Kibbutz Manara - Rabbi Gibbs

Kibbutz Manara sits in the Upper Galilee, high above the Hula Valley, overlooking Mount Hermon and the Golan Heights.

It was established in 1943, and for generations, it has been home to a small community of about 300 people.

But Manara is also one of the most exposed civilian communities in the region.

Some of its homes are just a few hundred metres from the Lebanese border. When there is incoming fire, residents can have only seconds to reach a shelter.

During the war, the community was evacuated.

Homes were damaged. Lives were disrupted. And the question became not only how to rebuild the buildings—but how to rebuild a sense of home.
As part of our emergency campaign, each kibbutz received an individual grant to support its recovery.

Manara chose something beautifully simple: a community garden.
Not a shelter. Not a wall. Not another piece of infrastructure. A garden.

Because when a community has been forced away from home, rebuilding means creating places where people can once again gather. Places where children can play, neighbours can meet, and people can sit together without thinking first about what is happening beyond the fence.

The garden represents something larger than plants and pathways.

It represents the decision to invest in life.

To put down roots again.

To create beauty in a place that has known fear.

And sometimes, light is not something that arrives all at once.

Sometimes, it is something a community plants together—and patiently watches grow.

Kfar Blum - Ohad

That day, I woke up two times.

The first time I woke up around 7:00 a.m., to an overwhelming number of messages. I silenced my phone and went back to sleep. The second time was around 10:00 a.m., when I finally read all the messages and I began to realize that something terrible and very big was happening.

By 10:15, I was already at my grandparents' house with the rest of my family, asking my parents why they hadn't woken me up. We sat around the table, trying to understand what was happening across the country.

Around noon, my mother managed to make contact with our cousins in Kibbutz Re'im. It was a short message: "We've been in the security room since six. We hope it will end soon."

Little did they know what was happening in the house down the road.

To those who don't know me, I live in kibbutz Kfar Blum, which is just 6 km from the Lebanese border. At that time, in our kibbutz there was one rifle and maybe several privately owned guns.

6 km from the border and no army forces around? All I could think of was: what if Hezbollah opens an attack?

12:30 a.m., second message from our family in Kibbutz Reim: we heard gunshots, we are in the security room; the dog is barking like crazy. Will update you when we can!!

Soon after My mother was called by the head of security in our kibbutz asking her to come help reopen the command room of the kibbutz. My father and I went home, to think about the best way to lock all the doors of our house; we used wood we found in our garden to make a lock for our security door and wooden broom poles to block the sliding doors for locking the windows.

At 1:00 p.m., I went to help my mother clean everything up and get the command room operational again. We checked communication lines, maps, name lists, and equipment, and worked on reactivating the encrypted radio station, among other things.

During that time, my three younger sisters, who had been left with my grandparents, went home to start packing in case we had to evacuate.

That first night I could not fall asleep, it was mostly because we hadn't heard anything for our family in the south yet, but more so, it was also that my mother was at the command room, taking first shift out of many to come.

The next day moved slowly, we continued to help in whatever was needed: from bringing emergency supplies to the bomb shelters, making sure there are no holes in the perimeter fence and checking all the firefighting equipment. But it all felt like we were just trying to distract ourselves from the danger and that we still hadn't heard anything from our family.

4:00 p.m., I was with my mother in the command room, when we got the message we had been waiting for: We are out! Rescued and on our way to Eilat. We are all good, but can not say the same about all our friends.

Before I continue, I want to highlight something about the story of my family in Re’im. Theirs isn’t some incredible story of bravery or survival. Their story is a simple one, one that hundreds of other families share.

It started at around 6:00 a.m., when the first sirens started. Almost everyone thought it was another round of random bombing and that it would be over soon. But it didn’t. It went on and on, and soon the sound of gunfire started.

Not long after, the power went down. I can’t imagine how terrifying it was, being six people—two adults, three kids, and a baby—with the only source of light being the flashlight on your phone. The same phone that you have no way to charge, and still need to use to communicate.

