

Since we met for the first time at Gitt's 90th birthday, I feel a connection with my Israeli family. But on the 7th of October, my connection became very strong. I was deeply concerned about all the victims of the horrible atrocities, but also about the safety Israel in general and my family (and friends) in particular. I wanted to get in touch back then already, but shortly after the 7th of October I was attacked myself by a Turkish jihadist colleague of mine at my school (he was even a history teacher..). This even became a witch hunt against me, even with blood libels, that lasted 6 weeks before I collapsed... and needed a long time to recover (still recovering). That's why it took some time before I contacted both of you to get in contact with my Israeli family. But all that time, my connection with Israel and my family there became stronger and stronger, amplified by the rising antisemitism in The Netherlands. In 2024, I came to Israel to do voluntary work with farmers in the Negev. In May 2024, I worked from the very first day of arrival till the very last day, but in November I had 2 days at the end of my stay to meet with Matti and Ada. That was very, very special and important for me! Also to stay in Ada's house (instead of a hotel), to really stay with family. I had visited Yad Vashem that same day to see the tree for the rescuers of my family in The Netherlands, so it was an impressive day. We talked about a lot of things the whole evening, and Shachor was also there.

When I came to Israel last July to do voluntary work for a whole month in the Negev, I met with Matti and Ada directly after my arrival, fortunately!! We visited Ada in the hospital, and I also got the opportunity to get to know Nilly better. Matti and Nilly had arranged that I could stay in Ada's house, although she was not there. Matti hid the key under a flowerpot, and made a video for me to show me where exactly. He'd also put food for me in the fridge, so when I arrived late in the evening, I could have a bite, so thoughtful of Matti and Nilly!! In fact, there was almost enough food for the 3 days I stayed in Yerushalayim. I had wonderful days there, thanks to Matti.

I couldn't believe my eyes when only 2 weeks after we met, I got the message from Tom Ziv Weiss that Matti had suddenly passed away... But I was very glad that I had the opportunity to meet with him again. And fortunately, on the day of the Le'vaya, the farmer had planned to go with me to Haifa to buy technical stuff for the farm, so I contacted Michal and Arnon to see if I could get a ride to Ramat Raziel, and fortunately it worked out. It also gave me the opportunity to get to know Michal better (we spent the afternoon at her nice house in Kfar Bialik). And I could get together with the rest of the family in Ramat Raziel, unfortunately due to a sad reason, but it really meant a lot for me to be there. What a beautiful beet kvarot, in nature, and Matti loved nature.

This whole month being in Israel and feeling such a strong connection with my family and the land, give me the strength to cope with the difficult situation here in The Netherlands.

Next year, I hope to be in Israel in August for voluntary work again, and I'll try to meet again with Ada, Nilly and others.