



Altars of Gratitude

by Brigitte B. Nussbächer

*It began as a prayer after a stroke of fate and became the start of a new chapter in life. The true story about friends of Israel who began to build altars for God out of words in order to create the opportunity for other people to get to know and love Israel better.
Right now, especially in this time!*

In the Hospital

It was March 23, 2023. I was sitting in the waiting area of the University Hospital in Tübingen. Around me were people and murmurs, but I was blind and deaf to them. They had just taken Harald, my husband, whom I had brought to the clinic, for surgery. It was the 17th operation since January 2022 when he had been diagnosed with malignant melanoma (malignant black skin cancer) and the biggest and most critical surgery so far.



Founded in 1805, Tübingen University Hospital is a leading center of German university medicine in the fields of high-performance medicine, research and teaching.

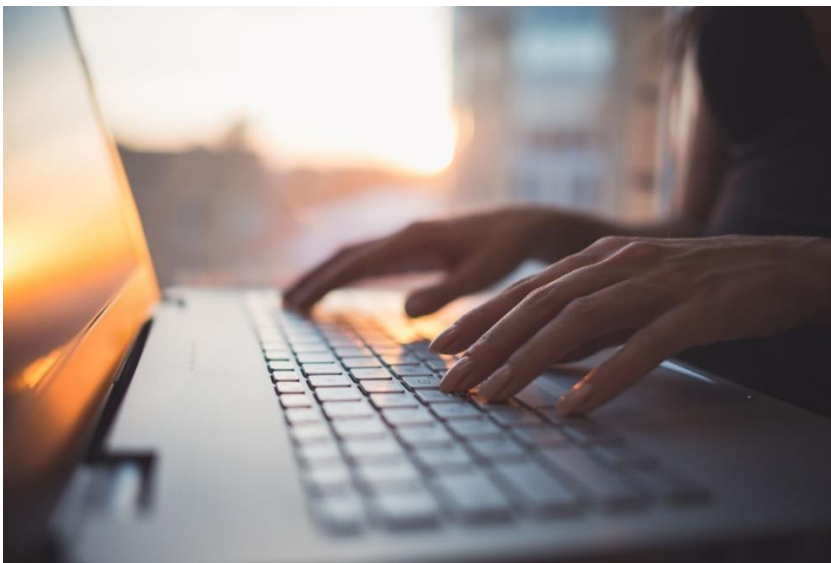
When he learned in January 2023 that two more tumors had formed on the left side of his neck, it was initially devastating for both of us. But then we made the decision to trust, that everything that came our way carries a hidden blessing that we will recognize sooner or later and to celebrate life as long as we were able to do so.

The first implementation of these thoughts was to spontaneously book a journey to Israel. We wanted to experience God "at home" (in the land he had chosen) and we wanted to seek him in the place, where he had said that "his eyes and his heart will always be there": the [Western Wall in Jerusalem](#) (1 Kings 9:3).



Anyone who followed the media during that period knows that Israel was (once again) rocked by a series of horrific terrorist attacks at that time. Divergent opinions on the planned judicial reform, voiced especially by opponents of the reform in stormy demonstrations, were tearing the Israeli people apart.

Nevertheless, we experienced a wonderful, touching time here. At that time I felt the desire to be a counter voice in the midst of all the depressing news (a Kaleb who saw the potential of the Promised Land while the other scouts saw only the frightening), because despite all the negative, sad and worrying topics, there was so much that was beautiful, enriching and inspiring. We had just experienced it! And now, three days after our return from Israel, I was sitting in the waiting area of this clinic and had decided to build an altar for God during the time Harald was being treated in surgery.! An altar out of words! So I sat in the midst of all the people with the laptop on my knees and wrote and wrote ... what became the article: [Israel, a Recent Travel Experience - the Kaleb Report](#)



I wanted to build an altar for God with words.

When and Why Do People Build Altars?

If you read the Torah (the books of Moses), you will notice that after a striking, drastic experience with God, each of the main characters and patriarchs built an altar.

Noah, when he came across land again after the Flood (Gen. 8:29), **Abraham** after God told him that the land would belong to his descendants (Gen. 12:7), **Isaac** after God promised, to bless him and multiply his descendants (Gen 26:25), **Jacob** after God revealed himself to him (Gen 35:7), and **Moses** after the victory over the Amalekites (Ex 17:15) and again at the covenant at Sinai (Ex 24:4).

