

Yom Hazikaron:

Degrees of Separation



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Yom HaZikaron (Israel Remembrance Day): Degrees of Separation

This lesson focuses on the challenge of marking Yom HaZikaron (Israel Remembrance Day) for North American Jewry. We explore the notion of *commemorating* in the wider American context, and expand on this to discuss Israel's Remembrance Day, and what it means to commemorate from a distance.

Goals:

- The students will grasp the challenge of commemorating the fallen from a geographical and psychological distance.
- The students will be challenged to assess the *role* of a mourner from afar
- The students will explore the meaning of being connected to Jews they have never met
- The students will explore various ways of moving beyond the obstacle of distance, allowing North American Jewry to connect to Remembrance Day
- The students will be challenged to draw closer and connect to the fallen soldiers in Israel, despite the distance
- The students will be given the opportunity to design their own program to mark Israel Remembrance Day

Outline:

Part 1: Trigger exercise

In the first part, students will participate in drama exercise to introduce the theme of the lesson.

Part 2: Discussion

A. September 11th

The students will explore the idea of commemorating from afar by learning about the September 11th memorial in California, and discussing how they think the tragedy should be marked by those who were not affected personally by it.

B. Yom HaZikaron (Israel Remembrance Day)

The students will apply their 9/11 discussion to marking Israel's Remembrance Day and be challenged to think about how they should commemorate the day.

Part 3: Connect to the fallen

The students will attempt to connect to the fallen and bridge the gap of distance. They will select from a variety of materials to draw closer to the stories of the fallen soldiers.

Trigger Exercise: start with this drama exercise: Cool and Angry

Instructions:

Place a chair in the middle of the room. Select two student volunteers per round. Each round, seat one student in the chair and instruct them that their role is to “play it cool”. The second student is to remain standing, and is instructed to “get angry”.

The set-up may sound like this:

Here is a chair.
I need two volunteers.
You sit in the chair, you stand.
You [in the chair] are totally cool. No matter what, stay calm and cool.
You [standing] are *angry*...embody this emotion

Then, you present the volunteers with a scenario that they are asked to respond to.

We’ve suggested 3 examples of scenarios below, the first is a warm-up that is unrelated to our topic, the second a transitional exercise, and the last is the fundamental issue that will be addressed in the discussion section.

Scenario 1: Warm-up

- You [the sitting student] didn’t do your class assignment.
- You [sitting] asked your friend [the standing student] to lend you her homework so you could copy it.
- When the teacher confronted both of you on your identical homework, you [sitting] completely denied any wrongdoing.
- In the end you [standing] took the blame for the whole mess.
- This is the first time you’ve spoken since the class.
- You [standing] are *angry*. You [sitting] are totally cool...

[express yourselves however you want, without touching. Go.]

Scenario 2: Transitional

- You [the standing student] are marking one year of the death of a close relative. Memories are flooding your mind and emotions are running high.
- You [the sitting student] ask your best friend [the standing student] to come hang out with your other friends.
- You [standing] are not in the mood to go out, you just want to be alone
- You [sitting] tell your friend [standing] that they need to get over it, it's been a year already.
- You [standing] can't believe your friend is being so insensitive and you're ready to lash out
- You [standing] are *angry*. You [sitting] are totally cool...

[express yourselves however you want, without touching. Go.]

Scenario 3: Fundamental

- You are both [sitting and standing students] from California and have just been at a September 11th memorial service
- You [the sitting student] thought it was a waste of time, and loudly walked out in the middle
- You [the standing student] can't believe your friend doesn't see the value in commemorating the tragedy
- You [sitting] say that it happened years ago to people you never met, what does it have to do with you?
- You [standing] disagree
- You [standing] are *angry*. You [sitting] are totally cool...

[express yourselves however you want, without touching. Go.]

The Tie-in: Depending on where you're standing/sitting in a given situation, the emotional response you have may be very different. What is right and appropriate for one context, may be out of place in another context. The way a situation appears from one angle may look entirely different from another.

