



TOWARDS MEANINGFUL SHABBOS

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Divrei Chizuk

Heroic Faith

The Shabbos I experienced two weeks ago is one I will never forget. My neighbors, Rav Achiya and Idit Eliyahu, were in the middle of sitting shiva for their 19 year old son Ariel H"yd. Ariel had been stationed at the border near Kibbutz Beeri from before Simchat Torah, and he and the soldiers in his tank were the first line of defense when hundreds of terrorists broke through the fence. They managed to kill off many of them but after five hours of fighting, Ariel was eventually killed.

The Eliyahus decided that the Shabbos in the middle of their mourning was going to be a Shabbos of chizuk. Ariel's fellow students from Yeshivat Yerucham had been planning a class reunion for that Shabbos and once they found out that their dear friend had been killed, they decided to move their Shabbaton to our Yishuv in order to be *mechazeik* themselves and the Eliyahu family. The family asked everyone to join them at shul for a beautiful Carlebach Kabbalat Shabat *l'iluy nishmat* their son. When I arrived at shul, I saw a scene I'd never seen there before. The men's side was completely packed with its regular congregants, Ariel's yeshiva friends, and the students from the local yeshiva who came to join as well. But what shocked me the most was the women's section. The

same women's section which typically gets 5-10 women on a regular Friday night, was full beyond capacity. Women, girls, and teenagers of all stripes, many of whom I had never seen in shul before, streamed into shul. Smack in the middle of it all was Idit Eliyahu, with a huge smile on her face as she sang the words of *קבלת שבת*. The emotions that filled the room were palpable – a mixture of sadness, fear, hope, and unity. The words of *Lecha Dodi* suddenly took on new meaning:

קומי צאי מתוך ההפכה... רב לך שבת העמק
הבכה... התנערי מעפר קומי... התעוררי התעוררי כי
בא אורך... לא תבושי ולא תכלמי... ובנתה העיר על
תילה... והיו למשיסה שאסין ורחקו כל מבעליך

Arise, go out from amidst the turmoil... in the valley of tears too long you have dwelt... Arise, now, shake off the dust... Wake up, wake up, your light has come.... Be not ashamed, nor confounded... The city will be rebuilt on its former mound... Your plunderers will be plundered and those who swallow you will be distanced...

In the midst of tragedy, Shabbos was giving us all that chizuk and that we so badly needed.

The next morning, I brought my younger daughters to תפילת ילדים. We go to תפילת ילדים on a weekly basis, but this week was not like every week. Idit had initiated this

program around five years ago and she runs it on a weekly basis. At the shiva on Friday, Idit had said to me – “Tomorrow we are going to all go to תפילת ילדים, and we’re not going to cry. We are going to sing and daven with the children, with smiles on our faces.” And so it was, Idit was there front and center. In the middle of mourning for her own child, she was there to encourage and inspire the rest of our children. Throughout the Tefilla, my mind just kept flashbacking back to the week before, Shabbat Simchat Torah. We had all just heard the news that something terrible was happening, though we didn’t really know what. It was time for תפילת ילדים and Idit took the children into the Sukkah and davened with the kids, and explained to them on a pre-school level what was going on. Little did she realize that as she was being mechazeik the children, her own son was at the battlefield, fighting a deadly battle. And yet, here she was the next week, in the same place, doing the same thing, with a gaping hole in her heart, but yet she continued on. She told the children about her brave son Ariel and how much he loved children and was so happy that his mother was running Tefillat Yeladim, and how proud she was of him for protecting Am Yisrael. She sang with the children תפילה לשלום המדינה encouraging them to daven for the chayalim to come home safely and had them sing יבנה המקדש over and over again. I had to wipe away the tears from my eyes many times over, because after all, Idit had requested that there be no tears. And I put on a smile because this is עם ישראל - We grieve and we mourn, but in the midst of the sorrow, we have hope, we rise up, and we continue on.

■ עם ישראל חי!

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