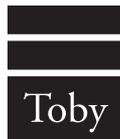


If You're Reading These Words
Last Letters from Heroes of the October 7th War



Shlomo Kavas • Racheli Palant-Rozen

If you're
reading
these
words



LAST LETTERS FROM HEROES
OF THE OCTOBER 7TH WAR

TRANSLATED BY
Sara Daniel

The Toby Press

*If You're Reading These Words:
Last Letters from Heroes of the October 7th War*

First English Edition, 2026

*The To by Press
An imprint of Koren Publishers Jerusalem Ltd.*

POB 8531, New Milford, CT 06776-8531, USA
& POB 4044, Jerusalem 9104001, Israel
www.korenpub.co.il

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The publication of this book was made possible through the generous support of *The Jewish Book Trust*.

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ISBN 978-1-59264-737-8, *paperback*

Printed in Israel

This book is sponsored by

*The Weisfeld Family
Charitable Foundation*

*whose mission is to strengthen
Eretz Yisrael, Zionism, Jewish continuity,
and strong Jewish education for all*



*Netanya, Israel; Highland Beach, FL, USA;
and Toronto, Canada*



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Editors' Introduction

I'm writing this down here because I realize that the deadly battle we just got through isn't the last.

*

I hope — I'm sure — that later on, we'll read this letter together in the yard over some good beer and a cigarette and laugh.

*

Tension's in the air, and also dark humor about who will be coming back and who won't.

*

In case something happens to me, I have something to tell you.

*

Who's supposed to teach twenty-three-year-old kids how to write a letter like this?

*

I don't relate to all the fancy words they publish about every soldier who dies.

*

If this is going to be a message from another world, let it be authentic.

*

If I die by enemy hand, I want the world to hear.

*

In case I die, I'd better leave operating instructions.

*

I want you to know that there's no one happier than I am.

*

I fell with honor for the sake of my people.

xi

xii If You're Reading These Words

I'd be very happy if they'd set something up in my memory . . . something like education.

*

Buy a good karaoke system for the gang in Dimona.

*

I'm a little scared, but I'm at peace.

*

I'm afraid that I'm a high-value target for Hamas.

*

We crawled up to here, I got injured, and there's a barrage now.

*

Dad . . . when it's all over and my friends tell you what I did here,
you'll be very proud of me.

*

Suddenly, it's all clear. Our generation, our turn.

*

Now that we're done with the kitschy part, we're up to the funeral. Mom, I ask you,
no tear-jerking, emotional speeches.

*

You saw how hundreds of people I don't even know came to my funeral?

*

Grandpa, I know that you always believed in me and you were very proud of me
becoming a fighter. So be proud now, too, because I didn't fall in vain.

*

Every once in a while, smile up at the clouds — I'll be there.

*

If I had to sculpt my life all over again, I wouldn't change a thing.

*

I hope that you'll remember me.

We remember the moment we first read these words, in the throes of the October 7th War (known operationally as Swords of Iron). We had already heard so many words during this war – testimonies, stories, interviews, but from our first encounter with a soldier's last letter, we were moved in a different way. What even is this? This beauty? Who writes like this? So vulnerable, penetrating, singular, unlike anything else. As people who work with words, we were left speechless.

We were speechless both in the face of these words, and of the very choice to write. Imagine the abnormal situation of a young soldier or a middle-aged reservist making the unfathomably courageous choice to contemplate the possibility of not returning from the battlefield, and writing a last letter.

We couldn't yet articulate just why, even to ourselves, but we felt that we couldn't let these words get swept away with the usual flood of current events and news reports. We felt that they were worthy of the highest honor; they deserved to live on.

And we also thought: There must be so many more of them.

These last words are treasures. So let's collect them.

Let's create a book that compiles the last letters of soldiers that fell in this war – those that have already been published, and especially those that haven't been.

But wait, we asked ourselves – why? Why us, why now? Why should we delve so deeply into this pain, get so close to the grief of mourning? Why dive into a whole sea of texts whose common denominator is that their authors are here no more? Why look death in the eye instead of looking away?

And then we understood: That's exactly what they did, the fallen. They dared look death straight in the eye, to contemplate the possibility that they would never return, and compose these last letters.

If they had the courage to write them, then we should summon the courage to read them.



The small, blue Star of David you see on the cover was drawn by Adi Leon, of blessed memory, at the end of his last letter, which he wrote the night before he went into Gaza.

