



REPAIRING A DEVASTATED HOME

A WONDERFUL FRIEND OF Bridges for Peace, Rabbi Yehuda Glick, and his wife Hadass lead an organization called *Amitsim* (Courageous). This amazing group works to support and bring restoration into homes that have suffered trauma due to the loss of a parent and a spouse. In partnership with Bridges for Peace, *Amitsim* ministers to children and surviving spouses with love, support and physical gifts, providing them with a space to heal.

The death of a parent forges two new identities: a widow/widower and orphans. Contrary to the Western mindset where an orphan is thought to be a child who has lost both parents, the biblical and Jewish perspectives see an orphan as a child who has lost at least one parent. The reason for this is that it takes two parents to form a complete home. The father and mother lean upon each other—like two supporting pillars—to bring stability, safety, provision, love, care, peace of mind and spiritual nourishment to their children and marriage. When one parent dies, the entire concept of the home is devastated and thus collapses. Security is compromised or vanishes altogether, which leaves the children and grieving spouse feeling vulnerable and exposed.

In the wake of the October 7, 2023 Hamas massacre on Israel's southern communities, hundreds of Israeli families experienced a level of devastation that nobody should live through. Over 1,200 people were murdered. Some were shot. Others, sometimes entire families, were burned alive. Many more were kidnapped. Within hours, horror had become reality.

On November 2, 2023, Bridges for Peace leaders drove to a Dead Sea hotel to visit the survivors of Kibbutz Be'eri, one of the epicenters of the attack. A staggering 10% of Be'eri's inhabitants were massacred—men, women, children and babies. For the roughly thousand survivors living in a hotel turned refugee center, community had been completely destroyed.



Bridges for Peace visiting survivors from Kibbutz Be'eri

We met one survivor, a mother, who had hidden with her family in their home's bomb shelter as thousands of Hamas rockets rained down on Israel. Once the terrorists showed up in the community, the terrified family started hearing the unmistakable sound of gunfire. The father quickly leapt into action. He took hold of the bomb shelter's door handle while Hamas terrorists tried to force open the door from the outside. For twenty minutes, the battle over the bomb shelter door continued as the desperate father fought to protect his family. Finally, the frustrated terrorists fired their automatic weapons at the door, mortally wounding the father. The mother grabbed her dying husband's handgun, and instinctively shot back through the door, which caused the terrorists to retreat.

The family was not out of danger though. Soon, smoke began to fill the shelter and it became obvious that the terrorists sought to burn them alive. In a desperate attempt to save her three children, the mother let go of the tourniquet that was keeping her husband's lifeblood from pouring out and opened a small window for them to take a few breaths. The mother and her children survived, but her husband bled to death. This courageous woman is now a widow and her children orphans.

On November 27, Bridges for Peace leaders visited the main dispatch center for Magen David Adom (MDA), Israel's emergency response service. We toured the center and heard about their incredible lifesaving aid. We learned about their ambulance fleet, medi-cycles and response times. We were also able to ask first responders questions and learn how they operate.

Then we discussed the October 7 attack. Hearing their painful and heroic accounts, we were able to understand the events through their eyes. We inspected an ambulance that bore countless terrorist bullet holes and heard the stories of emergency responders who were murdered. Finally, we listened to a recording between an MDA dispatcher and 9-year-old Michael from Kfar Aza, who hid in a closet with his 6-year-old sister after terrorists murdered his parents in front of him and kidnapped his 3-year-old sister, Avigail.

Dispatcher: *What about your parents? Please, when you talk to me, whisper, so that I can understand, but don't speak loudly.*

Michael: *Okay...Mommy...At first, my dad went outside. He left the shelter and then a soldier [terrorist] came in and killed my mom inside the house. Then he [my dad] came to us, and I told him that mommy was dead. Then we ran to the shelter...They killed dad...Now it's only the two of us.*

Dispatcher: *So, so right now, so I...sorry for asking this... just now your father and mother were shot?*

Michael: Yes.

Can you imagine the bravery of this young boy? And the trauma he lived through on that terrible morning? Miraculously, his younger sister, Avigail, was released in one of the hostage deals and reunited with her siblings. But Michael and his sisters are now orphans.

Bridges for Peace ministers in a number of very sensitive areas. We see people in their most vulnerable state of grief. We sit



shiva (seven-day mourning period) with broken families and embrace them when they weep. We show them the love of God in their darkest hour and bring light into their lives by sharing the comforting and encouraging news that Christians around the world care and pray for them; that Christians stand with them and take action; that they are not alone. But we can't do that alone. We need your help. Will you please consider giving generously to our Widows and Orphans Fund to make a difference in the lives of these broken Israelis? Will you be a light in this dark hour? Let's unite to inject hope into these people's lives today!

With a heavy heart of gratitude,
 Rev. Peter Fast
 International CEO

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