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# From Beth Emet in Israel: American Jewish Reactions to the Yom Kippur War (1973)

*Introduced by David Polish*

The collection of letters in this article contains correspondence from Israel written during the Yom Kippur War by members and friends of Congregation Beth Emet in Evanston, Illinois. They have been transcribed as written, and reflect the observations and feelings of the people involved.

The letter-writers include some of the five families from the congregation who had made aliyah as of 1973, three students who were spending a half-year at the Leo Baeck School in Haifa, some of the five young people who went on Sherut La'Am, as well as friends. At the time of writing, Sandy and Neale Katz, together with their children, were living in Jerusalem, and Earle Brody and his family were living in Beit Yanai. Neale Katz had been a member of the congregational board, and Earle Brody was a former president of the youth group. Myra Levine and her husband William were spending the year in Israel on a teaching assignment. Steve Rhodes, Stuart Rosenberg, and Alan May were on Sherut La'Am. Daniel Dunn, the son of Dr. Arthur Dunn of the congregation, was living in Israel. Edie Golden, Cary Ehrenberg, and Ben Kanter were Leo Baeck students in Haifa. Inge Golden is the mother of Edie Golden. Bracha Katz had made aliyah and had recently been married to David ben Avraham. Mayta Paul was a member of the congregation and a graduate of its high school department. Les Polonsky had been youth leader at the congregation and was a student at the Hebrew Union College. Iris Wachs is a sister of Sharlene Coleman, a member of the congregation. Dr. Irwin Siegel was a former member of Beth Emet, and Orna was a friend of David Kornfeld, a student in the congregation.

I wish to thank Dorothy and Samuel Barliant and William Valentino for graciously making possible the publication of these letters.

DAVID POLISH

*Sandy Katz*

Dear Rabbi, Aviva & all Beth Emet:

Thank you so much for your letters, thoughts, concern and love. Believe me they were needed. This has been a very bad month, watching the pain all around us. During the war Jerusalem was unbelievable. It must have been like this in London during W. W. II. It was so strange to see our beautiful city in total blackout. The streets were eerie, somehow we all felt more secure if we could somehow get home before nightfall.

The children took it pretty well in comparison to others. Richie was nervous and talked incessantly. On the second day he felt a little better because he could see something visible. We had tanks driving by all day and night on their way to the Jordan border to protect Jerusalem in case of action on that border. However at night he took a glass of wine before he went to bed. The first week he drank 1/2 bottle of wine just by himself, but he slept all night. Nancy was frightened by the sound of the air raid siren. She wanted me to be at home all the time in case it went off. Luckily we only had to go to the miklat (shelter) twice, once on Yom Kippur and once on the following Shabbat. Amy and David have little understanding of the whole thing other than some of their friends whose fathers went to the milchamah (war).

Neale and I were busy giving moral support to our friends whose husbands were called up. Shortly after the cease-fire, Neale went to do guard duty at Kibbutz Bar-Am, which is on the Lebanese border. As for myself, I am now working in Kupat Cholem as a nurse. I tried to volunteer at Shaarei Zedek but they said they had enough nurses so I did the next best thing, work for money.

Now, I'll tell you about morale as I see it. I feel a depression, not only myself but others as well. We feel uneasy with the political and diplomatic situation. It was hard to watch the African states leave us, when we all feel that Western Europe would do the same if it came to that. Now we don't know what we will be compelled to do. Many feel that war will break out again.

The two hardest things to face were the terrible loss of young boys. Many of those boys were single and hadn't yet had a chance to start another generation. Hundreds of Jews lost to us. The numbers of killed was enough to cause one to reel back from the magnitude, and

still the numbers grow. They are getting to those burned-out tanks in Sinai, some of them the fiery graves of 1 or 2 or 3 brave young men. Not one family remained untouched. We have friends who have lost sons and I have a cousin who lost a son-in-law leaving a 21-year-old widow, and there are many. There are instances of young girls widowed in '67, married again, and again widows in '73. I am firmly convinced that the strength of this country is the women. To be able to give and give again. The justice of it all is the fact that we will survive!! Am Yisrael Chai! (The people Israel lives).

The other is those poor souls who are in the hands of the Syrians. We don't know who is there and who still lives. And if we see them again, what tortures they have endured? The terrible sadness is seen in the eyes of those who survived the initial attack of the Syrians . . . and they just don't speak, only their eyes. It's enough to say only "Hayiti b'hermon." (I was at Hermon). It's understood.

These are some of my thoughts since Yom Kippur. Thank you for being there and caring, we are one family. Please come soon . . . Neale and I know there are 6 million Jews who care in the U.S.A., but not all the others do. When they hear how much you care, they feel stronger!

Shalom to all of you, we are looking forward to your visit soon.

L'hitraot,  
SANDY KATZ

*Neale Katz*

November 15, 1973

Dear Rabbi and Aviva,

Just adding a few comments to Sandy's letter. As you can see, I've found an English secretary (and, she says, how to misuse her—it was a question of whether the Director General got his letter done, or I got to write mine!)

First, some thoughts that you've probably heard already. The people here are proud of what the Jews have done in America and the rest of the world, for bonds and UJA. However, we still need tourism and I would encourage anyone who is thinking of it, to make their trip now. The country is safe and the tourism industry really needs a shot in the arm. As to the man in the street, we've had a great flip-flop. Those that were hawks are now doves and vice versa. Unfortunately, there is no

real choice in the next election as the only opposition is Begin and Company, and the people are afraid that he is nothing but a demagogue. The Labour Party and its allies are split and it appears to me that right now there is no effective leadership in the Party. The doves and hawks are fighting more and more. From all I can hear, the actual combat soldier talks both ways—one says “give ‘em back everything, including Jerusalem” and the other says “don’t give ‘em an inch.” I went with a UJA Young Leadership Group to hear Dayan last week, and I think he had two important points: (1) he is not unhappy about the fact that this war was a test case and the shock of the war revealed basic facts that were covered before (like the image of the invincible Israeli army and finding out who our friends were politically); and (2) Dayan said at this point he would rather face negotiations now than sit where we are. He also felt that this is the opportunity to negotiate as both the Russians and the Arabs do not want a repeat of what happened after 1967, where the situation was frozen.

As to my personal feelings, I have mixed emotions as I do not know how much the United States will support us. The Russians appear to give the Arabs one hundred percent in both arms and political support. We appear to be getting something less than one hundred percent.

As you know, I work in the Ministry of Labour and life seems to be getting back to normal, although many of the men are still away. It was—and still is—very frustrating to be a newcomer and not be able to really help in the war effort. I sometimes wish that I was still in the United States, just for the fact that I could at least have raised money for Israel.

We still have the same problems regarding permanent housing and a permanent job, but I don’t think now is the time to go into that.

Regards to all, and tell anyone that if they write, we will answer.

Shalom,  
NEALE

*Bracha Katz*

11/6/73

Dear Rabbi:

The last three weeks have been very trying for all of us here, and I can imagine how much so they have been for you who are far away

also. Life is beginning to get back to normal, but I doubt after this that things will ever be quite the same, at least not for a while. I can well imagine the frustration and anxiety of being in America and not knowing exactly what is going on. I experienced the same frustration during the Six Day War and during the year that I was back.

My fiance and I spent the time of the war at a Kibbutz near the Lebanese border in Western Galil. We have since taken candidacy for membership and decided to make this our home. It was a very difficult time for us all there and in a way it brought us all together very much. Since the Kibbutz is near the border most of the men were staying there but we all had much work and responsibility to fulfill, which people succeeded in doing as best they could. The first few hours were very tense for us—we knew the hostilities had broken out but the news was slow in coming and the reserves were still being called up. It took a long time for me to believe that it was really happening. We were listening to the news and preparing food and things for the shelters and even when the shooting started it was still like watching a movie or imagining it was happening somewhere else. It was realizing how many lives were being lost which really made me realize how intense the whole thing was and that more than anything else was what was the most upsetting.

There has been much talk of what will be now, and the war seems to have accomplished nothing for either side. I only hope that the Arabs will now realize that they can never defeat us and will not try again. I also think the Israelis must try and convince themselves that we must compromise, otherwise we will end up with the same stalemate situation which we had after the Six Day War.

We were shocked by the reactions of the press—they seemed to be praising the Arabs for surprising us and testing our invincibility. I'm sure if they were to realize how sensitive people are here to loss of life they would not speak of our being here to test our invincibility every five years. I only hope this will be the last time.

Of happier matters, David and I are, as I think you know, to be married at the Kibbutz in December. I wish that there was some way for you to be able to marry us—it would be much more meaningful to have you perform the ceremony than someone who has never known me. We have a tentative date for the Tuesday which falls during Chanukah when my family will be here.

I kept a sort of journal during the war of what happened at our Kibbutz and our feelings at the time. I am in the process of translating it and copying it for my parents, and I will ask them to share it with you.

BRACHA KATZ

Yom Kippur, 6 October, 1973

On Saturday afternoon we were sitting in the moadon playing chess when someone came in and said that we had received an order to clean out the shelters. This was the first hint that something was not in order. We thought nothing of it until the radio began broadcasting news on the quarter hour. Egypt had succeeded in crossing the Suez Canal with a large artillery force and the Syrians were advancing with a tank force in the Golan. There were three bridge heads along the canal and the Syrians were attacking the entire length of the Golan. In the middle of the newscast they began to call out code words of the various units being called up. The announcer said that any sirens were real and that preparations of shelters and emergency supplies were to begin in all places. We left the moadon and began to move the children's beds down to the shelter. It began to get dark and because of the blackout we lit candles and sat in the moadon. The news kept repeating itself except that there were more and more calls for mobilization. It was terribly frustrating—there was no news from the front for several hours. The evening passed—we ate by candlelight and sat in the moadon and listened to the radio. They asked for volunteers to help make food for the guys who were on guard. I went to help just to do something and fight the tension. We were cooking in the dark and everyone kept bumping into each other—we couldn't see if the eggs were done or not. At midnight two Egged busses pulled into the Kibbutz—they had come to get several of the guys who had been called up. To see them in uniform leaving suddenly brought the whole thing closer and the joking that had been going on to relieve the tension suddenly stopped. I was terribly tired and hungry and was eating with one hand and preparing food with the other. I was afraid to go to sleep—I wondered what would be on the news in another six hours or what we would wake up to. I finally went to bed at one only to be awakened at five by Alan and Louise—they had stayed in the moadon and fallen asleep. We had to go down to the shelter. We felt in the dark

for clothes and went down. People were sitting on the floor looking for a place to lie down, it was very confusing. All over were mattresses, boxes of things from the kibbutz store which had been located in the shelter when it was not in use, and crates of food and containers of water. Between newscasts and the noise of the communication device, everyone tried to sleep. It was six in the morning. We passed out bread, tomatoes, cucumbers and made coffee for breakfast. The same news was being broadcast over and over. Battles on both fronts in the air and by artillery. The morning passed and we ate some sandwiches for lunch. At two there was an explosion, the communicator went on and someone was yelling for everyone to go down to the shelters immediately. We didn't know if we had been hit or not, but in a half hour we got permission to go home. We all jumped up and ran up the stairs. We hardly managed to get to sleep when there was a siren and we had to go down again. They announced that evening that the guys could sleep upstairs but girls should sleep in shelter. I went down but it was a cross between a henhouse and a pajama party, so I went up to the baby house to sleep. At eleven they made us go down anyway—there were terrorists in the area and the army was planning a maneuver. The next day we tried to get some sleep. The news was a bit more encouraging but still tense. We have the upper hand on both fronts and the Syrians have begun to retreat. There were Katusha rockets fired in our area but we were able to sleep upstairs the whole time.