And it doesn’t end there. Now add the sounds of gunshots and explosions constantly going off, hearing the screams of the neighbors down the street. They stayed in that bomb shelter, in that darkness, for 30 hours before being rescued.

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16 of October, 14 of the 22 Kibbutzim in the Upper Galilee that are less than 5 km away from the Lebanese border were evacuated. Kfar Blum was not and effectively becoming, within one night, the first line of defense in an escalating security situation.

That day people started to evacuate on their own resources, and by the end of the week, the population in the kibbutz dropped by 80%. But we stayed, because my parents are part of the emergency personnel we couldn't just leave. I stayed and lived in the kibbutz throughout the whole war, experiencing hundreds of sirens, days of lockdown, and more.

But not everything is so bleak; the kibbutz has received a lot of help, both during the war and now. Throughout the war the kibbutz has received huge sums of money, that was used to acquire 13 new portable bomb shelters. It helped us to start over and rebuild the buildings that were hit.
It took time, but since the war in the north ended, the kibbutz has started to recover, thanks in no small part to the hundreds of volunteers who came from across Israel and from Jewish communities abroad.
The money we received didn't come from nowhere it came from here!! It came from the partnership region!! And those donations have allowed us to be one of the first schools to fully reopen, it allowed us to regrow the fields that were burnt and, to fix our buildings that were damaged, and so much more.

So, thank you for listening to me and my family's story. Thank you so much for all that you have done for my home even if it was the smallest donation or helping hand.

Adi Vital-Kaploun - Rabbi Bregman

Adi was a humble, quiet, and intelligent young woman who grew up in Jerusalem and raised a family with her beloved Anani on Kibbutz Holit, along the Gaza border.

Adi was both Israeli and Canadian with a strong connection and fondness for her Canadian roots. She and Anani were also proud Israelis, passionate about the land of Israel. The couple named their children Negev and Eshel - Negev, named after the tranquil desert location of their kibbutz, and Eshel, named after a common desert tree. Adi expressed her love for the desert by pursuing her master's degree in solar energy and environmental physics, which she received with honours.

On the morning of October 7th, Adi was home alone with her two children as terrorists broke into her kibbutz. When she realized that her family was in grave danger, she called her partner Anani and asked him for instructions on how to use the weapon that was in their home, while warning him not to return home. Adi guarded her children in the safe room and reminded them how much she loved them. At the same time, she sent warning messages to her father, who had been visiting the kibbutz and was staying in a guest house nearby. In doing so, she saved his life.

When the terrorists broke into the safe room in her home, Adi managed to kill one of them. Unfortunately, she was outnumbered and shot on the spot in front of her two small children, who were then kidnapped by the terrorists and then taken towards Gaza along with another member of the kibbutz. The three were unexpectedly released on their way to Gaza and made their way back to the kibbutz, wounded and alone in the fields.

Adi was a quiet and wise leader who lived her whole life with humility. She died as a heroic fighter protecting her family.

May her memory be blessed.

Kiryat Shmona - Rabbi Labowitz

For the children and teenagers of Kiryat Shmona, the summer could have looked very different.

After months of disruption and uncertainty, they needed more than activities.
They needed somewhere to go.

Somewhere safe. Somewhere to laugh, make friends, learn something new, and simply be young.

Throughout the summer, Beit Vancouver became a central home for Kiryat Shmona's Youth Department, welcoming hundreds of children and teens.

There were weekly outings across the country, educational trips and workshops, and a two-week program for 150 younger students.

And then there was the Youth Compound at Park Hazahav.

Approximately 300 teenagers came together there for supervised evenings filled with workshops, performances, games, food, and social activities.

There was even stand-up comedy and music.

It might sound simple.

But after so much uncertainty, simple things can become incredibly meaningful.
A teenager laughing with friends.

A group singing together.

A young person discovering a new interest.

A place where you know someone is waiting for you.