In that letter, he wrote about what he had seen on October 7th, about the dangerous battle he was about to face, and about the knowledge that he might not return. He wrote to his parents, to his little sister, and to the people of Israel. At the bottom of the page, he drew a small heart and a Star of David.

He ended the letter with the words “I hope you’ll remember me.”

If you are reading these words, you are helping to fulfill Adi’s humble request: to remember him, and to remember the forty-eight other heroes whose final letters are collected in this book. They went out to defend the country and the people they loved so deeply.

Despite the geographical distance, this book brings you very close to this generation of soldiers – the beautiful faces of Israel in 2023. Throughout the war, we as Israelis felt the warm embrace of our people in Jewish communities all over the world, as well as the support of our non-Jewish friends and all people of good will and moral clarity, who understood what we were fighting for. We experienced our fellow Jews’ tremendous willingness to help, and our shared pain.

We felt the Jewish people’s great love for our soldiers.

The book you now hold in your hands is living testimony to the deep love our soldiers had for the Jewish people – in their own words.



This war touched us, and all Israelis, personally.

On October 7th Shlomo’s uncle, Amram Alon Toledano of blessed memory, was murdered by Hamas terrorists in Sderot on his way to the synagogue. When we first started thinking about this book, and throughout our work on it, Racheli lived in fear for the lives of her reservist husband Nitai, her brothers in the service, and all her relatives off fighting in Gaza and Lebanon. Every day at work as a journalist, she kept in touch with bereaved families. The boundaries between the personal and the national, the individual and the collective, broke down.

A single day shattered the border between life and death. Death beckoned to us from bumper stickers in the street; from social gatherings; from official death notices. And we cannot look away any longer. Nor should we want to.

How This Book Was Created

We weren't quite sure how to create a book like this, so we decided to get started and learn as we went along. We understood that the letters that made it into the news were a fraction of what was out there, and that we didn't want to let a single one of these treasures slip away, its letters floating off into the air.

We thought about posting a public appeal in newspapers and social media, but we felt that reaching out to each bereaved family personally would be a more sensitive and appropriate way to invite them to share something so precious. So we started working systematically: We made an Excel sheet of all the fallen soldiers.

We found the families' contact information through every acquaintance, organization, and commemoration project we could think of, and slowly, we amassed many, many phone numbers. And with each new official death notice, we brokenheartedly added another name to the spreadsheet, which was already far too long.

We began reaching out to the families of all the soldiers who fell in the first year of the war. We soon realized that we wouldn't manage to get hold of all the hundreds of families by ourselves, so we looked for researchers to organize the effort. We were concerned that the process would become too technical. We wanted to keep it as personal and intimate as we could, so we sought professionals with a rare combination of sensitivity, thoroughness, and warmth. And we found Aviv Baavur and Tehila Ben Harush, who were all this and more.

Aviv and Tehila worked around the clock for months to contact each family, explain the project, embrace them and invite them to join. They went back and forth with us about each complex dilemma – for example, whether to approach the parents of the surveillance soldiers who were killed on October 7th, where the chances that a letter had been left were infinitesimal, or to risk overlooking them.

Aviv and Tehila, thank you for your devotion and your big hearts. It was a privilege to work with you.

We did our best to reach out to each family, and if we missed anyone, we ask their forgiveness.



Soon after we began reaching out to the families, it became clear that the overwhelming majority of soldiers did not leave a last letter. There is no formal IDF guideline encouraging soldiers to write letters before going out to battle; soldiers who write do so on their own initiative.

Some families shared their aching sense of loss at missing out on words their sons never got to write. Others were relieved that their loved ones fought without thought of death.

Some parents said that they had a letter, but were reluctant to share one of the most precious, intimate things they had left from their sons. Even so, many of them ultimately made the magnanimous choice to share the letters, so that these last words might comfort others as they themselves had been comforted.

Most of the letters in this book have never been published before. When we approached families whose son's letters had already been published, we almost always discovered that only one page or section of a longer letter had been made public – usually the paragraph beginning with something like “If I die.” The families assumed that the more personal parts of the letters would be less interesting to others. We thought the opposite – that these were the most engaging and individual parts of the letters; fortunately, our enthusiasm proved to be contagious.

“I’m not sure he would have wanted us to share this,” one of the fathers said to us, “but you know what? If he has a problem with it, let him come and say so.”



