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On our conference call this morning with Daniel who spoke from jail, he told us that the social worker from the Israeli Prison Service threatened once again that she would prevent him from calling us.

The four of us sat at the park on our way to a meeting with the director of the documentary film about us. We squeezed ourselves onto one bench: Ilana, Azamra, Shiran, and me, Aderet. He is on the line with us. Missing him, worried, and unsure what to do, constantly scared that our one line of communication will be cut off.

We have been like this for four years.

The park was desolate. We haven’t heard children’s laughter for a long time. They took them too.

They shut us up with a gag order, they prevented us from expressing ourselves and protesting, but the lies against us flooded the public via the press.

For many long months, the police forcefully closed us off separately, in different battered women’s shelters all over the country. We were not allowed to leave, have a phone, or contact each other. Two armed detectives would come to take each of us in a police car to exhausting and violent interrogations.

They deprived us of our freedom to live and destroyed everything we had built over fifteen years.

Preceding this unbelievable arrest, we had the best lives imaginable; we couldn’t understand how to live differently. We lived interesting, exciting, adventurous lives. A religious Breslev family with ties to Rabbi Isroel Ber Odesser, known as “HaSaba” (the grandfather), possessor of the famous Rabbi Na Nach Nachma Nachman from Uman note in Jerusalem. Our family was a special, non-conventional family- six friends who lived in love with one man. It may sound odd, but there are many odd things in this world. And some people may find it hard to understand, but we got along pretty well and the problems that we had were ‘normal’ problems like in every household. That is why we were so shocked by our arrest. We couldn’t imagine there is someone who wants to hurt us so much. Who were we bothering? What law did we break? Why would anyone care how we chose to live our lives? It was not clear to us who stood behind this and why. As time passed, the truth was revealed…

The plot against us was planned by “The Israel Centre for Victims of Cults” (ICVC) who tagged us a “dangerous cult” in the press in order to justify its existence and to enable the continued laundering of donation funds.

An exposé published by the newspaper “Yediot Ahronot” in March, 2011 revealed that the questionable “center” is actually a fake NPO working against religious streams which are unacceptable to them, and attacks any group of people who act in a way they don’t like. The organization comprises two women and one doctor: Rachel Lichtenstein, Sharona Ben Moshe, and Dr. David Green.

*The European Interreligious Forum (EIFRF) published that the ICVC is actually a branch of FECRIS (European Federation of Centres of Research and Information on Cults and Sects), an ‘anti-cult’ organization existing in over thirty countries comprised of small NGOs often comprised of only two to three people in each country.(www.eifrf-articles.org)*

*FECRIS vice-president Alexander Dvorkin, a Russian citizen who is actively involved with the Russian Orthodox Church, explains the organization’s anti-cult principles: “The Christian Orthodox faith is the original (…) a sect is a fake, something forged, something tawdry.” Dvorkin also attacked the Muslim faith on several occasions and announced: “Either Mohammed suffered from a disease and it was a delirium vision; or it was demonic obsession.”*

*Human rights experts worldwide strongly criticize FECRIS for their use of hate speech and their spread of intolerance in society against minority religions. A representative of the United Nations for Freedom of Religion said “there seems to be a negative and derogative connotation to the term “cult”. This approach is evidence of a tendency towards generalizations, discrimination, and rejection, an approach which damages freedom of religion and harms basic defense of human rights”.*

As opposed to other cases in which the police have a thread of evidence to make arrests and base indictments, in our case they had nothing. They could not even arrest us for “polygamy”, because we were not formally married.

The slanderous articles in the newspaper and television came from Aliza’s family, the fifth wife. In the early years, we had excellent relations with her family, who visited often since they lived close by. Their relationship with Aliza and our family went south when Aliza decided to stop helping them financially because she felt that it was already too much after having giving them no less that eighty thousand shekels. They became violent when she refused to give in to their pressure, and ambushed us outside of our house with sticks and stones, cursed us and broke windows in the house until the children nearly got hurt- it could have ended in disaster. Her older brother, a criminal known to the police, threatened to hurt Daniel and the children and burn our house down. Aliza did not give in and told them they went too far. She went to the police, filed a complaint, and demanded a restraining order. They apologized for their behavior, but simultaneously turned to the Israel Centre for Victims of Cults, the press, and the police. So it happened that in 2008 the investigation began: surveillance, bugging, investigators, undercover activity. All of their efforts were in vain.

Three years later…

Samy, Daniel’s fourteen year old stepson, called the police because “Dad isn’t home and a friend of my older brother is hitting me”. Even this was not cause for arrest. When the police called back and understood everything was okay, they did not even bother to come. A month and a half later, one of the boys saw a strange wooden box behind the closet and ripped it out. He couldn’t know that it was a police wire. When he opened the box to see what it was, five undercover cops swarmed the house yelling that everyone is under arrest. Chief prosecutor Lilach Ranan admitted in county court that the arrest was not planned, but they had to arrest us since the listening devices which were supposed to help gather evidence were exposed. (Just to remind you, three years of close and intense surveillance yielded nothing).

The Jerusalem Police understood that their only way to get the court to extend our arrest was to mark us as a “sadistic cult”, in which all of the family members are brainwashed slaves and sex slaves, and that the father of the family is no less than “the biggest criminal in the country” “the Satan from Jerusalem” “Head of a sadistic cult” as he was called in the media. In order to further their investigation, the police appointed the Israel Centre for Victims of Cults as “expert consultants” in the case against us. The ICVC provided the police with points of emphasis for the investigation and a list of questions for the interrogations. The police, in turn, sent them witnesses for bribing and “treatments” (i.e. to convince the people that they are indeed cult victims). Naturally, the police did not bother to check the credibility of the center or its active members, did not investigate the identity and quality of the “experts”, their past, their personal issues and the millions in donations that they pocket under false pretenses and fraud.

Sharona ben Moshe, who presents herself as “legal consultant for the ICVC”, is involved in the famous extortion case of Rabbi Nir Ben-Artzi and was the girlfriend of one of the partners in crime, Simon Katorza. For three years, they imprisoned Rabbi Ben-Artzi in different apartments in Tiberias under difficult conditions, took control of his assets and gave phony messages to the donors of his NPO. In this manner they fraudulently received funds. They fed him bread and margarine, and after forcing him to drink a liter of vodka, they made him sign a document in which he admits having sexual relations with sheep and other animals. In order to shift public attention and to cover her ties to the kidnapping and extortion, Sharona ben-Moshe became the “spokesperson” for the ICVC and fed false information to the press against “cults”, and Nir Ben-Artzi was one of the first ones attacked. In the end, during their trial, the deceit was revealed; they were sentenced to jail, public service, and a fine.

It is interesting to note that in our case, the police succeeded in convincing Aliza to become a witness for the state and to turn state's evidence after making great efforts over five long months and after “treatment” at the ICVC, Aliza suddenly began inventing hallucinatory stories, and slowly improved on them, until a year later she began to say that in the “cult” she was forced to have sexual relations with horses, snakes, spiders, mice, and cockroaches…

Rachel Lichtenstein, director of the ICVC, is a zealous, extremist haredi woman and she felt she won the lottery when she brought forward her first witness, Timna.

Timna was a 19 year old girl from a religious family. According to her, her mother suffered from schizophrenia and was hospitalized in mental hospitals, her father of Yemenite descent, was a head of Yeshiva, and was involved in a famous case where he was accused of being married to several women simultaneously; at some point he left the house and divorced her mother. She also said that her uncle sexually abused her when she was a child. She was thrown to the streets, grew up in boarding schools, and dreamed of becoming a model. At a young age, she tried different drugs, and dealt. One day, Kari, Daniel’s second wife about whom you will read later, met Timna in downtown Jerusalem, and Timna asked to accompany her to Chanukah candle lighting. Timna enjoyed her visit with Kari, and continued their relationship via phone calls and the occasional meals at our house. We couldn’t imagine that she would develop an “obsessive love” for Daniel. Timna insisted unequivocally that she marry Daniel as his seventh wife, an idea that scared him very much, and therefore he requested Kari cease inviting her to the house. Nonetheless, Timna showed up, and with no shame, took Daniel for a discussion in which she told him that she could only be happy with him, and demanded that he marry her immediately. Daniel did not want to hurt her, and rejected her by claiming that he did not have any intentions to marry any more women. Timna left the house in a rage, and while obsessively kissing the Mezuzah she repeatedly said through her teeth: “You will regret this…”

Nevertheless, she continued coming to our performances and enthusiastically interviewed for a television show “360” that Channel Two edited, produced, and aired about us. She heaped praise on our family and our way of life: “… I’ve been in a lot of groups, and here I felt that this was a place of people of the truth and that I don’t want to go…”

Four months later, while watching the show and hearing the presenter say: “More women are on the way to Ambash…” her pathological jealousy exploded and she called the ICVC who instigated the program and participated in it. She wrote to Rachel Lichtenstein, the director, and said she needed help. Lichtenstein invited Timna to a meeting. Timna was homeless and had an open criminal file for theft. Lichtenstein jumped at the opportunity that befell her, took advantage of Timna’s weaknesses, and promised her financial and emotional support. She set up a meeting with police investigators from Jerusalem, and they took her to a hotel on the Tel Aviv coastline. The police investigators did not document the meeting, and used her burning desire for revenge to fabricate a story that the ICVC can fit to a “cult profile”: 1. Sexual exploitation 2. Financial exploitation 3. Child rape 4. Sex with animals 5. Contempt by eating feces, and more. The police investigators broke every law possible, and even promised Timna an apartment, and also gave her bribe money. A year later, Timna was the prime witness in court and she said: “I was in shock that Rachel Lichtenstein passed this on to the police, I didn’t think this would get to the police, they were just words I said and I didn’t want this to have consequences but she said that I had no choice.” It was important to Timna to emphasize her total love for Daniel in court, and she said: “I loved Daniel like I have never and will never love a man in my life.” With Daniel in front of her, hands and feet chained, in prison garb and with guards around him, she stupidly revealed her motive when she told the judges that she is still hurt because she heard that Daniel once said her teeth were not pretty.

The FECRIS ideology is that a “cult” is a dangerous place for children, and that cult members are not legally competent and should have their children taken from them. Therefore, Dr. Green coached the police investigators that they need to prove that the children were sexually abused, and they should use any means necessary to prove it, as hard as they may be. From lack of evidence, they found a rabbit to pull out of the hat- the same phone call Samy made to the police, the one we mentioned earlier and will now expand upon:

Samy was a mischievous boy and he liked to sneak into the girls` dorms and peak in the showers. Once he touched six-year old Batya (Daniel and Aliza’s daughter) on her lower parts above her clothes. Aliza got very upset and made a dramatic claim that Samy raped Batya. When Daniel wasn’t home, a friend of Samy’s older brothers, a 24 year old American bully type came and heard Aliza’s hysteria. He began to threaten Samy that he would shove a pole in his rear end “to teach him a lesson”. Samy didn’t want to come out a sucker, so he called the police. Three hours later, the police called to see what was going on, and when they understood that everything was alright they ignored the call. A month and a half later, under the guidance of the ICVC and under the theory that the “leader of the cult” is exclusively responsible for everything that happened, even if he wasn’t there and didn’t know about it- we were shocked to discover that on the basis of this story, they built an indictment that sits well with one of the characteristic of a profile of a cult leader: child abuse. Daniel was convicted of “sodomy”, for a crime that may not have occurred, and if it did, all of the evidence indicates that he was not present while it was committed. Moreover, Samy testified that had his father been home, he would have protected him and not let something like this happen. We sent the tape of Samy’s conversation with the police to a sound expert who investigates evidence admissibility, we were surprised to discover that the police committed a criminal act: They edited the tape and cut out the words: “Daddy’s not home”. In the interrogation room they threatened Samy that he was suspected of raping his six year old sister and that if he didn’t cooperate, he would sit in jail fourteen years. In this manner, they were able to plant different versions, detail after detail on the basis of this story and got to a long story with twenty charges against Daniel.

The police still needed more witnesses from within the house to create “credibility” and corroborate the story. Anastasia, Samy’s eighteen and a half year old sister, Daniel’s step daughter, was disappointed that none of Daniel’s sons wanted to marry her because she was known to be a liar and someone who “changes boyfriends like socks”, and therefore she quickly decided that it would be more beneficial to her to accept the police bribe and help them and influence the others to testify against Daniel. She told the police that there was a rumor in the house about a week before the arrest that thirteen year old Akiva (Daniel and Ilana’s son) played immodest games with his two little brothers. The police jumped at the story. Similar to Samy’s case, they threatened Akiva that if he did not testify against his father, he would be charged with raping his younger brothers. After a lot of pressure, Akiva became a witness for the prosecution against his father, and was considered the most reliable witness by the courts. A few months later, he sent a detailed letter to the Supreme Court in which he recanted his testimony, and provided details about how attorneys Sagi Ofir and Lizo Wolfos, together with the children’s investigator Micah Haran, threatened him that if he didn’t testify against his father, he would sit in jail in his stead, and taught him what to say in his testimony. He also explained that they were the reason he tried to commit suicide.

The Department of Welfare declared publicly that in the “Ambash” case, there was successful cooperation between the police, the ICVC, the prosecution, and the social workers. This was a golden opportunity for the Department of Welfare to kidnap children from their parents, to send them to boarding schools, and to get huge allocations for each child they hold.

The police identified the weak spots, failings, and sensitivities of each of the interviewees in the interrogations, and tortured each accordingly. With Aliza they had an advantage: her mother worked for them and put all possible pressures on her to convince her to divorce Daniel, whom she loved so much; furthermore, one of Aliza’s relatives is a police investigator in the Jerusalem Region and she also pressured Aliza’s mother to convince her to give in to the investigators. Actually, Aliza was very strong in her war to prove Daniel’s innocence, so much so that they ended up using the weight of the whole of “Jerusalem Yamar” (Central Police Unit in Jerusalem- in charge of interrogations and intelligence in major crimes). They used different techniques: threats, screaming, degradation, flattery, and bribery. They scared her by saying she wouldn’t see Batya, hers and Daniel’s daughter, and explained her what she needed to say in order to save herself, otherwise she would sit in jail for years, because Anastasia, Kari’s daughter, was prepared to testify that she raped her “under Daniel’s orders”. They also let her have a taste of a few days in solitary confinement in Ma’asiyahu Prison.

Aliza held out for a long while, yelled at the investigators, posted clips on YouTube in which she talked about the police corruption and the lies they were forcing her to tell. Unfortunately, she weakened five months later because they told her that Daniel would never get out of prison, and it would be a shame if she lost both her daughter and her life. Her older siblings, with her mother’s cooperation, knew she couldn’t live without a man and tempted her using a childhood friend who was several years younger than her and who had lived the past few years in the United States. They convinced him to come back to Israel to complete the mission. He began courting her and got her pregnant. The distance from here to becoming a witness for the prosecution was short. At this point, the police had victory at their hands.

In her testimony in court, when the defense asked her if she had any connection to theft of the Daniel’s checkbook and forging of his signature, she played dumb and acted as if she didn’t know what he was talking about. When the defense attorney showed the court a tape made by private investigators that proved that she and her childhood friend and big brother, forged checks in an amount of a quarter of a million shekels, Aliza did not know what to say. Despite this, the judges chose to ignore the fact that an ineligible witness sits before them. That must be the way it works when you decide to prosecute someone no matter what, even if there is no evidence against him and truthful testimony is not important…

The crumbling of Aliza’s testimony as a witness for the prosecution is a turning point in the story because she was the only woman among us who became a witness for the prosecution and got benefits as a witness for the State.

Despite this whole house of cards, built on perjury after perjury (each witness recanted his or her testimony at some point after this and admitted to having lied) there is not any evidence to prove the charges against Daniel. Actually, evidence proving his innocence, like the police tapes and the beatings we got in the interrogations, was destroyed, made to disappear, or not recorded at all.

To my detriment, the police found twelve-year-old notebooks where I jotted down dreams, fantasies, imaginary things, and prayers. They gave their own interpretations to what I wrote, which were actually diametrically opposed to the truth, and despite the fact that the judges said the weight of the journal would be decided according the writer’s explanation, they completely ignored my testimony, and thus manipulated me into “helping” them.

Six months after Daniel’s arrest the police saw that despite the “treatment” at the battered women’s shelter, despite the beatings, pressures, threats, and curses in the interrogation rooms, Ilana, Kari, Azamra, Shiran and myself, did not give into their lies. They decided to put all us, except for Kari, in the Neve Tirza Prison. Despite being a witness for the defense, she was the only one not imprisoned because her daughter Anastasia threatened the head of the investigation team Asher Lazmi, that if her mother goes to jail, she will not testify against Daniel.

We sat in prison on a very heavy charge, about which we were not even questioned: child rape. Conviction could lead to a sentence of at least fourteen years. The state’s attorneys tried to tempt us by saying: “If you sign that you were Daniel’s victims, you will immediately be released from prison!” We sat for a whole year because we were not prepared to give in to the lie, and we insisted on waiting for trial so they could bring the evidence against us. Since they couldn’t find any, they subpoenaed Timna, Samy, and Aliza- their witnesses against Daniel, to bear witness against us. They contradicted each other and themselves, and were unable to answer even basic questions. It was so obvious that the witnesses were lying, that we were released the very same day. The judges reprimanded the prosecutor, Sagi Ofir, who was, not coincidentally, the same prosecutor in Daniel’s case, that he had better sort the whole thing out immediately and that these women should not sit one moment in prison. The court cancelled the charges against us and only left that our meetings with Aliza were against a legal order, and forbid us to see each other. Today, we understand that this deal too was an exercise by the prosecutor, because his goal was to convict Daniel of the same charge.

In Daniel’s trial, which was held simultaneously, with a different set of judges, in the same Jerusalem County court, with the same prosecutor, Sagi Ofir, with the same witnesses, with the same charge, which was proven to be a false story and was erased from the records, and against all criminal laws- the judges Jacob Saban, Refael Carmel, and Rebecca Friedman convicted Daniel.

In October 2013, in their ruling against Daniel, the judges wrote: “**A civilized society** cannot tolerate a way of life like that created by the defendant, with multiple wives”.

And since we are more than one woman, they decided we were female slaves, and since female slaves have no free will, then sexual relations with us are considered non-consensual, and that is how they succeeded in convicting Daniel as a serial rapist.

In order to prove the theory of “possession under conditions of slavery” that Dr. Green invented, we were subject to violent police interrogations and intrusive and insulting questions about our sexual relations, because they wanted to prove forcefully sexual exploitation and humiliation. Their strategy was clear. It is not possible that a woman would share her man with five other women, unless he bewitched her and uses hypnotic suggestion on her brain, and since they had nothing real or tangible, they made up an accusation and called it “modern slavery”, fruits of collaboration between the ICVC, the police, the welfare department, and the prosecutor’s office. Daniel is the only one in Israel, and apparently in the world, ever convicted on the charge that he has supernatural powers and charismatic powers that he can enslave other people’s minds. Not a physical enslavement, but a “mental enslavement”. It is unbelievable that in the 21st century a man is accused of using mystical powers, like in the times of the Inquisiton.

Even in the Goel Ratzon case, the man who had more than 32 women and was arrested in January 2-1- on charges of enslavement, polygamy, and rape of his daughters, which was the only case in Israel in which they wanted to convict a man for enslaving his family, he was not convicted on the enslavement charge. His case was completely different from ours: They believed in him, that he was a healer, they worshipped him and they called their children in his name, each of the women tattooed his image on wide areas of her body, and they had a rule book which defined proper behavior and what the punishments would be for not acting according to his will. They all lived with him in the same house. When he was arrested, most of them left him and testified against him, and he also admitted some of the charges. Despite all of this, the “enslavement” charge collapsed completely. As can be learned from the verdict in his case, the judges at the county court in Tel Aviv determined that the theory of “mental enslavement” created by the experts at the ICVC was not credible, not scientific, not accepted in the world or in professional circles, and determined: “There is no place to accept the theory regarding the existence of mental control over another person…”. The Supreme Court also rejected the petition by the ICVC, who tried desperately to return the charge of enslavement in Goel Ratzon’s case.

Despite this precedent, the judges in the Jerusalem County Court convicted Daniel on the charge of enslavement and mental captivity, since they had a problem: if they don’t convict him on the charge of ‘enslavement’, then the whole indictment falls apart since it was all based on this charge. It is important to understand that once the whole family is defined as slaves and brainwashed without an individual opinion, everyone is considered a victim, and automatically the head of the family is considered a “cult leader”, and can be convicted of whatever they choose.

The question is: How can the State hold the rope at both ends? On the one end they declared us victims, on the other end they locked us up in prison… Is that how you take care of “victims” in Israel? And if we were determined to be victims, why aren’t we getting financial support from the State like all other victims?

Usually, when a woman complains about a man to the police, her first version is spontaneous and therefore the most credible. The first version is the deciding one, if the woman recants, says she lied, her second testimony is unacceptable. In our case, no woman complained. Moreover, the judges had to even admit in the verdict: “It has been proven that all members of the family appeared at the initial investigations as one with a unified version denying all of the allegations against Daniel.”

When the prosecutors drew their card “mental slavery”, they succeeded in misleading the judges. The system of the “ victim witness” or “mental witness” enabled the prosecutors and the judges who decided to convict in any case, to achieve convictions, even if the prosecutor’s testimonies are full of contradictions and different versions, they could always say the witnesses are “brainwashed victims”, or if they went over to the prosecutor’s side they were “brainwashed victims that sobered up”, or if they switched sides and then went back to the defense and said they lied then they are “victims in the process of rehabilitation”. In any case, the witness is a victim and the credibility of his testimony is decided upon by the prosecutor. No defense lawyer can deal with this system. Thus for example, when Aliza explained for five months that she determines how things work in her relationship with Daniel, they claimed that she was under “mental influence”, and “her head was turned around”, and she is, without a doubt, “brainwashed”. They threatened her during the interrogations that until she “sobered up” and understand what they are telling her, she will not see her daughter, and will not get her back. Later, under the pressure of the investigation and emotional manipulation put on her by her mother and daughter, she skipped between different versions and couldn’t remember key details in any one of them… Nonetheless, the judges determined that it did not matter that her versions were contradictory, because she is “in rehabilitation”, and she should be allowed consideration and her testimony should be accepted as is. On the other hand, when they found my twelve-year-old journals they asked me to interpret things, rejected my answers all out, and decided on interpreting things exactly the opposite from my intentions. For example, when I wrote a prayer to G-d “Save me, Save me” which I copied from the books of Rabbi Nahman from Breslov, they used that as a type of evidence that I was in distress in my life with Daniel. They did not allow me to explain myself since I was “brainwashed”, even though several times during the trial the judges and the attorney said I am an intelligent and well spoken woman…; … so clever, the most outstanding student, with multiple and rare abilities, who could easily be the Chief Rabbi’s wife.

With unbearable ease and without any professional opinion or psychological testing, the judges decided that despite the fact that we are all independent, clever and intelligent; we are naught other than “a peloton of brainwashed people”. The judges chose to convict only on the basis of the five witnesses for the prosecution, who recanted their testimony, and ignored completely all 16 witnesses for the defense. The judges even wrote about the defense witnesses in a general manner that: “… they were all cut from the same cloth of family members and often were partners themselves in the punishment he practiced.”

When they said “Cut from the same cloth”, did they mean that anyone who visits in our home is also a victim? Or maybe an accessory in crime? If so, why weren’t they called in for questioning and indicted?

For example, when Dvora, a witness for the defense testified in court that she lived with us with her four children for six months, and that she liked the family and Daniel is a good father and nice and righteous man who never acted violently, the judges wrote in their verdict that “she is apparently an accomplice and is herself involved in the punishments that Daniel used, and was cut out of the same cloth as the family members, and that her positive impression of Daniel only strengthened his status among the household members…”

Daniel was sentenced to a harsh punishment, 26 years in jail. The prosecution appealed and asked for 65 years, and all this without one shred of evidence, no injured party.

Does a woman in a “**civilized society”** have to think “like the system”, or she will be tagged a prostitute or sex slave?

Who decided that women supply sexual services and don’t demand sexual services?

Who uses the term “feminism” and causes the oppression of women by preventing them to live as they choose?

Is it okay to decide in the name of “paternalism” what is love?

How is it possible that the same judges that call us “clever and smart” decide we are “sex slaves” just because we chose to love the same man together?

Is it possible that the courts will prosecute a man for raping his wife when she testifies sexual relations based on love?

The judges in Jerusalem determined that the State of Israel does not need proof to convict a man of rape, and doesn’t even need a woman to claim she was raped. They decided to reinvent us as women who were raped, and supplied sexual services under duress. That is how they frame people in Israel: narrow minded zealous, money-grabbing, headline seekers play with people’s lives, separate siblings, isolating each sibling in a different institution, sending children to destructive lives in boarding schools, incite them against their parents, teach them to be embarrassed of their origins, and to hate not only their father but also their mother who continues to love their father, who make them frustrated, desperate, and hopeless. It is interesting to note that when the State does that, it is not considered brainwashing and mental enslavement, but sobering… and the most important thing is the policeman who got the medal, the social worker who was promoted, the judge who got a certificate of excellence from feminist organizations, the ICVC who got the Speaker of the Knesset’s Award, the press who gets scoops, and everyone makes a living.

We appealed to the Supreme Court, who allowed us visits and conjugal visits with Daniel. We sat in court. I very much wanted to respond to the lies of the prosecution, but the judge shut me up. He got a secret document from the Incest Committee, a committee of social workers, a document that said we could not meet with him since we were “his victims”. Even our lawyer was not allowed to see what this was about, because it is a secret document. The judge added without hesitation that he could discontinue our phone calls with Daniel…

And now, sitting on the bench, we ask each other what to do, what will be? How will the world know our real story, four woman from different cultures, with rich life experiences, determined, who decided to live together with one man, how will our children get the real story of how we lived together?

Only we, who built the home, can tell how it really was there. Our cry is deep and painful, nested deeply in our hearts and will not give us rest- until the truth is told.

We created a website, put on a show, and a movie about us is about to come out, but we have so much more to tell. We decided that the best thing to do is to write a book, which will be comprised of four parts. Each of us will write her personal story, and together we will get our true story out, with each of us presenting her point of view. That is how this book was born. An authentic story of four women and one man who despite everything, did not give up on love.

Aderet’s Personal Story

December 16, 2012 early morning. I, Aderet Dorit Ambash, was brought by the Jerusalem Attorney’s Office, hands and feet cuffed, from Neve Tirza prison, to District Court, in order to testify for the prosecution against my husband Daniel Ambash and against my ex-husband Asa Mirash.

Preceding this were grueling sessions at the Jerusalem Police Central Unit through 2011, in which they tried to turn me and convince me to be a witness for the prosecution.

To this day, four years later, I am still angry with myself and cannot understand how police investigators brought me to the point where I confirm some of the lies that they told me? Why didn’t I insist on the truth to the end? What was I afraid of? Of their yelling, violence, cursing, and humiliation? Or their threat to publicize my name if I did not cooperate? Or because I was afraid to dishonor my parents? Was it because I was still traumatized from the way they arrested me and the whole family for questioning? Why did I concede my inner truth and my moral foundation and sense of justice and give in to bribery and flattery? Is it the cynical use of my private diaries that embarrassed me and caused me to “cover crap with more crap”?

These difficult questions weigh on me and haunt me. When I remember the feeling, the atmosphere, and the odor of the interrogation rooms I shudder all over. I relive the suffering and fear that I experienced in the Central Unit’s rooms for hours and hours, sometimes with no food or water, with my head about to burst from the pain, and my heart- can’t hold the sorrow any more. Once again, I hear shouts and threats made by Lilach Ranan, Itzik Levi, Revital Tzeref, Gadi Lubin, Asher Lazmi, Oded Shema, Oded Yaniv… the investigators. They came with all of their power to humiliate, degrade, yell, curse, and threaten in a systematic way: There were times when five investigators attacked me at once, there times when just one investigator worked, all according to the “interrogation exercises” they planned. In their eyes, the “ends justify the means” and everything is “kosher” in order to find something incriminating against my husband. They were frenzied and determined to prosecute, in the holds of a hatred I didn’t know existed. I remember having a thought: “They can make an innocent man think and believe that he murdered, and admit to a murder he didn’t commit…”

At the beginning of the first investigations I was determined not to give in to their pressure, and to be able to protect myself against their tricks and manipulations. I try to look at what happened in the interrogation rooms in retrospect of time in order to understand what caused me to later fall into their trap and reveal “the urban legends” and the “feces stories” that occurred between me and Aliza; how could I not have understood that they would use these stories to frame Daniel? Why didn’t I understand that they could enmesh Daniel into all of these stories, even if he didn’t know or hear of them, and to create false convictions on this basis? How could I have been so stupid as to believe they were looking for the truth and wanted a fair and just trial? What really happened to me in the interrogation rooms? Why did I feel I had to appease the investigators? Is it because I was afraid they would build a case against me as they promised? Was it some type of post trauma?

2011, a peak into the interrogation room at the Jerusalem Central Division:

“You are suspected of abuse of defenseless persons and assault, since you lived along with the other women in the Ambash family home, and you caused abuse of the children, and all of this is against the law. I am informing you that you have the right to consult an attorney. Anything you say can be used against you. Of course you have the right to remain silent, but you should know this will strengthen the evidence against you, in other words you will be interrogated as a suspect, which means your situation is not good… do you understand, Aderet, what we are talking about?”

The investigator, Lilach Ranan, looked at me straight in the eye with a threatening stare, concentrating, and narrowing her black eyes as she taunts me:” You are not going to see Daniel for at least thirty years, not the kids either. That’s it. It’s over Aderet” she screamed in anger, “you have no more family, forget Daniel, he doesn’t exist. Accept that as a fact.” And then suddenly she changed her tone and added in a whisper, as if she is sharing a secret: “Now all that’s left is to save yourself…”. She hoped that after the long hours, days and nights of the grueling interrogation, she would be able to squeeze out of me the long awaited admission, that I was Daniel’s victim. She continued her emotional abuse and warned: “ and I suggest you don’t continue going head to head against me, because I will be forced to write indictments against you from all over the place, and you won’t know how to get out of them, I promise you!” I looked at her in shock. Why is she allowed to threaten me like that? What am I doing here? When she saw that her threats were not working, she tried to adopt a softer tone: “Listen, Aderet, your writing talent is unique, your journals, they really touched me, you write from the heart, each and every word is really touching. Isn’t this a waste? A waste of your writing talent? Between the lines I can see that you are really suffering, why won’t you admit the simple truth?”

I felt like I wanted to scream to the skies. She is trying to use me and my writings against my husband! What the hell does she understand of them? How does she have the right to go through my intimate notebooks where I wrote fantasies and thoughts that modesty would serve them well, and I would never show them to a stranger. Certainly not to a man, and definitely not to her! Is it possible that there is no law in this country that protects the right to privacy? To dignity? Is she allowed to do anything and by all means to lock my husband up? She raised her feet on the computer table, leaned back and burst out in forced laughter: “You are so naive; you think all of the other women are protecting him like you? You have remained alone, Aderet, all of the others understood that they have no choice, that if they want to see their kids, they have to help the investigation. So okay, you don’t have kids, but you have your whole life ahead of you, why waste it? Let it go. Take your freedom. Just to be perfectly clear, you will not see Daniel anytime soon and not for a long time… I can arrange for a meeting with one of the wives so you can confirm what I am saying that everyone has to cooperate with us, and that you are the only one who stayed dumb and didn’t take responsibility for her life. Who do you want to see? Aliza? She spoke like you at the beginning too, and said that Daniel didn’t do anything wrong, but with time she smartened up and put one and one together and understood that it wasn’t worth it for her to be stubborn, I am sure that Daniel would tell her that that is the right consideration, where is your logic?”

“I don’t believe you that Aliza spoke against Daniel, you are simply lying,” I replied angrily.

“I am lying”?! She yelled at me, “ Now I am going to bring Aliza and we will see if I am lying to you”. She rose in one swift move from the chair, and left the room with large strides, leaving me alone for a moment, pondering the questions: Was she lying to me or not? Is it possible that Aliza spoke against Daniel? Could she be cooperating with them? No, no it can’t be, I thought to myself, it’s not possible. It is impossible that she would agree to cooperate with their malicious tale. The investigator must be lying about Aliza, like she lied about the other women and children. I remembered Tzippi, daughter of Ilana and Daniel, 16 years old, yesterday the investigator told me that Tzippi does not want to see me anymore and the door was slightly ajar and I saw Tzippi at the end of the hallway. When she saw me she put her hands to her mouth to create a loudspeaker effect and yelled to me: “Aderet, don’t pay attention to a word they tell you, they are **liars!**”She couldn’t have known that exactly at that moment the investigator had just told me that Tzippi said she was angry with me and that I did bad things to her father. I was sorry that I almost allowed the investigator to cause a dispute between me and Aliza.

The investigator left the room and suddenly Aliza entered. We were very excited to see each other and jumped and hugged for a long while. It was several weeks after the arrest, we were both locked up in battered women’s shelters under house arrest, and we were not allowed to speak or meet.

I whispered in her ear: “Is it true what they are saying about you?”

Aliza pushed me away and said out loud: “You believe them???”

“What are you talking about? “I said. “I don’t believe them, that’s why I’m asking you…”

The truth is that it was very hard for me to believe the investigators story about Aliza because I believed in her and the love between her and Daniel, but I have to admit, that despite that, at that moment I did suspect her, and she must have felt it, because I am not a very good actress and she would always say that I am transparent… she took a step back away from me… looked at me with wonder…

“Save me, you with all of the screens and walls you put up against me, what is your deal? Do you know what I have been through? 48 hours I am in a tiny room without even a bathroom, just a hole, hole… and I am in interrogation all day long, every day, and they say that I spoke against Daniel and you believe them? You believe this shit?”

“Do you think I believe it?” I rushed to my own defense.

“That I would lie about Daniel? Who told you that? I see your behavior, I see how you came to me, I am in shock from you. Me, they just said I would be meeting with Aderet and my heart broke, I was so excited, I am surprised by you Aderet, how many years have we been friends? What happened to you?”

“I told you. I don’t accept anything they say.”

“You are all, all… You do accept it,” she stuttered.

“No I don’t.”

“You have your suspicions.”

“I don’t believe them.”

“You are acting as if we are strangers, why are you being so cold with me? I waited so much to meet with you and this is what you have to say to me, that you believe them? Like, who do you believe? Someone you lived with for eight years or what?”

I couldn’t stop thinking she was putting on a show. She stood by the door and started yelling: “Where is the investigator, I want you to come here. I want someone to help me.”

“Why would Aliza do this?” I thought in my heart, “She isn’t allowing us a moment to be alone together. What is she afraid of? Is she lying or not?”

Lilach entered the room together with investigator Oded Shema.

“Tell the truth,” Aliza turned to the investigator: “Did you say that I was talking against Daniel? Did I say something against Daniel? I don’t understand what happened to Aderet, I was so happy to see her and she is being really cold to me. I give her a warm hug, and she hugs me back coldly and says she suspects me of lying about Daniel, who told her something like that?”

“What are you talking about,” said Lilach the investigator to Aliza and continued: “I said something like that? I didn’t say that you were talking against him, why should anyone talk against him? I said that you started to understand what you should say.”

Aliza hesitated for a moment and then she said out loud:

“Understand Aliza, I realized that I don’t have a choice, they know all sorts of things about me, and if I go to jail, then Batya could get adopted or sent to family abroad, you understand? This is not a game. Aderet, when you have a child it is not a game anymore; it’s something you cannot understand.”

“Why are you raising your voice,” I asked.

“I am trying to explain to you that this is a painful issue, this is what hurts me. I dream about that girl every night. I wake up from nightmares that the kid is without a father, without a mother. I am going through things you cannot understand. What I go through every night, every night, every night. I don’t know how you can live. I do not…”

“Do you think anyone is living well now?” I asked in surprise.

“But I have nightmares, nightmares, you get it? Nightmares about that girl,” she added a hysterical tone to her voice.

“So they promised you that if you spoke against him you will get her,” I tried to find out…

“Aderet, you haven’t figured it out yet? I am talking to you about the life of the girl, we are not in a game. How are you going to get Batya back?”

“When they understand that all of this, it doesn’t exist- then she will come back, what are these stories you are telling them?” I asked.

“You don’t understand anything, “she justified herself, “what I say is what they tell me, and if I think I should verify what they say, then I do.”

“Aliza, are you prepared to verify lies just so you won’t sit in jail? Do you hear what you are saying to me?!” I was shocked. I felt that I was in some sort of nightmare; I didn’t want to believe my ears.

“She is trying to save her daughter,“ interrupted the investigator in her defense.

“The girl should grow up with her father,” I was angry.

“You know what?” Aliza tried to explain: “You don’t understand how I run things, and you don’t understand my thoughts, you don’t understand how I operate, you suspect me, I guess this is another process I have to go through. But we have been through a lot of experiences together, our connection is something they can’t touch, and even if they do a thousand year investigation, they won’t be able to touch it, believe me that I cry at nights. But my battle now is to return my daughter, you have to understand, you don’t understand it, to return her at any price.”

The investigator made fun of me for not having children, and that is the reason I cannot understand what it is like to be a mother, She asked Aliza to leave the room and then addressed me in a tough tone: “So it’s clear to you, with your attitude you won’t get out, I am telling you, you will stand trial. And I think you should be ashamed to sit across from a woman and judge her for trying to save her child. You should take responsibility and I am not asking you to tell me anything, I will tell you, and you just confirm and try to explain and justify what happened in the situation.”

“You want me to lie?”

I didn’t believe this was happening. I, who was raised and educated with the understanding that the police protect the citizens, rescue and assist when trouble arises, needed saving from the police themselves. Across from me stands a police investigator from the Central Division of the Jerusalem Police Department, wasting all of the resources and power of the Israeli Police Force on threats on me and my friends, or like they like to call it: “threats on defenseless people”, that if we don’t lie and help them put away someone they have branded a “criminal”, they have the authority and the power to put us in jail and take away our children!

And the investigator continued: “I want to see you stand in front of Aliza in court, dying to see you, you think you are a hero? Let’s see, just try to call her a liar, and just try Aderet. If you try to blacken her, just see how dirty you will come out, you have no idea. A thousand of you couldn’t go against me. You think you are strong, Aderet? You think you can handle this? A trial is a tough thing. I wouldn’t want to be on the other side. I will ask you questions, and you will give your interpretation, and you will apologize and ask for forgiveness, and you will explain in an irrational manner, I know, everyone explained in an irrational manner, but there is some sense in this nonsense. Do you want to help? This is the time. You don’t want to, we can turn this around, we have no problem with that. I am giving you a fair fight, the choice is yours. Do you understand what I am saying, Aderet? If we part today, we will not meet again, but you will not leave here before I write all of the things, write them up nicely, make a nice case, I will work today, another day, another day, I will make a case against you. I will write thirty events you partook in, I will verify them, and that is how I will present things. Next time I see you will be when you try to blacken people on the witness stand, and I will go up, and you don’t know how you will come out of it, you don’t understand, you will see a different police. You are better off being with me, better with me, better that I will come with you and not against you. You are better off with the police coming with you and not against you, you are better off. You are not as strong as you think, you won’t survive two days in Neve Tirza Prison, won’t survive, the decision is yours. This is plan A, this is plan B, the decision is yours, my only regret is I feel for your parents…” Today, I am finishing this investigation one way or another. Tomorrow is your last opportunity.”

After all of these hours, they took me handcuffed and back in the police car to the battered women’s shelter. I got into the car, accompanied by two armed police officers who are trying to give me the feeling that I am a wanted criminal and they are responsible to make sure I don’t escape. One of them sits near the wheel and the other sits next to me in the back. I sat near the window, it was around sunset, and the sun painted the sky got red as if to identify with the fires in my heart. My longings for Daniel, my fear for his well being flooded me with an emotional storm that threatened to burst out in tears. I was still under the trauma of the investigation, and in shock from my meeting with Aliza. I didn’t know what to think about her, what was certain was that she succeeded in confusing me, and I couldn’t understand whose side she was on. Was she acting for the investigator because she wanted to gain her trust and ensure her daughter’s return, or was she playing with me and lying to me?

The truth is that I never was able to understand her and to know whether she believed what she was saying or she was only trying to present what went along with her temporary interests. I thought about the trials she was going through as a mother. What would I do if they had put my husband and my daughter on the scales and asked me who to bury?... Maybe she really didn’t have a choice… This is the first time I ever thought I was lucky not to have children, and I don’t have to withstand a trial like that.

I started thinking that maybe I am hard-hearted to Aliza’s sorrow, and maybe I should change my approach in the interrogations, and give them answers they want, so that Batya can have her mother back and maybe I can work things out and they will leave us alone… The police car parked near the shelter in Tel Aviv. Two investigators escorted me to the entrance, rang the bell to make sure the door was opened, and left. I entered the room I shared with a Philippine woman and her five year old son, and I wanted to get into bed and disappear under the blanket, without anyone noticing I had entered the room. My head was bursting with pain and my heart was pounding. I miss my bed, Daniel’s hug; I need him close to me, what is going on with him now? What is he going through? What are they doing to him? In the investigation rooms I encountered such loathing for Daniel, that it really worried me. I didn’t know what to expect. To find myself, already a month in the women’s shelter, far from my husband and family was a hard shock. Another dirty police technique, “divide and conquer”. To try and convince me and the other women, that we are in the category of “battered women”, that we experienced some sort of abuse. When will this nightmare end?

The next day, in the interrogation room, the investigator Lilach, with the backing of Oded Shema and Revital Tzeref, Gadi Lubin, and Itzik Levi , hurled outlandish situations at me. I became dumb and motionless. I didn’t know what to do. They attacked me from all sides. I felt like I was facing a firing squad, fear paralyzed me. According to her, anything I say will be used against me. The only option she gave me was to repeat her word for word.

“Admit you ate feces!” she yelled. “You and Aliza ate feces to please Daniel, “she determined. “You think I don’t know everything? Aliza ate solid waste and you ate liquid feces!” She tried to thread information into the story that she wanted me to confirm. I was horrified. What happened here, G-d above, she really thinks I ate feces? Where did she get that “crap” from?

I don’t expect you to tell about the others, all I am saying is that if you don’t take responsibility for your deeds, and admit them, and try to give a logical explanation for every situation I give you, you won’t get out of here for a long time, I promise you, and I give you my word!”

She also claimed I was responsible for the fact that Aliza is going to lose Batya. “Be careful Aderet, you are choosing a bad path. That is how you want it? No problem, just remember than on this path Batya won’t see Aliza anymore. I am leaving the room and giving you time to think one more time if you prefer to answer me… the fate of that girl is in your hands.”

She left the room and I remained there alone. I was exhausted from many hours of interrogation. I tried to shake the fear and her threats. I tried to think of advice that could help me finish the nightmare of the investigations as quickly as possible. I thought that maybe if I told of the special friendship between me and Aliza, of the adventures we experienced together, on our shared desire to be stronger in our faith and fear of G-d together, of the competition and jealousy between us and the “stings” we would give each other- she would understand that we never ate feces together and we were just having “girls’ (women’s) talk” about sexual fetishes.

Aliza and I came from very different backgrounds. That is also one of the reasons for the competition between us. She is eight years younger than me, from a traditional home; she told me that her parents had trouble getting along, debts on the “gray market”, her brothers got in trouble with the police, she tried drugs and had a lot of adventures and ups and downs in her life. She told of how at the age of 16 she developed different and varied relationships with men, and since she grew up in this mess she tried to build herself on the basis of her outer beauty. She was always told she is beautiful, and this built up her self esteem. She always said I should learn from her, because with her life experience, she knows what a man needs. And the most important thing in a relationship is honesty. She knew how to act and present herself as the most real and open woman.

I, on the other hand, came from a home with a very sound economic status, and I grew up with stability and parents that always had a good relationship. The home was national-religious, and over the years we got stronger in the Haredi-Litai direction, all of my sisters live in Bnei Brak, teachers married to Yeshiva students; my father- after years of being vice president of a building company also went to a Litai yeshiva, and my mother started giving torah lessons to women. I grew up with a conservative education, without contact with boys. When I married Asa I was 21 and he was the first boy I met. I married Daniel when I was 26, three years later Aliza arrived at the house.

Aliza would say she was jealous of my connection with Daniel. When I was with him alone we would close the door and that would “shatter her from inside”, and she would be mad at me for being a closed and introverted type, and that I don’t open my heart and share with her what goes on between me and him, because if I tell her then maybe it will calm her down. I thought there were things that were best kept in modesty, and I protected my privacy vigilantly. It annoyed me that she tried to get involved in everything that had to do with me, but I was also jealous of her because I knew that Daniel liked her “directness”. She “took control of the helm” all around: she was charismatic and assertive, and she knew how to control situations and organize everyone; and she also loved to drive the big distribution cars. There was quite a bit of tension between us. But with all of the ups and downs, we developed a strong friendship over the years.

When Lilach the investigator came back to the interrogation room, I told her exactly what the feces thing was between me and Aliza: “One day Aliza was mad at me that I wasn’t trying to stop my “*Okayism*”, and she said it wasn’t the most important thing in life to be ‘okay’ … in other words, in her opinion, a person should be honest with himself, and if he is deep in some forbidden passion, it doesn’t help to put a mask on his face, or stick his head in the sand and say: I am okay, I am not that dirty…, rather he should deal with himself and work on his virtues, and break himself if necessary”. “When was that?” Lilach asked. “Aliza would always joke with me that I liked being “okay”, but the conversation I am talking about happened last year,” I explained. Lilach started typing what I said on the computer, and I continued telling the story: “ I hated that Aliza was preaching morals to me, and I also didn’t like her arrogant tone, and I said: “ You know how to speak well about others, but when was the last time you tried to break yourself?” Aliza responded, in order to prove that she wasn’t only talk, but also practices what she preaches she told me that one day she felt that her lust for men was very strong, she took a piece of shit and swallowed it to feel dirty.” “What do you say,” laughed Lilach, “and you believed her?” she asked. “I told her that she is a liar, and that I don’t believe her. Aliza was hurt and an argument developed. It annoyed me that she felt she could tell ridiculous stories, and that I am supposed to “swallow” them. I decided to trick her. I left the house towards “Center 1” near the central bus station in Jerusalem. I stalled until Aliza called to ask me where I am and what is going on with me, so I answered her cynically:” I am at Center 1 and I am now eating feces in order to break my ‘*okayness’*…”. Aliza did not find this at all amusing. She said: “Liar. What are you trying to copy me? Do you think that anyone will believe you?” “That’s the story,” I said to Lilach.

Later, when I saw that the indictment said that as part of Daniel’s regime of terror Aliza and I ate feces as part of the punishment system, in order to prove our complete subservience and in order to find favor in his eyes… I understood that I was in a Kafkaesque nightmare facing an impervious and corrupt system, that doesn’t stop at any lie to convict someone it has marked with an X.

Five months later, Aliza and I sat at the train station in Jerusalem. She looked at me with teary eyes. I asked her what happened and she looked down and said quietly and reluctantly:” Listen, Aderet, a childhood friend of mine contacted me on Facebook, and he says he misses me and is worried about me and is coming back to Israel especially for me… I thought about everything, and the investigators told me that Daniel won’t be out for the next thirty years… you have to understand me, I can’t be without a man.”

Aliza got Batya back in return for becoming a witness to turn state’s evidence. Apparently, she had another incentive besides Batya, because when she spoke with me she was already pregnant from that same man.

Aliza turned our friendship into an indictment, and every gesture she asked for and I agreed to, became another clause. I sat in jail a whole year for offenses I did not commit. Aliza came to testify against me. Her version was impossible and full of contradictions, it was clear to the three judges in District Court that she was not credible, they released me the same day.

I grew up in Bat Yam, the third of four girls. When my parents and sisters connected with the Haredi movement, I wasn’t sure that the Litai direction that they chose suited me, but in any case, I didn’t agree for anyone to influence my personal search for a way to serve HaShem (G-d). On the last day of school, after 12 years of studies, each year I receiving certificates of excellence, I was able to realize my perfectionist ambitions, but I felt a terrible emptiness. I walked around the house, restless, feeling that I was wasting my life in competition, which gave me respect, but didn’t give an answer to the internal cry of my soul. On the contrary, my earthly achievements threatened to drown me in struggles for respectable degrees and to choke out the real yearnings of my heart. A strong need arose in me, out of thankfulness to the Creator, to please him, but how? I did my years of national service in Jerusalem. In a seminary for girls that combines the national service with Judaic studies. A direct continuation of the national service was studies in the College for Academic Studies in Ofakim for a degree as a “senior teacher for education and special education”. For three years, I studied every morning with the best of the teachers in the Haredi-Litai movement, and in the afternoon and evening there were academic studies for a degree as a senior teacher for grades 3-8 with a specialty in special education of all kinds. I invested in my studies, loved the discussions about issues in life. At this point, I decided that, like my sisters, I would devote my life to make a home based on Torah, that is to say, I will marry a yeshiva student who is an “iluyi” , in other words “the cream of the crop of the yeshiva”… and I would bring children whose “torah is their faith”. As a second year student at the college, I remember sitting on the grass, looking at all of the girls talking with each other, and thinking to myself with awe, here I am all day busy with charity and grace, helping women in the community, helping girls in the college, I have never had a forbidden relationship with boys, I felt that I had reached the epitome of spirituality, personal realization, and actually perfection, what more could I ask for?...

At that exact moment, two girls called me for a meeting with the Rabbanit-Director. I entered the room with slight trepidation, why would the rabbanit call for me? This was the first time I had been called like this to her room. She turned to me with a calming smile, and after asking how I am, she said: “Listen Aderet, the policy at the college determines that in the first year of studies we don’t allow girls to go on dates, because we prefer for the girls to become familiar with the community and the haredi way of life before they make a home of their own. But we got three different offers of dates for you, and I wanted for you to check them out, and decide who you would like to meet with.

So it’s true that I understood that building a home based on Torah is the most important thing in life, but I had not intended to get married before I finished studying. I was already twenty, and according to the haredi time table, I should have already been a mother, but I had other plans. I planned on building a career, and a wedding seemed to me to be a confining and committed structure that I preferred to postpone for a bit longer. The Rabbanit went over the list of potentials with me quickly, and stopped surprisingly on an offer that my father had presented me the day before- a boy who has a relative of someone who worked in his office. “Today he studies in “Tiferet Tzvi” Yeshiva in Jerusalem, she filled me in:”he also grew up in Bat Yam, only son in a secular family. When he was ten, his father died and since then he started his way back into the folds of religion. He studied in a yeshiva high school and was active in the Bnei Akiva youth movement; in the army he served in the Hesder Yeshiva ‘Har Etzion’ in Alon Shvut. He trained for six months to be a company commander, became a company commander and trained draftees, served during the intifada in Ramalla and Beit El, and ended his service in the ‘pit’ at the Kirya. When he completed the army he started studying Torah at a Haredi yeshiva in Kiryat Malachi and afterwards went to the ‘Mir’ Yeshiva. He studies in a ‘hevruta’ (small study group) with Rabbi Eliyahu Horowitz and in another hevruta with Rabbi Shach. His name is Asa Mirash.”

The Rabbanit looked at me and asked: “What do you think?” “I will find out about him and give you an answer,” I tried to be evasive and stall for time. “When I know more, I will let you know.” I left the room in emotional turmoil. On the one hand, I wanted to tell her that maybe we should give it more time, I wanted to decide if I want to get into this whole story of dates right now, on the other hand, the offer of dating Asa, which came simultaneously from two different sources, with a life story parallel to mine, seemed to be “divine intervention”, and that is something I felt I couldn’t refuse. Maybe it was G-d’s will that I meet him? When G-d makes and opening, it isn’t right to slam the door and turn your back on his intervention, I thought. That is the reason that I agreed to this offer of a date. After four short meetings, we decided we wanted to get married.

In the Haredi society, there is no touching allowed between couples until the night of the wedding. The groom gets private lessons from a Rabbi who teaches him how to behave with his bride according to the rules of a Jewish home, and the bride goes to a Rabbanit who is a bridal instructor. I have to admit that the last lesson with the Rabbanit who taught what you do “on the first night” left me embarrassed. I remember sitting on the bus after the lesson quite shocked, refraining from crying from the new revelation, and wondering: “what will be?” Until that lesson I didn’t know exactly how the “mitzvah” is done- Mitzvat Ona, in the religious society it is not a topic that is discussed, and I really never talked about it with anyone, not with my mother, not with my sisters, and not even with my girlfriends who were all religious, and I believe they were as ignorant in the field as I was. The only source until then that gave me some sort of direction about thinking how to have relations between men and women were the novels I liked to read, but they didn’t explain the act itself, they left a sort of fog around it. The lesson with the Rabbanit left me in stress about upcoming events, I had always emphasized the modesty rules and enforced them, so I had to change gears, and suddenly change my whole world and concepts. However, I was also curious and expectant of what was to come, and I waited excitedly for the experience of the first night. Some months later, we married. As a yeshiva student, Asa studied at ‘Kolel Be’er Sheva’ and ‘Ofakim Yeshiva’, and I combined my studies at the college with a job as fourth grade teacher at a girls’ school in Ofakim, along with the new challenge of making a home.

The wedding exposed me to feelings and senses I hadn’t known, and to new challenges. On the night of the wedding, when I was so excited, Asa surprised me by suddenly suggesting, “Maybe we should postpone doing the mitzvah for a time we are less tired?” My heart missed a beat; this was not what I read in my novels. Why doesn’t he want to be with me? Is something wrong with me? I dared and insisted that it should be this way, and I succeeded in giving him enough guilt until he had to do the “mitzvah”, but unfortunately, despite how hard we tried, we were not successful in doing what was necessary. I didn’t understand why it didn’t work. The Rabbanit did not prepare me for this. What am I doing wrong? I didn’t know how to interpret this failure. Asa decided that he was tired and we should try next time. He fell asleep. I stayed awake in bed for a long time, trying to understand what I had just experienced, and to get over the emotional flood that threatened to drown me with painful disappointment. During that whole year we had to consult with all sorts of rabbis to get instruction how to get over the problems that came up in our relationship, we even went for medical treatment with Dr. Mendelson, who tried hypnosis to cause me to open up for my husband and please him and only him. The treatments didn’t help. We dragged the problem on for a whole year with no solution, frustrated and confused. As time passed, I grew attached to him, but I felt more and more helpless because I couldn’t understand why we weren’t succeeding and nothing was helping. I started to blame myself. Maybe something was wrong with me, what was going on? What was wrong? Every night, I would cry quietly in bed. I felt lost in emotional turmoil and couldn’t talk to him about it. It bothered me that I needed his love and it bothered me even more that I didn’t understand what he was going through.