The goal was not simply to keep young people busy.

It was to rebuild connection.

To strengthen belonging.

To give children and teenagers positive experiences they could share with one another, and to remind them that their community was still there.

This summer did not erase what they had experienced.

But it created something alongside it: moments of joy, friendship, and possibility.
And perhaps that is one of the clearest forms of light.

Not pretending that the darkness never happened.

But creating spaces where young people can laugh, grow, connect—and begin to imagine what comes next.

Ella S. - Rabbi Moskovitz

I am 14 years old. These are not things a child my age should see

I want to start my story on October 6th, when I invited 12 friends to my house for a barbecue. Everything was amazing. Trusting in my friends' abilities, I tasked them with preparing the meat, unaware they had no idea how to do this. So I reached out to my cousin, Amit, who is really good at this. I asked for his guidance, and he happily walked us through the meat preparation process. Little did I know, as I hung up the phone, that it would be the last conversation we would share before he was tragically abducted.

My family and I woke up on October 7th to the horrors of gunshots and people screaming in Arabic. My mother and I, my little brother and his friend who was staying with us overnight, entered the safe room to hide. As we got inside, we received a message that there was a suspicion of terrorist infiltration in the kibbutz. We then heard someone knocking on our front door aggressively. We did not open, we remained quiet, keeping the doors closed so that no one could figure out we were there.

“I got a call from my cousin Nir, who said that terrorists tried to break into their house. They couldn't get in so they burned their safe room”

We have a WhatsApp group for all the youth in the kibbutz, a hundred kids between the ages of 13 and 17. They started writing things there like “They broke into my house, they're inside, they're shouting in Arabic, they're shooting at us”. The situation soon deteriorated and kids started writing more horrific things like: “they shot my parents, they set fire to the house, we are dying, someone please help us”.

We felt helpless, I was in the same situation, we were all in the same boat. I was locked in the safe room with my family and I couldn't do anything to assist my friends who were pleading for help. Amidst this chaos, I got a call from my cousin Nir, who said that terrorists tried to break into their house. The terrorists couldn't get in so they burned their safe room.

Among all the messages in the youth group, I saw a message from Amit, my beloved cousin. He was at home with his mother and his two younger sisters. He said that there were terrorists inside his house, shooting at the house and doors, that they had already broken in, and that they were afraid for their lives. After that we lost contact with all four of them. At 2 pm, I was told that my grandmother was shot and my grandfather was wounded while they were hiding in their safe room.

“There was blood everywhere, you could see internal organs. Let me repeat this - I am 14 years old. These are not things a child my age, or any child, should see”

We were rescued by a special unit. They took us out and moved us to another house across the street, where we were with three other families. There were seven children aged 3-8, myself, and four other adults. We stayed there while soldiers surrounded the house.

Later we reached the dining hall in the kibbutz. There was blood everywhere, you could see internal organs. Let me repeat this - I am 14 years old. These are not things a child my age, or any child, should see. I am the eldest sister, my little brother is 8 years old, so I covered his eyes and we continued to walk.

Our home, our beautiful home in the kibbutz, our paradise, turned into hell. There was blood everywhere in the streets, I was in shock from the amounts of blood spilled there.

Mt. Hermon Centre - Rabbi Brown

In Northern Israel, close to the Lebanese border, there is a place called the Mevo'ot HaHermon Rehabilitation and Therapy Hub.

It is a place built around healing.

The Hub provides physical and mental rehabilitation for people living with disabilities, injured IDF soldiers, and survivors of trauma from communities across the Eastern Galilee.

But in August 2024, the place that was helping others heal was itself hit by a missile launched from Lebanon. The Hydrotherapy Center suffered severe damage and had to close.

And yet, even in a place marked by destruction, the story did not end there.

In April 2026, after extensive renovation, the Hydrotherapy Center reopened.