We received hundreds of exquisite texts, but we had to narrow them down. We set a very specific criterion: The book was to consist only of letters written as last letters, letters written in the “If you’re reading this, it means...” mindset. Therefore, excerpts from journals or letters sent to family and friends that only became last words in retrospect were not included in this book. This meant that we had to regretfully turn down several beautiful texts that didn’t fit this concept.

We were left with dozens of letters, all very different, with one thing in common: All were written with the knowledge that they would be read only if the author was no longer with us.

When we studied these words, we felt that we were holding a piece of history. And we knew that was how we must present them – without any filters, without correcting words or commas, even if the spelling was off or the phrasing was a little awkward, because these were not our own. We remained fiercely faithful to the originals, to the raw material. We didn’t censor a single word – we only omitted words that the family chose to withhold for the sake of privacy or those that were destroyed because the paper was burnt or damaged.

After months of gathering materials, we were left with forty-nine last letters.

And then we understood that that was only the beginning.



We realized that none of the letters was written in a vacuum. Each letter has a story. Some soldiers wrote on October 7th during a brief respite between fierce battles in the Gaza Envelope. Others wrote just before

their phones were collected by the army in preparation for entering Gaza, when they sensed that it was their last chance to write.

Some soldiers wrote in notepads in the heart of Rafah, after losing close friends. One wrote before embarking on a mission to rescue hostages; he said he was well aware of the danger involved and prepared to pay the price.

There were also many who didn't write any letters over long months of fighting, only to decide to write mere days or even hours before they fell in battle – as if they somehow knew.

The story of how each letter was written became an integral part of this book. We clarified and researched as much background information as we could. This became the introduction to each letter: When did he decide to write? Where was he, and what was he going through at that time? Whom did he tell about the letter? How did he keep it from being read before he fell?

Often, even the family didn't know the full story, so we spoke with the friends, the commanders, the officers who kept the letters safe – with anyone who might be able to fill in another piece of the puzzle. We were motivated to gather and document as much concrete information as possible; to create a time capsule for future generations.



We read each letter again and again, meditating on each one, and the questions just kept coming. How could it be that Yoav, mortally wounded, wrote that it was “the best twenty minutes of my life”? Alon requested that a brewery be established in his memory. What happened in the end with that? What was Yonatan talking about when he wrote, “The images that I saw are stuck in my head – I’m going out to battle for their sake”? How could Elchanan Kalmanson – who fell at the very beginning of the surprise attack, on October 8 – manage to write a last letter? And what is that little sketch of a cat that Adi drew in the middle of his?

We also lingered over what might seem like small, marginal details. We stopped at every phrase that seemed to echo a private joke, refer to

the tail end of a story, or leave the vaguest hint. We allowed our curiosity to lead the way, and this stage of the work became part investigation, part literary analysis. We tried to read between the lines and get a sense of the person behind them, who put his heart into them.

We so badly wanted to talk to the writers themselves; to sit with them over a cup of coffee and ask them everything. If we only could. Instead, in lieu of the letter writers, we turned to their addressees – their parents, partners, and friends.

It was important to us to meet with each family personally and directly, without mediation. To look them in the eye and read their loved one's last letter together with them, word by word. This was one of the most emotional stages of creating this book – looking at it together with them, watching as many of the parents saw the letter through a new set of eyes in conversation with us, reading it anew and uncovering aspects they hadn't noticed before. One of the mothers stopped us in the middle and asked, through tears, "Wait, you read all of the letters like this, interpreting each and every word as if it were a sacred text?"

And we answered, "What do you mean, 'as if'?"

Deep connections were forged by our shared study of each letter. Forty-nine families made their way into our hearts, and there they remain. Thank you for entrusting us with this privilege. We did our best to be worthy of the mission.



Throughout the reading process, we felt again and again that the letters were so intimate that it was almost wrong to read them, like taking a peek into someone's diary. In many cases, we actually were peeking into someone's diary without permission, reading the final words that a person wrote himself. For this reason, the families became our moral compass; we asked their consent for each word we added about their sons in the introductions to the letters and the notes.

We had to show great restraint. Long hours of conversation with soldiers' families and friends were condensed into the brief notes at

the bottom of each letter. We chose to write in a minimalist style. To use few adjectives or superlatives. To let the facts speak for themselves. We also took care not to embellish or sugarcoat what we learned. The truth is beautiful as is.