Discussion:**Part 1: September 11th**

- Show this short clip on the famous September 11th memorial in Sacramento, California:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cT2RUEgtYs0&feature=channel>
- and this clip about the memorial, as well as other services in honor of 9/11 held throughout California:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cMB-E12ZN0>



Note: this memorial is located within the California State Fair, an aerial shot of it looks like this:

**Discussion Questions:**

- How do you feel about the exhibit in Sacramento?
- How do you feel about the tone taken by the tour guide?
- Did seeing the aerial shot affect your perspective?
- From the clip, does September 11th feel more close to home, or more removed?
- Is there anything inappropriate about the exhibit? If not, then why might it still rub you the wrong way?
- How does this type of memorializing differ from some of the memorials you may have seen or been to in New York?

- Are New Yorkers more entitled to commemorate 9/11 than those on the West Coast? Are their feelings more legitimate or genuine?
- In a time of tragedy, should the entire world react the same? Isn't it more natural to feel it differently depending on how far removed you are? Is this inclination OKAY?

→ Guide the discussion such that the students agree that it is important for Americans in California to mark 9/11 as well (and not just people in New York, who were affected personally and closer to home.)

Assuming that everyone agrees that Californians too should commemorate 9/11, ask the questions:

- How would you feel if someone from CA came to NY to run a ceremony for you?
- How should their ceremony be run?
- Should they make their own ceremony or should someone from New York (who was affected personally by the tragedy) come to CA to run it for them?

Part 2: Yom HaZikaron (Israel Remembrance Day)

Throw out the following lead-in question:

If you are standing in synagogue and someone in the row in front of you begins saying mourner's kaddish, how do you respond if:

- a. you know the mourner personally and/or the person they are mourning
 - b. the mourner is a stranger you've never met
- How quickly do you stand up in each case?
 - How likely are you to stop talking and answer dutifully in each case?
 - How loudly do you respond in each case?
 - Would you ever be compelled to say Kaddish yourself? When/in what circumstances?

If you're like most of us, you'll admit that there's a clear difference if you know the person and if you don't, in how seriously you relate to the prayer.

Suggestion: as students propose answers to the questions above, as well as the questions to follow below, start a list on a board or easel with the positive/proactive suggestions the group makes about mourning tragedy from afar. This will help them better internalize the process, and will prove helpful if you decide to turn this exercise into a practical brainstorm which leads to building your own Yom HaZikaron (Israel Remembrance Day) program.

Application: Is your relationship to Yom HaZikaron (Israel Remembrance Day) similar to the Kaddish example?

Think of it this way: most of us do not know anyone who has died in service of the State of Israel. We have never served in the Israeli Army, and may not even know personally anyone who has. When Israel is under enemy threat, we may be afraid, but it's not for our own lives. There is a distance between us and Israel's security, between us and Yom HaZikaron (Israel Remembrance Day), the day that commemorates those who died defending Israel.

- How are we meant to memorialize the fallen Israelis from this distance (keep in mind the California-Israel discussion)?
- Do you try to make it/force it to be personal? To find a way to connect yourself to what happened thousands of miles away? Or do you make it all about them and run the risk that people won't relate personally?
- Do Jews around the world share a common destiny?

Just because you may never understand exactly what Israelis feel on Yom HaZikaron (Israel Remembrance Day) does not mean you can't try to open your eyes and hearts to their experiences.

Optional: Follow-up this discussion by challenging the students to take what they said about how to commemorate Yom HaZikaron (Israel Remembrance Day), and actualize it: have them put together a Yom HaZikaron (Israel Remembrance Day) ceremony, perhaps one for younger students in the school.

Conclusion:

The struggles contended with above all relate to distance and the challenges that we face when marking a day from afar. Explain to the students that distance is a fact, and it is perfectly normal that a student in New York feels the pain and mourning of fallen Israeli soldiers less than Israelis do. This is the merely the nature of life!

However, the key message here should be that **distance is something the students can in fact take into their own hands**. The aim is to find a way to connect, to feel closer and bring the tragedy closer to our hearts. The question being asked of the students in this lesson is what do they think they should do to get closer, if not geographically then psychologically, to the loss.