Tuesday—We went out to work within the kibbutz. Louise and I began weeding the garden outside the moadon. Suddenly we heard shooting. We looked across the wadi, the valley which runs below the kibbutz into Lebanon, where the noise was coming from. In a few minutes there was a small battle going on. Everyone was running out of the moadon to look. The soldiers tried unsuccessfully to get us inside again—chevre, this is not a football game, we stepped back a couple of paces and then ran out onto the roof of the moadon which overlooks the wadi. The soldiers told us if they went crazy out there we had better get inside, but finally they gave up—after a quarter hour the whole thing was over. We were later told that there were about two dozen terrorists who had tried to penetrate to our area.

That evening we sat by candlelight in the moadon. The atmosphere was a bit spooky—Outside it was very light from a full moon—if this blackout continues it is liable to get very dark in a few days.

Wednesday—We were able to sleep up again! This has already become a luxury. I think I will be sleeping with a pile of clothes by the bed for a long time though. Yesterday was the first day of Succot. We were able to fix up a succah outside the dining room but all we could do to celebrate was to have a candlelight dinner, the candlelight seems to lack atmosphere by now . . . After dinner we watched the news. Golda Meir and General Herzog gave press conferences. Golda said that she is not ashamed to be sentimental and say that every life matters to us and she wished the Arabs would be a bit more sentimental too. Herzog predicted that this war would last a lot longer than six days. Fighting was very intense on both fronts. There was a lot of talk about what would have happened if we had relented and given the territories back. I think I won't argue about them anymore. It's obvious that it would not have been good at all.

Some parts of normal life still seem to penetrate. Rina had a baby boy yesterday and a wedding was held on Mount Manara near us where a group of soldiers was stationed on the border. Louise and Alan were asked to stay and photograph it and I came to play the guitar. The groom wanted a day off but was denied because of movement of terrorists in the area, so they brought the bride up to the kibbutz and we all loaded everything into a jeep and drove out. When we got there they put up an impromptu Chuppah from four rifles and a talith. We were all trying to sing the wedding march and the bride and groom stood under the Chuppah with the soldiers all around. They were all wearing their helmets and guns and in the middle was this bride in a white dress. Between the communicator blaring and the planes going over we could hardly hear the rabbi but everyone was very happy and I'm sure it gave the soldiers a boost in morale which lasted a week.

Friday—It's funny to say Shabbat Shalom. There is no shalom and no shabbat. We went out to work in the orchard and rushed to pick all the apples which were falling off the trees from being ripe. We had another "romantic" candlelight dinner and had to go down to the shelters to sleep early because of activity in the area. It was by far one of the worst nights—it was impossible to sleep. On shabbat we had to go out and work in the orchard again while we were able. We got back from work and were half asleep when our siren went off and there was a loud boom. Everyone grabbed their mattresses and ran down, but

they soon let us out. It turned out that an unidentified plane had gone over and had broken the sound barrier.

Sunday—I am amazed at how rapidly people can get used to situations and adapt to them. We have tried to settle down to what has become some absurd version of normalcy. You learn to ignore the noise that goes on all the time and to sit in the moadon with soldiers and guns all around. Certain things like that which I would have been sensitive to before this I now ignore. An army officer came and gave us a lecture on the last week in general and on the security situation. He explained that this front might warm up as the Syrians retreat and the terrorists try to carry out more activities. He told us about the various kinds of weapons they used and it didn't help to bring up people's hopes very much. The worst part is that we have to sleep in the shelters all the time now. We are making a list of who will sleep where—couples in security rooms and everyone else in the shelters.

At seven that evening came the most depressing thing that had happened so far. The announcer came on in a monotone and said an army spokesman reports that in the first week of fighting we have lost (pause) six hundred and fifty-three soldiers and close to two thousand wounded, along with others who are missing or taken prisoner. They were playing classical music and nobody talked. There was really nothing to say—everyone knew that the announcement was coming but it finally brought it home to us. I was terribly upset thinking of everyone I knew who was at the front. Worst of all, for the first time I really felt angry. I felt like I really wanted to take a gun and kill someone just to stop my anger of hearing we had lost so many people. I realized this was a childish reaction and the kind of one that starts wars in the first place, and I was frightened that I felt that way.

People are sitting in the moadon and beginning to talk. Some are a bit frightened. If this keeps up how many more will we lose? People began to ask, what will we do if they succeed in getting up here. I didn't want to think about it. Everyone is talking about it. What if they get a whole bunch together and get up here? I went outside to get away. I don't feel afraid of all the shelling and Katushas and all—it's the frustration of not having a gun or being able to do anything. It's worse for a lot of the guys who have not had training and can't do anything either. Mark and David taught me to fire an Uzzi (empty) and take it apart and put it together again. It was terribly confusing at first but

I'm glad I know how and hope we never have to use it. Afterward I thought about it and was frightened at the prospect of ever having to do anything. I very much doubt that as a girl I'll ever be in that situation but it seems that knowing how to use a gun you are no longer innocent of the whole thing.

Monday—We have begun to sleep permanently in the shelters. There are ten of us together and it's not too crowded. We had to go down at nine already. There was shooting in the wadi. Our shelter was right in back of it and the explosion came right down through the door. I thought my ears would never be the same . . . One of the soldiers came down and everyone sat up. What's going on? He said, there are about twenty terrorists trying to get up to your kibbutz. After that the noise didn't bother us so much. Someone came down and said they had another five rounds left and would fly in more by helicopter if it kept up. We all counted the last five shots and then it was quiet. Evidently those had been enough.

Thursday—Yesterday evening we were sitting in the security room playing scrabble when we heard machine guns firing very close. We sat in silence and waited. It seemed to be coming closer and to be either at our gate or closer. Nobody was outside. We sat and waited. Louise suggested we unscrew the lights in case someone tried to turn them on. We were 'all a bit nervous and were just starting to make off-color jokes of climbing out the window when the shooting stopped and we heard voices outside. Alan asked what language they were speaking and we heard it was one of the guards. We all got up and went out.

Friday—We made the news it seemed. "On the northern border three terrorists were killed outside of the kibbutz who had attempted to penetrate there." I know they were coming to do something to us but it still didn't make me happy at all to hear that they had been killed. The news said that one had had explosives with him which had gone off. It was awful thinking about it.

We tried to buy flashlights and batteries in Kiryat Shmonah. There are none to be found. It's getting terribly dark at the Kibbutz at night. I think we will have to forget one Phantom and ask the Americans for three million flashlights and six million batteries.

I am really getting tired of this whole thing. It seems whoever is not fighting us on the battlefield has been doing so in the UN or cutting off relations with us. North Korea and North Vietnam are flying planes

for Syria. We tried to get back to the Kibbutz by the northern road and got turned back at every crossroad. No one seemed to know exactly if it was permissible to pass or not. We got stopped at a roadblock and when we told them we had an Uzzi with us he said we could go through but drive fast, and get there as fast as we could. We were the only car on the road and we looked out at the wadi all the way. It was a quiet drive and if we had not been in such a hurry we might have enjoyed the view.

Monday—Today a cease-fire was called for seven this evening. Another army spokesman came to talk to us again. He predicted that Egypt and Syria would never agree to a cease-fire under the circumstances we are in now. We took the Hermon. We are 70 kilometers from Cairo and the armies in Suez are all turned around. We are on the west bank and the Egyptian third army is on the east side trapped without supplies. Still we are hoping this will hold and that the war will end tonight. I don't care if we have to give up the west bank of the canal—I just hope nobody else gets killed. I've had enough of this. Our government has ordered the army to stop shooting at 6:56 this evening. I'm sure that Yassir Arafat will not pay attention to the cease-fire and perhaps for us this may not be the end, but I hope so.

Tuesday—Early this morning I went into the moadon for a cup of coffee before work. One of the soldiers was talking to me. He said one of the terrorists who had attacked us last Thursday night was found hurt by our road last night. He had been there for four days without any food or water, and when the soldiers found him he just asked them not to kill him and for water. They told him he had come to kill us, but of course gave him water and brought him back up to the Kibbutz where he was taken by the security police to the hospital. Somehow this was one of the more human things I had heard in a while and I really thought about it. I felt sorry for the guy just thinking how he had lasted for that long. He told the soldiers he was from Gaza and had a wife and five children. I wonder how miserable you would have to be to leave a large family and volunteer to fight in an unorganized force and attack a Kibbutz. I am afraid we may have to live with another generation of these desperate people and we may not be able to solve this problem for a while.

After that we heard the news—disappointment. The Egyptians did not stop shooting. They are still attacking our forces trying to get their

third army back through to the west bank of the canal. The Kibbutz where we are was listed on the news again—we had some more katushas fired at us which hit the orchard and some other stuff that landed outside the fence. I have no patience today for anything and they are trying another cease-fire tonight. People are cynical as to whether it will hold or not.