We were often tempted to add another detail about his music, her dreams, to describe their heroic last battle. But we reminded ourselves that this book isn't the story of our heroes' lives or even of their deaths, but the story of their last letters. And that not everything needs to be said.

Leave the Rest

Shlomo Tanny

Don't say it all.

Even a tree says only trunk and leaves,

And leaves roots in the darkness.

Don't cross all the boundaries.

Even God tells only of sun,

Moon and stars,

And leaves universes

Beyond the griefs of knowledge.

Don't read a man all the way to the end.



These last letters were written in every format imaginable – by hand, on WhatsApp, on the computer, a voice note, a video clip. For the sake of consistency, we decided to transcribe each letter, word for word, and that they would all appear in the same font.

This was a difficult decision. Handwriting is fiercely intimate; we didn't want to give that up. We wanted to present the letters in all their rawness – the charred paper, the trembling hand, to give expression to the original, to the handwriting itself. And then we had the idea of turning to Ot.Hayim, "Living Letters." Ot.Hayim is a beautiful volunteer memorial initiative started in the midst of this war, in which graphic designers work in conjunction with bereaved families to create fonts out of the handwriting of the fallen, to memorialize their names and

individuality. The Ot.Hayim volunteers used the handwriting of the heroes of this book as a basis to sensitively, lovingly recreate the final words of the last letters in the book. We are truly grateful.

The intense encounter with all these last letters and the constant proximity to grief and death and longing flooded us with feelings and questions. We felt that we were confronting something bigger than us, and we didn't want to face it alone. We asked ourselves whom we'd want to guide us – and future readers – as we read through these words.

We assembled a group of inspiring figures from the world of Israeli culture – people of insight and heart. We talked with them and asked them to write words of their own about these last words.

These creators read the letters in this book and then donated their words and intimate thoughts. We were expecting meaningful philosophical and literary reflections, but they gave us far more: their heart, their vulnerability, their very selves. Each wrote from their own perspective and life experience, and together their reflections form an exquisite Israeli symposium on last words.



Thank you, President Isaac Herzog, Eviatar Banai, Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi, Rabbi Tamir Granot, Lieutenant Colonel Aviran Alfasi, Emily Damari, Iris Haim, Avi Issacharoff, and Miriam Peretz. Thank you for your dialogue, for thinking along with us, and for agreeing to open your hearts. Thank you for bearing this burden together with us.

Thank you to the true authors of this book, who will never read it. We fell in love with you even though we never met. How you wished that no one would have to read these words. Thank you for choosing to write and to leave something of yourselves for all of us – inspiring us to live and love more than before.

As we worked with your last words, we repeatedly asked ourselves what you would think of this book. Some of you would definitely have laughed at us for being too kitschy. “I don't relate to all the fancy words.”

“Be doers, not talkers.” But what can we do – your words are truly great and precious to us. We won't let go of them.

We don't really know how to thank people who sacrificed their lives for our sake. But for starters, we're here, looking right at you and reading your words.



Over the course of working on this book, people sometimes asked us: Wait, who do you actually work for? Are you part of some kind of organization or commemorative branch of government?

And sometimes we asked ourselves, when it was hard, what we had to do with all this. We're in truth not part of any official group or organization; we're just two people, a copywriter and a journalist; no one appointed us or commissioned us to take on this project.

And each time we hesitated or wavered, the words of six-year-old Romi Suissa from Sderot – who was hiding in the back seat with her three-year-old sister when terrorists murdered her parents in their car – resonated for us. When rescuers came to the car, Romi asked them, “Are you with Israel?”

And this is our answer: We are with Israel. That's what we're a part of.

We Israelis have never in our lifetimes been brought as low as we were on October 7th. Yet also in our lifetimes, we have never felt as proud to be sons and daughters of Israel. Throughout this difficult war, a spirit of voluntarism has swept the country, everyone doing their part.

We are people of words, so we have gathered this bouquet of words for our people. We lay it here before you.

Now it is yours.

Shlomo Kavas and Racheli Palant-Rozen
25 Shevat 5785/26 February 2025
Day 509 of the October 7th War

Foreword

President Isaac Herzog

Days of harsh warfare have come upon us, beginning with the biggest, most terrible, horrific, and savage massacre that we have experienced since our return to our land; even now, over a year since that bitter and fateful day, we are scarred, shocked, and overwhelmed. We are still far from processing, understanding, and putting into words the painful burden we have borne since October 7th, Simchat Torah.