He tried to explain his lack of drive and passion for me by saying that he is doing “Prishot” work, as if that is part of his work for G-d. He claimed that a smart Yeshiva student needs to be with his wife only from Sabath to Sabath, i.e. once a week, and made me feel that if the Torah said he should be with his wife once a month or once a year or not at all, that would be even better. I felt that he was avoiding me and kept looking for excuses and support from the Torah, I was angry with him, and for some reason, I also felt sorry for him. He seemed to have been suffering. Many times he didn’t want to get up and out of bed in the morning, as hard as I tried to get him to tell me what was going on, he stayed closed and kept it in and would only say that he was having a crisis.

When we spent Shabbat at my parents’ house and he was in a black mood, depressed in bed, I felt that I couldn’t take it anymore. At some point, my stomach hurt so badly that I felt as if something had burst inside. I couldn’t take the pain anymore. My parents called an ambulance, and the doctor examined me and said the stomach pain was from nerves. I knew that it was a direct response to the buildup of tension in our marriage.

What kept the connection between us alive was the mutual search for “G-d’s will”. One day, Asa came home very happy, and in his hands a pile of Rabbi Nachman’s books. I regretfully remember, the fire that burned in me like a fire from hell, a fire of dispute that burned from inside, and wouldn’t let me agree in any manner that he would start to study Rabbi Nachman’s books. I didn’t know how to explain to myself this inner opposition, but it was clear to me that I would do anything to get him away from this new idea. All four years of my studies in the Litai world, black-haredi, opposed to this Chasidut emerged at once into this inner storm that gave me no respite. I told him that Litai rabbis opposed Rabbi Nachman, and I wanted to understand what made him do something against everyone. He tried to explain to me that for years he has been looking for advice for “Pgam HaBrit” and for the sins of youth, and he didn’t find a solution in the Litai world, because there they don’t talk about it, and only Rabbi Nachman has solutions for these problems, and his books are filled with advice how to deal with it all. He said that Rabbi Nachman discovered the “Tikun clali” and that it is a big reparation for “pgam habrit”. And he asked that I not speak nonsense until I read the books and understand a bit better. So it happened that I started reading Rabbi Nachman’s books, in order to prove Asa wrong, but the more I read, the more I began to understand that the mistake was mine. I went through a tumultuous inner war between the Litai studies which I adored and the exposure to the hasidut, but I liked the challenge. It was fascinating. The real questions about getting closer to the Tzadik really grabbed my attention, and I was looking for answers. I enjoyed studying the books together. He also invited a Breslev student who came to our home on a regular basis and gave us a joint lesson on “Likutei Moharan”. In a way, I became his ‘hevruta’ (study group), and he even said it was a shame he couldn’t dress me in a yeshiva boys’ clothes and bring me to the “Kolel”. I felt that studying together strengthened our connection, and gave me some compensation for the bitterness that had built up in me from the frustrations resulting from our problems in our sex life.

With all of my effort to make him like me, I was not able to incite his passion for me, and he remained indifferent to my efforts. I remember days and nights sitting alone and waiting for him, crying that he didn’t remember me, or tried so hard to be busy with other things that he actually didn’t need me… and when he finally came home there were endless arguments about: “Why did you forget me?!” I felt that I was developing a dependence on his attention, and I suffered from it. He, on the other hand, liked to say at every opportunity, that he has a wife who is a burden on him like a millstone tied to his neck, and how can he do G-d’s work? And he would try to prevent me from being an obstacle in his path. Throughout the years, we were unable to develop a healthy relationship between man and wife and I felt that the curse and punishment of Eve were being carried out in full: “Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.” And when he doesn’t have passion- then you have a problem…

In the third year of our marriage, Asa heard on the radio that there is a haredi-sephardi radio station called “Kol HaNeshama”, and they raise money, and he decided he wanted to donate our home to them. At first it sounded ridiculous to me. Why should we give everything we have to charity? Can’t you give your ten percent or even twenty? I told him to forget it and that I wouldn’t agree to stay without a home. He said that if I had experienced what he had experienced I wouldn’t hesitate for one minute to give to charity, and that I don’t experience him and don’t understand what he feels and what he is going through, for him- donating the apartment to charity could save him. I couldn’t understand what salvation he was talking about, because he still hid his problem from me. I felt that he was calling out from an inner place that hurt him, and that he was dealing by himself with a problem. He said that he didn’t feel that our work on strengthening our trust in Hashem was real, how can we call it “trust in Hashem” when we have our own home and “financial security”? He had learned that charity is equal to all of the mitzvahs, and he wanted to do it to the fullest. I was very upset: on the one hand, logic dictated that I should in no way agree to this, where will we live if we donate our home, how will we live? On the other hand, something in Asa’s search for the truth pushed me to throw myself in the waters with him, and to expect for the ocean to open for us. It had been quite a while that both of us hadn’t worked because we wanted to trust “faith and security”, and we did succeed to manage. I prayed to G-d for guidance as to his wishes. In the end, I agreed to cooperate with Asa. Asa called the radio station “Kol NeShama” to offer them our apartment as a contribution. Within an hour, three rabbis from the station came and explained to us, using gematria (assignation of numeric values to Hebrew letters) how right we were in our desire to donate our home to them. They said that we shouldn’t worry because Asa is an only child and in the future he will receive an inheritance. In order to strengthen their case, they noted that Asa’s last name is Mirash, and if we change to order of the letters it will be “Em Yirash”, and from this we can be happy that we chose correctly. I couldn’t stand the conversation with them. People who guard their own houses well, encourage others to donate their homes, I didn’t understand how they could be called rabbis. After they left the house, we decided to leave the idea to donate open until we found a more deserving place.

Asa wanted us to go for a visit with Breslev families, and sometimes for extended periods of time, because he wanted to learn about their way of life. I felt that he was searching for a way to avoid situations of being alone with me so that he wouldn’t have to deal with me or my demands, and that really hurt me. I wanted us to have privacy because I hoped that we could invest in our relationship, and I couldn’t understand why it wasn’t important to him. I hated being a guest and giving up my own quiet corner, but it was also hard for me to feel that he was doing me a favor by staying home when his heart wasn’t there. I preferred to go away with him, and I thought that maybe that would refresh and renew the atmosphere between us. We were guests for several Shabbats in a Breslev settlement in the North. I didn’t feel that I belonged.

One day, Asa came home very excited, he had spoken in the street with a Breslever in a distribution van who told him about Rabbi Israel and about the “holy Petek (note)” in which the poem Na Nach Nachma Nachman Meuman was found. He was very excited and enthusiastic, and explained that the petek was a very big deal, and that Rabbi Israel said that it was the most wonderful miracle and wonder since creation. That Shabbat we stayed with my parents. My mother, who knew we were getting closer to Rabbi Nachman, bought a booklet from some Breslevers for us called “I am Na Nach Nachma Nachman Meuman”. The cover has a picture of Rabbi Israel holding his arms up on the background of the Dead Sea. From the moment I started reading the booklet, I drank up every word thirstily, and I couldn’t leave it until I had finished reading the whole thing. The booklet answered all of the questions I had, and gave an explanation for everything that bothered me. (Later, I discovered that Daniel was the one who gathered the quotes from Chazal, and published the booklet, but I didn’t know him then). The booklet had quotes from the bible and the Zohar about the tenth poem which was to be revealed (the previous nine poems appear in the bible, for example “Song of the Sea”, the Song of Hanna”, “the Song of Moses”), Rabbi Isroel Ber Odesser said that the “new song” was revealed and it is Na Nach Nachma Nachman Meuman, and it is the song of redemption, a song that the whole world, even the non-Jews, will sing. He also said that dissemination and distribution of the message was the most important thing, and that is what will bring redemption closer.

I agreed for Asa to join the group that distributes the message because I understood Rabbi Isroel saying that we have to organize vehicles, and to start a new trend of selling Rabbi Nahman’s books, stopping at traffic lights, singing and dancing and announcing that there is Rabbi Nachman in the world.

At the time, we had been married for three years. We rented an apartment in Tzfat in order to be part of the “Nach-Nachim” community there. They would go out all week to spread the word, and their wives developed close friendships. Asa joined them in spreading the word in the center of the country, and I would be home alone all week, waiting for him to come back for Shabbat. I was glad to finally have my own corner and not be a guest in a stranger’s home, but I felt very lonely. I remember getting into bed, covering myself with a blanket over my head and crying to Hashem that things are hard, that I am alone. Near me, on the bed, was a tape recorder. I didn’t know if there was a tape in it, but I felt I had to turn it on. I hit play, and suddenly heard the voice of Saba (Grandfather) say calmly: “Our holy rabbi is with each and every one.” I filled with joy, and I understood that I am not alone. I felt that Rabbi Isroel, the Saba, is with me, knows how I feel, understands my sorrow and came down to me to give me strength, I felt that he was surrounding me with love, and that gave me a lot of strength to overcome and fortify myself.

When we heard that Rabbi Israel Ber Odesser did not leave his children an inheritance, but rather gathered all the money he got from the ‘National Insurance’, from charity and proceeds and created a fund with one million and four hundred thousand shekels for distribution of Rabbi Nachman books at cost, we were very surprised. In “Av’i HaNachal” Saba wrote: “I would give my life, my soul, my capital and everything else for the soul of one Jew and maybe even for one moment to make him consider teshuva (repentance),” we saw that the Tzadik practices what he preaches, and when we wanted to learn from him how to abandon (earthly possessions), especially when Rabbi Isroel was asked what he thought about the discussion in which our great Rabbi said (in Sihot Haran, 51) “ You don’t need to abandon everything to be closer to the Tzadik” and Rabbi Isroel answered: “It is true that our Rabbi said that, but today, it is clear to us, in order to get closer to the Tzadik, you have to abandon all.” That strengthened our resolve to abandon our house to charity. We felt that finally our prayers have been accepted and that we are being guided by above, because now we heard that there is a “Rabbi Isroel Fund for Publishing and Distributing the writings of Rabbi Nachman” and that means that there is a place to donate without people taking advantage of it for their own personal gain. We prayed that we would be fortunate and succeed in selling our apartment quickly and easily, so we could donate to ‘Rabbi Israel’s Fund for Distribution of Books’.

When we were looking for buyers, I began to get fears and doubts, were we doing the right thing? One day, I decided to open the book “Avi HaNahal”, and ask Saba to show me the right advice. The book opened on the words: “and the most important thing is that there is no permanence in the world.” I closed the book quickly and didn’t want to believe that I got the answer to my question. I decided to open it again, maybe this time I would get the opposite answer? My heart started to beat strongly when a totally different letter opened and it said “there is no permanence in the world at all.” I closed the book, and I understood that Saba answered the question exactly. Like a reminder, that this world is temporary and nothing is permanent. I decided to open it once more, and when on the third try I saw that it said “Our holy Rabbi said there is nothing permanent in the world at all,” I felt that I got the reinforcement I was seeking. I decided to help Asa find a buyer for the apartment and sell it.

We got great light from our growing closeness to Rabbi Nachman, but the problems between us did not cease. I would cry and be in pain from the fact that he doesn’t need me, and he would let me feel and understand very well that his responsibility towards me as my husband, only served to irritate him and impede his development in doing G-d’s work.

On one winter evening, we were in the apartment in Tzfat alone. Asa was very restless. He sat on the bed in the bedroom, and held his head in his hands and didn’t move for a long while. When I asked him what was bothering him, he raised his head, looked at me with a look that led me to understand that he had something very important to tell me. I didn’t know what to expect. And then he said that for a long time he has been deliberating whether we should continue our relationship, and today he reached the final conclusion that we should get divorced. I didn’t have time to digest what he was saying and he immediately said that since he reached this conclusion, then according to Halacha we can’t sleep in the same house, and he would go look for somewhere else to sleep tonight. I was very surprised by his determination. What made him suddenly make such a final decision? We had been married three and a half years. In the end he said that he had a confession that he wanted to make to me. He was embarrassed and he said that he was sorry that he didn’t tell me sooner because he wasn’t sure that this was really true and he really thought that getting married would help him deal with the problem he has had since childhood, but he wanted to be honest with me because he feels he has reached a dead end, and as hard as he tried to deny it he has to admit that he has a struggle with his urges of attraction to men…! He explained that it is obviously not allowed by the Torah and he has always struggled not to fail, but he lives within the confines of a daily struggle with himself to get over his internal drive of desire for homosexual intercourse, and at the end he said that he thinks that our marriage won’t lead anywhere, and that’s why he wants to divorce.

I didn’t want to believe what I was hearing. I wasn’t ready to accept in any way that this was the truth. I wanted to believe that things could change, that maybe it was just his moods. I attacked him with a string of questions, to explain to me what he meant. I was very confused; I didn’t know what to think. We had been through so much over the past years, I was so attached to him, how could he do this to me? Rather than getting angry and resentful, I found myself feeling sorry for him. I could have thought, why did he get me into this fix with him and myself? Why didn’t he tell me this before the wedding and give me the opportunity to decide to choose how I wanted to live, and why take advantage of the total faith I had in him? In fact, if what he said was true, then our whole relationship was a mistake. But I felt pity and couldn’t be angry with him. I felt that maybe if I help him more he could escape his problems, but he continued to insist that I did not understand anything, and I couldn’t understand his life or what he went through and the best thing would be for me to let him be. When he saw how upset I was, he added that he loves me very much, and especially because of this it will be better for both of us to get divorced and go our separate ways. At the time I did not get that he had finally opened up to me, after three and a half years, he had opened his heart and told me the truth. I honestly thought that he was in a bind with himself, and that I couldn’t let him go like this, because what he was doing was a kind of suicide or self-punishment for something he had gotten himself into. I insisted that he was speaking nonsense and that he couldn’t get away from me. At first I didn’t want to deal with the new revelation. I preferred to repress reality, to hope that I would wake up to a different reality. I admired his struggle to get over the problem he lives in, I valued the fact that he did not give into his desires and his insistence on finding real solutions, so every time he tried to find a way to get away from me, to convince me we should get divorced, I would hold on tight and not leave, but at the same time I would cry out to G-d from the depths of my heart that he would create a miracle and the situation would change, something good would happen, we would find a solution, because this was hard for me, hard for him, because we can’t take it anymore, we are at a dead end, and we can’t continue our marriage like this!

So we dragged everything on for a while longer like this, trying to skip over and to gloss over the problems, and somehow put them aside until we reach a reasonable and clear decision.

One of the times when Asa went out with the guys to spread the word, they told him of a friend in Jerusalem, a distributor for the Na Nachs, who, upon hearing of Rabbi Isroel’s passing, sold his house and donated the money to spread Rabbi Nachman’s books, and also dedicated his vehicle to the cause. He was the first in Israel to cover his car in stickers that say Na Nach Nachma Nachman Meuman and his name is Daniel Ambash. We were curious to meet Daniel and his wife, and to hear from them how they dealt with the problems after they donated their home to charity, especially since we heard that they had seven children and that a week ago they had another son. Asa looked for a way to meet Daniel, and when he heard about the circumcision he saw that as an opportunity to go to Jerusalem. He was very pleased to meet a friend who did everything he could to help spread the message. At that time, we wanted to leave the apartment in Tzfat and find a place in Jerusalem. Asa informed me that he had asked Daniel and Ilana if we could stay with them for as short time to make it easier to look for an apartment. He asked me to come with him to Jerusalem. They cleared out a room for us, and we stayed with them for a few months. It wasn’t difficult to see that I was sad from my problems with Asa, and they tried very hard to help us get to “shlom bayit” (peace in the home, relationship). Ilana and Daniel found themselves reminding Asa to call me when he was out, when he had disappeared for long hours and sometimes days, his distribution friends would urge him to go home to his wife. With time, I realized that it wasn’t going to change, and nothing could help, with all of the good will, there was no solution for us. Daniel thought it might be better if we rent an apartment just for the two of us. We found an apartment in Givat Shaul. We lived there for some months until we couldn’t hold on any longer. Asa said that he wants to be free, and that our relationship had no future. It hurt, but I agreed that there was no point in dragging it on any longer, and it was time to end our relationship, we made the final decision to divorce. The very next day we got divorced at Rabbi Karlitz’s court in B’nei Brak. We sold the apartment in Bnei Brak; the money, as we had decided a while back, we donated to the “Rabbi Isroel Dov Oddeser Fund for Distribution of Rabbi Nachman’s Books”. I felt that finally I had made the right move.

Divorcing Asa left me with a feeling of failure and a leadness. Even years later, it was still hard for me to come to terms with the fact that Asa was not attracted to women, and that he didn’t want me. My pride was damaged. I didn’t understand why HaShem did this to me. How is it possible that I, who thought that I was so perfect and had such good intentions, got a match from heaven with a man with homosexual tendencies, and that I didn’t interest him at all?!

I tried to get over it, to forget about him, to start a new life. I rented a small ground floor apartment with two rooms in the Kiryat Moshe neighborhood, near Ilana, and together we decided that it was a good opportunity to form a school for children from Breslev families who believe in Na-Nach, since at the time, there was no suitable school for children of families who believed in Na-Nach, and I felt that I had an educational responsibility as a teacher.

Kari was 38 years old when I met her. She had made aliyah to Israel in order to join the army, and after she became religious, she married and divorced six times. She had four children from different fathers, and she was sick with serious illnesses, one of which was terminal, and the doctors gave her two years to live. She came to Daniel and Ilana many times for Shabbat, and asked for help. It was important to her that her children get a good education, and that she have strength to hold on as long as possible. She said that only with them did she “still have hope”. Daniel and Ilana tried to talk to different people to help her, but everyone around shrugged their shoulders at this difficult case. In the chapter “Ilana’s personal story” you will read how things happened that resulted in Kari becoming the second wife. It was undoubtedly a very difficult decision, and definitely a brave one. Kari’s children- Tsila-13. Yan-11, Anastasia-6, and Samy- 1, were not easy children, Tsila and Yan were expelled from the existing schools due to learning difficulties, ADHD, and behavioral issues. The only school that accepted them was the special education school “Tidhar”, and that hurt their self image. Kari asked us to find a solution for them, since they had had a hard life. Nearly every year they moved, switched fathers, and were in constant instability. Together with Ilana, we decided to see this as a charity project, and along with another family and friends, we tried to build a Na-Nach school for girls. I really liked putting all of my efforts into work. At first, we converted my apartment into a school, and later on we rented a place on “Najara Street”, especially for the school. The work as a teacher and educator filled me with satisfaction. Ilana and I became closer and closer friends. I admired her and Daniel’s commitment to Kari’s children. Yan, for example, was 1, but didn’t know how to talk. He would stutter all sorts of syllables and had difficulty expressing himself, and maybe that was the reason he acted violently, it was very difficult to calm him down. Tsila was also a wild and active child, and they used to bother Ilana’s children while riding around the house and the streets on rollers, and it was very difficult to stop them. Daniel and Ilana took care of them with all of their hearts, and invested endless love in them. For the first time in their lives, Kari’s children felt safe and protected. I remember the day that Yan and Tsila decided to call Daniel Abba (Dad), and that was very emotional. Yan hugged Daniel strongly, and it was clear that his soul had found some comfort. They called Kari “Mommy” and Ilana “Maman” (Mom in French), and it was a wonderful experience to see how a new and special family unit was built. I remember myself looking at Daniel, thinking that I would like a husband who is responsible and devoted and would be exactly the same kind of father as Daniel who loved his children and Kari’s children…

Azamra was 18 at the time, a distributor who arrived from a moshav in the south in order to strengthen the distribution in Jerusalem, and she loved the family very much. We became a group: Ilana, Kari, me and Azamra. We would study together, prepare Shabbats together, and organize our missionary activities together. We became like one family. I admired Ilana for opening her home and allowing Providene to bring things to where they were. Kari, to the doctors’ surprise, recovered fully from the disease, and was filled with motivation and life energy. She had grandiose ideas for distributing our message, and her exuberance was contagious. Even though the doctors said that it was dangerous for her to get pregnant, she insisted that she wanted another child.

It was fun with everyone. It had been one year since my divorce from Asa, and I felt that I was finally getting back to myself, forgetting the past and all of my troubles, and starting to think and search for my true mate.

We would all sit together, preparing for music shows, original distributions, or study together and talk for hours about Saba. Daniel told us all about his first efforts at distributing the message, and about the time Saba lived with him and Ilana at home. I found myself daydreaming “I wish I were part of his life story”, and deep inside I knew that I wanted to have children with him. Each day my wish to be with him grew stronger. I thought to myself, he already has two wives, Ilana and Kari, so why not make it three? One day, I decided to make a brave move, and offer him marriage. I asked to speak with him, and I told him how I felt, and it was clear that Daniel was surprised. He did not expect such an offer from me. He thought that as a friendly gesture, he should first ask Asa what he thought, and how he felt about it, since they were good friends. Asa was very happy, and wished him Mazal Tov. He said that he had had a feeling for quite some time that Daniel and I are a true match, and secretly waited for it to happen, because it released him from the burden of responsibility he felt for me.

Living with Daniel returned my sense of inner peace. My femininity returned, and with it my lost sense of pride. Slowly, all of the holes that I had had in my life began to fill. I was happy to realize myself as a woman. The relationship with Daniel, in all senses, was exactly what I had been looking for, the openness, attention, discussions, understanding, working together, gave me calm and a sense of wholeness. The underlying competition with the other women only amplified the challenge…

Ilana, Kari, and Azamra (you will read in her chapter how she chose to join the family) were full of vitality, joie de vivre, positivity, intelligence, and pleasantness. Life with them, the special friendship, jealousy, arguments, limitations, the need to overcome the difficulties and get along, introduced another dimension to our understanding of life. Suddenly, from being a student studying moral books as theory on the work of virtue, the work became daily reality. I am sure that the trials of our holy foremothers are inflicted upon each woman in this generation. Chazal prepared something to strengthen us for generations, in the Gemarra, Masechet Yoma 38b it is written:  “No man can touch what is prepared for his fellow and ‘One kingdom does not interfere with the other even to the extent of one hair's breadth.” In other words, no one can touch what is prepared for me, my kingdom, what is mine, I don’t have to relinquish what is mine, everyone gets exactly what they deserve according to the accounts in heaven. Wishing that things will be good for the other, to be happy in another’s joy, that is another thing that certainly demands intensive work, and that is what is called being a Breslev ” rejoicing in the good fortune of a friend”. We used to joke between us women that each one is a queen, and that the wars between us were a type of world war, and that every time we connected in peace it brought us closer to redemption.

Asa rented the apartment that served as a study hall for the distributioners in Givat Shaul and lived there. He had a big car, and he organized the mens’ distribution teams, and was the manager at the synagogue. At some point he tried to marry again, but that didn’t last more than a week and they divorced.

Kari became pregnant, and we were very excited. It was a real miracle, and the doctors were also shocked. When she was in her advanced months of pregnancy, we rented a house in Lifta, in order to allow her to rest for the birth. She was obviously happy and calm. She was healthy to the bone, and gaining weight nicely. Throughout the pregnancy she prayed to Hashem that the baby would have a good heart like his father. Since Ilana, Azamra, and I took care of the kids, she had the privilege of taking care of herself quietly, with the beautiful view from Lifta. She read many books by Rabbi Nachman, and thus improved her Hebrew (as a reminder- her mother tongue is English). I accompanied her to her ultrasounds at her private ob/gyn, and she asked I be with her at the birth.

At that time, I worked with Daniel on publishing a new book about distribution and the people who do it. For hours and hours we sat together across from the computer, into the small hours of the night, with maximum concentration, proofreading. We didn’t notice time go by. Ilana or Azamra would bring us drinks. I remember Kari calling at 2 a.m. from the house in Lifta, telling us that the birth was beginning and asked Daniel to come get her quickly to the hospital. Daniel jumped from his seat and we ran to the car. We all drove to the hospital. Daniel, Kari, Ilana, Izmrea, and me. On the way, four white doves accompanied us. We felt that was a sign of a blessing. The birth of Jonathan, as opposed to Kari’s earlier births, was quick and easy, and Kari was very excited.

I liked to spread the word in the city, the town, the mall and the street. Everywhere, handing out photocopies of the Petek from Rabbi Nachman to women, explaining what Na-Nach is, selling Rabbi Nachman books and transcribed talks by Rabbi Isroel.

Over the first three years, a very special relationship was built between the four of us: Ilana, Kari, Azamra, and me, however, there were quite a few arguments and fights between us. Sometimes the arguments became such a burden, that I found myself missing the days when I was alone with Asa, without another woman to criticize me or try to take over, but along with this, I was in no way prepared to give up on my life with Daniel, and when I got along well with the women, I felt that I had the best life that I could ask for. Daniel feared the arguments between us, and sometimes he would become doubtful of a structure with several women; he even said once that maybe the construct was too hard on us and maybe we should all get divorced and end it.

I didn’t want him to have doubts, and it hurt me that those were his thoughts. I didn’t want to get divorced, and neither did the other women. We held a clear stance that we would not quit, not on him and not on each other. We tried to explain to him that even if it was sometimes hard on us, there is no reason to worry, we are happy together even if we fight, that’s what women are like and we fight like sisters, and we are even closer than sisters and it is natural.

I felt that taking apart what we had built would be ungrateful to the Providence that brought us together. I believe that our whole story would not have happened if it hadn’t been private divine intervention that was fine tuned and exact. I really wanted some sign from heaven that would put an end to the doubt, and that we would stop fearing whether we were doing the right thing or not. To this day I am in awe from the degree of my security when I told Daniel that by the 23rd of Adar, my birthday and our wedding anniversary, there would be a sign from heaven that would strengthen us all.

All of the women wanted the sign to come. We did not determine what the “sign from heaven” is, but we agreed that anything good could be a sign. If a new distributor came along, or we discovered a new recording of Saba that we didn’t know about, anything that would come and show us that we are on the right path, then that would be considered a sign for us. I thought to myself that our lifestyle presented me with a way to realize my dream of having a child. Since it had been nine years already and I was not able to conceive myself, if I pray for another woman to come to my husband, the child who ensues would be considered to my credit. I thought that my idea was brilliant. When I told Daniel, he didn’t like the idea very much, he said that bringing another woman into the family was a great responsibility, and that it could, G-d forbid, ruin everything. He tried to comfort me and said that I could still conceive children, and that’s not a reason to get into more trouble: that if I want to pray, I should pray for myself to have children; and that Rabbi Nachman said that “good deeds” were also considered children. I thought in my heart, “I’ll surprise him yet”.

Ilana, Kari, Azamra, and I knew that the charity and grace between us women, opens the blessing. We were determined to succeed in the mission I had placed as a goal. Kari gathered us for an emergency meeting about a plan leading to 23 Adar. She suggested that we strengthen our “togetherness”, that we do more things to fortify the connection between us, and that maybe that would bring the blessing. For example, she said that she wanted me to have children, and she believed that could happen with divine intervention, that a woman would join us. Realizing the plan became an amazing joint experience. We decided that in order to be focused on the goal, we would get up every morning at dawn, and start the day by running to the Lifta Spring, located in the nearby valley, and concentrate together for about ten minutes to prepare ourselves for our Shacharit (morning prayers) together, and then to have breakfast together, study together, and decide on a plan for the rest of the day. We were, all in all, successful in carrying out the plan. The challenge created a very dynamic atmosphere between us. It was a month packed with activities; we prayed a lot at Saba’s and the Western Wall, we handed out Tehilim (psalms) and yarmulkes to the soldiers, we went together to visit the sick in the hospitals, we dedicated an album of Saba’s pictures to tens of graves of righteous ones all over the country. The closer we got to the target date, the tension grew and we searched for things to do. We read books by Rabbi Nachman about the truth raising prayers, we decided to get stronger in truth between us, we opened our hearts to each other and told our deepest secrets, we tried to be as honest as possible, and we waited with anxiety and anticipation…

On one of the days, when we were thinking what we should do, I got a written message to my cell phone “Rachel’s tomb is open to the public.” We jumped for joy, we felt that our mother Rachel was inviting us to come and pray, we went straight away. We cried in prayer to our mother Rachel that would help us go in her path and the paths of the holy mothers, and that she pray for us that we get a sign.

And the days of Purim came to pass, ten days before the date we had set. Many guests came to the Purim feast. Kari found an old date book of hers, and called every number in it in order to invite all to the feast. Among her guests was Aliza. Aliza came dressed as Little Red Riding Hood with a friend who was dressed as a wolf, and holding a basket of candies, she came into the house theatrically and yelled:” Help! Help! Who can save me?” and she handed candy out to the children. Kari suggested that she pray at the “Ziyun “ (the burial site) of Rabbi Isroel, and she went there. After the holiday, we continued with the plan, and we prayed for Hashem to save us.

The 23rd of Adar arrived. We prepared a birthday party for me, we set the table with lots of good things, decorated the house, Daniel played the organ, and we all danced. Even though we had reached the date and still there was no special sign, in our hearts we all hoped that something would happen at the last minute of the 23rd of Adar.

At the time, we hadn’t told anyone outside the family that we were married together. We kept it a secret for five years.

Aliza surprised us, and arrived at the birthday celebration with a bambook Magen David that she made for me as a gift. All of the women sat together, and she told us she had had a dream, and that she was embarrassed to tell us about it. Suddenly she got up and asked for Daniel to stop playing because she has to talk to him, and within a few minutes she told us of a dream in which she saw him playing an organ, and Ilana, Kari, Aderet, and Azamra dancing around him; She wanted to know if it was true that we were all married to him. Daniel answered her simply: “Yes”. With great excitement, Aliza announced, with great ease, that she is the fifth wife!

So that was the sign.

When Aliza married Daniel I felt pride and victory. She was a sign of success for me. When she gave birth to Batya, ten years after I couldn’t get pregnant, it was closure. With her beautiful golden curls and sweet smile she conquered the heart of anyone who saw her. A joyous child, she would sing for hours, dance, and clap her hands.

Aliza and I got along pretty well, but it would have been much easier if she hadn’t butt into everyone’s business and caused conflicts. I would always say to her that what happened with others was “not her business” but she would say:”We are one family, and everyone needs to know everything about everyone.” She wouldn’t really reveal herself, but she did have a talent- to look sincere.

There were Shabbats where we ate at the Study Hall, the whole family and the distributors. On one of these occasions, Aliza told me that she was attracted to Asa, and therefore noticed my glances at him, and she said it was interesting to know what I really felt about him. She asked me if it doesn’t bother me that sometimes he eats with us at Shabbat meals at the Beit Midrash. On my part, I didn’t really like her questions, and I didn’t want to talk about it. When we got home, she surprised me by saying to Daniel: “Aderet is lying to you, I see how she looks at Asa at the meal, and she doesn’t really love you.” I was hurt and very angry.

The truth is that she had touched a sensitive spot. Since Asa was the one who initiated the divorce and not me, in some inner place, even four years later, I had remained emotionally attached to him, and I couldn’t cut myself off. At first, it was hard for me to admit that I still loved him. Since I came from a haredi background and wanted to be a “kosher woman”, I thought that my feelings for him were “unkosher”, since I had divorced him and married someone else and according to the Torah, Asa was forbidden to me forever and ever. When I wondered about Asa or missed him, I tried with all my strength to repress and deny my thoughts, so that I would feel that I didn’t damage anything, that I was “okay”, that I didn’t have, G-d forbid, an abominable thought about him. On the one hand, I was comfortable with the image of the “righteous woman” that I had created for myself, it connected me to the haredi world I had come from, and it helped me feel better about myself; but, on the other hand, the attempt to hide my feelings for him, made me change my perception of reality with time, and feel sorry for him as if I had left him and left him alone. It was completely twisted to think that, since he left me and actually insisted on it, and I knew that he was happy to be free of the burden of a wife, and finally he got the quiet he wanted. I developed a conflict between logic that understood and saw the truth, and my feelings that wouldn’t come to terms with the fact that Asa was never interested in me. I wanted to cut off the dependence I felt towards him and to feel free, and since I wasn’t able to, I was disappointed in myself. Why can’t I control my feelings? Why years after our divorce, did I still seek his attention? I found myself suffering; it is not dignified to chase after someone who doesn’t need me, especially since I was married to someone else. I didn’t understand why I still sought Asa out, while I got all the love I could dream of from Daniel. I started taking out my frustration angrily on my new husband. Apparently, somewhere in my subconscious, I blamed him that I can’t go back to Asa, since according the Torah a divorced woman married to another is not allowed to her first husband. I felt very bad with these feelings that arose in me. On one hand, it really got to me that after Asa divorced me since he is not attracted to women, and he was going to marry another woman; but on the other hand, I was sorry for him that a week later he ran away from her. It still bothered me that I was worried about him and felt pity for him. It bothered me that I worried more about him than I did about Daniel. My feelings of guilt from the thoughts about him wouldn’t leave me, and I shared my anger and frustration with Daniel. With all of this going on, I found comfort: at least I was not alone with all of this.

That’s why I was so angry with Aliza for touching on this point, I felt that in order to allow for all sorts of fantasies she was having about Asa, she was using me. She would say to Daniel that it was important in the name of honesty and truth that he knows that she was attracted to Asa and that she is the only one who can persuade him away from his attraction to men. I couldn’t understand if with this whole act of sincerity, she was telling the truth about herself, or if she was doing it just to draw attention to herself, she would tell me that my secrecy about Asa confused her. In the end, she dragged Daniel, Asa, and me to discussions, in which she wanted to clarify what each felt. I have to say, to her credit, that these discussions helped me open up and free myself of the burden.

Daniel wasn’t very comfortable with Asa’s visits in our home, because of the complexity of the whole thing in terms of Halacha, and after I saw the effectiveness of the joint discussions, I told Daniel that the solution was external, for example, telling him not to come won’t solve my problem, because when he is at Givat Shaul I also think about him and worry about him, and I prefer to find a real solution to my connection with him. When I consulted with a “haredi relationsip consultant” how to solve the conflict in which I live, she said that my case was special, since Asa is not attracted to women, and there is no danger of damage as a result of talking with him, it is important that I share my feelings with him and with Daniel and try to release my baggage as much as possible. To this day we are not sure if we acted properly by taking this advice but we were in a complicated situation. Daniel grew up in the world of theater and therefore saw things differently from me, He thought that I was causing myself suffering for nothing, and that it is natural that I didn’t forget Asa, who was my “first love”, and that I should learn to come to terms with myself, and not deny my feelings and desires. In talks with women, Aliza took the role of mediator and convinced Daniel to show us what he learned in the world of dance and theater. Via games and improvisations we released feelings and were able to express ourselves. That was the perfect solution for me. Sometimes I felt stuck and stilted, but I wanted to let go, because my inner self was bursting out, and I wanted to live how I really felt like living, without calculating what was “okay” and “not okay”. I felt free even with Asa, so much so that we showed all of our cards and talked about everything. We laughed at ourselves, we made things into games. I liked the improvisation games, I saw that it was also good for Asa, I felt that finally, thanks to the openness of the group, I am real with myself. Sometimes the more intimate talks caused an emotional outburst and tension between us, sometimes we got carried away with our drives, but since we wanted to direct our energies properly, we actually got stronger from the ups and downs, our connection got stronger. Aliza knew how to act and how to get everyone into the mood she wanted, more than anyone she knew how to find an outlet for feelings, sometimes I would envy her spontaneity and her talent for drama. There were times when we had these conversations in the room attached to the house, which we called “the shack”. During the day, the shack was a sewing room for Anatasia and it was quiet and private. The improvisation games helped us understand each other and ourselves, and what each of us was going through in a much better way. Aliza liked saying that she “never had real friends like this, and that they couldn’t be found anywhere in the world.”

In 2009, Shiran, the sixth wife, arrived.

Together with Shiran we were six women, and we lived in several apartments in different areas- Jerusalem, center of the country, and in the north, according to the needs of the distribution program. In Tiberias we rented a beautiful caravan, in the mountains behind the Ziyun of Rabbi Meir Ba’al HaNes. Surrounding the caravan was a huge area of grass, a comfortable parking area for all of the distribution vehicles, there was a horse stable, and we made a pool for the kids. The Sea of Galilee was nearby, and the view was dreamy. We really loved being in Tiberias, walking around in the area, going to the lake, and organizing the bands’ performances and the distributions around the north.

On the 4th of July, 2011, our lives were stopped. The trauma and the shock are still fresh. My memories of that night haunt me since then and the longings burn my heart. Until this day, I relive the last moments as if they were happening right now. Shiran and I were with the girls in the house in Tiberias, waiting on the swing on the wooden porch overlooking the Sea of Galilee, for Dad and the boys to return from prayers. It was already late, and I didn’t understand why they were late. Suddenly three white cars stopped in front of the house, and out came about ten armed men, and in a run, surrounded the house. I thought it was an act of terror. I called the girls to go into the house immediately and they cried and were scared. I tried to close the front door, but one of them shoved the door strongly and pushed his way in. They locked us in the house, and one of them said: “I am a policeman and I can do whatever I want.” They yelled, cursed, and turned the house upside down. They threatened us that we should all hurry into their cars and drive to the investigation in Jerusalem. When I tried to call Daniel and the boys, there was no answer. I didn’t know what to think.

Since that night, my life has not been a life. At 0200 in the morning, they forced me to separate from the girls, and leave them in the “Emergency Center” in Pardes Hanna. They dragged Bella out of my hands, Ilana’s little girl. I remember how she held me tight so I don’t leave her alone. I can still feel her heart beating strongly on my heart, and I can hear her say that she wants to go home and that I can’t leave her. I remember the girls holding hands in a circle, and promising each other tearfully that they would not separate. To this day I don’t understand how the world can continue on as if nothing happened, when our children, since that day, are living like orphans to live parents.

In the bill of indictment against Daniel, they claimed that with mental control, Daniel caused my divorce from Asa so he could marry me, and that during our marriage, as punishment, he would send Asa occasionally to the shed to rape me.

They didn’t even bother asking me during the long interrogations nor in court if all of this was true and if I were raped at all and they disregarded the fact that Asa is not attracted to women. When they introduced me as a witness for the prosecution as part of the prosecution’s trickery, I explained that the charges were not true and illogical. The same judges complimented me on my high level of intelligence, my education, and they added that I could be a chief rabbanit. I couldn’t imagine that in the verdict they would decide that I was a slave, and that I had been raped by Asa under Daniel’s orders.

The media lynch was shocking. I couldn’t believe such corruption was possible in public in the year 2011. Exactly 27 days after the arrest, when we were only at the beginning of the investigations, there had not been a trial, and this was a long time before they were able to influence the key prosecution witnesses to turn on Daniel, they had already set Daniel up with a case with no way out, they had determined his fate. They had a press conference around a huge table for blood thirsty journalists, and they interviewed high ranking officials from the police department and the welfare department who forgot that a trial had not been held, and that every citizen has the right to be assumed innocent, and they competed against each other who could describe Daniel as the worst case in Israel. It was horrifying. They assassinated his character in broad daylight. I couldn’t understand how people who are considered “law men” or “welfare workers” in high ranking positions, could allow themselves to slander, to make false statements, and to proclaim that a man is a criminal, without giving him a trial? Who made them judges? Where is the justice? Slowly I learned that this was an evil trick of “professionals”, who are preparing a trap of public opinion for the judges, who couldn’t acquit suspects, because then they would have to deal with the whole country!

I went to the conference room in the battered women’s shelter to watch the news, it had not been a month since the arrest, they hadn’t finished the police investigations, and the dirt in the media was at its height. I was shocked when I heard: “One of the most shocking stories in Israel over the past few years has just been broken. The police suspect a Jerusalem resident of building a cruel cult, he is suspected of abusing his wives…”

On the television screen, the head of the Jerusalem Central Division, Shlomo Dai, announced at the press conference:” The experiences these women went through were difficult, and I, as a veteran policeman, have difficulty describing what they went through…” What a liar! I thought with deep anger, in fact I sat in front of him during the investigations, and I told him that we were good together, and that Daniel never harmed us! The deputy director at the welfare office tried to sound more sensational, and proclaimed:”I have filled more than a few positions in the welfare department in my lifetime, all of which in areas close to this, and I think this is one of the most serious cases, or I can even say that the most severe case in terms of its intensity”, I was even more angry when I heard Ruth Matot, director of the “Division for Children at Risk” at the Jerusalem municipality:” when I saw the things and heard, when I saw the children and the mothers, it was hard to see and hear the things…” but she had never met any of us! I screamed in my heart, why is she lying like that? And she continued to revile him:”this is one of the most horrific cases I have seen and heard, and I have been in the field for 30 years,”, and the head of the interrogation team at the Jerusalem Central Division, in some sort of attempt to compete with his predecessors’ superlatives, announced: “this is the most severe case I have encountered, and we have encountered difficult cases!” They interviewed all sorts of pundits who gave their version of “what went on in the house”. I always knew that the press lied, but until I had experienced it in person, I didn’t know how far it could go!

I was determined to respond quickly, and to publish in all of the media, radio, television, and newspapers the true story. We do live in a democratic country, and I am supposed to have freedom to express myself…

I waited for morning. In the shelter, I was not allowed to have a phone. At 0800 in the morning, I snuck into the office with the television. There was a phone there. I quickly called the radio and said that I am the wife of Daniel Ambash and I wanted to respond to everything being said against us in the press. They told me to call at 1000 and they would let me talk live. I waited impatiently for ten o’ clock. At 09:30 the director of the shelter informed me that shelter’s lawyer was waiting for me. I tried to postpone the interview so that I could call the radio station, but with no luck. I had to go into the meeting, but I had decided that I would call the radio station no matter what. At 09:55 I apologized to the lawyer, and left the room for a moment. I snuck into the next room, where the phone was and closed the door. I dialed the radio. They said they were putting me on the air. I started telling them about my shock at the lies they were telling about Daniel and publicizing in the media, about the way the children were taken from us, and cut off from us, the radio announcer asked me questions and I started to answer. Suddenly, someone tried to open the door. I tried to keep the door shut while talking. It was the lawyer who had come to find me. She instructed me loudly to open the door, I tried to ignore her and answer the questions from the radio, but she kept knocking on the door, I held it shut until she managed to open it, and she entered and asked me immediately to hang up the phone. I tried, despite the interruption, to concentrate on the conversation and I said on the air that part of the injustice was that we were not allowed to talk and express ourselves while they are telling the public lies about us. I hung up and remained with a bitter taste that I didn’t succeed in saying everything that was in my heart. She reported my call to the shelter director, who warned me that I am not allowed to contact the press. I didn’t agree at all to them shutting my mouth or telling me what to do, and I would certainly not cave in, especially while the press is full of lies about us. I made appointments with journalists from all of the leading papers in the country, “Yediot Ahronot”, “Ma’ariv”, “Haaretz”, “Mekomon Yerushalayim”… I looked for ways to get out of the shelter without them knowing where I was going, because I had to ask for permission for every excursion and to report exactly where I was and who I met with. I met with the journalists by circuitous means. They listened for hours to what I had to say, but after we parted they called to tell me that the editor wouldn’t print the article because of the gag order. I tried to insist, it can’t be possible for the police and prosecution to publicize what they want and to slander without limits. This was about me. They were using me to frame Daniel to the point where they said he committed crimes against me, while I am testifying for him and saying explicitly that they are lying, and they are not allowing me to respond with the excuse of a gag order? Who decides what goes to the press and how they will be published and blocks our voice? Is a gag order an order meant to protect the citizens or is it a disguise that enables terrible corruption under the cover of a gag order?!

I searched for something to strengthen me. On one of the days at the “battered women’s shelter”, I opened the book Avi Hanahal by Saba, and I was encouraged by what I read:

“A large crown of grace and honor will be given by HaShem to those who go innocently and fully with all their hearts in fire and water and **sacrifice their souls and homes** for the people for Israel and the people of Israel, that Hashem, may he be blessed, prides himself in them and commits miracles for them. Hashem, show them your benevolence and may your salvation save them from their enemies, love them in every organ and organ and save them!” (Ralo, second part).

The sweetness of Saba’s love engulfed me in security that there could still be salvation and rescue, and I felt that he had written this letter especially for us, for who else could Saba have meant when he said “sacrifice their homes”?

I seized the first opportunity to use a phone to try to reach Tsila, Kari’s daughter. I was so excited to hear her, but my joy was immediately dampened when she told me that Daniel’s father was hospitalized in critical condition following a stroke. I was very scared. Immediately, despite the fact that the police had prohibited us from going to Jerusalem, I rode to the hospital to see him. There I met the wives and the older children, Daniel’s mother and his sister, the meeting was emotional and painful. He lay on the bed, attached to machines, helpless, in pain, Aliza also came to the hospital. She stood by his bed and looked at him for a few minutes, and then got close to his ear and whispered: “I ask for your forgiveness. I know that I am responsible for your condition, I know that I caused great sorrow for what I did to your son, but I ask for your forgiveness.” Daniel’s mother, a holocaust survivor, who since her son’s arrest had gone through another holocaust, signaled Aliza to approach her and told her that in the gas chambers you could identify two types of Jews, those who sacrificed themselves to save others and shared their bread with another so that he may live and there were those who were prepared to shove another into the gas chamber to save themselves. Aliza went silent, and couldn’t move for a few seconds, after which she pulled herself together and left the room.

Daniel’s father died. The Israel Prison Service prohibited Daniel from attending the funeral. It is hard to describe the magnitude of sorrow in words. After dedicating his life to the country, fighting in the “Haganna”, being badly wounded in the War of Independence, working towards aliya of Jews to the Land of Israel, the State didn’t allow his only son, Daniel, to come say Kaddish for him at his funeral. The funeral was held in the cemetery in Jerusalem. An ancient custom in Jerusalem forbids women from entering the cemetery during the funeral, so all of the women stayed in the parking lot during the funeral, and the men went forward and accompanied the car that carried the deceased. Aliza was not embarrassed to be the only woman who accompanied the men, to be present during all of the stages of the burial and to look from nearby through big, black sunglasses that hide her face, how father is covered by dirt. Only after that did she leave.

Aliza’s birthday came. We had a surprise party for her and she was very excited and wanted to take pictures with all of us. She told us that she dreamed of Daniel, and for her birthday she is asking the Creator of the World for Daniel to be released quickly. That was the last time I saw her.

Two months later, I was in Tel Aviv. Lilach, the investigator, called to tell me to come for a short meeting in her office. I immediately rode to Jerusalem.

The dark corridors of the Jerusalem Central Division brought traumatic memories from the violent interrogations held against the whole family six months earlier. The bitter taste of being cut off from Daniel, the worry and fear of the unknown came back to gnaw at my insides. I went into the interrogation room without knowing that I was entering a trap, which it took me a whole year to escape.

“I summoned you, since it has been a long time since I’ve heard from you and I wanted to know your situation?”

“What do you mean, my situation?”

“Do you still support Daniel, or not?”

“Of course I am still with him, he is my husband and I love him and he did nothing wrong.”

“Are you sure?”

“Of course.”

“I thought you were more intelligent, Aderet, and understood things, but if you are continuing to go with power and arguing, I already explained to you that it would be to your detriment. At least you can’t say that I didn’t warn you!”

“Daniel did nothing wrong.”

“I don’t like the way you are talking, but if you are sure of your position on the matter, then you have opened a battlefront with me and from now on you are to be interrogated as a subject.”

“What are you talking about?” I didn’t understand.

She looked me straight in the eye, and recited the text that was so familiar to her: “I am informing you that you are suspected of conspiracy to commit a crime, witness tampering, obstruction of interrogation and trial, and kidnapping and child abuse. You have the right to consult an attorney, you do not have to say anything, anything you say can be used as evidence against you, and refusal to respond to questions may strengthen the evidence against you.”

“Is this a joke?” I asked, couldn’t believe my own ears.

“Tell me what you have been doing in the past weeks, and where you live.” She opened the investigation. I was silent. I understood that she was making good on her promise from six months earlier, she would indict me. This time, I decided, I wasn’t going to answer her.

“There are serious charges against you, Don’t you want to give some sort of interpretation to these charges?” Of course not, I thought in my heart, every word I say she then interprets according to her will, at least this time I will learn from my previous experience in the interrogation rooms…

“Did you meet with any of Daniel’s wives since he was arrested?” she asked.

I remained silent.

“From the evidence we have gathered it appears that you made a habit of meeting on a regular basis, each time in a different place, what is your response?”

I exercised my right to remain silent.

“The information we have gathered in the investigation it appears that you would all meet and you went to Aliza to persuade her not to testify in the trial of Daniel Ambash, what is your response?”

Where did she get that idea? I thought. After all, it was Aliza who instigated the meetings between us, asked us to come to her parents’ house; it couldn’t be that Aliza complained about that.

“Why are you remaining silent? These are serious accusations of witness tampering, which is a crime. Why don’t you give us your version? I remind you that this is the time. According to our information, you met Aliza and gave her 2000 NIS, what is your response to that? Aliza told that to the police. What is your response to that?”

I kept quiet; I didn’t want to believe that after she cried to me that her credit card was swallowed and she was in debt and needed money urgently because she didn’t have clothing for Batya for the winter and it was already cold, Aliza was using my help against me? I did everything I could to get 2500 NIS, I took a loan that I haven’t been able to repay to this day!

“I present you with an eight page letter that Aliza gave to the police, that you wrote to her and gave her, and that in this manner you harassed a witness.

“What?!” I was in shock. I saw in the investigators’ hand a letter I had written to Aliza in the small hours of the night when I couldn’t fall asleep because of thoughts and worries for her and Batya. There is no way that Aliza gave it to the police. Only then did I see things clearly, Aliza was not the Aliza I thought she was. It was very hard to accept this truth. I didn’t want to accept it. I felt that she had stabbed a sword deep into my heart, and was slowly twisting it in order to hurt me, to kill me and the whole family, a slow and painful death. But why? How is this possible? What a con artist. It’s not human, how could she do this?!

“Aliza said that you, together with the other women, met with the reporter, Dina Abramson, and that you convinced her to be photographed. What is your response?”

What was going on here? How many put downs did I take from her when she was angry that I wasn’t doing enough, like her, for Daniel, she was the one who invited the journalist and encouraged us to be photographed and talk about police, welfare, and prosecution corruption. I was shocked, but I kept silent, she wouldn’t be able to get me to fly off the handle.

“Our information leads us to understand that you met with the women against the rules at the hospital, Sha’arei Tzedek,” what is your response? Do you understand that you are suspected of very serious crimes, and that this is the time for you to talk and give your response?”

I was stupefied by the truth about Aliza. In my worst nightmares, I couldn’t have imagined that she would behave like that. Even the worst nightmare couldn’t bring me to think that she would act to lock us, her friends and Daniel up in jail.

“Is it clear to you that you are under arrest?”

I couldn’t believe my ears. Why and what for? How is it possible that on the basis of such blatant lies she locks me up in jail?! What was this evil plot, and who stood behind it? But above all, I was in turmoil from the revelation of Aliza’s two facing, how could this happen? When did Aliza decide to turn over? How did she succeed in acting in front of all of us up until now?

The investigator sent me to get a mug shot and to degrading examinations to show me properly that I was under arrest. They photographed me from the front, took a profile picture, took fingerprints, the guard touched me in a degrading manner to check that I didn’t have any forbidden substance in my body, I had never felt so humiliated as a I did in these examinations. Another detainee who went through the same procedure after me, broke down and started sobbing that it was inhumane that they allow themselves to treat us as if were cattle. I felt like she did, but I tried to give her strength. The investigator called one of the jail guards to escort me to the holding cell at the Russian Compound, and said in a threatening tone: “You will regret making the wrong choice, Aderet!”

The arrest was unexpected, and I was totally unprepared. The jail guard put me in a cell, and locked the door after me. The slam of the metal door, the noise of the keys locking me in made me feel like crying a deep cry from the heart. The cell was small and narrow, without windows or circulation. The walls were full of malicious graffiti in clumps of brown left by previous prisoners as a memento. There were two bunk beds on either side of the room with thin mattresses with urine stains, and itchy wool blankets on each bed. Between the beds was a narrow path that led to a foul smelling bathroom with an old shower and a rusty sink- the only source of drinking water. I didn’t know how I could survive this chokehold. Suddenly, like a breeze of fresh air, they put Ilana into the cell. I was so happy to see her that I forgot about Aliza and everything I had been through in the past hours. We hugged. She had been arrested the day before, and I didn’t know what was going on with her. Since they didn’t give us a chance to make a phone call, Ilana was anxious that she couldn’t be in touch with the children. We talked about the terrible injustice of the system against us, but more than anything, it pained us to see the cruel turnaround of the people closest to us.

In jail, the prison guards do a count five times a day, starting at 05:00 in the morning. They burst into the cells screaming: “stand on your feet”, with a stick in their hands they bang on the wall. For one half hour a day, the guard takes us to the “yard”, a square surrounded by grey, heavy concrete walls; we had to really make an effort to see the sky through the barbed wire. About a week later, they arrested Azamra, and put her in the cell with us. Not because we asked to be together, but because it was the only cell for women. Six months earlier they had separated us, and now we felt that we had to appreciate every moment together, even in a place like this. We strengthened ourselves with song and dance. The guards looked at us for a second confused, and yelled “Shut your mouths!”

Several days later, we got the writ of indictment. I was shocked to see that in addition to all of the things the investigator had accused me of; they added a new charge that I wasn’t even interrogated about: “child rape”. And this is what it says, at an unknown time, in an unknown place, at an unknown age, we held Kari’s son Samy, me with one hand and Aliza with the other, while Azamra dressed in underwear and a bra performed oral sex on him, under Daniel’s orders. This charge could have put me away for at least ten years. I wondered, if there was a suspicion that something like this indeed happened, how is it possible: 1) We were not questioned about it before we were put in jail 2) Why did they wait six months to arrest us? 3) Why did Lilach Ronen have to clarify my stance towards Daniel before deciding whether to investigate me or not? 4) Why did they try so hard for six months, since Daniel’s arrest and up till now, to convince us women at the shelter via social workers, group talks, bribery and threats, that we were “battered women”?

