



LIGHT AND MERCY

May 18 2008

Ashkelon is a beautiful, modern beach city situated between the desert and the Mediterranean Sea. It is surrounded by citrus groves, cotton plants and acres of sunflowers. With a population of 110,000, it is Israel's 13th largest city. It is also one of the oldest cities in the world, dating back 4000 years.



For the past year and a half, Ashkelon has come into range of rockets fired by Palestinians from Gaza. Many of the missiles have landed very close to the Rotenberg Power Plant, which supplies about a quarter of Israel's electricity.



Late Wednesday afternoon, May 13th, Palestinians fired an Iranian Grad missile from Dugit in Gaza, an Israeli community before the disengagement. The missile fell on a shopping mall in Ashkelon a few hours after President George Bush arrived in Israel and was ending his conversation with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.

Defense Minister Ehud Barak invited visiting US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to accompany him on a tour of the scene of the attack, but she declined the invitation.

At the Ashkelon mall, people were trapped under the rubble and a young mother and her 2 ½ year old daughter were seriously wounded. Over 83 people were transferred to the hospital, with 19 suffering light to moderate wounds and the rest were treated for shock.





Because of the severity of their wounds the mother and daughter were transferred to the Tel Hashomer Hospital. Friday morning we visited their families at the hospital, bringing them a basket filled with small and practical gifts of food and other items.

We went first to the Children's Wing of the Hospital to check on the condition of the 2 ½ year old little girl, Tai'ir. When the missile exploded directly above her and her mother, its impact caused Tai'ir to fly from her mother's arms. She is suffering greatly with a hole in her eardrum and shrapnel throughout her tiny body. She has undergone an operation already to remove some of the shrapnel from her leg but faces many other operations and a very long recovery period. Her distraught grandmother stays by her bedside so Tai'ir's father, Adi, can spend his time between his daughter and his wife.

We walked with Adi from the Pediatric Hospital to the trauma unit in the main hospital to visit with his wife, Avital. Avital's body has massive amounts of shrapnel, she has a broken leg, arm and jaw, cannot see from one eye which is full of blood, and cannot hear from one ear. Her husband Adi said it is a "Ness Gadol," a Great Miracle that Avital is alive. Shrapnel pierced her neck but did not break it or sever any veins, and shrapnel also lodged next to her spine, but, Baruch Hashem, did not touch the spinal cord. This 24 year old mother is facing a very long road to recovery. In addition to 2 year old Tai'ir, they also have a nine month old baby at home.

Twenty-five year old Adi studied at a military yeshiva before enlisting in the Israeli Defense Forces. He was just beginning to attend officer's training school.

This gentle, precious family needs much prayer, as well as financial and emotional assistance. Please pray for a miraculous recovery for both Mother and daughter; finances to cover their unexpected needs; G-d's strength for all of them, including the Grandmother; and for His provision and mercy during this traumatic time.



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