Wednesday—The war is over! I hope. The cease-fire seems to be holding, the Golan is quiet, and except for occasional fire the Suez front seems quiet also. Negotiations were called for by the UN and the third army of Egypt is stuck on the other side of the Suez. They have been reading the temperatures for the Hermon again—after we lost it they had stopped. We saw Rabbi Goren with a Torah dancing on top of the Hermon after they had restored the synagogue there. I wonder if he was taking into consideration how many soldiers we lost getting back up there again and all those who got taken prisoner or killed when we lost it at the beginning. I'm glad they can dance—I'm not in the mood for it.

We are still sleeping in shelters, but the lights are on! We did chicken deliveries last night. Everyone was in the shelters but it is O.K. to go down to the chicken house at twelve at night under the searchlights and take all the chickens out of the house and load them onto the truck for market. The change back to normalcy will be slow here. The people at Gonen were complaining about the army being there, taking room and all. As far as I am concerned, they can mess up our moadon, drink all the coffee they want, sit in the front seats at television and movies, and throw all their guns and blankets wherever they please. There were several nights when I was very grateful they were here.

Saturday—The first real shabbat we have had in a long time. Another speaker came up to talk to us. During the past few days things have been getting shaky again—the cease-fire is very delicate. Russia mobilized its troops and the U.S. as a “diplomatic maneuver,” did the same. The speaker claimed that Russia had planned this war and proceeded to give a lot of paranoid talk about if we stayed at the old borders and relented and given back Sinai and Golan we would not be sitting here. Perhaps it would have been true to some degree but talking about it that way does not seem to do much good. I'd rather think about what we can do now than prove our mistrust of the Arabs in the past. This war seems to have accomplished nothing for either side, and the status

quo is obviously not more than a temporary situation. Negotiations are being held to get the third army supplies and get them out of the Sinai and the UN peace-keeping force (even that name contradicts itself) is being brought in. Peace seems no closer than it ever did, but maybe this is a beginning.

*Earl Brody*

November 22, 1973

Dear Rabbi Polish,

Thank you very much for your kind letter of greetings and prayer. I only returned from the service yesterday and I discovered your letter on my desk.

My family is in good health and spirits, and maintain unwavering confidence that things will work out well for Israel. The inexplicable feeling of *mishpochah echad* (one family) that is so evident on the home front and in the military, must be seen to be appreciated.

All of us are gratefully aware of the moral and financial support that has been forthcoming from congregations like Beth Emet and other Jewish organizations in America and around the world. Without this support we would have indeed been hard-pressed to continue with this seemingly unending struggle for our existence. Be that as it may, the economic ruin that has beset our young nation will be a difficult obstacle to overcome in the near future, but hope springs eternal.

I will be returning within the next days to my small role in the I.D.F., but wanted to quickly convey my thanks to you and my old friends at Beth Emet that I am still remembered after all these years.

Trusting that this note finds you and your family in the best of health, I remain faithfully yours.

EARL BRODY

L'hitraot—hakol yiyeh b'seder! (See you soon—everything will be okay!)

*Myra Levine*

Oct. 28, 1973

Shalom, Rabbi:

We were so happy to have your letter of October 17. We had no mail for almost three weeks, but this was a good day—we had nine, and it was so good to hear from everybody! We were able to talk to our family by phone and so we were not worried about them and we were just as satisfied that the cargo space was bringing weapons instead of letters. This war, however, proved in the most costly way—in human life—how important the defensible borders are for Israel. Those of us who remained at home could be safely there, and beyond the minor annoyance of a blackout, we knew we were safe from harm. We had no physical or material discomforts, but we share with our Israeli neighbors the terrible frustrations of wanting to help, and still being unable to do so. There were many volunteers—it became a local joke that one needed “protethsia” to get a volunteer job. So that for a while, contributing to the War Loan was all one could do. I finally, however, managed to get work as a nurse at Beilinson Hospital in Petah Tikvah. And, of course, here the war goes on—as it will for months to come, because there are many wounded and many of them seriously. They are, however, given a measure of love and dedication which compensates to some degree for the lack of modern equipment. I suppose no hospital could be equipped sufficiently to handle so many severely injured, but the degree of personal devotion has made miracles there, just as it did on the battlefield. It is remarkable that a people who have war so much could gird themselves to face it with calm courage. Except for the first day when the housewives mounted an assault on the supermarkets, there has been the most magnificent sense of purpose—quietly and without any commotion, the mobilization went on. We had arranged to go to Kedem Synagogue for the Yom Kippur Services. After Kol Nidre Services, we walked home—down the broad avenues in utter quiet—now and then we would hear some Orthodox congregations still davening—but nothing moved. As we neared Yad Eliahu, however, we saw several Egged buses racing down Rehov Yitzak Zadeh. It was the first hint that something was terribly wrong, but not until the air raid warning the next day, did we realize how wrong it was. All day on Yom Kippur and the Sunday following,

we watched the young men come to the tank corps mobilization point next door—and then accompanied by our fervent prayers, busload after busload left for War. The Israeli communiques were restrained, and as reassuring as they could be in the first days. We often heard Radio Cairo and Damascus, and that well-known Arab network, the BBA—and in contrast to the Israeli position, they were filled with hatred and recrimination. The Jews did not hate, Rabbi—they sought strength out of their own will, fortified with God's promises—and we never heard one word of hostile opinion. There was neither hate nor love of their enemies, but spent, instead, all of their energy on the task—the frightful task—they had to perform.

We have come to love the land—the ancient stones of Jerusalem have a special excitement—but the most marvelous of all is the forests, clinging to the Judean Hills and growing there as a testimony to life, to now and to a future that will be living and peaceful. In many ways, the Israelis were like those trees. Each one “planted” here, clinging defiantly and precariously to life on the rocky slopes of Jerusalem. Thus Israel clung to life in the past few weeks, even in the face of death, and I know the choice they made will assure their survival. There is much to mourn—and that must come, but there is also much to celebrate.

Best wishes to you and our friends.

Fondly,  
MYRA LEVINE

*Steve Rhodes*

November 19, 1973

Dear Rabbi Polish:

I want to thank you and express my appreciation for writing to me. As our friend Eliezer would say, Chesed.

I'm very grateful to my parents for having allowed me to make my own decision in regard to leaving Brandeis to work here. At the airport in New York, we witnessed a very tragic scene—a total lack of understanding between a highly immature boy desiring to volunteer and an equally immature father refusing to allow him to go. They shouted at each other for the better part of four hours, and it became apparent that the son was more concerned with escaping than with going to Israel. I think this tragedy made everyone in our group, and myself in

particular, appreciate our ability to make our own decisions and our parents' trust in these decisions.

The group of people that did go represented a wide scope of Jewish and even non-Jewish life, and for many, the trip meant more than just leaving a year of college. The religious backgrounds covered almost the entire spectrum of Jewish life—from very observant, to non-religious Zionists, to even a few Christians. Approximately half of the 100 that went had been to Israel before and 15 had dual citizenship. Twenty percent knew no Hebrew, and another 30 percent knew very little. Possibly, most interesting, are the circumstances under which many came. Many, like myself, were interrupting their undergraduate studies. For some, it meant leaving graduate schools. Here on Nirim, several of us left undergraduate schools, one deferred entrance to law school, another to business school, one left a job as an editor of a national magazine, one left an executive position with a large Canadian textiles company, still another left his job as vice-president of an import-export firm. One fellow Chicagoan sold his car and most of his personal belongings to get here. One girl is the daughter of the Swedish ambassador to Israel. But through all this diversity, we all share a deep concern for Israel and we're all working very hard.

The work we are doing covers all parts of life at Nirim. Many of us are picking oranges, many are plowing the fields, moving, irrigation pipes, working in the dining hall, and on. One job that everyone does at least once is catching chickens at 3:00 in the morning to be sent to market, something I did this morning. The important thing is that we are working. I get the distinct feeling that if we weren't doing the work, it wouldn't get done.

The mood on the Kibbutz is best typified by what occurred today. It was 30 days ago today that a member of Nirim fell. This afternoon a group of people went to the cemetery for a memorial service. The mood was very solemn. But at the same time, there was a very joyous atmosphere. Three days ago, a Kibbutz member who was wounded and captured by the Egyptians in the early days of the war, was among the first prisoners to return. To term the mood jubilant would be to use an understatement. Now all are eagerly awaiting his return from the hospital in Tel Ha'Shomer, which could be any day now.

This seeming emotional schizophrenia is something that seems prevalent throughout the country. No one is sure whether to rejoice or to mourn. Israel's losses have never been so high since the War of

Independence and no one has gone untouched. I just heard an amazing story that a roommate of mine told me. He was talking with several kibbutzniks and one said that it was too bad the country is so small that everyone knows each other. Another American asked the obvious "Why?" The response was quick and appalling "I personally know 100 people that fell." Yet, in spite of the heavy losses, everyone is very thankful and happy too, that friends are alright, that the prisoners are returning, that maybe this time we will have peace.

As for my own mood, I've never been a very constant person and it varies. I'm sure that I, and all other volunteers, are making an important contribution to Israel. I'm sure that I made the right decision. My real doubts and even moments of self-despising, arise occasionally prompted by the seeming indifference of many Israelis toward what they've just gone through. I think I may be able to express this feeling better by relating a story.

When I went to Haifa to visit the Israeli family that I lived with while at Leo Baeck, my Israeli brother Raffi was given a four-day leave from the Sinai for that same weekend. I arrived in Haifa at about 11:00 a.m. and took the bus up to the Carmel to our apartment, thrilled to be looking out over the nof again. As it turned out, I arrived before Raffi, so my sister Rachel and I played cards while waiting. At 12:00, we heard someone at the door. I ran, opened it, and Raffi walked in in khaki, and an Uzi slung casually over his shoulder. I was really excited to see him and somewhat awed. But with all that military show, he was the same Raffi I had know two years before. Our mother arrived home soon after, and I've never seen anyone so happy in my life. That Raffi was home and safe was terrific. Soon she started asking, "How was it? Did they get near you? How was it?" And always Raffi smiled uncomfortably, shrugged, and said, "Nu, leave me alone," and it was apparent that the Egyptians had approached him.