The clear conclusion is that this whole arrest was a trick to prevent us from working on his release, and to pressure us to testify against him to save ourselves, as the prosecution told us: “If you sign that you are victims you will immediately be released from jail.”

For one whole year we were transported in blazing hot tin trucks, feet and hands shackled, to court to extend our arrests. The pain of the handcuffs and shackles on my legs is still sharp in my memory.

On Tu BeShvat 2012, Azamra and I were in the holding cells in Jerusalem. Daniel was in “Rimonim” prison in the north, and we couldn’t contact him, and Ilana was in “Neve Tirza” prison. The jail guard took me out for a meeting with a lawyer that Tsila sent me, and she opened the huge metal door of the ward, and I followed her down a narrow corridor that led to the conference room. I heard the sound of handcuffs coming from the end of the corridor. I raised my eyes, and my heart missed a beat from joy… I met Daniel face to face (!). What was he doing in the jail in Jerusalem? When the guard escorting him stopped directly near the one escorting me, it was like a small miracle that they both decided to uncuff us at the same place… Daniel didn’t know that we had been arrested, and was shocked to see me there. We were so excited. I felt that my soul had been put back in its place. We managed to exchange a few words until the guard took him to a room. My guard ordered me to follow her and started walking, but I wanted to see Daniel. I hadn’t seen him for six months. I couldn’t keep following her. My feet took me in exactly the opposite direction… I got to the cell where Daniel was being held. He sat among a large group of men and held his head between his hands. I recognized him by the big white yarmulke on his head. I hugged the bars and yelled towards him: “ Daniel!” He raised his head and quickly came towards me. I whispered to him, “I miss you so much, be strong and don’t break!” He managed to tell me that he loves me just as the prison guard approached me with rapid steps, yelling and admonishing me, and separating me from the bars. We sent kisses in the air to each other and she led me to the lawyer. When I went in the room, I was still excited, and I saw that Azamra had already talked to the lawyer. “Daniel is here,” I filled her in with excitement.

“Really?!” she almost cried, “How could that be? What is he doing here? Where is he?” She didn’t want to miss any detail. “I have to see him”.

“Don’t worry,” I told her. “On the way back to the cell let’s try to do something…”

We almost forgot about the lawyer’s presence. We tried to quickly finish the discussion with him. The guard arrived and told us to follow her. We hoped we would be able to see Daniel. Suddenly, when the guard proceeded down the hallway, a large group of prisoners accompanied by guards arrived, and they filled up the whole hallway at once so that the guard lost eye contact with us. We didn’t hesitate, and I quickly took Azamra to the cell where I saw Daniel. Azamra yelled: “Daniel, what a miracle to see you,” Daniel came closer to us. Azamra held on tightly to the bars, fighting the guard who had arrived running and tried to free Azamra’s hold on the bars. Azamra didn’t listen to anyone, she had eyes only for Daniel, and she tried to give him as many messages of love and support that she could. Another guard arrived, and they returned us to our holding cell against our wills. There was no chance that exactly on the same day, at the same place, and at the same moment, despite all of the “system”’s efforts to cut off any contact between us, we met for a few moments whose sweetness we won’t ever forget.

Later, we discovered that Daniel was waiting in the jail in Jerusalem to be summoned to the religious court to give Aliza a get (Jewish divorce).

Some days later, we were told I was moving from the jail at the “Russian Compound” to the women’s prison “Neve Tirza”. I packed my grey sweatsuit that I got there with the towel and a few other items in a big black plastic bag, and I waited to be called for transport. They took me in a large Israeli Prison Service truck (Fosta) in a separate compartment, hands and feet cuffed. Once again, I had to go through degrading examinations. After a long wait, a prison guard took me to the “Hamitcham Ward”, the ward where women are kept until the admissions committee decides where to put me. I walked behind her, with the black bag in my hands. She walked me down a long corridor with a train of dark cells on either side, through which some prisoners peeked out at me. One yelled: “Here is another stinky religious woman”, another yelled:” Hey! Do you have a cigarette?” Someone called to the guard to complain about someone in her room, another begged the guard for some water, the guard yelled at her “Quiet!!” We passed through the whole corridor until we reached the last room. I thought it my heart: “It isn’t for nothing that Rabbi Nachman said that he believes there is a heaven in the afterlife, but in this world he cannot see it, because here it looks like hell. I felt I was in a nightmare. I didn’t want to believe that it was real. The guard held up a huge keyring, and opened the cell. The room was dark. In the darkness, I noticed five pairs of eyes examining me and my black bag. I hadn’t gotten over the shock of my new standing, when suddenly, as if from another world, I heard Ilana’s voice greeting me enthusiastically: “Here is the great Aderet, you have finally arrived!” She held both of my hands, and dragged me into a dance. The women in the room smiled, and some of them joined us in a dance circle. I felt the love between us could light up even the darkness of the pits of hell.

Theoretically, we were all represented by an attorney from the public defendant’s office. In the hearing where we were supposed to respond to the charges in the indictment, just before the judges entered the court, my and Azamra’s lawyers approached us and told us that we will not like what they have to say in the hearing in response to the charges, but they had decided on it the night before, and we should sit quietly and not interrupt the proceedings, and let them do their job to release us. We didn’t know what to expect. But in the deliberation, when we heard our lawyers try to explain to the judges that we were actually Daniel’s victims and that’s why we should be released, we were shocked. They acted in complete contrast to what we had agreed upon. They didn’t represent at all the truth that we had fought to defend, and for which we were prepared to even sit in jail. They knew, just as well as we did, that the police’s purpose in arresting us was just to pressure us to speak against our husband, and to tell stories that never happened. The fact that the lawyers chose the easy and facetious way, and prima facie, in a cold and legal way claimed that we don’t deny the charges against our husband, but we were in such as state of denial because of the brainwashing, so we were deserving of the court’s mercy, and deserved to be released from prison- made us very angry, and we burst into their diatribe, yelling that we don’t in any way agree with what they are saying. We told the judge that we were willing to sit in jail for years if necessary, but we would not deny the truth! Turning Daniel into a cruel tormentor who performed acts of indecent assault and controlled us- was an unmitigated lie, and we were not Daniel’s victims, and we wanted justice and truth to prevail! The judge tried to calm us down, and explained that these were just legal terms and they don’t claim to prove any truth. We unequivocally opposed their continued representation of our cases, and we asked the judge for different lawyers, or we would represent ourselves, and the truth would be its own witness. In the proceedings following this one, different lawyers represented us. They dealt with each clause in the indictment in order to disprove it.

After we had spent a year in prison, the three witnesses who testified against Daniel arrived to testify against us: Samy, Aliza, and Timna. We were once again taken from “Neve Tirza” in Ramla to the district court house in Jerusalem via difficult trips in the “Fosta”, I couldn’t believe that Aliza dared show up in court and look us in the eyes. She dared to testify after seeing us with hands and feet in cuffs, and to perjure herself to shut us in and to get her daughter back by subterfuge. I couldn’t believe her heart would allow her to see us, her friends, in this condition, and to want us to be locked up in prison, especially knowing that Ilana and Azamra’s children were also suffering from their mothers being imprisoned. But it turns out that I was wrong. Aliza came into town, stood on the witness stand like a cold actress waiting for the audience to be moved by her performance and clap hands for her. She got caught up in blatant lies. She didn’t know the place where Samy’s event happened, not the time, or even remembered who was present at the event, she also didn’t exactly know what happened at the said event, and she contradicted herself time and contradicted Samy’s testimony together with Timna and they all came out liars. The judges decided that it was superfluous to waste the courts’ time by hearing about four more deliberations for the defense, and suggested the prosecution “close a deal” with us. It was decided to drop the whole indictment, including the background to the indictiment. The judges wrote that “in light of the evidence before them they decided to free us immediately”, and in order to justify the year we spent under arrest, we were convicted of violation of a court order and witness tampering for meeting between us wives when we were not supposed to meet.

In an unclear and outraging twist, the same charges were not dismissed in Daniel’s court ruling, and he was convicted of these crimes.

On the date 17.12.12, the eight night of Chanukah, we were released from jail. The minute we walked out of the front door of the District Court of Jerusalem, one year after being arrested, Ilana started to run in the streets from joy, Azamra and I after her. We felt like free birds who were just given their freedom back, and we thanked the good Lord may he be blessed for the Chanukah miracle, but a cloud of sadness still hovered above us- our husband was still not free!

Nine months later, in October 2013, Daniel got his verdict. A lawyer from Avigdor Feldman’s office explained that there was no chance that Daniel would be convicted of enslavement. She even laughed and added”: With such strong and independent wives as yourselves, it is more likely that he was the victim and slave in the story.” She said that in their victory they were able to prove in court that all of the witnesses for the prosecution were lying, and that the only thing that had them a bit worried was that the court found Timna to be reliable. She quickly added that it’s nothing to be worried about. Because they were able to prove to the court that Timna was only a hearsay witness who heard the stories and that’s it. I reminded her that when Timna came to testify, Mr. Feldman didn’t show up for the session. Another lawyer from the firm apologized that he was not prepared for the interrogation, and the judges allowed for Timna to be called again for a cross examination. I asked her, “Why did you decide to waive this possibility?” she said: “It is superfluous to call Timna again.”

We got to the verdict full of expectation that Daniel would come home with us. We waited in the courtroom tensely to hear the judges’ decision. The judges entered the courtroom with quick steps. We got up in their honor. The presiding judge asked everyone to be seated and said:” The verdict contains 152 pages. I will summarize it in one sentence: Of the twenty charges against defendant 1 (Daniel), we convict him of 18 charges, and defendant 2 (Asa), we convict of four charges.” I burst out yelling at the judges: “This is not a fair trial! Daniel is innocent! How could you do something like this?!” I felt like the world was collapsing. Azamra cried and yelled:” There is no way that you are listening to Aliza, one whore, and not five women who testified in his favor!” The guards removed us from the courtroom forcefully. Ilana and Shiran remained stunned.

The press waited outside of the courtroom, and I wanted to approach them and tell them of the horrible injustice here, but the courthouse guards took me to the bottom floor, and forbade me from talking to the press. I sat on the bench near the main entrance. I cried from the depths of my soul. One of the guards stood next to me to make sure I wouldn’t go upstairs again. When I saw the lawyer, Mr. Feldman, leave the courthouse stoically, looking at me with an impermeable look, and continue on his way, I broke down and screamed at him with all of the strength I had left,” What have you done?... How could it be? How could you do such a bad job?” I was hysterical, I had lost self control. I had never yelled at anyone like that before. I cried aloud. I felt like I was falling apart. To this day, I cannot and do not want to accept the bad news. Daniel was sentenced to 26 years in prison, Asa to six years. I am in a nightmare that hasn’t ended yet, trying to waken from it and not succeeding. I screamed out for help, but no one came.

Ilana, Shiran, Azamra, and I went to the jail in Jerusalem. We knew Daniel would be transported there by a “Fosta” to wait to be sent to prison. We hoped to see him through the little spaces in the windows of the police truck. We knew he would signal us if he saw us. He was devastated mentally and hurting, and we tried to signal him to be strong, and it was important for him to know that we were with him, love him, and would fight to have him returned home. One of the guards at the jail got annoyed when he saw us, and said: “I’ll show you!” and he brought a long stick, and closed Daniel’s window. I thought: what evil, what brutality is there in this world, why do people take advantage of their position to do bad things to others? It was all too much. Nothing could surprise me anymore. But later, when I was listening to the news, I got the biggest shock of my life. The prosecution had announced that they were appealing the “unduly lenient sentence”, and they are demanding 65 years for Daniel, and for Asa- twenty.

**Cynical use of personal diaries**

As I mentioned earlier, I was used. My personal ruminations in writing were used as evidence towards Daniel’s conviction. The insistence on using these writings resulted from their lack of convicting evidence; they didn’t have a significant backbone that could justify the outlandish and cruel story they plotted… therefore they needed to use virtuoso legality, to build a monstrous puzzle like a stack of cards, and if you take out one piece- the whole building falls. The use of personal writings that a person wrote for herself, is embarrassing, it is an encroachment and a deep insult to the privacy and honor of a person and her choices, especially when it is used as dubious support of weak evidence, and they gave a cynical and fraudulent interpretation of the writings, take them completely out of context, very far from the intention with which they were written. It reminds me of a story I heard about a Chinese Caesar who ordered the masses to write personal diaries. After a while, he ordered all of the diaries brought to him, and he decided to put everyone who wrote things he didn’t like on trial and have them executed. In Judaism, there is a halachic prohibition called “Rabbi Gershom’s ban on bigamy”, which they like to cite when talking about a temporary prohibition Rabbi Gershom made against bigamy in Ashkenazi countries, and it is interesting that they don’t quote the prohibition against opening personal letters…

Despite what was written in the verdict: “The evidentiary weight of the diary will be decided according to the witness’ position regarding the contents of the written material, its meaning, truth, or refutation…” they completely ignored the specific and detailed testimony I gave. In the verdict, the judges sited from my personal diary, and I was surprised to see that they wrote in my name: “I have no will of my own and I have no thought of my own about what’s right and what’s not” (page 57 of the verdict). It just can’t be that I wrote something like that! I went to my notebooks, and after a lot of searching I found what I had written. A superficial reading led me to understand immediately that it was a rhetoric question, “Don’t I have a will of my own?! Don’t I have a thought of my own?!” A question that came in the context of philosophical questions, wondering about the meaning of the verse:” Revoke your will for His will so that he can revoke other’s wills for the sake of yours.” A verse taken from Pirkei Avot, which refers to revoking man’s will towards G-d’s will makes G-d revoke man’s will for His will. I wrote it as a discussion between me and myself about the meaning of self nullification before G-d: Does that mean that I have no will of my own or that I have a will, but I, doing the Lord’s work, nullify my will for the sake of G-d’s will? Only a gross and blatant disregard of the context of the written text could lead to a situation in which the judges quoted my sentences as ending in an exclamation point (!) instead of a question mark (?) and attributed their content as a “submission” to Daniel. The judges resorted to relying on my diaries in order to affirm their arbitrary decision: “the women are brainwashed without any independent opinion” (as they wrote in the verdict), and didn’t even bother eliciting the professional opinion of a psychologist or professional who could determine if we had an independent opinion or not. How is it possible that the judges changed their job description to “psychologists by the hour”, and allow themselves to determine in the verdict (page 38): “The women were incapable intellectually and psychologically of leaving the accused and the house…”, and based on this diagnosis they convicted him of “illegal holding under terms of enslavement”. Did the judges in Israel forget and completely disregard the basic values underlying the justice system?

The prosecuting attorney Sagi Ofir, tried to prove that Daniel had a system of sending the women to “recruit souls”, as written in the verdict (page 2): “For years the wives of accused number one acted to find more candidates to be wives and join the family, in order to spread the word of the Saba”. As evidence they presented my journal, and wrote: “Aderet wrote down a conversation with Daniel verbatim, and she wrote that he said: There is a great interest to introduce another woman into the family.” If the judges had read two more words of the sentence, they would have understood that the sentence was taken out of context and turned into something entirely different. The original sentence was: “There is a great interest to introduce another woman into the family, it is a huge responsibility and might G-d forbid destroy everything!”The sentence that Daniel said actually means the opposite. That was the conversation that developed following the date that I had determined as a deadline for receiving a good sign, and I prayed for a woman to arrive. Daniel tried to squash my enthusiasm and said explicitly: “The thing is not a woman, you may still have children… allowing another woman into the family is a great responsibility and it could, G-d forbid, ruin everything!” How could the judges not have made the effort to read two more words in the diary? How is it possible they took the prosecutor’s words as “Torah from the Sinai”, without checking out their credibility, or just because it fit with their decision, before the trial began?

When the prosecutor accused Daniel of sending me to “punishment by exile” based on my journals, I thought I would go crazy. How is that possible? I checked my journals again, and found the text that was brought as evidence by the prosecution, in a prayer I wrote to the Creator, a poem in rhymes that talks about exile of the soul and longing for the Heavenly Father. I expected the judge to see the truth and reprimand the prosecutor for trying to twist things; I was shocked to see the easiness with which the judge adopted the prosecution’s position.

There are endless examples of the journals which show how the written text was twisted and given a biased interpretation in according with their plan to convict. In truth, my diaries are evidence of my independence, and should have been used as evidence for the defense if only the judges had been looking objectively.

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I will never, and I mean never, forgive all of the people, who participated in this horrible crime, and everyone who had a hand in this terrible travesty of justice, and everyone who had a hand in the holocaust thrust upon my family. Within me, I know that the land will not be silent. I know that the heavens will not be silent. I want to copy here a prayer from a collection by Rabbi Nathan:

“And may strength and courage influence us by the right of the truly righteous, and aid us and save us so that we will live to subdue and disgrace as witnessed by all of the land those who oppose the truth and we will live to uproot and break and nullify those who prosecute and inform on those from afar who bring the true closeness to You, who truly fear your name. Despite that we are not worthy of your closeness by our deeds, despite this, ‘the mercies of the heaven are many your mercies are many indeed. Do to us what you will, do as you will with us. And who would tell you what to do. But who appointed them to judge and sentence, to G-d forbid sentence us, to convict us. Who asked for them to trample the persecuted, G-d forbid.” Because you are the one who gives blows and chases, and your victims will tell of the pain.Ruler of the World, here the cry from the depths of the underworld and below, here my cry and my bitter moan, oh so weighty and oh so deep!”

Ilana is Daniel’s first wife, together they brought ten children to the world, and after ten years of marriage she opened her home to us, her friends. In our opinion, she is a true “woman of valor”. Let us now move onto her personal story.

Ilana’s Story, the First Wife

Part One

I am Ilana Ambash. I was the French Kung Fu Champion. I went to the Republic of China in Taiwan together with the French delegation to compete in the Kung Fu and Chinese Boxing World Championship, not because I wanted a medal, nor did I go to seek honor; an old Chinese Master of Chi Kong with whom I studied told me that it would be a life experience.

During the days of the competition, we would arrive at the stadium to watch our teammates’ matches. I only found out one hour before the match that today would be my round and that I have to compete against the Chinese Champion.

The late notice about the match was quite surprising and not very fair. Despite the fact that I was not prepared that day, and I was even fasting, I took the surprise dispassionately. I went to warm up in an isolated side room, adjacent to the training auditorium. I sat on the floor, cross-legged and concentrated on the Chi Kong and meditated to prepare myself for battle. After several movements, I felt ready.

A month before the world championship, I went to a grocery store in France and a glass bottle broke on my foot. It cut part of a tendon in my foot. In the emergency room at the hospital the doctor said that in no way could I compete in the world championship for at least three months. I decided that I would go. I concentrated on healing my foot with the power of thought, as I had learned from Chinese medicine, and even though I was limping, I went to compete.

The stadium was full with thousands of spectators from all over the world. When I got to the ring, I was given a blue Kimono, and across from me stood the Chinese Champion, dressed in a yellow Kimono. She was much taller than me. I did not look at her. My system was not to look at the opponent, only to feel her.

The battle was very short. The Chinese Champion tried to make me step out of the ring, I let her feel like she was about to win and then I turned it against her, in a quick turn, one strong blow, I got her in a serious knockout. She broke her nose and was carried away on a stretcher. I won fourth place in the world.

In the Kung Fu training I was the only woman in a group of men. Two of them would hold the punching bag, and I would, with one jumping kick, send them both flying.

I found Kung Fu through a spiritual search. The training was a connection to faith for me. I loved the nobility, the power, the concentration necessary in the Chinese art of warfare. I loved the training and the hard work, the ups and downs, and the wars. I didn’t find purpose in the wisdom of the Far East, and I decided to return to my roots- to Judaism.

I understood that the real challenge for me, that what I really wanted to fight for was to live in the Land of Israel, to work on my own virtues, to have children and to care for them. When I began my process of going back to G-d and I was set up with Daniel, I wanted to have 26 children with him. I had a kind of dream in which I raised a lot of children, who stood on a high hill in nature, praying and singing and praising G-d, may he be blessed. My dream came true, I made aliya to Eretz Israel, and I became a mother of ten children, and I raised nine more children from the other mothers. I dedicated myself entirely to taking care of them with all my heart and soul; they were my source of happiness. I was very excited that all of the children danced and sang to G-d with their father in the performances dedicated to the festivities in honor of the Righteous Tzadikim in front of thousands of people. I was very proud to have the privilege of producing these shows. The bigger boys became cantors at the Rabbi Na Nach Nachma Nachman Meuman synagogue.

Just as I had finally arrived at the spiritual purpose I had sought my whole life, the realization of my aspirations, “I got hit below the belt”. The judges in Israel plunged a knife in my back against all rules of fairness. In 2011, without asking me, without investigating, without checking, without seeking the truth, they decided that I am a slave to my husband, who took sexual and financial advantage of me, and declared me an abused woman. They took my children, separated them, and scattered them into different closed welfare institutions, and sent my husband to 26 years in prison on false accusations!

I was born in Morocco, and when I was two my family moved to France. I grew up mostly among non-Jews. My mother’s family was highly respected whose genealogy led back to one of the great wise men of Morocco in the 19th century, who was the head of the Beit Din (Court) in Fez, and head of the high Beit Din in Rabbat. His grandson was my grandfather, the last Dayan in a line of 23 Dayans in the family. He was also head of the Beit Din in Fez and Rabbat, but as a child I was surprised to hear my grandmother complaining and crying to me that she suspected him of messing with the Arab servants who worked in their home. She was afraid that that was why her small baby, Moshe, died. My mother did not remain religious, and raised me in a secular environment. My father had a bachelor’s in chemistry, and hated religion and religious people. He believed in science and rationalism. At home there were very few signs of traditional Judaism. Sometimes when mother would miss keeping Shabbat, she would set the table for Shabbat, and father would turn over the table while yelling and cursing. My aunts and uncles on my mother’s side were religious Jews, and my aunts on my father’s side were married to Christians and celebrated the Christian holidays, and I grew up in this conflict. Since I was eight, I remember being a guest in my mother’s sister’s home, and she was haredi. I would go with her to synagogue on Yom Kippur, but since I didn’t really understand, and didn’t know what to do during the prayers, I would cry. My heart broke, and I wanted to talk to Hashem, and I didn’t know how. When I went back to the material way of life, at my parents’ home, it would depress me. When I grew up, I thought that I would be able to rise above the material via Chinese wisdom and to understand the meaning of life. I specifically was enthusiastic about martial arts from the Far East, and I decided to learn them. My parents didn’t understand me and that’s why I would hide my karate gloves and my shields under my close, and go to practice against their wills. When I was twenty they wanted to marry me off to the son of my father’s manager, since he was rich and it didn’t bother them that he hated Jews. When I asked them how they could offer him to me when they knew he was anti-Semitic, they said: “Convert him. The important thing is that he has money.” It was hard for me that they were not sensitive to my quest.

I thought that by working on my internal abilities, I could reach a connection to Hashem. I learned that there are two Indian concepts:” Big Car” and “Little Car”. In other words, two approached to life. Either you are like a little car and just take yourself, or you drive a big car and take others with you. I chose the big car. Kung Fu includes Chinese medicine. I believed that you can connect with nature and with G-d and through this, to heal people. Therefore, I invested in my studies and training.

I used to go deep into the woods near Paris with a staff, a training sword and a small bag on my back with some simple bread and a water canteen, which I would fill with water from the spring beneath the mountain. Sometimes I would stay there at night to practice. At night I would light fires, and the place became like a second home to me. I liked eating the forest fruits; I would run up the hill; I would practice in the snow without shoes or socks. I improved my abilities also with studying Chi Kong which teaches control of energy and breathing in accordance with the principles of Chinese medicine. With the help of concentration and motions I engaged my inner energy (the Chi). With the help of energy control you can reach amazing achievements in battle, in self control, emotional balance, development of senses, and development of physical strength, work that required great concentration. Once, during training in the forest, I felt, without seeing, someone from about two hundred meters coming to attack me. I scared him by making movements with my staff. He understood that he should not approach me and he quickly ran off.

One of the parks in Paris was locked at 21:00. Sometimes, I would climb the fence to get into the locked park to practice in a quiet place. On one of the nights, when I was very concentrated on my Kung Fu and Chi Kong movements, I suddenly saw four Arab brutes accompanied by a big German dog. I didn’t pay attention to them. One of them yelled at the dog: “Attack!” The dog ran quickly towards me. At that moment I connected heart and soul to G-d and ignored them. The dog ran until he was about a meter and a half from me, and went back to them slowly. One of them got angry and yelled once again: “Attack!” and he once again ran towards me and returned to them. After they tried a third time to no avail, they must have understood that they shouldn’t mess with me and they left. I thanked G-d.

When I started learning Kung Fu, I knew that Buddha and the statues were idolatry, and it was clear that I wouldn’t fall into that trap, because although I wasn’t religious, I always be believed in G-d, may he be blessed. But in the end, the passion to learn alternative medicine; the Tibetan books and Tibetan medicine studies- made me think that there are secrets, and these attracted me, unfortunately, to idolatry.

The sharp turn that awoke my Jewish soul occurred when I was 22, after the championship in Taiwan. On my way to another practice in the woods, a Jewish woman approached me and said: “Do you know that your whole body is the letters of Hashem?” Her words penetrated my heart. She led me to understand that Judaism has a very high spiritual treasure, and that is how I started to learn about Judaism. At that time, during the month of Av, I went to my grandfather Saul’s memorial, my father’s father. When I spread myself on his grave, my heart opened and I started to scream “Where is the truth”. I felt confused from all of the wisdom of the Far East. I cried from a cry to Hashem to show me what the truth is (at the time I did not know that Daniel had simultaneously flown to Uman in the Ukraine to the grave of Rabbi Nachman to pray for a match). When I returned from the cemetery, the Jewish Channel was on the television, there was a show about Rabbi Nachman, and they showed Breslev Hasid's dancing. I felt that was the answer to my prayer on my grandfather’s grave. I immediately went out to buy books by Rabbi Nachman, in order to learn how to return to my religion.

Over the summer vacation I prayed a lot in my room at my parents’ house. In the evening, I went to Torah lessons. One day, in honor of Tu BeShvat, I went with my mother to a lecture at the synagogue, and we sat in the women’s section, and my mother told me to look a Hasidic boy who was sitting in the lecture. It was Daniel. He was in the men’s section, and he didn’t see me.

People from the Jewish community asked me to teach children Kung Fu. I began to teach, until I felt that I could not in any way be a cause for others to fall. I was afraid that the children’s enthusiasm for Kung Fu would draw them away from the religion. And they would be tempted to fall into idol worship, so I stopped the lessons. I apologized to the mothers that I could not continue. At the time, I continued studying stories and prayer collections by Rabbi Nachman, and to seclude myself in prayer for hours.

My grandfather, the Dayan from Morocco, wanted me to marry a rich dentist from a family of Cohens. I refused, because I had already decided I wanted to marry a boy who loves Rabbi Nachman. Not a dentist, not an engineer.

I worked three days in a store called “Ki Tov”, in the Jewish area of Paris. I became friendly with a girl who worked in a neighboring bookstore, and I told her I was becoming religious. I was there when Daniel arrived in the area to buy a book for Shabbat. It turned out that the girl I was friendly with was friends with Daniel’s sister, and sent him to see me as a possible match. I went out to the front of the store to organize some towels and other items, and I noticed Daniel across the street. I smiled at him and he left.

On the last day of my job at the store, Daniel’s sister came to the store with her husband, and offered that I meet her brother for a “date”. She took my number, and gave it to Daniel. When he called me, he invited me to his sister’s birthday party. Immediately after work, I got on the underground and went there. There was a warm and pleasant atmosphere. At the end of the party, Manno, his son from a previous marriage said: “Dad, maybe marry her?” I was moved.

Daniel was studying Gemarra at the Pava Yeshiva in Paris. After Yom Kippur had ended, after the moon blessing, the rabbi at the yeshiva decided to perform an engagement ceremony. The end of Yom Kippur is considered the “Day for exalting G-d’s Name”, and after the moon blessing it was a special feeling of timing. Of a new beginning. I had strong yearning for repent and exaltation of Hashem in the world. I studied “Likutei Moharan” by Rabbi Nachman because: every righteous Tzadik has a room, where the mere words of children give strength to the Tzadik to win the war against the Amalek. I wanted to have a lot of children for the Tzadik Rabbi Nachman’s room.

We got married on the eight night of Chanukah. After the chupa I had a sort of internal understanding that in order to realize my aspirations, I had to succeed in raising 26 children, I would need the help of other women. Of course, I did not tell Daniel about my idea. I knew that he wanted us to live like all of the people in the Haredi community in Paris, but in my heart, I hoped that my will would realize itself.

One year later we had a boy. Daniel came back from Rosh HaShana at Uman, and told me that we got a blessing from a precious student of Rabbi Nachman, Rabbi Isroel Ber Oddeser, known as “the Saba” to make aliya to Israel. I was very excited. One month later it happened, we were informed by the Jewish Agency that there was a place for us at the absorption center in Mevasseret Zion. We made aliya to Eretz Israel!

In Israel, we were privileged to host in our home, for a special period of time, Rabbi Isroel Ber Odesser, who got a letter handwritten by Rabbi Nachman and signed with Na Nah Nahman MeUman revealing the secret of the “new song”. Because of the Saba, many people arrived to talk to him. It was a pleasure to hear the Saba sing wonderful melodies with the friends. When I heard him say that spreading the word is more important that anything; that it is important that every house in Israel have books and the note by Rabbi Nachman; that if all women of Israel would wear the charm of Na Nach Nachma Nachman Meuman, they would all be pure and holy, and a new G-d fearing generation would be born. I thought it was very important to try and spread the word to women, and to prepare charms of all sorts. At the time there were not a lot of women to spread the word. I would do it alone. I gave birth nearly every year. There were months when I couldn’t spread the word, because I was busy with birth and a new baby. I prayed that more women come to work with me, and strengthen the distribution to the women.

When our second son was two months old, the Saba was at our house and he said: “Tell me when he starts to sing”. At the time, I didn’t know what he meant. Years later, when this son grew and became the lead singer of the group “HaBetlers”, we understood that his unusual talent he received as a gift. I once again saw with my own eyes how the Tzadik’s blessings came true. When another son was born, the Saba was his godfather at the circumcision, and named him.

On the 18th of Cheshva, 5755 (1995), after Shabbat, I was at home with the children and Daniel was with friends at “Hadassah” hospital, next to Rabbi Isroel who was hospitalized. The children and I prayed in song and dance for the rabbi’s recovery. Suddenly, all at once the “eternal candle” that we lit in the house for Rabbi Nachman burned out as did all of the lights in the living room. A few minutes later Daniel called and told me that Rabbi Isroel had left this world. I told him that when the eternal candle blew out, I felt that something had happened.

After the Tzadik’s passing, we felt we had to do something. Daniel talked to me about it. He thought about selling our house that we bought from his money as a choreographer in Europe, and donating the money to charity and to printing Nachman and Saba books. It was a daring move that required bravery, especially since we had six children to support, but we believed it was the right move and would bring with it a blessing. I supported and strengthened Daniel to do it. What made us more enthusiastic about was that Rabbi Isroel, in his life, gathered every scrap and every charity he received, and all of his social security, in order to establish the fund for printing Rabbi Nachman’s books and their distribution at cost (without profit). Daniel was very sorry that he didn’t donate his apartment before the Tzadik died. To this day he regrets it. We had a strong belief that that was what we needed to do. After we were privileged to live with Saba at the house, it was very important to give up everything for the distribution. Daniel even founded a radio station called “Na –Nach” which broadcasted 24 hours a day. I was happy and I supported my husband in distributing to the people of Israel. Looking back, I am happy that we chose this step since it was responsible for many wonderful divine providences, and I am sure that if I hadn’t supported it, the story would have developed very differently. Daniel amazed me with his devotion, his caring, and the way he organized the distribution and strengthened his friends. Our house was open to guests for all of the distributors on Sabaths and during the week, and I saw this as a great privilege. After we sold the house and dedicated the money to charity for Rabbi Isroel, we went to find a rental in the Neve Ya’akov neighborhood. We saw an ad for an inexpensive four room apartment. We got there, and stayed for three years. The landlord was nice and considerate, he told us to pay when we could. The apartment was spacious and had a view of the forest; we could see shepherds herding sheep. Daniel and I would take the children to trips in the woods and they had adventures just like in “The Tales of Rabbi Nachman from Breslov”.

With the money we freed by selling the house, Daniel would organize and produce a celebration every year in honor of Rabbi Isroel on the anniversary of his passing, the 18th of Hesvan. It was a huge celebration, and the general public was invited for free. Every year, they found a place suitable for thousands of people, they booked famous music bands, showed films about Rabbi Isroel on a big screen, and set up tables with books for sale at cost, and made sure there were abundant refreshments for all. When the celebration ended, buses waited for the public to take them to the cemetery, to Rabbi Isroel’s grave. A week before the event, we would hang huge notices on bulletin boards to invite the general public. I met Kari at the third event. She came with her 11 year old daughter, Tsila. She approached me, and tried to be nice. She told me that in their house, she and the children listen all day to the Na-Nach radio station. She would call up the radio, and ask for them to find her a “shidduch”. That is how she met her sixth husband. An American, like her. I remembered that I had already seen her once at some wedding, distributing Rabbi Nachman books in English with her husband. She told me that she bought him a computer to encourage him to translate and print. She volunteered to sell books at the distribution table for women at the celebration, and was full of wonder at the event itself. She told me that she had made aliyah to Israel 19 years ago to enlist in the army. After the army she took part in founding a kibbutz in Northern Israel, and even got a house there. She had a boyfriend for several years, but he didn’t want to get married and they separated. Somehow, a copy of “The Tales of Rabbi Nachman from Breslov” in English came into her hands, and after she read it she looked for a Breslover to marry. The failures of her previous six marriages, caused difficult crises and behavioral problems with her children, and she was unable to control them. She said that the distribution always gave her the strength to survive since her medical condition was getting worse. Her American husband left her and disappeared when the doctors told her that she had terminal cancer. Kari was 38 and looked much older. She was thin and gaunt, so much so that her cheeks almost connected; she had black circles around her eyes. Her body was weak and fighting several illnesses at once, it was clear that she had been through many hardships. She asked us to have mercy and take the children to raise as ours. That was in the summer, during the summer break. Kari’s children felt good in our home, and received a lot of love and attention from me, Daniel, and Aderet, who was a certified teacher and made a classroom for girls at her house. On the day of the celebration of the Holy Ari, when Daniel and his friends went to Tzfat to distribute, I thought to make Kari happy, and invited her to distribute with me at the hospital. I shared my idea with Aderet, and she said it was good I was thinking about Kari, and offered to do a “summer camp” for the kids. Kari was very happy, and there was a good atmosphere between us. A short time later, on a Thursday, I wanted to prepared the house and do the cooking for Sabath, but I couldn’t, because Yan was riding through the house on roller blades, still wild and undisciplined, even though he was still sweet, and he opened the fridge every five minutes, and all of the children in the house ran after him and I felt I was losing control over them. I was in my sixth pregnancy and I didn’t know what to do. Suddenly, Yan saw that I was concerned, and without my asking a thing of him, took off the rollerblades that were constantly attached to his feet, and started to throw water and soap on the floor and scrub the floor with the broom. He didn’t relax until the kitchen was clean as a laboratory, so I began immediately to knead the dough for the challahs for Shabbat. The pleasant atmosphere of preparations for Shabbat returned. Suddenly the phone rang, and my hands were full of dough, braiding the challahs. It was Kari. I spontaneously shared with her my joy about the miracle that happened at home, how everything was a mess, until Yan had mercy on me and took things into his own hands, and cleaned the whole kitchen so I could continue preparing for Shabbat… Kari reacted with unusual rage, and said in her American accent:” My son cleans at your house and not at mine!? Put my children in a taxi immediately and send them to me! Now!” I told her that I couldn’t send the kids alone in a taxi because it was dangerous; it has to go through an Arab village… I suggested she wait unti l Daniel returned in the evening and could take them home in his van. She said, “What? I am sending a lawyer immediately!” I felt that I got a ringing slap through the phone; I couldn’t understand what her problem was. Aderet, who was present at the time, was also in shock. When Daniel came home in the evening he drove immediately to return her children, and told her to leave us alone and not make me sad anymore, since I was actually helping her with the kids. Several days later, she called in a coquettish tone and asked forgiveness for her ungratefulness. Daniel and I decided to forgive her and to have mercy on her because of the agony of her disease. She and the children once again became frequent guests at our home, and Yan began studying regularly with our boys at the “Cheyder” called “Avi Nachal” at the seminary in Givat Shaul and she saw how her children were improving in their studies. Yan, who did not know how to read and write, surprised us with his motivation to learn, and with the results of his efforts. On Shabbat, she would whisper in my ear:” How does your h u s b a n d take such good care of your children?” in her rolling American accent, lengthening and drawing out the words “… your husband…”. I didn’t know whether I should be afraid or happy…

A few months later, she asked to speak with me and Daniel in private, and sat us down for a talk in the living room. In a low and soft tone she told us that the disease had spread in her body, and that according to the doctors, she did not have long to live. She said that she was a bit embarrassed, although she was not shy at all, but even so, she said, she asked us to take mercy on her and take her as a second wife. Daniel and I went silent, and she continued to explain her position, that in her opinion, our lifestyle was the closest thing to what is written in Rabbi Nachman’s books; that our love for the Tzadik provides a good and healthy education for our children, and that is something she has never seen in another family, not with her previous Breslov husbands, especially not this joie de vivre, with music and dancing, which in her words, “brought her back to life”; She said that she saw that we provided a stable home, and the children get along well among themselves, and our children have a good effect on them, make them want to study and be calmer; and Daniel is a considerate and sensitive husband, and that is a rare thing that can’t be found today. She tried to convince us that it would be a Mitzvah to take her on as a second wife; after all she had been through with her previous husbands. And she gave us interpretations from The Tales of Rabbi Nachman from Breslov and fables and that this is heaven sent and that she is in a situation of Pikuach Nefesh, and her children cannot grow without a father. She asked us to understand her, that she cannot stay alone, and didn’t want to remarry, because of her bitter experience, she didn’t want to repeat her mistakes, and she only trusts us. She said that she knows that according to Halacha there is no prohibition on Jews to marry several wives, and she checked that with several rabbis. She told us that she met several families who live like that, in Rosh Ha’Ayin, where she had lived with her first husband, and which is predominantly people of Yemenite descent, it is an accepted practice and normal; she also knows that “Herem DeRabeinu Gershom”, which forbade Ashkenazi Jews from polygamy, was in effect for only one thousand years, and that period ran out long ago. It was very clear that she very much wanted it to happen and that she would not take “no” for an answer. I didn’t know what to say. I had been married to Daniel for ten years, we had seven children, and I was pregnant. I always wanted the family to get bigger, but Kari was not an easy type of person, and I had already experienced several of her follies… it seemed to me to be a very difficult mission, maybe even impossible. When Kari saw that I didn’t know how to respond, she admitted to me that on the day of her marriage to the American that she met through the radio, she had her eye on Daniel, who was one of the witnesses under the chuppah… I felt that she was sending me back to the period when I was in the far East, before I became religious, when I was in love with a married man with a daughter, and I really wanted his wife to accept me as a second wife, and we would raise their daughter together. It didn’t happen, but it made me understand Kari. I didn’t want her to suffer as I did in my youth, from the platonic love I had. I knew that it would give her hope for her life. I talked about it with Daniel and I explained the situation to him from a woman’s point of view, and from my experience. We also conferred with Orthodox rabbis, and we understood that we could have kosher wedding according the Torah and Halacha, without being formally married and without breaking the law. We did it; I didn’t expect that two weeks after marrying Daniel she would tell him to divorce me. I cried a lot that first year because of her behavior towards me. I couldn’t understand how she could yell at me in front of everyone, when I was the one who opened my home to her. When Daniel would comment on it to her, she would cause a ruckus and scream hysterically in the streets for hours. We cared for her children as if they were our own, with devotion and love. She lived in her own house, and she would send her children to me so that she could rest and get better. She wasn’t able to do nearly anything beyond that. Daniel and I would make her healthy sandwiches, and slowly, slowly she gathered strength and recovered. She said that she got her life back as a gift. The black circles disappeared, and instead her face got a nice shape and filled with color and happiness. The doctors said that it was a miracle, and they didn’t know how to explain it, since she was dying, on the verge of death, and got better and stronger than ever. She was proud that she gave her children a warm home and a place to grow in. Her children became confident, educated, and learned trades. It was clearly visible that Kari had fallen in love with life.

For years, as will be told later, the family grew, and Azamra, Aliza, and Shiran joined us, and it was much easier not to have to deal with Kari on my own. We learned about each other’s strengths and weaknesses, and we learned the meaning of true friendship. In fire and water. As Rabbi Nachman said: “Peace is the connection of opposites”. I was glad that the women’s distribution was fortified, we made charms with the “new song”: Na Nach Nachma Nachman Meuman, and we distributed the Petek and books for women in seminars and at festivals all over the country. The band put out five albums with different music styles, and a DVD of the performance at the festival for Rabbi Isroel in 2010. The seminary where the boys learned was next to a ground floor apartment with a big yard and a green view, and the apartment served as a dance studio with a parquet floor, a recording studio, and a distribution office, where the older boys lived and worked. We would usually do Shabbat there, since there was enough room for a big table for the whole family and the many guests that would arrive, some of them on a regular basis. Daniel would practice with the boys for hours many afternoons, and together they would prepare the band’s performances. I was so happy and proud to produce the shows with my husband and children, and since we were several mothers, it was convenient to organize each activity such that each woman could take her turn in cooking, laundry, and taking care of the children as she wished. During the years, I continued to strictly adhere to my usual exercise regiment. When I was in aerobic and martial arts classes, the children would study at a karate class at the same fitness center. In the evenings, when the children would go to sleep, we would have dinner together with the adults; talk about our experiences during that day, and making plans for the next.

In 2011, the Israeli Police broke into our home cursing and yelling. For no reason, they took apart our home. The police brutally grabbed the children from our hands while they were screaming, “Mommy! Mommy!” they shoved and pushed me down on the floor in front of the children, they wouldn’t let me near them. They took Daniel into custody, separated the women, and after an interrogation into the night through to the morning, after I demanded to see a lawyer and they ignored me, a social worker and two policemen locked me up forcefully, without my consent, despite my objection, in an abused women’s shelter under the threat that if I didn’t cooperate there would be no chance to get my children back. I told the social worker that I wanted to go where they put Daniel, and that I would rather be in jail. She wouldn’t listen to me and continued to try to convince me to stay in the shelter if I wanted to see my children again. They didn’t give me back any of children, they just let me cook and clean for forty, fifty women and babies every day, every day. In order to see my kids, who were closed up in boarding schools all over the country, I had to get up at 4 am, clean the stairs of the shelter, the cafeteria and the living room, travel for hours, each time to a different city, in all corners of the country (Binyamina, Ashdod, Be’er Sheva, Hevron, Moshav Ora, etc.) and to meet with my children for half an hour to an hour, under the supervision of a social worker. When I would return to the shelter, they would yell at me for being late and instruct me to start cooking and cleaning immediately! During the whole period I was incarcerated at the shelter, my family and I were subjected to violent police interrogations under the threat: “either you accuse or are accused”, in other words: either you accuse Daniel of what we tell you to accuse him, or you will be accused and framed with a case we build against you…

The absurdity of fate is that the indictment is based on nasty invented allegations against Daniel that he used us as “sex and work slaves” -forcefully incarcerated. Daniel and I lived together for 27 years, and together we had ten children- the fruits of our love.

Daniel and I were hurt so strongly that even our basic right to be alone together was taken from us, why? In order to create the false impression that I need protection from him? Absurd! Now I want to tell you about a time in Paris, when Daniel and I were being fixed up, we traveled on the Metro (underground subway), when Daniel was dressed as a chassid, with a beard, side-locks, and a Breslov yarmulke, when suddenly a bully approached us, and he looked like an aggressive criminal. I spontaneously, apparently from my martial arts training, pushed myself between them, with my back to Daniel and my face to the bully, and in a warning look, told him that if he made one move against my love, he would regret it… Daniel was surprised by my reaction, and the aggressive bully let us alone.

In this battle of my life, I am in the battle ring, with my heart full of prayer that real love and innocent belief will prevail. I know that standing opposite me, is not just one opponent, but the monstrous system of the state, which is sacrificing my husband on the altar of corruption and big salaries of the high ranking who are earning on the backs of my children, who have been yelling for four years that they want to come home! And the representatives of the Welfare Department get 17,000 NIS per minor per month, and dare call themselves a “moral society”. The judges wrote in their verdict: “the punishment of number one accused needs to reflect the moral perception of a society which guards basic principles, and it should be clear that without these basic values **there will not be a humane society...”** . And I ask myself: What basic principles, and what basic moral values can the country be proud of, when they don’t even follow fair “rules of engagement” and jails an innocent man for 26 years, takes him from his children, his loves, and destroys a family in Israel, without evidence, without proof, without a complaint, without having hurt anyone, without a criminal offense and without a criminal record!

**This is the humane society the judges are talking about?! I invite you to come and be the jury…**

**A personal letter from Azamra to the whole world**

“… It started when we stopped dreaming and stopped hoping… I cried to all: look-it’s the end of the world…” (Aviv Gefen)

On our school trips, when a few of us sat on the back bench of the bus, I couldn’t stop myself from singing Aviv Gefen’s songs at the top of my lungs; “… synthetic child turned off watching a lit screen… an epidemic lurking in every corner, waiting for us to sin in touch, we already forgot what love is… the end of the world, the end of the world!...” I wanted to live the songs, some of them protest songs, which incite and express the problems of the young generation in our country. But the solutions that he suggested in his songs were that there are no solutions. We went to concerts, thousands of teenagers, yelling the words together: “In honor of millions and millions of strays, who are still looking for their way, if you haven’t found it maybe it’s a sign there isn’t one…” What kind of sign is that?! It depressed me, because I was not looking for a sign there isn’t any. I was looking for the answers to mistakes, and how to change the end of the world.

I was born on a moshav called Zarchia in southern Israel, and I went to a religious public school. The only lessons that really interested me were bible, which strengthened my belief that there are correct ways to achieve change. The feelings of agony and oppression that our forefathers experienced live on in me as if they were happening now. When I read about King David, I wanted to come and help him. When Saul chased David, I wanted to stop him and tell him that David loves him. The tragedy of David and Jonathan was they had to part ways in this world for a reason that seemed to me to be unjustified, it broke me. Every year, when we learned about the sale of Joseph, I was angry with the brothers that behaved that way towards him. This all influenced my way of thought. You have to do something to fix the faults and injustices in the world. Partings were to me a sad thing which left me in shock and with questions of why? I didn’t understand why in elementary school (grades 1-6) you have to leave all of your friends and go to junior high school (grades 7-9) and then again be separated from them and move to high school (grades 10-12). I never accepted the fact that something has to separate people. I always wanted to meet our father Abraham, Aharon the Cohen, and Boaz. Inside, I felt an eternal connection to them, and felt sure that no one can separate me from them.

As the eldest granddaughter in a big family, surrounded by tens of uncles and aunts, everything could have been good. I remember the sweetness of Grandma Zohara, of blessed memory, my father’s mother from Morocco. She made sure to strengthen the love and unity of the family. Up to the age of 92 she would sing with all of her heart songs of yearning for the Land of Israel, Jerusalem of Gold and Torah, making everyone happy, and making sure that everyone gets what he needs. Even if we were to ask for Mufleta or Sphinge (Moroccan desserts) in the middle of the night, she would get up and happily make them for us. My mother’s parents came from Iran, and lived not far from us. My grandmother would come get me from kindergarten ever day, when my parents were at work, and I often stayed to sleep with them. I felt very badly for her, who suffered terribly from her husband, Saba Avram. One of Grandma’s stories, that caused me nightmares, was that Saba would stand her near the wall when she was in her ninth month of pregnancy and throw apples at her stomach. When Saba would start to yell and curse at home she would tell us grandchildren: “Go, go, you know him, he is evil.” He and his son, Uncle Benny, did things that ruined my childhood, ruined my innocence, and caused me fears, anxiety and an intense jolt to my soul.

My grandfather worked the land and he and his sons had a tractor and digging company. The only thing that mattered was money, and all of his discussions were about money and cars. He would degrade and insult anyone who did not have money, and suck up to anyone he thought to be a success. At every opportunity he asked me the same question: ” Who is better, a jackass or a Morrocan?” It hurt me and made me angry, since he was referring to my father, but each time anew, I didn’t want to believe it. Sometimes I would hang my head, ashamed and silent, but he would keep asking: “Who is better: your father or a jackass?” That was too much. That question ruined me. “Your father is an ass!” I can hear his stupid laugh while he says it. Each time I saw him I hoped that maybe this time he won’t ask me this question, but unfortunately he didn’t stop. Every place, every time, alone, and in front of everyone, also guests. When he would walk into synagogue he would announce:”All religious people are asses!” To him it was like saying hello. I thought that if I told myself that I should get used to him talking nonsense, he wouldn’t be able to hurt me. Each time it stabbed me anew. He would offer me ten shekels to answer him: “Who is better, your father or a jackass?” I would shut up in contempt, hoping he would feel like an idiot. When I decided to finally answer him, I was frightened he would strike me, but I couldn’t be silent any longer. And when it came up, and he asked me again, I quickly answered:” Whoever asks that question is a jackass himself!” and I ran, before he was able to hit me. I decided that he wouldn’t talk about my father like that anymore. I stopped hearing hip when he yelled towards me: “Get out of here, jackass, so that I don’t see you again!”

I will never forget the weekends we spent with Saba Avram on the moshav. One Saturday, after Kiddush and the family dinner, Saba went to his room and asked me, as his religious granddaughter who went to first grade, to read Parashat Hashavua to him. He locked the door and removed his trousers and turned the radio onto the news channel, got into bed and covered himself with the sheet. I sat next to him with the book in my hand. He asked me if I knew the song “fire fire in the hole, panties panties of the girl”. He sang the song as his eyebrows moved to the rhythm of the song and opened his eyes in an excitement I found strange. I felt uncomfortable, and I slid myself off the bed towards the floor, and turned my head towards the door, and I knew he had the key. He told me to remove my skirt and underwear. I thought I had to do what he said. He continued: “come here and I will teach you about the organs of the body.” He sent his hand towards my sex organ, pinched my clitoris and told me that it was called a “Duldul”. That hurt terribly. He commanded me to get on the bed and take off my big white panties. I tried to take his keys to run from the room, but I was unsuccessful. I knew I had no way to run… I pulled on the underwear and had no idea what I was doing. He took my hand and put it on his member and told me to do like this… I didn’t want to and he held my hand forcefully on his organ in order to show me what to do. He started to get annoyed and told me to lick it like ice cream, and give him kisses there. I choked, my heart pounded even faster. I was disgusted and made an effort not to throw up. When I couldn’t do what he asked me, I began to cry. He lifted me onto his sex organ and told me: “ride like a horse”. I couldn’t do what he said, so he lifted me angrily on his pot belly, and said I needed to move back and forth. He kept touching himself and saying in Persian “Kir Ahar” (meaning a jackass’ prick) raised his eyebrows and lowered them as if something good was happening to him, and then he lay me down forcefully and climbed on me. I was crushed by his weight, and I couldn’t move or resist, I had trouble breathing. I tried to push him but I wasn’t able to. I felt like he was trying to force a metal pole in me, it hurt me to death. He cursed me and tried with all his strength until he penetrated. I cannot describe the agony in words; he didn’t stop going in and out. When I yelled he put two pillows on my face. After he stopped moving I felt a heavy worm lying on my lower parts. I didn’t know what happened and what I needed to do. The bed was wet, and I thought that I had peed from fright. Afterwards he yelled at me: “Jackass, get out of the room! You know that I am your grandfather and I love you, I buy you clothes, bring you wafers and money. Who is better, your father or a jackass? Take fifty shekels, give them to your mother, and get me my pants from the closet, if you tell anyone, I will kill your father!”

I quickly dressed and ran to the bathroom. The toilet got dirty from the blood. I thought I was going to die. I got pressured and cleaned up quickly without thinking. I was scared to tell anyone because I believed that he really would kill my father.

Since then, every Shabbat Eve became a nightmare. I was scared of the moment when he would ask me to read him parashat hashavua in his room… I was angry with my family for having no one there to stop it. Sometimes I thought that if I hadn’t been quiet so many times when he called my father an ass, maybe he would have been scared to touch me. He had no fear. He repeated it frequently, and not only on weekends but also on weekdays. The next times he raped me, the threats increased, and while he was raping me he would threaten me with frightening and terrible things, each time more and more frightening.

Uncle Benny followed in his footsteps, and felt he was entitled to anything he wanted. He would degrade me in front of his mother, his older sister, and told her that her husband was an ass. The extent of his cruelty is hard to describe in words. He would degrade everyone, except the rich. He thought everything belonged to him. He acted like a “Persian Sheik”. The people on the moshav did their best not to run into him. When he would mock and make fun of them, they would mostly remain silent because they were scared of him, and they knew that in any case there was no one to talk to. The fat spilled off his body just like his dirty mouth. When they decided to put up a blockade at the entrance to the moshav so that cars couldn’t come in on the Sabath, since it was a religious moshav, Benny would drive around in order to annoy everyone, broke the blockade and threatened that anyone who rebuilt it would pay. He was a violent person, strong against the weak. He would walk around the house in his underwear even when his mother begged him to wear clothing.

