



#333

By Pam Morris, Early Learning Center director

333 is the number for Tuesday, Sept. 3. 333 days of separation from the land of Israel. 333 days since they were ripped from their homes, their families, their loved ones. 333.

Everywhere you look or listen or watch the news, the headlines, the blogs, the message is the same. Bibi, why don't you accept the offer on the table for the release of the hostages? Netanyahu, why are you thwarting the release of the hostages?

Seriously? Where are the questions for the terrorists? Hamas is the reason the hostages were taken in the first place. The hostages are the reason there is fighting happening now. On Oct. 6, there was peace. There were no military operations being conducted by the IDF. Shin Bet wasn't strategizing how to find the members of the leadership of Hamas. On Oct. 6, Gaza residents crossed the border into Israel to work, freely. The Gaza residents who worked in Israel cashed their paychecks.

But, yes, on Oct. 7, **BECAUSE OF THE HAMAS TERRORISTS**, that all changed. Would you stop a search-and-rescue mission if your child was missing? Would you stop a search-and-rescue mission if your baby had been taken? And what if there was someone blocking your way? Someone who refused to move? Someone who was hiding in a school? Someone who was hiding in a hospital?

More than 200 people were taken on Oct. 7. Some have been rescued. In the early stages, some were even released because of lopsided (in Hamas' favor) exchange deals. But now, Hamas has given orders to those Hamas terrorists that if they think the IDF is close, the orders are to kill the hostages.

That is what happened this past week to [Hersh Goldberg-Polin](#), 23, Eden Yerushalmi, 24, Ori Danino, 25, Alex Lobanov, 32, Carmel Gat, 40, and Almog Sarusi, 27. Just 48 hours or so from being found and rescued, Hamas executed these people. Are these terrorists people who are looking to reach a deal? I don't think so. The Hamas terrorists are looking to inflict the most pain and anguish they can.



333. Wednesday will be 334. Thursday will be 335. Each day a bigger number. Each day a bigger hole in our hearts.

The hostages are our family. Parents of the slain hostages are speaking out. They are publishing the last messages of their loved ones.

“Ben Zussman, a combat engineering fighter, fell in battle in the northern Gaza Strip on December 3. Ben knew when he went into battle that the danger was great, and he left behind this will:

I am writing this message to you on the way to the base. If you are reading this, something must have happened to me. As you know me, there is probably no one happier than me right now. It was not for nothing that I was on the verge of fulfilling my dream soon. I am happy and grateful for the privilege I will have to defend our beautiful land and the people of Israel. Even if something happens to me, I don't allow you to sink into sadness. I had the privilege of fulfilling my dream and vocation, and you can be sure that I am looking down at you and smiling hugely....

If, G-d forbid, I'm dead and you are sitting shiva, make it a week of friends, family, and fun. Let there be food, meat of course, beers, sweet drinks, grains, tea, and, of course, mom's cookies. Make jokes, hear stories, meet all my other friends you haven't seen yet. Wow. I'm jealous of you. I would like to sit there and see them all.

And one more very, very important point: If, G-d forbid, I fall into captivity, alive or dead, you do not have my consent that anyone, soldier or citizen, will be harmed as part of some deal for my release. Do not conduct a campaign or struggle or anything. I'm not prepared that terrorist[s] be released for my exchange. In no way, shape, or deal do not dismiss my ask, please... I left home without even being called up to the reserves. I am full of pride and a sense of mission, and I have always said that if I have to die, I wish it would be in defense of others and the country.”



These are the words eulogized by Rachel Goldberg Polin, the mother of Hersh, a 23-year-old American-Israeli who was brutally kidnapped by Hamas on Oct. 7. "I am honest. And I say it is not that Hersh was perfect. But, he was the perfect son for me. And I am so grateful to G-d, and I want to do *hakarat hatov* and thank G-d right now, for giving me this magnificent present of my Hersh.... For 23 years I was privileged to have this most stunning treasure, to be Hersh's Mama. I'll take it and say thank you. I just wish it had been for longer."

#333. We can't let Hamas win.

#Shabbat Shalom