Our job as educators is not to say how to get closer, but to explore different ways to make the connections. **Below is a selection of materials about soldiers who have fallen in defense of the State of Israel**. You, the educator, may either decide on one item to read to the students, or, better yet, select from the below materials a number of the options to give your students the choice. **It is your decision what array to provide the students with. We recommend deciding on a few items, and making a page for the students to read, and ask the students which piece helps them best connect.**

Close the lesson with the reading of the materials.

Connecting Item 1: Gadi's Letter to Galit

Gadi Ezra fell in battle during "Operation Defensive Shield". He was killed on April 4, 2002 while attempting to evacuate a wounded soldier in the midst of battle in Jenin. He received a posthumous medal for extreme bravery under fire. He was 23 years old when he was killed.

Gadi was the youngest child of Soli and Roseline Ezra, he was a commander in the Golani Brigade. He was soon to be released from the army and planned to marry his girlfriend, Galit. About a month before he was killed, he wrote Galit a letter to read in case something would happen to him. The following is the letter.



My Dear Galiti,

Feb. 28, 2002

If this letter reaches you, it means that something has happened to me.

This morning, we were informed that the mission planned yesterday, will with the Almighty's help, take place today....

My beloved, on one hand I feel that there is nothing more that I want in this world than to be with you - to love you and to establish a home and a family with you.

But on the other hand, there isn't anything that I want more than to be a part of this military operation and strike those terrorists a blow so strong, that they will never again even consider carrying out a terrorist attack.

In order to do this, there is a price that we must pay. I am willing to be that price.

Don't be angry with me, my love, but at moments like this, your feelings for "Klal Yisrael" (All Israel) is the feeling that is supposed to guide you right now - and you relate to this evil as if your private life does not exist.

...My beautiful one, I love you so much and the only grief of mine is the fact that you will have sorrow and I will not be the one who will be privileged to make you happy. You deserve all the happiness in the world. Therefore I ask, magnificent one, that you should be happy! That you should be happy, that you should love and blossom - because that is what you deserve.

I will always watch over you from wherever I am and I will see to it that you will meet someone who will make you even happier than I could have made you.

My sweet one, don't forget - all that happens is for the best and if this is what the Almighty chose, then this is what has to be. What is left for us, is to accept it with love.

I love you and will always love you and want you to know that the thoughts in my head are only for you in these moments and also I am sure, in the moment that will happen what has happened, you will be the last thing that I will think about, and I will leave this world with the knowledge that I was the most happy person that can be, and that is because of you.

Know that you made me the happiest of men and you brought me to achievements that all my life I only dreamt of reaching.

I love you my dearest and thank you for all the good and all the joy you brought me while we were together.

Really, it is not that we were together, but we are always together - before we came to this world and when we part from it, we are together...My dearest one, my beloved one, I love you and will always love you.

Only promise me that you will continue onward and will not allow Sodom to be the victor - you are the victor and that is how it should be and that is right to be.

I love you forever, for all eternity, and I am always with you.

Gadi

Connecting Item 2: Alex Singer

Alex was born in 1962 in Westchester, New York. As a boy, his family spent four years in Israel, then returned to Washington, D.C. Alex graduated high school and went on to college at Cornell. In 1984, Alex made Aliyah on his own, and was drafted to the I.D.F. He volunteered to join the Paratrooper's unit and was accepted. After basic training Alex was asked to become an officer.



On the 15th of September, Alex's 25th birthday, he and 11 other men were dropped by helicopter onto a very rugged ridge in the foothills of Mt. Hermon, about a mile into Lebanon. They were to set up an ambush to try to intercept terrorists on their way into Israel. Unexpectedly, they landed among a group of about 30 terrorists who had hidden themselves among boulders. Alex's commander, Ronen Weissman, was the first to be hit by their fire. When Alex, who was the second officer on the mission, landed he was told that Ronen was not answering the radio. Alex took a medic and went to help Ronen. When Alex reached Ronen, he too was shot and killed at the same spot... Outnumbered, and without their officers, the remainder of the small Israeli force continued to return fire until they were reinforced and the band of terrorists retreated, unable to continue their mission to attack settlements in Israel.

