



Israeli soldiers pray facing Jerusalem as they prepare for battle along Israel's northern border

DECEMBER 2023 | KISLEV-TEVET 5784

WORSHIP & WAR SHIPS

By **Shani Sorko-Ram Ferguson**

It's the holidays, and we're at war. Warships are at our shore. But making a point to celebrate the goodness of God in the midst of difficulty has long been a part of Israel's secret to survival. This is our worship. Our sacrifice of praise.

It may take a moment to find, but in every terrible situation there are glimpses of hope—sweet moments in the pain and miracles in the chaos.

There are so much more, but we've collected some of these moments for you that took place on the fateful October 7th and since. We hope they make you smile as much as they made many Israelis smile as well.

By Mail:
Maoz Ministries
P.O. Box 535788
Grand Prairie, TX 75053-5788

By Phone:
U.S. 214.677.0560
CAN. 866.712.0188
U.K. 01732 886441

By Email:
usa@maozisrael.org
canada@maozisrael.org
UK@maozisrael.org

Online:
www.maozisrael.org
www.istandwithisrael.com
www.IsraeliWorship.com

Follow:
f maozisrael
i maozisrael
y maozisrael

WOMEN WARRIORS

RACHEL EDRI

Rachel Edri was held hostage for 17 hours by five Hamas terrorists she described as “rottweilers.” She lived to tell the tale and much of it had to do with her lifelong passion for baking and hosting.

“People get cranky and irrational when they are hungry, so I kept offering them food. One of them told me, ‘You remind me of my mother...’ ‘Yes!’ I answered him, ‘I am just like your mother and I’m going to take care of you!’”

- ◀ Rachel has been depicted in a variety of memes and murals on public buildings and bomb shelters



▶ Rachel Edri and her husband have met with a slew of celebrities and international officials including the British Foreign Secretary and U.S. president



“I gave them some special cookies I had made for the holidays. They asked me to eat my food first to prove it wasn’t poisoned. When they finally ate they calmed down. They loved the cookies.

“One of the guys was really evil. He kept saying he was a martyr. But another one was wounded so I bandaged him. I tried to buy time until we could be rescued so kept up conversation. *‘Tell me,’* I asked them, *‘Besides being martyrs, what else do you do? It’s a pity that we are constantly fighting. Let’s live in peace..’*

“I sang them songs from an Egyptian singer and they sang me songs of an Israeli singer and just for a moment I forgot the dire situation I was in.

“Whenever I noticed them getting cranky I offered them more food, more tea—more cookies.

“At some point they asked me where my kids were (because they had information about all of our families

before the attack). I told them they were in America. In reality though, they were all nearby as we had come together to celebrate my husband’s birthday that weekend. One of my sons who is in the police force became the principle negotiator with the terrorists. Through the window he signaled to me not to show that we know each other.” After 20 hours miraculously, a SWAT team rushed through a back window and killed all five terrorists with no injury to the couple.

A very emotional Rachel was filmed in her first moments of rescue running into her son’s arms. She is now taking time to recover from her brush with death so she isn’t getting on the internet or watching the news. This is the main reason she doesn’t realize what a legend she has become in Israel—and how many people would like the recipe to her holiday cookies. ■

INBAL LIEBERMAN

Saturday morning felt quiet and peaceful to everyone in Kibbutz Nir Am—except Inbal. It wasn’t that long ago that people raised eyebrows when Inbal Lieberman was the first woman ever to be appointed head of the security in her village near Gaza. But as it turns out it was the best decision anyone could have made.

The electricity had gone out in the village and the local technician wanted to turn on the generators. *“Don’t turn it back on yet.”* She instructed, *“Something’s wrong. Give me an hour!”* It was the air, she later explained. She never received an official order to take action, but she had grown up in Nir Am, and the air sounded strange that morning. Still in her pajamas she ran home, organized a plan and then went to more than a dozen different homes distributing weapons to the designated emergency team (villages near Gaza always have residents with military experience on call for emergencies.)

That’s why when more than 25 terrorists attempted to infiltrate Nir Am, not a single one made it inside. Inbal took out five of the terrorists herself and together with her team, they held off the enemy until the IDF arrived.