Nothing scared Benny. I was like a toy to him. When I was six he was around 18. His room was adjacent to Saba’s room. Many times my cousins and I were in his room when he watched movies, lying on his bed with one of his girlfriends under the blanket and they would move and we would hear strange noises. At the time, I didn’t understand what he was doing in front of the kids, and that it was wrong. Benny and Saba Avram became the trauma of my life. When Benny was in his room alone he yelled towards me:”Get in here now!” I didn’t want to. I was scared of him. He went on: “You Moroccan, you religious girl, every Shabbat has a Motzei Shabbat, if you don’t come in here I will show you and your ass of a father!” I remember the anxiety and fear I felt at these moments, and I knew that something bad was about to happen, but I thought it would be better to go in and hear him than be caught by him, and then I would also get beat and he would cause trouble for my father. When I entered the room, he moved the legs of the bed towards the door so that I couldn’t leave. He lay on his back and only his feet were outside of the blanket. It started when he told me to scratch his feet between his toes with my hands. When I told him it disgusted me and I didn’t want to, he would threaten me that he would show me, and took a shoe off the floor and threw it with all of his strength while yelling: “I will cut your father’s feet off!” I knew that he could harm my father. I saw him at the pool, drowning children until they choked and laughing about it. He would hurt us his cousins with strong pinches, and if we would cry he would hit us. He continued and said, “In the end you will kiss my feet and say thank you.” I took a comb and scratched his feet, and he was under the blankets and I didn’t understand what he was doing. Later he told me to scratch his back and yelled at me “don’t worry; you will get paid for every hour”. He rubbed his organ with his hands and told me to do the same. I didn’t want to and he slapped me. When he saw that I resisted he caught me by the neck and pushed his organ into my mouth. Hair entered my mouth and I choked. I had no air. I was distressed, and I wanted it to end. I couldn’t breathe. I remember myself choking from the smell and asking his forgiveness because I thought he was punishing me for something I did but couldn’t understand what. He got angry when I didn’t do what he asked of me, and he kept rubbing his member and saying: “this is how it has to be, don’t you see? Next time you will do this, and if you keep crying I will show you…!” And then he grabbed me and lay me down on my back, and my head hit the wooden poles of the bed. He opened my legs by force, and I tried with my two little hands to get him off of me and he said that if I don’t let him cum he will do this all of the time. I didn’t know how to stop it and when it would end. He pushed himself into me with all of this power and cruelty. When I yelled “Mom!” he shut my mouth and nose with both his hands, and he said: “You think your mother doesn’t do this?” and he continued. His door had a square glass that was opaque and I hoped someone would pass by and save me. He said that if I opened my mouth he would kill me. When he came I thought that I could run away, but he would grab me hard between my legs and laugh. He said:”you can’t leave here until I say so,” I would dress and leave the room. On the day it happened, one of my cousins came in the room and I told her to run from there so that Benny doesn’t catch her. I think he did it to another cousin, but I knew I had no one to tell, because I was sure everyone was afraid of him. When he would finish, he would tell me:”Go to Saba!”

The threats and physical and emotional abuse of Benny and Saba Avram left deep wounds in my soul for many years, wounds that bled and hurt and created anxieties that became compulsive thoughts. The absurdity of it was that I was a six year old child, and to this day I blame myself for giving into them and developing a dependence on them. Sometimes I even got to the situation that I thought I was a full partner in it.

When I was ten, in fourth grade, my father didn’t have work, and our financial situation at home was difficult, and my father had to work at Saba Avram and Benny’s company, even though he didn’t want to. Not only would they shame him endlessly on the walky talky, where all of the workers heard them calling him a “Moroccan ass”, and they even stopped paying his salary, and put him further into debt and trouble. It caused a rift between my parents and a mess I couldn’t understand all of. What I did understand was that my mother yelled at my father that he should keep working for them and give into Benny. She actually defended her brother, instead of her husband. That hurt me deeply and I considered telling them what Benny and Saba Avram did to me, but I knew that everyone was scared of them, and they wouldn’t want to listen to me. And now that the situation became complex, because of what was going on between my parents, if I told them, it could result in them not being together. So I decided not to tell them. One good thing came of this, since due to this rift we stopped going to their house and Saba and Benny couldn’t touch me anymore.

I had no choice but to try to find balance outside of the moshav, and I did it with the aid of friends, neighbors, and father’s relatives. My ballet lessons calmed me and let me feel for a few moments that I was like everyone. The movement to the sounds of music together with the other girls gave me the feeling that I was not different from them. The sport, the competition of “artistic gymnastics”, the song and dance became an inseparable part of my daily life and helped me overcome my sadness and humiliation, but the fears went and grew. I remember asking my aunt, Benny’s sister, who was older than me by two years:”If you had to choose, whether you died or your parents died, who would you choose?” She always reflected the question back to me, and I would answer her half hysterically: “That I should die and nothing bad would happen to my father, mother, and sisters. Questions like: “Who would you rather die” I began to ask frequently. Since then, I decided I had to do things that would save my parents. I invented a game and I shared it with my aunt: Each of us picked a number, I chose even numbers, and she chose odd numbers, and from that day I decided that I would drink, eat, and do things only in even numbers. Two glasses of water, four or six, not one sweet or three, and if I turn off the light, I push the switch twice in a row. I had a strange feeling that if I didn’t do things according to even numbers, something bad would happen. So, if Benny threatened us again, with the aid of even numbers, I could save the day. I developed a kind of self defense system.

When I turned ten years old, Benny apparently thought he shouldn’t continue doing the things he was doing, because I started bursting out and saying things about his actions in front of people. But what I went through between the ages of six and ten from him and Saba caused me great damage with long term consequences. Because of the fear, I developed an illness. I didn’t know what I had, but I was just attacked with thoughts like: “if I don’t pick five leaves now my sister will fall…”; “if I don’t walk on the red bricks on the sidewalk my father won’t have money”; “If I don’t touch the floor right now, a terrible tragedy will befall my parents…” I dealt with these thoughts daily, and it took a lot of my adolescence, and made me frustrated and caused me suffering.

The incident which resulted in life threatening danger happened when I left the movie theater with my friend. We stood on the highway to cross the street to the bus stop. Suddenly I yelled to her: “Run!” and she didn’t understand. I grabbed her hand and pulled her with force, and I told her that we had to cross the street before the red semitrailer truck passed by. I believed that if I didn’t manage to cross the street, my father would die. The cars drove quickly, and I saw how we were saving my father and we crossed crazily. We nearly got run over… She was in shock, and asked me in a scared voice what happened to me. I was ashamed and nearly cried. Until that moment I kept my fears a secret. I felt that my behavior was strange, but I thought that it wasn’t in my control and that I didn’t have a choice, because that was the only way to save in these situations.

Another friend, in sixth grade, dared to ask me why I was touching the floor all of the time. She laughed at me in front of two other friends, while demonstrating how I look when I do it. I was embarrassed, and I tried to explain that I have fears that disaster will strike if I don’t stop it. She didn’t really understand. It was not easy to explain it to her, but it released me and caused me to tell another friend. I didn’t know if there were other children who suffer like me. I don’t know why my parents never talked to me about it. When I was 15 in my room in my parents’ house, like every other day, I heard music at full volume and danced. My thoughts about what was under Uncle Benny’s blanket and in Saba Avram’s bed gave me no rest, and then it began… the compulsive thought that made me touch the floor so nothing bad happens, and then another thought that if I wanted it to stop existing, I had to put my fingers in the door to neutralize the danger. A wave of negative thoughts overcame me, something like that had never happened to me. The madness to the point of desperation made me throw myself on the bed with my face stuck in the mattress and I started to scream and cry helplessly: “Enough!... I can’t take it anymore!” I was already really tired, and then another thought came: if I don’t touch the edge of the bed frame with my front teeth something bad would happen to my sister… as tired as I was, I dragged myself to the touch the floor… I was angry and resentful: G-d of the universe, why are you doing this to me?!

I began to search for a solution. The injustice I experienced in the flesh burned within me like a fire to look for a change. I understood that I had to grasp onto the real ideals I believed in, to fight for them. That is what made me volunteer to be a guide in the Moledet youth movement. I wanted a change in the status quo in the country, and I became a political activist. When our group within the movement was at the peak of its activity, we put together a plan: To created a settlement kibbutz with a new spirit. But then everyone once again dispersed, because they had more important things…

Even when I was already 16, the thoughts didn’t stop haunting me. I felt that I was in need of love, attention, but I couldn’t even consider a relationship with a boy, since I didn’t want to find myself in situations like I had with my grandfather and Uncle Benny… At the time my father heard all sorts of lectures by rabbis on tape. In my trips with him in the truck we would listen to them together and talk about them. So that my girlfriends in school would also become stronger in their religion, I began to bring the tapes to school and tried to distribute them during recess even though the girls didn’t want to hear them. Despite all of this, I still didn’t have an answer how to deal with my fears and thoughts. I started going to Torah lessons in the evening, but I didn’t find an answer there either. Nonetheless, I made an effort to push myself and try to find advice.

One day, my neighbor Sivan, a fellow student who is also a relative of mine, told me that she was reading a book about prayer and solitude. The name of the book was “Hishtapchut Hanefesh, MeShivat HaNefesh”. I asked to borrow it from her, and when I read it, every sentence brought me to tears of excitement; or to jump for joy, to dance and mostly to talk to G-d, may his name be blessed. This is the first book I read about thoughts:

“… has to strengthen himself greatly and to believe and to inform, because every good point and every awakening from the holy that awakens at any point can disconnect himself from bad thoughts and to cause himself to continue to have holy thoughts and anything that tries to do to the best of his abilities to do good despite that between him and himself what was done to him was done and it even happened thousands of times and despite this no good point gets lost…” (Meshivat Nefesh Siman LeAleph).

It gave me hope that all could change.

Sivan called to order more books by Rabbi Nachman. When the distributors brought her the books, they added Na Nach Nachma Nachman MeUman stickers and a poster of Rabbi Isroel and some copies of the holy Petek.

One day Sivan brought me a video cassette. It was the first time I saw Rabbi Isroel Ber Oddeser speak. My heart broke, and I started to cry, I understood that the Rabbi Nachman that everyone was talking about was here in front of me. I decided to read everything that Rabbi Nachman wrote. I bought all of the books from the “Rabbi Isroel Fund”, and I discovered that they were full of advice how to change habits called ‘Midot’. For example: “A person whose mind is confused will be sorted out with the prayer of the Prophet Chabkuk. Eating wheat is also a midah (remedy) for that…” (Book of Midot). I was glad that I found ways to escape the mazes that entrapped me. From then on, I was going to live differently.

With all of the money that I had saved from three years of waiting on tables and babysitting, I bought a large number of books, and built myself a kind of small distribution fund. I thought of people in the hospital, and that’s how I came up with the idea to go to Kaplan Hospital, which was near my moshav, to distribute the books. I was a super- energetic distributor. I became addicted to distribution, and it became a kind of therapy for me. And I brought a book as a gift to everyone I knew: teachers, my boss at work, friends, my driving instructor, and relatives, with a dedication that I copied from the book Avi HaNachal.

More than anything, it was important that my parents become Breslev Na-Nachim. I dreamed and imagined my father wearing a Na-Nach Kippa, distributing the Petek and the books dancing in the streets… I was 17.5. On Shabbat I would make sure to bring some of Rabbeinu’s books to the Sabath table to explain to the whole family about the tenth song of Na Nach Nachma Nachman Meuman. My parents stopped me quickly, claiming that they go to lessons from Rabbis, and give Tzedakka every month, pray in synagogue and have their way. I tried to explain to them that belief in Na Nach was not just another path in Judaism, but a solution to all of the problems of our generation. It pained me that they didn’t have the patience to listen. Still, I insisted on proving to them that already in Psalms it was written: “and there we will sing a new song”, and that many sources of Chazal talk about this song. I asked my father how it could be that everyone says that when Rashi wrote about “Shirat HaYam” where it is written :and then he will sing” in the future tense, from here we can understand that Moses will return with the song in the future and when I tell you that the song was revealed in the Petek and it is already here, can’t you feel it? It was important to me that he know what I know about “The New Song”. I managed to get him a bit interested, and he asked: “Does Rabbi Nachman also talk about “The New Song”? I opened the last torah that the Rabbi said before his passing, Torah Chet:”… In the future, a new song will be distributed that examines wonders, examines divine intervention, and then leadership will be by divine intervention alone. And the new song, to be distributed in the future, will be a simple song, double, triple, quadruple…” I showed my father the signature on the Petek in the form of a song: “simple- Nun(one letter), double- Nach (two letters), triple- Nachma (three letters), and quadruple- Nachman (four letters).”

“Father, do you understand that the Rabbi promised before his departure, and kept his promise now? Na, Nach, Nachma, Nachman Meuman that is the new song!”

“Very nice, I am glad that my daughter knows how to lecture like that!”

“Dad! Wake up! I am not kidding! Why do we have to continue with everything the same? You don’t remember what you taught me in Gemara: We are near the seventh century, the end of time, and we can still fix something?!”

He began telling me about a Dvar Torah he heard from some Rabbi. I got upset and asked him:

“This rabbi or all of the other rabbis that you know, and you know a lot of rabbis, did any of them tell you anything about the new song?!”

He poured me cold orange juice and started singing Shabbat songs… My mother saw that I was upset and beseeched: “Do what you want, just leave us alone.” It wasn’t the first time she asked me to leave them in peace. Each time that I fought for my principles, she showed a distinct lack of interest. I was always stubborn and dominant, and it always bothered my mother. This time, their behavior bothered me. Because this time it wasn’t about Aviv Gefen or about Moledet Youth ideology, and it wasn’t even about what Saba Avram and Uncle Benny did right under her nose, but the possibility of a real Tikun of all of the things broken since Creation. The hope for a new beginning. They treated me like a “little girl” and didn’t take me seriously. Their lack of caring made me cease to share my enthusiasm with them. I felt that I had no one to talk to in my family. What kept me a bit longer on the moshav were the orchards and the beautiful fields that I would go to in order to pray. There I would tell Hashem my secrets, and ask to meet people who believe in Rabbi Nachman and live with them. I didn’t forget to give thanks for the privilege of hearing about Rabbi Isroel. I spent most of my time in school in prayer, until I remembered to show up in class. Usually, that happened in the middle of third period. A discussion developed in English class with the teacher, who was a religious kibbutznikit. When she heard that I wanted to get married, she didn’t understand why so early, and how did I think I could manage and provide for the needs of my children. I didn’t think I would have a problem “managing” because in my family everyone helps each other and we could always get what we needed. My plan for a family life was to marry a book distributor and have children with him. I just didn’t know how to put my plan in action. At the end of the lesson, I dedicated a copy of Avi HaNachal to my teacher and I wished she would be privileged to get close to Rabbi Nachman.

One day, Sivan and I planned to go to Jerusalem, to the cemetery, to Rabbi Isroel’s Tziyun. Bracha, Sivan’s mother, came to the synagogue at the moshav where I prayed, and started crying to me hysterically that I should convince Sivan to leave Rabbi Nachman. She said that Sivan was in a kind of “craze”, and won’t listen to her, and she is scared that she has been cursed. She made a whole show and even threw herself on the floor. I immediately thought about the story of Rabbi Isroel’s connecting and getting closer, in which he tells that his mother went out in the streets yelling when he was 17, and came to Rabbi Israel Karduner Breslover, and threw herself down on her hands and knees, crying as if for the dead, and asked him to get him away from Rabbi Nachman. I thought that was odd, it doesn’t matter what generation we belong to, our parents take on the role of prevention, and put themselves in the position “Or them or the Tzadik”. It hurt me that her mother was doing this to her. I thought that it wasn’t honest or real to behave this way. I tried to calm her mother down, but I would not agree in any way to prevent Sivan from getting closer to Rabbi Nachman. I went home, and my mother had already caught the hysteria and told me that she won’t permit me to go the gravesite in Jerusalem. My mother never interfered with my decisions, and so I asked her what her problem was, and she said that Bracha had come to her, and she decided that she didn’t want problems with her. We started arguing, and I made it clear to her that she couldn’t decide for me, so leave me alone. My father arrived and tried to bridge the gap diplomatically. He promised me, without my mother hearing, that if I cancel my trip to reduce my mother’s pressure level, he himself would take me to the gravesite of Rabbi Isroel. I was convinced, but I was angry with my mother for being influenced and unable to think independently in my favor.

On Independence Day, 1999, my father took me, as promised, to the gravesite of Rabbi Isroel, in his old yellow Mak truck. It was the third time that I was privileged to get to the Tziyun (gravesite) of the Tzadik Yesod HaOlam in Jerusalem. When I got to the Tziyun, I saw a young girl praying. I got closer, and before me lay a copy of the book “Likutei Tefillot” with a special cover I had never seen before, despite the fact that I had been distributing books from the “Rabbi Isroel Fund” for six months. The cover had a copy of the holy Petek. I asked the girl about the book, and she started to explain that there is a Na Nach group of several families from Jerusalem who publish Rabbeinu’s books with the Petek, and that was new to me. She must have felt my excitement, and went to the book shelf to show me more books with the Petek on the cover. Afterwards, she ostentatiously laid a very special book, and said that this book was “conversations from Saba’s life” which was all recorded conversations with Rabbi Isroel, written verbatim. I sat on the step near the Tziyun, opened the book and started reading. I couldn’t stop. I was amazed by its simplicity. In each story, you can feel the caring, the attention. I felt that I was part of the story he writes, and that I am reading. That he notices me. This book gave me a craving to do charity and tzedakka, and a special awakening for prayer. I prayed with all my heart to raise a family with a husband who would dedicate his life to distributing the books and the Petek and that is what I saw as the purpose of my life. I looked for a name or phone number on the book, but there was no name or number. I asked the girl who introduced herself as Tsila, if she knows where I can buy this book, and other books with a picture of the Petek on the cover. She answered: “In our book warehouse”. I asked her if she knew of a matchmaker in Na-Nach, and she told me that they have a beit midrash and two brothers, who are distributors, study there, and that one of them is looking for a match, but there is one problem, he doesn’t work and doesn’t really have a way to make a living. I told her that that isn’t really a problem; on the contrary, as long as he is a distributor, there is a blessing in all. We went to the bookstore together, and the whole way Tsila told me about Rabbi Isroel. We arrived at a house made of Jerusalem stone, where the distributors lived, and it was also used as a book warehouse. There were special and enlightening photographs of the Saba, which gave the feeling that he was really here. Huge boxes filled with books with the smell of fresh print. I felt at home. I was shocked to see all of the books there were printed with unique covers with photos of the Petek; photos that were clear and sharp. It was obvious that whoever did this had put all his heart into the book cover. When I looked at them, I saw that each book contained a story of Rabbi Isroel becoming closer to Breslev, and the story of the miracle of the Petek. I used all of the money I had to buy the book “Conversations from the Life of Saba”, and I decided that from now on I would distribute only these books. I regretted being born a woman, because otherwise I could have stayed and lived with the distributors. I went back to the moshav and brought Sivan a gift, a book I knew she didn’t have. She was moved and hugged the book, and understood that she was holding a treasure. Suddenly, three days later she returned the book to me and said that she doesn’t want to talk Lashon HaRa (slander), but there are people who object to this distribution and to the distributors from Jerusalem. I felt personally hurt, and I told her sadly: “What is the problem with a book that entails transcriptions of talks with Rabbi Isroel?” Even though I did not personally know these distributors yet, I felt the need to defend them. She didn’t want to tell me who was talking to her, and just repeated that there were objections. I told her that that was exactly the problem, that if these objectors were really familiar with the discussions that were written up in this book they would know that Rabbi Isroel said: “The essence is love of friends.” The argument hurt me a lot, but strengthened my understanding that the reason these distributors were subject to persecution was that they were the only ones publishing the Tzadik’s words without censorship. Unlike Sivan, I felt that this was a war I belonged to. I thought that the person who published this book was really brave, because he dared publish Rabbi Isroel’s talks about the lie -all of the rabbis seeking money and honor, and stealing people’s judgment.

I went to the festival of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai at Meron. We stayed with a family of Na-Nachim. Sivan met a young man and told me that she was going to marry him. Many of the girls our age were already married, and I felt that I was losing the only friend I had left, I said to her:” Why do we have to separate, can’t we just live somewhere together? Or marry the same Gay?” I don’t know where that came from. She didn’t take me seriously, and I was terrified of the thought of staying alone. I started going out on dates, but it didn’t work out like I had planned. I looked for Tsila’s phone number. I called her and told her about the unsuccessful dates I had had. I asked her what was going on with the match she wanted to offer me, and if there is a family who hosts for Shabbat. We arranged to meet on Friday and I would meet the “match”- Ezra.

On the date with Ezra, it was important to me to speak with him about the values we would want in building a family. For every word he said, I had a lot answer. Moreover: for three hours I explained to him how we should live, who he should connect with, who he should keep away from, and mostly it was important to me that he understand my stand, so that we don’t have any misunderstandings in the future. He said it was good that there are strong distributors for Saba, and we arranged for an engagement ceremony for Saturday night (Motzei Shabbat). I certainly did not intend to tell him about what happened with my grandfather and Uncle Benny, and about my complicated mental state, because I was afraid it would cause him to distance himself from me. During the dancing at the engagement party, I cried, because I was not certain of my decision to marry him, I remembered things he said during our date, and I thought that he wouldn’t really do what we had talked about. After the engagement, he said we would go live with his mother in Tel Aviv. I totally refused. In any case, I did not want to cancel the match in the meantime, I decided that I was going to stay in Jerusalem and distribute. I got to the moshav to get a few things, and I told my mother about my fiancé from Jerusalem, and I was surprised by her reaction when she said: “The distributors in Jerusalem are not like the other ones.” I tried to understand what she was hinting at, and on what grounds she was saying it. I understood that Sivan and her mother had spoken with her, and I was shocked that Sivan would try to incite my mother against people she had never met. I didn’t want to delay things any longer. My mother tried to convince me to stay, and I told her that I had no one to speak with at home, and returned to Jerusalem. I distributed at Sha’arei Tzedek hospital, and I saw Ilana, whom I had met on Shabbat with Tsila, and I was glad to see her. She was pregnant and the mother of eight children. It gave strength to see that she could be a mother and continue distributing. We talked about the upcoming Arad Festival, and we arranged to travel together in the women’s distribution car, with Kari and Aderet whom I had also met on Shabbat. We went to distribute at the Arad Festival. Two weeks later, when I was buying a hair covering and clothing for the wedding, I got a telephone from the police to come quickly to the jail, because Ezra had been arrested, and they didn’t plan on releasing him until I arrived. I ran to the police station. I was shocked when I saw my father. I quickly discovered that my family had pulled a dirty trick to prevent my wedding. Benny the scoundrel and eight of his hooligan friends broke into the Gillbregross’ house (one of the Chassidim), and wouldn’t let anyone out. They threatened to throw his wife out of the window and kill her and the baby in her womb, if they didn’t cancel the wedding. Gillbregross managed to get away and call the police, who surprisingly, instead of arresting the bullies, arrested the terrified Chassidim. Benny, in his defense made up a ridiculous story about Breslov Chasidim who kidnapped me to a cave to marry me against my will. In front of the police investigators, I found courage and told them, for the first time, about Benny raping me from childhood, and that I am begging them to protect me because my parents are scared of him and don’t know how to protect me. They asked me about the incident with the Chasidim and understood from my answers that Benny was lying and they immediately released Ezra and Gillbregross. I didn’t understand how they still made me return to the moshav with Benny and my parents. I refused to get in the car with him, and the police investigators warned me that I would be 18 in only one month, and until then I have to obey my parents, because if not, they will have to use force and return me to the moshav in a police car. Finally, Benny pushed my head and pushed me forcefully into the back seat, between my mother and father. I felt trapped. When we went by the cemetery Benny said that he has a tractor and he would uproot the “Holy Tziyun”, cut up the children I have, and burn “every finger” on Ezra’s, my future husband’s, hand. I was scared and upset, and terrified of my father and mother who sat in silence, giving Benny the final approval to hurt me. I whispered to them, with tears in my eyes: “How can you let him interfere, after he ruined my life, how could you harm people who never did anything wrong to you, scare little children, and a pregnant woman?” When we got to the moshav, I ran to my room where I had left the boxes of books that I distributed. To my utter amazement, the books were not there. I asked my mother where the books were. She indicated that it wasn’t her, but my father. For some reason, I always thought that it didn’t suit my father to behave that way. For several weeks, he didn’t agree to return the books I had bought with my own money, and denied that he had them. Only after I told him that if he didn’t return the books he would never see me again, and what was for certain- that he wouldn’t be at my wedding, he returned the books. I explained to my parents that they should accept the fact that I would choose who I marry, and that was not their area. In order to bridge the gap and for things to work out, I wanted to give my parents another opportunity, so I asked the distributors in Jerusalem to talk to them for me. Gillbregross, Ezra, and Daniel came to the moshav. Ezra was scared of meeting my family, so he waited at the entrance to the moshav. I was moved that the distributors made an effort to come to make Shlom Bait (peace in the home). The conversation was pleasant, more relatives and neighbors came, but when Benny and Saba Avram arrived without an invitation, whispered comments began and tensions rose. Benny said rudely in front of everyone that Ezra was a druggie and a thief and that was why they wouldn’t let me marry him. I thought I was going crazy, why did he continue to haunt me?! Save me! How can I get out of this? I wanted to go back to Jerusalem. Benny drove Daniel and Gillbregross away disgracefully. He threatened me that if I go he will burn their children. Saba Avram said he would burn down all of Breslov. I was scared. Benny took me strongly by the hand, pushed me into the room, and threw me on the floor and said: “You will not leave here, get it! You will not step foot outside of the moshav! If you dare, I will show you! Ass!” It was scary that once again my family saw his violence towards me and still decided to ignore it and remain silent. I locked myself in the bathroom, and started to scream and curse him. I felt that I needed to run away, because I understood that Benny would never allow me to get married, just so I don’t reveal what he did to me. When I left the bathroom, they started talking to me in soft words, said that they are worried about me, and they want to help me have the wedding. Saba Avram said that he wants to lift his grandchild on his shoulders. He also said he would make sure I had a house. I admit that they were able to convince me with promises of financial security, and that they wanted what was best for me. I didn’t know that at the time they were misleading me with their words, and Benny and Saba had sent people to ambush the car with Daniel, Gillbregross, and Ezra –my intended. At home, my mother began telling me that maybe I should reconsider things, and let go of the idea of the wedding. I hoped that maybe the Rabbi at the moshav could help me talk to my parents in a language they could understand. I arranged for a meeting at the old synagogue with my parents, with the social worker and welfare worker, and once again I invited the distributors from Jerusalem. The aim was to make it easier for my parents to understand that the way I chose to live my life is healthy and good. It nearly worked. The distributors told of Rabbi Isroel Baar Oddesser and about Rabbi Nachman. The Moshav’s rabbi seemed interested, and that pleased me. The social worker and welfare worker listened carefully to the stories. I was pleased, and I thought things might work out. Suddenly, Benny showed up and yelled: “Stories of Tzadikim will not be told here!” He cursed the welfare worker, and threw a chair at her. She was an elderly lady, and still Benny was not scared to raise a hand, and he nearly slapped her. The social worker, who was younger, yelled at Benny that this was a discussion between a daughter and her parents, and he was not invited. Benny said he would cut me and my children if I got married. The social workers decided we would continue the conversation elsewhere. We went to the regional council. Benny followed us there, and tried to attack our cars with some other men from the moshav. We had a short and brief discussion at the council center. The social workers decided that since I had only two weeks until I was 18, and because of the danger Benny poses, and because of my family’s inability to protect me, they would send me for two weeks to a host family in Sussia. I was upset that my parents couldn’t protect me, so the welfare department decided for me where I would go. Benny, who waited for me outside of the building, grabbed my hand and dragged me forcefully in front of the social workers and council workers and said: “Ass, where do you think you are going? You are not going anywhere! You are coming with me!” He grabbed me by my neck and forced me into his car. On the ride he kept threatening: “If you dare leave the moshav it will be the end for you!” To this day, I am still angry at myself for giving into him, for not using my power to defend myself. The next day, the social workers moved me to the host family. One day, the woman with whom I was staying, showed me an article about me in the paper under the headline: “Moon Struck”. Benny was interviewed in the article and he said that Breslovers from Jerusalem kidnapped me to a cave to marry me. He didn’t let go and continued saying the same things on the radio. It wasn’t bad enough that I had lost faith in myself and in people, but he also managed to postpone the wedding, caused problems with my parents, and because of him I was holed up in a remote moshav in the Negev; now he is slandering and falsely accusing the only people who came to my aid when my parents didn’t. My father was also a part of the article, and that was a further break of trust between us. I tried to make contact with my fiancé. He avoided me, and other people answered his phone. Finally, one of his friends informed me that Ezra does not want any connection with a family like mine, and that he was hurt by having his picture printed on a whole page in the newspaper under the lies about Breslov that was all blasphemy, and therefore he was not interested in the match. We cancelled the engagement.

Two weeks to my birthday seemed especially long. I waited impatiently to start a new life without interference. The day I left the host family in Sussia, I quickly went to Jerusalem with a chocolate cake I had made as a surprise for Ilana. At Daniel and Ilana’s home, I finally felt satisfaction and calm. I quickly made them my family. On the first Shavuot we had together, the men and boys were at Givat Shaul and the women and girls were at Ilana’s house in the Bait Vegan neighborhood. Kari was living in the Beit HaKerem neighborhood at the time. She arrived at the beginning of the holiday for candle lighting. Afterwards, we sat to talk. She told me all about what she had been through in the different Breslov communities from Tzfat to Jerusalem, about a whole community in Tzfat who had ostracized her and called her a whore, and how she zealously raised her children with devotion, and finally ended up in Jerusalem, and now she feels that her children no longer suffer a life of bouncing and moving around. I was shocked to hear that she had already been married six times, and that she has children from four different fathers. I asked her a lot of questions. I thought there was something wrong with her. When she told me that Daniel was her seventh husband, I thought that if she could overcome all of the crises and trouble she had and marry again, then maybe I could too. I was jealous that she had the worst behind her, and now she was in a good chapter in her life, and I already wanted to be there. I started thinking of Daniel as an option, and it awoke me, but I didn’t discuss it with anyone. It was time for Kiddush Erev Chag. Aderet helped Iana. I felt uncomfortable sitting and talking instead of helping after Ilana had made an effort and prepared the holiday meal. Kari said not to worry, because it was more important that I concentrate on understanding the books, and planned for all of us to pull an “all nighter” and read psalms until the sun begins to rise. I noticed that Kari made Ilana feel she was superfluous and would be better off taking care of the kids. Ilana was insulted. Kari’s disregard for Ilana in different situations, made me feel condescending towards Ilana, and ruined our friendship, and made me see her in the wrong light, so much so that most of the time I was on Kari’s side. At the same time, it was difficult getting along with Kari, since we are both dominant women, and we had a lot of disagreements. After Shabbat, we were all at the meal and Daniel was playing a new tune on his guitar to a poem from Rabbi Nachman’s torah: “because there is no nature at all.” I always liked special songs, and I had never heard such strong words and composition before. I asked who wrote the beautiful composition, and Kari said, “Daniel”. I felt the music was a part of me. That I, as the bee, had found the nectar of the flower that she loves the most, and to which she wants to attach herself. That is actually how the sound track of our wonderful life together began. The festive meal went on until dawn and when I was doing dishes with Ilana in the kitchen, I took advantage of the opportunity to share my feelings for the children and for Daniel and she took it well. Her generosity gave me the courage to request to join him on a trip to Rabbi Isroel with his young boys. There, when I found the right moment, I asked Daniel for the Tefillin to perform the Breslev custom of “Nekitat Chefetz”. I held the Tefillin in both hands and stood close to the Tziyun and said to the Holy One, Blessed He Be out loud: “I ask not to be separated from Rabbi Nachman in this world and in the next world and to be with Daniel and his family my whole life.” Daniel seemed surprised. When we left the Tziyun and returned home, I asked to speak with him alone. I explained to him at length about the importance of the distribution they were doing, about Rabbi Isroel’s book that he published with strengthened me, and how important it is to continue and develop the distribution. I told him that I was here to help, and I am looking for a husband who believes as I do, and that he has the same enthusiasm for distribution as me. At some point I couldn’t stop myself and I said: “Haven’t you understood that I want a husband like you?” When Daniel understood that I was serious, he said he would have to ask Ilana and Kari. Ilana immediately said with a smile, “Mazal Tov”. Kari was very excited. We were married according to Jewish law. At the Sheva Brachot, Daniel played for me as I liked and it was very exciting. We went for a walk, and Daniel and I got to the “Motzah” spring, where there was a very ancient olive tree. We sat under it. I began to ask him intimate questions that I was curious about regarding his life and his past, until I found myself announcing that I am actually a virgin that had never been with a man. I wanted to believe that I could be new to my husband, and to forget the burdens. My parents never talked to me about virginity, interesting that I heard about it only from Benny and Saba Avram, who would praise their Persian women who were good and virgins, and that is how a woman should be.

In the first months of our marriage, after the children left for school, we would sit, the women and Daniel, for breakfast and make a plan for the day. There was a time when we would study together books by Rabbi Nachman in the mornings, which strengthened us in distribution. I felt that I had gotten a gift from Rabbi Nachman, my dear husband, compensation for all I had gone through. After I heard that Saba Avram died, I dared go to the moshav and tell my parents what I had gone through. It was very hard to talk about it, and I cried a lot. I was scared to talk about Benny, because he was still on the moshav, but I knew the day would come when I would yell it. My parents were very sad to hear it, my mother was frightened that she didn’t know about it, and they tried to think what could help me.

My parents asked forgiveness for their behavior towards the distributors from Jerusalem, and finally I could tell them that I married Daniel! They were happy, and my father gave him our blessing. They came to Jerusalem to Daniel’s concerts with the children, and that made me happy. When Daniel and Ilana’s first daughter got married, my parents invited us all to celebrate Sheva Brachot with them, at their home on the moshav. When Savta Zohara saw Daniel, she was moved by him and said “You have a red-headed husband. He is handsome! Have many children.” She told Daniel that she prayed her whole life that her grandchildren and she would meet good people on the way, and she saw that her prayer had been answered.

**Lifta, my slice of heaven**

One of my hobbies was to organize and arrange houses. Now I had a few houses to control. I started with Ilana’s house. Ilana noticed that I liked to bring home interesting and unique items and she liked it. I quickly felt “ownership” on the design of the house, to the point where I would get annoyed if Ilana styled the fabric on the sofa, and not me. I kept changing the permanent places of different items. We got to the point where it repeated itself tens of times, and when Ilana wanted to wash the floor, she couldn’t find the bucket, would ask everyone if they had seen it, and I would avoid answering because I felt uncomfortable for not putting it back in its place. When we saw this kind of thing repeating itself, we understood that we had to coordinate between us how it would be convenient to run the house. I decided to be more considerate of Ilana, and to understand what she felt and what I caused her when I didn’t pay attention to her plan. We strengthened each other that life together is a rare and special opportunity to work on Midot on a daily basis, and that at any given time we can be charitable to each other, and to strengthen with acknowledging the good, and to try to change for the better. We reached the conclusion that we wanted the sweetness of each other, and need to overcome the need for respect, “that I and me and myself… I did and I did and I did.” Today, fifteen years later, when we remember and laugh about the arguments about the bucket, Ilana says: “What an idiot I was, why didn’t I leave you the bucket and the cleaning and go do something else? And why didn’t I buy another bucket for you? Maybe because Daniel is an acquarius (also bucket in Hebrew) and we each wanted to control him in her own way…

The relationships between us were not always simple. Even with our faith and shared ideals, we had arguments and disagreements about principles and habits that none of us was willing to give up. We weren’t always able to rise above cruelty, jealousy and self respect and each of was certain she was right. Nevertheless, we made up with one another, and we got to nice results at home, at distribution, and at personal work. There was a special conviviality, which took us back to song and dance nearly every evening anew…

When Aderet married Daniel, I remember the first time I realized she was going to spend the night with him; OK…I am trying to understand what is going on here. A little demon “lit my fire”, a compulsive thought intruded, but I thought that I have the tools, with all my past, to get over this problem. The truth is that I hadn’t gotten over it. But what I tried to do was to hide it from Daniel, especially from Aderet, that G-d forbid, shouldn’t find out that I was jealous. And what about Ilana? I pushed her away from my thoughts, she already had children with him and she’s been with him for years. Kari boasted that she was already past the age of jealousy, so what did she care about giving up a few nights after “burying” six husbands!?

In the first year, I did not share what I had been through with Benny and Saba Avram with Daniel. I was ashamed to explain to him my jealousy of the other women who did not experience the trauma I’d had when I was six. I felt that my past was blocking me, and not allowing me to develop in our relationship, but every once in a while my feelings would burst out, manifesting in strange behavior. One day, while we sat together for dinner, I was thinking about what Sava Avram and Uncle Benny did to me, and I thought that if I didn’t knock the milk carton off the table, a disaster would happen. When I suddenly threw the carton on the floor, everyone looked at me and didn’t know what had happened. These kinds of acts began repeating themselves on a frequent basis, and I also began storing many small feelings of anger, which manifested themselves in bad thoughts towards Daniel, the women, and the children. I tried to do everything so that no one would know about it. My thoughts were in the same form as the threats and curses of Benny and Saba Avram. They resounded in my head: “I will cut off every finger on your husband’s hand…”; “I will burn your children…”. I found myself having attacks of compulsive thoughts about each member of the household. It made me close myself off, to feel horrible, like the worst in the world. I lived in real fear that because of these thoughts something would really happen. I didn’t know how I should deal with it, especially since these behaviors were too overt and useless. When I decided that I was sick of dealing with the frustration on my own, I told Daniel and the women. It was such a release, that since then, each time I was attacked by “thoughts”, I felt the need to tell someone. Everything I couldn’t share in my parent’s home because they ignored my problem, built up within me, and actually found release. The thoughts had very difficult content and I suffered from them greatly. Daniel and the women tried everything possible to help me, but they were helpless from seeing that nothing helped heal the core of the anxieties and childhood trauma. Daniel suggested I meet with a professional. I told him I had been considering it a long time. I looked for a psychologist on the internet, and I found that my problem has a name: “Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)”. It surprised me to find the definition so easily, after torturing myself for years from the thought that I was the only one in the world with this problem. I discovered that thousands of people, all over the world, even doctors, academics, and very intelligent people suffer from it. I found a psychologist and admitted to him all that was bothering me. He told me that compulsive thoughts could be caused by sexual abuse in childhood and usually people who suffer from OCD use compulsive rituals to reduce anxiety. He also said there were two options for treatment: instruction books or medication. I didn’t believe in medication that just muddles reality, I chose to deal with it, so I bought the books. Aderet sat with me for days on end, and we read and searched for practical advice. The books had some interesting and challenging suggestions about how to cope, and I tried to apply them. Daniel encouraged me that there was no despair in the world at all, and together we can overcome everything. There was a book about exercises that required group work. One of them was psychodrama. We started the improvisation workshops by the book. The workshop generally opens with a short round in which every participant tells the group about significant events in his life in general, and lately in particular, and afterwards, a physical warm-up, and from them group or private work where one participant presents a topic he wants to explore and understand, and the rest of the group helps him play the characters in the events. The workshop ends with “sharing”, in which every participant shares how the work done touched him. I liked this exercise. We had fun together; it brought us to dance, song, and act, and helped tighten the connection between us. It lowered a lot of the pressure and of the fear of the thoughts.

In the field of reflecting on men, I dealt with two opposing sides within me, one side that wanted to completely abstain and was scared of intimacy with a man, even in imagination, and another side that was all about addiction to thoughts about lust for sex with any man possible. Only the family structure of several girlfriends living together, allowed me to talk about these things. I saw that each of the women had a burden she carried from her past, and it wasn’t only me. Together we tried to cope with everything with a mixture of faith and art. Through art and improvisation workshops I was able to share my intimate feelings, and talk about everything. I was able to turn all of that energy into action, creativity, and distribution.

In Rabbi Nachman’s books, I found advice that gave me a solution to the root of the problem, for example, in Likutei Maharan, Torah 54:

“… And the Lord, blessed be he… orders for each man a thought, a speech, and an action according to the day and according to the man and according to the place, and dresses him thus with a thought, a speech,and an act that will provide him with clues to become closer to His work. Therefore, he should examine his thoughts and increase his wisdom, and understand what clues exist in the privacy of this costume in this thought, speech, and act on this day, which G-d, blessed be he, ordered for him…”

In torah 29, Rabeinu wrote:

“… because the thought in the mind is like the Midot in the person, and as the Mida that the person holds near, so the thoughts in his head come and go to him.”

I also understood from the holy books that the main problem is the rituals I performed to nullify the bad thoughts, like touching the floor, or any other action. This is called in the language of the torah “the Amori Way”, which is idolatry. According to the Sanhedrin Gemarra the meaning is: “… he who puts on himself a sign that if such and such happens to me and I will do some thing, and if it doesn’t happen, I won’t do it.” The term “the Amori Way” exists nearly 3300 years, since the existence of the Amori people, Noah’s great grandson. According to Rashi, the prohibition of idolatry can be learned from the verse: “And you shall not go in their laws:. I also read in Rabbi Nachman about something called “false beliefs.”

When I understood that I had put an emphasis in the wrong place that was progress. I was always bothered by the thought, because I thought that was causing damage, and so I tried to silence it and bury it and I didn’t understand that Hashem was sending me a clue at the time in order to help me cope, and that I don’t need to get stressed by it and certainly not use ceremonies. Rabbi Nachman said: “ I am the biggest doctor, he who needs healing shall come to me.” Indeed, by getting closer to Rabbi Nachman, by studying his books and trying to live by his advice, I found medicine for my soul.

The structure of my life with Daniel and the women gave me a solution and calmed me. I felt the structure suited me especially. I wasn’t capable of being closed in with a man alone and being committed. In the end, each of our personal interests managed well together. The house worked like a kibbutz and supported itself. We lived in financial security and abundance. We are together nearly 16 years. 16 years of love and mutual assistance, of caring and desire to develop together. The experience of being “together”, in distribution, music, and performances, gave me real satisfaction. I have always dreamed of marrying a man who plays and sings, and together we can live the music- that is also a dream that came true. The wonderful years of Daniel and the boys performing on stage, dancing and making others happy, cannot be replaced by anything. Also, my desire to overcome my fears and bring a child into this world came true.

I remember one Shabbat, little Gay Noam, Ilana’s five year old son, approached me dressed in a white shirt, with a jacket and a black bow tie and his long flowing sidelocks around his sweet face, with a smile that cannot be refused, and he asked me to listen to him tell the story “Bat Melech Shehalcha Leibud” by heart. When he had recited several pages, word by word, I thought to myself: this is the kind of child I want!

A year after we married we had a dear son and for the purposes of this book we will call him Yedidya. Yedidya was born without an elbow. No one was impervious to his charm. Since he was a baby, it seems that he was aware of everything going on around him. In the hospital they put an identity band on him. A wondrous thing happened, it said on the band: “Yedidya son of G-d”, and we felt that he was the son of Hashem and we called him that. Daniel loved him especially. He worried about Daniel’s physical development, and thought constantly about what would happen when he grew, and how would he manage, and how would he cope with daily activities like closing a button or a zipper, and how would he be independent and not dependent on others. Daniel and I thought it was very important that Yedidya get all of the security and love from his siblings and wouldn’t feel disadvantaged. Indeed, all of the siblings and other mothers felt responsible for supporting Yedidya and strengthening him. When Yedidya was three, he already knew how to read fluently, and knew how to tell “Sipurei Maasiot” by Rabbi Nachman by heart, and he would stir all of the guests that would visit us. When he was seven, Daniel bought him a real electric guitar suitable for his age, and they would practice together. In the evenings, when the whole band played for pleasure, Yedidya would go to the piano in the studio, and invent a new harmony. It really moved me, and I thought I was lucky to have such a sweet son and such a supportive family. He would always take the place near Abba at the table, and wouldn’t let any other child or mother sit there; there were many arguments over this. Daniel also did not relinquish sitting next to Yedidya. Yedidya would jump up like a smart student to respond to the Divrei Torah that we learned at the meal, and he had comments that were beyond his age and he did not hesitate to debate things with his fathers’ friends. He insisted on going everywhere with his father. In their performances and festivals Yedidya and his brothers would surprise the audience with beautiful breakdance performances on the stage. Daniel and I would take Yedidya to the pool and the sea since he was one year old to train him in swimming and physiotherapy and it always ended up being a family outing, since all of the children wanted to be with Yedidya. Yedidya grew up with a lot of joie de vivre, love, and self confidence; he was very proud of his family and very connected to his father.

When I wanted to have another child, even though I felt loved and secure with Daniel, I couldn’t avoid the thought that there was a connection between the fact that Yedidya was born without an elbow, and what Uncle Benny and Saba had done to me. In order to solve my problem once and for all, I decided to confront these fears and worries and stop avoiding them, and go to the moshav where I grew up, and reveal the whole story to my parents. When I spoke with Daniel about it, he thought it was a good idea. I left Yedidya with the other mothers, took a bag and left, I didn’t know for how long. I was there for a long time, and on Shabbat, holidays, and midweek, I would go back to Jerusalem, to Daniel and Yedidya who I missed very much, gathered more strength to continue coping with my difficult story. When I told my parents that besides my Saba, also my mother’s brother, for years when I was a child, sexually abused me, they couldn’t handle it: My mother said that she needs to save the little strength she has left to care for my siblings, who were already grown and independent; my father said he didn’t want to hear about things like that, and if I wanted to stay, I shouldn’t talk about it… I thought that if other people on the moshav knew about it, maybe my parents would take me more seriously. I stayed at the moshav on Shabbat because I planned something… at night I couldn’t fall asleep, I was in emotional turmoil. At five in the morning, I lay on the floor and cried. Around ten o’clock, I started walking towards the synagogue, my heart was pounding strongly, and I turned around and started heading back home. I was angry with myself, and once again I went to the synagogue. I could barely breathe. All of the men of the moshav were at synagogue for Shabbat morning prayers. My father was at another synagogue, so I felt that I could do it. I waited for them to finish the Torah reading and then I walked into the men’s section and walked, shaking, to the center and said out loud: “I want everyone here to know something”. It got quiet in the congregation. I looked at Benny, and saw that he felt the pressure. He laughed a forced laugh and talked with someone. I didn’t care about the shame of everyone knowing what happened… I got closer to where Benny was sitting and started to scream what he had done to me. He in response went crazy and hit me. I, in return, continued and yelled also what Saba had done to me… People held Benny, and he cursed me and threatened me. “A S S!” he yelled towards me. Everyone started talking about Benny ruining and complicating a lot of families, and tried to calm me down. When my parents heard about what happened they said: “Go to the police”. I wasn’t capable of going to the police because I pitied Benny’s wife and children. The next day, I left the moshav. I felt that I had made a big step to relieving myself of the burden. I felt how good I have it with Daniel and the women, my best friends who can talk about everything without fear.

**Comment:**

In their verdict against Daniel, the judges referred to my visit at my parents, and they wrote: “Azamra stayed at Moshav Zarchia for a long period of time as punishment by distancing her from her home which was imposed upon her, against her will, by the accused.”

And the judges conclude:

“… from the above, it can be concluded that the accused was clearly and directly involved in the severance of relationships between the women and their families. The accused incited the women against their families and influenced them to limit the scope of their connection and especially its depth… clear evidence of the measure of control of the accused over his wives, was their obedience of his orders with such absolute faith as to lead them to severing their ties with their family members (relationships that were good and solidly based previously).”

Here is some evidence for you, dear readers, of the way judges reverse things, distort the facts, and in the end, distort justice and convict the wrong man.

When in my interrogations, I told the police about what my Uncle Benny and Saba Avram did to me, they ignored it, didn’t say anything and tried forcefully to plant false versions against my husband. When I didn’t cooperate, they continued to threaten me. It turns out that the Israeli Police Department, whose job it is to protect citizens and help them, doesn’t respond to their distress, but only acts according to its own aim that it decided upon.

Saba Avram is dead. Uncle Benny is wandering around free, who knows what children he is hurting now.

And Daniel is sitting in jail.

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On the 4th of July, 2011 at about 5 in the afternoon, Yedidya, who was already nine years old, was at home in Romema with Ilana and Batya, his six year old sister. Suddenly, eight armed men broke into the house aggressively, threatening and cursing rudely. Yedidya was very frightened when he saw how the policemen pushed Ilana to the floor and turned her closet upside down. He cried hysterically and yelled: “Why? Why? What is happening?” Two social workers grabbed Yedidya, one by his hands and another by his feet while he was fighting them and yelling: “Why are you taking me? I want my father!”

I wasn’t there. I didn’t know what they did to Yedidya, everything I am telling you is in the investigation files. I was arrested that day in the center of town, and following violent interrogations they sent me to a battered women’s shelter for three months. They shut me up there for no reason, because they didn’t have any claim or accusation towards me. I was under house arrest, not telephone, not allowed out, with the explanation that they have to “take apart the cult”. They started by separating all of the family members. For more than a month, they did not let me see Yedidya at all, not even talk to him on the phone.

My first phone conversation with Yedidya was under the supervision of the social worker Nehama Jehassi. He told me quickly how the child investigator Micha Haran cursed his father, used foul language, and asked strange questions and said we are not a normal family. The social worker was inconsiderate of the child’s sadness and pain which accompanied him over the past month alone, and cut off the conversation in the middle. I called her worriedly and asked her why she did that, she said coldly: “The child is not allowed to talk about this.” When I asked to speak with him again, she said I needed permission from a judge.

At the first hearing regarding the children, the judge ruled that the child needs me, and decided that Yedidya should see me three times a week. I spoke with the social worker, Nehama Jehassi, to arrange for the days of my visit and she said that she decided we would meet only one day a week for one hour. I said, “But that was the court’s decision and the child needs me, I have no contact with anyone else in the family, and the judge said three times a week.” She stopped me and said: “Go to the court with your complaints, in the meantime, it is as I said, one meeting a week for one hour only, I will tell you when the first time will be.” For a whole month I cried to the director of the shelter that I haven’t seen Yedidya, and that I know he is in bad shape. She promised me that she would help and talk to the social worker. One day, the director called me and told me that Nechama Jehassi informed her that the next day I would have a meeting with the child, but I have to do it under two conditions: First of all, under no circumstances am I to talk to him about his father or the family, and if I talk- they will stop the meeting, and added that she doesn’t care that he needs me. The second condition is that I respond to him accordingly. I asked what that meant, and she said: “The social worker said that Yedidya doesn’t want any connection to you or the family, he is angry at the whole family, don’t be mad at him for it, show him that you understand him.” I felt a pinch in my heart, and I found it difficult to believe that Yedidya, who so loved his father and mother and family, would talk like that, it didn’t make sense to me. I was very excited about the meeting and with all of the money I saved working for the women in the shelter I bought him gifts. I was so excited; I didn’t sleep all night before the meeting. I didn’t know what to expect.

When I got to the boarding school Yedidya saw me from afar. He ran, jumped on me, and hugged me and didn’t want to leave me. We both cried and hugged each other hard. He said to me: “Do you know how much I asked for you to come?” He got down from my hands, became serious and said: “Where is Dad?! Tell him to come get me from here, I don’t want to stay here, I want to go home. Where are all the children? Are they also in boarding schools?”

The social worker, Nehama Jehassi, came towards us in big steps and commanded us to go into a small, dark and stuffy room. I asked her if we could meet in the garden, so it would be more pleasant for the child, she answered in a shrill voice: “No, this is a supervised visit.” It was very unpleasant for me, as well as for Yedidya, to be under the critical eyes of the welfare people, and in this case, three women, six penetrating eyes staring at me and Yedidya for the whole meeting, writing on a piece of paper what they would pass on to the judge, twisted lies, in a methodic manner, in order to keep him in their care, and to separate me and my son, to prevent me from getting him back, and to deprive him of a mother and father’s real love. Yedidya was occupied with his excitement at seeing me, after a whole month of being disconnected from me and the rest of his family, including his siblings; he hugged me, looked at me with shiny and sweet eyes and said:”I dreamed I was at Superland and father is waiting for me at the end of the slide and saying that he doesn’t want me to be sad, that he wants me to have fun, mom, where is he?! I want to be with him!” Nehchama stopped the conversation, and asked in a threatening voice, while completely ignoring Yedidya’s questions: “Do you want us to stop the meeting? You are not living up to the condition, I warned you, you cannot talk about the father or the family, did you forget?! “Yedidya paled, and begged her: “Enough! Please!” I couldn’t understand how she once again cut the boy off so bluntly and insensitively! Ignoring his words and turning to me with such an accusation!

When the meeting ended, I asked Nechama, the case worker: “Why did you tell me that Yedidya was not interested in seeing me?” She didn’t answer me. I understood from that moment that the case worker was capable of lying about the basic needs of a child asking to see his mother, so she is capable of lying about everything.

For a year and a half, the meetings with Yedidya occurred once a week for only one hour, under the supervision of a social worker. At each meeting, Yedidya would ask me what is going on with his father, tell me that he misses him and wants to go home with mom and dad, he is sick of boarding school. I would answer him and try to strengthen him; as a result I was reprimanded by Nechama Jehassi. At some point, Yedidya told me that they explained he would have to stay in boarding school until he was eighteen, and that we shouldn’t talk about his father, because they would cancel our hour together. I felt that they were succeeding in breaking his faith and hope. They cruelly took away his basic right to want to be with his parents. Since then, he did not talk about his father or family, only if the social worker left us alone by chance for two minutes, he took advantage of that and ask about his father. The fear they made us feel about talking about his father and the families, slowly sunk in like snake poison, and did its thing. The height of it was a year and a half ago, after Daniel was sentenced to 26 years in prison; the case worker called me and asked me how I was. I thought she was asking because she was worried and cared about me, and I told her innocently that Ilana, Aderet, Shiran, and I were living together and we are fighting to expose the corruption of the investigators and judges. I was shocked by her indifference to the situation when she coldly replied: “As long as you live with the other wives and support Daniel, you cannot see your son. If you go anywhere near his residence, I will immediately call the police! You have to choose, your son or the women and Daniel!”