Alex was buried on September 18, 1987 in the military cemetery on Mt. Herzl in Jerusalem.

After Alex died, his writings and drawings were gathered by his family and put into a book, with the hope that Alex's words and art would inspire young people as they struggle with some of the same questions that Alex asked himself as he tried to translate idealism into action.

Read the excerpts below, or watch this video clip (the news reports at the beginning are in Hebrew, but the readings [of Alex's letters and poems] are read in English by Alex's family members.

http://www.alex singer.org/index.php?section=article&album_id=5&id=18

Kibbutz Ein Tsurim, June 22, 1985

Dear Grandma and Grandpa,

The army is a series of challenges. Some are more difficult than others. Some are physical, some are spiritual, some are irritating, but all are new. I have no regrets about putting myself before all of these challenges; they teach well even if their education is different from that at Cornell....

...Dear Katherine,...

We will win the next war, as we've won every war until now, and Israel will not be pushed into the sea.

I don't want to lecture anymore about Zionism and decision-making. I'd rather tell you about walking through a wadi in the middle of the night with a million stars over my head, and singing as I walk because I'm so content and so enjoying myself, and climbing mountains and looking over the desert, and seeing eagles and a huge waddling porcupine, and the goodness of the rest which always comes after a night of trekking with so much weight on my shoulders. There are nights which make the weight disappear, and I love those nights.

I'm feeling wonderful and very much at peace with my decision to stay on....

From Alex's journal during officers' school, August, 1986

Once in a while.
As I progress towards the course's end.
I feel a pang of fear.

Today I felt such fear.

If the war comes
When the war comes
I will have to lead men to die

But those men were not men a short time ago
Some don't even shave yet
And I will have to have the calm power
to yell to them
or to whisper

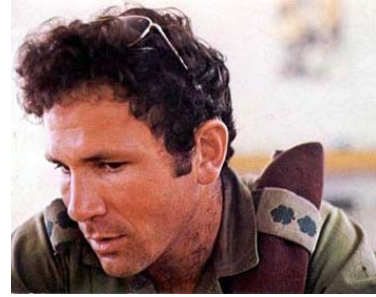
Kadima.

And,

I will have to have the calm power
to step forward myself.

Connecting Item 3: Yoni Netanyahu

Yonatan "Yoni" Netanyahu (March 13, 1946 – July 4, 1976), was the commander of the elite Israeli army commando unit Sayeret Matkal. (His younger brother, Benjamin Netanyahu, is the prime minister of Israel). He was awarded the Medal of Distinguished Service for his conduct in the Yom Kippur War. He was killed in action during Operation Entebbe in Uganda, in which the I.D.F. raided Entebbe to rescue the over-200 Air France passengers who had been hijacked by terrorists on their way from Israel to France. Yoni was the only Israeli casualty in the mission, which was otherwise successful. The mission was renamed "Operation Yoni" after his death.



In 1980 many of Netanyahu's personal letters were published. Many of his letters were written hurriedly under trying conditions in the field, but according to a review in the New York Times, give a "convincing portrayal of a talented, sensitive man of our times who might have excelled at many things yet chose clearsightedly to devote himself to the practice and mastery of the art of war, not because he liked to kill or wanted to, but because he knew that, as always in human history, good is no match for evil without the power to physically defend itself."

Read the excerpts from Yoni's Letters below, and **watch** this video depicting Operation Yoni: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EO2-KoO9F3I>

Letter to his parents, March 6, 1969:

"In another week I'll be 23. On me, on us, the young men of Israel, rests the duty of keeping our country safe. This is a heavy responsibility, which matures us early... I do not regret what I have done and what I'm about to do. I'm convinced that what I am doing is right. I believe in myself, in my country and in my future"

Letter to his brother Benjamin, Dec. 2, 1973:

"We're preparing for war, and it's hard to know what to expect. What I'm positive of is that there will be a next round, and others after that. But I would rather opt for living here in continual battle than for becoming part of the wandering Jewish people. Any compromise will simply hasten the end. As I don't intend to tell my grandchildren about the Jewish State in the twentieth century as a mere brief and transient episode in thousands of years of wandering, I intend to hold on here with all my might."