“The whole village owes her our lives!” exclaimed the locals as viral videos of the real life wonder woman gave Israelis a rare moment to smile. ■



Inbal in the photo posted on her Facebook page when she was appointed head of security in her village just last year



Flash90/ Dor Pazuelo

TOGETHER ▲ IN THE HARVEST

U.S. cowboys harvesting on a pepper farm in the Golan heights near Syria and Lebanon border

One of the things that was not widely noted in international news has been the agricultural crisis that resulted from the displacement of hundreds of thousands from southern villages and the fleeing of thousands of foreign field workers (that is, those who weren't murdered or kidnapped). This crisis only increased when northern towns also evacuated. In response, Israelis—lawyers, teachers, doctors and hi-tech workers began going between work hours to volunteer in the harvest. The crisis gives a whole new angle to Yeshua's observation, *"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few..."* (Matthew 9:37)

I'm guessing these smalltown cowboys from the U.S. did not expect to even be noticed when they arrived in Israel.

But a photo of them standing in line at JFK airport in NYC with the Hebrew caption, "Girls, drop everything, the cowboys are coming!" made them an online sensation before they even landed in Tel Aviv. "We've come to serve Israel in her time of need," they said. Those who understood the larger ramifications of Christians helping in such a practical way commented on the photo—"Sometimes, this is what witnessing looks like." ■

If you have background in agriculture, like to work hard and are interested in volunteering, please write us!

contact@maozisrael.org

BABIES & BRIDES ▶

They say most every girl grows up dreaming about her wedding day. She may imagine it large or small, indoors or out in nature, formal or whimsical. But few girls grow up imagining their special day will be thrown together in a day and the invited guests will be—whoever is nearby at the time.

That is, however, the fate of a surprising number of Israeli couples whose wedding plans were interrupted by the war. Some managed to pull together a wedding dress and have their ceremony in a tank. Others made do with a rabbi, a guitarist, a veil—and Israeli flag as a makeshift huppah. A few adventurous brides just planned everything and surprised the groom out where he was stationed in the field.

But Israelis didn't stop there when it came to giving us reasons to smile. A slew of photos of fresh fathers who stepped away from the fight long enough to kiss their newborns, filled our social network feeds. And we couldn't help but think of Exodus 1:12:

But as the Israelites were mistreated, their families grew larger, and they took over more land. Because of this, the Egyptians feared them worse than before. ■



Flash90/ Ayal Margolin



Flash90/ Erez Ben Simon



Telegram

Flash 90/Yonatan Sindel

▶ Before October 7th, the religious community blocks traffic to protest Israeli law that requires all citizens to serve in the army.



RELIGIOUS WARRIORS

Among the major cultural divides between secular and religious Israelis has been the mandatory military service. Secular and traditional Jews have argued that everyone should carry their load when it comes to the protection of our nation. On the other hand, religious Jews have argued that their Torah studies are their service to the country. They've also expressed concerns about the negative impact of the exposure to secular Israeli culture on members of their community who grow up very sheltered.

However, even the closed ultra-Orthodox communities could not escape the atrocities of October the 7th. In addition to having members of their community among the dead and kidnapped, the gruesome job of cleaning up was handled by "Zaka," which is largely made up of religious men.



The biggest, heart warming surprise came from young religious men who insisted by the thousands to be drafted! When asked about it they responded, "We always felt pressure from our community not to join, but if we don't help our country in this war we will be traumatized for the rest of our lives." ■

▲ After the atrocities of October 7th religious Jews line up to join the army

CIVILIAN WARRIORS ▶

In the early days of the war, blood drive stations were set up across the country as hospitals were flooded with thousands of wounded people from the October 7th massacre. It was the early days of the war and everyone knew why they were there. But as Israelis lay on rows of beds to help others who laid in rows of beds in the hospital, someone began singing Israel's national anthem. It's called Hatikvah, the Hope, for a reason. Hope is the one thing we always have. It is the one thing that no matter how many times our enemies attack, no one has ever been able to take from the Jewish people. ■



Flash 90/Noam Revkin Fenton

Beds line the walls of convention center as Israelis ▲ come in droves to refill Israel's emergency blood supply

FAMILY WARRIORS ▶

One of the most beautiful stories of a miraculous rescue was the family of Ori Megidish. Pvt. Ori is a field observer who was kidnapped on October the 7th from a military base near Gaza. As a soldier (as opposed to a kidnapped civilian) the chances of her being on the list of those released was very low. That, however, did not stop her family from interceding on her behalf for her release.

