



RCA Representatives Visit Family of Dvir Sorek, 19 Year-Old Victim of Palestinian Terror

By Rabbi Reuven Tradburks, RCA Representative in Israel

I visited the shiva today, Tisha B'Av, of Dvir Sorek, Hy"d, in Ofra. Chaim Strauchler, Rav of Shaarei Shomayim in Toronto and RCA Vice President, joined me.

Dvir, 19, was murdered by terrorists last Thursday.

The family was sitting amidst a large crowd outside their home in Ofra. Ofra is a beautiful yishuv, an older yishuv that is now lush with the trees and vegetation planted years ago.

Dvir's mother was taking a break and making her way into their home, being hugged every step of the way. Her father was murdered by terrorists before Dvir was born. A father and a son murdered by terrorists.

Dvir's father, Yoav, was surrounded by people. The crowd made some room for the Rosh Yeshiva of Reishit Chochma of Yerushalayim when he arrived. He sat for just 2 minutes – a haredi looking man, black hat, black coat, amidst dati leumi style dress, of colourful head coverings for the woman, payos and large yarmulkes with sandals for the young people. Rav Zalman Melamed of Beit El arrived. The shared tragedy spans communities.

When the Rav left we had a chance to speak with Yoav, however briefly. Chaim Strauchler delivered a letter from the RCA, from Rabbis Dratch and Korobkin, expressing condolences on behalf of the rabbanim of the RCA.

I sat with Dvir's grandparents. I asked them to tell me about Dvir. His grandmother spoke. She asked, "Did you hear the story of the donkey?" We had, but she told it to another who hadn't. Dvir saw an Arab man walking with a sickly looking donkey. Dvir felt bad for the donkey – and for the man. He asked to buy it and bought it for 700 shekel, taking care of it and nursing it back to health.

His grandfather leaned in. "I said this at the levaya - You know the minhag - we start teaching children with sefer Vayikra, because let tahorim learn tahora." He choked back his tears and held my hand. "He was 19 but he was still a child, tahor. No, he was going into the army, yes, but he was still a pure little child."

The grandmother continued - he was smiley and always doing. He saw a section of the yishuv here that was bare. He decided it needed some flowers and plants and so he prepared the area and planted and took care of it. Only, there are no water pipes out to there. He had to carry water in containers to water it. Someone saw him doing it and told him that he had a big container that could hold a lot of water, so they could fill it and transport it. That was this week. I saw on the way here that someone did it - took the big tank and is continuing Dvir's work of watering that garden.

She continued - he did the same at the Yeshiva - too bare - so he planted and took care of the garden. And he has little brothers. When one would cry in the night, he would get up, change the diaper, calm him and put him back to sleep.

Someone shared that one of the boys in Yeshivat Machanaim said that on his first day in yeshiva, Dvir was the first to greet him, hug him, make sure he knew where to go and check on him later in the day to see that he was OK.

Dvir's father Yoav is a distinguished journalist in the Dati Leumi community. He was the founder and editor of the weekend supplement Mussaf of Mekor Rishon, the newspaper of note for the Dati Leumi community. Now he is the editor of HaShiloach, the Journal of Policy and Thought of the Herzl Institute.

He said that Dvir was his side kick. He would accompany him to conferences and speaking engagements. He was the child that was like a kind of follower - the child that stands at his father's side, taking in, learning, absorbing.

I asked the grandfather where he was from. Hungary. Came to Israel in 1947. A survivor. And the grandmother too, from Hungary. But they met here in the north.

She leaned over to tell Yoav that we were here representing the rabbis of the RCA from North America. I know, he said. She was very appreciative.

I told her that it was obvious that the smiles that Yoav has and that Dvir had came from her. A positive, vibrant, happy face.

Chaim and I spoke on the way back about the "faces that smile." You know the kind that, if you didn't know the father Yoav was sitting shiva, you would think he is enjoying a social moment with friends. The grandmother too - expressing her grief but with a face that smiles. Racheli Frankel has that, as does Rabbanit Chana Henkin - just can't remove the smile, it's just natural. That is a special blessing, albeit a bit incongruous in that setting.

Chaim also pointed out that in the Kinot, the paytanim describe loss - mikdash, cohanim, Yerushalayim; why did this happen? look what happened and how could it be so? But the paytan never speaks of the world that could have been. What would have

been? What would Dvir have been? What would he have created after moving beyond gardens?

And all the other tragedies, of lives lost too young. The ten lost tribes – what would we have been had they returned. And Beitar – the loss of, what some say was 75% or more of the Jewish world. And in our time, what would our Jewish world be had those 6 million continued their lives and their myriad contributions? Look at what we are – what more could we be?

A Tisha B'Av shiva visit to a boy bursting with life and joy, comforting a family whose history is the history of our people, of death and pain and of planting and building.