

The non-profit organisation and the death (a play on words in Hebrew – Ha'amuta vevat'muta).

The angels in blue: the tragedy of the NGO Elem at Nova – the new testimonies and evidence

"We saw people were running away, and we understood that people were injured. A tender drove in front of us, started firing at us, and then I shouted to everyone to get out of the vehicle."

"We went across the dance floor, that was full of lots of people dancing, happy."

"I shouted: 'It's them', and I opened the door and we started running away."

"Quick! Quick! Run! Run! Run!"

"Yo!"

How they had waited for this party. Not because of the dancing or the music. For the people from the non-profit Elem, this was supposed to be the highpoint of their volunteering.

Maayan Shenker Brownstein: volunteer with Elem. "We picked a spot. We set up our 'space'. We had a really nice evening meal. And then we divided into shifts. Some of us went to sleep; and some of us were on duty; some of us were in the space."

Liraz Avraham: volunteer with Elem. "There was lots of excitement on our part. And we went across the dance floor, that was full of lots of people dancing, happy. And I said to Sigal: 'Look at this. Just stop for a minute. Look. It's overwhelming.'"

On the Nature Party scene, there's hardly anyone who doesn't know the angels in the blue shirts, 'Good People', as they call themselves, and that's really what they are. The ones who are always there, close by and right on the dancefloor, looking at every one of the party people, and ready to give emotional and physical support to anyone who drugs have caused them to lose their way.

Moshe Elad: volunteer in Elem. "People come to us as a result of panic attacks or confusion or drunkenness. They don't sleep at night. They're confused. They can't find their friends. They come to talk to someone. And that's what we give: that shoulder, a feeling of being like a friend or a big brother, who has come from this thing."

They came to Re'im on Friday evening. The vast experience that they have acquired in the field taught them that sunrise would also be the time when the bulk of their work would take place. And then sunrise came and missiles and terrorists appeared from every corner, and the earth shook.

"Sister, we're at the party and there are rockets being intercepted."

"Come here, people."

"Emergency exit? But why? What's happened?"

Maayan: "We saw people start to run away from the end of the queue, and we heard gunfire. We saw people were running away, and we understood that there were people injured, who were injured from the gunfire. A tender drove in front of us. It was still some distance away, and I saw people get out of the tender, and I felt something go past my ear like that started firing at us, and then I shouted to everyone to get out of the vehicle."

"They're firing at us."

“They’re firing at us. Let’s get out of the vehicle.”

“Get out.”

Adam Barel: volunteer in Elem. “We simply got out of the vehicle.”

Maayan: “We ran.”

Moshe: “We turned the vehicle round. The tender was in front of us and we did a U-turn. And we drove in the direction of Be’eri.”

Liraz: “The road was open, because the other side of the road was basically blocked by lots of people who actually, apparently, they had fired on earlier, and they abandoned their cars. Thanks to Maayan’s shout, I shouted at her: ‘Drive!’” And she shouted: ‘They’re firing at us, run!’ And, thanks to that, we simply split up and everyone simply fled.”

Maayan: “At times like that, it’s hard to stay together. Everyone runs for his life.”

“Yo, yo, yo, yo! Please!”

In the moments of terror and escape, they go back to their van, and there discover that their friends have been butchered.

Maayan: “I went into the van kind of instinctively. And then I saw Lior there. I lifted her up and I tried to kind of check whether she was conscious. And they kept firing at us. So I carried on. Like, I carried on running away. Then I saw Sigal, beside the road. She didn’t respond either. She was wounded.”

Moshe: “She was there, with people with her, up to the last moment. And Lior and Yonatan as well.”

Adam: “Right up to the last moment.”

Moshe: “Up to the last moment, they were there with people.”

Of the nine players who set out on the mission on that Shabbat, six returned home. Three others who were with them until the moment they split up, were murdered in cold blood. Sigal Levi, Lior Hadad and Yonatan Richter, good people who paid with their lives, only because they wanted to care about other people.

Lior Hadad started volunteering during the last year, and since then she hadn’t missed a single party, even though it meant leaving at home her husband and her six-year-old daughter.

“At 5:50, she was still writing to them a message on the group?”

“About people she was helping. So she writes here: ‘A cute Swedish guy, going out with an Israeli girl. He loves Israelis for some reason. Marijuana. Ori and Re’ut, both cute, marijuana.’”

“You have to find a bit of humour in all these things.”

“She did...yes. This is...her humour. Sigal writes that she and I are giving support”

“I still see them alive.”

Sigal Levi z”l: murdered at the party:

“Mummy, mummy: what animal do you like best?”

“Dogs. Nico.”

(“For your next grandchildren, who will come, please God.”)

“Why?”

“Because he’s the cutest in the world.”

“They...I still feel them. I still see them smiling, with their good eyes.”