Footage of friends and family marching through their house with a Torah scroll crying out to the God of Israel and declaring, "Ori, return home!" was taken just days before information came in to Israel's intelligence forces as to her whereabouts. In an operation that included "dozens if not hundreds" of agents, Ori was found and rescued. "Our prayers to God brought our daughter home; now we turn our prayers to the rest of the hostages," the family said in a tearful reunion.



Rights by Section 27A

Ori hugged by her aunt on the day she is returned ▲ from Hamas captivity

Because of her name, the entire scene brought to mind the well-known scripture from Isaiah 60 "Kumi ORI ki ba orech" "Arise, Ori your light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon You!" ■



Kobi Ferguson and Victor at sunset take selfie near field base after dropping off supplies provided by Maoz partners

MEN WARRIORS ▲

It was 4 am on Saturday, the last day of Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles) when Victor arrived at the Nova festival near Gaza. Camping out in the middle of the desert wasn't exactly his style, but his friends wanted to go, and sunrise was the climax of the event. Around 6am, Victor went to his car to get his sunglasses. During the five minute walk to his car he heard explosions, but no Code Red siren. A quick check online didn't turn up a single warning.

Victor had served in Operation Protective Edge in 2014 near the Gaza border, so he knew the area well. Turning around, he ran back to the party to get his two friends. "Something's wrong, let's get out of here," he told them. They went back to the car and saw other cars also heading towards the narrow path that led onto the main road.

It was an ambush. The terrorists were waiting for them just around the corner. The cars in front of them were sprayed with bullets. Victor hit the gas and only looked long enough to realize no one from the cars in front of them survived. It was their turn to pass through the group of terrorists and the sudden silence was deafening. "I don't know if they were refilling their cartridge or what, but they didn't fire at us."

Victor drove as fast as he could but nothing could prepare him for the carnage they would pass along the way. Lifeless people and cars in ditches on the side of the road. "I noticed one guy who had been shot but was still alive. We put him in the car and later dropped him off at an ambulance. At the time we didn't know how big the event was so we just drove and eventually decided to pull into the next village we passed. We came to a fork in the road—to the left was Kfar Azza and to the right Kibbutz Sa'ad."

Kibbutz Sa'ad was religious so the gate was closed when they arrived, but they were let in by

the civilian security team that had been alerted of "a threat." Victor and his friends hid in a bomb shelter for hours while terrorists roamed the streets. They wouldn't leave until the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) finally arrived later that day.

Victor arrived home safely to the embrace of his overjoyed family but the event left him unsettled. He had fought to protect his nation before, and he needed to go do it again. It was a harrowing ordeal that we at Maoz were fervently praying through and getting updates as it was unfolding. There are more details to Victor's story—but he left so quickly we never had time to sit down and film his testimony. However, Maoz did have the privilege of getting his entire unit some hot meals and basic needs early on in the war before they closed the area to civilians. In the meantime, Victor and five others from the Maoz staff are out in the field fighting for God's promise of a Jewish homeland. Prayers for their safety are more than welcome! ■

KEYBOARD WARRIOR ▶

In Israel serving in the army is a requirement for Jews. But for obvious reasons, Arabs are not required. That, however, doesn't stop Israeli-Arabs - who appreciate the freedoms they enjoy -from choosing to serve their country. Yoseph Haddad is one of those Arabs who served in a Golani combat unit. He was seriously injured in the Second Lebanese War and has since spent his time advocating for Israel in English, Hebrew and Arabic. His social media accounts garner hundreds of thousands of followers and millions of views. One of the funniest posts was when Hamas frustrated with the impact he was having against their cause started a rumor that Yoseph was a dangerous spy for Hamas. Yoseph' activism is among



the most prolific in terms of covering both current events, historical context of Israel—and the ignorance of pro-Palestinian supporters. ■

FALLEN WARRIOR ▶



The funeral of Bruna Valeanu is a bittersweet story from that day. Bruna was at the same festival that Victor was at and escaped along the same route he did. Only she took a left at the fork into Kfar Azza and did not survive the attack on the village that was virtually burned to the ground. Bruna immigrated with her mother and sister from Brazil. She served in the military and was a university student when her life was cut short. Alan, from our Maoz team who worked with Bruna's mother at his previous job, described the two as inseparable. *"Everywhere the mom went, her daughter went. They were best friends,"* he told us.

