

THE SCARS OF TRAUMA

"I AM A TRAINED PSYCHOLOGIST of twenty-five years, and I have no clue what to do." Yoav's hopeless words resounded painfully in the fraught atmosphere of Hotel David at Ein Bokek on the shores of the Dead Sea.

The hotel used to be a popular spot for family vacations and breakaways, but after hundreds of Hamas terrorists invaded Kibbutz Be'eri on October 7, 2023, murdering 132 men, women and children and kidnapping 32 residents, it became a refugee center for a thousand displaced Israelis from the community.

As I turned away from Yoav, my eye caught several women leading a group of toddlers across the foyer. The youngsters innocently held hands, their shouts of exuberance out of place amid the remnants of trauma. I shook my head, stunned by the fact that every one of these children had been a target of Hamas's blood-stained agenda. It was a miracle they had survived.

I had spent the day listening to the stories of shocked survivors, gaining a glimpse of the trauma care that had been set up to help those who survived the massacre at Kibbutz Be'eri face the future. Art therapy, massage counseling and other activities were available to begin the crucial healing each one required.

Months later, I found myself at the Resilience Center in Sderot, where I was introduced to a young soldier named Elior. I learned that Elior and his security detail had fought Hamas terrorists for 24 hours without pause. Elior and his men saved the community of Zikim but they witnessed the carnage of murdered civilians during that desperate battle with the terrorists. Elior stated plainly, "I suffer from PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). I try to live with it. I come here because it's good to talk about things."

Next, I was introduced to Moshe, a rabbi and child psychologist. He told me that when he looks into the eyes of a child who survived the horror of October 7, all he sees is a black hole. "I want to weep," he admitted.

Finally, I met the mother of Amit Mann. Amit was a young nurse who had volunteered with Magen David Adom (Israel's emergency service) at Kibbutz Be'eri. Amit was wounded during the Hamas attack on the community, yet still managed to make her way to the dental clinic where she set up triage treatment of the wounded. Amit's bravery and courage spoke volumes, as she continued to care for her bleeding patients until terrorists burst into the clinic and executed her in cold blood. Amit's mother played the last song her daughter had sung for her on that morning before all hell broke loose. Once the song was finished, she cried in my arms.

Incredible strength and resilience are part of Israel's DNA. Yet her citizens have endured decades of war and terror attacks, which began even before Israel's miraculous rebirth in 1948. As a result, layers of trauma permeate and scar their hearts.

In the aftermath of the October 7 Hamas invasion, when 3,000 terrorists surged out of Gaza and attacked the communities of southern Israel, slaughtering over 1,200 and wounding countless more, the nation has undergone a Herculean transformation. Israel has now fought its longest war with almost 900 soldiers falling in battle against evil forces, be they Hezbollah in Lebanon or Hamas in Gaza.

With the "ceasefire" deal, Israelis have had to grapple with the release of 2,000 terrorists from their prisons in exchange for



precious Israeli hostages, alive or dead. Israelis were forced to watch emaciated hostages paraded before crowds of jeering Gazans in twisted Hamas ceremonies. Imagine the paradox of being sickened by the sight and at the same time, overjoyed at seeing loved ones return.

For over 500 days, Israel—along with millions around the world—had prayed and hoped that somehow, the Bibas babies (Ariel and Kfir) and their mother, Shiri, would be returned to their father and husband, Yarden, who had recently been released.

Yet tears flowed at the sight of the black coffins that held their remains. Rage swelled as their murderers handed them over to the Red Cross, only to discover that the casket contained the body of an unidentified Gazan woman instead of Shiri. Outrage and desperation soared as questions of “Where is Shiri?” flooded every Israeli mind. Within 24 hours, the cruel, psychological stunt came to a close as Shiri’s body was returned to Israel and her identity confirmed.