It has been nearly two years since I have seen my son, as punishment for loving his father! Every child I see in the street makes me want to cry, and it pains me. I see Yedidya in him, and I think how humiliated he is when they say horrible things about his father, how he suffers. I know how a child feels when his father is being cursed, humiliated, and scorned.

The situation is unbearable. How is it possible that the case worker has the authority to separate a mother and her son without any supervision of her actions, while she isn’t even abiding the judge’s decision?! She knows that my son needs me and she doesn’t really care what is in his best interests.

Only in Daniel’s verdict did I receive a copy of the protocol of the Yedidya’s interrogation by Micha Haran from the lawyer. I was shocked to see how the investigator tortured a nine year old’s soul!

The investigator Micha Haran asked Yedidya who he was closest to in the family, and Yedidya answered: “I have the same connection with all of my siblings; the strongest is with my father, because I love him most”. Yedidya was in great distress when the investigator explained that from the first day of his arrest, his father had committed crimes that he would have to pay for with thirty years in prison, and that he would never see him again, and the family would not be together again because it is a cult. My Yedidya underwent torture from this investigator, who hurled terrible accusations against his father and family. He told the child terrible stories that never occurred, and told him what happened in the house. He expected, like a malicious animal hunting his prey that Yedidya would admit it happened. It pained Yedidya to hear his father degraded by huge lies, and being cursed. He bravely tried to fight the investigator and defend his father and family. Yedidya asked several times during the investigation to speak with his father, the investigator ignored him.

I am going to quote verbatim the protocol from the despicable investigation, in which a police investigator investigates a nine year old child under cross fire, without the presence of an adult to defend him, which in itself is a criminal offense:

“… what you do is just to be cruel! It is no less than what they do in Russia to children when they hit them with rulers on their hands. It is really… exactly that is how I feel in my heart, that you are pinching my heart. You are pinching my heart! You grab him where he is and tell me: “you are under supervision and in a good place…’ and you are pinching my heart and holding it in a place it doesn’t belong; like a puzzle, you are putting the puzzle together at the wrong place.”

The investigator keeps asking questions and Yedidya complains that the questions are bothering him, nonetheless, he tries to explain: “My father, he really spoils me, there is nothing… nothing like his pampering and love…” Yedidya complains in sorrow:

“How did you dare today to take me with such sadness, held feet and hands, you should ask forgiveness for the sadness you caused us. It is not nice, to do something like that to a child… and I will tell you something else, I will tell you something right now, I am better off with my parents, even if it will cause the biggest anger in the world. But I am not angry. I prefer not to leave this house. You are causing me nightmares. Maybe, with G-d’s help, I will go to my home tonight… that’s it, that‘s all I have to say. I would never do such a thing! You are just cruel!”

My sweet Yedidya, innocent, tried with all his heart to continue and explain to the investigator why the police arrested us:

“We are people who are only trying to promote Rabbi Nachman in song. That’s why we create such a ruckus… we are in the spotlight, we are crazy. We even have a story with Rabbi Nachman about Ganani, which was a garden that provided for the whole country, it was such a beautiful garden, it was Ganani… Ganani from the word Nigun (play music), and he would play and enliven the flowers. Once a cruel king came and he wanted to bring three things into the garden, so the garden would be ruined: obscenity, bribery, and adultery. You know, it is written that “bribery blinds the eyes of the wise?” So all of the people already forgot the meaning of Ganani and they no longer had something to provide for the whole country. Once a Tzadik came and said: ‘If you bring back Ganani, your livelihood will return’ and then someone remembered that a Gay ran in the street yelling “I am Ganani, I am Ganani’ and everyone would laugh at him that he was crazy ‘you are crazy’. That is exactly what they said to him. We are the crazy and crazy. But in the end, it is the Ganani, Rabbi Nachman, who fixes everything and we are trying to promote him.”

The investigator did not consider anything the boy tried to explain to him and only asked coldly: “Did anyone ever hit your mother?”

Yedidya nodded his head to indicate a negative response and the investigator repeated the question:”Did you ever see anyone hit your mother?” Yedidya answered:” Of course not.”

The investigator repeatedly asked the same question, and Yedidya answered him: “G-d forbid.” The investigator once again asked “did it ever happen that someone choked one of the women?” Yedidya answered: “Enough. Totally G-d forbid, not at all. You are asking really bad questions. G-d forbid, who would choke them, my father would take them apart. My father is good to his wives.” The investigator was indifferent to see Yedidya in front of him with only one elbow, trying to fight like a little knight, with the remaining shreds of his strength.

In later investigations, exactly when Nechama Jehassi lied to me and declared to the judge that Yedidya did not want to see me or his father, the protocols of the investigation indicate:

“I am sad without my parents, I am sad without my parents.”

“But you have friends.”

“But friends are not parents, “and he continues: “Somebody here lied a lot.”

“No, really, I am telling you the truth.”

“Then why can’t we call our parents?... I don’t want to be here in this meeting!”

When the investigator asked Yedidya if he knew what a shocker is, Yedidya thought he was talking about a cigarette lighter, and the investigator tried again and again to explain to him what a shocker is and Yedidya said: “I have never heard that word in my life!”

“Were there punishments at home for the children?”

“My brothers would give small punishments to stand in the corner; my father did not give punishments!”

The investigator turned in a false report about Yedidya to the court, in which he wrote: “ He should not testify in court about what he testified in his statement, because this may cause him additional emotional damage, because of the difficult content of his reports as well as the family connection to the perpetrators of injury.” And I asked the child investigator Micha Haran, how he could live with the fact that the child begged to see his father, told him how much he misses him, how he spoils him, how his father is a good man that never did anyone harm ever, and still file a false and opposite report? I ask the judges whether contamination of the testimony became legal. It would seem it has.

On 6.2.2012 I went to visit Yedidya. When I finished the visit, I ordered a cab. The cab rode until we got to the city entrance. Suddenly, a white car with red license tags passed us and they ordered us by loudspeaker to pull over. It was the police. They told me that I was under arrest. I felt that an atom bomb had fallen on me, but I tried to gather my wits quickly because I knew from previous experience six months ago that the police are above the law. I had no idea what was going to be with me this time, but I knew that I had a visit on Sunday with Yedidya and I didn’t intend on missing it. Within a few minutes, I found myself under arrest, in a small cell with no window that had a thick and heavy smell of depression and despair from those who had been there before me; it was barely breathable in there. I held onto the bars of the door to look for air. I hadn’t understood yet that I was really going to prison!

On Friday morning, Ilana, Aderet and I were brought, chained hand and foot, to the Magistrate’s Court, hoping to be released.

We were surprised to see Ilana’s three eldest children, and they were also arrested and chained. It seemed like they were trying to preserve the family’s pride in this humiliating situation. They winked at us fondly to strengthen us and told us to be strong and not fear, because we would soon be released. There were four prosecuting attorneys, court security guards, prison guards, and press. The courtroom was quite full. The state’s attorney appointed to us did not show up for some reason. On the prosecutor’s side, two investigators who headed the investigation against our family arrived, Asher Lazmi and Lilach Ranan.

When I saw Lilach Rana in court, memories of the arrest six months earlier on 4 July 2011 came back to me. There she grabbed me by the neck when I was chained on my feet in the corridors of police headquarters and she hit my head so hard on the wall that I fell and passed out. When I recovered from my loss of consciousness, I heard that she was still yelling curses at me. The same Lilach Rana was standing in court, looking at us mockingly, and laughing with the investigator Asher Lazmi. When the judge entered they stopped for a moment, and everyone stood in his honor. Immediately after that, the investigator presented her argument for extending our arrest, certain that the judges were there only to approve her request. When the lawyers on our side started claiming that we shouldn’t even be there, Lilach Ronen and Asher Lazmi whispered between them loudly and giggled. The judge asked for quiet, but they continued talking and it seemed that the judge was nothing to them. Suddenly, I began to understand that I might have to stay and there is a chance I won’t get to see Yedidya. The thought made me cry. I looked at the two investigators and they looked at me and joked. I turned to the boys’ attorney and said to him, crying: “Look, see how they torture us emotionally?” The lawyer heard me and said to the judge: “What is this, the investigators’ behavior? This is contempt of court!” The judge said indifferently: “I request quiet”, but the investigators ignored him. I was really upset and began to cry, to yell at the judge: “How can you let them laugh at us in front of you and all of the people present?!” the judge had no mercy, and signaled the security people to remove me from the court. The security guards reached me, cuffed my hands and feet. I couldn’t believe this was happening to me! I was being removed before a decision was made. Only because I broke and cried from the degrading behavior of the investigators? I cried to the judge: “Why? Why?...” When the security guards led me to the courtroom exit, superintendent Asher Lazmi snuck a sneer at me and said: “You are not going to see your son in the near future…” I realized that if I said out loud what I thought it would not help, and the only thing I could do cuffed as I was, was to spit at him in contempt. I spat at him and hit him in the left eye. He got really angry. His brown face took on a reddish tint, and I kept following the security guard with my back to him, I wanted to show him that with all of his power he is worthless! Suddenly, I felt strong blows to my spine, neck and head, and a strong hand pushing my head to the floor. It took a bit of time for me to realize that it was the superintendent Asher Lazmi, who did not hesitate to attack a helpless woman who was cuffed hands and feet, in front of the judge and reports. When the stunned guards saw my distress, they jumped on him and tried to remove him while saying: “Asher, what are you doing, it’s inappropriate, you are hitting a woman who is cuffed.” But he kept attacking me with rage and yelling and cursing and didn’t calm down. I was quickly removed and locked up in a holding cell. Later I found out that the judge did not even chastise Lazmi for his violence towards me in the courtroom.

Luckily, the boys’ attorney was shocked and said that he had never seen such a case in which the police were not even scared in public in front of a judge to hurt helpless people and demanded that the judge record the incident in the protocol. For two whole days I asked the guards and the officers to see a lawyer, but they ignored me. In the meantime, I suffered a sharp pain all down my spine. So I couldn’t sleep. On the third day, they took me to the investigation rooms at headquarters. The investigator who was there started to degrade me and tell me I was a battered hooker and a horse and that I am crazy and that I like being beaten and that I am a brainwashed sicko etc. I told him that I wanted to file a complaint against Asher Lazmi for hitting me in court. He laughed indifferently and asked me in cold cruelty: “ Do you even know why you are here?” I said: “No.” He answered: “You are here being investigated under suspicion for attacking an officer in the line of duty!”

That was just too much. I said: “You Gays get to do what you want without any limits?!” “True”, he answered with a smile. “But you should just know that right now they are writing the indictment. Do you have anything to say? Let me remind you that anything you say or don’t say can be used against you.” “I have nothing to say, you will do what you want to anyway,” I answered. I was led back to my cell at the Russian Compound, and from there to Neve Tirza women’s prison.

At Neve Tirza, I found myself in a three by five meter room with five women from different nationalities and religions. All at once, I remembered the times when I hadn’t appreciated my friends for life. I didn’t have Ilana to make sure I had shoes, and I didn’t have Aderet who supported me endlessly, and I didn’t have Shiran, who made me laugh, and I didn’t even have Kari to argue with. The year in jail made me miss our “together”. The girls in Neve Tirza were very curious to hear about six women living together. Some of them were actually very aggressive about this point. I answered them: “Here in prison, six women live together in one cell and get along despite the difficulty; so when women are free and independent, and lack for nothing, and don’t have the restrictions of prison, all the more so!”

The real reason we sat in Neve Tirza for a whole year was that the investigators saw strong women before them, who wouldn’t lie, who didn’t give in to their bribes and threats, and they planned to break us in custody so that we would be willing to testify against Daniel, just to be released. That is how they were able to break Aliza, the fifth wife.

For eight years, Aliza and I were very close. We were both the same age. We each had one child, I a son and she, a daughter. We went through similar things in our childhood, and we helped each other cope with them. We shared joy at the same things and we spent most of the day together. We became so close that we shared each other’s deepest secrets. When Daniel was arrested, six months before my arrest, the investigator asked me in the interrogation rooms: “Who do you want to meet with?” I immediately answered: “Aliza.” So they called Aliza to come. When she entered the room, I was very excited to see her after such a long separation. We hugged. I gave her a special bracelet I had on my hand that I made in a class in the shelter and I wore in order to give to one of the women at first chance. I was glad she got it. She gave me the earrings she wore. She said to me: “Azamra, you don’t understand, the investigators explained that Daniel wasn’t going to get out for the next twenty –thirty years no matter what we say, whether we try to help or not, it’s already a lost cause! We have to save the children. We cannot let them be traumatized without a father and a mother, we have to save what we can and at least help them get their mothers back. If you want to help Yedidya, just confirm everything the investigators tell you to say, confirm all of the situations they are describing and you will get Yedidya back and financial support. Yedidya needs his mother, and I am sure that Daniel is worried about the children and wants us to worry about them and not him.”

I couldn’t figure out what was wrong with her. This all happened in front of the investigator and I didn’t want to embarrass her, so I just told her straight to her face: “Aliza, you are willing to lie about Daniel to get your daughter back?! Do you think that Batya, who loves her father so much is willing to grow up knowing that you were willing to ‘save’ her life and close her father’s? Don’t tell me this is for your daughter, from this day forth we don’t know each other.” She got confused for a moment, and then she got closer to me and whispered to me: “Azamra, I am only tricking them to get the girl back. When I have her, I will concentrate on getting Daniel out.” I was not prepared in my heart to believe what she said. I couldn’t believe my ears, and knew that she would be willing to lie about her husband that she always pronounced she loved for the price of getting her daughter back, but 13 other children would remain without their father because of her. The investigators came into the room and cut off our conversation, and I stayed with a knife in my heart.

I was afraid what would happen to Daniel if Aliza spoke like that. One year later, when the prosecution summoned her as a witness for the prosecution, I was sure she wouldn’t dare show up in court and speak against him. When I heard how she showed up and slaughtered him with horrific lies, shamelessly, without fear of the Creator. I couldn’t breathe for the pain, knowing how much Daniel loved her. I felt she was like Delila sending Samson to his death.

The police investigators didn’t stop with turning Aliza against Daniel, six months later they also demanded she testify as a main witness against us, the wives. After nearly a year of imprisonment, we finally had our trial, and were summoned to a deliberation in which Aliza was supposed to testify against us. I knew she had no limits, but still I couldn’t believe that she was going to lock us up, her friends, for at least 14 years. I hoped that she would remember how much Yedidya needs his father and me, and that she would have a last vestige of conscience for a disabled child who needs his mother and father.

We entered the courtroom, Ilana, Aderet, and myself, cuffed hand and foot, wearing prison garb, accompanied by some people, some of whom felt the injustice and tried to strengthen us. We sat on the defense table, and to our utter surprise, Aliza actually came. She stood on the witness stand and began telling all sorts of stories about Daniel. My lawyer stopped her and said that the deliberation was not about Daniel, and that she should concentrate on the issue at hand. On cross examination her lie was revealed in such a manner that even the judges were embarrassed. At the end of the deliberation my lawyer asked Aliza if she has something to say to the women sitting at the defense table. Aliza, for the first time in this whole surreal deliberation, looked me in the eyes and said dramatically, like an actress in the theater: “Believe me Azamra, I am doing this for your own good! You have to wake up and do what you can to get your son back, because your child should be more important than his father!” The whole way back to jail we were sorry that we didn’t clap at the end of her show.

On the eighth night of Chanukah, I called my lawyer from jail and asked him when the next deliberation would take place. He told me we should pack our stuff, because tomorrow we are being released! For a minute, I was confused, and asked: “Really? How do you know that?” and he said to me: “After Timna, Aliza, and Samy finished their cross examination and the judge asked that you three be removed from the court, the judge reprimanded the prosecutor and clarified that you shouldn’t have been in jail at all! And that he’d better reach a plea agreement to get you out quickly, because this is a possibility of an acquittal.” The next day, we were released. I remember our first steps out of jail, freedom ahead, but behind I felt that we left women, some of whom were victims of gross injustice and didn’t belong in prison. I hoped that our war would help a lot of other people, for whom the predatory machine that, in the name of the law, takes families apart without any truth or justice in the short time a person has to live, and stop its killing spree.

This house was destroyed and we didn’t want to lose time. We saw ahead only Daniel’s release. We began a war. We went to the internal affairs office in the police force and I filed a complaint against violence in the interrogations, and I added the protocol in which the judge noted the violence of the policeman towards me, and the article in YNET describing everything that happened in the courtroom, but for some reason that didn’t interest the internal affairs department. When I called to ask what was happening with the complaint against the investigator who hit me in front of the judge, and about the female investigator that hit me in the interrogation rooms, the secretary said that the case was closed due to “lack of public interest”. I turned to the press, but there I also understood that the public is not interested in things that are not a matter of slander. I looked for a private attorney, but I discovered that they too don’t have an interest in people who have no money or an apartment to sell in order to pay them. What kept us going was the strength the children got as the result of our struggle. They were very excited and got much stronger since our release from prison because it gave them hope that the lie in their father’s trial would be revealed and he would be released and come home. During the whole year we were in prison, Kari lived with her son Yan and his wife Marie (Daniel and Ilana’s eldest daughter). When we were released, Yan and Marie invited us to live with them all of us together, and that they wanted to take care of us in the near future. They rented a ground floor apartment in Givat Shaul because they worried about us all, and it hurt them that family was getting lost. They wanted the entire group of siblings home, and for the family to go back to being together. There were three rooms in the apartment, and they cleared one for us. Ilana, Kari, Aderet, Shiran, and I slept in the same room. We took care of the grandkids, bills, and Passover cleaning. Mariewas pregnant with her third child, and we got her an apartment in the hotel near the hospital in honor of the birth. Once in two weeks Yan took Kari to visit Daniel in jail and we were glad that at least she got to see him, because she hadn’t been in prison. Marie came to the courthouse to testify for her father, talked on television, radio and the newspaper about the injustice to her father, and the judges ignored her testimony. Shosh, who was 16, ran away from the boarding school to get to court, where she said to the judges: “It is important to hear that my father has been sitting for a year and a half for no reason and I personally miss him very much, why are you listening to the people who come to lie and I don’t know what they want?!” The judges ignored her testimony, and convicted Daniel also in a charge against her. She was broken up about, and went to interview on Channel 2, and talked about what happened in court and what they did to her father, and Channel 2 decided not to air it. When they aired the show and she saw she wasn’t on it and they spoke against her father, she grew despondent and cried: “You see that nothing helps?” Samy, who was a witness for the prosecution and recanted his testimony wanted to interview for the same show on Channel Two, but they didn’t agree.

When I came to court to testify on Daniel’s behalf and I stood on the witness stand, I still hoped in my heart that the judges would be honest enough to hear me without prejudice. Judge Tzaban said I should tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth otherwise I would be subject to the punishments by law. For three hours I told about our life together. The judge asked me if Daniel ever did something to me against my will, and I answered him:

“This is an outrage! Between the ages of six to ten I was routinely raped by my uncle and grandfather and I talked about it with the police investigators. No one cared. Daniel was the only one who cared about me and helped me with a lot of love and patience to overcome the post trauma I lived with, and now, you want to accuse him of rape?! Daniel is the closest person to me, the gentlest and the furthest from being that type, like your questions indicate. It is important to me that it is clear that Daniel never harmed me in any way, shape or form. He never raped me and it is unacceptable that there is a charge against Daniel for raping me on the basis of things said by another person about me!?”

When I saw that in their verdict the judges convicted him of raping me six times, and he was sitting in jail for it, I discovered that the court is corrupt and “rigged from the start”. When I read that the judges wrote that Daniel created a reality in which the wives had to confess their thoughts to him, I understood that they had turned reality upside down, and that my need to share things with my husband, my best friend, terrible thoughts that haunted me when no one else would listen, not even my own parents, they turned that in a split second to a basis for the indictment and conviction.

The same judges that demanded only the truth, convicted Daniel on 18 false counts, held a false trial and received false testimony, and actually they are those who raped us, the wives, to be slaves of the system that doesn’t allow us personal relationships according to our own choice. I thought: How do those judges receive the punishments by law for injustice? Will they pay for what they did to us? Who will succeed in compensating us for this horrible destruction? Who will give me my child back and those precious years he lost with his father?

The twisted verdict made me blame everyone who brought us to this situation. Primarily, I thought about my Uncle Benny. I didn’t understand how all of these years, instead of blaming him for what he did to me, I blamed myself and thought that I, a six year old child made him do what he did and asked him to do it. I decided to back to Zarchia to see Benny and ask him to take responsibility for what he did to me and for the consequences of it on my life and my family. I got there, and when I faced him, instead of yelling at him, as I had planned, and confronting him with the life he took from me, I found myself feeling sorry for him, and in a really childish voice I begged him to just ask forgiveness, because someone else was sitting in jail instead of him.

Ilana’s Story, the first wife

Part two

I weep and cry out to have Daniel and all of the children back.

In 2011 my children: Zalman was 22, Boaz 20, Gay Noam 18, Marie 19, Tsipi 16, Shosh 15, Akiva 13.5, Kati 12, Nuriel 11, and Bela was nine. Without any warning or early indication, without any chance of defending them, they were suddenly taken from me; as were the children of Daniel and his other wives: Yonathan 10.5, Yedidya was nine and Batya was six, they called me Mom, and I wasn’t allowed any kind of contact with them- not conversations or visits; Tsila 26, Yan 24, Anastasia 19, and Samy 14, Kari’s children, who with time became strangers, as if I hadn’t raised them and invested in them for 11 years, no less than I had invested in my own children. The state harmed each and every one of them deeply. They turned happy innocent children into children who are searching for a way to survive and be saved from the insufferable persecution of the police and welfare people. The crisis they went through over the past four years, when they were torn from their parents and siblings and their world was shaken up, made the girls turn to hard drugs, and some of them even threatened and some tried to commit suicide. They threatened Akiva, my 13.5 year old son who was under arrest, that if he didn’t testify against his father, he himself would sit in jail. They used insufferable pressure on him via talks and psychiatric pills, until they caused him to turn and he became a witness for the prosecution. Immediately after that, Akiva tried three times to commit suicide, and was hospitalized for a long time in a psychiatric hospital.

At home, Akiva wanted to make us happy. He would always be interested in what he could do to help. Even before his bar mitzvah, he decided to take care of Yedidya who was nine, and Yonathan who was ten. He would say to me: “Don’t worry Mom, we will take of our laundry, folding clothes, and ironing, and everything will be perfect.” Together with Samy they were a group of four brothers from three mothers and close in age that would do everything together. Akiva liked taking responsibility, and it seemed he influenced them positively. The brothers were glad he looked out for them.

When we made an album of the family band “the Baatleers”, it was an extraordinary family experience. On one of the DVD’s, Akiva told the story “the Son of the King and the Son of a Servant who Switched” by heart. Daniel prepared a special background of a cartoon with musical accompaniment to the story. When Akiva saw the clip for the first time, he was very excited, it pleased him that it came out so well, and I remember how he hugged his father. He waited without patience to make another disk with more stories that he told by heart.

Akiva was very connected to his father. He always wanted to go everywhere with him, to the Western Wall, to synagogue, to seminary. When he studied Torah with his father and his brothers, he would excel at rote learning. For him it was like a competition with his brothers, who learned more by heart, and he enjoyed impressing everyone with his abilities. He was talented at music, and loved to go with his father to the recording studio. He would sing in the microphone when Daniel played the organ for the whole family, and together they would perform for us. He enjoyed riding horses with his father at the beach in Netanya and Tiberias, to play tennis with him and soccer at the beach, and even tried to beat him at chess.

The last week before we were arrested I felt that Akiva was very troubled, and that something was bothering him. Indeed, a short time later he told me and Daniel that since his bar mitzvah, he started playing sexual games with his brothers Yonathan and Yedidya, who were nine and ten and a half years old. He was very ashamed and said that he regrets it all and is very sorry.

He said that when he asked to show his brothers cartoons on the laptop, they locked themselves in the room and would surf the internet on forbidden sites. I blamed myself for believing them that they were watching cartoons as a prize for doing their homework. I couldn’t imagine that this was the kind of game they were playing behind locked doors.

How didn’t I know that something was happening right under my nose for four months? I suddenly remembered that Aderet complained that she knocked on the door for fifteen minutes until they opened, and couldn’t understand what took them so long.

We asked Yonathan and Yedidya if it’s true what Akiva told us, and they were embarrassed and said yes, it is true. I didn’t know how to respond to such a thing, I was shocked that despite all of our watching over them, they found a way to be exposed to such despicable matter. We have a religious home, and even though our education was not as strict as some of the extreme orthodox, we always made sure our education was in accordance with the laws of modesty of the Torah. Immediately upon hearing what they did, we looked for professionals to consult with about coping with the problems of puberty, and how to prevent these games between them. I went to Jerusalem to talk to the Haredi psychiatrist Dr. C, but when I got to Jerusalem, the police came to us, and with extreme violence, took the whole family to interrogations.

Akiva was witness to his father’s arrest. The police did not exhibit any sensitivity to the fact that the boys were young and were with their father when he was arrested in a degrading manner. They cursed him and jeered in front of the children. They arrested him in handcuffs, and let him wait for hours in a car in the hot Tiberias summer. They wouldn’t give him water to drink even when the children begged that their father was thirsty and asked for water for him. The cruelty the policemen showed to their father left a traumatic impression on the children, especially on Akiva. Akiva told the social worker that he has a hard time living with his father’s arrest, and that he is very angry at the police that took his father who he loves most in the world.

Not long after the arrest, Akiva was sent for a psychiatric evaluation with Dr. P, who said the child misses his family, has no suicidal thoughts, normal intelligence, no P.T.S.D, no depression or anxiety, no flashbacks, problems sleeping, and no significant psychiatric disorder at the moment…

Akiva was very upset by the situation, as can be seen in the reports of the investigations how he yelled at the investigator Micha Haran: “The police can go to Hell. I want to go back to my father and my brothers”. When the investigator said he wants to know if his father hurt him, Akiva answered him:”My father is a good father and didn’t do anything wrong… I don’t understand what you want from him.” When the investigator continued badgering and cursing his father, Akiva yelled at him with fury: “I am going to end up killing myself because you are causing me nightmares.”

For a long while, the welfare people kept me from knowing what was going on with all of the children, and with Akiva. Together with the police, they used incredible pressure to separate us in order to sever the connection between the wives, and the mothers and their children. My heart was torn with longing and worry. I was anxious about everyone’s wellbeing and tried to find out a way to find out what was happening with Daniel and each and every child, and of course with Akiva, who I hadn’t seen since I went to Jerusalem. I didn’t know what they were doing to him in the police investigations; I didn’t know he had threatened to kill himself. That fact reached me only after he acted upon his threat with several suicide attempts, as you will read further on…

Four months after our incarceration, they moved Akiva to the youth village “Beit Chagai”. The case worker did not inform me that it was a treatment facility. He was sent to a social worker named Sarit Vered, and she tried her hardest to systematically cut him off from me. They only allowed me to visit him three times, for only half an hour each time, under the supervision of the social worker Sarit Vered. At our last visit Akiva asked: “Mom, I want you to come for my birthday”. I innocently said I would come, and he begged: “Mom, take me away from here, I want to go home! Rent a place, I want to be with you” immediately the social worker interrupted and said in front of the child without any regard for the sensitivity and delicacy of the situation: “It is not good that you come every two weeks, it confuses the child, we have started therapy, I permit you to come only once a month, and it is not appropriate for you to come on his birthday, come two weeks later!” Akiva looked at me with fright and fear of speaking in front of the social worker, in a pale look that is etched in my memory, and I couldn’t understand how a social worker could speak like that in front of a child, especially if those words went against the judge, who permitted more frequent visits with Akiva. It was another difficult thing to cope with for Akiva, beyond what he had experienced thus far. To me, it was a disaster. I felt that the social worker is trying to steal my place as a mother, and not trying to help him.

On my birthday, the tenth of Tevet in 2011, I was closed up in a battered women’s shelter when I got a call from Akiva. The call was supervised by the boarding school. I remember the leadenness in his voice when he said: “You know Mom, they want to give me psychiatric medicine and I don’t know what to do, I don’t want to take it.” I got very scared. How could they not ask for a mother’s permission to give her child psychiatric medicine? What were they doing to him? Who knows what effects these pills could have, who is taking responsibility for doing this without my knowledge, and why? When Akiva asked me: “How is Dad,” I answered: “They’ve taken him to solitary.” I didn’t even finish the sentence and the house father and social worker cut the call off after throwing a threat at me: “You just made a very grave mistake by answering Akiva’s question, don’t you know that you are not allowed to talk about Daniel? From now on, you cannot speak with Akiva on the phone until further notice!” I couldn’t believe they would carry out the threat. Every day, I waited for a call from the boarding school. When I called the social worker, she would hang up. Akiva was isolated there. I had no way to talk to him, not to see him, not to pass on letters or gifts. The case worker told me he no longer recognizes me as his mother.

About a month after the discussion, on 31.1.12, six months after the family was taken apart, I was called suddenly to the police station for interrogation. I didn’t understand what had happened. I got to the interview and was shocked to hear from the investigator Lilach Ranan that I am under arrest. The investigator claimed that we violated a legal order not to meet the other wives since the initial investigations and she has information that proves that we met. I told her: “We met at the hospital where Daniel’s father was hospitalized, we took turns watching him and that is not a reason to arrest someone, we were warned that if we met we would have to pay a fine of 7000 NIS, why are you arresting me? How can you leave me under arrest for no reason when ten children need me and you took their father?” She did not listen to me and she said: “They are not your children any more, in a few days you will get the indictment and then you will understand; you are going to rot in prison.”

When I got the indictment, I understood everything. It was a fabrication, simple as that. A rotten trick pulled to try to put pressure on us to testify against my husband, and to cut me off from my children. The damage caused by the prosecution at that time to me, my children, and Daniel is a distortion nothing can fix.

I was in prison for a year, without any way to know what was going on with Akiva. The whole time I was incarcerated, I was very sad that I couldn’t see him, I knew that he was waiting for me, and I remained with the impression left by our last meeting, before I was arrested, the meeting was etched deeply in my memory, because for three years after that, they wouldn’t let me meet with him. I called the social worker Sarit Vered from prison, to ask to speak with Akiva and wish him a happy birthday. I also asked that he come visit me once a month, like every mother got in jail. She ignored me and didn’t even tell Akiva that I had been arrested and was in jail, and didn’t explain to him that was the reason I didn’t come on his birthday when he waited so for me to come. She wouldn’t allow me under any circumstances to talk with him on the phone and explained that Akiva decided he didn’t want to talk to his mother. Only five months later, my older daughter Marie, received one-time permission to visit Akiva. The first thing he asked was: “Why doesn’t Mom call me? Why hasn’t she come to visit? Why didn’t she come for my birthday?” and he added: “The social worker said that my mother and father and all my siblings hate me.” She said: “Don’t you know that mom is in prison…?” He looked at her in shock, couldn’t believe his ears, and answered her quietly: “What?! Really?!” The social worker was very angry with Marie and asked her to leave immediately. She didn’t take into consideration that Marie was pregnant and had a baby in a carriage, and had made a great effort to take a bus to the Hebron area to the youth village. Marie left, shocked and scared, and on the way out managed to yell to Akiva: “Dad, Mom, and all of us love you very much!”

The counselors at the boarding school would say inciting and mean things about the family to Akiva. Akiva explained in his interrogation: “They told me for days and nights that I grew up in a cult and that what I had was not normal.”

I managed to get his medical record from the court only months later.

According to reports by Dr. Weinstein during the time I was in prison, Akiva went into a depression and said that he was suffering from being isolated from his family, and that he couldn’t deal with a reality without family… that all of the children have vacations at home, Akiva stayed alone at the boarding school. They began giving him psychiatric medication without my knowledge, and since then his situation deteriorated drastically. The social worker wouldn’t take my calls from prison. I called the director of the boarding school, Chaim Cohen, and he said: “There is nothing I can do, Akiva doesn’t want to see you.” I told him: “I want to hear him say it on the phone”, he answered: “Impossible” and hung up.

They did not tell me what the child went through in his interrogations. Only months later did I get the reports through my lawyer about the interrogations Akiva underwent throughout that year since they tore the family apart. Then I understood that Anastasia, Kari’s daughter, told the police about the game Akiva played with his brothers prior to the arrest and the investigator used that as leverage against him. The investigator lied to him that his brothers complained that he raped them in their interviews and therefore he can be charged with what he did to his brothers and sit in jail for at least ten years or accuse his father and receive their support. Akiva told them that it wasn’t true, and that he hadn’t raped his brothers. The investigator ignored him and continued saying that in less than a month he will be 14… and if he doesn’t cooperate, they will take him to the police, and the police will interrogate him under their terms… by the way, he said: “I have two testimonies from your brothers who said exactly what you did to them…”

Akiva did not believe the investigator and was assertive with him, but in the end gave into the threats and said to the investigator: “Tell me what you want me to say…” and that is how they got Akiva to be a witness for the prosecution against his father.

On 4 September 2012, the prosecution took Akiva to a meeting to refresh his testimony against his father. Two days later, on the 6th of September 2012, he took a knife and cut himself several times on his body, and on that day was taken to a psychiatric emergency room in Beer Sheva. I was still in prison. The welfare people had not told me about the emotional state of my son who tried to commit suicide, and didn’t tell the judge in juvenile court and wrote in the social report that his situation was “fine”. Only three months later, a defense lawyer in my criminal case informed me of the suicide attempt and that he had spent one day in emergency in a psychiatric hospital and was released that day although he had cut himself on his arms and stomach. It is difficult to describe the feeling of helplessness, the sadness and worry I had, locked up behind bars, without permission to visit my son, and knowing that he tried to end his life! It is very hard to accept the fact that the state made my son into a means of convicting his father. How they played with my son’s soul, made him collapse emotionally, and after they got what they wanted, they washed their hands of responsibility for his condition.

On one of the days in December 2012 at 500 in the morning, we were taken handcuffed from Neve Tirza to juvenile court, to a deliberation about the children. I gave the court the social worker’s report given to me that the children were fine, and I wanted to show him on the other hand the admission papers from the psychiatric hospital. The judge was shocked that the case worker had hidden this fact from me, and especially the report that everything was fine while the child was trying to commit suicide and taken to the hospital. The judge told the case worker that within a month, his mother should receive Akiva’s psychiatric file.

A week later, when I was released from jail, I called the special case worker under the minor’s law, Yael Ben Dor Halemi, who was supposed, according to the judge’s order, to give me the psychiatric file. She said that she would leave it at the office with the guard. When I got there, the guard gave me an envelope but it only had one paper about Akiva, and it had nothing to do with is suicide attempt. I called her again and asked to meet with her. I waited a long time for the meeting, and one month later she called me, and instead of trying to help me find out what happened to my son, she asked me where I got the information that my son had tried to commit suicide. I showed her innocently the admission paper from the psychiatric hospital that I had gotten from my lawyer. She grabbed it out of my hand and left the office quickly. I was shocked by her reaction. I hoped she had gone to get the file. Fifteen minutes later she returned. I asked her: “Can you complete Akiva’s psychiatric file?” she looked at me coldly and said: We have nothing! This meeting is over.” I said to her: “But I have a court order that you have to bring me the file. She said: “the form that I brought you in the envelope is the only document we have about Akiva, and like I said, this meeting is over.” I left sadly and hurt from the office and I understood that there was no one to talk to. Half an hour later, even before I got home, my lawyer phoned and she sounded very pressured and said that the prosecutor, Sagi Ofir, the prosecutor against Daniel, reprimanded her for giving me the information that my son tried to commit suicide, and that he had been in the psychiatric emergency room. She asked me to destroy the document she gave me so they don’t cause trouble for her.

On the 16th of December, 2012, after having been cut off for a year and a half from his family, Akiva was brought to court to testify against his father. The prosecutor Sagi Ofir asked the court that the child not see his father while testifying, and the judge agreed, and Daniel was moved to another room, where he had to watch his well loved child make up stories about him. I didn’t stop crying. After the testimony, the social worker Sarit Vered guarded him so that he wouldn’t get close to Daniel’s mother, his grandmother who was 84. Akiva was very attached to her when he was young. When he went into the youth village and he heard that his grandfather had died, it was very important for him to see his grandmother. He fought to be allowed to comfort her, a visit which was supervised. On the other hand, now in court, when Akiva saw his grandmother, the social worker said to Grandma: “Are you looking for a fight?! Get away from Akiva!” and all the while she hadn’t even gotten closer to them but had leaned on her daughter who was witness to this. The grandmother and aunt were shocked and scared by Sarit Vered’s aggression and verbal violence and said that Akiva looked drugged. According to Dr. Weinstein’s report, Akiva got psychiatric medicine exactly up to the day he testified against his father, and immediately afterwards they stopped the treatment.

The prosecutor Sagi Ofir concealed important information about the child’s emotional state, about his psychiatric medication, and suicide attempt. In their verdict, the courts determined that Akiva, in contrast with the other witnesses, was the most reliable witness.

On 19 December 2012, Thursday night, Akiva was admitted to the psychiatric hospital in Beer Sheva, after threatening to kill himself with a rope. Only five days later the social worker called me and told me about his condition. Daniel and I were very worried about him. I went straight from Jerusalem to the hospital in Beer Sheva to see him. The social worker, Sarit Vered said that he didn’t want to see me. I cried in the halls of the hospital, but there was no one to turn to.

In a deliberation in juvenile court, I begged the judge to help me save our son because this was a matter of life and death, and that this whole situation was caused by the youth village. I told the judge that I was terribly worried and felt helpless, and I begged for permission to see Akiva, I knew that he needed his mother. The juvenile court judge allowed me to bring a private expert opinion of my choice who would meet with Akiva. He determined that it was very important to restore the connection between mother and son, and asked my lawyer to meet with Akiva to ask him if he really didn’t want to see me. Leah Aliav, the state appointed guardian for all of my children, refused to allow him to meet me with the excuse that it could cause him trauma.

I arrived nearly every day from Jerusalem to the hospital in Beer Sheva to ask how he was doing, in the hope to see him, but each day I was disappointed when I wasn’t granted permission. I wrote him letters, and he wrote me back through the social worker. On the 25th of June 2013, he sent me a letter: “… I would rather not have contact with you…” My heart hurt, how is this possible?! Is it possible that he wrote the letters himself or that they were dictated to him?!

I was invited to a medical board meeting at the hospital with the permission of the judge. The board decided to extend his hospitalization, claiming that Akiva asked to stay at the hospital. They still wouldn’t let me see him, and I couldn’t ask him if that were true. Only on the 11th of July, 2013, two and a half months after he had been hospitalized, was I able to get permission for a private child psychiatrist in Beer Sheva to examine Akiva. I was surprised when I heard that Akiva complained that he very much wanted to be released from the ward, and that he had asked the head of the juvenile ward, Dr. R. to release him, and he didn’t understand why he was staying so long. I immediately wrote a letter to the judge asking him to help my son.

In his written psychiatric assessment, the doctor wrote:

“The child said things about his testimony against his father in an emotionally detached manner, it seemed he was reciting things, and clearly their reliability is harmed by this manner.”

It hurt me that he was in this state, and I wanted to strengthen him, I bought him gifts: an electronic chess game that I knew he wanted very much and some special books. Some weeks later, the doctor returned all of the gifts to me and said that Akiva asked that I not bring any more gifts.

After some time, Akiva was released from the hospital and returned to the youth village.

On the 17th of October, 2013, I waited at the entrance to District Court for a court session in which they were going to give Daniel’s sentence. Suddenly I saw Akiva before me. It took me a few moments to recognize him. I couldn’t understand how he was allowed to wander around unsupervised and come to the court session. He did not resemble the child they took from me two and a half years earlier. He grew taller, cut his side locks, and removed his yarmulke and looked a bit confused. He quickly came towards me, and I called out to him: “Akiva!” until he passed by me without a glance in my direction, and went straight towards the prosecutor who fought to lock his father up. He spoke with him at length, and remained close to him throughout the deliberation. When the judges entered the courtroom to give the sentence, it took them exactly two minutes to say apathetically that they were going to send Daniel to prison for 26 years. When we left the courtroom, I saw Akiva surrounded by television cameras, speaking against his father. I felt as if somebody had stuck a knife in my soul. In my worst nightmare, I could not imagine such a scenario. On the 17th of December, 2013, Akiva called me and said: “My father is the prosecutor Sagi Ofir”.

Two days later Akiva called me and I heard that there was someone next to him whispering to him what to say to me. I asked him: “Is there someone next to you?” and he answered: “Yes, but I want to tell you something important: I cannot be in touch with you if you are with Dad! Do you understand? I am not allowed! I can’t! I am not permitted! I want you to choose, me or Dad!”

When he told me he had someone next to him, I immediately understood that they were using my child and my love for him to make me cut off contact with the love of my life, first they tried via the social worker at the shelter and with clinical psychologist from the welfare department, through investigators in the interrogation rooms, and even through a whole year in prison, and each day they told me: “Leave Daniel, say you are a victim and you will immediately be released,” and when they saw they weren’t succeeding, they tried to pressure me through the child, and influence me to leave his father. I was fearful that the child is under duress.

A short time later, Akiva called me and said: “Mom, I ran away from the boarding school yesterday. You have to understand, I am either with you, in the hospital, or in the grave. The social worker Sarit Vered is a liar. She lies to me and she lies to you, I wanted to call you in the hospital and they grabbed the phone quickly, and I also sent a letter that I want to see you.” I told him: “I didn’t get such a letter, on the contrary, I got a letter that you didn’t want to see me,” he said that he hates what the welfare people did. He explained that the police investigators came to the hospital in Beer Sheva and told him that if he were to have contact with his mother or receive presents from her it would harm the testimony he gave in court, and they scared him and told him that they were following him and knew everything he did, and they threatened him with a personal electronic surveillance device in his ear. He told me that he regretfully had to return the presents, and said: “The social worker Sarit Vered and the case worker Sarit Ashuri told me that you came to harm me, and stupid me, I believed them, and I was under the influence of the psychiatric pills.”

Since then, he started calling me tens of times a day, because he wanted to meet with me. I consulted with my lawyer about what to do, especially the fact that he was under surveillance, the lawyer forbade me from granting his wish, and said that it could be a trap by the prosecution, who are trying again to fabricate another indictment. I had to explain to Akiva that the lawyer said that I couldn’t meet with him because he is a main prosecution witness. I told him that I applied to the judge to see him legally and supervised, and in the meantime the judge didn’t allow it because the social workers keep saying in court that Akiva doesn’t want to see me.

Akiva did not agree to wait for the judge’s permission. He was very angry that I refused to meet him after he ran away from the boarding school, and he called me and told me he was waiting for me at the Malcha Mall in Jerusalem, and he insisted that I come immediately. I really wanted to see him, but it was very important to me not to go back to jail, so I could take care of my other children and grandchildren. I told Akiva that I love him very much but I am sorry and I cannot take the risk. When he phoned again, I explained it to him again that his calls were endangering me. But Akiva apparently did not understand that I was really afraid of the stories they would pin on me, or he was angry that I didn’t trust him, in any case he couldn’t stand my refusal to meet him, and the fact that I didn’t take his calls. That night, the first of January, 2014, he arrived with the son of the second wife- Samy, who influenced him to throw rocks at the house and to scratch the car of the people who came to take the air conditioners we sold to pay off some debts. Samy and Akiva behaved very violently. I didn’t recognize my own son. I couldn’t understand how he got to this situation. Samy stood in front of me and teased me and laughed that they were going to split the 100,000 NIS they received as compensation for their testimony against Daniel, and why was I a sucker who didn’t wanted to split the money with them. I was very angry at their behavior, and I asked them to leave the area. At night I heard steps on the roof of the house. In the morning I left the house. When I returned, the Arab worker who was building a house next to us told me that he saw young men on the roof at night. The solar water heater wasn’t there anymore. I tried to open the door to the house, but I couldn’t. I looked into the house from the window, and I saw the entrance was blocked with a closet that was moved towards the entrance, and the whole house had been taken apart as if in a pogrom. I went to the police and asked the police to come take fingerprints to see who the intruder was. When I got to the apartment with the policeman, I saw the two children jump from the window, taking expensive equipment from the music studio in the house. They ripped the foam off the studio wall, removed windows from their place, threw everything that was in the kitchen cabinets on the floor, and removed the closet doors from their place. I was frightened when I saw the children and the house in this state. I was deeply grieved. I tried to stop Akiva, and to my surprise, he used force against me. I was shocked by the fact that the policemen stood and watched the children empty the house, and were mad at me for preventing them from trying to do so. I know this sounds delirious, but a friend who was with me filmed and recorded the whole thing, and everything is documented. A big van parked next to the police car, and in front of the policemen and with their encouragement, the children filled the van with property. I thought I was living a nightmare.

The next day I filed a complaint with the police department, and other than a three month restraining order, the police did not investigate the incident, they closed the case immediately. After Akiva ran away from the boarding school in Hebron, they found him and the case manager put him in the boarding school “Nirim” in Akko. I was worried about him and missed him very much.

On the 9th of May, 2014, the case worker Tzipi Levi told me that Akiva ran away from Nirim, and he was found on the train tracks in Akko, attempting suicide, and was hospitalized in the psychiatric hospital in Haifa Tirat HaCarmel. I cracked. I was filled with anxiety and fear for him. When Daniel called from jail and I told him that Akiva tried to commit suicide again, Daniel was shocked from the news and very sad.

A week later, thank G-d, the child was released and went back to Nirim. I was surprised to read in the the psychiatric report that it said the boy “denied suicidal intentions”. So I asked myself, why, in that case, was he closed up in a psychiatric hospital…?

Two and a half years after being completely cut off from Akiva, three years after Daniel’s arrest and the dissolution of our family, one day in September 2014 I got a call from the public defender Avi Cohen’s office (Daniel’s lawyer), and was informed that they received a letter from Akiva. I immediately went to the office to see what they were talking about. When I held a handwritten letter from my son I began to read, and I couldn’t stop the flow of tears:

9.9.14

To Avi Cohen, attorney

I wanted to share with you what I am going through right now, and in general what I am going through since the interrogations. I cannot stand any longer the lies I said in court, mostly about my father.

I want you to know that that is why I started having suicidal thoughts and tried to commit suicide several times because I was being pressured by all of the people in charge of my treatment in the boarding schools, like Sarit the social worker, counselors, investigators, etc… I was very scared. And I was a coward because the first investigator, Micha Haran threatened me that I should cooperate with him and if I didn’t, the investigation will be passed on to the police and they will indict me. And the police investigators have the right to use violence against me. He said that if I want the judges to have mercy on me I should cooperate and prove that I was hurt at home, because violent youth are youth that got hit in their homes and that I was a victim.

But I was no one’s victim.

Since I lied and cooperated, they left me alone for a while. Then I started getting messages from the police again at the boarding school, and they told me that it wasn’t enough and they tried to cause me to testify in court against my father. And I didn’t want to, and then Sagi (the prosecutor) told me: “Listen, you should be in jail instead of your father, we don’t want you to get hurt, to have it bad, but it depends on you if you cooperate and testify nothing will happen to you.” And before the testimony they tried each time to hint to me, and also said explicitly, that I should admit the lie that I raped Yonathan and Yedidya, in order to prove that my testimony is credible (despite the fact that a large part of the accusations against me were true and I lied about them to the investigators and the District court in Jerusalem that they weren’t true). Sagi explained that if the defense proves that I raped them then my testimony will be invalidated, since I lied in court. They brought me psychiatric pills against my will up to the day of the trial. They said: “What do you care. Say you raped them, what difference it makes, we won’t do anything bad to you.” And it bothered me that they would say I raped for no reason and before testifying in court I met with Lizo Wulfus and she explained to me what I should say and how to say it.

When the judges asked me if someone coached me and told me what to say, I lied and said they did not prepare me.

I want to write to you briefly about the things I lied about in court:

I lied about my father regarding the penetration to my anus with a stick 20, 30 times. I lied when I said that in the north I saw my father holding a stick or heard him. I lied and I am sorry I lied.

I lied about my father that he said Yedidya and Yonathan are my slaves and that whole story about that was twisted (in Romema and the North). I lied when I said that he told me to hit them. All of the charges about sexual relations with them were true, except the rape. That is why I blamed Dad and covered myself and everything I said about this was a lie. Dad did not know about or support the indecent acts I performed with Yonathan and Yedidya. I lied about Dad regarding K. Dad was not present when K. put a stick in Samy’s anus and I lied in court when I said the police did not threaten me.

I also feel bad for lying about Shosh when I told about the drowning in the Jacuzzi and more and I also perjured myself that Dad was there.

In the story about the sea in the north when I was ten I lied about Dad making me lie hugging Asa naked and that Aderet came in naked. And I lied about Assa regarding sexual events. And what I said all the time about Dad making his wives and Assa do things together like sex and such…

About the slavery I made up a lot things that never happened. I lied to the court that almost every day there was an electric shock, a whip and fasts, and there are a lot of other lies about the same issues that I would like to discuss with you because the letter isn’t enough.

And all this to please Sagi and the prosecution so they will take care of me and give me protection. But now I am writing the truth to you of my own free will. Thank you

As soon as they allowed me to meet with Akiva, I went to Akko. Akiva was very happy to see me and told me excitedly about the new boarding school, his studies, and his trips to the mountains. The school is very close to the beach and he was permitted to walk along the beach with the social worker. I told Akiva that I was very worried about him when they told me tried to commit suicide on the train tracks four months ago, and I was sorry that they didn’t let me meet him. Akiva said to me:

“Mom, that‘s a lie! They are lying! I didn’t want to kill myself! I ran away from the boarding school and I didn’t want to be seen on the road so I walked parallel to the train tracks. I know that the reason they locked me up in the hospital is that I called the prosecutor Lizo Wulfus and told her that I have a bad conscience about lying about my father in my testimony, and she understood that I want to recant my testimony, so they locked me up in the hospital. They lied that I wanted to commit suicide and label me as a psychotic with poor judgment, so there won’t be any possibility of taking what I say seriously.”

On the one hand, I was pleased that my son was emotionally healthy; on the other hand I was worried when I understood he was in danger and was very worried. “More proof that I am right,” Akiva added and explained:

“It’s a fact that last year, when I did try to cut myself, that was before the testimony against Dad, they brought me to the emergency room, but did not hospitalize me because they were scared it would hurt the testimony, and I heard them with my own ears talking to the doctors, asking them not to hospitalize me.” Akiva was very upset and added:” And do you know that they don’t even care about me, because I warned them that I would kill myself in the end because of them and the one who brought me the pocket knife I used to cut myself with was the legal guardian- Leah Eliav.”

“How is that possible?” I was shocked.

“We had a lottery in honor of Purim at the boarding school and they handed out all sorts of prizes, and I got a pocket knife from my counselor. When I was staying with Leah Aliav I lost my pocket knife in the snow and she told her husband to bring it to me.” Akiva handed me an envelope with his picture and told me quietly, open this at home. I wrote something for you. When the meeting ended, the social worker said that I could only come again in maybe two months. They left and I stayed on the beach feeling satisfied that at least he liked the school, and I was mostly glad to hear that he is mentally healthy at the moment. But when I opened the envelope with the picture and read the letter he wrote I screamed to Hashem, I understood that his nightmare continues, and he wrote:

“Yesterday they asked me to talk to a psychiatrist and told me that I see demons in the dark and have all sorts of delusions, in short they tried to convince me that I need psychiatric pills and that they are worried about me… (In psychological therapy) on the bench, even about your mom and your meetings with her, and they drew all sorts of lines that indicated fear and apprehension. I am certain they are working with the police.. And it is most important to believe in Hashem that he is watching over us, love you and see you at our next meeting.”

On the bottom of the page he drew a big heart and next to it four flowers, and above it a chessboard and I was very moved to read that he wrote:

“So in summary, good luck to us in the future. Now my war truly begins. And yours long ago. We will show them what check mate is!”

A week later, I was told that Akiva was hospitalized in a psychiatric hospital, under an emergency order from the social worker Sarit Ashuri, and this time not because of suicidal intentions but because he wouldn’t take psychiatric medication from the psychiatrist at the boarding school, was rude to a counselor, and when he was in the yard he threw a small stone that rolled in the direction of the counselor. Akiva was hospitalized in the closed ward at “Tirat HaCarmel” Psychiatric Hospital.

I couldn’t believe the ease with which a child could be closed up in a psychiatric hospital, in a closed ward no less! A hospitalization that could create an irreparable impression on him, a “One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest” nightmare, a trauma for life. And all of this for being rude…! Who was pulling the strings here??

I called the doctors at the department and asked to speak with them. The department manager set a meeting with me and his doctor. In the meeting he explained that the child is suffering from a new illness: “paranoia from the police, welfare, and boarding school staff!” I tried to explain to them what the child had been through since he was taken forcefully from home, about the trauma of his father’s arrest, about the threats and blows he received from the police, about the social workers who forcefully cut him off from me and the whole family and about the police investigators who frightened him when they told him they were following him and would put an electronic tag in his ear. I told them that if he fears the police and the welfare people it is because of what he has been through, and it isn’t paranoia but fact. I tried to understand why he was hospitalized in the closed ward, he hadn’t tried to commit suicide, and the doctor said that he didn’t want him staying in the ward anyway because it was too crowded, and he prefers to transfer the child to a hospital in Jerusalem. I had a letter from the judge allowing me to get a second opinion from a psychiatrist, the doctor came to visit the child, and in his opinion said the boy didn’t need to be hospitalized.

At the deliberation in juvenile court I asked the psychiatrist to testify. In his testimony he told the judge that the boy does not need to be forcefully hospitalized or medicated, but the case workers fought him and claimed they wanted a medical board to meet and decide about his hospitalization, and in the meantime, until the board’s decision the child should be hospitalized in a closed ward of the hospital.