The whole point is that I had already started thinking, "What would really be the best thing for me to do?" And I had already been very upset by all of the fuss made over me, both by my friends at school and by my friends here. I wished they would just leave me to work and make a fuss over the thousands of Raffi's. Every now and then I come to the conclusion that if I had any real guts I would make aliyah tomorrow and enlist ten minutes later. I really despise myself at times for not taking this course. But I know that I won't. I know what I'm doing is important and I know that when I'm done here, I'm going to return

home and finish my studies. I feel very good about helping Israel, but I don't want to be treated as a hero. The heroes are the people of Israel, students, teachers, truck drivers, kibbutzniks, janitors, lawyers. These are the heroes, but they are all too busy being heroes to congratulate one another. So it's up to us, the Jews of the Galut (Diaspora), to congratulate, to support, and to love them.

These are a few of my feelings and observations about what I've been experiencing.

Once again, I'd like to thank you for writing and want to extend my best to all at Beth Emet.

Shalom, and everything good,  
STEVE RHODES

*Stuart Rosenberg*

November 28, 1973

Dear Folks,

I realize I haven't been what you'd call an angel about writing, so I'll try to make it up with this. If it runs longer than this aerogramme, I'll send two. Whatever.

The situation here is baaad. I've been very lucky so far in that my friends and co-workers were not affected by deaths, but the mobilization is still in full swing and it looks as if it will be that way for quite a while.

I re-read *Catcher in the Rye*, and once again I am convinced that I am Holden Caulfield.

Anyway, I am certainly not going to be back at Earlham in time for the second semester. To tell you the honest to God naked truth, I don't even know if I am going to be back for the third semester. The point is, (and maybe you won't like this too much) I have become a very necessary person on the kibbutz. Since our last communication, I changed jobs. It seems that one of the people at the factory was called up into the reserves, and they needed someone to take over the job. (The kibbutz factory, I should mention, is a food-type factory, grossing over two and one-half million dollars a year.) I am about the only volunteer here who speaks Hebrew with a semblance of fluency, so I was chosen. So every day I get up at 3:30 a.m., get to work at 4, and turn 500,000 liters of orange juice into 100,000 liters of orange juice syrup, to which

other people then add pulp and sugar and put it in cans and send it all over the world.

The machine is incredible—it's 4 stories high, has 23 switches, 84 valves, and 26 dials which are already a part of me. It costs about 1/2 million dollars. And I am the only person who knows how to operate it. I work till about 1:30, 2:00 p.m. It's good work. It requires a knowledge of chem. and phys., because the water is drawn off the juice bit by bit through pressure and temperature changes, all of which must be constantly monitored. I use a slide rule a lot, and PU NrT and Brix PU/2it and P1 Brix [T-2/-1/. It's incredible how easy all this is to learn when I have to apply it to something. The way I see it, the method of teaching I'm used to getting for physics is like receiving step by step instructions to prepare Duck a l'orange and not being able to taste it when you're done. Whatever.

About school, me and Rhodes have tentatively decided to start our freshman year over again with all the other freshmen. It's not so bad, really—Mom, tell dad to stop crying—and as far as I'm concerned, it's perfectly worthwhile. A year late does not mean a whole lot in the big picture. I'm sure I can handle it.

Oh yes—the reason I have found the time to write to you is that I have that great Jewish disease—bronchitis—really, though, doesn't it *sound* Jewish? *Bronchitis*. I wish it was something with a little more class, like leprosy. Whatever, I'm in the infirmary and getting better by the minute. It's been 3 days so far, and the factory has been canning regular juice in the meantime, but orders are starting to pile up so if they don't release me I'll have to call the gang and will dig a tunnel out to the main gate and then, lawd almighty, free at last.

By the time you get this I'll be just dandy, anyway, so don't worry at all.

Love and orange-juice concentrate,  
SHLOIMY

*Alan May*

Dear Rabbi Polish,

I'm writing to you from a small wooden "tzarif" in Kibbutz Amir, Israel—the temperature is terribly cold, why, before I sat down to write this letter I actually had to *put my shirt on!!* Tsk—oh, well . . .

The Israelis are an amazing people—some of the people here have lived with war half their lives; most of the children have (and still do) slept in shelters two and three nights out of every week. Yet they are all very unaffected by the very big threat of war. We (the volunteers) came over to help, knowing that there were war conditions. We came expecting to work eight, maybe ten, hours daily to replace the work being missed by the kibbutzniks who have been drafted. The heads of the kibbutz, however, don't see any need to work us even six hours (which is what we do work) even though at our present rate neither the apple orchard nor the grapefruit orchard will be finished being picked *this year!* It also seems that the American and other volunteers are more “gung ho” on Israel than the Israelis—naturally they want Israel to survive because they are living here and don't want to suffer the inconvenience of losing the war. But they don't care if Israel gives back the Sinai, or Jerusalem, (the people in my area don't want to give back Golan for obvious reasons). It seems as though the Israelis think of Israel as most Americans of the U.S., while the Americans consider Israel as much more of an ideal! A Jewish state—something so important that many of us gave up good jobs and positions to help defend it. I have been told on two occasions by Israelis that had they been in my position, they never would have come to help!

My father writes me that he has seen bumper stickers saying “Save oil—Burn Jews”—whatever happened to that Christian saying—“Peace on earth, *goodwill* toward men?” Or does that only apply to certain men?

I understand that the fuel shortage is getting very bad! Ellanna writes me that she gave my father ten gallons of gas for his birthday (I wonder if it's the right size).

You may be interested to know that this is not a religious kibbutz—we don't even have a synagogue. Our entire Chanukah program was only . . . lighting candles—I don't know if you saw the movie “The Fixer” or not. I hope you did . . . it's by Bernard Malamud. It's about a non-religious Jew who with more and more pressure to become NON-Jewish only realized how very important it was to him being Jewish! That's very similar to the situation here. When I arrived at Lod airport I said, “Well, here I am in Israel, I wonder if I should take my shoes off before I touch the ground . . . ?” But to the stewardess and the other airport employees it was just like we had landed in Pittsburgh, Penn.!

I find Israel awe-inspiring and, even more exciting, I find myself talking to someone who I'm not even sure is listening or even there!!—God. Yes, sir, that's right . . . I find myself having one-sided conversations with God—I'm not sure if I do it just to shock non-religious Israelis or what! But maybe someday they'll be two-sided conversations.

Your friend,  
ALAN MAY

*Daniel Dunn*

November 5, 1973 B"H

Dear Dad and Elaine:

I have been so involved with the situation that I have not kept up with your trips around the states. Nevertheless, from reading your letters and the letters that I have received from many other people, everybody is interested in my battle-scene analysis of the present situation.

Firstly, much like the states, but then much different, Israel is experiencing a political struggle within the government. It has stayed quite internal, and the politicians have been fairly successful in masking the situation from the public and world opinion. The government is in a big bind, and has to get out of it. It had to accept the tremendous resupplies from the States, and because of this, it had to listen to their ideas of peace talks. Dayan is near a mental and physical breakdown since he was a day or two away from the complete destruction of the countries of Syria and Egypt, before the ceasefire was forced into effect. Meanwhile, the national elections were supposed to have been this week, until the war started, and now they have been postponed until December 31. The opposition party is becoming very strong within the country especially since the resentment of the initial losses of the army during the first days of the war. Mrs. Meir has to come out of the situation with the Arabs within the next few weeks in a very good position, or start fighting away, and finish them off, or she and her party might lose in the coming election.

The situation is very severe with the POW's in Syria; please do everything within your power, like writing and telegrams, etc. to impor-

tant people, and talk with your patients about the situation. The Syrians have a history of torture to the Israelis. In '67, a pilot was shot down over the Golan Heights. He was captured in the town near Madjal Shams, in a small Arab village. The people of the village had so much propaganda about the Israelis, they literally tortured the pilot alive. It was filmed live on the Syrian television. I know this story well, as this village was the place where I worked in '69, when I worked at the ski settlement. Even though that I have continued my learning full time, as the hospital where I was working is back to normal conditions. My mind and heart is with the idea of trying to do as much as I can. It is published each day in the papers, to get as much pressure as possible to get the immediate release of the POW's.

It is a very difficult situation still in Israel. The rumors are such that Israel is under tremendous pressure to finish what was not finished on Oct. 23. The feeling is resentment to the government. The people want a solution, and not one that was like the first week of the war. Israel did have its reputation destroyed to an extent. Besides that, it wants to have the situation of no war, not like it is now.

One of the most interesting things about the war is the way it affected the people in Israel, and from this I can only speculate on the effect in the states, from the news reports, the papers, and *Time*. It seems that life for the Jews in Israel and in the states, and for that matter in most every part of the world was a bit too easy during these last six years since the last war. In the last war, it was a live or die situation, and Israel was successful. This war was different. It affected the prosperity of the society. Things were a little too comfortable, and the emphasis was on the wrong energies. This war has begun to place many people in Israel back into the realities of the Jews throughout the centuries, and in the world today. It is really something that when I talked to you on your birthday, Sept. 23, neither of us had the idea that the situation in the Middle East would be such as it is. Nor would we have the feeling that the situation in the U.S. would be as it is with Nixon, and what happened with Agnew. The people that are fighting and that will be affected most from both of these changes, in the Government, in the society, in the stresses and the successes, is what is important. The people most affected in Israel have been those who have had somebody die in their families. Many people have also given tremendous sums of money to the State because of the tremendous cost of the war.

The luxuries will be long coming from many people, for many years, people will feel this war. And I think the same is true for the Jews in America. They too have and will have to make sacrifices to keep the country alive. And the country will not die at the wealth of the American Jews. They too will suffer.

The religious Jews still have their Torah, that part of tradition that has never failed to stay alive throughout any crisis in world history. But those Jews without the Torah, will lose their material wealth, their mental health, and their feeling of a secure Israel. The religious Jews, no matter how bitter it may be, know that the war was meant to be, and that the best will prevail. I say this with the knowledge that the Bar Lev line was armed with only religious Jews on the first day of the war, those who were the first to be called up in the reserves on Friday, Oct. 5. I say this knowing that many Yeshiva boys were on the front lines in the bunkers with the soldiers leading the prayer, in the Golan and on the Canal. In the first three days of fighting, 75% of those who died, were Yeshiva people. They were on the front lines because they are known to be the best fighters.

It is a little over a month since I talked to you on your birthday, and the world almost had a world war in between that time. And the situation is still very bad. I hope that you believe me. But at least I know that my perception of good and bad may be only a mirage, like a thirsty man in the desert. I don't know what will be the next time I write a letter like this to you.

All my love to the family, and hope that you pass my message and regards to the family.