The Jewish people are not strangers to trauma. The Holocaust (1939–1945), when Nazi Germany and her collaborators murdered over six million Jews, was one of the latest episodes of suffering. Hamas’s attack on October 7, along with the determination of Iran and her other proxies to annihilate the one and only Jewish state, has reawakened the age-old trauma. Fear is growing among Jews worldwide as antisemitism has spiked. Despite outspoken support and prayer from millions of Christians internationally, the pain is raw.

The volunteers and staff of Bridges for Peace live in Israel and share in the pain and joy Israelis experience. Israel is not alone! Our actions speak louder than words. We have purchased bomb shelters and ambulances and have provided thousands of bags of food and clothing to those in need. We have made donations towards trauma care, including a mobile van dedicated in memory of Amit Mann, to carry trained therapists to reach needy Israelis. Our work in Israel has reached new heights. God has opened miraculous new relationships as we journey the difficult road of war, missile attacks and logistical challenges alongside Israel.

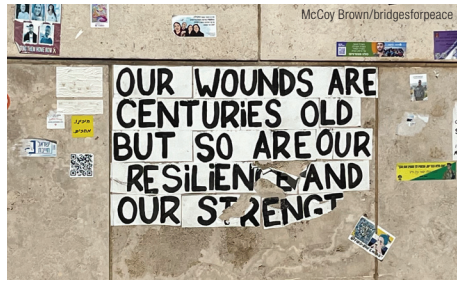
The people of Israel live because the God of Israel is sovereign and on the throne. Yet the icy finger of trauma has touched every

Jewish person, some more than others. Despair and sorrow are evident. As an organization, we are pivoting to meet the need of trauma care and shine the love of God into afflicted hearts as we live out the reality of Christian love at a level never seen before.

Please join us in expressing Christlike love as we serve the people of Israel and see the scars of trauma restored and healed by donating to our **Crisis Assistance Fund**.

With joy and shalom,
Rev. Peter Fast
International CEO

“Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me.”
Isaiah 49:16



BRIDGES FOR PEACE Your Israel Connection...

Crisis Assistance Fund

US \$50 US \$100 US \$200 US \$500 US \$1,000 US \$ _____ (Other)

- GREATEST MINISTRY NEED US \$ _____
- GREATEST ISRAELI NEED US \$ _____
- INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIC PROJECTS FUND
US \$ _____
- FOOD PROJECT US \$ _____
- ADOPTION PROGRAM (one-year commitment)
_____ US \$65/month
- FEED A CHILD (one-year commitment)
_____ US \$65/month
_____ US \$ one-time gift
- PROJECT RESCUE _____ US \$400 (or any size gift)
- EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY FUND
US \$ _____
- ADOPT AN ISRAELI TOWN (one-year commitment)
_____ Minimum US \$150/month
- PROJECT TIKVAH (HOPE) _____ US \$45 (or any size gift)
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- INTERNATIONAL HQ FUND US \$ _____
- HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS US \$ _____

- IMMIGRANT WELCOME GIFTS US \$ _____
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- VOLUNTEER SUPPORT US \$ _____
- VEHICLE FUND US \$ _____
- SAVE AN ISRAELI LIFE US \$ _____

I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A MONTHLY COMMITMENT TO _____ PROJECT

OF US \$ _____

TOTAL \$ _____

Enclose amount in US dollars or your currency equivalent. Indicate your currency symbol.

Payment Options

- Check:** Make checks payable to Bridges for Peace. US and Canadian gifts are tax-deductible.
- PayPal:** Go to www.bridgesforpeace.com, and click on "Donate>Bless Israel."
- VISA** **MasterCard** **Discover** **AMEX**

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- I will pray for Israel and the Jewish people.
- I also need your prayers and have attached my prayer request.
- I have placed Bridges for Peace in my will to bless future generations.
- Please send me information on your Bridges for Peace travel programs.
- Please send your publications to my friend(s), whose name(s) and address(es) are attached.
- By filling in this contact form I give permission to receive communication from Bridges for Peace International and my national office.