

# The Price



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# The Price



The Korean War Memorial

*Target Population:* Adults

*Technical needs:*

internet connection, computer, computer projector, screen, good speakers, pens and paper, (Mindmanager)

There is a price involved in taking full responsibility for one's independence. There is a cost in one's time, money, innocence, and in the most extreme circumstances there is a cost of life. Ever since its establishment, Israel has had universal conscription for 18 year olds. Arabs are mostly exempt from conscription, as are the vast majority of Ultra-Orthodox Jews. Nevertheless the majority experience is either of having been in the army, or having a relative in the army. At times of conflict, this weighs heavily on all citizens.

While the official day in the Israeli calendar for marking the loss of soldiers arrives the day before Independence Day on Yom HaZikaron, it would be true to say that the death of soldiers is a constant presence in the country. If a soldier is killed, all radio stations play sad music. In this sense the death of a soldier touches the life of all Israelis, in a deeply public way.

In this program we look at two pieces of public art that touch on the raw nerve of loss in a painfully private way.

# Nothing at all

## *Knisiyat HaSechel*

### **Play the video clip of the song by *Knisiyat HaSechel* without translation.**

[This will allow a clean response to the combination of the music and the video, prior to addressing the lyrics.]

#### *What is the video saying?*

[Here you should allow for a free-ranging conversation. If opinions are not forthcoming, throw out some observations: the fact that all the actors are children, that at first the kids are at an army exhibition, that there are kids from all ethnic and religious backgrounds. Why/what is the child climbing? What of the oversized army uniform, stripping off the uniform? And what of the foetus-shaped gathering of bodies?]

There are no wrong answers for this conversation, personal interpretations and individual responses are welcome.

### **Now play the clip with the subtitles included.**

The words to this song come from a poem written by a young soldier, Erez Shtark. He died in a notorious military helicopter crash in February 1997. The poem was read out at his funeral, and eventually turned into a rock song by *Knisiyat HaSechel*.

#### *How does the meaning of the words affect your understanding of the video?*

This song was created as part of an annual project for Yom HaZikaron called: "Soon we'll become a poem", that sets to music the writings of young soldiers who died in battle. This song is played on the radio throughout the year, as just one other rock song.

#### *What do you think this says about Israeli society and its relationship to the death of its soldiers?*

*What do you imagine is behind the choice of the parents' to permit the band to make a song out of their dead sons' words? And how do you imagine they relate to the video itself?*

[Does the video imply a criticism of parents sending their children to war?]

## More on the

### *Helicopter Disaster*

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On 4 February 1997, two Sikorsky CH-53 helicopters collided over Shaar Yishuv in northern Israel. The helicopters were supposed to have crossed the border into Israel's "security zone" in Lebanon, but they were hovering while waiting for official clearance to go. Previously Israel had moved troops by ground, but this policy changed as the threat of roadside bombs from Hizbullah increased. 73 IDF soldiers died. Erez Shtark, the lyricist of the song, was among them. There were no survivors.

The crash brought about widespread national grieving. Thursday, 6 February, was declared an official day of mourning, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Ezer Weizman attended funerals and visited the surviving families. In addition, thousands of Israelis went to pray at the Western Wall, and assemblies were held at schools nationwide.

Because it was the worst air disaster in Israeli history, a commission headed by David Ivry was set up to investigate the cause of the collision. The committee finished its investigation in mid-April of the same year. It had been unable to find the definite cause of the mid-air collision, noting that the pilots appeared in good health and that no external causes could be found.



# Marking

## *the Disaster*

The mid-air crash led to a huge amount of debris, helicopter parts, and body parts falling on the Northern village of Shaar Yishuv. Two main areas were affected: an ancient tree in the center of the village, and the Banias stream adjacent to the graveyard of Kibbutz Dafna. The village created the 'Forest of the Fallen', a wooded area with 73 newly-planted trees, one for each soldier. The soldiers themselves were buried in their own locales, but parents felt the need to create a more public commemoration of the disaster. Their initial and later memorials are situated exactly where burning fusillages and debris were left hanging in the eucalyptus trees shading the brook. Some ten years later an official monument was created in the adjacent land.