Letter to his parents, January 17th, 1969

"...I would like you to know my reasons for considering going back to the army.

Firstly, and above all else, is the dangerous security situation, and my steadfast belief that I, as a son of this nation and this land, must do the maximum that I can at this time... I seriously debated between the desire to continue living my life the way I am, and the awareness of **my responsibility to my country, to my nation, and most of all, to myself. I feel it is incumbent (מצוה) upon me to go back to the army**...I would be kidding myself and fundamentally denying that very inner commandment that is calling me to go, if I did not follow through and go. ... I am positive that I am doing the right thing!"

Connecting Item 4: Roi Klein

Roi Klein (July 10 1975–July 26 2006) was born in Raanana, Israel. He began his IDF service in the Paratroopers Brigade but later transferred to the Golani Brigade's Egoz Reconnaissance Unit. Klein lived in Eli, with his wife and two sons: Gilad and Yoav.



In the Battle of Bint Jbeil, during the 2006 Lebanon War, a hand grenade was thrown into the house where Klein and his unit were present. Klein told his men "Report that I've been killed" and subsequently jumped on the live grenade and stopped the explosion with his body, saving his fellow soldiers. The soldiers in the unit reported that Klein recited the Jewish prayer, Shema Yisrael, as he jumped on the grenade.

For his actions during the war Klein received the Medal of Courage posthumously (after his death).

Watch this short clip:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qjWrsyVFqps&feature=related>

Connecting Item 5: Nachshon Wachsman

Read the piece below by Esther Wachsman, Nachshon's mother, and then **watch** her speak here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1eJ8VfV5Oak>

His Name was Nachshon Wachsman By Esther Wachsman

...And so I was married to Yehuda in 1970 and we had seven sons between 1971 and 1986. Our sons were raised on a three-fold love -- of their people, their land, and their heritage, the Torah. Our lives were complete, my dreams fulfilled, and I felt privileged to be able to live my life and raise my children in this, our sacred city, in this, our God-given land. I taught English at the Hebrew University High School for 28 years, my children grew up, attended yeshivot, and in time served their country, proudly wearing the uniform of the Jewish army. How proud I was -- the Jewish immigrant from Brooklyn, mother of soldiers of Israel!

Nachshon, our third son, was named after the one who was the first to jump into the Red Sea. Nachshon did us proud, as did all our sons and, thank God, lived up to his name.

After having served in the army for a little over a year, with two stints in Lebanon, Nachshon came home on a week's leave, Friday, October 7, 1994 just before the Sabbath. On Saturday night, he got a call from the army informing him that the following day, Sunday, he was to attend a course up north, where he and another soldier from his unit would learn to operate a special military vehicle and in a one-day-course receive a license.

Nachshon found this offer very prestigious and got a ride with a friend to take the course up north. He left us late Saturday night and told us he would be back home the following night.

Nachshon did not come home on Sunday night. When by midnight Nachshon did not call or arrive home, I feared the worst.

We notified the military authorities, we traced his movements, we spoke to his army friends. On Monday we sent search parties to the area where he had last been seen -- at this point the army was still unconcerned and more or less making inquiries at hotels and resorts in Eilat to see if he had just taken off.

The fact that I told them that such a thing was simply out of the question in my family just seemed to amuse them as the attitude of a typical Jewish mother. To me, on Monday, my child was dead.

On Tuesday, we were contacted by Israeli Television, who told us that they had received a video tape from a Reuters photographer showing my son being held hostage by Hamas terrorists. On that video tape, Nachshon was seen, bound hand and foot, with a terrorist whose face was covered with a kaffiya, holding up Nachshon's identity card. The terrorist recited his home address, identity number, and then Nachshon spoke at gunpoint. He said that he had been kidnapped by the Hamas, who were demanding the release of their spiritual leader, Achmed Yassin, from an Israeli prison, as well as the release of 200 other imprisoned Hamas terrorists. If these demands were not met, he would be executed on Friday at 8:00 PM.