Today, it is once again filled with water, movement, therapy, and people working toward recovery. The renewed facility is state-of-the-art, with trauma-sensitive hydrotherapy and physical rehabilitation designed to meet the needs of a community that has experienced so much.

And our community in British Columbia is part of that story.

Through our emergency campaign, $218,603 was allocated toward equipment for the rehabilitation center.

That support is more than a contribution to a building.

It is an investment in recovery.

It means that someone who has been injured can take their first steps toward healing. It means that someone carrying the weight of trauma can enter a space designed to help them feel safe again.

Sometimes light looks like a grand gesture.

And sometimes, it looks like opening the doors of a therapy center again—and making sure that the people who need it can walk through them.

Roey Biber - Itay

Imagine that tomorrow, someone asks you to describe someone you love.

You probably wouldn't start with the day they died. You'd talk about the way they laughed, the things they cared about, the people they loved, the memories they left behind, the dreams they had for their future.

You would describe a person.

Not a soldier. Not a number. Not a name on a memorial.

A person.

I never met Roey Biber. I never heard his voice. I never sat next to him in a classroom. I never played with him, laughed with him, or called him a friend.

But there is something that connects us.

We grew up in the same place.

Tzur Moshe.

And when I learned more about Roey's life, I started noticing something that felt almost surreal. We weren't just from the same small community. We were part of the same youth movement, Bnei HaMoshavim. We grew up surrounded by the same kind of community, the same fields, the same streets, and the same sense that the people around you are more than just neighbors.

In a way, our lives seem to run on parallel paths, just years apart. He grew up in Tzur Moshe, became involved in Bnei HaMoshavim, became a counselor, served his country, and then began building a life of his own. And years later, I followed some of those same paths. I grew up in that same community. I was part of that same movement. I walked through the same place he once called home.

Our paths never actually crossed. But when I look at his story, I can't help but see pieces of a life that feels strangely familiar.

And now, thousands of kilometers away from that place, here in Vancouver, I'm standing in front of you telling his story.

So today, I don't want to tell you about how Roey died.

Il want to tell you about how he lived.

So, who was Roey Biber?

spent most of his childhood in Tzur Moshe.

He was involved in Bnei HaMoshavim, first as a participant and later as a counselor and coordinator.

He was an outstanding student, served as the chair of his school's student council, and was known for being charismatic, funny, empathetic, and full of life.

He loved sports, especially basketball. He followed the NBA, supported Hapoel Tel Aviv, loved hiking, reading, music and movies.

And people who knew him remember something else.

His smile.

A huge smile.

The kind of smile that made people feel comfortable around him.

Roey once called Tzur Moshe “the biggest moshav in Israel.” I think that tells us something about him. Because for Roey, Tzur Moshe wasn't just a place on a map.

It was home.

After high school, Roey chose to spend a year doing pre-army service in southern Israel.

Then, in 2014, he joined the IDF.

He served in the elite Yahalom unit of the Combat Engineering Corps, completed officers' training with distinction, and became a commander.

After five years of military service, he was discharged.

And then he started building the next chapter of his life.

He studied mechanical engineering at Ben-Gurion University.

He lived with his partner, Maya.

He had friends.

IHe had family.

He had plans.

He had a future.

And then came October 7th.

Like so many Israelis, Roey's life changed that morning.

He was called back to reserve duty.

He immediately reported to his unit.

The person who had spent years training to protect others was now being asked to do exactly that.

For the following weeks, Roey served as a commander, leading soldiers in the war that followed October 7th.

And on November 18th, 2023, Roey fell in combat in northern Gaza.

He was 28 years old. Twenty-eight.

A son.

A brother.

A partner.

A friend.

A commander.

A student.

A person who had so much more life ahead of him.

And this is the part of his story that I find hardest to think about.

Because when we talk about people who died on October 7th and in the war that followed, sometimes we hear numbers so large that they become impossible to understand.

But every number was a person.

Every person had a favorite place.

A favorite song.

A best friend.

A family.

A joke they always told.

