



“Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your Faithfulness!” (Lamentations 3: 22-23)

Israel blossoms in crisis. After over a month of rockets, numerous violated cease fires, and 64 fallen Israeli soldiers, the southern border is still insecure. However, as a nation, Israel is witnessing almost unprecedented solidarity and unity. Operation “Protective Edge” began on the 17th of the Hebrew month Tamuz, at the dawn of “the days of dire straits.” This season is traditionally associated with turmoil and destruction caused by disunity and hatred within the nation. The destruction of the temple happened at the end of this time period, on the 9th of Av. So there was some concern. Yet Israel stood as one nation, united in love and support.

In addition, Israel witnessed her brave children serving in the IDF without any thought for their personal well-being, endangering themselves on behalf of their fellow citizens living within range of rocket fire. One of more than 60 soldiers who gave their lives was Shai Kushnir, a young man from our congregational community (story on pg. 6). Hamas sent their children and women to the forefront of the conflict and hid behind the weak. Israel sent its strong to protect the weak. Hence Israel lost men of valor while Hamas caused the death of their own children and mothers.

And there is more. How can one explain thousands of indiscriminate rockets fired at innocent civilians missing their targets? It is not due only to Israel’s “Iron Dome” technology, but thanks to the Dome of Heavenly protection undergirded by the fervent prayers of Yeshua’s followers around the world. It is clear to all who have eyes and ears, that this battle bypasses the logic of the mind. It is as much a spiritual battle as a physical one.



United in thanks



Once again the hearts of the people of Israel are being pushed toward utter dependence on God. Our intense identification and intercession with our threatened people echoes the situation described in II Chronicles many centuries ago. King Jehoshaphat reigned in Judah in that time, and the meaning of his name was “the LORD will judge.” In spite of having an army of over 1 million, he did not put his trust in weapons and soldiers. When a large enemy alliance advanced on his territory, he gathered the people of Judah and Jerusalem, and prayed out in desperation:

“O LORD God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You?...‘If disaster comes upon us - sword, judgment, pestilence, or famine - we will...cry out to You in our affliction, and You will hear and save.’ And now, here are the people... coming to throw us out of Your possession which You have given us to inherit. O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You.” (II Chronicles 20:6-12)

The Tents of Mercy Network of congregations joined together in this prayer. We also sought a way to tangibly stand with our nation. Early one morning, the two of us, together with a few other men from our congregation left the quiet, peaceful northern region of Israel, traveling south to bring material, emotional and spiritual encouragement to Israeli soldiers stationed near Gaza. We listened intently to radio broadcasts all the way down, to hear radar-triggered warnings of incoming Hamas rocket fire toward this town or that, in case we needed to find cover. Then suddenly we were there, within sight of Gaza and its rockets. That was not all. At least ten Hamas attack tunnels had been dug surreptitiously hundreds of meters into

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Avi, Andrey and a grateful soldier

Israeli territory. We felt the surreal sense of being nearly helpless before a dual threat that could come without warning from above, or from below, in the form of terrorists suddenly rising from the ground beneath our feet. It was a very unsettling feeling, and one which tens of thousands of soldiers and residents have been experiencing for weeks now. Our journey was repeated again the following week. Both times we were able to distribute a van load of supplies. The soldiers, young men and young women, were visibly touched and extremely

thankful. And we were not alone. Millions of Israelis came together to encourage our soldiers in many different ways.

After each visit, we drove back north, breathing more freely with every added mile between us and Gaza. Though distant from the sound of rockets, our hearts remain united with those under fire and we continue to keep our eyes on God – trusting in His ultimate salvation. ✡



By AVI & DAVID

Shai

A Priceless Sacrifice

One of the IDF soldiers who gave his life to defend us in the 28 day conflict with Hamas was a Jewish believer in Yeshua. Shai Kushnir grew up in our congregation from the time he was 4 years old. I knew him well. As a teen, his constant smile and fun-loving, easy going nature belied his intense desire to serve in a combat unit.

An only son is not required to do combat duty in the Israeli army. One can choose office work and fulfill the military requirement with honor. Yet Shai insisted and would not relent. Finally, his father signed the waiver. Shai trained diligently and became a medic. At one point he carried a fellow soldier on his back, removing him from the battlefield in Gaza. From the pudgy boy who rarely seemed serious, he had become a heroic, selfless young man, more concerned with others' safety than his own.

Thousands attended the memorial service held for Shai at a military cemetery near Haifa. Many of them had not known him or his family. Such was the outpouring of gratitude and grief that occurred again and again for the 64 soldiers who gave their lives to give us ours. Officers eulogized our young brother in moving terms. They

highlighted his dedication, his popularity among the troops, and the focus with which he applied himself to military service. We wept, and are still weeping.

How can we possibly measure the value of Shai's life? For me, standing near his grave, surrounded by sober, resolute, tender yet sinewy infantrymen, that value is framed by the divine mandate to make our home here, in Eretz Yisrael. From the cemetery I can see Mount Carmel, one of our country's biblical and geophysical landmarks. I'm reminded of God's declaration to Abraham: **"I will establish my covenant between me and you...for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also, I give to you and your descendants after you the land...all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting**



Shai in winter uniform

possession; and I will be their God" (Genesis 17:7, 8).