Love,  
DANIEL

*Edi Golden*

November 22, 1973

Dear Rabbi Polish and Beth Emet:

First of all I want to thank you for your tapes and letters in reference to your concern for us in the midst of our war. I have heard that Beth

Emet has been actively helping out financially and sticking together collectively in the community.

I must tell you—I was proud when Steve Rhodes and Shlomo Rosenberg showed up at Leo Baeck. I was glad to say I was from Beth Emet. It is quite evident that we leave as good an impression on Leo Baeck, as we receive from Israel.

Though all the Americans here are deeply affected by this shocking occurrence, our experiences and reactions differ considerably.

The first of my war experiences started at approximately 2:15, October 6th, Yom Kippur. The entire family was sleeping. At 2:30, I was suddenly awakened to a disturbing shuffle of feet outside my room. As I became more awake, I realized the running and shouting outside my window. I then heard my Emma yelling from below

War! War! Children!

It wasn't until then that I became aware of the blasting siren, signifying for us to get to a bomb shelter. From then on our lives were scheduled around radios and televisions. Our ears alert for the sound of the siren, and our legs ready to run.

The nights were much more dramatic—we could only use candles, the streets were silent and bare. The air was filled with noise and the sea with the sounds of shelling.

It seemed as if every Israeli knew what to do, and did it. There were no questions and the cooperation and the consideration within the people made it seem as if we were living in peace instead of war. If our borders were not fighting, this country would give the impression of being utopian.

It took a while for the idea of war to sink in—the results of the war did it,—results, meaning casualties.

Things began to take different perspective, things that were once important, no longer mattered. The only things that came to mind were the soldiers, the situation, and how to help.

Everyone helped—the kids didn't go to school, but worked at Post Offices and Mosharim, and anywhere else that was lacking workers. Women were knitting hats and sweaters, and little kids drawing pictures to send to the soldiers. I delivered “arrived safe” notes from the soldiers to the hands of their families.

Being here during the war showed me Israel at its best. To see a country rise to the occasion successfully is something quite rare. I

consider myself lucky to be able to observe and now feel a part of this country.

Much love,  
EDI GOLDEN

*Cary Ehrenberg*

Dear Mr. Glustoff:

I waited all summer to write you before I got the army beret you requested. I have not been able to find it but my Israeli brother is a soldier and maybe he can clue me in.

Anyway, school has been in session 3 weeks. I must admit that it is a real challenge. I take English, History, Citizenship, Literature, Art, Music, Biology, Algebra, gym, Talmud, Tanach, and Gadna (Army Training). I think that the Talmud and Literature are the hardest, each for their obvious reasons.

English should be interesting because I play part-time teacher, tutor and student. One day a week I lead a class discussion,—the other day I have a conversation with a student, and every two weeks I turn in a critical analysis of short stories I read.

The disciplinary techniques and some rules seem a bit ancient; however it will take awhile for them to loosen their stubborn pride and update the system.

The Reform synagogue and youth group is called Ohr-Chodosh. The youth group has parties every Friday night and so it hasn't been hard to get to know the "chevra" (group). They're a nice bunch of kids, some of which are in my class at Leo Baeck.

My family is really nice, also. My father just got a professorship at the Technion. They all spent 2 years in the U.S. so unfortunately they all speak English well. Tho I speak to the rest of the family in Hebrew, my Israeli sister and I sometimes find it hard to stick to Hebrew.

At Leo Baeck there are 11 Americans, which is less than last year. We have an Ulpan program 3 hours a week, with a really good teacher so we are all really plugging away at the Hebrew. Rosh Hashana was a beautiful holiday here and I really got to see how it should be celebrated. Yom Kippur was yesterday. The environment was unbelievably silent until 2:30. That's when the war started. This war experience is a

new, interesting, and a little frightening and I suppose you've heard what it's all about, so there is no real need to explain it.

There was no school today and we were in the cellar twice because of air raids.

Not much else is new. I hope everything around B. E. is O.K.

Love

CARY

11/9/73

I really did start this letter in Hebrew but if it is to Rabbi Polish and everyone at Beth Emet I decided it better be in English.

To tell you the truth the war did not hit us directly in Haifa. It did reach us in many indirect, but powerful ways.

October 6th at 2:30 I was asleep as the first air-raid siren went off signifying a possible war. My Israeli brother was home on leave that weekend and so of course he hurried to get his uniform in order. He was called the same night to report to Beer-Sheva. It was strange because this was the first time I had any real connection with a war. That night was probably the worst during the war. They started a blackout that evening and everything seemed to have a tense, eerie, silence. Because there were no lights in the streets, it seemed especially dark and foreboding. The anticipation of a time of war seemed to be more frightening than the days to follow.

The next day the children were ordered to stay home from school. There were two air-raid sirens that day. I became acquainted with the bomb shelter in our apartment building pretty fast, though I must admit that after that day there were not many more sirens.

We returned to school as normal the next day but a few teachers were missing as was everything else. The school was in utter chaos. There were only two days left until vacation, so we did not do too much learning during school. Kids brought their radios and news was listened to every hour on the hour. There were some air-raid sirens and between all this we were pasting special papers on windows to prevent shattering of glass.

Sukkot vacation began as not much of a vacation. No one went out too much, except to do something in order to keep the country running. Postmen, doctors, teachers and merchants were all in the reserves and off to war.

We received periodic phone calls and post-cards from my brother, and learned that he was in Sinai. The news that already many had been killed and that there were more to come was not too encouraging.

They sent us back to school a week early from vacation, but minus the teachers, and the country being in the state it was, school was still not back to normal.

The youth group here became involved in volunteer work like everyone else, and so after school one weekend, I worked at the post office.

The situation outside the city was perhaps worse. The Kibbutzes and Moshavs were finding it impossible to harvest their crops minus so many workers. So they came to our school and sent the 11th grade to a Moshav for a week.

I worked in the peanut fields and the chicken-coop, and lived with a family originally from Algeria.

I guess, though, the experience which has made a profound effect on us all is the statistic of dead soldiers. For us the statistic has ceased being a number and has become a real and personal tragedy. Already 4 kids in our youth group have a dead brother or cousin. The tense, giddy nervousness that filled the air is now over-shadowed by a dull, sad depression. In the youth group, no one feels like laughing. Everyone was mentally ready for the worst always, but once it hits personally it doesn't make things any less disillusioning. I mean it's something that was long ago accepted, but no one will ever understand it.

My Israeli brother was home on leave last weekend and had some gruesome stories to tell. We are still receiving letters from him.

So there is not much else to say. School, everything is back to normal though some of the teachers still aren't back.

I saw Steve Rhodes and Shlomo Rosenberg last Friday. Both are doing well and send their regards. I hope all is well with everyone there.

Love,  
CARY EHRENBERG

*Ben Kanter*

Dear Rabbi Polish,

Sorry for taking so long to write. School has settled down now and I'm starting up on my belated correspondences.

I had a fantastic summer with our group. I personally consider the Ben Shemen ulpan a big success. There was a little difference of opinion but over all I think that I learned a lot of Hebrew and that it provided me with an excellent basis for my family experience.

The archaeological dig was sort of a flop as you may have heard. While we were able to dig up a number of interesting things, the water system in Bet Shean was contaminated with dysentery. Over half of our group became sick which, to say the least, hampered our digging activities. My group was lucky, however, in Danny's (The head archaeologist) own words, it was a beautiful collapse! A wall had fallen in on to the floor and you could easily tell exactly how it happened.

I'm well into the Leo Baeck school year now and I am enjoying it immensely. Originally I was put into the 12th grade like I am in the U.S., but I have not studied trigonometry or physics to the extent that the seniors here have. I am now studying in 11th grade and it is where I belong. Surprisingly, I find myself able to understand what is going on in about half of my classes.

I am an active member of the Haifa youth group from Or Chadash. The kids are really great and many of them keep asking me "how is so and so from Evanston?" Apparently the temple has formed a well liked bunch. As of yet there have been no youth group trips, but a number are being planned and I intend to take full advantage of them.

I have a great family and all of us get along real well. My father is, as I call it, the number two fix-it man in the Sinai. All tanks, trucks, jeeps, etc. that break down are fixed by a company of his men.

My brother does not go to Leo Baeck, nor does he go to Or Chadash. However, due to this I am able to make my own friends at school, and still meet and get to know all of my brother's friends.

There is again this year, a special ulpan for us EIE kids. It is excellent and due to the totally Hebrew atmosphere, I find it easy to assimilate new words and ideas.

Not much else is going on. Every day I'm learning new things and am becoming more accustomed to the language and culture.

BEN KANTER

Dear Rabbi Polish:

Well, it looks like that for at least the time being, there is a kind of peace in the middle east. President Nixon's problems have been overshadowing the middle east conflict for the last week, and now Israelis are shifting their attention to the United States to wonder who will become president if Nixon is replaced. Mr. Nixon is well loved here and I think that in general, Israelis are very worried at the prospect of someone replacing a man as helpful as he has been. Every day I am buying newspapers and Time and Newsweek to keep up on what is happening back home.

My father as you may or may not know, is a major in the technical corps. He is the number two man in charge of the technicians that fix the tanks, half-tracks, and other vehicles in the Sinai. He is stationed at the front. He finds time to write postcards, that we have been receiving every day. He also telephones almost every night. Last week he obtained a one day leave and was here in Haifa with us.

During the war, there was a large labor shortage, as to be expected, so we helped fill in. I worked for four days in the post office delivering letters, but then school was reinstated and positions in places needing help, were assigned by school. Leo Baeck was not assigned any duties in Haifa. In fact, we had a government speaker that reported that there were too many people wanting to help!

Here in Haifa, we observed the regular, physical, characteristics of a country at war. The blackout was strictly observed, and we [had] over a dozen air raids. About two days before the cease-fire, I was sitting on a bench overlooking the port, on my way to Havdalah, when as I was listening to a BBC radio news broadcast, I heard that radio Damascus reported destroying the Haifa oil refineries. Needless to say, I was quite surprised to know that what I was looking at was not really there!

My house is one of the apartments across the street from Leo Baeck, so we have a beautiful view of the sea. As a result, all the practice boats

were seen, and the explosions from practice shots were felt and heard. Planes heading toward the Sinai fly down the coast, so we heard about 12 sonic booms a day. All of this has stopped now, with the exception of a high flying Phantom overhead a few times a day.