A food they loved. Roey's was something incredibly simple. Apple pie.

Roey apparently didn't like cake very much.

But there was one cake he would never say no to: his mother Karen's apple pie.

And I think there is something incredibly powerful about that.

Because after everything, the uniform, the rank, the military service, the war, one of the things his family remembers most is something as ordinary as a homemade apple pie.

And in Tzur Moshe, his family continues to share that recipe on Yom HaZikaron.

So every year, when people gather to remember Roey, they can also taste something that he loved.

A recipe becomes a memory.

A memory becomes a story.

And a story keeps a person alive in the people who remember them.

That is why I wanted to tell you about Roey today.

Not because I knew him.

I didn't.

But because I knew the place he called home.

And now, after standing here and telling you his story, you know a little bit about him too.

You know that he was more than a soldier.

More than a photograph.

More than a name.

He was a kid from Tzur Moshe who loved basketball.

A counselor who cared about the people around him.

A student who was building a future.

A commander who returned when his country needed him.

A son whose family still remembers the little things.

And a person who should still be here.

Thousands of kilometers away from Tzur Moshe, here in Vancouver, we cannot bring Roey back.

But we can do something.

We can remember him.

We can say his name.

We can tell his story.

And we can remember not only how his story ended, but everything that came before it.

Because Roey Biber was a person before he was a soldier.

And today, we remember the person.
Roey Biber.

May his memory be a blessing.

Hadar Miriam Cohen - Yahel

When we remember someone we have lost, we remember more than the day they were taken from us. We remember their life, the people they loved, and the things that made them who they were.

Today, I want to tell you about Hadar Miriam Cohen, and about the way I remember her.

Hadar Miriam Cohen was born on December 2, 2004, in the moshav of Zetan, to her parents, Ilanit and Yigal Cohen. She grew up there with her family and three older brothers.

I knew Hadar through the Scouts, in Shevet Masuot in my hometown, Yehud. When I was in eighth grade, she was in twelfth grade. I didn't have the chance to know her personally, but I remember seeing her around the tribe — always smiling, happy, and surrounded by people. Even though we didn't know each other, I still remember her presence and the impression she left on me.

Sometimes I wish we had had the chance to know each other better, because I would have loved to learn more about the person she was.

After finishing high school, Hadar began her military service in the Israel Defense Forces. She served as an observation soldier in the Gaza Division, a role that required responsibility, focus, and awareness of everything happening around her.

On October 7th, Hadar was serving at the Nahal Oz military base. When the attacks began that morning, the base was under heavy attacked by Hamas terrorists.

During those terrifying moments, Hadar was not only thinking about herself. She stayed in contact with her family, trying to reassure them and let them know that she was okay. At the same time, inside the bomb shelters she was also trying to calm the other soldiers around her. Even while she was facing an unimaginable situation herself, she continued to speak to the people around her, comfort them, and help them stay calm.

Hadar was killed on October 7th, 2023, at Nahal Oz. She was only 19 years old.

Four months before that day, during her military service, Hadar had written herself a letter for the difficult moments. She wrote: "Don't compare yourself to anyone. Never put yourself down... You will succeed. If not now, tomorrow."

She reminded herself to breathe, to speak to her family, and to believe in herself.

At the end of the letter, she wrote: "Good luck with everything. I believe in myself."

Reading those words today feels different. They were written by a young woman who was preparing herself for the difficult days of life, never knowing what was waiting for her just a few months later.

And there is another sentence that I think captures Hadar so well: "A good attitude and a smile." It was the way she chose to approach life and the way people remember her.

The song that was especially meaningful to her was "It Will Be Good" by Yasmin Moallem. Hadar wrote that the song always made her feel better and reminded her that even when things felt like they were falling apart, somehow, things would eventually be okay.

That was Hadar to me.

I hope that each of us can take something from her into our own lives — to believe in ourselves, to care for the people around us, and, just as Hadar wrote, always come with a good attitude and a smile