...We appealed to world leaders everywhere and to Moslem religious leaders, all of whom stated unequivocally on the media that they must not harm our son.

And we appealed to our brethren -- to the Jewish people throughout the world -- and asked them to pray for our son. The Chief Rabbi of Israel delegated three chapters of Psalms to be said every day, and people everywhere, including schoolchildren who had never prayed before, did so for the sake of one precious Jewish soul.

I asked women throughout the world to light an extra Sabbath candle for my son. From about 30,000 letters that poured into our home, I learned of thousands of women who had never lit Sabbath candles, who did so for the sake of our son -- who had become a symbol of everyone's son, brother, friend.

At the Western Wall 100,000 people arrived, with almost no notice -- Chassidim in black frock coats and long side curls swayed and prayed and cried, side by side with young boys in torn jeans and ponytails and earrings. There was total unity and solidarity of purpose among us -- religious and secular, left wing and right wing, Sephardi and Ashkenazi, old and young, rich and poor -- an occurrence unprecedented in our sadly fragmented society.

On Friday night we ushered in the Sabbath, and I spoke to my son on the media and begged him to be strong, for all our people were with him. We sat rooted to our Sabbath table; my eyes were glued to the door, expecting Nachshon to walk in at any moment.

...We were not aware that they had discovered from their informant that Nachshon was being held in a village called Bir Nabbalah, under Israeli rule, located about 10 minutes from our home in Ramot. We were not aware that Prime Minister Rabin had made a decision to launch a military action to attempt to rescue our son.

At the hour of the ultimatum, 8:00 PM Friday night, General Yoram Yair, not Nachshon, walked through our door and brought us the terrible news. The military rescue attempt had failed -- Nachshon had been killed and so had the commander of the rescue team, Captain Nir Poraz.

On Saturday night at midnight we buried our son. That same microcosm of our people came to Mount Herzl at midnight Saturday night to attend Nachshon's funeral.

My husband asked Nachshon's Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Mordechai Elon, who gave the eulogy, to please tell all our people that God did listen to our prayers and that He collected all our tears. My husband's greatest concern when burying his son was that there would be a crisis in faith. And so he asked Rabbi Elon to tell everyone that just as father would always like to say "yes" to all of his children's requests, but sometimes he had to say "no" though the child might not understand why, so our Father in Heaven heard our prayers, and though we don't understand why, His answer was "no."

...After the Shiva, we all returned to our routines. Our son who had just gotten out of the army attended the Hebrew University, another went back to the army, two others returned to yeshiva, and the two youngest, twins who had just turned eight on the day of the funeral, went back to school.

For that is what the Jewish people have always done -- rebuilt after destruction, began new lives from the ashes and blood of the old.

...I was in my own country, my own homeland; my son died wearing his country's uniform, and, God willing, my other sons will serve their country proudly as well.

For, among my people I dwell, and that for me is still a privilege and a blessing. My three-fold love of my people, my land, and my Torah has never wavered.



Connecting Item 6: Uri Grossman

David Grossman is one of Israel's leading authors. Like Amos Oz and A.B. Yehoshua, he fully supported the Second Lebanon War of 2006. In the last week of the war, however, as the cease fire was being negotiated, the three authors urged Israel to pull the soldiers out from Lebanon, rather than risk more lives. Poignantly and tragically Uri, David's middle child, died along with 34 other soldiers the last weekend of the war. This is the eulogy David gave for his son at the funeral, translated from the Hebrew. One of Grossman's most widely-read novels is entitled, "Someone to Run With."

You Were My Someone to Run With Eulogy delivered by David Grossman for his son Uri Grossman z"l Mt. Herzl, 15 August, 2006



At twenty to three on Saturday night, there was a ring at our door. Over the intercom, they announced themselves as army officers. We had already been through three days when almost every thought that entered our minds began with a negative. He won't come. We won't speak. We won't laugh. There will be no more of that boy with the ironic grin and the crazy sense of humor. No more of that young man with wisdom beyond his years. No more warm smile and no more healthy appetite. No more rare combination of determination and delicateness, no more shrewd common sense and wise-heartedness. No more the infinite gentleness of Uri, and no more silence in which he could calm the stormy atmosphere. No more watching The Simpsons and Seinfeld together, and no more listening to Johnny Cash. No more of your strong hugs, and no more seeing you walking with [your brother] Yonatan, gesticulating wildly as you speak. No more hugs for your beloved [sister] Ruti. No more. No.