Our Ulpan classes were cancelled during the war, but have started up again. I am pleased with the speed of my Hebrew improvement. I can understand almost any normal conversation, though history, literature, and Bible in Hebrew are still posing problems.

Rabbi Samuels is in the reserves, serving in an anti-aircraft battery somewhere in Haifa. He has not been in school in a month, and we have only had contact once with the other rabbis (Skirball, Levin). We are hoping that he will return soon, because a number of us have problems with colleges and other things.

Rabbi Hoffman is teaching a course in Jewish Literature, in English, that meets once a week. We have been reading: Bialik, Mendel Mocher Sefarim, Yitzchak Peretz, and Sholom Aleichem.

I am having a fantastic time here, and the kids are great. (Israeli kids). The other people on EIE of which 8 besides Edi, Cary, and myself, are in Haifa, are one of the best put together, closest groups I have ever known. I know that the people I have met will remain close friends long after EIE is over. We are already planning where our first reunion will be held!

Please tell the youth group that they will be receiving a tape cassette letter from me.

BEN KANTER

*Inge Golden*

Monday, Oct. 8, 1973  
11 a.m. Chicago Time

SHALOM Rabbi and Aviva:

We are approximately two hours away from our destination and Harve and I have had quite an adventure already.

The airliner is filled to capacity with what seems like thousands, but is about 400 anxious passengers. There are few Americans—mostly Israelis who feel totally compelled to go home,—just to be there, to already attend funerals, or to join their companies in the service.

We've had some interesting discussions with a few friendly and intelligent Israelis. At present they feel like they were caught with their "pants down" but that will be rectified, they know, but the cost is their concern—the cost in lives, in friends.

A number of passengers are young Americans who are prepared to volunteer in whatever capacity necessary. Harvey, too, has decided that he would volunteer himself at one of the major hospitals.

For comic relief we laugh a little about the Israeli Chutzpah which is ever present. The food for breakfast was spoiled, the water has been dry, the bathrooms are out of commission. The other side of that coin is that the Israelis on the plane act like they are from one family. We have two babies on the plane—they have been held by one dutch aunt after the other.

We are both terribly weary but happy to be on our way to Israel and Edi. We could not get through to her (all lines were busy and no telegrams were guaranteed to arrive).

Thank you again for your concern, warmth and the tape to Edi. Please thank Irv for me.

Fond regards,  
INGE

*Mayta Paul*

October 28, 1973

Dear Rabbi Polish,

I've been wanting to write to you for so long, but it has been quite difficult for me to express my feelings as well as what I've been through. I came on a visit to Kibbutz Hatzor because I wanted to see family friends, as well as to get a close-up view of kibbutz life. I arrived September 15th intending to stay one month. I immediately became totally involved with my friends—my kibbutz family—Binnie, Yonatan and their two children, David—6 years old, and Mirit, 3<sup>1/2</sup>. After doing my morning work, which consisted of a variety of things from picking almonds to washing floors, I would spend the late afternoon and evening with my family. I would even join them in putting the children to bed. I actually became a part of their lives as they became a part of mine. Since the children were never taught English and my Hebrew is rather limited, we developed our own patterns of communi-

cation through sign language. That was quite an experience! I was enjoying life, meeting many people, and living a new and invigorating way of life.

Then it happened—October 6th—

I remained on the kibbutz for Yom Kippur fortunately. At 11:00 a.m. a siren went off at the air base which is located next to the kibbutz. Planes began taking off in great amounts. The planes never fly on Shabbos, let alone Yom Kippur, so we knew something was not right. Even the radios began broadcasting and soon we learned 1600 Syrian tanks were mobilized.

Yonatan was the first reservist called and I watched him pack his gear and kiss his family goodbye. What do you say to someone going off to war? I just said Shalom and resolved to be here when he returned. Little did I know it would be this long. Within the next 24 hours, 100 men, including the kibbutz boys in the regular army were gone. There were no males between the ages of 18 and 45 on the kibbutz except for 15 volunteers.

This was quite a loss of manpower so I figured there would be much work for everyone to do. Besides, the almonds and olives, the cotton, "white gold," had to be picked before the rains. However, the high school kids joined the work force so the volunteers still worked a six hour day. I felt really slighted because my afternoons were still open for relaxation while the country was in a state of crisis. Because of feeling useless, I asked, what can I do, there must be more? But the reply I received was "You're here and that's the most important thing." No one had left the kibbutz.

Day and night, hundreds of Phantoms, Mirages and Skyhawks would take off. I saw the American planes arrive. It was a proud feeling. Between the roaring planes and sonic booms, I was in a continuous frightening atmosphere. At night it changed to morbidity (if there's such a word) and depression. There was a statewide blackout and on the kibbutz it was extremely vital because of the proximity to the air base. Black curtains hung over the dining hall, windows were taped to avoid shattering,—the only light was from the moon. The telephone in the dining hall is covered 24 hours a day to receive calls from our soldiers directly (those who are lucky to get to a phone) or someone else calling to say, "I saw your husband (son or brother) and he sends his love." Binnie has received several messages from Yonatan,

as well as letters, thank G-d. Tension is quite high, but the morale is higher. I couldn't and still can't believe I am a part of this.

Three weeks ago I went to Tel Aviv (which is a ghost town at night) to change my flight from October 19th to "open." I could not leave Hatzor without saying goodbye to Yonatan. My daily schedule has not changed; I still spend the same time with Binnie and the children. Only now it is with half a heart because the agony she is going through has had a tremendous effect on me. The children are even nervous. David understands quite well what the situation means, but Mirit still cannot understand why people fight and kill one another. Who understands this? Binnie is extremely patient with them, answering the questions and I can only sit and watch. It is very frustrating for me.

Up to now the kibbutz has suffered one death and has two boys missing. There have been several wounded, only one seriously. We are quite lucky. Gilad, who was killed, was among the Golani attempting to recapture Mt. Hermon. His death was felt by all, including the volunteers who were not even personal friends of his—only 22 years old.

One afternoon, while working in the cotton fields (which I might add are practically on the runways of the airfield) a plane came in to land. But before doing so, it swooped down really low and did two somersaults in the air before landing. He was letting everyone know he shot down two Arab planes. This was one of my happier moments the past three weeks. The guys at the airfield were cheering as we were.

Presently, the cease-fire is in effect. The Syrian front is quiet, no one can tell really about the Suez. U.N. troops are here patrolling. The big fear is what will be between Russia and the U.S.

Negotiations began today between Israel and Egypt. It's a start, but it will be a long haul. The news is not that easy for me to get because English news only comes on several times a day. I get translations, but they are never complete. One by one kibbutz soldiers return, but they are only on 24 hour leave. The soldiers in the Suez, where Yonatan has been, are not allowed leave yet and won't be for awhile. It is so painful for Binnie to see others coming home, even for a short time, because she knows Yonatan is not among the lucky ones.

I am in an awful conflict. I want to come home very badly. My stay has been extended over a week now and I am lonesome for my boyfriend, family and friends. Marcy's Sweet Sixteen party is in Novem-

ber and she has asked me to please be there. Yet I want to just see Yonatan again to say goodbye and to know he is well and safe. I cannot tolerate the waiting much longer; that is the worst part. I feel selfish for saying this, yet I know I cannot do much more here. Several new volunteers have arrived and the high school kids have voted to continue working instead of studying. My two hands in the orange groves won't be missed!

Seeing Binnie and the children so emotionally drained has torn me apart inside. Even though the war is over and the blackout is lifted, there is still tension and frustration in the air. Negotiations are moving slowly and are painful to sit through—not just for me, but for the whole country. You can just feel it, not knowing what will be in the morning when you wake up.

I have packed and repacked my suitcase. Yet I want to see Yonatan once more along with other guys who I know. I want to be a part of the celebration when this is over since I was here when it all began. I really am a part of this war! But who can put my priorities in their proper perspective? I just can't decide what's more important.

Aside from my friends, the other factor that has kept me here is seeing how the Israelis have pulled together. Everyone is living for someone else—the hand is always extended. No one could do more for the other. The little children even took part in war preparations by helping to clean out the bomb shelters. They would not quit until it was completely finished. The elderly people on the kibbutz came out to fill in open places in the factory, the laundry and wherever else they could function. I have never seen anything so beautiful.

There is so much more to say. It is so difficult to put down on paper what has been going on in front of me and what's been in my mind for three weeks. I am confused, bewildered and emotionally exhausted. My eight weeks of European and Israeli travels for pleasure and having an opportunity to put my life in perspective has not only been extended, but has made me more aware of other's lives than I have ever known before.

Whoever thought this could happen to me?

Please extend my greetings to the Congregation. Thank you for the warm wishes and letter. I will be in touch with you when I return.

Shalom,  
MAYTA PAUL

Oct. 11, 1973

Dear Mom and Dad and Family,

I have received your letters. I want to wish you Happy Anniversary. With what's going on here I completely forgot. I hope you enjoyed yourself.

Life here is not too pleasant. I hope Ronald shared the letter with you about the War. The situation is very bad in the Suez, tho good in the Golan Heights, as long as the Iraqis stay out. Yonatan is supposed to be in the Sinai. Binnie is so depressed and in quite low spirits. It is so hard for me to be with her and the kids. Her son understands what has happened and was in tears when Yonatan left. Merrit (3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> yrs.) doesn't understand, tho she knows that there is a war.

Kay and Joe have been here every evening. Joe is doing so much driving it is unbelievable. They were at Ellen's when the war broke and came here Sunday. Don isn't in the Army so Ellen is O.K.

Kibbutz life is proceeding per usual with all of the work going on. Because there are no males here between ages 18-45, except for Ulpan and Volunteers, the older men have pitched in everywhere they are able. Everyone has doubled the workload. The high school kids are not in school because they are needed in the fields. There is still a lot of work to do, especially in cotton, before the rains come.

At night it is like a morgue. It seems that everyone is sitting Shiva. The kibbutz is totally blacked out for safety precautions. Anyone driving somewhere at night in Israel must paint the headlights to dim them. Black curtains are hung in the windows of buildings where lights are needed, such as the dining hall, the club and the infirmary. All windows are taped up to avoid glass shattering from bombs and sonic booms.