The official monument is built in such a way that respects the 'unofficial' commemoration of the parents. Here we have a short film that allows you to 'walk' from the official monument, to the brook itself. The sound includes the clicking of the camera, which can be a bit distracting, but we'd nevertheless recommend leaving the sound on: the silence, the flowing water, and the birds give the atmosphere of this extraordinary place.

[Play the video](#)

Allow for a full 60 seconds of silence after the video comes to an end.

## An 'emotional mind map'

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Feel free to make use of the program Mind Manager for this activity, although one can of course simply make use of pen and paper!

Ask everyone to take a few minutes to map out the responses to the helicopter crash they have experienced: the song, the video clip of the song, the official monument, and the hangings in the trees.

*What lines of feeling, causality, agreement or dissonance do these pieces of art form between each other? What emotional responses do each of them elicit from you?*

Give whatever time is necessary to share these maps.

[Mention at some point how each person in Israel has their own map – for each event, for each soldier, for each time a song is played that refers to a death, and for each death reported. Imagine such an interleaving of emotional maps in one country...]

Finally, if time and emotional strength remains, (this isn't a hoop-te-doo kind of session after all!) you might wish to have the group read out, or read silently to themselves, the emotional map that David Grossman draws in the eulogy for his son who died in Lebanon 2006.

[If you use the Grossman piece, allow it to have the final word. Don't hold a discussion after it. Summaries and conclusions should be given prior to the reading.]

[One important note to throw in, is that Yom HaZikaron is one of the most notoriously difficult of days for Diaspora Jewry to mark. It is full of terribly complex emotions on the part of Israelis and non-Israelis. When going to the Yom HaZikaron ceremony in your community, it may be helpful to remember these intermeshing emotional mind maps of Israeli loss. The ceremony may feel less foreign, more something of your own.]

# You Were My

## *Someone to Run With*

### **Eulogy delivered by David Grossman for his son Uri Grossman z"l**

**Har Herzl, 15 August 2006**

*[From the Hebrew, unabridged]*

David Grossman is one of Israel's leading authors. Like Amos Oz and A.B. Yehoshua, he fully supported the Second Lebanon War of 2006. In the last week of the war, however, as the cease fire was being negotiated, the three authors urged Israel to pull the soldiers out from Lebanon, rather than risk more lives. Poignantly and tragically Uri, David's middle child, died along with 34 other soldiers the last weekend of the war. This is the eulogy David gave for his son at the funeral, translated from the Hebrew. One of Grossman's most widely-read novels is entitled, "Someone to Run With."

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At twenty to three on Saturday night, there was a ring at our door. Over the intercom, they announced themselves as army officers. We had already been through three days when almost every thought that entered our minds began with a negative. He won't come. We won't speak. We won't laugh. There will be no more of that boy with the ironic grin and the crazy sense of humor. No more of that young man with wisdom beyond his years. No more warm smile and no more healthy appetite. No more rare combination of determination and delicateness, no more shrewd common sense and wise-heartedness. No more the infinite gentleness of Uri, and no more silence in which he could calm the stormy atmosphere. No more watching The Simpsons and Seinfeld together, and no more listening to Johnny Cash. No more of your strong hugs, and no more seeing you walking with [your brother] Yonatan, gesticulating wildly as you speak. No more hugs for your beloved [sister] Ruti. No more. No.

Uri, my love, throughout all your short life, we have all learned from you. We learned from your strength and your determination to go about things your own way. To follow your own path even if there was no chance that you'd succeed. We observed in astonishment as you fought to be accepted to a tank officers' course. You were not prepared to be satisfied with giving any less than you knew you were capable of giving. And when you succeeded, I thought, here is someone who knows his abilities so simply and so soberly. Someone with no pretenses and no pride. Who is not influenced by what others say to him. Someone whose source of strength is lodged firmly within himself.

