



# Yom HaZikaron. The Minute That Never Ends.

**“A Letter to My Boys”**

**By Brigitte Chaya Nussbächer**



*Kim reads the letter to her sons. Private Photo*

For sixty seconds, an entire nation comes to a standstill. But for the families of the fallen, this minute never ends. Behind every name lies a life, a love, a future abruptly cut short. On this evening in Jerusalem, national remembrance becomes a deeply personal story. At its heart: a moving letter from a mother to her sons - about loss, courage, and the strength of love to carry on.



April 20, 2026, evening. The foyer of the Museum of Tolerance in the heart of Jerusalem begins to fill. The IDFWO, together with bereaved families, has organized a memorial ceremony. In total, 25,648 fallen members of Israel's security forces and 5,313 civilian victims of terror attacks (including more than 780 children) since the founding of the state are being honored. This is the price Israel continues to pay for its independence.

Shlomi, the CEO, and David, Director of International Relations, welcome the distinguished guests. The families of the fallen arrive as well.



*With David Metzler, Yossi Cohen (President of the IDFWO and former Director of the Mossad), and Shlomi Nahumson. Photo: IDFWO*

In just a few minutes (at 8:00 p.m.), the siren will sound for the first time that day. Sixty endless seconds. Sixty fleeting seconds. A sound that tears at the soul yet fades so quickly.

In those seconds, what accompanies the families of the fallen every single day comes into sharp focus once more: the thought of those who gave their lives so that Israel may continue to exist. Those who fell defending the only Jewish state, the homeland of many



Holocaust survivors, a refuge for Jews who do not feel safe in the diaspora, and the home of millions whose families have been building this country for decades. For sixty seconds, an entire nation stands still, united in remembrance.

But for those gathered here today, those sixty seconds stretch on, becoming minutes, then hours, filled with the life stories of the fallen and the memories of those left behind.

For once the coffin, draped in the flag of Israel, is lowered into the ground; once the eulogies are spoken and the Kaddish recited, once the funeral ends and the days of shiva pass - the true weight begins to reveal itself. The consequences of this sacrifice and loss unfold over years. Over decades. Wives must build lives that were never meant to be lived alone. Children grow up without the parent who should have been there.

This evening does not only honor the fallen, it also offers a glimpse into the lives of the bereaved, lives that were so suddenly and irrevocably changed.



*With Kim Alush at the memorial ceremony. Private photo.*



We meet Kim Alush. She lost her husband, Daniel, on the night of September 10–11, 2024. She shows us photos: images he sent her shortly before his death: a breathtaking sunset. And she tells us about him.

“He was someone who loved the sea, the movement, the waves, life itself and in his youth spent much of his time on a surfboard along the coast of Tel Aviv.

After his military service, he set out on a long journey and later lived and worked in Canada. He studied business administration at the Interdisciplinary Center, took part in a student exchange program in Portugal, and met people from all over the world, from every walk of life. Daniel was never afraid to step beyond his comfort zone.

It was in Lisbon that he met Kim, who was running a marathon there. He joined her for the final kilometers. That is how their love story began.

During his military service, he chose to serve in Unit 669, the elite rescue unit deployed in the most difficult situations, when there seems to be no way out.”



*Daniel Alush. Photo: by Kim*



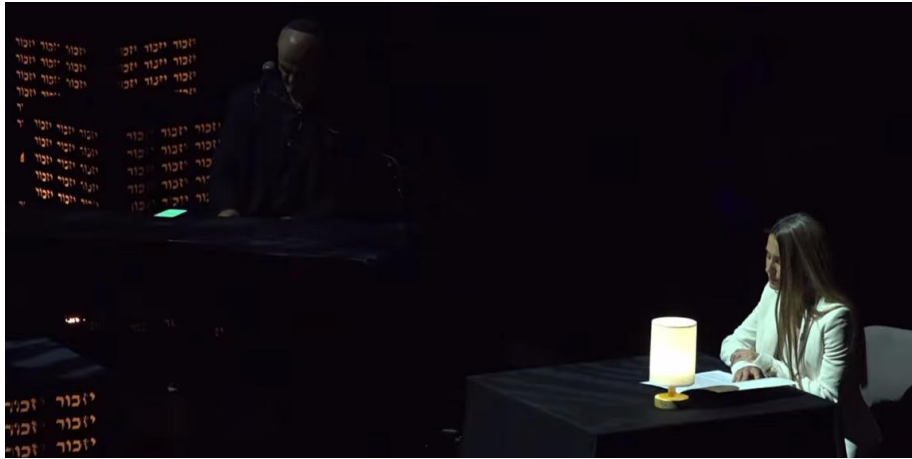
“For nearly twenty years, he served there: as a fighter, a commander, and a rescuer. He trained other soldiers and saved dozens of lives. His superiors and comrades said of him that he was one of those rare individuals who not only fit into the unit, but shaped it in his own image: professional, principled, modest, humble - and with a smile that never left him, even in the most difficult moments.

On the night of September 10–11, 2024, he set out in an “Owl” helicopter on a rescue mission in the Philadelphia–Rafah area of Gaza. The objective was clear: to save a wounded soldier. It was what Daniel had done time and again throughout his life, to be there when needed, to rescue wherever possible, and to leave no one behind.

The helicopter crashed, and Daniel did not return.