Because the Kibbutz is right next to the airbase, we have the best location and protection. But it is like being in the middle of the war because the planes fly constantly. The Mirages and the Phantoms do not take off quietly and when they do they go in groups of at least six to 10. Working in the almonds again is a real trip. It is right off the strip where the planes take off. They are still quite low and when you look up you can see the bombs underneath. You also say a prayer that they return. So far one Kibbutz member, a 23 year old guy, had to bail out from his plane after being hit. He was missing for 3 days. He

finally got a message here that he only broke a leg and is in Egypt. No one knows whether he is a captive or not.

The biggest casualty known of is my friend Opir's brother-in-law who is dying. He was badly wounded, losing an arm and a lung wound. He is from our Kibbutz too. The only way you find out about the wounded is when a special person from the Kibbutz goes through the hospitals. To keep up the people and the country's morale, the deaths and the wounded are not reported until the war is over. The Kibbutz only finds out by people calling in and saying they have seen someone. It's good and bad. Binnie has not heard from Yonatan. Talk about gaining life experience . . . this is the place,—especially Saturday night being with Opir while he was waiting for his call. He is an old friend of Yonatan's who I met at a party Friday night. I was the only one not eating or drinking, cause I fasted. I saw him Saturday afternoon after the fighting began and he gave me a radio. Saturday night we were glued to it because they call up the reserve units over the air. There was so much tension in his face . . . you could just see it, but finally Sunday when he did get called, he looked relieved and proud to go. His parents haven't heard from him and I doubt if he knows about his brother-in-law.

Tonight I am going to Rishon with Kay and Joe and try to get in touch with the Spirz's friends to see if they are still coming. If so I'll get to see them over the weekend to get things you have sent. I have to get away from here for a couple of days. I have been so upset and tense. I've gone on a cookie binge. Any drug pusher could probably make a fortune here now with the people's anxieties and frustrations of not knowing.

Golda says it's going to be a long war. If they stopped playing politics the war wouldn't have gotten so bad. Israel knew Friday the Arabs were going to strike and they just did not prepare.

Despite the war the news of Agnew came across, tho I don't completely understand the whole situation except that a deal was made . . . typical.

As Ron probably told you I am not leaving until Yonatan returns. I just can't. I would never live in peace if I was home and didn't know whether he came through O.K. That goes for Opir and the other soldiers that I met. At wartime people always pulled together and this time I'm dragged in as well. I was at Binnie's when Yonatan packed up

and left and I was there when Opir left. G-d willing I'll be here when they return.

If the war ends soon I will fly to Boston to see Gary and pick up the car, if not I will fly directly back to Chicago.

I also have to stay because I haven't gotten pictures of Binnie's family. I should have taken them when I arrived cause as a New Year's present Yonatan shaved off his beard and moustache which I loved. It was only to stay off a week—then he he was going to grow them back. I was waiting for it to be back.

Please send my love to my Grandparents. Sorry I haven't written, but I'm just not in the mood. Take care . . . I miss all of you . . .

Love,  
MAYTA

*Les Polonsky*

Israel—October 16, 1973

This is your on-the-spot reporter from the Middle East. The war is continuing. Jerusalem is strongly adhering to the blackout procedures which start at 6 p.m. Everything stops—busses, shops close.

Since the war broke out, I have been paying a daily visit to the Jewish Volunteer Office to look for some sort of work. The first opportunity was at Berman's Bakery, in loading 50 kilogram sacks of sugar and salt for the making of bread. They were attempting a goal of 65,000 loaves: 30,000 for the army. Along with 30 Russian immigrants, we unload about 3-4 thousand sacks of sugar—until about 11-12 p.m. It took about 2 hours and reminded me of a movie scene where people were racing against time and circumstance—the circumstance being, that this was the emergency warehouse of food for Jerusalem, in case . . .

For the past week I have been working at the Wizo Baby Home in Beit Hakerem. We are working actually on 24 hour maintenance call in case of emergency. Luckily we were here last Saturday. The air raid sirens went off, the first time since Yom Kippur. We helped the nurses bring the 50 or so infants into the bomb shelters. To begin to realize and feel the war like this is scary, to feel that everyone has someone waiting in the front lines.

I have been here only 2 months, and I already know personally 3 people in Golan and one in Sinai. Fear and frustration shows clearly on the faces of Americans at HUC for we have never in our lifetime experienced war this close. But for the Israelis, although they seemed calm, moving about their daily business, they are old hands at this. They suppress their anger, fear, frustration. Yet, while watching TV news and newsreels of the front lines, their emotion rises to the surface and muscles tense. Somehow you want to hold and embrace them and assure them of a victory, but assuring them that their boyfriends, husbands, sons, relatives are well and safe, is something that even the God of Israel cannot confirm.

The question of how much longer can we, the Diaspora, and Israel exist through a war as this has no logical answer. We can only hope and pray and work.

Shalom      Dov-ra-cha      Am Yisrael Chai

LES POLONSKY, c/o H. U. C.

13 King David St., Jerusalem, ISRAEL

*Iris Wachs*

October 27, 1973

Dear Folks,

Have just finished blacking out the house, or the part of it that I can, and having heard today that the mail is starting to go through to the States, I'm writing. Up to now, no mail since before the war has been coming here, and as all the airlines except El Al have stopped coming in, the mail doesn't either, as much of our mail is brought in foreign carriers.

This is the night after the cease-fire was to have gone into effect, and was immediately broken. Golda talked on television to explain why the government accepted the cease-fire, as far as she could, without telling us the international political reasons that made us accept it, for militarily yesterday's cease-fire was not good for us, for most surely during the cease-fire the Russians would have and will, if we get another cease-fire, resupply the Arabs faster and in spite of any agreement to the contrary which she may have with the States, and the States won't, if their promise is not to. Afterward, the news from the

Security Council was that the Egyptians want us to go back to yesterday's cease-fire positions, which means that during the day we have made our position considerably stronger on the West Bank of the Canal, and started mopping up what's left on the East Side. We know the news. If the Russians and Egyptians are in a hurry for something, we know it's going well for us, and if they're not, things aren't.

It's a small country, and everyone knows something. Every husband and son of fighting age is called up, and if they get four hours leave, like one friend, Motti, they tell some, not much, but enough for each wife to tell her friends, and so little by little we put together how close we were to being exterminated. Which supply base was empty of ammunition until restocking came, who was last seen jumping out of a burning tank a week ago, but not since, and you don't know if he's a prisoner, or looking for his unit, or dead. And the parents this morning sent him stockings of wool because it's terribly cold on Golan at night, and they don't know yet that he's missing.

You call your friends casually, to see how the kids are, because you are too afraid or ashamed to ask if they heard from their husband, and then, if they start talking about whether or not there are any eggs in your grocery store because theirs is out, you know that either they got a phone call from their husband, or someone else on four hours leave came with a list of all the boys in his group, to call his family for them, that at least four hours ago he had a chance to take a field shower. And someone else has just gotten a postcard from her husband which keeps repeating what the last three did, that the sand is driving him crazy, which means he is in Sinai, where the heavy fighting is, so she has days yet to worry because the kind of work he does does not provide with any cover, and he is on the front where the fighting is still heavy. And my friend Rahel comes back from visiting her husband each day at a hospital in Tel Aviv and says, "he'll have a little trouble walking, but it's O.K., he won't hear in one ear, but it's O.K.," because she is grateful he is wounded and alive, and she doesn't have to think of him maybe not coming back at all. All of the wives I know whose husband has been lightly wounded are grateful that their husband is not at the front, and hope the wounds will be just severe enough to keep them there—they don't know how long to wish for—a month, or two months?—because we don't know how long it will go on. That is, we know it will go on as long as the Russians keep airlifting supplies to

them, and they can find replacement crews to man the new arsenal. And we all know that this time they have tasted victory, even if it was not long lived, and they inflicted heavy losses on us, and they are thinking that they did much better this time, so next time, who knows.

I don't think we'll get an acknowledged cease-fire from the Syrians—they didn't even give one in 1967 when they were badly defeated, but they will for a time simply have to stop fighting, as will the Egyptians. As we will have to, from sheer exhaustion. And when it is over, and we stop reeling from the hard facts of our casualties, we are going to live through a long and intense period of anxiety, waiting for the next time. No one here believes that peace-signed formal documents which our Arab neighbors agree permits recognition of the State of Israel, and peace, will come out of it. And even if such a miracle occurred, we would still be nervous, because what good is the signed document of a government which is overthrown by a new regime two months later.

But it's been like this since the State was born, even long before it, before we had our own legitimate army; people here with longer memories of the country than I, lived through it with the same anxiety, and insecurity, and persisted for the same two reasons that we will live it through in the future—because they believe in a Jewish State, and because they have no choice.

And we all—even I, who detest Nixon, and in any other circumstance at all would wish him impeached—hope he stays in office, at least until—and there our mind again trails off, because we don't know how long to wish for, because we all know it's going to be a long time that we'll need arms, a very long time.

We have many, many more soldiers suffering from shock than last time. Shell-shock. Only it does not happen usually to soldiers who've been hit, badly. Nor to twenty-four year olds, more than forty year olds. Nor to cowards, usually frightenable people. On the contrary, it happens to men who were brave, who fought without thinking a moment about themselves, who were at the front, especially in the first days of the war when our forces were so badly out-gunned, who fought, until a shell hit their jeep, or their foxhole, or their tank, and all the men they fought with fell beside them except themselves. And they cannot bear the guilt that they should have survived while their comrades fell. Or to the many at the front who fought those first awful

weeks, and saw through the sight of their cannons how they destroyed one after another after another of the enemy tanks; and then our reinforcements finally joined them, and the battle finally stopped being a defensive one, and they finally moved in their tanks up to the enemy lines which they had seen from half a mile distance, and they see the bodies of the enemy soldiers—by the thousands, so thick that a tank cannot pass without grinding some human part under its treads, and a man, who fought without eating or sleeping for four or five days, suddenly sees the awfulness of what he wrought in his bravery, collapses because it is too awful to comprehend what his own hand has wrought. Amiram will be limping a little but taking his son down to the beach, or back to the kibbutz to see his Saba and Safta, before these men will look up one day at the nurse when she brings them their tray of food, and ask her if she is the same nurse they saw yesterday, though she is the same nurse who has brought them their food every day for a month.

Golda said in her speech last week that after the horror of having lost so many of her own sons, we cannot forgive them the horror of having had to kill so many of theirs. One has to know war to understand that she spoke it not as a sentimental gesture, not as a political gesture to world opinion, but as one who understands that war is the ultimate affliction to all who are in it.