Tali Erez: director of Elem: “All the time they talk about those enjoying themselves and about the producers and about the police. But nobody talks about the people who came to look after those who were enjoying themselves. Or what it means that there is someone there who has come to be there for someone who is now going through a crisis, who’s drowning in something, in a panic attack.”

Welfare professionals, who always knew the right thing to say, are having difficulty, these days, finding the words. And despite that, it was important for them to meet the families of their friends who were murdered, to apologise to them, and also to complete the puzzle for them.

Mor Hadad, the sister of Lior z”l: “Thanks for your efforts. Really, really thank you. She really loved everything that you did, and she was so excited about every gig that you went to. She really loved it, really loved it. And it was so suited to her. When she told me that she’d done it, I was so proud of her. I said to her: ‘Sister, how great that you’re doing this. It’s both exactly you and also helping people and also enjoying a party. And also, like, everything.’ It’s exactly who she was. So thank you.”

Liraz: “She didn’t stop saying that. The night before, she stood in front of us, like that; some had already gone to sleep. Some of us were just...we were sitting around, talking. She said: ‘I’m so proud of myself.’ Both the fact that she managed to come and also how her life changed completely in the last months. And she said: ‘It’s me. I’ve done this.’”

Mor: “I think she was the happiest I’ve seen her. Of course, apart from the hospital.”

Liraz: “How great that we, as it were, gave her this.”

Sigal Levi, 31, was a social worker by training

Sigal Levi z”l: murdered at the party: “We meet all of those who are more transparent, who are under the radar, who slip between the cracks.”

For eight years, she worked with young people in distress. She saw her calling as saving those whose whole life was in front of them. This party, which was also her first festival, she was simply not prepared to miss.

“She was with us. She was with us in the van. And then she went out, she went to the road.”

Yossi Atiya: fiancé of Sigal z”l. “She went out for a second. Like, really on Road 232, like. Wow.”

“Like, OK.”

Yossi: “No. It’s important to close the...for me, at least, it’s important to close the circle and to understand what happened there. Also from the first moment. Because you’re, yes, looking for that certainty, and to know what was there, what there wasn’t there.”

“OK.”

“They’ve helped you to understand now?”

Yossi: “In retrospect, yes. But bear in mind that I was with her from Shabbat on the phone from 6:30. In other words, from two hours before it happened. In my opinion, I also spoke to her about before it...before they met...I didn’t understand. I said: ‘Right, I’ll come and

collect you.’ Because, it’s like, you say to yourself: ‘OK, what can be going on here? Two or three missiles. OK, an incursion of terrorists. How many? Four? Peh! You don’t imagine ...’

“Look at Grandma. Three, four... “

Annie Levi: mother of Sigal z”l. “It was important for me simply to know that she didn’t suffer. That it really was important to hear the story from this point of view. To know that she was murdered, as it were, immediately. And also, I’m not asking any questions. I prefer to think like that. And yes, in order to really...that there’s a chance of carrying on. Absolutely.”

Yuval Lavi: brother of Sigal z”l. “She was always a people person. Already from a young age, when she was little, she would... there was this kind of thing where she would stand next to people talking, and simply stare at them, and stand next to them like that, as if she was...”

Annie: “Listening to them.”

Yuval: “Listening. She was in a state where she was oblivious to anything else.”

Sigal on the phone: “Wow! Yoski, don’t ask. There’s starting here a whole lot of interceptions of rockets and stuff. The whole party is breaking up. People are going.”

“When was contact broken?”

Yossi: “8:10, more or less. I remember I spoke to her one last time on the phone, and there she was,...the first time that I understood that she was stressed, and I didn’t understand what was happening there. And I said, like: ‘OK. Calm down. Cal down, Sigali. You’ll come back to me when everything has calmed down and it will all be OK. And, in retrospect, a few minutes later I got a message from here and....that was the last message.”

Yossi and Sigal had more than a few plans for the future, having got engaged just three months ago. Their wedding was set for January. In the week before that Shabbat, Sigal, with her mother, had managed to buy a wedding dress. That was also the last time they met.

Yossi: “We’d set a date. We’d made all the arrangements. In the end I buried her instead of marrying her. It’s the hardest stage now. It seems to me that this is the stage when you...you understand how much you miss her in your life. This is life. She’s not there..... There’s nobody who’s going to come home.”

“Tell me: when you lie in bed at night, do you say to yourself: ‘All the people at the party were good people. How did this happen to the people who are better than the good people?’

Yossi: “There’s no justice.....Yes.”

Hagar Levi, sister of Sigal z”l: “Wow, wow!

Annie: “Yossi, are you OK?”

Hagar: “Wow! I didn’t expect to see the stone. I thought that I was coming to see...”

Yuval: “Yes. A mound of sand.”

Hagar: “Sigal, daughter of Annie and Mickey Levy. A good woman. Murdered at the Nova party on 7 October, 2023. Sigal, the beautiful girl with the turquoise eyes. The laughter, the optimism and the light that you brought to the world will continue to beat in the hearts of all of those you touched. We will always love you..... Sorry.