

“What keeps me together is to come home at the end”

A wounded soldier story

MAARIV NRG

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During second Lebanon war Roez Ziv's unit was stationed in Northern Israel. An explosive smoking device fired mistakenly from an Israeli tank flung over his way, causing severe burns. He is currently fighting his private war for survival.

Two telephone calls have changed Roez's life forever. A year after he suffered scars that will forever be burned on his body, Roez Ziv tells his story to MAARIV NRG, an on-line version of MAARIV newspaper.

The first call occurred while he was traveling in India. His father, Yigal, called Roez from Israel and told him that a reserve notice has been sent him and he had to go to Jenin in the West Bank. Yigal suggested that he continue with his travels and return to Israel at a later date so that he can avoid the danger that is attached to joining the reserves at such a dangerous time. Roez's response was: "If I do not return to the reserves, then who will?" He cut his trip short and returned to Israel at the earliest opportunity.

In the meantime, the war in Lebanon began. Just like the rest of the country, he reflected on the developments from the television screen. Then Roez received a second phone call. He was requested to join his reserve unit go up to northern Israel. In less than 24 hours, he said goodbye to his parents and began his journey with the rest of his brigade. Long lines of tanks were heading up to Lebanon.

After quick training exercises, his unit headed north and was positioned in Cfar Yuval. It was a hot evening. Even with the echoes of explosions, the soldiers preferred to sleep outside of the tank. At 5 AM he woke up to the sound of an explosion. When he opened his eyes he saw "Rain of Gold", a smoke bomb that was mistakenly fired towards him from a close-by tank.

His friends rushed to cover his body with hundreds of liters of water to fight the fire. Later, after the fire was extinguished, the unit doctor had to scrape the phosphorous off his skin in order to save his life and prevent additional damage. Roez lost his consciousness and was rushed by helicopter to RamBam Hospital in Haifa.

Although Haifa was under a bomb attack from the many Katushas, his parents rushed to the hospital and were astonished to find how badly Royee

was wounded. He was wrapped in bandages all over. Royee was transferred to the intensive care unit and went through a several complicated surgeries.

“I believe that what happened had to happen”, says Royee. “I don’t deal with why it happened, although at the beginning, it was very difficult. Everyday in the week is a special day, I need a lot of stamina and will power. I have to undergo a lot of physiotherapy and surgeries. In the beginning it was very difficult to talk about it but slowly I opened up because the process of treatment is very hard. What keeps me going is coming back home to my parents and family.”

Then he adds: “I learned a lot from my injury. It’s important to help others. I have not recovered yet but there are many volunteers who are helping me and the other injured soldiers.” Royee is asking the public, “Wherever you can, try to help the others more. It helps a lot.”

A week after his injury, his friends from his combat unit went to Lebanon and their tank was directly hit by a missile that miraculously didn’t end in casualties but few of his friends were wounded.

Translated from Hebrew by Yael Zohar

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