Shai wrote praise songs and played guitar in our youth group. Now, in the Lord's presence, he is able to lift his voice as never before. Dare I imagine Yeshua, His arm around Shai, saying "Well done, son, I laid down my life to save Israel too." ✡



Shai playing guitar together with Eitan and Maxim



By EITAN SHISHKOFF



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TEENS TASTE “LAST DAYS”

“The Last Days” was the topic we chose for our national teen summer camp. What we had no way of knowing was that the rocket attacks from Hamas and Israel’s defensive war against them would begin on the first day of the camp. Our goal was to equip the young people for an eventual end-times scenario. Yeshua said clearly **“You will hear of wars and rumors of war”** (Matthew 24:6). How ironic (might one say ‘Spirit-led?’) that months before the camp opened, we felt in prayer to focus on the question: “...since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God...?”

the camp resulted in profound days of youth drawing near to God. For the duration of the camp, young people came forward for prayer in large numbers. Their vulnerability and sincerity was evident. They will never forget the “Last Days” summer camp. ✡



Praying together



Camp counselors’ drama



A quiet time of worship

One evening, midway through the week-long camp, nearly 80 young Israelis from 30 Messianic congregations worshiped and heard a gripping message from a sabra (native Israeli) believer. He challenged the kids boldly. “You need to decide where you’re at in life and with Yeshua, because you have no guarantee that God will grant you another day on this earth.” Moments later the air raid siren began wailing. Immediately kids began running for the bomb shelter. Girls screamed. Some cried. Then, before everyone could clamber down the steps to the underground shelter we heard a loud “boom!” and felt the ground shake from the rocket’s impact. I stood, still outside, at the ground level opening to the shelter, shepherding our young people inside. The screams and crying increased. Later, we learned that the explosion occurred only 1500 yards (1.5 kilometers) away.



The local bomb shelter

Below, we crowded into the concrete space, calming the kids and wondering if the first rocket would be followed by more. In those minutes—besides fear, disbelief, and perplexity—some youth began praying, others sang to the Lord. Some comforted and reassured each other. It was a revealing scene. We had felt it important to deal with the end-of-the-age in a practical and personally relevant way. Instead of emphasizing dates and timetables, our small group discussions dealt with questions of the heart. Here, an unseen enemy (which turned out to be a renegade group of Palestinians firing on Israel from the Lebanese border) accelerated the entire “lesson” to a degree we could not have imagined.



By EITAN SHISHKOFF

The next day we wrestled with whether to send everyone home, having no idea if we would now be “under fire.” Taking the decision to stay and finish out



Reshet kids camp at the Kinneret

DIRECTED STEPS

“A man’s heart devises his way; but the Lord directs his steps.” (Proverbs 16:9)

Many months before summer arrived, our team began planning the program and activities for the annual Tents of Mercy Network camp. This would be the first one that we’d organized without Katya’s oversight and presence. Yet we knew she had passed the task on to us, and we were excited at all of the fun and creative ideas that were developing.

Then on June 12th three Jewish teenagers were kidnapped and subsequently murdered. As we watched the tragedy unfold, we did not yet know that the situation would soon deteriorate into full-fledged warfare. The entire country remained glued to their televisions and smart phones as rockets flew and troops massed in the south. I had a particular reason for obsessively checking the news updates every few minutes...a decision would have to be made as to whether or not our camp would be held at its regular venue near Petach Tikva, within range of the Gaza rockets.

Barely a week before camp was to start, we decided to cancel the overnight camp and make it a day-camp to be held in the north at Tents of Mercy. At the same time, our congregational leaders had the inspired idea of inviting 23 children and teens from congregations under rocket fire in Ashdod to attend as a respite from the traumatizing security situation.

The next seven days were a whirlwind of activity and planning. Staff and congregants worked together to turn Tents of Mercy’s facility into a “campground.” Families from the Krayot and Akko prepared to host our young Ashdod guests. Shavei Tzion Congregation offered to expand their small guest quarters to hold 25 volunteers. Throughout we prayed fervently that the international Ben Gurion Airport would be re-

opened, enabling our support team of volunteers from Texas to join us. They were determined to come and participate as they have every year, even with the country essentially at war.

In Hebrew, the name of the current military campaign is “Tzuk Eitan” - Protective Edge or translated more literally a steadfast cliff. We chose to use this as a theme for the camp as well, reminding the children and ourselves that **“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble”** (Psalm 46:1).

Ultimately He is the steadfast cliff, the strong tower in whom we can take refuge.

I had my worries and my doubts, but God came through. Everything and everyone came together. For five days we worked and played together – 70 kids and over 40 helpers of all ages. We set aside our worries and were joyful in Him who is our refuge, strength and true help in troubling and challenging times. He is the one who made it all possible. ✡



Fencing lesson for beginners



Ashdod boy saying thanks at final prayer send off



Baseball, Israeli style



Climbing wall fun



By LEORA

