



Celebration of Life - As a Guest of Avishay!

By Brigitte B. Nussbächer

*The experiences of a survivor from Kfar Azza, who - after the Hamas massacre and during the war that has been going on ever since - is working to rebuild his life.
A story of courage, resilience and hope.*



It was a celebration of life that was held in Reutlingen on 27 July 2024. More precisely, a celebration of survival.

Because the ingenious cook, the master of flavours, spices and ingredients, who spoiled us with delicacies, was one of the survivors of Kibbutz [Kfar Azza](#). One who was saved on Black Shabbat (7.10.23) after the brutal Hamas attack on Israel.

And who did not give up!

Avishay in the kitchen. Private photo.

We have known Avishay since April 2024, when we visited him in his destroyed kibbutz on the border to Gaza and he showed us the burnt houses and ruins of Kfar Azza. Including his own damaged house.

Here is the story of our first encounter:

[“Wounded Israel – Death and Destruction on the Border to Gaza”](#).

All episodes of our journey in April 2024 can be found [here](#).



Avishay with us in front of his damaged house in Kfar Azza. April 2024. Private photo.

Nine months have passed since then, yet the inhabitants of the village have not been able to return. The kibbutz cannot be rebuilt because the war with Hamas continues and rockets still fall here regularly.

Avishay now lives with his family in Herzliya. The talented cook, who has already catered for three Israeli presidents (Perez, Rivlin and Herzog), is in great demand. And not only in Israel.

This summer, he is visiting friends in Germany and working on his dream of opening his own restaurant. It will be called “Two-Three-Two (2-3-2)” one day - like the road in Israel, that runs from Ashkelon along the Gaza Strip to Kerem Shalom and the border crossing with Egypt. He always travelled home via this route. On October 7th, the sunlit road became an avenue of death, on which hundreds of people lay murdered in partially burnt-out cars.

But Avishay wants to bring the term “2-3-2” back to life with new, different connotations.



Experiencing Israel - in Germany

And with the help of dedicated friends of Israel, an evening is organised under the motto “Experience Israel with all your senses”.

Hannelore and Kerstin from Reutlingen have spared no effort to create a wonderful ambience for the culinary arts of this gourmet chef. The guests enjoy all the lovely details and, of course, the wonderfully delicious, different dishes that taste so different from German cuisine. Avishay thus becomes a representative of his country as every dish conveys the message of freshness, variety and uniqueness.



Buffet & guests at the Israel evening in July 2024 in Reutlingen. Private photo

Living in Kfar Azza

But he also has another message: he talks about his experiences in the kibbutz before and during the Hamas massacre. Delly from CSI, who works intensively for Israel, especially for victims of terror, has known Avishay for over 12 years and invited him to Germany. She provides a virtuoso translation so that not a hint of his message is lost.

Avishay begins with the story of his ancestors. His mother's side of the family has lived in Israel for 12 generations, long before the state was founded in 1948; his father's side, for 3 generations. They all helped to build Israel. He himself has always lived in Kfar Azza since his birth, got married and lived with his wife Shani and his two young sons in a beautiful house on the outskirts of the village.

He talks about the years before 2005, before Israel withdrew completely from the Gaza Strip in the hope of bringing peace to the region. He talks about the Israeli villages in the Gaza Strip that were known as [Gush Katif](#) and how he and his family travelled to the beautiful beaches of Gaza to swim and enjoy delicious food.

Avishay speaks about the coexistence with the Arabs, how the inhabitants of the kibbutz helped the Palestinians, without realising that sometimes they were indirectly supporting [Hamas](#). And of the year 2005, when Israel evacuated its own citizens from the Gaza Strip by force. This happened without the Palestinians giving anything in return; as a sacrifice by Israel for peace in the region.

But things turned out very differently! Hamas became the ruling power and coexistence changed. The attacks from the Gaza Strip increased. Again and again and more and more rockets. His parent's house and his sister's house were both hit - even before 2024.



The 7th of October

Then the morning of October 7th. The sirens blared for hours like never before. When it finally calmed down and he dared to leave the shelter, he heard the terrorists' shots and realized that something terrible was happening. As he didn't have any weapons, he took the biggest knife from the kitchen and barricaded himself and his family as best he could in the shelter.