He left behind his parents, Kim, the love of his life and his two boys: Tommy, who already knows who his father was, and Niko, who one day will ask about him.”<sup>i</sup>

For these two boys, Kim wrote a letter, which she reads aloud this evening. She is dressed entirely in white, the color of mourning in Israel and appears infinitely delicate, fragile. In her eyes is a pain that lingers even when she smiles. And yet those eyes shine as she speaks about Daniel and shows us pictures of him with their two sons.



*Kim reads the letter to her boys. Private Photo*

As she sits on the darkened stage, a slender figure before a single lamp, surrounded by a sea of darkness, you can feel the weight resting on her shoulders. And she draws us into her thoughts.

## ***A Letter to My Boys***

*Boys, we're going through something that words can't fix. No one will actually tell you. You don't just lose daddy once. You lose him over and over and over again. A thousand times in a thousand different ways. Every day. Sometimes multiple times in a day. It's a continuous cycle, one you'll have to endure with each reminder of his absence.*

*For each moment that passes, you are growing further and closer to him all at once.*

*And it takes a lot of courage to look forward to the future when you wish you could just go back to yesterday.*

*It gets lonely and you're never really okay. But that's the reality of loss. It can't be fixed, only carried. Healing isn't about feeling good. It's about feeling everything and facing it anyway.*



*You don't stop, boys. It won't be pretty, but it has to be real. It'll be messy, quiet, lonely, numb. Some days you'll cry for reasons you can't even explain. Other days you'll feel nothing at all.*

*They say that grief in its simplest form is just love that has nowhere to go. The point isn't to get past it, but to be with it. To sit under the sun and let the tears fall. To let the love that's underneath the grief remind you why it hurts. Feelings don't have to be fixed. They need to be felt.*

*I need you to know that no matter what we have been through, every hardship, our biggest loss, every challenge, we got through it together. And I wouldn't trade a single step of it.*

*When I feel alone, like the walls are closing in, I remember you two are here with me. When I feel like I don't know what I'm doing, you two remind me that I make it look easy to you. When I feel that tug in my heart when we're apart, I know you feel it too. When I feel like I've achieved nothing, I look at your smiles and know your cup is pretty full.*

*When I feel like I don't know who I am anymore, as if I can't even look in the mirror, I know my face is the one you two look to when you achieve something and when you smile.*

*When I feel like the weight of it is heavy in my heart, I get to hug the two of you a little bit longer. There's never a single moment when you two aren't my reason for pushing forward.*

*I'm so aware that I'm not always perfect. I don't always have the right answers, and I don't always make the right choices. There are times when I fall short. I get tired. Tired of carrying what two people were supposed to carry...*



*Alone, but with a smile on my face. So you do too. Don't worry. I'm the provider, the protector, the comforter. And I wish you knew that my silence isn't anger, it's survival. I can't fall apart. Not ever. Because who will pick up the pieces if I do? No one's there to carry it with me.*

*And still I show up and raise you two stronger than I ever felt. The only arms waiting for me at the end of the day are your arms that I'm trying to stay strong for. I try to be the safety net, the rock, and the soft place to land. I try to be everything while still feeling I'm not doing enough.*

*But you two don't deserve a broken version of me. You deserve love that isn't heavy. Mommy refuses to be crushed by the weight I'm not meant to carry. I see the way you look at me with trust and hope, with that innocent belief that I could do anything.*

*I will fight back to get that version of myself you deserve. Not just by loving you, but by loving myself enough to be whole again.*

*I still have things I want to tell your daddy. Small things. Something that happened today, a joke he would have liked. And then I remember an ending that no one could have guessed. It's hard to turn the page when you know someone won't be in the next chapter.*

*But turning the page doesn't mean forgetting. It means carrying him with us in the love he gave and the strength he left behind.”<sup>ii</sup>*

This evening will remain unforgettable for us. And it reminds us that through these sacrifices, a debt is incurred that can never truly be repaid, a responsibility that endures. For those who fall while defending Israel give something irreplaceable. No ceremony, no words, no act of remembrance can make up for that loss.



But we can stand with those they have left behind - with our love and our support. We can help them carry the burden, show them that they are not alone, that they do not have to rebuild their lives on their own. We can stand by them - for a lifetime.

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For 35 years, the IDF Widows & Orphans Organization has stood by these families. Its programs provide support at every stage of life: for young and adult orphans, for widows, including those who are pregnant and for children growing up in the shadow of loss. But the journey is long. Circumstances change over time and so too must the support these families receive.

One thing, however, will never change: the need for this support, nor the commitment to these families. This is not a task for one person or one organization alone, it is a shared responsibility of all who care about Israel.

To all those who already offer their support: know that your help reaches these families not only on a day of remembrance, but every single day of the year. For the rest of their lives. Thank you on their behalf!

ARC to ISRAEL is a partner of the IDFWO in its vital work for widows and orphans. More information can be found at: <https://www.arc-to-israel.org/en/witwen-waisen-widows-orphans> as well as in the book: [“Israel’s Trial by Fire – The Fateful Years Around Okt. 7. 2023”](#)

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<sup>i</sup> <https://alush.org/>

<sup>ii</sup> [YOM HAZIKARON Memorial Ceremony - YouTube](#); Kims reading from minute 53:54 until 1:00.46