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**SPECIAL GUEST DVAR TORAH
FOR YOM HAZIKARON**

Fighting for Kedusha with Kedusha

I love how the Torah “speaks” to us. You can practically “hear” Hashem talk to us today through His Torah. This year, Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut are in between particularly lofty parshiot: Kedoshim and Emor. Hashem tells Moshe to speak to the entire assembly of Bnei Yisrael and commands them “Be Holy” כי קדוש אני and Emor’s opening command to the Kohanim to maintain even higher standards of holiness and loftiness: לנפש לא יטמא בעמיו.

You see, for months I have been comparing our soldiers to Kohanim.

In Parshat Tetzaveh, we learned about the בגדי כהונה - their uniform -and all the details, perfection and significance of each finishing of clothing. Then in Parshat Shmini- words that hit very close to home and almost reliving our loss- when Ahrons’s sons Nadav and Avihu were consumed by fire. Moshe relays Hashem’s words: בקרובי אקדש “I will be sanctified through those who are nearest Me”. The loudest silence. A space. No words. Then immediately, Moshe instructs Aharon and his remaining sons: do not show any signs of mourning. Continue in your mission of service.



Five years ago, at the age of 16, Binyamin made a list of 55 things he wanted. One of them was to be a Kohen. Seems so peculiar since we are not a family of kohanim. I’m not sure what he meant by this as I only found this list in a drawer in his bedroom after he was killed. To stay separate and ritually pure? To be selfless in G-dly service? To be the intermediary between the people and G-d? All possibilities. Ultimately, however, to be a kohen is to live to die for Hashem (for more, see Rashi 22:32. ת”ל ונקדשתי).

Rav Noach Weinberg zt”l said “it’s easier to die once for Gd then it is to live every day for him”. The way Binyamin died on Nov 18th in Gaza was a continuation of how he lived. Constant קדושת עם ישראל וארץ for מסירות נפש ישראל.

These are our soldiers. Our holy Tzahal. They are fighting day and night, risking their lives solely out of complete מסירות נפש. They are Hashem’s servants doing their job to

protect His land and His people. They are not thinking about themselves. They don't care about how heavy their equipment is or how tired their body might be. They cannot mourn for their friends and loved ones when they want. They must march on and continue their job. They are משרתי ה', real kohamin.

During this war, our soldiers have witnessed and recognized פרטית פרטית. They have been stripped of caring solely for themselves and for materialism. Our Tzahal live and breathe unity and kedusha.

They are our role models.

Every year, I'm a basket case on Yom HaZikaron. As a family, we spend the day learning about different soldiers, crying for the loss and devastation. Broken for all the spilled blood our Holy Land has absorbed in order for us to live as בארצנו עם. Devastated for the incomplete families who sacrificed their loved ones against their wills.

The magnitude is too great to bear.

This year will be different as our loss has unfortunately become personal. Every day for the last six months has been Yom HaZikaron for our family. So we have a different plan of how our family will observe Yom HaZikaron תשפד. The Airleys plan to go plant and build in the Shomron, a place Binyamin spent

years protecting our אדמת קודש even before he was a Paratrooper. We will go continue what Binyamin started.

Binyamin loved our Land with every cell in his body and only wanted to see it flourish.

He planted a vineyard erev Sukkot and we hope to go plant more.

הזורעים בדמעה ברינה יקצורו.

We will continue to plant and build- physically, spiritually, mentally and emotionally- until the time will come to reap all that has been sown ממש בקרוב, with the greeting of Mashiach, the ultimate Building, the בית of all our loved ones. ■

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