And then the messages started coming in via WhatsApp, one after the other. Desperate messages, cries for help, non-stop - for hours on end. Families whose homes had been invaded by terrorists or whose houses had been burnt down. People who had to watch their loved ones being killed in front of their eyes and others being abducted. People who were helpless and defenseless in the face of this orgy of violence and brutality.

He tried to contact his parents, who lived in the same village, but they wrote to him, saying that they couldn't talk for fear the terrorists, who were in the house, would hear them. He tried to call his sister in Beeri but was unable to reach her. Endless, horrific hours passed - more and more messages and then sometimes a sudden, terrible silence. He wanted to help his friends, but his wife begged him to stay with her and the children. They both realized that if the terrorists came to their house, they had no chance. They decided that in this case he would fight with the knife to give her the opportunity to take her own life and that of the children. Because after all they had heard from the others, they preferred to die, rather than be abducted. His little son was only 3 months old at the time.

That night, they were finally rescued by the IDF, by soldiers who arrived after endless 23 hours of hell and expected to find only corpses. But instead they evacuated a woman with a three-month-old baby in her arms and an eight-year-old boy clutching his teddy bear. It was dark - so you couldn't see everything clearly on the way to the vehicle that took them away. Negev, Avishay's older son, wondered why so many people had laid down on the ground to "sleep" ... To this day, Avishay is glad that his son did not understand that they were corpses. They were the first family to be rescued from Kfar Azza. The battle to liberate the kibbutz from the terrorists lasted a total of 78 hours.



Since that day, Avishay has been working on rebuilding his life: piece by piece. This constructive work helps him to push the terrible memories into the background.

He has had a lot of time to think. And today he says: you could have seen it coming. But people in Israel were too self-confident and too credulous. That's over now. They will fight until they bring all the hostages home, he says, pointing to the T-shirt he is wearing - that so many in Israel are wearing: 'Bring them home.' And they will continue to fight until Hamas is defeated. Because Hamas stands for evil par excellence.

They have believed in peace all these years. And they don't hate all Muslims. But evil must be put in its place, otherwise it will continue to spread. That is Israel's current mission.

Avishay during his speech. Private photo



Think for Yourself!

And then he turns to us, the guests in peaceful Reutlingen, and says: “You Germans are a wonderful people. Everything works here, because everyone does what they are told.” But he also warns: “Learn to think for yourselves, judge things for yourselves, don't just let yourselves be carried along by the mainstream. Start to reflect critically and ask yourselves why Jews in Germany today are once again afraid to declare their Jewishness on the street. History is repeating itself - and you have sworn: never again!

“You have taken in millions of Muslims. I'm not saying that's not a good thing, but make sure they don't overtake you. Make it clear to them that they are welcome, but that they are expected to adapt. Defend your values and your identity. Because in the not too distant future, they will be many more and if you are not careful, they will impose their values and culture on your country. In the middle of a democracy and because of democratic majorities, they will have a very loud voice.”

These are words that resonate and make you think ...

And then he comes to the end - it will be a finale con brio, just like his dessert, which he prepares in front of his astonished audience. A combination of originality and ingenuity, presented with a smile at the corner of his mouth and shining eyes. Quick, simple and enchanting delicious.



The dessert artwork. Private photo.

Finale Con Brio!

This is his final message: “That I stand here before you today, that I can tell my story, is my victory!”

[Simchat Torah](#) was celebrated on October 7th, it is the last Jewish holiday of Sukkot (Tabernacles) and it was his Jewish birthday. The fact that he survived the massacre on this day is like a rebirth for him.

A new beginning.

Whether and when he will be able to return to Kfar Azza is currently completely uncertain. At best, in several years' time.

But he wants to make the most of this time and live his dreams. Like this evening! Celebrate life.

Celebrate Israel! His survival!

What a wonderful message of resilience and hope.

We look forward to welcoming you back to Germany soon, Avishay!

Shalom chaver shelanu - Le hitraot!

Goodbye, our friend! See you soon!



*At the celebration of life.
Private photo*