A Jewish burial requires ten adults to participate and the funeral to take place within 24 hours of a declared death. However, as Bruna's mother and sister were her



only family, a social media post was written to ask a few Israelis to come help honor her life and premature death.

Ten thousand Israelis parked on both sides of the narrow road and clogged the entrance to the cemetery to stand with a grieving mother for her daughter whom they had never met before that day. Some people envy us for being the chosen people with a chosen land. They don't always understand the cost we pay to be here. ■



December 2023



Shalom from Jerusalem,

By the time you read this, Kobi and I will have handed our first-born daughter to serve in our nation's military. **She is no longer legally ours.** For the next few years, she will belong to our ancient and modern state of Israel. From her birth, we raised our daughter with this day in mind. **It's a calling each of our children will take on. It's a call every family in Israel must embrace.**

There are those among us who will choose the army as a way of life. However, **Israel's Defense Forces is an army made up mostly of civilian reservists;** everyday citizens who will live regular lives and get civilian jobs, but who will drop everything at any time to fight for our right to exist.

Overnight, **hundreds of thousands of Israelis** were evacuated from their homes on the southern and northern border. Then, **an additional 400,000 everyday civilian reservists** had to drop their jobs, companies, government jobs, families, wedding plans...**to fight in fields they've been trained in** since they finished high school.

The sudden gaps in the workforce and the national and personal trauma caused by the October 7th terrorist attack have put our country in complete turmoil. **The need is greater than any one person or organization can handle.** Not even our government can begin to provide the needs of the people of Israel in this war. That is why **Maoz is partnering with other ministries, pastors and even city municipalities to address the basic needs in three main areas.**



Shani Ferguson harvest tomatoes near Gaza border

Issue: Over 90% of Israel's food supply is grown locally, most of it on Israel's northern and southern borders. With the world turning against Israel, losing local farms could eventually mean a dearth of food. Foreign workers who survived October 7th fled the country when the war began creating a sudden crisis.

Maoz Action: Organizing local groups including adults and school kids to help harvest. Recruiting farmers from abroad as well as volunteering in the fields near Gaza ourselves.



Dropping off supplies for evacuees in a hotel in Nazareth

Issue: Displaced families evacuated to hotels and hostels will be staying there for at least the next year. Over a month into the war, schools have not been able to provide school supplies to the scattered population.

Maoz Action: Helping build an entire school in the city of Ra’anana for evacuees. Provide school and after-school supplies for teachers and families evacuated to Nazareth.



Issue: Reserve soldiers called up from civilian life do not have basic supplies.

Maoz Action: Purchasing and personally delivering shoes, jackets, protective gear and hot meals to soldiers on the field. Caring for needs of families left by those sent to fight.

Israel is bleeding. Israel is a nation in want.

As followers of Yeshua, now is the time we can truly show our love for the Jewish people—because this is a moment they will remember.

For His promises are YES and AMEN!

Kobi and Shani Ferguson

Kobi and Shani Ferguson

SHALOM

STAY UPDATED!

WATCH OUR

**ISRAEL
AT WAR**

VIDEO UPDATES

Shani has been posting videos updating everyone in between our massive efforts to help those affected by the war. They are available at maozisrael.org or on our Facebook, Instagram and YouTube channels.

ISRAELNEEDSME.COM

Israel is at war. She is being attacked from the north, south, east and west. But she doesn't have to fight alone.

God promised Israel will never be destroyed—but how much suffering the enemy can inflict will depend on whether or not she fights this war alone.

ISRAEL NEEDS YOU. ISRAEL NEEDS ME.