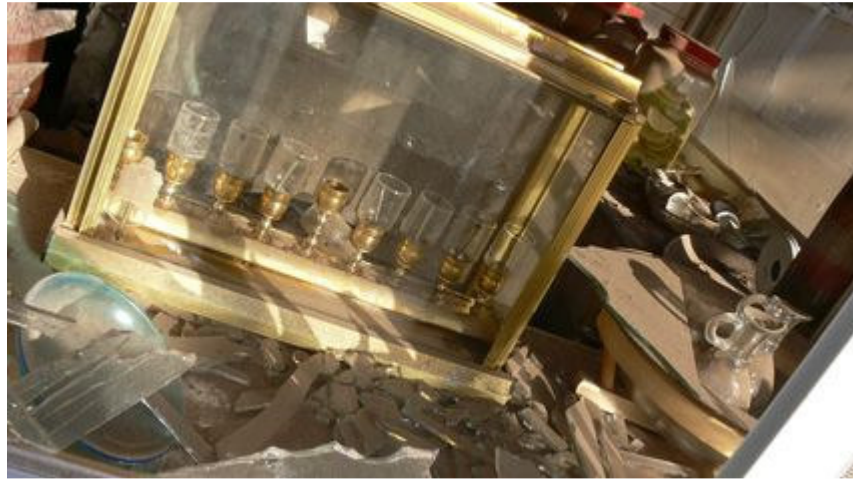


Miracle on the ninth day of Chanukah

By Noam Bedein December 18, 2007



Chanukia, a damaged candelabra for the holiday of Chanuka (Noam Bedein)

When the Chabad Rabbi of Sderot, Chaim Pizen, viewed the damage on Mount Sinai Street in Sderot the day after the eight day holiday of Chanukah finished, he remarked, "The Miracles that we are seeing in Sderot have revealed themselves more clearly than the miracles we witnessed on Mount Sinai itself."

Our crew arrived at the Amar family home at 7am on Friday morning, the night after a kassam missile had crashed through the roof and passed straight through the kitchen, slamming into the Sasson family's backyard.

We always arrive the morning after a kassam missile, to the sight of debris spread throughout a home -- hours before tax appraisers appear to evaluate the damages.

Pinchas, the father, was chain smoking and walking through the ruins of his kitchen as I opened the door to his home. There is a gaping hole in the roof. His kitchen has been shattered. Here is a father in his own home, the place he feels most secure, where he kept a normal Jewish life. His family is not with him. His wife, Aliza, just recovering from a stroke as a result of a previous attack, is back in the hospital being treated for trauma and injuries.

The camera tries to grasp details that say everything: The different Jewish Symbols that in some miraculous way have survived the explosion. The Hamsah good luck charms, the pictures of Rabbis, Sabbath candles, an untouched collection of holy books in a glass case that remains intact, and the menorah that the family had lit for the past eight days, lying unscathed on the mantle overlooking the entrance to their home.

The Sasson family, their neighbors, came by while we were there.

"How is Shula's condition?" I asked Moshe, her husband, remembering Shula was also injured on

Thursday night.

"She's still pretty shaken up, in the hospital, with high blood pressure, probably going to stay there for the Shabbat, to be watched over. She might have serious brain damage, from the trauma and anxiety".

I remembered their son Avidan, and his words the night before, still wearing his army uniform: "I got a phone call while I was at the base telling me that my mother has been evacuated to the hospital, unconscious. I started to run towards the nearest junction to catch a ride".

Avidan was discharged from the Israeli army only 2 weeks ago.

This was Avidan's first Shabbat at home since leaving the army. How absurd -- joining the army to serve and protect your country, while not being able to protect your own mother and family?

Our first visit to the Sasson family was two weeks ago, when we accompanied the Euro News to their home, to experience a night at a Sderot home.

The Sassons have been living in their living room for the past year, the parents and 5 children.

The Sassons have a beautiful home, with two floors, but they don't have enough time to run downstairs from the second floor in 15 seconds.

Their son Rafi built a protected shelter for his younger brother in the middle of the living room with money that he got when he was released by the army, since the Sassons do not have a protected room in the house.

"Rafi has a very close relationship with Azriel, ever since Azriel was 8 years old and experienced the kassam rocket land nearby, while playing in the soccer field. He always felt the need to protect him," Shula told me. "5 years later, Azriel is still in therapy".

Shula was pointing out to the small swimming pool that Moshe and the boys built in the back yard. "We don't go outside anymore, so we try living as much as possible at home. The truth is I don't know how much longer I'll be able to keep on like this."

"Why don't you leave your home, leave Sderot?" I asked her.

"We have no where we can go, with 5 children? Real estate went down over 50%. Who would be willing to buy or rent a home in Sderot, and with the money we get, can we offered any home to go to? This past May, after a kassam barrage, we and ten families from the neighborhood bought tents and went camping on the Kinneret for a week. How long can we live in tents?"

The Sasson and Amar families live on the Mivtza Sinai Street. Ohel Yitzchak Synagogue is two

homes down.

That is the same Synagogue that was hit this past May by a direct kassam rocket explosion, destroying the reception hall where 400 people had celebrated a new Torah scroll being brought into the Synagogue 28 minutes before, in memory of Sderot resident Yitzhak Dahan, who had passed away exactly one year before.

Only a few members of the Dahan family remained at the synagogue, cleaning up.

They were all saved, since one member the Dahan family had just cleaned the reception hall that was hit and had locked it. And they all ran for shelter when the warning siren went off?

As a reporter, I keep on asking myself: There are endless stories of kassam rockets exploding. Every single family in Sderot has experienced the explosion of a rocket nearby. From that moment your life is changed, including my own as a resident of Sderot in the past year and a half. How many stories can one tell and write about?

What else is there to do, with an army of 20,000 Hamas soldiers in Gaza with 130 tons of ammunition waiting for the right time to strike Sderot's homes, many of which are not protected?

Publicizing the miracle of survival through writing, filming and taking pictures. That is what I do, must do. To record the human effects of merciless attacks on innocent people, instead of listening to the drab Israeli newscast, "A kassam fell on a home in Sderot today. Two people were lightly injured and taken to the hospital. And in sports news?"

After hearing the human stories of what people are going through, perhaps people in Israel and around the world will open up their hearts and homes to the people of the Western Negev.

It is too early to tell what kind of an effect all this will have on Sderot, and on Israel, after EuroNews, with a TV audience of 200 million, shows an eight minute segment which portrays what is occurring in Sderot.

Perhaps it is not too late.

Noam Bedein is CEO of the [Sderot Media Center](#) for the Western Negev Ltd., a media company which emphasizes the human side of Sderot and the Western Negev, behind the headlines.