



Why Did You Stay Alive?

It was a moment I don't think I'll ever forget.

This past Simchat Torah, hundreds of young Nova survivors gathered at a Jerusalem hotel to celebrate the Yom Tov alongside bereaved families and families of hostages. Everything in their world had changed since the previous Simchat Torah — October 7, 2023. They talked, hugged, danced with the sifrei Torah. But one guest, a young man, sat off to the side, withdrawn and heavy-hearted.

Eliyahu Libman, whose son Elyakim was murdered at Nova after saving dozens, approached the young man with his wife, Avishag. I stood nearby, listening.

"What's your name?" Eliyahu asked.

"Nachman Dahan," came the tearful reply. Then, shaking, Nachman began to speak — about the friends murdered right beside him, about those kidnapped, about how he escaped, and how hard it's been since to function, to return to anything like normal.

Eliyahu shared his own pain. "I'm Elyakim's father," he said. "He was a security guard at the Nova festival. He saved lives and was killed doing so. And you, Nachman — you survived. Tell me, why did you survive?"

Nachman had no answer.

Eliyahu continued: "Today is Elyakim's first *yahrzeit*. But it's also the anniversary of your salvation. You were granted life. I ask that you be happy today, also in memory of my Elyakim.

"And I want to ask something else. You didn't answer me, and that's okay. Take your time.

But ask yourself: Why did I stay alive? How do I give meaning to this life I've been given again? What do I do with the gift I received on this day?"

I often wondered what became of Nachman.

Recently, I found out: He's begun working, studying Torah, slowly rebuilding. And this week, in the Nova survivors' WhatsApp group, a photo appeared — Nachman and his bride, Daniella, under the *chuppah*. The next day, the group held a festive *sheva berachot* for the couple. So many blessings. So much joy. So much life. From the Syrian border, where he's serving in reserves, Eliyahu Libman sent a heartfelt blessing.

Mazal tov, Nachman and Daniella. You're answering the question more powerfully than words ever could. ■

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