On the 1st of October, 2014, Akiva was transferred to involuntary commitment at Eitanim, a psychiatric hospital in Jerusalem. I got to the “parents’ meeting”, and I met Dr. Tanya Shechter, child psychiatrist, for the first time. I asked to talk to her about the situation, and explained that the doctor who said that Akiva was paranoid of the police and welfare was wrong, because he didn’t take into account what the boy had been through over the years with the police and the welfare people, and I asked to have him released from the hospital, since he didn’t need to be hospitalized. On Sukkot I got permission to see Akiva under supervision. I got to the hospital with the Four Minim, with clothing, shoes, and candies for the holiday, just as Akiva was praying Shacharit. Akiva was wearing clothes from the warehouse at the hospital. I didn’t understand why the case worker who made sure to have him hospitalized didn’t bring him some of his clothes from the boarding school, especially since he had been there several weeks. He was very happy to see me. He asked me to wait a few minutes while he finished his prayers and he would bless on the Four Minim, and we could talk. While I was waiting for Akiva, Dr. Tanya Shechter passed by and she asked me: “What is going on, where is Akiva?” I told her that he went to pray and would be back in a few minutes. At the meeting Akiva told me how they took him from Nirim to Tirat HaCarmel in a police car, and the police were very violent towards him, and that he was happy that he didn’t stay in the closed ward at Tirat HaCarmel because it was very hard there. I told him that I had met with the doctors there, and that I yelled through an open window high up: “Akiva, mom loves you.” He answered me: “There was no chance that I would sing in a class or hear you calling me, I was in the locked ward in a place where they don’t even go down for classes,” and he said:

“Just so you know, the psychiatric meds they give me here cause me pressure in my heart and give me headaches, dizziness, and a terrible weakness so I have to sleep most of the day. They threatened me that if I don’t take them they will “hold me down” and give me shots in the rear end with the meds like they did in Tirat HaCarmel.”

I asked Dr. Tanya Shecther to lower the dosage of the medicine at least by half. She promised me that she would lower the dosage and give him an E.K.G., but in my next visit Akiva told me that instead of lowering the dosage, they doubled it, and kept threatening him with holdings and shots.

I understood that the child was in serious danger. He said that he couldn’t stay there another minute, that if the judge didn’t release him he would run away from the hospital. I didn’t know what to do. I didn’t want him to run away again and get mixed up again with the police and get hit by them, I wanted to get him out through the courts. I once again called the Tel Aviv District psychiatrist, to give a second opinion to the court and to appear at the medical board. Dr. Tanya Shechter really did not like having an outside psychiatrist involved in her work, and since then changed her attitude towards me and Akiva, and became very aggressive. On the day of the board, I arrived with the psychiatrist at the hospital and he spoke with him at length. Akiva told him about everything he had been through: the police abuse, in the interrogation room, in the boarding schools, and in the psychiatric hospital, and read him the letter he prepared to make a complaint at the police internal affairs department. The psychiatrist spoke at the medical board meeting and said that Akiva should not be hospitalized and that he should be released from the hospital. He wrote in his opinion to the court:

“… we are dealing in this opinion with the question whether Akiva should be forcefully committed. In my opinion, no. Akiva is not in a state which endangers him, is not suicidal, and neither is he psychotic. And if the claim is that outside of the hospital Akiva will not act with the wisdom of taking medicinal treatment, I don’t think Akiva needs it.”

The medical board decided to involuntarily hospitalize Akiva for three more months. I was shocked when I read in Dr. Tanya Shechter’s report to the committee that Akiva was not happy to see me when I came to visit him, and said that he was late to a meeting with his mother, even though she knew he was delayed so he could finish his prayers and bless on the Four Minim. Even more surprising was to read that she wrote in her report that this is a case of “Folie à deux “, in other words shared psychosis disorder with his mother… I couldn’t understand how an expert doctor could talk about Folie à deux when I hadn’t been in contact with my son for three years. What else did she want to invent?! Only later, when I saw her connection with the case worker, I understood everything…

There was a hearing about the findings of the medical board in juvenile court. Akiva was also brought to the deliberation. When I saw him he seemed tense and told me: “Mom, I am not going back to the psychiatric hospital any more!” I was very scared, worried, what was going to happen? I hoped he wouldn’t do anything foolish or try to run… how would he cope if the judge decided to leave him hospitalized? In the courtroom while we were waiting for the judge, Akiva turned to the court appointed guardian and said to her: “How can you leave me forcefully hospitalized? You say you care about me, but you as a guardian are doing nothing for me.” He asked her to leave his case and resign. Leah Eliav yelled at Akiva: “You are influenced by your mother, and you have an evil mother, you know that she complained about me to the judge?” I couldn’t believe that I heard her speak like that to Akiva. She was responsible for the fact that my older daughters ended up in juvenile detention and deteriorated to really bad places and didn’t take my youngest daughter to a follow up visit at Schneider Medical Center after she had a bypass when she was seven, and that is what I complained about to the judge, how could she not be ashamed to turn Akiva against me, and right in front of me? Akiva felt very uncomfortable with the disrespect towards me. When the judge entered, the deliberation began. The social workers claimed that the medical board determined that Akiva needs to be hospitalized for three more months for assessment, and the lawyer from legal aid really disappointed Akiva because she didn’t even try to fight to get him released, the district psychiatrist I invited to give his opinion told the judge that he knows Akiva since August 2013, from his hospitalization in Beer Sheva, and in accordance with what the child has been through over the past three years from the police and social workers there is no reason to hospitalize him and he is certainly not paranoid. I was very tense waiting to hear what the judge decided. And then, in a short moment, the judge said: “I agree with the decision of the medical board, that Akiva will stay in therapy at the hospital for three more months…” Akiva could not hear anything anymore, and he jumped out of his chair and ran from the courtroom. The case worker Sarit Ashuri yelled: “ He is running! Police! Guards! Stop him! Catch him!” I ran after him and saw how the guards grabbed him in the street and brought him back to the session. He was really broken. It hurt to see him in this state, and I cried and tried to calm him, and I heard the case worker Sarit Ashuri yelling to the judge: “Akiva ran because of his mother! She is a bad influence on him…! Akiva was very emotional, and he couldn’t take it anymore, it was too much, and suddenly in front of everyone he threw a bag with his coat towards the judge. There was a storm in the court. Sarit Ashuri yelled: “Arrest him! Call the police” The judge said that the boy was going back to the hospital for three months. When I saw Akiva cuffed in the police car, taking him back to Eitanim, I saw how my son was degraded. I cried with sorrow from the bottom of my heart.

One of the questions that troubled me since the first time at the emergency room in Beer Sheva, after he cut his arms and stomach with a knife with suicidal intentions, two days after the refresher with the prosecution, before he testified against his father, he was released from the emergency room back to the bearding school, he did not undergo an evaluation, and the social workers concealed the incident from the court and reported that everything was fine, and in contrast, now when he is not suicidal, the social worker gives him an emergency order and has him committed for months…? Something is not making sense!

On the 2nd of December, 2014, Akiva wrote a letter to the judges of the Supreme Court from within the psychiatric hospital, in order to add it to the appeal of his father’s conviction. The letter was 11 pages long, and it reveals a child’s cry, a child who was closed up like a wounded animal in a cage in order to use him to jail his father, he wrote from deep pain: “I would like to complain about everyone who hurt me over the past three and a half years in the police, welfare department, boarding schools, etc…” and this is the letter:

In honor of the Supreme Court

My name is I.XXXX Ambash, and I'm 16.5 years old.  
My ID number is: XXXXXXX.

I would like to recount to you all the wrongs done to me for three and half years by the police, the welfare department, my boarding school and more.

They took us out of our house, they separated us.

In the honoring of Rabbi Nachman Horodankr, which we call Hillula, we went to his grave in Tiberius to pray. Coming out from the cemetery and into the car we suddenly heard a loud noise from behind the vehicle – the police men hit it.

They arrested my father, shackled his hands and put him in the patrol car. They held us up next to the car he was sitting in until late at night. We were worried for his safety, and afraid we would never see him again. Even when they tried to stop me I rounded them up and knocked on the window to wave him goodbye. He waved back. We, all the brothers, sang  a prayer for the wellbeing and peace of him, and the rest of us. Not all of us were there, but the police took out of the house everyone, even the others. It turned out that the arrest was planned. The Tiberius station cops were waiting for the cops from Jerusalem to come and pick us up. Once there, they took us to the police station at the Russian Compound.

We arrived to the Russian Compound around three-thirty in the morning. My dad was brought into custody and I didn’t see him afterwards. We were questioned and then my brother XXXXX and I were taken into an emergency center "Mivtakh Oz" in Ramat Shlomo, where I met with my mother in this center, once every two weeks or so, under supervision.

The counselors there were holding me strongly for hours. They used to hold on to my hands, for two hours on the floor, until I calmed down. It was violent, and one of the guides- Mr. Moti Malka - kicked me to the floor and grabbed me. They also gave us destructive conversations and destructive treatment. From the police came a Children Interrogator called Micha Haran, who investigated us using lies, telling us "you were all hurt, right? Your father was so and so… right?". He tried to make me confirm lies, while threatening me that if I did not cooperate with him I will be investigated by the police with beatings.

After four months of suffering and concern for the whole family which was broken after the dissolution of the house, they took me away to 'Beit Chaggay'.

I thought it might be a better place for me, somewhere, and I hoped  I could finally be in touch with my family and get out to see my mom. But once I was accepted  in  schooI, I realized I was wrong, they just shut me more and after some time they took my cell phone and denied me any way to connect to my mother and family.

The staff also hurt me and the other boys were beating me up. I suffered humiliation and extortion of money. On one occasion when we went out, me and the guide Moshe Hussein and another boy, we parked at the Biblical Zoo to pick up another guide. Than the guide beat me up in the car. There were several times he hit me in boarding school too, struck objects at me, pushed me and more, and when I was in the shower he hugged me from behind. The money for which I worked in the petting zoo for a very long time they did not pay me. Only when I threatened to complaint to the police and to make a mess did they pay me. But even then, they stole money from me : the boys and the staff.

They treated me in a destructive way which caused me a lot of pain and destruction; which ruined all my inner world. Dr. Weinstein, the psychiatrist of 'Beit Chaggay', just played with the psychiatrist pills and paid no attention to me. He only listened to Sarit Ward, the welfare officer, who told only lies about me. And two days after the testimony, he cut off the pills. And there are other sufferings I went through at the boarding school of 'Beit Chaggay'. But the most difficult thing I went through was that they forced me with threats to testify against my father and gave me psychiatrist pills, despite promising me that after the investigations with children Interrogator, Micha Haran, it will all be over.

When we were still at home with the family, the last five months before my father's arrest I was 13 and I celebrated a Bar Mitzvah. A Friend of my father's, who said he was a scribe, made me the Tefilin. His daughter was seven and we were friends. When my father found out the father was a missionary priest pretending to be jewish they fought and their relation was cut. Since then I could not see her anymore. The relationship I started with her, of kisses and hugs, I missed very much when she left. Then I was also browsing the Internet, what then developed into the sexual preoccupation with XXXXX and XXXXX, my brothers who were 10 and 9 years old. Later I mastered them and gave them orders to fulfill my personal needs and do jobs and I gave them a beating. But I did not rape them. No one in the family knew about that and no one saw us.

On the hillula of Rabbi Yonathan Ben Uziel, K'v Sivan 28/06/11 I felt great remorse for what I did to my brothers and I talked to my family. Five days later the family got dismantled, the police wanted me to testify lies against my father and I refused it at first.

Sagi Offir and Lizo Wolfus, the prosecutors against my father told me before the evidence: "Tell you raped, we won't take you to court for it. What do you care, even if it's a lie ?". They also said that my testimony will  be proved unreliable if the defense proves I raped. They added that "your brother B. said he raped  your sister XXXXX and we did nothing to him",  because they wanted me to lie in order to put my father in jail and get their good name.

I went along and I lied.

Only about one thing I didn't agree to lie : I refused to say I raped.

Lizo Wolfus encouraged me that I can be the best lawyer.

To remove the pressure of Sagi Offir and Lizo Wolfus on me and still not have to lie and say I raped, I told a different story.  I said dad was in charge of everything, of all the things I did to my two brothers and the rest of it - I lied. Sarit Ward, the welfare officer would tell me: "You have to save your family from suffering" and she and everyone made me realize that maybe someone died or will die if I won't cooperate with the prosecution.  And I collaborated. And to prove my testimony credibility against dad, since I was so hurt and my mind messed up from what they said - Sagi Offir and Lizo Wolfus  and Micha Haran and boarding school, I had to hurt myself before the medical examination XXX XXXX XXXX XXX to prove the allegations against my father and make the judges spare me.

They also used the same things I said and took my mother to prison Neve Tirza for a year because I lied saying my mother was a victim and encouraged my father to harm us. But it did not matter to me anymore. They destroyed me and made me destroy myself with my own hands; I no longer cared to testify against her.  So well they used me, the police and welfare and through boarding school...

There were people who supported me in boarding school and helped me but they were only a minority. In general I was depressed mainly because of the testimony they wanted me to give against my father and all the rest of the problems in boarding school.

I cut my arms and chest. I was bleeding and they barely cared for it. Because when I cut myself, the boarding staff was afraid to hurt their connections with the police around my testimony against my father. They did not seek for my personal interest in their considerations and made sure that I would be allowed to testify even if I was sent to a psychiatric examination. In the hospital I heard the boarding school dormitory manager, Kobbi Eyal, convinces Dr. Bush to release me and that it was a one-time event. So I went through a psychiatric examination at the hospital in Beer-Sheva and after the test they agreed to release me and let me go on that day.

During the testimonies I suffered a lot.

After the period of testimony and after testifying lies against my father and the other defendants I wanted to leave the boarding school and leave life.

I was too depressed to overcome the mental pain, and I felt no physical pain. I put out cigarettes on my bare hands and asked the boys at boarding school, as a game on their part, to slap me.

Again I threatened to kill myself, because I suffered greatly in boarding school, but this time it didn't matter to them. I had already testified and the testimony stages were over so it couldn't hurt the evidence. They sent me for review and I was admitted by consent. I was happy that at last I managed to get out of the boarding school  because I just wanted to get out from there in any way and so I was glad I could, but I fell into a new hell. There, they gave me pills and put me in "relaxing room" and when I objected against a pill, once they brought it to me as an injection in the buttocks in a violent way. They pushed me, grabbed my hands and feet by force and knocked my head in the iron bed which they threw me on. At the same time they also lied to me from my boarding school, mostly the welfare officer Sarit Ward, and she said to me that my mother wanted to hurt me. They also convinced me not to meet my mother, what they managed to do through the lies and manipulations all the years I was in there! In addition from boarding school, the counselors and Sarit, the welfare officer, came to visit me, in order to strengthen my suicidal thoughts : they preferred me in a grave, that’s was I really felt. Because they were afraid I'd complain about them, particularly when they heard from the hospital that I had a lot of charges against them and I didn’t want to go back there.

Only at the end, after coming and convincing me with a lot of lies and sweets and more, I put my confidence in them and went back to boarding school. They abused me again, and even when they knew how much I suffered in the hospital- because I told them - they used it to threaten me. They said they will sent me back there, and once they tried. I ran away. I went back to boarding school the same day hoping to be done with the psychiatric hospital, because I thought that by coming back I actually solved the problem they feared: me running away. And they did leave me alone. In particular because they knew they could not get me in there when Dr. Marina gave me a good recommendation.

 Then, on the day of the sentence of my father and Asa, they woudn’t let me go to court. Their refusal showed me that they didn't care about me and lied to me all along. I was present on the testimony against my father and for the other accusations, so what happened this time? why did  they not let me go?

And I was curious about the verdict. I had mixed feelings : on one hand it was important for me to know what's going on and what will happen with my father and I was concerned. On the other hand it was important for me to know I managed to save my family with him being in jail, as they explained to me and lied to me.

I ran away at night. I left with nothing but money for the bus. I was waiting for the bus at central station and then went away. Because it was cold outside I had an idea to go to the Western Wall and there I prayed it would all be good. On the next day I went to the District Court and met my mother and sister XXXX outside, for the first time after a long period. Outside the court I also met Sagi Offir and Lizo Wolfus and they told me to ignore my mother and all the women.

My father was wrongly sentenced 26 years and Asa 6 years, and I went and talked nonsense about my father to the media.

That day, after the verdict, I met with my sister XXXX and she started telling me about all the pain she suffered in those years from the police and welfare and told me about the other brothers who also suffered. And she gave me some kind of a different perspective, a true and eyes-opening perspective. At boarding school, when I came back after the escape they did not punish me for escaping and did not call the police on that day I escaped, as to my knowledge. However when I asked the manager Haim Cohen why they did not agree for me to go to the sentencing, he did not know what to respond. His mouth was shut, he avoided it.

I met my stepbrother, B. for the first time just before the testimony against father as Sagi Offir, the prosecutor, invited the two of us to his office and let us go together outside because B. wanted to smoke. The second time I saw him was after the sentencing, during one of my escapes. B. told me he suffered and was threatened by the investigators who also bought him 800₪  cost of things, like perfume and more so that he will cooperate with them. He told me about the same means the officers used against S-M, his sister. And that up to this day the investigator Asher Lizmi gives them special treatment. I found out more about the corruption I had to deal with. So I started to run away and come back a lot. This was repeated and later on I tried to leave the boarding school through the new welfare officer they replaced for me - Sarit Hashuri. She did not help me, she would just tell me that I should "eat frogs and swallow saliva". She then became a part of everything; they hurt me. So I ran away and came back.

After the Passover Seder in 2013 I called the prosecutor Lizo Wolfus and shared with her the bad conscience I had about lying in my testimony in the Jerusalem District Court. She told me I should start a new page and leave all this behind me. And, about the parts of me feeling guilty for what I did to my brothers, she said it's not my fault that I was led to do this and she also said more lies about my dad forcing me to do things and behave like that. I know she knew she was lying, because she told me to lie in the testimony. Also in the refreshes before the testimony she came to 'Beit Chaggay' to remind me of the lies the prosecution wanted me to tell and gave me candy. After all in Passover, because of  the conversation with her on the phone, I had a relief, to finally take out the truth and get clean from some of the lies.

Escapes from the dormitory were repeated and caused a chain of events which made the Hebron Police step in and threaten me. A policeman called Avi threatened me that he will “tear off my balls and give me a beating if I run again, and put a chip on my ear like they do to cattle and sheep ..."

After many times I ran away and went back and then again and again the Police put up a picture of me - which I didn’t want - and wrote that a boy was missing and in danger of death, because they wanted people to turn me in. Maybe if I die, they thought, I should die inside the boarding school, with all their abuse which was organized and arranged by the police and welfare all along.

The welfare officer Sarit Hashuri did not mind when I told her they were hurting me, and just encouraged them to keep attacking me, using more manipulative ways, so I will suffer and not run away. She was new at the time, and kept on making promises to help but there is no liar like her, or at least I have not met any. So, she lied all the time, and in general just played me. On one of the times I got arrested by Boris, an interrogator of the Hebron police, whom would not let me file a complaint for all they did to me. So after I slept the night in custody, Judge Simon Leibo bailed me out for 1,000 ₪   and agreed to my request to stay in a hostel until things settle down.

I moved to the hostel, "Mevaser Tov". They took me in for questioning for one of the brake-ins from one of my escapes:  When I walked on the street, I missed my mother a lot and tried to meet with her. I called her and arranged a meeting with her, but she did not come. When it happened for the second time and she did not come, after I missed her so much, I went to the house in Givat-Shaul and there was nobody there.

At the time I was in touch with B. who came to visit me in the hostel. B. tried on his own, and with others, to convince me to come with him to the  house in Givat-Shaul, to steal everything. Even when I went to visit my brother N. and his wife

R-L, there was also her mother ,E., who left my dad after the verdict. They tried to influence me and convinced me that all the women had stolen her money and sold her household items, to encourage me to steal back from them. I believed her, because when I came with B. to Givat-Shaul we saw people I did not know taking out the air conditioners from the house. B. and I fought with them. I did not know that the year the women spent in prison, E. lived in the house and left them large debts of electricity, and therefore they had to sell their air conditioners, because when she left they got cut off of electricity and water. The next day, when there was no one there, we burst into the house in Givat- Shaul and did some damage. Mom came home and got scared and called the police. When the police arrived at one of the times we came in with them, and they helped us to steal because they heard about the verdict.

In short, I opposed the investigation and told them I was in a hostel.  The magistrate asked what hostel I'm staying in. I said "Go fetch"... and so again I had to go back and forth because I believed and trusted them and went back to 'Beit Chaggay'. From 'Mevaser Tov', I went to 'Atnachta', which is also a hostel. And after a period of peace from the police, I ran away because of a foolish fight witch came to blows on which they mainly blamed me.

When I ran away, I was sleeping in the 'Liberty Bell Park' and my bag with my ID and money was stolen from me.  On the next morning, I asked the person in charge there what should I do. He told me that he'd look for it but he did not find it. So he explained to me that I can check the cameras on Jaffa street. He helped me by giving me the money for the bus ride. When I got to Jaffa st. they told me that in order to see the camera's tape, I must have a cop. So I went to the Russian Compound and there when I filed a complaint they arrested me and took me to 'Morya' station and interrogated me about the break-ins and my escapes and other things they added on it. I kept silent during the investigation. They asked me questions and I didn’t answered. Then the officer who interrogated me said things like: "We will show you! We will file you for every little thing because you do not cooperate,". I did not want to sign the investigation so they made me do it violently. The officer shouted at me and pushed me against the wall and the table. Three policemen came in and bent my hands and fingers and took my fingerprint with force while cursing and treating me very badly, like in Hebron. I think the officer's name is Isaac. At night they sent me to the Russian Compound and on the next day those 'Nachshonim' lied to me that I won't be released if I don’t speak to Sarit Hashuri, the welfare officer, and after two hours they released me. I believe the criminal judge decided to release me even earlier.

From 'Atnachta' I went to "Nirim", after the manager of 'Atnachta'- Yaron, and Sarit Hashuri recommend on them. But they did not tell me that there I would be in such an intense psychotherapy that I did not want, and I do not want a therapeutic boarding school, but this was the best option and it's after all a good place with high level education. When I was accepted to 'Nirim' at first it was very good and after a short period internal problems started, and that is why I wanted to run away. I did not know the way to get to the train station because I was new in this area, and did not want to waste money on a taxi or a bus so I'd have enough for the train. Then I thought of the idea of just going by the railway line to the Acre station. I left on foot and one instructor – Yael - went after me on bikes and talked to me and tried to get me to go back. She came with me on foot on the road, and then also near the train tracks until she got a flat tire and she tried to get me to go back to the boarding school, until I agreed and went back with her and with the manager Amnon in a police car. When I came back I tried again to run away and then they locked me in the office and did not let me leave, so I got out through the window. Then they talked to me again and again I returned. On the next day they insisted I will be checked in a psychiatric hospital and sent me to a psychiatric hospital for examination- 'Ma'Alee HaCarmel'. They told the doctor many lies about me- said I got on the train tracks and wanted to scratch myself; in general they gave her the usual preparation they gave to doctors and everyone else. At first I ran away, not wanting to be hospitalized and I thought that if I ran they won't take me back, like it was in 'Beit Chaggay'. But I was wrong, I ran away and the on next day, they gave me their word that this is only an examination. Again I believed them and then they threatened that if I did not cooperate they will throw me out from the boarding school. They lied to me and I went into one week examination at the mental hospital. Then Dr. Daniel, who was my doctor, wrote me a recommendation saying I have no mental illness and released me from the hospital. And I came back to Nirim.

After a long period of four or five months on which I had learned and done well matriculation, the welfare officer Sarit Hashuri came back, in an attempt to get me into a mental hospital because of a false claim of hers - my mother badly influencing me when we meet and talk without supervision. She took advantage of the situation, coming again with these false claims about my past and incited Yael, the mentor, against me, and caused her to incite others in school against me, which led me, at last, to escape. But within minutes the manager of the youth village found me, talked to me; I went back with him.

I was given one meeting with my mother, which was also monitored, after two and half years we have not met, and because they suspected I was talking with her without supervision, they accused me of old accusations that were not true. When I threw a stone as a game in the direction of one of concrete pillars in the yard, without intention to harm anyone, and without it hitting anyone, the instructor Yael was in a conversation with one of the boys in the yard and even though no stone hit her, she took advantage of the situation and alongside the welfare officer Sarit Hashuri organized a big mess.

I was on the 'bench' which is a hut used for punishment by : thinking about the acts we did through questions in a notebook. They asked me almost entirely on the subject of the conversation I had with my mom. They wanted to sew around this a case – both for me and for my mother - they claimed she incited me and took my sanity. They also used psychological methods to convince me that they are right and I am insane. Boaz, the staff manager, said with full confidence, that I must have escaped from the boarding school because I'm afraid of the dark night on the bench and because I see demons and have hallucinations. On the day when I came back from the bench to my room I suddenly saw in my closet there was laying a new single lanyard in a plastic. It was strange. When I asked my friends there: "Who put it there and whose is it?" No one knew. I was worried that someone was trying to make it seem like I have intentions of suicide, and there were other similar things that happened and made me worried. Then they decided that I should see a psychiatrist. I wanted a week to think about it, since you don’t just send someone out for review, so I asked maybe I could do it next week, especially because I heard they planned to put me in a mental hospital again. In the end they actually decided that I'll go to be tested in a psychiatric hospital, 'Ma'Alee HaCarmel'.

Before they took me to the hospital, 'Ma'Alee HaCarmel', I went to the manager of the boarding school to see if I had any other option, because there was a car already waiting for me, but I did not agree to go with Yael. Then they gave me the option of going to the office of the director. And Boaz, the manager, spoke to me with anger, and told me I was insane and that if I did not cooperate. I will have two hours to leave the boarding school and if I'll not go they will throw out all my stuff from my closet. So I took the case of one of them, which I thought was the case of the manager, and I ran, but it turned out that it was the social worker's, Yehuda. He ran after me and told me that he had confidential material about the other boys in there, so I gave it to him. Then, they told me to go back to the office and when I did it, in a good way, they didn't let me out. After several hours on which I tried to run and they did not let me, at last when I tried to get away from the window they ambushed me. I held a social worker's glasses in my hand, as an attempt to stop them from holding my hands and let me go out, but it did not bother them- they tried to take the glasses from my hand with force and so I twisted them a bit.

First thing in the morning they tried to call the police but had to wait for the order of a welfare officer. In the time being the boarding school staff told the police about a few small incidents I had with them that same week, especially around their forced effort of getting me to a mental hospital. They lied saying I did vandalism, saying I was insane and that I was a danger and more lies, in short- just lied to the police. Then five policemen came to take me. I cursed them so a policeman named Rafi twisted my wrist and almost broke it, and in the car I cursed him and he cursed me back, held my one hand in one of his hands, and with his second hit me with his elbows on my chest. The policeman sitting on the other side of mine, named Jacob, caught my second hand and cursed me. On the way they stopped at the police station in Acre and manacled my hands and feet and asked if I'd rather they put  handcuffs behind my back. Two policeman left and the instructor Yael came on and took me to the mental institution 'MaAlee Carmel'.

Yael gave the preparation to the physician, Dr. Tziber, as they did in the rest of times before I went to the hospital and other institutions, and then he hospitalized me. In a conversation with him I told him the welfare and police are working together to hurt me and he said I have a disease of 'paranoia'. I met with Dr. Yanco, a private psychiatrist, who diagnosed me as healthy and said that I have no disease, and there's no need to hospitalize me, that I was not suicidal or psychotic and in no need of medication.

When I was given anti-psychotic pills in 'MaAlee HaCarmel' they refused to give me the name of the pills, in short- they were corrupted. The treatment there was very bad, and even when I complained that I had a headache and heart pain because of the pills they wouldn't replace them. I was hospitalized there in a closed ward for two weeks and it was very sad to celebrate Rosh Ha'Shana in there. Then Dr. Tziber decided to send me to the hospital 'Eitanim', because he diagnosed that I had a disease and almost convinced me and begged me to cooperate with Dr. Miguel from 'Eitanim' and talk to him, because they are good friends. In reality it was just because he wanted, using lies and deceit, to get another doctor from another hospital to diagnose the same disease he did - paranoia.

I was transferred to 'Eitanim'. I was pleased that on Yom Kippur I didn't have to be in 'MaAlee HaCarmel', because I knew that in 'MaAlee HaCarmel' I was not allowed to fast or to go out to the yard and in general 'Eitanim' hospital  is more open.  In Sukkot was hard for me to be without my family. I was happy when my mother came to visit me . There, too, they played me and messed with my pills, and did not reduce them even when I complained that I have heart pains and headaches and other bad feelings from the pills. Instead of reducing the dose as they said, they gave me another five milligrams!

In the hearing in Jerusalem Magistrate's Court I asked the Judge Shimon Leibo to release me from the forced hospitalization. I told him I do not think I need therapy and that I feel the pills harm me. He threatened me that if I refused to take my pills they will prolong my hospitalization and we will return to the 'Beit Chaggay' time and intended the time I suffered. At the same hearing the guardian Leah Eliav yelled at my mother in court: "Satan Mother ".

In the next court hearing I got to court hoping that Judge Shimon Leibo will free me from my hospitalization. When I realized he was already convinced by the welfare officer who wanted to extend the forced hospitalization, I went out from the hall of the court and started to run away. The court guards grabbed me by my hands and took me back to the hall. The judge asked me sarcastically: "What was that for?". So I got upset and threw a plastic bag on him, in particular when I saw my mom crying and that the situation is not good. I felt we were helpless, so that what I did.

My brother Naftali came to visit me in 'Eitanim' and told me the guardian Leah Eliav told him that day, that the whole thing around the psychiatric hospital would not have happened if I cooperated with them and not with the defense of my father.

I understood they wanted to sew a psychiatric case for me, so I could not withdraw my testimony against my father, and so they tried to say I was paranoid, that I have psychotic delusion, posttraumatic stress disorder and Poliado with my mother ...

That's why I didn’t want to do the hospital's deductive psychologists diagnostics. When Dr. Tanya called me to make the diagnosis, I asked her: "Why do I have to"?

She replied, "That's what the court decided"

I told her: "Maybe a youth court, but now we appeal to the District Court"

Dr. Tania said angrily: "I am writing to the court that you do not agree to take the test! You are delaying all the things I want to do! When there won't be any available diagnostics here you'll just be here for much longer time. It is less likely that you will get a positive appeal, don't you get it?!"

I was afraid of her and then replied: "Well, OK, I'll do the diagnosis"

So she replied, "You don’t do me any favors"

I consulted a lawyer and he told me that I should ask for a lawyer to be present during my diagnosis. When I asked them to bring me this kind of lawyer, the diagnostician informed Dr. Tanya about it. Then Dr. Tanya asked me:

"Israel, a lawyer told you that? Which lawyer? "

I replied: "A lawyer."

Then she threatened me: "Now he signed off your future here, that's a waste of time… I'm done!"

I asked her: "Why? ... What? ..."

She replied, sarcastically: "A lawyer also told me I shouldn’t talk to you ..."

I said, "No ... he said I will do the diagnosis, but with the presence of a lawyer,"

She answered: "With a lawyer we don’t do anything!"

I asked, "Why not?"

She said: "You are in a hospital. And here there are only doctors, not lawyers."

I replied, "So we can't do it" and she said: "Yes, too bad we can't do it." And added afterwards: "I will not let you be in touch with him, he is harmful to you and tomorrow we will take your cellphone," all because I wouldn't give her his phone number.

I called the lawyer again and he told me I should ask to do the diagnostics only after two days of no pills, because otherwise the results are real bad and very low when you are fuzzy because of the pills. The next morning when I saw Dr. Tanya and told her what the lawyer said, she was angry and said she will not get instructions from a child and that my lawyer is Satan.

For over two months now I am closed in 'Eitanim', hospital against my will. And my story is not over yet, it continues up to this day -2.12.14 - because I'm still locked in the youth department of the psychiatric hospital 'Eitanim'.

On the internet, the retired judge Chana Ben Ami warns against corruption of the welfare workers. I called her and asked her advice. She referred me to several people, and that is how, with G-d’s mercy, I found volunteer lawyers who saw the boy’s distress and tried to help with all their hearts.

One day I got a message from the courthouse that the juvenile court judge approved the social worker Sarit Ashuri’s request to take Akiva’s cell phone from him since he was consulting a lawyer. I was very angry. How could they refuse my son’s right to legal counsel? It isn’t enough that they closed him up forcefully, but they don’t let him defend himself? Why can’t they leave him alone? I appealed the judge’s decision at District court. The judge who took care of the appeal was one of the team that convicted Daniel and sent him to 26 years in prison. I was hoping that when she read Akiva’s letter about how the prosecutors Sagi Ofir and Lizo Wulfus threatened him that he should perjure himself and testify otherwise he would sit in jail, and told him everything he needed to say- her heart would open and she would understand what a mistake she made in her sentence when she sent an innocent Jew to jail for 26 years for stories that were made up. I waited for the deliberation.

At the beginning, the judge smiled to Akiva and said something to him quietly, and I saw that Akiva was moving uncomfortably on the bench and looked angry. I didn’t understand what happened. Her verdict was hard and especially absurd. She forbade Akiva to have a cell phone or have any contact with lawyers other than is guardian Leah Eliav, and from the lawyer who gave him “legal aid” who kept showing up at the procedures despite the fact that he asked her to resign.

That was a painful blow.

After the deliberation, I asked Akiva what the judge whispered to him at the beginning. Akva thought a moment and said: “The truth is that I didn’t understand what glasses she was talking about, but when she said to me: “Akiva do you remember us…? I brought you the expensive sunglasses you forgot with us..!” She let me understand that I should remember that I am on her side, but I didn’t understand what she was talking about, I didn’t forget any glasses at her house!” When I heard this from Akiva, I couldn’t believe my ears! What Akiva didn’t know was that those sunglasses belonged to his step brother, Samy the 15 year old, and he brought them to the courthouse when he recanted his testimony against Daniel, because he wanted to show the judges the expensive sunglasses the police used to bribe him… Everyone who was at Daniel’s trials saw how the same judge fell asleep during deliberations, that is apparently the reason she confused Samy and Akiva…!

Akiva also told me that while he was sitting on the bench during the deliberation someone from the prosecution sat next to him and showed him that the prosecutor Lizo Wulfus sent an sms for him and wrote: “Don’t worry, the prosecution won’t do anything to you, we are worried about you, call me.” He said that after court he called Lizo Wulfus and asked her if she remembers that that last year on the eve of Passover, he called her to tell her that he felt bad about lying against his father, and she told him that she remembers, but he did well to testify against his father and they will watch over him and won’t put him in jail for what he did do his brothers… Akiva recorded the conversation and turned it in to the Prosecution Comptroller, the government’s legal adviser, and the State Comptroller.

In the meantime, the volunteer lawyers submitted an appeal to District Court of the decision of the medical board to hospitalize Akiva for three more months for evaluation.

The main point they presented in the appeal was written thus:

“… The case worker is not performing her duties and hasn’t found a place for the minor to live with a bed, food, and school. The case worker is scared that all of the theories she created for herself about a “dangerous cult” where the child grew have shattered. She will in the future be sued for malpractice, therefore the case worker is doing all she can to lock up the minor, shut him up, and close his mouth with the aid of Chagit, the psychiatrist. We are talking about a minor who was used by the criminal prosecutors and welfare services to frame his father for deeds that were never committed. The minor was caught up in a brutal police action and was made to recite testimony that was prepared in advance, it is no wonder that he is now suffering. He was torn away from his family, thrown into boarding schools, severed from his siblings and his mother, and they are inciting him against his mother, and then he is expected not to get upset? These nerves or justified anger are translated into nice words like “suspicion of delusional disorder”. Finally, it should be noted that the procedure in juvenile court when the social worker Sarit Ashuri is talking, but not interviewed, causes the social worker to take control of the protocol and the juvenile court becomes her rubber stamp. The social worker Sarit Ashuri purposefully did not prepare an alternative treatment plan in order to keep the minor hospitalized: like she said: “at this point we cannot find him a framework until he has an evaluation.”

Akiva called the guardian Leah Aliav from the hospital, to ask her why she isn’t helping him get released from the hospital. He recorded the conversation and presented it later to the judge in District Court, together with the following transcript in which he describes the conversation:

“Akiva, your mother came and instigated and caused you to go against everyone and write a false letter to the Supreme Court.”

“Excuse me, if the letter is false then you are corrupt! I’m sorry, if the letter is a lie then you are corrupt, because I don’t think that anything I wrote there is a lie! Even if you have arguments against it, that’s it!”

“It is a shame that your mother is putting you in this position! I could get you out of Eitanim in a minute, I could get you out of there in a minute, I am not prepared for this destructive relationship with your mother, your mother is ruining your life, I always told you, your mother hurt you… I will help you, I will find you a place and you will get out of Eitanim, you don’t have to hook up with that group of criminals that hurt you, you know that…”

“You are talking about criminals? You are talking about criminals? You are talking about criminals? I think that criminals, criminals, criminals, are what you are! You are the lawbreakers! You are the ones hurting me!”

“Akiva, my dear, your mother ruined your life and continues to ruin it, it is a shame.”

“I want you to get out of my life, that’s it, that’s it, that is what I want!”

The court hearing at District Court took place on the 23th of December, 2014, three and a half months after Akiva was committed involuntarily. Akiva prepared a letter in which he describes the corruption around my father’s trial. Judge Drori, Vice President, said that he was very sorry that he cannot interfere with what was going on in the next room with the other judges in the case of his father, but when he read Akiva’s letter to the Supreme Court and he understood what Akiva meant, and he wanted to hear what Akiva would like and then he would decide. It was the eight night of Chanukah. I felt that a Chanukah miracle was taking place in front of my eyes. Two years earlier, on the eight night of Chanukah the District Court released me and the other wives from prison, and said that we shouldn’t have been there at all, and on the eight night of Chanukah 26 years earlier I married Daniel.

The judge ordered Akiva’s immediate release from the Eitanim Psychiatric Hospital. Akiva asked to have his cell phone back and the judge said: “of course”, and added: “in any case, I would like to make it clear, and this is very important for the future of this youth’s life, that he should not be stigmatized as a person who suffers from any kind of psychiatric problems.” The legal counsel for the welfare department Deborah Hirsch Lev Ran and the case worker Sarit Ashuri couldn’t stand their failure, and when they saw the judge leave the court and the volunteer lawyers left town, they took advantage of it and turned to the judge on duty for emergency sessions, to change the terms of release. The lawyer, Deborah Hirsch Lev Ran, tried in a “retrial” to forcefully change his decision. The case worker ranted in front of the judge and said that Akiva was recording her, and the judge determined that everything Judge Drori ruled remained, and added the District Court judge’s decision to deny Akiva his phone had ended, since it was limited to the time of his hospitalization.

Akiva waited at the court house so that the guard who brought him from Eitanim could go to the hospital and bring him his equipment and clothing, but the guard left and didn’t take care of him. Sarit Ashuri who carried on and yelled in the courtroom that the child needed protection from his mother, didn’t even make sure that Akiva got his things or call to see that he got everything.

About two months after his release from the psychiatric hospital, on the 17th of February, 2015, there was a session in juvenile court about extending the writ of neediness, and thank G-d, the judge ordered the writ removed in Akiva’s case, meaning that Akiva was released from the hands of the welfare system.

I was worried, what would be the next step. I am very scared about Akiva. It is hard to understand who stands behind this whole nightmare. What will be with Daniel? What will be with the kids? One thing comforts me and strengthens my resolve to continue to fight and survive, and that is the fact that “the Eternity (G-d) of Israel will not lie”, and that the day will come and the lie will crumble and the world will know the truth.

My daughter Tsipi was only 16 when we were arrested. She was educated on the values of modesty, and studied only with girls and had no contact with boys. On the television program they did about us they asked her: “What do you want to be when you grow up?” She answered: “I want to be just like my father!” the investigator Itzik Levi caused her serious physical and emotional damage in the closed interrogation room, and after the trauma she went through she turned in turmoil and anger to her social worker and together they filed a complaint with internal affairs, and it read thus:

“He called me a retard, fuck up start talking. You don’t even know how to lie. So I asked, can I have a different interrogator? So I told him that I needed the bathroom and he didn’t let me, I begged him to take me to the bathroom, and then he took me and on the way there was a policeman and I told him that I wanted someone else because he was cruel, he speaks rudely, and is questioning me in a rude and not nice way. He asked me about the case in a violent manner, for example- start talking retard. Later he shoved me into the room weakly in front of other people, but they didn’t see that he also pinched me and I didn’t go in, and he told the other two people: “Just ignore her, she’s just a retard.” Later when he saw there was no one outside, maybe a Russian lady that I saw coming later.

The violence: He grabbed me by my hair and pulled me to the floor and hit my head and I felt light-headed. Then I told him that I learned in the emergency center that he can’t hit me. He said that he can because I am an investigating policeman… he said that I am ugly, fat, and stupid. And then I told him that I learned that it was sexual harassment to tell a woman that she is ugly (I learned that at the emergency center) and he said:” Shut up” and slapped me so hard on the mouth that I almost bled. And then he said: “I can hit you, you bitch. You are used to getting hit at home, this is nothing to you, you are used to electric shocks, whips on your legs, you are used to getting a stick in your anus for telling the truth, that’s why you area retard. I told you. Retard. Your father screwed you in your ass because your virginity is important so instead they fucked you in the ass. And while he was saying this he moved his whole bottom part towards his testicles. He said “Your father’s prick didn’t stand and didn’t work”… and then he said that since I didn’t talk “it’s probably because you also sucked your father’s dick”. Then he put his hands close, but really close, to my breasts, almost touching me. I said to him: “Get your fingers away from me” and he said “don’t want to”. And then he said to me “your father did this and this to your breasts” and he moved his fingers. And he said to me:”You have to be screwed to get you to talk” and he moved his hips and his lower parts in a very crude way and said “you sucked your father’s dick and you probably raped your brothers. Stupid whore!” All this time he threatened me with blows. And he wrote all sorts of things I never said on the computer and I got mad at him and asked him to let me erase it. Then he said: “You came to break the computer and that is food for the court.” “That way you won’t be able to tell on me.” I told him: “Let me talk to my lawyer: and he said: “No”. So I said: “Don’t worry, I will write everything down. Everything you said to me.” He answered:”If you say anything, I have witnesses that you spit at me and shoved me.” I was shocked because that didn’t happen. I started crying and thought who I should give the papers to. “If you don’t let me bring the papers to court I will bring it to the lawyer who takes me to court” and he said that the lawyer wouldn’t come. And truly, to this moment they haven’t let me talk to a lawyer. He wrote on the computer that I hit him and spat on him and cursed him tens of times. And he said that I said my mother is a whore and I was in shock because I never said that. He said: “bitch, idiot”. He said: “I am waiting for you to break the computer and rip up the papers and curse me. That is food for me for the court. In order to accuse you. I beg you to do it. I told him that I wasn’t going to do it, but I ripped one page from the interview… he brought my face to his and said to me: “Slap me. I am waiting for you to slap me. That’s good. I want you to be charged in court.” And I went silent because I didn’t want to talk. He wrote on the computer: “That’s odd, she’s being silent”

Tsipi Ambash

Six months later, internal affairs closed the case. One year later, when I got out of jail and appealed the decision to internal affairs because it was outrageous that they were ignoring such a serious injury to my minor. At the time, I didn’t understand that in the internal affairs division, which belongs to the state’s prosection itself, there is no one to talk to. They denied the appeal as well. Worse than that, in a session at County Court on the criminal charge, when Daniel’s attorney asked Itzik Levi in cross examination: “Did internal affairs come and investigate you?” He answered spontaneously: “Yes” and then immediately corrected: “Um, actually maybe they didn’t”. The judge ran to his help and closed the issue by saying: “Maybe the girl didn’t file a complaint”. That is how the judge allowed Itzik Levi to come out of this clean and the okay to continue this behavior in future investigations. My daughter and I were left feeling helpless and feeling that everything is corrupt, that no one seeks the truth, and there is no one to turn to.

Shosh, my youngest daughter, was only 15, a girl who was educated with the values of modesty, very smart and organized, always dressed with long sleeve shirts, long skirts and stockings and had her hair in a braid. During the investigations, one of the policemen threw her on the floor and yelled at her: “I will screw you in the butt like they do at home!”

My two girls, Tsipi and Shosh, were sent to a boarding school in the north. There was a session in family court about them. I asked the judge to get the girls back. Leah Eliav, attorney, their appointed guardian, stood up in the court and said that the girls did not want to hear about us, not about their mother and not their father, and that they want her help to prepare for their matriculation exams. I felt a stab in the heart. Three days earlier the girls, Tsipi and Shosh, called me under the supervision of the social worker and asked me: “Mom, when are we coming home? When are you coming to see us? What they told us isn’t true, is? That you don’t want to see us?” I was shocked, and I told them that it isn’t true, that I am fighting to see them, and am trying to get permission.

It was all too much for Tsipi. The destruction of the family, the abuse of the investigator, the humiliation at the boarding school, the cruelty of the staff, and now the lie of the guardian. She climbed on a very high fence at the boarding school and ran out to the street. It was on a Saturday, in July 2011. I was closed in the shelter. After six hours of wandering around in the heat without drink or food, Tsipi went back to the boarding school. The director didn’t want to open the door for her. Her sister Shosh pulled some tricks and managed after a few hours to open the gate. Tsipi, who hadn’t eaten or drunk anything until that moment, ran to the sink to drink. The director forbade her to drink and said: “you will not eat or drink. If you want to drink , drink from the fire hose.” Tsipi was broken by it all, she took the water hose and sprayed the director. All of the counselors grabbed Tsipi, knocked her on the ground, and dragged her and beat her. The director held her strongly by the arms and dug her fingernails into the Tsipi’s flesh. Her arms and stomach were covered with bruises and deep fingernail scratches. Shosh wanted to support her sister and be with her, and since they wouldn’t let her and closed her in another room, she broke the little window in the door and managed to get out. Tsipi and Shosh went berserk and didn’t let the staff catch them. On the way they broke and flung chairs and tables. The boarding school called the police on them. They underwent difficult police interrogations under the charge of destruction of property and violence against the director.

The boarding school staff did not update me with what was going on with my girls. The next day, I arrived with a lot of gifts to visit the girls at the boarding school, without knowing anything about what had happened. I travelled 300 kilometers to get to them. When I had almost arrived the director called me and said:”Go home, you won’t see them today, they are being punished for their behavior.” I asked: “What happened?” She answered: “They broke a lot of things and are in punishment.” I said to the director: “I am already here. I want to know what is happening with my daughters.” She said: “You won’t see them.” I said to her: “Tsipi had an operation on her foot and I didn’t buy her sports shoes or orthopedic foot supports. She is walking around with flip flops and is complaining that it hurts, I bought her shoes and the supports and I want to bring them to her.” The director did not agree. I got to the boarding school, left the presents and returned broken hearted and terribly concerned about their welfare.

As a result of the incident, the girls were separated and punished severely: Tsipi was sent to a closed troubled girls’ home-“Mesila”, and Shosh- to “Tzofia” in Ashdod.

When I got to Meslia and saw the place my heart was heavy. The atmosphere was scary. The place was surrounded by barbed wire, and you have to go through several locked metal doors to get in. Tsipi was in turmoil. She showed me all the bruises on her body and told me what really happened. I was horrified. Tsipi’s social worker at Mesila was also horrified by the blows that Tsipi got at the boarding school and permitted me to photograph the bruises and scratches on her body. I showed it all to the judge in court and the people in charge in the welfare department. Unfortunately, they ignored by complaints about the director’s behavior, who had no sensitivity towards the girls’ situation.

The effect of a closed institution on my girls was destructive. For the first time in their lives the girls met girls their age from broken homes, and the welfare department, instead of helping them and their families financially, closed them up and caused them to stoop to prostitution, alcohol, and drugs. My sweet girls could have succeeded if the state had invested in them, and not abandoned them. My girls deteriorated to places I hadn’t dreamed about in my worst nightmare. They lost their innocence. I was helpless and cried to Hashem to save these girls. I waited with bated breath and concern for every supervised call with them. One of the times that I visited Tsipi in Mesila it was during a singing class in a recording studio with an instructor that accompanied them on piano. And she sang into the microphone, with all her heart, in a very moving way the song: “Oh, Father” by Shlomi Shabbat. I restrained myself from crying in front of her.

When their grandfather, Daniel’s father, died, they were not allowed to attend the funeral. They were very angry about it but there was no one to turn to in order to ask for a little bit of understanding and consideration for the girls.

From Mesila, Tsipi was sent to a hostel, and after a little while, Shosh was transferred to another hostel. I was locked up in jail and they would tell me on the phone about dangerous connections they made with shady people from the underworld, and I couldn’t do anything to help them, to watch over them or protect them from the cruelty in the world. In order to talk to them, I sold my things to other prisoners, my cooking pot, stove top, and night lamp, so that I could buy phone cards to hear them. I begged them to hang on a little longer and try not to get in trouble, that I understand that it is hard for them without family but they should support each other.

In one of the cells to which I was transferred, I slept in the same room with five other prisoners, one of whom was a transgender Arab woman. She was very violent. One time she didn’t want to let me have my turn at the phone so she closed me in the bathroom and took the top of a tin can, pushed me towards the toilet, broke the hose and threatened to cut my face. I didn’t want to respond because I didn’t want to go to isolation and not be able to talk to my girls. The officer decided to transfer me to a closed ward instead of her. The next day, she cut the ear of another prisoner, and she was still left in the ward for another month. There we were only permitted one hour in the yard, and during that hour share the phone with twenty other prisoners. The pressure on the phone was great. How could I talk to the children? The conditions in the closed ward were tough. I couldn’t take care of the pains in my shoulders that were injured earlier when a prison guard pushed me from post to post while I had cuffs on my hands and feet. I begged the women in the closed ward to trade the only thing I had, cigarettes, for a phone call. I was very worried about the girls and all of the children. Tsipi cried every day over the additional insults she received at the hostel from the girls and the staff. She was shamed and told that just because she was “Ambash” she had no chance to succeed anywhere, and they wouldn’t even take her to the army and only let her clean the bathroom. At first, she argued and fought with the girls, but in the end she decided to go out to work and argue with them less. When she started working, she met an Arab boy who courted her and decided she wanted to be Muslim. She dressed like an Arab and went with him to an Arab village. I was helpless behind bars. When I heard on the radio once again that Jews were stabbed in East Jerusalem by an Arab youth, I worried about my daughter’s dangerous deterioration, and didn’t know how to save her. I begged again for her to leave him, but Tsipi did not want to listen to me. Daniel, the other wives, and I prayed for her a lot, and by miracle with mercy from above she cut off her relationship with the boy. When I got out of jail she said it was a miracle that I got out of jail because there was a pimp who offered her a job, and if I hadn’t come out she would have started working out of depression.

Tsipi’s mood was very bad. She came to visit me after I got released from prison and showed me her arms were full of knife cuts because she didn’t’ want to live anymore, they took her mother, her father, and all of the siblings, the crises she had been through since they took apart the family, made her nervous and restless, it hurt me to see her seeking peace for her soul in nature parties and drugs. Every night at 2 am I would go look for Tsipi at pubs in order to bring her home, even on rainy nights. I would cry in the streets from concern for her safety.

When she would come home to me, she told me how the social workers tried to influence her to cut off her ties from the family and convince her that she was in danger, and that she was born into a cult and that only they really care about her, and she would make Azamra, Aderet, and Shiran cry since they identified strongly with her stories, which reminded us of our conversations with the social workers in the shelters. She wrote diaries full of letters about missing her father in jail, and in one of the letters wrote to Daniel:

“Dad, I love you very much. It moves me to think of you, to remember you. I have no words. My heart is bursting. You are my life. You have no idea how much I love you. I have only love in my heart and hot tears spill from how much I miss you. After not having spoken to you for so long, I play a game with myself where I pick up the phone and talk to you and I hope that your heart listens and that I am not talking to myself. I love you. There is no one, no one, who loves you as I do. I will turn the world upside down for you.”

Tsipi met an Ethiopian boy who was sensitive and patient towards her; he was 11 years older than her. One day she went high up in the building and started cutting herself deeply in the arm. He stopped her and took her to the emergency room. They only got to my house the next day and I was alarmed by her condition. I took her immediately with the referral from the emergency room to the doctor at the Kupat Cholim, to buy antibiotics. Her boyfriend told me that when she drinks she talks about her father and cries that she needs him and misses him, and he shared with me that he feels she is with him because she sees him as a kind of proxy father figure. Tsipi got pregnant. I supported her the whole way. I took her for ultrasounds, exams, and charity organizations to help her financially for the first two years after the birth. During the pregnancy, maybe because of her crises that caused her to be instable, she separated from her boyfriend, and coped with the birth alone.

She waited breathlessly to be 18 so she could visit her father in jail. Exactly on her birthday, she went for the first time to visit. She was very excited to see him. The second time she came they didn’t let her in. Tsipi wrote in her diary:

G-d, let me dream tonight that I am hugging Dad, I miss him. Caress him with my love. Believe me Dad, all the time I deteriorate and fall weakly, it is from the poison of my enemies. Dad, hug me strongly and don’t leave me. I am scared alone. When you are not around everything is dark and I am like a flower without sun and water. Dad, let me in your heart and hug me there. I am in danger, they want to kill me, but I am not scared because I know that you are watching over me. I have no words but gratitude and love, and nothing can separate us. If they ask me what my most precious possession is, I would say my love for you.”

One day, Tsipi called me and invited me for coffee. We wandered around at the “Mashbir”. Suddenly she asked me: “Are you still with Dad?” I asked her: “What kind of question is that?” She felt uncomfortable and said: “There is no choice, you have to choose, either you are with me or you are with him, because the social worker at the hostel warned me that if you are in touch with Dad and I stay in touch with you they won’t let me raise the child, so choose: Me or Dad!”

Shosh’s condition also deteriorated. She missed her father, worried about her siblings, was frustrated by the situation, the degradation and daily humiliation were too hard to bear. She was broken by the fact the situation was hard and never ending and that her father had not returned home and the pain was so intense she couldn’t handle it. One day, she showed me her arms were full of signs of attempts to cut her veins with a knife, and on the upper part of her arm she had carved the word “Abba” (Dad) with sharp scissors. She said that she was in turmoil: “It’s so hard for me. I miss Dad.” I hugged her hard and tried to calm her down: “Everything will be okay; Dad will come back and be with us here.” We cried on each other’s shoulders.