Uri, my love, throughout all your short life, we have all learned from you. We learned from your strength and your determination to go about things your own way. To follow your own path even if there was no chance that you'd succeed. We observed in astonishment as you fought to be accepted to a tank officers' course. You were not prepared to be satisfied with giving any less than you knew you were capable of giving. And when you succeeded, I thought, here is someone who knows his abilities so simply and so soberly. Someone with no pretenses and no pride. Who is not influenced by what others say to him. Someone whose source of strength is lodged firmly within himself...

Uri, you were the Left-winger in your regiment, and everyone respected you because you held fast to your word without ever abdicating a single military responsibility. When you left for Lebanon, Ima said that the one thing she was most afraid of was your "Elifelet Syndrome" [reference to poem by Natan Alterman]. We were worried that like Elifelet of the poem, if someone were needed to run and save a wounded soldier, you

would not hesitate to run directly through the line of fire; and you would be the first to volunteer to restock the supply of ammunition when it ran low. And that, just as you were all your life, at home and at school and in your army service, and just as you always volunteered to give up your furloughs because there was someone else who needed a break more than you did or because someone else's situation was more difficult --- in just this way, would you fall in Lebanon, facing a difficult battle.

Uri, you were a person who was at one with himself, a person whom it was good to be around. I can't begin to express just how much you were, for me, someone to run with. During every visit home you would say to me, "Abba, let's go talk," and we would go together, usually to a restaurant, and sit and talk. You would tell me so much, Uri, and I felt so proud that I had the merit of serving as your confidante. That someone like you chose to confide in me.

You lit up our lives, Uri. Ima and I raised you with love. There was simply so much to love in you. I know that your short life was good. I hope that I was a fitting father for a son like you. But I know that to be the son of your mother meant to grow up surrounded by infinite generosity and loving-kindness and love. You received all of this in plenitude, and you knew how to appreciate it, and you knew how to be grateful, and nothing that you received was ever taken for granted...

Uri was very much an Israeli child – even his name is very Israeli. He was the essence of Israel as I would like to see it. That essence which is almost forgotten now. That which is sometimes regarded as a curiosity these days. What's more, Uri was principled. That word, principled, so often derided in our times, because in our crazy, cruel, and cynical world, it isn't "cool" to be principled, to be a humanist, or to be empathic towards the other -- especially if the other is your enemy on the battlefield. But I learned from Uri that it is possible to be both principled and cool. We need to be accountable for our own souls. We have to both defend ourselves and uphold ourselves. We have to uphold ourselves against brute force, against the destructiveness of cynicism, and against the constricting scorn that is the greatest curse of everyone who lives in a disaster area such as ours.

Uri had the courage to be himself all the time and in every situation. He had the courage to find his voice in everything he said and did; this is what saved him from contamination, corruption and diminution of the soul.

In the night between the Sabbath and Sunday morning, at twenty to three, there was a ring at our door. Over the intercom, they announced themselves as army officers, and I went to open the door, and I thought – that's it. Our lives are over. But five hours later, when Michal and I went into Ruti's room and woke her in order to break the terrible news to her, Ruti, after her first cry, said, "But we will still go on living, right? We'll still go hiking like before, and I want to keep singing in the choir, and I want to keep laughing

as always, and I want to learn to play the guitar." And we hugged her and told her that yes, we'd still go on living.

We will take our strength from Uri. He had the strength to carry us forward for many years. He radiated a sense of life, of warmth, and of love. The light of that radiance will continue to shine for us, even if the star itself has been extinguished. Uri our love, it was a great honor for us to live with you. Thank you for every moment that you were ours.

Love – Abba, Ima, Yonatan, and Ruti