You were like this from childhood. A boy who lived in harmony with himself and his surroundings. A boy who knew his place, who knew that he was beloved, and who knew his limitations and his talents. Indeed, from the moment you overleaped the entire army and became a commander, it was clear just what sort of commander you would be. We heard today from your friend and fellow soldier that you would always wake up before everyone else to begin organizing the equipment, and that you would go to sleep after everyone else so as to make sure that everything was in its place. Yesterday at midnight I looked at our house, which had become a total mess as a result of the hundreds of people who had passed through to offer condolences, and I said: Nu, now we need Uri to help us sort it all out.

Uri, you were the Left-winger in your regiment, and everyone respected you because you held fast to your word without ever abdicating a single military responsibility. When you left for Lebanon, Ima said that the one thing she was most afraid of was your "Elifelet Syndrome" [reference to poem by Natan Alterman]. We were worried that like Elifelet of the poem, if someone were needed to run and save a wounded soldier, you would not hesitate to run directly through the line of fire; and you would be the first to volunteer to restock the supply of ammunition when it ran low. And that, just as you were all your life, at home and at school and in your army service, and just as you always volunteered to give up your furloughs because there was someone else who needed a break more than you did or because someone else's situation was more difficult --- in just this way, would you fall in Lebanon, facing a difficult battle.

Uri, you were a person who was at one with himself, a person whom it was good to be around. I can't begin to express just how much you were, for me, someone to run with. During every visit home you would say to me, "Abba, let's go talk," and we would go together, usually to a restaurant, and sit and talk. You would tell me so much, Uri, and I felt so proud that I had the merit of serving as your confidante. That someone like you chose to confide in me.

You lit up our lives, Uri. Ima and I raised you with love. There was simply so much to love in you. I know that your short life was good. I hope that I was a fitting father for a son like you. But I know that to be the son of your mother meant to grow up surrounded by infinite generosity and loving-kindness and love. You received all of this in plenitude, and you knew how to appreciate it, and you knew how to be grateful, and nothing that you received was ever taken for granted.

I am not saying anything at this moment about the war in which you were killed. We, your family, have already lost in this war. The State of Israel will make her own reckoning. As your family, we will retreat into our pain, surrounded by our good friends, enveloped in the strong love that we feel from so many people, the majority of whom we don't even know. I am so grateful to them for their boundless support. I only wish that we Israelis could also give this amount of love and solidarity in better times. This is, perhaps, our only common national aspiration. It is our great human resource - if only we knew how to use it. If only we could extricate ourselves from the violence and the enmity that has permeated our way of life. If only we could know how to save ourselves now, at the last minute, because even more difficult times lie ahead for us.

Uri was very much an Israeli child – even his name is very Israeli. He was the essence of Israel as I would like to see it. That essence which is almost forgotten now. That which is sometimes regarded as a curiosity these days. What's more, Uri was principled. That word, principled, so often derided in our times, because in our crazy, cruel, and cynical world, it isn't "cool" to be principled, to be a humanist, or to be empathic towards the other -- especially if the other is your enemy on the battlefield. But I learned from Uri that it is possible to be both principled and cool. We need to be accountable for our own souls. We have to both defend ourselves and uphold ourselves. We have to uphold ourselves against brute force, against the destructiveness of cynicism, and against the constricting scorn that is the greatest curse of everyone who lives in a disaster area such as ours.

Uri had the courage to be himself all the time and in every situation. He had the courage to find his voice in everything he said and did; this is what saved him from contamination, corruption and diminution of the soul.

In the night between the Sabbath and Sunday morning, at twenty to three, there was a ring at our door. Over the intercom, they announced themselves as army officers, and I went to open the door, and I thought – that's it. Our lives are over. But five hours later, when Michal and I went into Ruti's room and woke her in order to break the terrible news to her, Ruti, after her first cry, said, "But we will still go on living, right? We'll still go hiking like before, and I want to keep singing in the choir, and I want to keep laughing as always, and I want to learn to play the guitar." And we hugged her and told her that yes, we'd still go on living.

We will take our strength from Uri. He had the strength to carry us forward for many years. He radiated a sense of life, of warmth, and of love. The light of that radiance will continue to shine for us, even if the star itself has been extinguished. Uri our love, it was a great honor for us to live with you. Thank you for every moment that you were ours.

*Love – Abba, Ima, Yonatan, and Ruti*