Was it the need to set a visible milestone, a monument, so to speak, for special encounters with God? Was it to be a memorial for God and/or for what had happened at this place? Was it to show gratitude? Should it convey a message to others, or was it the builder himself who wanted to remember these special experiences again and again through concrete, tangible proof?

And finally, God himself gave the order to build an altar (Ex 20:24) and the promise: "in every place where I cause my name to be honored, I will come to you and bless you".



From the beginning, people built altars to God when they experienced something particularly impactful with Him

What were **my motives**? First of all, I wanted to make a statement to myself and to God that I was determined not to let anything that was happening separate me from Him. But I also wanted to make visible, what a life-changing experience it had been for me to get to know Israel. I wanted to give thanks for all the blessings I had already experienced in my life and thus create a reminder of those experiences. I wanted to build a pillar of encouragement for dark times. And I wanted to ask God to continue to bless us, especially now, especially Harald who was currently on the operating table. I tried to put my whole heart into my words. And every word was a song of thanksgiving and a pleading request at the same time.

It is said that one should bring to God the most precious thing one possesses. In my youth I had won literary prizes before I gave up writing in order to turn to seemingly more promising future prospects. So now I wanted to build this altar with what I subconsciously still considered my personal strength and talent: Words.

What Happened Afterwards ...

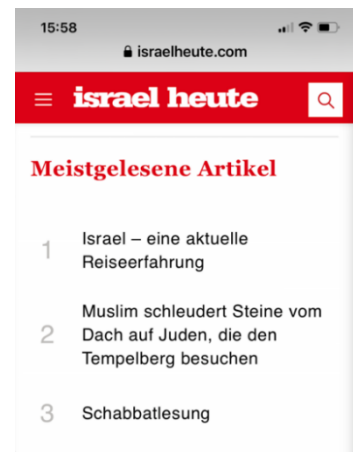
Harald's surgery was without complications and, miraculously, with much less pain afterwards than all the others. Since then, other tumors have been identified (and removed), but all at a very early stage.



Harald's surgery to remove two malignant melanomas (malignant tumors) from his neck was successful.

Our friends Aviel and Anat Schneider, who run the news agency "[Israel Today](#)" in Jerusalem, published my travelogue, which was written in the hospital, and within 48 hours it became the most read article on the site. The feedback I received gave me the impulse to write more about our experiences in and with Israel.

Until now, we had always shared our impressions and recommendations verbally with others in small circles. Now the idea arose to make everything we knew about Israel available for those interested in written form and in at least two languages. Because it is our [heart's desire](#) to create the possibility for other people to get to know and love this country and this people..



The logo of our non-profit association.

We founded a non-profit association and started working on our own Website; [ARC TO ISRAEL](#).



- One focus of this site is to present the [handpicked places](#) that have impressed and touched us the most during our travels over the years.
- A second focus is to provide living **in-depth knowledge** about this special people with their unique history **through** [books and films](#).

Because those who know these places and the history of the country can better relate to events in Israel and better understand the nature of Israelis.

- And the third focus is to capture in words the most precious **personal experiences** related to Israel of ourselves and our family Also to show historical connections and explain how they relate to current topics. This is how our passionately written [articles](#) are created, each of which is a small word altar in its own right.

The year flew by. Instead of worrying about the next medical control and the future, we wondered about how we could make our website a blessing for Israel. It was only much later, that we realized what a gift this was for ourselves. So the circle became complete: whoever blesses Israel will be blessed. Thoughts became deeds. More and more was added and our site took shape. But we are far from finished, because there is so much to report and show. We are already looking forward to sharing our impressions of the next trips to Israel and introducing new articles. Each one is a small altar of words in itself.

Our Website is a great thanksgiving, for all that we have experienced and come to know. An "altar" on which we continue to build. And our wish is, that this website becomes a source of inspiration for others.

In this sense, **welcome to: Arc to Israel!**

www.arc-to-israel.org/en



Israel's history and present are fascinating. Get to know this special country and people!



More articles from Brigitte B. Nussbächer under: www.arc-to-israel.org/en/artikel