When I was in jail, my eldest daughter, Marie, told me that Shosh came to her at night after getting drunk with Sudanese people at the central bus station in Tel Aviv, and that they would come to take her soon to Mesila. I was anxious; how much further down can we go?

To their surprise, policemen came to take her. Shosh was in bed with a throat infection and a 40 degree temperature. The policemen yelled at her to get up and come with them. They knocked her down on the floor and sat on her back, closed her hands behind her back with cuffs. One of the cops hit her with his elbow in her throat and she bled. They did all of this in her older sister’s house, who was one month after giving birth, and yelled at her: “Say thanks that you didn’t get slapped.” Or like one of them said to Shosh later: “I should have given your sister a fiver in the face”. Shosh was very upset and complained to her social worker, and she in turn wrote to Internal Affairs with a letter describing in detail the policemen’s abuse. When I got to visit her and saw all of the bruises on her body, I was terrified. She told me that the cops called her: “an Arab’s whore, fat, ugly, chicken…” and other endless bad words. On the ride to Mesila, they banged her head on the window, kicked her, and dragged her. When she asked to loosen the cuffs, they tied them stronger, and twisted her hands with the cuffs. The coordinator at Mesila who saw Shosh told in the report to Internal Affairs that he saw her sitting cuffed in the squad car when one of the policemen held her by the cuffs and pushed his elbow to her throat. The police’s behavior was violent towards her even in front of him, while using blunt and aggressive language.

When she had been at Mesila for a month, she ran away again. She submitted the following letter at juvenile court:

“In one month I will be 17. At this point, I have run away from Mesila because it isn’t good for me there. The staff there punishes for everything by holding in the ‘room’ or ‘timeout’ (an isolated room) and I explained to them that it wasn’t helping me calm down but only angered me and caused me to arrive at my behavior there. They were not careful with their ‘holding’, they would hurt me on purpose. I always ended up with cruises all over my body and that didn’t bother them. I always had the feeling that they are waiting for me to mess up and wanted me to so they could ‘hold’. They would say to me: “Our job is to annoy you and your job is to calm down.” And if they say they are trying to help me then that is a lie because I always told them there is a way to explain things to me and it is not their way. I request that you allow me to prove myself at home. To study. Not to get in danger, not to wander the streets.

And by the way, I need to roam the streets because of welfare and the police and from there they take me to dangerous places. If I am allowed to live at home with my mother, that will not happen.

All I did was out of self defense or disagreement when they told me that I was abused in the family which is a lie for which my life has been ruined.”

Thank you very much- Shosh.

One of the times I met with Shosh she asked about her brother Akiva. I told her that he was being given psychiatric medicine. She told me that there was a time when the social worker took her to a psychiatrist, and they gave her pills too. She said the effect of the pills was destructive and if they had told her at the time to eat a tree, she would have.

When she heard that they were charging her father with two charges of harming her, she was shocked, and decided to run away from Mesila because she wanted with all her strength to yell the truth at court. She knew the police would look for her and do anything to prevent her from coming to testify, she also knew that they had the means to pressure her not to testify, so she wandered from city to city so they wouldn’t catch her, and slept in stairwells. She couldn’t stay with me because she was scared of being caught. After several hard and bitter days on the street, with no shower, no clothes to change into and nearly no food, she managed to get to the courthouse to testify on her father’s behalf. In court she said to the judges: “It is very important that you all hear the truth about my father that he is innocent, my father caused no one any harm and everything he is being accused of is a complete lie. The house was full of love and happiness and father was always there for everyone. It is a terrible travesty what the state has done to my father and my family.” In the halls of the courtroom after the testimony she yelled towards Daniel that she loves him and that he should be strong: “We will not give up, we will be victorious!”

The judges ignored everything she said and convicted Daniel on two counts describing abuse towards her although there was no proof of it, and despite the fact that she came to the courtroom especially to testify that it never happened!

When Shosh heard that in the verdict her father was convicted of 18 charges, two of which involved her, she was really upset. She decided to appear together with us, the wives, for Channel 2 and talk about the cruel lie of the verdict in the press. When she interviewed, she talked about the injustice and the travesty of justice, about the police behavior, and about the judges’ lie. But Channel 2 decided not to air her interview in the item, and instead presented a slanderous item. Shosh was in a big crisis. She prepared a video in which she says: “Since my father had several wives and we had several homes people were jealous of us, and I would have been jealous too, we had the best life, the most fun…”

A month later, Daniel was sentenced to 26 years. Since Shosh started psychological treatment under the auspices of the welfare department and as a result, she also cut off her connection with me. One day, she called and said: “Mom, you should understand, if a person gets 26 years, then there must be a reason. The judges couldn’t be wrong. The whole country can’t be wrong.”

In prison, even the murderers had monthly visitations with their children. The social workers, who were supposed to bring me my small girls, Katti, Muriel, and Bela, didn’t allow me to see them, even though the girls begged to see me. The authorities at the Israeli Prison Service didn’t understand why I was not allowed visitations. Only five months later was I given one-time permission for the one and only visit, and I didn’t see them again the whole year I was incarcerated. Even when I was released, I had to wait four months to get permission to visit them in a supervised visit at the Kesher Center, once every two weeks for only an hour and a half. Before each meeting I would speak with two clinical psychologists for an hour and then two social workers brought them to the meeting and stayed to supervise us together with the clinical psychologists. One telephone conversation of up to only twenty minutes was allowed each week, with the telephone on loud speaker, with the social workers monitoring the conversation. At our meetings and conversations with the children we were not allowed to talk about Daniel and the family and each time we strayed from the rules, the social workers would cut off the call and threaten to cancel the next meeting. They psychologically manipulated my little girls, degraded and humiliated them, and made them be ashamed of the family, and explained that the situation was helpless, and they won’t see their father for at least twenty years, and the only way to begin a new life was to put faith in the system. With time, the girls learned that if they didn’t talk about their father, they would get attention and gifts from the staff at the boarding school, and slowly, slowly, as time passed, they stopped asking me about their father.

The punishments that the girls got at the boarding schools were insufferable. My three little girls were closed up in a room for three days, without going to school, only able to go the restroom with the accompaniment of a counselor. I don’t understand where the justice is in our country, when we sent a child to calm down in his room as an educational punishment, Daniel was convicted of “false imprisonment”, and when the social workers locked my girls up for three days, each in a different room, why don’t they get jailed for false imprisonment?

Yonathan, who was not permitted to speak with Daniel on the phone, wanted to send him gifts and love. He would work hard and prepare beautiful pictures, or copy famous paintings and write a dedication to Daniel on them and try, without the social worker’s knowledge, to pass them onto Kari so she could pass them onto his father in prison. One of the times he asked: “What did Dad say about the painting?” He was crushed when Kari broke the news to him that one of the jailguards took the picture he had made for his father from her, and ripped it up into little pieces in front of her.

On the 5th of July, 2011, on the day after the family was ripped apart by the police, my eldest boys: Zalman (22), Boaz (21), and Gay-Noam (18); Kari’s eldest daughter – Tzilla (26) and Kari’s son – Yan (24), found themselves without a home. Dad was under arrest, and the other wives and I were in battered women’s shelters as an alternative to arrest, and the younger siblings were scattered in different boarding schools. For a long time, the police did not allow them into the houses in which we lived. They were shocked by the situation, and were sure that any moment the police would realize that they had made a mistake. They would let their father go and the family would be together once again. Each hour that didn’t happen was unbearable. The concern for their father ate away at them and gave them no rest. Suddenly, the responsibility for the fate and future of the family fell on their young shoulders. When they waited for their father outside the courtroom they would talk to journalists and you could see and hear them talking on the news trying to strengthen Daniel in the corridors of the courthouse and calling to him: “Dad, be strong, we will win, we love you Dad.”

Boaz said to the reporters:

“First of all, my father is the simplest man there is. This whole thing with rabbi and leader – it is exactly the opposite; that is just not him”; in answer to the question: “Didn’t he punish you?” Boaz answered: “I don’t understand- I wouldn’t be surprised if you ask me if I murdered someone! These questions are so unpleasant. These things were made up somewhere and we have to deal with did we kill or didn’t we kill?! These things never ever happened!”

Gay- Noam interrupted him and said to the reporters:

“Bare-faced lies! Fabrications of things that never happened” […] “If people knew the truth about how we lived, everyone would want to live like us.”

Zalman said to the reporters:

“It is easy to blame us for things, we are a bit different from the public norm in Israel so it was very easy to blame us for things that never happened… these are false accusations… and no one really knows how we lived. We had so much fun. They think he probably controls us. Maybe I am a wizard too?!...”

Tsila told the reporters:

“The best testimony you could all have is to go to the children and ask them what they feel, and see what they have to say, how they look. What they have to say… and about Dad, if you look them in the eyes and look into his eyes and see if really… if this could be the kind of person who does things like what they are saying!”

One of the children added:

“I grew up at first with one mom and at some point, it became several moms. It was good for me… there was no abuse…”.

Marie told the reporter:

“My father did not abuse the women and their children. He loved them and brought them love. Ever secular person has many more women! If a wife testified against him it is perjury, they scared her into talking.”

(“To Blame the Women, Too”, YNET; “The Cult Leader’s Neighbors”, Walla News; “The Cult Leader’s Daughter There Was No Abuse, Nana10)

The children also turned to different newspapers to publish stories and inform people of the injustice and the terrible lie of what was said about our family. They ran around to different law firms to look for the best representation for their father. The prices that the lawyers demanded for the representation ran into hundreds of thousands of shekels. The pressure was unbearable. They tried to raise money from family members all over the country to pay a lawyer, and looked for a place for house arrest for Daniel in case the judge agreed to an alternative to jail and took care of each family member. They traveled each day from place to place, and when they were exhausted, they would fall asleep in the van on the side of the road. They wanted with all their hearts and souls to save the day and bring their father home. At first I had no contact with them because I was in the shelter. When I finally saw them I saw the fire in their eyes. They were full of motivation and faith they would succeed in their mission. When they saw that the lawyer who represented Daniel during the extension of his arrest wasn’t able to get house arrest and didn’t do his job properly, they immediately looked for another lawyer to represent him, and they were in daily contact with him and made sure to give him all of the information to help free Daniel. They would give him strength with phone calls of love, and Gay-Noam would study with him every day in a phone hevruta. They would help Daniel’s mother go to jail to visit him, and they would also regularly go to visit. They said they would turn the world upside down to get their father out of jail. They couldn’t relax because of the fact that the police were hurting their father and influencing witnesses to give false testimony, and were still shocked by the police’s behavior towards them in the interrogations. They fought tooth and nail, day and night.

All of the four prosecution witnesses contacted them in different ways and asked help to get out of the threats made by the police investigators who gave them ultimatums. They threatened the main witness for the prosecution that if she didn’t testify against Daniel, they would take her daughter to adoption overseas, and she wouldn’t see her anymore; they threatened the others that if they didn’t accuse Daniel, they would be under arrest for several good years. The prosecution witnesses were scared and asked the older boys for help to get out of the position into which they were put against their will. One of the witnesses for the prosecution- Timna, asked for help to fly overseas and disappear until after the trial. Samy ran away all of the time from the boarding school he was sent to, and look for his brothers, begging them to find him a place he could stay where the police won’t find him. The prosecution witness Anastasia, whose rent they paid for months, asked them to rent her and her husband an apartment far away so they wouldn’t know where she was she wouldn’t have to testify. For five months after Daniel’s arrest, Aliza was in contact with the children, looking for solutions to the situation and asking them to find a way for her to be with her daughter, so that she wouldn’t have to testify against him. She also asked them for financial aid, so she wouldn’t be dependent on the mercies of the police investigators, and suggested that the best solution would be to find a place where she could disappear from the threatening eyes of the police until after the trial. My sons and daughters were helpless and tried to find the best way to change the situation so that it would be good for everyone and they could get Daniel out of jail.

One day, they arrived at a lawyer in the north, and he took 60,000 NIS for terrible advice, which got them in trouble and caused their deterioration following that.

Since the boys knew that the prosecution witnesses did not want to testify against Daniel and were desperate for help, the lawyer suggested they rent a place, fill it with food and other items enough for one year, and they help all of the prosecution witnesses disappear from the police until after the trial. He told them that was the “surest” way to save their father, and that was their only chance to free their father immediately. He also told them what actions they should take. My boys, out of their good will and desire to save their father, decided that is what they would do, especially since the witnesses were pressuring them to find a quick solution for them. They borrowed money, rented a big villa close to a township near Tiberias in order for the witnesses to hide there until after the trial. The villa had guest rooms, and every room had a Jacuzzi and television. They made sure to stock the house with good things, an abundance of food: two industrial sized refrigerators filled with meat, huge amounts of butter, two barrels of seeds, a food cupboard full of canned goods, canned milk for a year, flour and oil for baking bread, big bottles of juice concentrate, clothing, medicine, cleaning supplies etc. They also bought chickens who laid eggs and sacks of chicken feed Dochan, enough for a year. They ordered a big plasma screen with cable tv, a large amount of books about different subjects, filled the closets with a large quantity of cigarettes from the brands they knew they smoked, and even made sure there was an exercise room with a treadmill, weights and sit-up machine- all this in order for them to feel good at home. They rented a pool table, bought different games. They got a German shepherd to guard them. And all this was done in complete secrecy, and of course without letting their father know, because they knew that all of the conversations were taped and they didn’t want to jeopardize the only plan that gave them hope.

One of the witnesses who became a prosecution witness due to police pressure was Samy, Kari’s 16 year old son. Samy lived in trauma and fear of the police, and told the boys how they treated him in the interrogation rooms, how they threatened him until he lied, and made him sign tens of investigation papers when he didn’t know what was written in them. As time went on, the boys trusted him, believed in his desire to help them and let him in on their plan to save them. They brought him to the house they had rented and revealed their plan. One day, Samy asked Boaz for a cigarette and Boaz did not want to give him one, Samy got angry and threatened to tell the police about the plan.

On the 31st of January, the police surprisingly arrested my sons and me. Samy told the investigators about the house the boys rented and we were all shocked to discover that the indictment against the boys was for “witness kidnapping”, when nobody ever talked about kidnapping and there was no kidnapping. On the contrary, the witnesses asked for help and the plan didn’t even succeed or was even carried out!

Samy’s older siblings, Tsila and Yan, Kari’s children from previous marriages, who had acted together with the boys to save the situation and also against Kari, were not charged with anything and did not go to jail. Only later did I understand that her daughter Anastasia became a witness for the prosecution, and got immunity for her family members in exchange for her framing Daniel. There is a recording of Anastasia saying she went to the investigator Asher Lazmi to cry to him not to harm her mother and her siblings, because if he locks them up in jail she won’t testify against Daniel.

Aliza turned out to be a con artist. She extorted money from the children and asked them for endless help and said that if she didn’t get help from them she would get it from the police who promised her money. She made the kids run around like crazy in order to get her what she wanted, and still, it turned out in the indictment that she filed a complaint with the police against them and the wives, claiming that they bribed her not to testify against Daniel, and caused their arrest and ours, the wives.

So thus it happened, that seven months after Daniel’s arrest, when the police arrested Zalman, Boaz, and Gay-Noam, they once again went through exhausting interrogations during which the police told them that if they didn’t want to be accused of kidnapping and witness harassment, they have to accuse their father. My boys were strong in their resolve not to surrender to the police’s temptations. Zalman at first was in jail and then under house arrest for a whole year and did public service, all the while the police tried to break him and get him to say that he was his father’s victim, but he was strong, and came to court to testify for Daniel. After a year and a half long battle with the system, he and his wife Tsila had to participate in a weekly session with a clinical psychologist and social worker who explained to them in every session that they should give in to the system and threatened them that if they kept in contact with the family, their children would be taken away. By the way, Marie and Yan went through the same experience, and since the welfare people threatened to prevent them from raising their children if they were associated with the “Ambash Cult”, they also severed contact with me.

Boaz was locked up for a year in prison in Beer Sheva, in order to put pressure on him. He held out a long time, but by the time he was released, I didn’t recognize him. He cut his side-locks, took off his yarmulke, and flew to India.

Gay-Noam was taken handcuffed to hard interrogations day after day and they threatened him “either you point the finger at your father or we accuse you”. He asked the investigators: “Are you going to bring me to interrogation every day handcuffed?” They answered him: “We are stronger than you, and in the end we will break you, but if you start to cooperate, you won’t have to come back here anymore.” After a while in prison, he was transferred to house arrest with a family of psychologists. At some point he swallowed ten psychiatric pills with the aim of committing suicide. I didn’t know about it when it happened. I was in jail all of 2012, and no one told me what was going on with Gay-Noam. I was very worried about him. The Israeli Center for Cult Victims took advantage of his unstable mental state without a father, a mother, siblings, or money, and when he was saved from the suicide attempt, they told him in conversations and meetings that he grew up in a cult, and promised him money and support if he spoke out on television and the newspapers against his father. They paid for his studies at the prep school for matriculation at the Hebrew University, and made him feel he could trust them. He was also treated with psychiatric meds, until one day, after Daniel’s verdict, they said that Guy-Noam was going to talk to the press against his father. I couldn’t believe my ears. When I watched his interview on the television show, I felt that it would have easier had he come up to me with a gun and shot me dead. Each word said in the program was torturous and painfully bitter as hell. The son that I gave birth to in order to distribute and publicize the name of the Tzadik in the world, was lying in public and giving his father a bad name, while advertising the “Center for Cult Victims” whose goal it was to bury his father alive.

I was also shocked to hear on the show that his father stole his mother from him. We have always invested a lot of attention and love in him, and even when I got out of jail I was very worried and talked to him daily on the phone. I would talk to him for hours, we went to coffee houses, movies, and I showed respect for his girlfriend and had her over as a guest. His father always cared for him with devotion since he was little, how is this possible? He had his own private room in the recording studio to practice on the most professional drums, and another set of electronic drums. The soundman who taught the boys was there every day and he said that he had never seen such an investment in such a young person as in Guy-Noam. About a month after the show, Guy- Noam, like all the others, called me and said to me: “Mom, you have to choose, it’s me or Dad!”

Daniel’s mother was able to escape the horrors of the Holocaust in Bulgaria because she hid with the whole family in the closet at the home of a Bulgarian doctor, but the holocaust the State put her son and the whole family through, she did not survive. She died with great sorrow, four years after Daniel was arrested, after losing her husband and her only daughter. She did not live to see her son be released from prison.

When she remembered the times the children came to her to ask for money for the battle to release Daniel, she would talk wondrously about their energy, enthusiasm, and strong faith they had that they would be able to get their father released. It was very hard to see their deterioration after they were in jail, and she had a strong desire that the love in their hearts would prevail. She was shocked and pained that they stopped coming to visit her and ask after her. She called them every few months. She couldn’t understand how they came to terms with their father being imprisoned, how they abandoned their mother, and became best friends with Samy, the same child their mother raised since he was two, and became a prosecution witness who put them and their father behind bars.

With a bleeding heart, I cry the cry of a mother, calling out to the heavens, weeping over the terrible injustice, the bold faced assassination carried out in our own country. My children were strong in the face of this Machiavellian system for at least a year and a half while they tore apart the family. The system (investigators, police, social workers, case workers, counselors, boarding school directors, media, clinical psychologists, psychiatrists…) made them understand all too well that it is stronger than them. The system worked using powerful threats against each and everyone – the loss of their most important thing, until they managed to make each of them to become enslaved to its policy.

How is it possible that they took innocent and loving children, and systematically taught them to hate their parents and be embarrassed of their family? The children slowly despaired of prayer, and threw away their yarmulke and side-locks. Their stories are reminiscent of the Catholic Inquisition in Spain, which caused Jewish children to assassinate their parents for a blood libel. The regime knew how to turn children against their parents so much so that the children believed that it was a mitzvah to hunt down and kill their parents who didn’t want to convert.

Nonetheless, I thank Hashem that they are healthy. They are financially sound, and each of them has opened a successful business, e.g. a fitness center, air-conditioning company, an event production company, contractors, and they bought fancy cars and built themselves tools for survival.

I will not give up, not on my husband, and not on any of my children, and I hope that the children will stop fearing what other people think, and have the courage to choose their father and me.

My personal story- Shiran

If you heard a story about women who did not give up on their love,

Even when they were arrested by the Israeli Police Force who took everything that can be taken from them,

Even when they were hit, cursed at, and humiliated in interrogation rooms for not cooperating with an evil plan to jail, until his death, the man that they love, for deeds they know he didn’t commit!

Even when the police offered them, in exchange for cooperation and false testimony in this story, many benefits from the authorities in the country and political asylum, immunity, and protection, living accommodations, and fringe benefits, support from the authorities and recognition as “victims”. That recognition would provide them “with all they need”; and if they continue being stubborn, and don’t agree to cooperate with one of the paths described, they will regret it for years behind bars, and will cry over their children who will be given over to state custody, with no guarantee they will see them at all ever.

The police were certain (apparently due to their previous successes at corruption) that they would extort a signature or admission, and then easily announce in the headlines, that all of the horror stories, that they developed relentlessly, are the G-d’s honest truth, and that way no one would discover the fraud they committed that coldly put a 25 member family to death.

Immediately after the arrest all the media reported the capture of “The Country’s Criminal”; “The police haven’t seen anything like this in thirty years”; Head of Sadistic Cult Slave-Driver to Family!”

But which members of the family confirmed these reports?! What difference does that make?! He has been indicted! Press conference with all of the who’s who: Heads of welfare, police, and Ruth Matot, case worker who announced with complete confidence and without blinking an eyelid that welfare representatives met with each of the wives and children and heard the complaints, when in reality there is proof that they never met, not with the wives and not with the children, and thus they quickly and proudly present to the couch-sitters who are watching the box with a totally ridiculous story wrapped up as a blockbuster!

Without checking basic facts, on purpose, nothing was checked and no findings were presented except those made up in the twisted scene…!

For the obvious reason that they would have revealed the truth; nothing of the kind ever happened, only baseless stories, and the world would have understood that the police in Israel are crooked, and they would force drastic changes as a result of the greed that made the police go on a crime spree!

Since the women in this love story refused resolutely to all of the police’s indecent proposals, they immediately went to the alternative- arrest in battered women’s shelters under duress and separation, each woman in a different shelter, in a different city for long months, they took the painful hit of being defined as “abused women”, while the only blows they received were the fresh ones from the interrogation rooms by the cruel policewomen (full story below under the heading “battered woman”).

All this and more, in the eyes of the hidden cameras, which by law have to record and document every step of the investigation, which did not happen in this case.

And what is the reason for that? Superintendent Asher Lazmi, head of the investigation team, had to admit, shamelessly, in front of the judges at the “trial within the trial”, that he did indeed give specific orders not to document the specific proceedings in the investigation. Coincidentally, or not, precisely at the exact time loving family members became scared witnesses for the prosecution. When asked by the defense attorney “Can you explain that to us?” Superintendent Azmi answered: “I don’t have an answer exactly, what I was thinking at the time, I don’t know… there is a written statement. The prosecutor: “But the witness said that documentation is very important, that sometimes the statements can be cleverly edited so it is important to see the documentation, right?” Officer Lazmi replied: “Correct.” The prosecutor: “Why didn’t they record it?” Officer Lazmi: “I don’t have to record witnesses’ interrogations.”

Thus, without any effort, the police and Central Division investigators turned all of the contaminated testimonies and tampering into an easy way to get to the judges.

The complaints filed at Internal Affairs for sexual and verbal violence against family members during the long months of police interrogation, were denied categorically under the claim “lack of public interest”.

When the months of superfluous (since the indictment had already been submitted long before) interrogation was over, the women were released from the shelters. A short time later, they were called once again to the interrogation rooms to find out if they were prepared yet to give up on the love of their life; with all of the threats and agony they went through from the police and the conversations with the social workers who scared them that they wouldn’t get their children back managed to influence them to “sober up” and understand that in their current situation they should cooperate with the powers that be or be crushed like a cockroach under the tough sole of the heavy system’s boots.

In nearly complete solitary, under a feeling of alienation and endless threats, the wives became stronger in their belief that the truth and love have to be victorious! For that, they were thrown into prison for 11 months. What for? And actually, what difference does it make?! With horrible accusations of absurd deeds they didn’t commit! After several frustrating sessions in court, in which they were not allowed to talk or express their position, the prosecution claimed the opposite: they are no doubt “brain washed victims”.

By the time their turn came to bear witness- the proof- Ilana had almost been murdered by one of the inmates, Azamra was yelled at and chased from morning to night by an inmate who stabbed someone to death, and Aderet was in a cell with a woman who couldn’t stand the noise of the page being turned in “Likutei Tefilot”.

The prosecution witnesses were created by those who chose the benefits offered by the police in order to protect themselves, after they were told (by a police investigator of course) that if they didn’t cooperate in closing the target (Daniel) up forever by “affirming” the stories that they dictated in the interrogation rooms, they would sit in jail instead of him, and they would be indicted on serious charges that would stop their lives forever. All that and more is documented in the interrogation reports and protocols.

The lawyers who were appointed to defend the wives from the public defender’s office were shocked to discover that every one of the prosecution witnesses provided a different account full of contradictions! The court was embarrassed to hear the prosecution witnesses perjuring themselves so bluntly against the women, and no count remained when one witness claims something happened on a particular year, and another a long time earlier, a third claiming it was in a different city, and a fourth forgot what the lawyer taught him to say and in what tone, and his account was way out there, and the details and people involved in the stories were different… in short… the women were released on the same day.

But the man they love and lived with and know remained stuck with grotesque descriptions given in the indictment and verdict that are the opposite of the truth! The judges gave 26 years to a man nearly 60 years old!

The love story that was cut off by arrests, threats, blows, and indictment of innocent people, children among them, is not for the weak-hearted. And if a heart beats within you and not a stone, it is important that you know what is going on here on this planet. We, the only ones the Blessed created with the ability to choose, to choose right and avoid wrong, who are supposed to be “humane”, unlike other creatures on earth.

While you were having lunch, while you went shopping, while you had fun with those dear to you, while you put your kids to bed and woke them in the morning, while you made them a sandwich in school and washed their fruit, while you paid bills, while you looked in the mirror, while you brushed your teeth, while you drove back and forth and dialed and answered and thought and walked and rose and advanced and were late… terrible things happened to Israeli citizens who committed no crime and did not break the law. In a back room, with secret documents to judges who swallowed the pills the police gave them with cold water, and with warm words… the final result is produced, well processed by the media and government bodies working together to trick you.

That can happen to any one of you, at any moment, even now. Believe me. I didn’t believe in that sentence until it happened to me, hit me at home.

Hold on tight and stay with me to the end. Even though you don’t know yet, even if sometimes you will feel as if you are in a car race and sometimes on a pirate ship in the dead of the sea, and even if you feel sharp turns, and 360 degree loops, and your feet are in the clouds and your head in your pants, if your heart is programmed for truth, we will get exactly to where we need, even if it not what we thought. The path is part of the whole picture, and no less important.

Today, October 2015, it has been four years and still they won’t let these women who have been through hell in their own homeland for no reason – see the man they love, have children, and live as they choose, the way they did before the “much ado about nothing”. The whole thing was stirred up by a shady girl who wanted revenge after being inspired by a science fiction television show masquerading as an investigative program. To take revenge on whom? On Daniel, who dared say not to her obsessive attempts to seduce him, time after time, and barely got out from under her hot hands alive…

I am Shiran Ambash, 32 years old, and I was the sixth wife, now I am the forth. Two less; Aliza (the fifth) whom you can see and hear on youtube (<https://youtu.be/qAZ-L6pXxJo>) recording herself under arrest conditions at the battered women’s shelter telling about the police threats and the welfare threatening to take away her children if she doesn’t give false testimony against Daniel Ambash. She admitted that she had done it under duress in the police interrogations, and expresses regret. Two months later, in other words, five months after the arrest, she changed her story in accordance with what the investigator Lilach Ranan dictated to her while promising to give her daughter back and giving them a good, quiet, and comfortable life. For five months she fought, and asked Daniel’s older children who were the only ones in contact with Daniel, to give him her love, asked that he call her everyday so she doesn’t think he has given up on her and that might break her. She tried to connect us wives with all her might, brought us together to pray at the Tzadik Rabbi Isroel of the Holy Petek in Jerusalem, even though we were not supposed to see or speak with each other, she took every opportunity, when they let her go to Netanya to visit Batya, her child with Daniel, on the way back she would arrange to meet us all in secret in Tel Aviv: in the central bus station on the ground floor; Tsila, Zalman, and Boaz, Gay-Noam and us of course, sat around and tried to think of a plan that would get us out of the mud. Each time she asked us to hang on even though we are far apart, and to pray for her that she doesn’t succumb to her mother and brother’s pressure to get divorced and date the wealthy neighbor who came from the United States to tempt her to open a new page in her life with him. I asked her if she was seriously considering it, she said that it’s not her, it is the pressure being put on her from all sides, and that she feels it is a spiritual battle. She said she gets weak when we are apart, and that all of the bad talk around her, and the conversations with the social workers sink in, twist her heart and affect her each time more and more. When she got on the bus to go back to the shelter in Jerusalem, she did not go immediately to grab a seat; she stayed next to the driver and made heart signs with her hands, with big and sad smiles as the bus slowly pulled off the curb. Something in my heart felt the petals falling off her flower; something in my heart did not want to see her wane.

On rainy days, she managed to sneak in meetings in which we all gathered in the commercial center near the shelter where she was staying. She made each of us a special gift, earrings for me and Azamra, a necklace for Aderet, and for Ilana and Esther she made silk scarves in colors they especially liked. In a special meeting she organized at Rina’s (my childhood friend) house, she brought each of us a magnet with a picture of a couple of birds, “Simply a love story” written on it and decorated with red hearts. And for Rosh Hashana she made us an apple filled with chocolates and handed us stuffed birds on a long stick. She got us all together for television shows and newspapers so that we could tell about the police’s lies and what they were trying to pin on Daniel, only because he dared promote that “Saba the King and Uman are now in Jerusalem”. She instructed each of us to tell what they did to us in the interrogation rooms, the threats, the bribery (<https://youtu.be/jlhws1p7MZA>) and especially how they dared break a family of ten souls, only because it didn’t fit in with the “Aryan bourgeois” production line of the State of Israel, 2011. On the night of the festivity of Samuel the Prophet she felt like a winner as she was filmed with the reporter, Raviv Druker, to correct her mother’s distortion in a slanderous piece a few years earlier, only because she stopped giving her mother money to pay off her debts in the gray market. Two days before her birthday, she called to remind us that she wanted to celebrate it with us, and she said she hoped she could get away from the shelter and her family to be with us for a few hours. That evening, she arrived at Kari’s apartment on Nahum Street in Geula, where all the women and Samy, who had run away from the boarding school which the police had locked him in, met. She brought vodka for a toast, and talked about all of the problems stacking up everywhere. And it wasn’t getting any easier… on her birthday two days later, we invited her to a spa at a luxurious hotel for a facial and a massage, and after the treatment we surprised her with a birthday party and little designer cakes just like she loves, and we tried to make her happy. She stopped a moment after blowing out the candles and said dramatically that she dreamt about Arye, Daniel’s father who died… I don’t know where that came from. She always had to ruin things at the height of joy with something sad and bitter, with her big eyes, certain and confident that they said something marvelous, without getting confused, and , as if she couldn’t hear herself, continue. She said very harsh things, and it did not seem that she understood the weight of her words as she said heavy things lightly and that she took her thoughts and dreams too seriously, when they are only figments of her imagination. In the same breath, she opened the book “Conversations after Sipurei Ma’asiot”, and begins to read:

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“Even the smallest distancing, even less than a hair’s breathe of moving further away from where we were to begin with, there in the worlds above we will have distanced ourselves many thousands of worlds and clicks. All the more so when a person has walked a click or several clicks from G-d’s work. Eyes don’t see it, etc.”

When she stood before us and parted she said: “You shouldn’t be jealous of me.” It made me laugh that that was what she had to say, I am pretty sure that we all felt pity on her more than anything else, and even then there was no place for jealousy… she stayed and looked at us a bit longer before running along to the locked tower under the social workers’ supervision.

One day, when she came back from a visit with Batya, she asked us to wait for her at the train station in Tel Aviv. When she saw us, she ran towards us and when she spread her arms around me she began to cry and say that Batya asked where her father was, said she missed him and she didn’t know what to tell the girl. She looked at me with her big eyes, as if waiting to hear that everything changed, that the war was over and we won, that we are going home… I didn’t have any news for her, and she felt me squirm uncomfortably because I really wanted to strengthen her, and I didn’t know with what… She said that she couldn’t handle it; it was all too hard… She scared me, because in this movie, when somebody raises their hands in submission they don’t stay in place, but go over to the enemy who uses him to attack and destroy us completely. I told her: “You are not giving up, Aliza, this is not the end of the story!” She walked more quickly to the bus and sent kisses in the air. She said that every second we wasted on stupid arguments was a waste, we had the best life there is and how could we allow something like this to happen?! Today I think I should have told her that what was happening was also part of life, and that it is another thing to cope with on the path we have travel, why did I look for other answers I thought she would like more, and in the end I couldn’t find the words… I tried to catch up with her despite her big steps (she is taller than me by at least ten centimeters), I told her that now for certain we would be best friends. She hinted that that was it, it is over. I asked her: “But you love him”. She said: “Of course I love him; he is the best thing that ever happened to me. Nothing can change that.” She was serious and smiled bitterly… I tried to remind her what she had said: “But you are always saying that there are two birds, one male and one female, and they are only one of a kind in the world… and they looked for each other a lot until they found that they could not find one another. And so each built a nest, so that the other could hear the sound, remember? And when the night comes, these birds begin to cry, each to his partner, and the voices can be heard from afar… the longings can be heard in their voices, remember? You said that during the day the birds gather and comfort each other, that they can still find each other… and that the happiness of the day cannot be heard, only the crying voice of the couple can be heard… do you hear Aliza?” Heavy tears flowed from the corner of her eyes and washed her face which looked as she had lost hope… Why didn’t I find words? Comforting words, after all of the messages she had sent… I wanted to run after her and not let her go, but my legs turned leaden like two weights, and wouldn’t let me move. I turned to stone like a statue. I didn’t know what to do. What was she doing? What’s going on? This can’t be, I am in a nightmare… Suddenly I was flooded with memories, a sharp pain cut me, I regretted every moment I was not at her side, that I thought of myself above all, was jealous , instead of trying to change together, to be and do a bit differently… she told me how she first came dressed as little red riding hood, and when she saw Daniel with the baby Yedidya in his hands, she said that she felt the warmth, the love, the light that was missing in the house she grew up in and she was moved by Daniel’s generosity with the children and the family. She said that she wanted a love like that for herself. Sometimes she would say that she wants to live with him alone, that he divorce the other women, but she still didn’t give him up when none of the other women would budge. Nonetheless, she believed strongly in the structure of several wives, because in any case Daniel is the best husband in the world. She would perform shows for him and surprise him with romantic gestures. When they argued, I wanted to be there because it was like a fascinating movie the likes of which no one has made yet. To watch them from the side was to me the closest thing to watching up close what *I* had always dreamed it would be like with the one I love, even though through my filters it seemed that he had a weakness for her. I was jealous of her influence over him, after she would yell and cry in a dramatic dialogue she had dragged him into, he would forgive her for everything. She would melt him and manipulate him every time as she wished. She gave the impression she could control nature; that it would conform to her needs. And now what?! A storm blew everything away. Big chaos.

I will tell you a bit more about myself so you understand where I came from and where I was going…

I was the first born daughter of young and affluent parents in Tiberias. I have a sister three years younger than me, and a brother ten years younger.

From first to third grades, I studied in school in Tiberias. My homeroom teacher, Chana Marom, told my mother that she should “put a hot pepper in my rear”, that I “float”… I was not interested by my studies. I was mostly busy drawing. One day, at recess, when all of the children played outside, I found myself in the middle of the court, coloring with large colored chalk on a black asphalt surface, which looked to me like a huge board waiting to be brought to life with color… I was so engrossed with drawing, I didn’t hear the bell ring or see all of the children go back to their classes.

Suddenly, I saw solid black high heels at eye level, since I was on my knees… I lifted my head, and got really scared from the severe look on the principal’s face. I didn’t think I was doing anything wrong. Just her response, and the fact that I found myself alone outside of the school building really freaked me out, until I started to erase the chalk drawing from the hot asphalt by rubbing it with my thumb, until I hurt from the burning of my skin. This caused me to run away. Feeling awful and crying, I ran to my grandmother’s house two blocks from the school. When I arrived, I called my mother in tears telling her that I didn’t want to go back to school. She tried to comfort me, but immediately added that I had no choice and I had to go to school until I was 18.

That sentence accompanied me; my mother repeated it many times over the years, until I finally came of age…

I was full of confidence. Maybe it was because my mother adored me and liked the fact that her daughter attracts attention everywhere we went, all the kids followed her around, producing plays, pantomiming, Marionette Theater, and bands. I would organize groups and make “camps”. I had a wonderful gift for doing impressions of languages and characters, which made people, hold their stomachs from laughing so hard. I was a source of pride for my mother… Mom even said that her friends would come to the house just to see her unique multi-talented daughter who affected even the most apathetic people, and with whom everyone easily fell in love. My father, who did not talk much, always went to work early in the morning and came home in the evening. However, he would make up for lack of time with extras and gifts. Only much later, I heard from a friend whose parents didn’t have money that she had to wait a month to get something she wanted. I remember that I didn’t know there was such a thing that parents didn’t have money to buy their children what they wanted. I grew up happy and wealthy. I was, without a doubt, my mother’s doll. She styled my hair every day, with pins and special bands, princess clothes, that can be seen in tens of albums my mother has in the safe to this day, as she mourns the day I covered my head and my belly button. She would have preferred I became a provocative actress on stage, rubbing elbows with the upper echelon and marrying one of them, who would, in her fantasy, open a store for me and her which sells items that she decorated and colored, her clay sculptures and the pictures she learned to make at “Oranim”, when she studied art history (needless to say, I had other plans…).

When I finished elementary school, on summer break, I cried with all of my strength that I wanted to go to a theater arts school, so at least it would be interesting, because it burdened me that my mother insisted that I get my matriculation, I couldn’t understand why. The children’s magazine “Kulanu” published an article about me with a half-page picture under the title: “Shiran Aslan, young author at 11”.

My mother tried to appease me saying that art schools only exist in the center of the country, and she won’t send me to live so far away from her, so until I was 18, I was under her supervision. Again, that sentence… I couldn’t even imagine how that time would ever pass. I tried to cut myself off from reality, and I lived in a world between the stories I read and the stories I wrote, between “groups” I made with kids from the moshav and I guided them on journeys on the wings of the imaginary stories I invented, because I had to believe that anything was possible, otherwise I couldn’t be able to get through those years happily. My system was mainly: to think I am in a movie, and I have no choice but to play the main role to the best of my ability.

When I was 18, I had planned to leave my parents for the big city, for which I had waited expectantly, and which I knew would accept me with open arms and no prejudice, and would allow me to feel free being me, and to express myself as I see fit.

My mother put the pressure on to enlist in the army and didn’t hesitate to sneak in a sarcastic comment: “At least do this like everyone else”, to hint that up till now I was not like everyone. Only to stop her from having complaints against me, I told her that this was the last thing I would do for her, and after that she can’t ask me for anything else! I waited twenty years to live as I wanted- not a short time! And the days were long and wearisome waiting for my freedom…

I didn’t want her to be proud of me, so I purposefully chose to be a “shekemistit” (run an army canteen)! Shekem in the IDF is a kind of “supermarket” for soldiers on different bases, and is not considered a particularly patriotic assignment, to say the least, but rather pretty lowly. They sent me to basic training and a “mashakit shekem” course (which is akin to canteen director!). Three weeks after “breaking distance” with the commanders (a meeting between the soldiers and the commanders at the end of the course, without tough guy games and without the gap between soldier and commander, in civilian clothes and not in uniform), they admitted that they cracked up from my nonsense, and would leave the class so we wouldn’t see that they couldn’t stay serious and tough when Shiran turns everything into a “ stand-up” show… For me, like I already said, that was my only way to survive, no necessarily out of a need for attention or adoration.

I was stationed at the Hermon base. The canteen I ran was a hole in the wall of the soldiers’ club at an isolated base, and nearly everyone who arrived got an imitation of all of the products at the canteen. Nonetheless, I couldn’t handle it and ran away. I turned myself into the MPs, and they took me to be judged at Kele 400 Women’s Jail in Tzriffin. I cried to the judge that I only enlisted to please my mother and I felt that I was choking and I couldn’t take authority and certainly not orders! He was sorry when he saw I couldn’t keep from crying… He was so sorry and said: “Even if I wanted to give you less, I can’t. You got 15 days! I can’t give you any less!”

That is how I got 15 days in military jail. I saw only black. I couldn’t stay here, I looked around to find a way out. There wasn’t any. Everything was fences and barbed wire. Only when I told myself that I got a part in a movie about a girl who enlisted only so her mother would let her live in peace for the rest of her life in accordance with her free will, and her independent choices, and not be her doll anymore, and she was in military jail, only then I thought I could endure this. A few days later, the commanding officer of the “facility” gave us (the prisoners) at talk and said we could write a letter. I was happy and immediately jumped at the chance to get out of this using my talent as a writer. I got out after nine days. My father made some calls, and I was transferred to be a guide at a memorial site for Golani, an “open” base, five minutes from home, 11 soldiers and one commander. That is how I got through the last year. When I got out, my father told me that “preferred work” for just-released soldiers would give me a bonus and other benefits, and it was only 150 hours or 150 days, I don’t remember. I said that I didn’t want to work at the types of jobs being offered to just-released soldiers in order to get the benefits… So my father decided to run a gas station, so that I could work as an attendant, and that is how my parents managed to keep me home for six more months. On the 150th day, I took off the jumpsuit, and wearing jeans and a t-shirt, I got on a direct bus to Tel Aviv, with a huge backpack from the army which was now filled with what I had put in to start my new life of freedom.

My boyfriend, Chatzav, waited for me in Tel Aviv. I met him when I was on my final leave from the army and was staying with a friend. He said it was love at first sight. Even though I asserted that I did not want a partner, and that I wanted to start life alone, he was handsome and romantic and gave the impression that he adored me, and he was an actor, an emcee, and a drummer, who had left the religious life, and that suited me. I moved in with him into an apartment he shared with two roommates, and we quickly moved into an apartment of our own. He grew up in a religious home and he told me how he ran away from “Kfar Chabad” boarding school. I felt sorry for him and I wanted us to start new lives together. I supported him and encouraged him that he could succeed in what he loved, and he believed in me and pushed me to work in acting, emceeing, and modeling. I hadn’t planned on working, I thought I came with enough money; I just wanted to be free of debts and obligations, just to live.

Sometimes, we would go for Shabbat at his parents. I was anti-religious but in order not to cause a scene and fit in with the scenery, I looked for hours for layers of clothing to be more modest and removed the nose ring. In the armored bus, full of Charedi men wearing black suits and hats, on the way to his parents, I became anxious in a way I cannot explain, and I couldn’t stop crying until the bus stopped and we got off. Before we got on the next bus, I wanted to tell Chatzav that I was going back, but I couldn’t do it. I announced demonstratively that I was putting the nose ring back and I didn’t care about anything. Chatzav gave me a crooked smile and refrained from reacting, because he was scared of causing a scandal in front of all of the religious black-hats. His parents were very nice to me, which did not prevent us from going out for a cigarette after the Shabbat meal. I stayed in my anti-religious pose, I didn’t understand anything about Torah or faith in Hashem, nor did I try to understand.

When the money I had saved ran out, I started working at major advertising agencies as a freelancer on interesting projects I chose, many of them with Chatzav. We were photographed together and did some short films. Chatzav worked day and night, and also studied “acting in front of a camera”, worked out in the gym, and held theater rehearsals at home. I was mostly busy writing from the recesses of my mind, still looking for my place and purpose in the world; I took long walks in the flat city, and the random meetings with interesting people on the way turned into short stories in my book on insights about the big city. I loved to draw as well; mostly my drawings were sketches of nude models and women. Probably my best sketch was of Chatzav modeling.

Chatzav did not have money. He had huge debts. My mother would call and say that maybe I should work as an office manager to pay for me to go to acting school, I would get angry and tell her time and again that I don’t want money from them, mostly so that I didn’t have to be dependent on anyone, so they wouldn’t tell me what to do. It would drive me crazy that she tried to interfere in my life and try to control it, and it distanced me from them…

A year later, we moved into a new apartment on Shenken Street. Chatzav encouraged me to sign up for acting and emceeing studies, which were held on Balfour Street, only a few minutes walk from our apartment.

In one of the classes run by one of the best directors in the country, he handed out short monologues to learn by heart, the first one I got was “Morpheus” from the movie “Matrix”. In this scene, Morpheus let Neo choose between the blue pill and the red pill, in other words stay in a world of lies where he had lived to this day or go to another dimension, with no return, which is the true dimension (<https://youtu.be/9a9B1q06ihA>).

The truth really hit me when I discovered by accident, that Chatzav was in contact with no other than a transgender, covered with colorful tattoos, dressed minimally. I saw her almost every day on Dizengoff Street, and everyone knew he was a prostitute… I wasn’t sure any more that I knew Chatzav as well as I had thought… and after years of living together, I began to understand where he and his partner got the inspiration for their play. They succeeded in convincing a well known playwright to write and direct and give them the leading roles, in a respectable theater, in a play about the double life of two haredim, whose wives did not know who they spent their nights with… I felt stupid, suddenly it dawned on me. In any case, at the end, I forgave him.

Regarding my relationship with Chatzav, maybe because of my age, after the army, after leaving my parents’ home, with the move to Tel Aviv, studying acting and living together, there was something convenient about it at the time, and he tried to please me, and more or less managed to handle my whims… once, when he came home late and I started to become suspicious, I locked him outside of our shared apartment. For hours, we sat on either side of the door and I didn’t let him in. I cried that he was not satisfied and had found another. He wrote me make up letters without rhymes, love letters without romance or word games, and sent them under the door and cried. It is possible that he put on an act for me, that it was also just a nice gesture and I appreciate him for it, but it was nonetheless not very convincing… After several hours of talking through the door, I gave in and opened it. And still, I did not stop being tragic, and left him feeling ashamed.

After more than three years living together, working together, and going through a lot together, when he began talking about getting married and he was already 26, I couldn’t even think about it. I was still fumbling around in the dark about this relationship and verification of the concept that seemed to me like a lie: “being a couple”. We separated.

On the one hand, the separation was a relief. I always had the need to be free, and maybe something in the relationship blocked me. Not necessarily because of him. I continued to feel it in every relationship I had. The formal definition of “being a couple” disturbed me, and I felt that it restricted my freedom to move in space, and reduced my point of view, and in the end I always “stopped playing by the rules”, and preferred to reinvent myself, and to move forward according to my own will with no commitment to anyone else. I didn’t want to live under any definition, just according to my choice at the moment.

I became a “single woman” in the big city, and I loved it. I rented a big, beautiful studio apartment, in a special building filled with artists. Each floor was a long corridor with nine studio apartments on either side. There were at least three actors, a musician, an artist, and a writer. Everyone was always invited to my place. At the entrance to my apartment stood a wooden coat rack with hats of all kinds and shapes and sizes, for men and women, special coats for characters in different sizes, ties, wigs, and shoes. Everyone who entered had to put on at least one prop and get into character. That’s how we flowed with long improvisations and we even made up a comic skit, the neighbor across the hall (who was a close friend, who lived there before me and thanks to whom I moved there) was the copywriter; the writer, I, and my downstairs neighbor were the actors. Hasty chance meetings with different men, e.g.: the Russian, the Japanese, the African American dancer, Grossman the Moroccan, the charming musician, the romantic Mexican, the muscle man with the bulldog, the punk from Ben Yehuda, the barman from “HaYehoshua”, the redhead with long hair on the beach, the kibbutznik, the Jerusalemite, they all were added, as part of a colorful list, to the memoir about to be published as part of an adventure diary of short stories, revealing the world of a girl, a part that most prefer to hide…

I had been working at the exclusive Ramat Aviv shopping mall as a hostess in a luxury car sales dealership for 15 days when a family arrived; a father, mother and child. When I showed them the car, we sat in the front seats, the father and I, while his wife and child were just in front of the windshield. The father, who was nearly 80 years old, started flirting with me and asking me questions that made me turn all sorts of colors… my boss had just arrived, and must have noticed the distress on my face, and he acted like a gentleman as he came toward me and announced “my wife!” quickly and got me out of the luxurious car in the mall, to my private car in the parking lot. He continued presenting me at the company office and to all of his acquaintances with the same nickname, and I got mad and told him that “I am not anyone’s wife…” A few weeks later, he grounded me at his apartment and tried to turn me into something I am not. While he was at work, I got a deep and sharp pain in the center of my stomach. I rushed to my apartment to bury myself under the covers; to yell in pain without disturbing the neighbors. My mother called and said they were coming to take me to the hospital. When he arrived at my apartment with chicken liver from a restaurant, he forced me to eat, I threw up, and when he heard that my parents were coming especially from the north to take me to the hospital he got mad that I called my parents, because he is everything to me, and as my husband- he is my father and mother, and I should call them and tell them they shouldn’t come! I didn’t call. They came and took me to the hospital. They did all of the tests possible. After an overnight stay in the hospital, the doctors announced “we didn’t find any signs…” There was nothing. When he came to get me I told him I thought it was “psychosomatic, I know that my soul is crying out, I am not where I should be.” He laughed at me. I hated that he didn’t understand me. It annoyed me even more when he went on to say: “Marry me! We’ll have little blonde kids, and you will be a queen! You won’t have to do anything, I will build you a castle on a hill and you will have horses…” It was nice that he thought I was the one for him, but I couldn’t stand the thought, even for one minute, even in my imagination: being locked up in someone else’s life… I wanted to continue to seek out my life. On Friday afternoon, his usual custom returned, and when I was on the way to work he called to tell me: “I am picking you up for schnitzel at my mother’s, they are waiting for us.” I gathered my courage, and gave up castles, horses, and palaces, and said: “No, enough! I want to go out with friends, don’t tell me what to do!” On the other side of the line: “if that is the case, take your things from the house, I don’t want to see you anymore.” This time, I thought, I am not going to give in to his charm and fancy words, not his magnetic charm nor his impeccable finances! That is not what I am looking for! I can’t hear the word “wedding” without getting nauseous. Every time. I told myself, from now on I want to be alone, no boyfriend and no men, they just prevent me from finding what I am looking for… and once again, I found myself in a relationship that blocked me, with a man who wants to plant me in the ground for reproduction. I object! No more!

Five years since moving to the big city, sitting at the “On the Rocks Beach” with my friends from the bar around me, I drank a few more bottles of alcohol. Waves of thoughts hit me, I actually feel lonely. When everyone was packing up and getting ready to go they asked: “Are you coming?” I lied and said that I wanted to stay to see the sunrise… when I was finally left alone, I let my head sink into the sand and asked the angels in the skies to take my soul from this world, I can’t live in it any more… I felt as if my soul was sucked out of me and sent beyond; to eternity… suddenly a voiceless scream came out of me “No! I want to carry out my mission- the reason I was created to begin with,” I felt that I had abilities that were meant for some purpose, I didn’t know where to channel all of these desires… a phone call interrupted my thoughts. Rina, my friend from the Golan Heights was on the line, she said she was at my place and waiting to see me. I told her that I was in no state to show my face… She came to the beach and picked me up along with a couple of million grains of sand that came with me… She got scared of the mess I was in, and said she had never seen me like that, that I am nearly unrecognizable…

“That’s it!” I managed to say on the verge of vomiting: “I have to wean myself off this city!”

I rented a small room with a garden on a kibbutz near the Sea of Galilee. I felt that I wanted to do exactly the opposite of what I had done up till now (details in my personal log). I didn’t want any more men. I started thinking about a relationship with a woman, but I wasn’t brave enough to act on it.

I looked for a job in the barnyard. I felt that I had reached such a point of superiority that I had to dive head first into cow shit, and start from there.

Before the Yom Kippur fast, I had a strange feeling. Like I had exited my own body and floated above the years of my existence on earth. I saw real scenes from my life, in which I hadn’t realized what I now saw, the damage I caused, intentionally or not, and I didn’t feel how badly I hurt those who loved me and those who didn’t. Looking back, I didn’t understand how anyone could love someone like me. I was sorry for what I had done, and sorry for what I should have done and didn’t do. I felt that I had spoiled things, and I wanted to fix it. I wanted to find everyone who had suffered from my disgusting behavior, from my superior behavior and from the selfish behavior that accompanied my impertinent self, and make up with them. Suddenly, I realized that I left in my wake only injured people, left with scars, or as my friend Shani said, I left bodies… how could I move on with such an obvious mark on me? That is impossible. The more I thought about it, I remembered more and more situations in which I acted insensitively, I didn’t think about anyone but myself. I remembered situations in which I hurt others and left, still looking for people to fulfill my wishes and desires. I wrote letters and called to express my regret to all of the “victims” of my horrid pride…

For the first time, I am thirsty and tortured by my crimes and transgressions, ask for forgiveness, expect atonement, salvation, from the heavens…

They didn’t need workers at the barnyard. I found a job in the packing house, worked 11 hours a day, with people from Thailand and Druze with a tough foreman with a glorious military history who yelled at us like we were his soldiers. I thought it would help me to feel some humiliation… it was not easy, getting up every morning at 0400 in the morning and working on an assembly line that carries drab cartons, in which I was to sort tangerines, always in the same way… for so many hours…

Luckily, my mother’s close friend (who knew me since I was 15 and ran the souvenir shop in the kibbutz) called me with a job offer. I was glad that Providence had put me in a clean, air-conditioned shop, and I started working at the kibbutz souvenir shop. I still tried to keep to myself. Not let anything confuse me, to listen to my heart. When around me there was only nature at its most glorious and powerful, what did my heart say to me?! Where would it take me…?!

