

PARTING Thoughts

BY WINNIE SANDLER GRINSPOON

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“Abba, are we going to die?”

As we stood among the incinerated structures of Kibbutz Be’eri this past March, a father of two young children recounted for us the harrowing hours his family spent hiding in their safe room on that terrible day in October as the sounds of gunfire and explosions reverberated outside.

“We are not going to die,” he answered in a firm, quiet voice. “I am here to block this door, and I am strong. And when it is safe to leave, we will go somewhere safe. Now you need to start making a list in your mind of what you will take that can fit in your backpack. Remember ... in your mind, without speaking ...”

He shared how the terrifying blasts continued outside for hours, and the texts from his neighbors grew dire. People started to text their goodbyes. His in-laws stopped answering messages. Yet he couldn’t react. He was focused on keeping his kids from speaking or crying. If he could keep his family hidden, perhaps they’d survive.

I visited Kibbutz Be’eri this past spring with a group of funders who support projects in Israel, such as Sifriyat Pijama and Maktabat al-Fanoos — programs the Harold Grinspoon Foundation is proud to help fund. These programs provide free books to hundreds of thousands of children throughout Israel, both Jewish and Arab, thanks to a partnership between generous donors and Israel’s Ministry of Education. For Israeli kids, these books are a beloved part of childhood.

It broke my heart to receive a photo taken at Kibbutz Be’eri in the days after the massacre. The photo showed a child’s bookcase filled with Sifriyat Pijama storybooks. Horrifically, the books were stained with blood.

Israel is a country that mourns together. Seemingly everyone knows someone who has had a family member die in war or be killed by terror. In the weeks and months following the October 7 attack, the country united with an outpouring of support. Thousands of people showed up at the funerals of victims they had never met, and volunteers helped to feed, clothe, relocate, and comfort thousands of families. Many have visited the Tel Aviv plaza

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now known as Hostages Square in solidarity with families waiting for their loved ones to come home. As one mother, whose son was kidnapped and died in Gaza, told us, only in Israel could she survive such a thing. The shared connection of the Israeli people is what gives her the strength to persevere.

As our rabbis teach us, all of *Am Yisrael* — the Jewish people — are responsible for one another. Whether we live in Israel or in the diaspora, we are part of an extended family. We also have a unique responsibility to the Jewish state and all its citizens. That’s why the Harold Grinspoon Foundation invests in books in both Hebrew and Arabic — so that Israeli children of all backgrounds can start life with a strong foundation. We know the benefits of early-childhood literacy, and we appreciate the power of books to bring calm, connection, and a bit of normalcy to children and their families in very difficult times. I hope you will join us in supporting this work.

We look forward to the day when all displaced families can return to their homes in safety and security, and we will make sure there are beautiful new storybooks and resources waiting for them. ■



Kibbutz Be’eri in March.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WINNIE SANDLER GRINSPOON