

'WE HAVE OFIR'S SPIRIT INSIDE OF US'

Siblings turn trauma into growth

CARLY ADNO

DORON and Racheli Libshtein are turning their trauma into growth and continue to be inspired by their brother, Ofir Libshtein, who was murdered on October 7, 2023.

Ofir was the head of the Sha'ar Hanegev Regional Council and was killed fighting Hamas terrorists on Kibbutz Kfar Aza. In the years before October 7, Ofir had worked closely with JNF Australia and was chairman of the Netaim organisation, which develops and strengthens the connection of Jewish communities around the world to Israel.

Determined to continue their brother's legacy, Doron and Racheli recently visited Australia for JNF and Netaim and met with Jewish communities around the country.

"Since October 7, I have met all these people that used to know my brother and what he has done for Israel and the Diaspora," Racheli told *The AJN*.

"I felt the calling to keep on his legacy and to build the bridge from Israel to small communities to make them feel that they belong, are seen, and are important to us, to the Jewish nation."

Ofir's son Nitzan was also murdered on October 7, as was his mother-in-law Bilha Epstein and nephew Netta Epstein. In one day, Ofir's wife Vered lost her husband, son, mother and nephew.



Racheli and Doron Libshtein. Inset: Ofir Libshtein was killed in Kfar Aza on October 7, 2023.

"Near his house, below the olive tree, they shot Ofir and he died," Doron said.

"It took us 11 days to get the body and bury Ofir and 12 days to get the message that Nitzan was murdered."

Two years later, Doron said he is using the tools he has learned from dealing with grief and tragedy to try help others.

"There are two options," he said.

"Either post-trauma, or growth from trauma, and we are choosing growth from trauma. We would pay everything to get our brother and his son back, but we cannot do

that. This is the reality. We need to accept it and grow from it and help others do the same.

"Israel as a society is in trauma and there is an opportunity for tremendous growth and unity."

Despite the devastating loss, Racheli said she holds hope for a better tomorrow.

"We feel we have Ofir's spirit inside of us that brings us the love and the energy to spread the truth, to connect people to their strengths and to build resilience for people in Israel and the Diaspora," she said.

"We somehow succeeded to turn the trauma into a situation that we're growing from."

JEWISH HOUSE GALA DINNER

'An incredible partner'

GARETH NARUNSKY

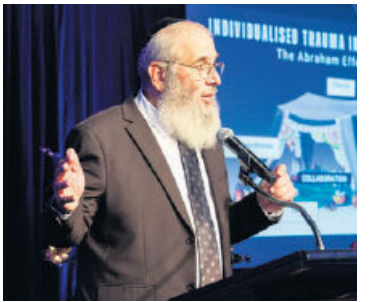
JEWISH House is "an incredible partner" with the NSW Government in helping to tackle homelessness, Housing Minister Rose Jackson said at the organisation's gala dinner last Thursday.

More than 700 people packed the Le Montage function centre for the event, at which former Brisbane Roar footballer Jamie Young delivered the keynote address and Operation Golda founder Shoshana Eisner was honoured with a humanitarian award.

"Earlier this year, I released the first New South Wales homelessness strategy. This is the first time we have committed to a 10-year vision to address homelessness," Jackson said. "The one organisation that has always stood steadfast to encourage and demand ambition from the NSW Government is Jewish House."

Recounting the disparate highs and lows of an extraordinary week in his football career, Young said having faith saw him through his crises. "And that's what you give every day here at Jewish House, faith when people can't find it for themselves," he said.

"Thank you for all the work you do at Jewish House, for walking beside people in their darkness, for championing their return to light."



Rabbi Mendel Kastel speaks at the event. Photo: Nadine Saacks

Fivex managing director Lesli Berger told of how Eisner founded Operation Golda "within hours" of the October 7 atrocities.

"She united thousands of people in our community and gave anyone who wanted a chance to connect, a pathway to make a difference, turning anxiety into action, grief into generosity, and compassion into tangible help," he said. Accepting her award, Eisner said, "Operation Golda was formed as an emergency support network, but after collaborating with Jewish House, I quickly realised that that's exactly what they've been doing. They are an emergency support network, and they've been doing this for years, quietly, compassionately and with incredible efficiency."

Rounding out the evening, Jewish House CEO Rabbi Mendel Kastel said, "It's just very special to be in a position that we can really help people and change their lives."

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