The Golan is covered with dead animals and dead men. They asked Alberto today which they should bury first, for sanitary reasons. And he told them, bury the enemy first, so that our soldiers do not have to see them.

I must close now. I have to get up early tomorrow as usual to get Eval to Gan by eight. He likes it now, because he finally got to know the children, and no longer feels an outsider, and I am swamped with requests to have this one and that one come home to play at our house. And I do. I have a regular kindergarten at our house every afternoon, as much for the children as for their mothers, since their husbands are all away, and it is better for them to be in someone else's house than in their own, waiting for the telephone to ring, and feeling the emptiness. Sometimes I drive at night for the hospital, either taking discharged soldiers home, or bringing relatives who have visited the wounded back to their home. Not too many people are willing to drive at night in the blackout, but it doesn't bother me, as I have good night vision.

But I can't take the Contessa too far from Haifa as it is not sure. Sometimes I go with another driver in their car because it takes a long time at night, and in the blackout one gets lost quickly. Aviva and I were on Kvish Geha the other night and suddenly found ourselves driving down a deadend alley, which is like being on the Kennedy Expressway, and suddenly finding yourself on a small country road. Even Otto, who I enlisted and who is happy to be able to help (all the men who weren't mobilized are half mad trying to find something useful to do), got lost in the middle of Petah Tikva on one of his night driving runs. I wish I had a decent car so I could do more.

Goodnight. Tonight I sleep.

I haven't the energy to write more than one letter like this just now, so you'll please share it with the rest of the family.

Love,  
IRIS

*Irwin Siegel*

Hadassah Medical Organization  
Jerusalem—October 22, 1973

Shalom to all:

This evening a cease-fire was declared—nonetheless, the fighting continues in the South. But the casualties are a little lighter and I finally have a little time to rest, clean up and write a few letters. From the beginning, I knew the situation here was more serious than we were led to believe. It was so strange landing at Lod, the only plane except for the American transports. The drive to Jerusalem was eerie—very little traffic—all headlights painted blue—and my beautiful city of light—completely blacked out, silent, tense. Hadassah was grim. The fighting has been fierce and the wounded many and serious. They now estimate a total of well over 1000 dead and upward of 3000 wounded. We have 150 orthopaedic cases alone here and until now have been receiving 30 to 50 wounded of whom 10 to 15 are orthopaedic cases each day. They come in by helicopter and are triaged in the hospital lobby which has been converted to a giant 50 bed ER, complete with X-Ray, blood bank, crash carts, etc., and 50 teams of doctors and

nurses. The operating rooms have been going 24 hours around the clock. I have been working approximately 18 hours a day, sometimes more. Mostly I operate. It is so busy I haven't had a cool instrument in my hands, so quickly are they transferred from sterilization to use. We sleep when we can and where we can. Everything smells to me like blood. I could cry with rage to see such beautiful boys so seriously maimed. The Egyptians have been using shoulder-fired missiles. The wounds are anything but simple—single, double, even triple amputations, complicated by third degree burns, head, chest and abdominal injuries. In addition to the Israelis, there are 50 volunteers at Hadasah (150 in all of Israel) from all over the world. I have met and worked with some very fine doctors. The devotion of all to our wounded is remarkable. They are evaluated quickly, resuscitated well at a field hospital, and distributed to hospitals throughout Israel within 6 to 12 hours of injury. We have lost no lives and no limbs that could be saved—perhaps we have even saved some that should have been lost. Hippocrates said, "if you would be a surgeon, go to war." I have seen and treated almost every conceivable orthopaedic injury and complication; high-velocity missile wounds, multiple shrapnel injuries, transection of every major vessel. Since I have been here, I have operated over 40 compound fractures. All of our wounds are treated by primary wide debridement—packing—above and below pins and plaster. Four days later they are re-operated with delayed suture, definitive nerve suture, fracture realignment and fixation and skin graft, if indicated. At this time I get a chance to work with the plastic surgeons if flaps, etc., are necessary. I have not yet been away from the hospital, but everything is on a wartime status anyway. The shops close early, entertainment is scarce, and public transportation at a minimum. Nonetheless, the feeling of peoplehood, the mystique of common struggle, sacrifice, and need is strong indeed. It is a rich and meaningful feeling, and I am fulfilled to be where I am most needed at this time of my life. My Hebrew is improving each day. I saw Shoshanno Dilian last night. She has been working at a hospital in the Sinai. She looks better than ever. I guess she really needed to come home for awhile. I have found no time to visit friends (hopefully later), but have managed to contact most by phone. Everyone carries transistor radios, and listens to the news every hour—also messages to and from soldiers at the front. The spirits of the wounded have been high in spite

of the fact that for most of them the war will never end. Volunteers have filled the rooms with flowers. Food and drink are everywhere. Singers and other entertainers (today it was Danny Kaye) perform right on the wards. Last night we had a power failure. Emergency generators lit the OR and important offices, but the wards were dark. Suddenly, the wounded and their visitors (always crowds of visitors—parents, wives, girlfriends) began to sing and the song was taken up from ward to ward, from floor to floor, “Osah Shalom Oobrachah”—Bring us peace, bring us peace with a blessing.” I thought it is a great and noble people to which I belong—proud and sometimes “stiff-necked,” as they say, but nonetheless irrepressible and beautiful to behold. I sat there in the darkness, so far from home and yet at home, and I wept without shame.

Someone asked me the other day why I volunteered to help. It never occurred to me that I was volunteering. Rather I felt I was in some measure repaying the debt that all Jews in the Diaspora owe Israel, for sustaining us through her very existence. What sense would my life make were I not to come to her aid when that existence is threatened? And besides, I once had some relatives here. I believe their names were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There was simply no choice. I could not at this time belie their faith. I like most the sun, a laugh and love. I do not favor blackouts, and all war, even this one, is obscene. “MASH” is no longer funny to me. I have lived it and it stinks. There is nothing amusing about pain, blood-soaked stretchers, and working until you are too exhausted to stand anymore.

Yet with all, I simply must be here now. In the final analysis, it’s simply because on Yom Kippur they blew an air raid siren in Jerusalem instead of a Shofar. To a Jew the sound of the Shofar is a terrible and fearful sound—it warns him that on the Day of Awe he must look not to God, but to himself—that he must, whatever the price, live as he believes, else he will certainly come to believe as he has been forced to live. I guess that’s what the air raid siren warned. I guess that’s what I heard. I guess that’s why I’m here.

Peace to each of you,  
Peace . . . with a blessing  
DR. IRWIN SIEGEL

Orna

October 26, 1973

Dear Rabbi Polish,

I realize you are a very, very busy man, but I have enclosed a letter which I hope you will have time to read. This letter was written to my son David from a friend in Israel.

David spent seven weeks in Israel this past summer and returned home with many good friends in Israel. Orna, the girl who wrote the letter, is the same age as David, 17 years old. She started to write the letter when the war started and wrote a little more for three separate days.

I found the letter a masterpiece. Her feelings about the war and her life are so eloquently stated; her maturity far beyond her years.

Both David and I were so moved by her letter, we feel that others should be able to read it or hear it.

I am sending it to you to use in the bulletin, or from the pulpit, or whatever way you may feel to use it.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Clara Kornfeld

October 6, 1973

Hi, David.

I guess you would like to know about Israel now, to know what does it mean for us to be in a war.

We all knew that something is going to happen since yesterday. This morning we heard cars on the road—which is something extraordinary here. I live next to an army camp so we heard tanks too.

At noon my brother was called back to his camp. I helped him packing and my hands were shaking. Then when we started eating (we don't fast) we heard the first air raid alarm. David, you can't imagine how I felt. I remembered the Six Day War. I knew that it must be a serious thing. All the people gathered in the streets in little groups, everyone very, very excited. Then the army reserves were called. I changed my clothes and started moving in the streets from one group to the other. I went to my best friend's house, to Naomi. Her brother

was killed in the Six Day War. We went together to one family three of whose sons were called, all of the three are Paratroopers. (The father was drafted too.) Eddie, the younger, is in my hevra. I'm worrying about him and all of the other hevra. Yossi called me twice today and I was very, very glad to hear that he's still near. But he told me that tomorrow morning he'll be in the Golan Heights.

At the time of the S.D.W. (Six Day war) I was eleven years old, I didn't know what it was all about. I used to think that life stops. I thought we won't go to school and so on. And I was very surprised to see people trying to keep on living the usual way. But now it's quite different. I already know what the price for war is. I know what it means for a family to lose her *son*.

Today we went through the streets trying to keep ourselves busy, and not to think about it all. Not to be afraid. The last war wasn't the same, this time my friends are soldiers, and I'm not ashamed to admit that I'm excited, worried and afraid about them.

It's interesting to see how people feel better and close to each other when they are together. No one wants to be alone now. Today all the hevra which are not soldiers—including two kids 11 and 12 years old—gathered at my home—we drank coffee and listened to the radio. You should have looked at the little kids, they were so proud to stay with us—the older ones—to speak like grown-up people. I remember myself as an eleven year old girl—and I can understand them.

It's funny how people like to tell everybody about their feelings, but we all feel the same. That's why I wanted to write to you.

There is a blackout here. I prepared warm clothes next to my bed, and my mother prepared a bag with all the things we might need. The shelter is not so far away from my home. My mother has a job in a first-aid post. My father was not drafted because he is an army invalid. We listen to the radio all the time and we are very tense.

October 7, 1973

The second day passed. It was worse than yesterday. But we weren't so tense. I couldn't find my place. I moved with my bike from one place to another. I was very nervous and didn't know what to do with myself.

October 10, 1973

I didn't write for some days because it's very difficult for me to write in English and express my feelings. Yesterday Yossi came to visit me just for about three minutes. I can't describe it because I was so excited. When I saw him I started crying. I didn't cry for such a long time—but this time it was the first time in my life that I cried from joy. He came just after I heard some very bad news from the Golan. I prepared myself for the worst. Yossi told me about some of our friends—they were killed. I don't want to write about it because the worst is still in front of us.

When the fights will stop, we'll hear about all the casualties.

David—I don't think that I'll write to you in the next few days or weeks but—please—try to write to me. (long letters!!) There is much more to write about our life nowadays. But I'm too nervous to sit such a long time. Drishat shalom m'nurit. (Shalom from Nurit). I met her today. *Please write!!*

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