Many tourists came from all over the world to the souvenir shop and were moved by the country and the Jews. One Saturday, I was working in the store in the vacation village (there were two stores, one at the kibbutz on the Sea of Galilee, and one at the vacation village- across from the dining room), a tourist from Germany put Talitot, Yarmulkes, Mezuzot, Psalms and other signs of Judaism on the table. She asked me what each was and what it represented. I, who didn’t know what to answer, felt that I was embarrassing the Jewish people. After that shift, and when a number of other embarrassing incidents occurred with visitors from here and abroad, asking questions about the Torah, customs of our holy forefathers and stories from the Bible, and I didn’t have answers for them… I turned on the computer in my tiny room, and started learning about Judaism. I told the store manager that I couldn’t work on Saturdays anymore, because I felt it hurt me. Personally, I thought to myself that I might confuse the non-Jews who come to the kibbutz from all over the world, some of whom know that according to the Torah Jews cannot work on Shabbat. They made me happy to be Jewish, and I wanted to be a living example of how the Torah was given to us so we could live by it, so why shouldn’t I live by it? And what had I done so far?! The manager of the store explained that I would have to find someone to fill in, because often the height of business was on Saturdays. Replacements started coming in order to train. I felt happy, and I was excited by the thought: where is the wind going to carry me now, what is my next destination…? I found a book called “Yahadut, Halacha Lemaase” (Judaism in Practice) and I found a law for women I could immediately follow. I read about the laws for immersion (in water). When it became night and it was especially dark at the beach, I left my clothing on a rock near the water, and got in under the sweet waters of the Sea of Galilee. I went down slowly and then rose out of the water in one move, and then went down again swiftly. Under the water, I started to yell: “Leader of the people of Israel! Show me the leader of the sons of Israel, show me Moses.”

At the time, I had a good relationship with Tal who studied culinary arts in Tiberias and rented an apartment in the area. I knew Tal via Chatzav, and he also had run away in his youth from the Kfar Chabad boarding school. Tal was known for his wisdom and knowledge in Torah and other subjects. Once, when I was in the shop, tourists asked about our father Abraham and other questions, and I whispered to him into the mouthpiece: “Tal, teach me the whole Torah, quickly!” I offered him a deal, I would find him a woman, and he would teach me Torah. When he went to see his father, who was a Breslov Chassid (I didn’t know what a chassid was or a Breslover), he came back to me with a present on loan from his father: “Sipurei Maasiot from Rabbi Nachman”. He told me that there were big secrets encoded within, and that Kaballah is hidden in every letter and word. There were many powers in these stories and he asked that I guard the treasure since it is the most important thing to his father, and he promised to return it to him. He said that even if I don’t understand, I should read it anyway, because the soul knows. The more you read and pray and get stronger, the more you can understand, and different things, because each time you can discover what your soul needs at the time. In the first story- Bat Melech Shehalcha Leibud - the second in line for the crown was determined to find the lost daughter of the king, everywhere, for many years, and did not give up even when everyone told him to let it go, and that the place he is looking for does not exist and he will never find it. He continued to insist, didn’t get confused or give up, even when he discovered that he had gotten to her and lost her and she had gone further away and is gone, and many more years will pass until he gets to her again… he continued and tried to find her, until he did. The story gave me strength, because I knew that I was in a process of seeking what I had lost, maybe in parallel worlds, maybe in previous lives. Seeking the thing for which I had been created. I couldn’t give up, because I felt I had to find a true way to live, and like Rabbi Nachman said: “He who seeks the truth, truly shall find it…” I wanted to live the stories in my daily life, and it stirred a longing to find people to put together a traveling theater, a sort of traveling circus, that would be made up in the shape of a Magen Dovid, and we would put on plays based on Rabbi Nachman’s stories and each time more people would join us, and together we would spread the words of Rabbi Nachman over the country, and that is what my life would look like.

And back on the ground; in order to keep Shabbat and since I didn’t know any else who was religious, I signed up for a weekend of lectures for families who wanted to be stronger in mitzvahs at a hotel in southern Israel. In one of the lectures, maybe the last one, the host invited anyone who wanted to become stronger in mitzvahs and religion to come to the stage. I raised my hand up high because I wanted to be allowed to go up to the stage, and when I went up, I was excited to say with full intentions: “I take upon myself full penitence”… From there, I found myself at a seminary in Jerusalem. I rented an apartment with five more girls who studied at the seminary and I started learning what it takes to repent, to know the difference between impurity and purity, to be a “kosher” Jew, and so forth. Studying only with girls charmed me. At a bride’s Shabbat at the seminary, I cried from excitement, I felt I was in a dream, how could I have gone through a whole life in a parallel universe without knowing there was another way? I could have been saved so much sorrow if I hadn’t studied with boys from a young age… I could have been an entirely different person… What didn’t seem right to me was that there were so many types of Judaism, and for every type- different rabbis and their followers followed them blindly. I couldn’t understand how that could be. After all, Hashem chose Moses who was the ‘most modest of men’; and taught him the whole Torah, and gave him the Torah, and even called it Moshe’s Torah so that we would get it from him, and he would teach us to exist and live by it, and that is the direction that Hashem gave to all the Jews. Therefore I thought, I have to find Moses, because without him everything is chaos, as I had experienced in my 25 years. And as it is said “and they will believe in Hashem and Moses his servant”, there is no way to understand the Torah without him, and anyone who tries anyway, will understand everything backwards, and go against what Hashem determined. When the girls in the apartment wanted to light candles for the transcendence of the souls of the Tzadikim, I asked them who they were lighting them for, and they showed me pictures of famous rabbis (whom I didn’t recognize), I couldn’t look in their faces. I panicked. They seemed like strangers, and I didn’t feel a part of it. I told them that I would light candles for our holy forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and for Moses (Moshe Rabeinu). One day, one of my roommates took me to a lecture by a fashion professor at “Bezalel” (an art academy where she studied). A three hour lecture. Besides for a red scarf with which she laughed and flirted throughout the whole lecture, I don’t remember anything but one sentence she said: “**Change never comes from the majority.”** On the bus on the way back, I remembered that it was a day off at the seminary and there were no classes; I told my roommate that I was in need of a Torah lesson. She said that I should get off at the central bus station and not too far from there, there was a lesson in an hour and a half by a hassidic rabbi. When she told me his name, I remembered that was the same rabbi who lectured at the weekend in the south, and it was the first time I heard a religious person say that if he saw a naked woman drowning in a river, he wouldn’t think about being pious and guarding his modesty and letting her drown, but jump in the water to save her, she is a daughter of Israel, like a sister. It changed the opposition I had to religious people, who I had previously thought I couldn’t talk to or understand how they think… (Then I didn’t know that it says in the Gemarra that anyone who does not jump in the water in that situation is called a “foolish chassid”). I got off at the central bus station, and while I waited I looked for a book about Chanukah. The holiday was coming up and I thought it was about time I learned why we light candles and the meaning of the holiday. While I was near the bookstand without finding any book to look at, a nice, thin woman with a head covering approached me, Aderet. She asked me if I had seen this Petek (note). What is that? I asked curiously about the thing she held in her hand; a note, which looked like a secret parchment, like a map to an ancient world. “This is the note from heaven sent by Rabbi Nachman 111 years after his passing to Rabbi Isroel Ber Odesser, who studied at Rabbi Meir Ba’al HaNes’ Yeshiva in Tiberias.” I didn’t connect that Rabbi Nachman to the Rabbi Nachman who wrote the stories I had read at the kibbutz. In Tiberias? I was born in Tiberias! That reminded me that the Tiberians always liked to brag that Tiberias is a holy city full of the righteous’ graves, and that Chazal (our sages of blessed memory) revealed that the messiah will come from Tiberias. I asked her about the connection to Moses and she said that Moses’ soul returned in the five Tzadikim of the generations, and these are the Tzadikim who gave the Torah to the world and they are: Moses, who gave us the Torah, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai who discovered the Holy Zohar, the Holy Ari who discovered Kabbala, Ba’al Shem Tov the Holy who discovered Hasidism, and Rabbi Nachman who discovered the secret of the new song and said: “My fire will burn until the coming of the Messiah.” And in this Petek he revealed to Rabbi Isroel that he is the one who returned: “and about you I said my fire will burn until the coming of the Messiah.” And he vouched that Blessed Be He would fix the world. Rabbi Isroel did not want to be called Rabbi, so he was called “Saba”. She said that Saba said: All you have to do is say with your mouth this name: Na Nach Nachma Nachman MeUman and that sweetens all of the problems and the judgments and all of the travesties and heresies, everything!.. Na Nach and everything is good… that is all, the whole Torah and all of Israel and all of the remedies and all of the salvations and all in one saying… and she told me that Rabbi Yonathan Ben Uziel wrote in the prelude to the Song of Songs about the discovery of ten songs between the creation of the world and the days of the Messiah. And in the holy Zohar Parashat Pinchas, Rabbi Shimon says: “… A simple song will awaken in the world, double, triple, quadruple, and it will uplift his letter, Yod, Yod-Hey, Yod-Hey-Vav, Yod Hey Vav-Hey”… (hints at the song Na Nach Nachma Nachman Meuman which is Hashem clad in the name of the Tzadik who opened the eyes of the people of Israel). I asked her if they know what are the songs? And she told me: 1. The Song of the Sea 2. The Song of the Well 3. Ha’azinu 4.Joshua’s Song 5. Deborah’s Song 6. Hanna’s Song 7. David’s Song 8. Solomon’s Song 9. Hizkiya’s Song (there are those who claim the Song of Songs is the ninth) 10. The song for the future, as Rabbi Nathan, Rabbi Nachman’s student wrote: “ and in the future everything everyone experienced will be in this melody.” And Rabbi Nachman said of himself: “I will sing a song of the future and it will be the next world of all of the Chasidim and Tzadikkim,” and in Torah Chet of Likutei Tanina, which is the last torah that he gave on Rosh Hashana before his passing he discovered that this song would be the renewal of the future world.

I was very excited by her words, and I asked to learn more. She showed me where everything she had told me was written in the book and this torah: “A new song will come in the future, a song examining wonders, examining Providence, because then the leadership will be by Providence alone.”

I tried to imagine what it would be like to live only by Providence… with all of the talk I heard I already felt in the future.

The Saba said: “I will tell you here and now who am I? I am Na Nach Nachma Nachman Meuman, that is me! You already know who I am.” I thought how it is that I came to seminary in Jerusalem is and they did not teach me the most important thing?! In my mind I had already decided not to continue my studies at the seminary. How could they not mention, or even hint about Rabbi Nachman and the miracle of the Petek?! I felt in my heart that everything I had been through in my life led me up to this moment, and everything was dwarfed by what I felt at that moment. I wanted to know everything about the Petek and its owner, to study all of the books by our rabbi, Rabbi Nachman, and to get to everyone in the world and distribute this Petek, which is a one page book, the root of the Torah, and as Rabbi Nathan said: “One page of our rabbi’s books will be the whole Tikun (rectify everything)!” And also: “One page of our rabbi’s books will root out all evil from the world.” She said that Saba said to spread the word about the existence of the Petek, and that there is an owner of the Petek, I asked to come to her and learn more. She called the house, and came back to me. “We are a special family,” she said with a smile, “five women with the same man,” cool, I thought. In any case, can I come?! I was eager to learn from Rabbi Nachman about the wonder, about Na- Nach! We walked for about fifteen minutes, and on the way each of us told about herself, it was nice talking to her, I felt as if we knew each other; there was something beautiful about the simplicity of it, effortless. Until then, I hadn’t met a religious woman personally, in other words, not in class or in a lecture. And with Chatzav’s family, the acquaintance was not deep and at an entirely different time when I was not interested in the same subjects. In any case, when we got to the house, Ilana opened the door with a wide smile and a lot of heart. A mother of ten children and a woman of many talents. It seemed she loved her life. I felt excited to see the pages of the books. In the seminary, I would spend nights in the library, and unfortunately, I was unable to find books I could learn from, I wanted to study and exist. When I saw Daniel, I wanted to talk to him. We sat at the table in the living room and we spoke. It was funny, but I felt that we were similar. I couldn’t imagine that I would find my best friend, whom I had looked for a lifetime, in the form of a famous ballet dancer who repented; married with a beard and red sidelocks and a blue yarmulke that covered his head up to the forehead with yellow embroidery of the words Na Nach Nachma Nachamn Meuman in Jerusalem. He thought like me, and reminded me of myself. I have had many discussions with all sorts of people, and they would usually respond that I “live in a movie”, and that I have impossible ideas and that one can’t live the way I think one can… that is why, at the end of the day, surrounded by “friends”, I always felt alone. Because no one really went with me “all the way”, and everyone would go back to their boring routine of life in pursuit of money. I always looked for someone who thought like me. I was very glad that he felt comfortable with me, and we talked about life before, in other words, the times that led us to repentance, and we found that our stories were nearly identical in their tastes, senses, thoughts, and feelings. We talked about the Petek and the owner of the Petek, when Tsila entered, and she offered me the opportunity to watch the DVD of the Saba telling his story of getting closer to Breslov, and how Rabbi Isroel Karduner came to his house, who was one of the 36 hidden Tzadikim and up to the story of the miracle of the Petek. Before I left, I asked Daniel to choose one of his books to lend to me until the next time I come. Daniel chose one of the volumes of “Likutei Halachot” written by Rabbi Nathan, Rabbi Nachman’student, responsible for writing down the stories and torah of Rabbi Nachman. Rabbi Nathan explained every Halacha in depth: literal meaning, interpretation, and secret, something within the thing, and you can understand the material and spiritual depth of the Halachot of Shulchan Aruch which makes keeping the Halacha much easier in my opinion.

The younger boys came back from their studies, and entered the house like a train, one after the others; their tziziot (fringed garments) stuck out of their black pats under buttoned plaid shirts, with Na-nach colorful yarmulkes with a pompom, long sidelocks on either side of their faces- they were so beautiful. I thought to myself, I hope that my children will be like that forever. Tsila showed me the music album of the family band “Habetlers”, in which the younger and older boys sing and play with Daniel. A double album of a music disc and a movie disc, a song book with all the words, pictures and a book explaining about the Na-Nach from the holy sources, conversations among friends and innovations. I bought the album, and went back to the apartment at the seminary. The next morning, I found myself alone at the apartment. It was rare that all five of my roommates weren’t there. After a shower and a long morning prayer, I sat with my coffee at the kitchen table, and looked out of the balcony at the crowded haredi neighborhood. The buildings were built one inside the other, attached, with every balcony overlooking a window or balcony from another house. Everything was barred with crude and long bars. I took the album “Habetlers” in hand and took out the songbook. Wow, who wrote these words I thought, and I jumped up and put the disc on. I couldn’t continue to sit there, and I started to dance enthusiastically to the whole disc! I cried, laughed, and mostly got stronger. I switched over to the movie disc, and watched films of the Saba and films of the distribution and performances I had never seen, in short clips; one of a child telling a story from “Sipurei Maasiot” by heart in a pleasant and wonderful melody (<https://youtu.be/nNB3fTT50zM>), a short parody clip in black and white, and I was so moved, I cried. I opened the book that came with the album and read earnestly.

I called Aderet and told her what I did that whole morning, and I shook from excitement, I wanted to talk about it, to know everything about Rabbi Nachman, who was Rabbi Isroel. I asked her what she was doing. She said she was looking for a teacher to enrich the girls. I told her that I could hang some notices up in my building and in the seminary… she was glad. Suddenly I had an idea… I could do it! I worked with children my whole life, I am an actress, I read, I write… I asked her if I could meet the girls and think about building an enrichment class for them. She agreed! I dressed as a teacher… I walked the ten minutes to their house. When I entered the house, the girls greeted me, and I thought I had never met such beauty in my life, the light of innocence and sweetness. They asked me questions, and I asked them questions. I couldn’t wipe the smile off my face… we arranged for me to arrive at 0730 the next day.

I arrived, and all the girls sat around one table. A tight braid on their heads, wearing buttoned blouses and long skirts, fresh faced and curious eyed… I sat with them. Ilana gave them all breakfast and a warm beverage. We ate, drank, and blessed the food. Afterwards, we folded the dining table, and everyone sat at school desks, and I stood in front of them with a white board to my back. In order to remember their names, I gave each of them a rectangle I had cut from colored poster paper, and asked everyone to write her name, fold the paper so that it stood on her table. After they did that, each one in turn told the story behind her name, and that way I also learned about women in the Torah, since all of them were named after women in the bible. When it was my turn to talk about my name, I told them that Shiran was a stupid name with a neutral story, my mother told me about Shiran and Moran, girls she babysat in her youth, and that I was her first daughter, so she named me after them. I said that I didn’t like my name and it didn’t have any meaning. Shosh jumped up and said: “That is not just any name! It is Shir (song) and N- for Nach” that is the song of our rabbi, it certainly has a meaning! Nice! I thought, and since then I began to like my name.

I arrived every morning at 0730, and taught literature, reading comprehension, and Hebrew. When the girls were in other classes or enrichment programs, I would sit in the work room and prepare the next lessons. I always integrated playing and drama, because it was an inseparable part of me, and we would always end up with personal discussions, about everything. As a result, I spoke with Daniel and told him about my experience with his daughters. Since I had come from a permissive life style, when they asked me personal questions, I stuttered, because I didn’t know if it was okay to tell them that I had lived with a partner for several years, and that I didn’t want to get married, and about the army, and altogether about my life’s story which was very wild to the ears of someone with a religious or conservative life. Daniel said I should be myself. I loved the way he thought, the way he spoke, the way he went with the flow of situations, and along with that was caring and concerned, and tried to understand everyone’s complexity. On birthdays, we would buy presents for everyone, and we all watched a good movie together on a big screen after a festive dinner, greetings, and dancing to the sounds of the boys playing and singing in the microphone. I felt I was part of the family. I would stay with the girls, and when the young boys came home from school, we would have “cooking classes” and cook together. They saw my bag with books by Shai Agnon and “The Diary of Anne Frank”, and asked me to read to them. We sat for hours, me in the teacher’s chair, and they, in front of me, with extraordinary concentration, and I read to them, while acting out the stories. They were fascinated, and hours later we would ask reading comprehension questions. They amazed me with the sharpness of their thinking, reception, memory, and the interest they showed and love of knowledge. I enjoyed them like I had never enjoyed anything in my life. Time with them was unmitigated pleasure. I learned a lot from them, Torah, Halachot, Midrashim, Stories of Tzadikim and customs of Chassidic truth and morality. Many times the young boys would come back from Beit Midrash and tell me what they learned with their teacher. Once, nine year old Yonathan read to me from his notebook, and tested me to see what I remembered. When I would wear makeup, eight year old Yedidya said I was ugly, and the girls would say I looked like a cartoon. We had Shabbats and holidays together, and when they were recording with Daniel at the studio in Givat Shaul, I was with them. When Aderet proofread books, I sat next to her; when Anastasia wanted an opinion about an outfit she sewed, we ended up having long heart to heart talks. Everyone in the house was so sensitive and special, talented and excited. At the meal, along the long tables, women and girls on one side and men and boys on the other, the children liked to talk about Torah and interpretations, they opened the book “Likutei Moharan”, and the whole family studies together, each giving his opinion and analyzing according to his understanding. I felt a part of the family, but also as an observer from the side, imagining how everything is filmed for an international reality show, waking the whole world to see the wonder, that it is possible to live following love for Rabbi Nachman and daily attempts to live by his advice… the more I fell in love with the children and admired the adults, I fell in love with the person who brought them to the world: Hashem, the mothers, and the father.

It is funny how life leads us according to the need burning in us. After reading Sipurei Maasiyot by Rabbi Nachman, when I was still at the kibbutz, I had a dream: to find a band of actors, and together we would abandon ourselves to a life of distribution with a traveling theater appearing all over the country, and perform plays based on the stories by Rabbi Nachman. I saw it as a way of life, the point of which was the common goal, which was much stronger than personal success at a stupid career and battles for social status, for money resulting from egocentric competition. The goal was general success; a joining of the hearts which could turn all of the evil in the world, all of the hate and animosity to peace and love.

And now, bring on anyone who says that more than twenty people together is not simple. From experience, I discovered that it flows much better than trivial couples, in which couples are like Trojan horses, threatening to explode at any moment; or from banal family life, with everyday resembling the last, and with wing-clipping routine.

After one of my lessons with the girls, Tsipi, who has a cast on her arm, complained that writing was hard for her and her handwriting came out ugly. I sat near her to help her and she threw her pencil and said: “Why should I trust you at all?! We had lots of teachers who taught us and then left and said bad things about our family!” I told her that I was sorry, I am already one of the family, and I love them as I would my own children. Tsipi butt in and said: “If you love us so much then why don’t you marry my father?” I stopped, somewhat surprised; she looked at me, serious and tough, and smiled…

The family’s houses ran like theater stages. There was no permanence in residence, the actors changed stages and roles. The scenery and the rooms moved according to the scene and the needs of the people involved. I discovered that it was much easier than expensive furniture. A pile of plastic chairs ready to accept guests at any moment, and many friends arrived. Long plastic tables, dressed in white for Shabbat and holidays or throw away plastic tablecloths for day to day. Metal legs, which fold expediently, set with feasts and a place for discussions… More than once, when we all sat down for the morning meal, from the washing of the hands, the blessing on the bread and its distribution, we would start a lively discussion, until it was almost time for sunset. The afternoon prayers called the boys from the table, and they would join together for a Minyan at the house of study. When they returned, there was no table and no food. We folded everything aside, and the studio became a dance floor. Instruments for the musicians and the others jumping, dancing, and singing, until they tired.

The women were active and energetic, full of love of life and enthusiasm. They had ideas of their own for the distribution, and they had meetings and produced events and shows for the band “Habetlers”.

2010. On one clear day- Daniel was taken by surprise and arrested.

We were all shocked.

I opened the head-covering drawer in the women’s room, and took out a head-covering to cover the hair on my head, I wanted to show Hashem, may he be blessed, that even if he leaves me, I am not leaving him! It was important to me than Daniel knows I am with him, waiting for him, and I gave him the message through his lawyer…

The police threatened and claimed that he raped his step daughter Anastasia.

It was a hard blow.

The merciless cruelty of those who slandered, made up this plot, all in order to ruin a man and his household, on what basis? Why?

Unfounded hatred and nothing more. Cold blooded murder in broad daylight. Bloodshed.

Four days later- we were in terrible suspense, and the children did not want to do anything but pray and live by the advice in Rabbi Nachman’s books for “sweetening of judgements” and for “salvation”- Daniel was released. The case was closed for lack of evidence.

The judge reprimanded the police investigators.

There was no indictment.

Anastasia candidly told her truth; she had a fling with a boy who stopped answering her phone calls. Anastasia went nuts because he stopped answering her, and like every 17 year old who fools around with boys who end up trashing her and avoiding her, she thought of a trick to get back at him. Her idea was to go to the doctor’s office and pretend to be pregnant, and so according to her distorted logic- they would call the responsible party, and then she would meet the boy again, who would have to marry her against his will. That was her convoluted plan.

Obviously, her plan failed, Anastasia was under 18, and hurried Ilana to take her to the nearest Kupat Cholim (doctors’ clinic), and not wait for her mother Kari, who asked her to wait patiently until she got home to take her. A strange thing happened at Kupat Cholim: a social worker who was present wrote a report, and sent it to the police, about a 17 year old girl who came with a suspected pregnancy, with a woman, who is not her mother. Why is that such a strange thing? Everywhere in the world, thousands and maybe millions of 17 year old girls suspect they are pregnant, and come for examinations at clinics, with or without their mothers. That is entirely not important! The social worker’s report caused her stepfather’s arrest as being linked to her pregnancy?! It seemed that someone cooked up a poisonous dish. But who? The police added hot and spicy things, like a charge of rape of the second wife’s daughter! It sounds like a scoop for the news, and honor for the Israeli Police Force that caught a serial sexual offender married to six women! How could he? The police were sure they would cause joy and happiness in the streets of the city: they threw him into the lions’ den, and waited to see what would be left… If we don’t live like that, then why should he? Everyone is busy with theft, burglary, fraud, scheming, betrayal, embezzlement, mendacity and lies; everyone is in deep, more than in horror movies or soap operas. So therefore they certainly cannot understand that they don’t have to live as swindlers. But it turns out that the neighbors, television watchers, police, investigators, lawyers, judges, welfare system and other authorities of the same kind, feel they have to live as swindlers. Chaos and darkness on the verge of the abyss. Today, I understand that all those who believe in slander or spread it, they are those that have a sack of scorpions and snakes that they really don’t want anyone to know about. So they found a solution, straight from the evil inclination- to besmirch the name of an innocent person- and thus prevent discovery of the evil. There is no doubt that he who acts to slander- is bad himself.

Anastasia loved to talk to me and tell me endless stories, which often burdened and tired me. Despite that, I became a good friend to her. She even went with me from Jerusalem to Kfar Hittim to visit my parents. She must have developed all sorts of complications as a result of her mother’s many divorces, and when her biological father remarried and his new wife didn’t want Anastasia around, and he didn’t try to stay in contact with her, she thought he didn’t love her. Her siblings from other fathers alienated her, and her mother’s muscular disease which made her permanently tired and occupied with her pain more than the attention that Anastasia, in her opinion, needed. Similarly, her mother’s cursing the husbands she had divorced, a community that excommunicated her and more and more stories of the kind. I didn’t believe everything she told me, I wanted to help her, to understand why she had the need to make up stories the whole time. Among other things, she told me that she had been in love, from a young age, with Boaz, and showed me notebooks full of love letters to him. Since Boaz did not reciprocate her love, she thought to comfort herself with Zalman, his older brother, who should marry her. It didn’t happen. Zalman married Tsila- her older sister. One day she also told me that she tried to tempt Daniel, but he stopped her, and tried to help her find a solution to the emotional complications of her childhood; her mother announced publicly that her first husband performed indecent acts against Tsila and Yan. Tsila and Yan were disturbed and studied in a special school for disturbed children; Anastasia on the other hand, was a polite and organized girl who loved to learn, so she got good grades from the teachers. Since her older siblings didn’t let her in their group, and they made fun of her a lot, she felt rejected. She wanted her mother to take pity on her. After she heartd Aliza talk about how her brother raped her from childhood, Anastasia started saying that the Rabbi from her biological father’s community raped her. As did his son. And the neighbor and the son of the distributor from Tiberias, and the boys of the distributor in Beit Shemesh, and him and him and her (she claimed that Alizah raped her and that she planned on suing her). In her testimony for the police, Daniel’s attorney at the time testified that she had her phone open and he heard the investigators breaking the law and trying to influence her testimony and push on her a claim of sexual relations with her stepfather- Daniel. They weren’t able to confuse her, and she explained to them that Daniel never touched her or anything close to that. She continued to tell the police about her wanton behavior with boys her age, some of which were true and some of them- fruits of her imagination. After four days under arrest, Daniel returned home and the joy returned. There was great excitement! When he wanted to rest a bit, all of the children, from the smallest to the oldest, climbed on him in bed and played together until they fell asleep.

My relationship with the other women got closer and I got stronger from our closeness. We talked about everything and looked for solutions to each other’s problems. I joined the improvisation workshops with the wives, and each time we discovered new things about ourselves. We dramatized feelings and brought situations to the extreme, we played “drama”. Aliza was, without a doubt, the queen of drama. She had unusual fantasies, and she knew how to express herself potently. Many times we also recorded the improvisations because we seriously considered making them into a movie. I was sorry there wasn’t a camera team around the clock documenting every corner. We got to the root of things, and we released ourselves from our denials and false perceptions. The insights we reached, I thought, could help anyone watching us.

Timna met the family a bit before I arrived. She was one of the many guests invited to our home. Timna grew up without a father, with a schizophrenic mother (as she testified in court), and rolled around between boarding schools, until she finally dropped out. Timna came to our home on Shabbats and holidays, and developed an obsession with marrying Daniel. When she tried to ambush him and be alone with him, she asked him to take her virginity. He panicked and asked that the wives make sure she doesn’t come again. Somehow, she came back every time. When she tried again and again to catch him in her web, Daniel had to explain to her once and for all that he does not intend to wed again; Timna did not stop courting him, and became compulsive. When I arrived, I noticed that Timna was acting strange and was sick, and might be dangerous to Daniel and the children, and I told her not to come anymore. Timna looked at me with black eyes, opening and closing her eyelids, I couldn’t understand what she was trying to do. Later, she left angrily and for several months we didn’t see nor hear from her. Until she came again for a visit, and almost went crazy when she found out that since the first day she saw me, I hadn’t left Daniel or the family, and the head-covering on my head indicated that I had crowned myself officially as Daniel’s sixth wife. She restrained herself, and took long drags from her cigarettes and it even seemed she had changed, overcome herself and tried. Today, looking at the result… her sick jealousy cruelly burned every moment of help and mercy she received from the family, who fed her in her time of need.

What needs to be learned from this? To be careful of hospitality? What should we have done? How could we have predicted or prevented the turn of events?

More than a year after the unfortunate arrest on the pretense something happened with Anastasia, we realized that for years the police and welfare planned to take the family apart, and the only reason they didn’t do it was they didn’t find enough evidence. From Anastasia’s case, they reached the conclusion that they should threaten not only each and every family member- they should capture everyone, separate the mothers and children, separate the siblings, isolate each of them in front of a trained investigator, who would threaten and pressure, yell and bark, and if necessary to hit- they have an answer for that too, hard blows. And then the investigator would say that each one could find himself behind bars for tens of years, because they already have the necessary material and solid proof, that cannot be appealed, and the only way to avoid jail was to affirm the words of the investigator, and nothing else. Like mice in the laboratory of the Central Division, we were sealed shut in jars- **arrest 2011**.

The proof and evidence regarding the real victim, against whom all of the weapons were aimed for with the clear and sole purpose of conviction and life-long imprisonment without a doubt-, accused number 1- Daniel Ambash. A victim of a lawless system, without truth or justice.

Timna stated before the judges:

“I will never love a man as I loved Daniel.”

What is going on here? The girl is declaring her so called endless love for the man, dedicated and loyal to his god, a stable man, married to six women, who lives with his wives and children. How could she be the one responsible for his arrest and the dismantlement of his family?

It did not occur to Timna, that as a tall, young, full-bosomed (double entendre intended), nose-job, provocative walking woman, she would encounter a resounding no from Daniel.

It drove her crazy. She set out on a revenge campaign, the fruit of stupid and destructive jealousy!

Is it possible that three judges treated twenty year old Timna’s destructive campaign seriously?

Timna was in the streets, addicted to drugs, and also dealt. She got to us wanting to detox, get stronger, and repent. She worked at least four jobs simultaneously (in Bnei Brak and Herzeliya), and lived in a rented apartment with roommates in Givat Shmuel. She talked about great pressure from debts she had, and also debts in the drug market.

Timna testified in court that she went to the Israeli Centre for Cult Victims after she saw an item on the family on Channel 2, on the show “360”, and she couldn’t stand the fact that Rino Tzror, the host of the show, said that apparently more women would join. She said in the court that the show made her think that the Ambash family is a cult. In the segment, Rino Tzror compared us to Goel Ratzon who treated himself as if he had all sorts of powers, and said that he himself is the “goel” (savior). He lived with tens of women who tattooed his name and picture on their arms, and he was branded a cult leader and arrested. Most of the women left him after the arrest and said they were slaves and victims, and he admitted some of the charges against him. It is important to note that we have nothing in common with him or his wives or their lifestyle. Timna said in court that she thought the Israeli Centre for Cult Victims would give her psychological help for her distress, and didn’t expect them to file a complaint with the police in her name.

The “Israeli Centre for Cult Victims” participated in Rino Tzror’s program, and sent a woman who testified that she had been Goel Ratzon’s slave, as well as a poser layer, as “experts” for the program, and that in order to determine that we were a “twin group”, and thus pave the way for the police work. Then public opinion was already widespread, and the whole country talked about the man with six wives, who was branded a dangerous cult leader on an investigative program on a commercial channel in Israel. And then, no judge would dare give less than life in prison to a man the press had branded a dangerous criminal. The Israeli Centre for Cult Victims, controversial in itself, is made up of three people. A report by “Yediot Ahronot” from that year revealed, it was formed in order to extort millions of dollars, and they were also the subjects of huge lawsuits from big organizations to which they had to apologize. Despite all this, they enjoyed fame in Israel, thanks to our arrest, and they managed to get in with the Knesset and Welfare Department, when at the same time they are actually a harmful body themselves. And after our terrible verdict, they also got a certificate of appreciation from the police…

The first meeting between the lead investigators at the Central Unit Asher Lazmi and Lilach Ranan with Timna was not documented (no voice or video recording, no memo, no summary, nothing) at a hotel on the Tel Aviv beaches.

Nothing prevented the police investigators from using Timna, who was prepared to say anything to revenge her wounded pride; there was nothing to prevent the police investigators from paying off her debts and closing all the open cases against her; and there was nothing that prevented the lead investigators from coaching Timna and telling her how to talk, what to say, and what tone to use.

Only after negotiating to the benefit of both sides, and agreeing between them, she came to give her testimony over three days, none of which was recorded by camera.

Timna was efficient. She was the main witness and everything began and ended with her testimony. It is noteworthy to mention that Timna was not interviewed by Daniel’s lawyer in court, and we also found out the reason for this intentional malpractice: actually, Daniel’s lawyer simultaneously represented a client in another case who required the services of the Israeli Centre for Cult Victims, in direct conflict of interest to our case, and therefore, had he cross-examined the witness, the center’s fraud would have been revealed, that they sent Timna, and her testimony would have crumbled.

And there is no proof or evidence of the horror stories she describes like a confused shopping list. Despite that, there are many memos of the cash given to her from the Central Division investigators, and a memo describing how the investigator (Lilach Ranan) describes how Timna called crying and yelling that she doesn’t have an apartment, and how they left her thrown to the streets. Lilach Ranan, the investigator, states that she calmed her down and told her they would take care of it…

The judges crowned her “coherent and reliable”, despite her illogical and unfounded theories, not in time, and not in place. Similarly, she was not asked, not by the judges and not by the prosecutor, any question that could confirm her imaginary testimony, and give it some hold in reality to the point of convicting an innocent man and sentencing him to 26 years.

The witnesses for the prosecution that the police managed to recruit- by extortion and threats, bribery, misrepresentation and hard blows- didn’t understand in the first interrogations what anyone wanted from them, and the judges even noted in their verdict that all of the family members gave a unified version, denying all of the terrible things they tried to ascribe to Daniel. The prosecution witnesses were created as a result of a series of emotional and physical abuses perpetuated by police investigators, were revealed as “unreliable” by the judges, who determined that anything they said required “help” to be acceptable as testimony, since the contradictions were too many, and the “contamination of the testimony” by the investigators was so tremendous the judges defined them as “many investigative failures, something judges don’t usually note, unless the failures are so severe as to get the accused set free, and the indictment cancelled due to unlawful investigation, therefore, the whole investigation and arrest should have been nullified to begin with, and Daniel should be set free immediately. It is interesting to see that in the verdict the judges called everyone who testified about simple facts of Timna’s life, which easily prove the magnitude of her lies, and cancels out each of her evil testimonies, as people who are “blackening her name”…

Fixed game?! Russian roulette?! Guillotine?! Murder in broad daylight under the heading of “trial”?! Somebody shoot me, because I cannot wake from this nightmare!!

I will give a bit of the details, like a grain of dust, some of the details of this horrifying case. A case labeled as Tapach, a major crimes case. Very true, the acts of the Central Division police investigators are indeed major crimes, since they took the liberty to break the law and actually abuse, mentally and physically, women, men and children, and applied any and all means to give a death sentence to an innocent man. Why?! Apparently, political bodies like the police and welfare department have things to hide…

Aliza left me shocked when they managed to break her and turn her into “a witness to turn state’s evidence”. She was the only one of the wives I didn’t particularly like, I remember the first Shabbat I spent at the family home. Something in me couldn’t stand her presence. She had a terrifying smile that bared rows of immense teeth. I tried to look forward towards the bookshelves, and not turn my head in her direction, to ignore the content of what she whispered in my ear, with quite a bit of nerve, since it was pretty clear that I was not interested in her company. She continued to tell me that she too had been secular, and bragged about 300 men she had slept with. She told me that she had even worked as a prostitute. About her experiences with hard drugs. When we became a bit more friendly, she told me that she had suffered at her parents’ home, where her mother had made her a cleaning slave and Aliza called her “the witch”, and about her older brother, who according to her, had raped her and made her sex slave to his delinquent friends… she told how she feels strong today, she has hope. She made me feel uncomfortable and embarrassed. The atmosphere she created was horrible. The children begged me not to leave them alone with her. I asked: “Why?” They said she was bad, a witch. I tried to say things to make them like her. She was a different person when Daniel was around: considerate, caring, delicate, and righteous. And when he wasn’t around, a different person emerged, as if she were a person with two existences: then she would behave vulgarly, use cheap language, and silly behavior, looking to instigate conflicts between people, and everything accompanied by a malicious laugh and evil scorn.

It was very hard to get to Daniel when she was talking to him alone, and she made it very clear with a tough stare, without blinking: “I need this time, sorry” and there was no choice. I told Daniel that he shouldn’t believe a word she said, in front of her. I had been through a lot in life before I met the Ambash family, and I learned to read people. What I read in Aliza did not suit this house, the place where there is no room for manipulative games. This was a house for people not masquerading. We all got closer, joined and connected to live out the true Torah.

Aliza insisted, despite Daniel’s objection, to continue working at “Hevra Kadisha”, washing bodies. One of the times she returned from there, she said that the work gave a “feeling of superiority over the deceased”. Daniel felt it might harm her and them, but she continued anyway.

I believe with all my heart that the Torah lives and exists for us so that we can truly live by it. And that is what we wanted and tried to do. Unfortunately, there were a lot of people who took advantage of the innocence of this family, especially of Daniel. And it pains me, a lot, to discover that not only was I right about what I felt about this woman- Aliza, but even worse, she went too far, and decided to wipe us out. Wipe out the Ambash family. Now I understand that what the children tried to say to me -and I didn’t want to hear- is true.

During the time after Aliza had decided to cooperate with the police and perjure herself in court, she was caught by private investigators hired by Daniel’s adult children forging Daniel’s signature on his checks that she took from the house, and pilfered over 250,000 NIS ! ! With the help of her new boyfriend and her older brother (yes, the same one she liked to say for years that raped her, and she adored, and always wanted to be like him, and nothing satisfied her because she need power and violence. What no one could give her…); at the same time, Daniel was being interrogated by the police, surrounded by insults, getting beaten: having his beard pulled, kicked, shoved, and bombarded with horrible accusations of crimes he did not commit! And he was being threatened that he would rot in jail long before he would get to thirty years in prison because they are going to send undercover criminals to beat him to death if he didn’t commit suicide first.

Zalman, Boaz, Tsila, and Gay Noam didn’t rest for one minute, went from one lawyer to another to find solutions to the impossible situation Daniel was in. A police warrant forbade them from living in the houses they still paid rent for, so they spent their nights in a car they rented. One day, Aliza asked to borrow the car, “to go to a family event”. From that day on, the car disappeared, and she, when asked in court in front of the judges, claimed shamelessly that she returned it. To this day the car is defined by the police as “stolen”… somebody turn the light on in this darkness! How many lies! Baseless lies, they will fall. Hang on tight.

Aliza claims she couldn’t restrain herself, and couldn’t stand up to the temptation, and she betrayed Daniel while she was married to him, also with some of the police investigators, one of whom testified in the trial within the trial (“investigative failures”): “that’s right, I was in contact with her and I didn’t write memos of the conversations and meetings, so?”

The investigators took Aliza to the house in Romema, because she “wanted to get a few things”.   
Among other things, she took washing machines, family albums, my laptop that I bought for myself. Maybe because she knew it held damning evidence against her, about her sexual experience with no other than… Timna! I had to document it, because I knew they would both deny it. It gives another explanation for the tension between the two and the “latent” competition between them, about which Aliza testified in her investigation In any case, to this day, even though I told the court that my personal computer ended up in her hands with the “generous” aid of the police investigator Revital Tzeref, I haven’t received a response. When I went to the police station to ask for my property, I was sent away empty-handed.

Zalman, Boaz, Gay-Noam, Tsila, Marie, and Yan spoke about how they had to protect their father , and decided that Zalman would be their representative in visiting Daniel in prison, and telling him about Aliza’s true colors, and that he should divorce her, because she is a con artist and they can’t even tell him everything.

In the District Courthouse where I arrived as a witness for the defense, I committed to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. The judges were far less interested in the truth. One of the judges yelled at me at the top of his lungs when I insisted on telling the truth, and stopped only when Daniel’s lawyer found proof of what I was saying, and the prosecution was made to apologize to me. That happened three times in that deliberation; they insisted on a lie, and I insisted on the truth. I beat them. But it didn’t help, because gross lies are juicier, more exciting, and influence them apparently much more than the truth and they were the determining factors in the verdict.

**“Battered Woman”- back to the interrogation rooms 2011**

Less than 24 hours after we had been arrested, under the heading “suspects”, while leaving the deliberation room, in a deliberation regarding us wives, the investigator Idan tried to push me to go faster, and I moved my hand so he couldn’t touch me. In a quick jump, detective Maayan Tzur shoved my head into the wall, put both her hands around my neck so hard she choked me. With a mean look on her face, she forcefully, in order to hurt me, cuffed my hands and threw me down the stairs, while cursing Daniel and his sexual organ in unusual cruelness. Wearing nylon pantyhose and wooden clogs, I slipped and flew on the floor hard, and she kicked me and pulled me up by the handcuffs, dragged me the rest of the way down the stairs. Beat up and scared witless of the senseless hate of the detective who seemed to be my age, who made sure to clarify that they were going to “finish” us. After she dragged me through the corridors of the Central Division, she shoved me strongly onto a chair, in a small room, in the interrogation division. I didn’t object, I had a feeling it might get worse, and I wasn’t even sure I would get out of there alive. But that they would also cover up easily and peacefully, and no one would know about the murder in the interrogation rooms, and they would no doubt pin the blame on Daniel. What else?!

She slapped me hard in the face. Quickly Lilach Ranan showed up to back her up, and together they cursed Daniel (!!!), used sarcasm and with red in their eyes, they continued to hit me with double the vigor! Every once in a while, an investigator wearing civilian clothing would come in, asked something in a cold and dry tone, threw out a curse of his own, then they talked among themselves as if ‘by the way’ what they were going to do to Daniel, what else they could do to him, using expressions reserved for experienced killers, and left. The door stayed open, apparently that is a normal reflection of the goings on in the interrogations’ division of the Central Division in Jerusalem. My head was thrown back, and the only comfort I had, was there was an eye watching, a camera recording…

Sometime later, I can’t really estimate its length, since I was under shock and receiving blows, I was left alone. When I recovered, I yelled that I wanted to file a complaint. The police walked back and forth in the corridor, mocking me. At some point, an investigator by the name of Oded Shema moved me to another room, and gave me a pen and paper, to laugh at me that I could file any complaint I wanted, that they had nothing to fear, they are “the police”. Within half an hour at the most, a social worker called Yael Shochat arrived, and she accompanied me to the battered women’s shelter in Ashdod. Why?! I objected, I would rather be in a jail cell, I want to go in front of a judge and tell him what was going on here! I started telling her in a torrent everything I had been through, and that I am not a battered woman, unless you count the police!! She remained impassive, and during the ride I cried hysterically and incessantly, while trying to tell the taxi driver, who could be a witness and tell someone to get help. The social worker spoke on the phone to another social worker, about the salad she is making for lunch… I thought I would go crazy. When we arrived at the battered women’s shelter, behind electric metal gates and barbed wire I poured my heart out to Ronit, the director of the shelter, to explain the real situation to her. About the blows to my face- the police are the ones who hit me and not my husband! She sat in front of me, straight backed, cross legged, and determined: “Battered wife syndrome- she is in denial, and continues to defend him, don’t worry, we have all the tools to treat her…”

This is not real, it is not real.

Na Nach Nachman Meuman.

After several difficult months, of nightmares and more (for expansion see my personal blog), I managed to run away from the shelter. I didn’t know where to go, I couldn’t trust anyone, I had a feeling that the whole world was under the influence of narcotics, and no one knew what was really happening… I arrived at the cemetery, to pray for advice from the Saba, to yell voicelessly to wake the sleeping. A panicked child in a black suit ran in my direction. Samy? I had never seen him dressed like that. He was very upset, shaking and dirty, pale faced, black circles under his eyes, furtively looking left and right, like he was paranoid. He did not look good, and I was scared to find out what had happened to him in the days since we were all arrested and tortured… he spoke in mixed up sentences with his eyebrows jumping as if he were walking on hot coals:

“I have been here for three days. I slept near the Saba’s grave… I had nowhere to go… they destroyed the house.. I haven’t eaten in several days… please Shiran, take me with you, I have nowhere to be! Be my mother, take me wherever you go…”

I was dumbstruck. I didn’t know what to say or how to help him. I tried to explain to him: “I ran away too, from a battered women’s shelter, I was locked in their under house arrest and they took my phones and money and everything. I have remained without anything.” I started walking quickly up the windy street towards the parking lot and asked in silent prayer to be shown the way… Samy, with quick steps and incessant jumpiness didn’t stop saying quick and confused sentences about everything he had been through… he was apparently on the verge of a nervous breakdown… a bus arrived and I got on. He jumped up the steps and passed me. He told the driver: “My mother is paying for me,” and he sat down in the front seat. When I sat next to him he asked me, nearly in tears, not to leave him. He said repeatedly that he was scared to be alone. He came with me to a friend’s apartment in Tel Aviv, and couldn’t calm down from the stories about the investigators and investigations, he was in a nightmare. I called his older siblings, Tsila and Zalman, Boaz and Gay Noam to tell me what to do with him, and they said that he has to go back to the boarding school, otherwise he would get us all in trouble, and they can’t take him because they are sleeping in a rental car, and they are very busy during the day. I accompanied him to the central bus station, and my friend paid for his ticket to Jerusalem and she gave him more money to go back to the boarding school. He was like an abandoned puppy, pathetic and wretched, which can’t be left at home because of fear of rabies… After he left, I felt a bit relieved. However, I was also worried; I didn’t know whether I had done the right thing. He found his older siblings in Jerusalem, they called me panicked that Samy would not go back to the boarding school where the police put him, and that if I want to help, I should take him and care for him. They were under enormous pressure because they were the only adults left to take care of the whole criminal side with the lawyers. From that day on, I took it upon myself to care for Samy as if he were the baby I never had. He told me that he suffered terribly in the boarding school; the counselors and boys put cigarettes out on him, degraded him and threatened to cut his face. They closed him up after interrogations, the police played “good cop, bad cop” with him, one of them threatened he would hit him and put him into prison, and the other tried to make him one of them and said he could work with them if he wanted to be an undercover policeman. They took him to restaurants and bribed him with expensive gifts. He said that sometimes there were four or five investigators on him at the same time, attacking him and yelling at him and putting tremendous pressure on him. Since then, he was anxious and fearful, and every cop or police car made him jump and hide and shake from fear and be hysterical for long minutes. He told me that they brought Anastasia (his half sister) into the interrogation room, and she started yelling at him that there is no longer a family, no more home, no more Dad, who wasn’t their biological father anyway, that he was going to be shut up for thirty years, and if he wanted to manage, he shouldn’t be stupid, and do what she did and say whatever the police wanted him to say, and they would work everything out and buy him whatever he wanted, and if not, they would lock him up for 14 years… he hated her for it. (<https://youtu.be/_aK4udkcN1E>).

Samy was traumatized by what he had been through with the policemen. He would wake up in a panic and beg not to move from my bed. He dreamed dreams that woke him in the middle of the night and made him jump out of bed. One night he woke up from an emotional dream: “Dad came home and everyone is together”, he told me the details excitedly, and asked me to write it down and he would sign it with a date, because it is a talisman from Rabbi Nachman and that the dream would come true. We slept at friends’ houses and at hospitals. He was always tense. I would always have to provide him with security that everything was under control. Nothing was under my control, and I had no idea what would happen from one moment to the next. I only tried to listen to him, because he had a need to talk about what happened in the interrogation rooms, and he cried and was very sorry that he said bad things about Daniel under the influence of the investigators who coached him in what he should say, in order to protect himself from a charge of rape against his six year old sister. He wanted to get back at the police, and his sister Anastasia, and Aliza and everyone who contributed to the dismantling of the family. I tried to calm him down and tell him that the Torah forbids us from revenge and that Hashem will pay everyone for his deeds. He decided that from now on, we should take action to free his father. In cooperation with his big brothers, we prepared flyers explaining the situation, and Samy ran around passing them out everywhere. He wanted to go on a tour of gravesites of Tzadikim, to occupy ourselves studying holy books and to do good deeds. Samy lived in instability since our home was taken apart; everything was taken from him, all of his security and love. Without a father, without a mother, who was closed up in a battered women’s shelter in Beer Sheva, ands wasn’t allowed to call us, and she didn’t know where either. His escape from the boarding school, paranoia of the police, life on the lamb, we didn’t know each day where we would sleep at night, I spoke with restaurant owners to let us eat at their restaurants, and I tried to give him hope that it was only temporary, that things would work out. When someone gave us an apartment for a few weeks, Samy was filled with joy and he wanted us to make a plan to kidnap all of the kids from the boarding schools, and come together to get Dad out. At the end of these weeks he fell apart again and cried all night that he had a hand in having his father arrested, and he can’t live with himself. For four months he tortured himself and blamed Anastasia for influencing him with her yelling and because of the pressure he spouted nonsense at the investigators. He discharged his frustration with a violent outburst towards me, and I didn’t know how to respond or what to do to help him. I found myself in the streets running away from him when I got scared when he hit me and tried to burn me, with him running after me and yelling that I lied to him and told him that I was his mother, that he didn’t care about me and that I don’t love him. That hurt me. We were in a complicated situation. One night we went to sleep at the home of a couple of friends of mine, who had two children. I sat at their house, on the big chair in front of the computer, and he came up behind me with a scarf, tied it on my face and pushed the chair back. I called his older brothers to come get him.

About six months later, while Ilana, Aderet, and Azamra were in jail, and Kari and I traveled between apartments, I went to the Russian Compound. I knew that Daniel was supposed to go there for a pretrial procedure, and I thought he might see me and I could send him messages of love with pantomime. I thought that if I dressed in a different style and messed up my hair, I wouldn’t be identified. That was not too bright. The investigator, who hit Daniel and Azamra, Asher Lazmi, stood in front of me and said I was under arrest, and if I didn’t come with him immediately to the station- he would use violence. Four months in isolation for “tampering with the investigation” and “witness tampering”. Samy was responsible for that too. With Aliza’s support, who turned her heart in for a stone, and Timna’s, who continued to insist on telling everything but the truth. In her testimony against me she said I chased her, harassed her, and gave her money, and other endless lies as she was used to, and similar to her claims against Daniel, the fire of jealousy burned within her, and every connection between her and reality did not exist, not even by chance.

I have a lot more to tell, because when I wasn’t in a 2 meter by 2.5 meter cell, I was transferred between almost all of the cells, each time being locked in with another prisoner trying to kill me, herself, or both of us. What I can say, is that the state appointed attorney warned me that if I didn’t plead guilty, I would sit 9-11 years, and when I asked him what they wanted from me, he said the prosecution wanted me to divorce Daniel and come out against him. I got stronger and I said: “In that case, as far as I am concerned, I will stay here!”

Six months earlier, Timna saw me in Tel Aviv near Rabin Square, after I had run away from the battered women’s shelter, and came up to me enthusiastically:

“Wow! Shiran! What a coincidence, here I am exactly coming from Frishman, and I saw a guy who reminded me of you, and just as I was thinking of you, how you were secular in Tel Aviv. You don’t understand! I dreamed last night that the whole family is around a big table with Daniel and there is such a pleasant happiness like there always is with you…”

I was silent. I didn’t know what side she was on. She always seemed suspect in my eyes. She continued: “What, where are you? How is everyone?” When I told her where everyone is and what the situation is, she shed tears and said that the Israeli Centre for Cult Victims took advantage of her, she said she wanted to do something to cancel the complaint they filed in her name without her knowledge, and she called her lawyer to see what could be done, and she asked to meet with Boaz and the boys in the same place to make a plan. We met with everyone she asked for at a friend’s house. Aliza also cam and sat with Timna, whispering in the stairway. From a hidden camera in the place, you could hear Aliza tell Timna, how she is trying all of the time to be strong to stand against all of the attempts coming at her from every direction to separate her from the person she loves and the life she chose, and how even her mother sent her a younger man as a messenger to separate her from her husband and seduce her to sleep with him, so that she would have no way back. This meeting was the seed of the secret plan to hide away the prosecution witnesses.

Samy blew the plan when everything was ready, after the older kids took out hundreds of thousands of shekels in loans to carry out the vision. When Boaz wouldn’t give him a cigarette right away, he called the police, and caused the arrest of Boaz, Zalman, Gay-Noam, Azamra, Aderet, and Ilana.

At the end, I and the other women signed a deal in which we admitted that we met, and the other charges against us were dropped. We got out of jail. Ilana, Aderet, and Azamra a whole year later! And me, four months later.

In summary,

We are free, independent, and strong women, who believe in you, dear readers that you do want to know the truth. Otherwise, who would want to read a book about rebellious women who broke under interrogation?! And just to be clear to everyone; we are just like all women- built the same way; only we decided to live together in one love.

Shiran Ambash.

Now, we are just two months before the appeal in the Supreme Court, in the hope to prove Daniel’s innocence and have him returned to us.

Erev Sukkot, 5776, another holiday without him.

With a rapidly beating heart, excited and fearful of the judges’ decision.

Do you think the State has the right to give a life sentence of separation between people who love each other and want to be together?

Is it humane not to allow people who love each other to see each other for the rest of their lives?

Is it allowed to forbid contact between people only because the State decided that their lifestyle was unacceptable in a “moral society”?

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Daniel Ambash is innocent

[www.danielambash.info](http://www.danielambash.info)

find us also on youtube

The Ambash Women