Throughout this time period, we have all of us veered between anxiety and hope, pain and faith, in an impossible conjunction of life and death, grief and love, longing and intense agony. And in an astonishing way, though our shoulders bend under the weight of our sadness, we hold our backs more straight – buoyed by the privilege of being part of this people, that these are our sons and daughters.

Every day more stories of the courage, audacity, and nobility of our brave soldiers and citizens come to our attention. Male and female fighters who did not wait around for orders; who girded themselves for battle and charged into fire; citizens, men and women, who, with a breathtaking statement of “Here I am,” risked their lives instead of standing by, even on that cursed day when the enemy broke into homes and, with monstrous, merciless cruelty, burned and slaughtered mothers and children, the young and the old, seekers of peace. They came because their hearts called them to action, and they stood guard with

strength and might that cannot be surpassed. Soldiers who have continued to fight, for months on end, some of them parents, some of them just engaged, some of them new recruits, putting their lives on hold to protect their people. They have gone out to the bloody, cruel battlefields of Gaza, Judea, Samaria, and Lebanon to bring back our safety, our security, and our brothers and sisters tortured and held hostage by the terrorists of Hamas. For all its horrors, this war has revealed to us the full glory and splendor of our shining warriors. For the sake of our people, so that good and light will prevail, they have given their lives with a sense of purpose, with love for nation and homeland, with their eyes open and hearts awake.

Compiling their last letters – written before going out to battles from which they did not return – is a most precious, powerful, and worthy task. These letters – in all their beauty and lucidity, the clear and comprehending gaze that peeks out from behind them – must become part of our people's eternal heritage, with all the trembling and turmoil that sometimes come across, and maybe because of them. They are Holy Writ, letters rising from parchment that went up in flame, insofar as they bear tidings, and faith and a binding command: to continue life here, to do great good, and – together, shoulder to shoulder – to deepen our hold on our only home, the home for whose existence so many wondrous people have fallen. To reaffirm our commitment to the Eternal of Israel and to Israel's unity, in a home that must be perfected, whole, strong, and worthy of the immense sacrifice our beautiful, beloved, and courageous sons and daughters have made for its sake.

*Know that time and enemies, wind and water, shall not erase you:
you shall go on, made of letters.*

Haim Gouri

May we be worthy of them and their letters,
In blessing and with deep appreciation,
Isaac Herzog
President of Israel

Letters



Eden Provisor

Captain Eden Provisor, from Alfei Menashe, tank officer in the 52nd Battalion, 401st (Armored) Brigade. He fell in combat in the Gaza Strip on 5 Kislev 5784/November 18, 2023. He is survived by his parents and three siblings. He was twenty-one when he fell.

Eden was chosen to command the brigade's lead tank, from the first day of the ground campaign in Gaza until he fell.

On November 15, 2023, he called his family from Gaza with a cell phone belonging to a noncommissioned officer bringing supplies to the field.

After long conversations with his mother and siblings, he asked his father to stay on the line by himself.

Eden didn't have time to write during the intense fighting, so he told his father, Guy, "Dad, now I'm dictating my last words to you."

His father wrote the words down and held onto them.

Three days later, Eden fell in battle, and his father first shared Eden's last words with the rest of the family.

When It's All Over, You'll Be Very Proud of Me

Eden Provisor

Dad, I want to speak with you, seriously, and I'm asking you to listen to me without getting angry at me.

Dad, we're here in the inferno and the situation is terrible. I can't tell you what will happen, but there's a chance that I won't be coming back home, but will be staying here. I'm asking you to listen to me: I want you to continue living as if I'm with you.

Don't collapse and don't live in sadness. I'm asking you to continue to enjoy life, to go out to restaurants and travel abroad

I'm asking you to listen to me without getting angry at me: When Eden left for battle, his father, Guy, handed him a letter with two requests: to bring all his soldiers safely back home, and not to do anything that would earn him a commendation. Eden's soldiers told them that before they went into Gaza, he read them his father's letter and cried. He knew that he wouldn't be able to fulfill his father's requests.

We're here in the inferno: As Eden's battalion advanced, more and more anti-tank missiles were fired at them. Eden, who was the commander of the lead tank, knew that he was an especially vulnerable target. Two days after his conversation with his father, during their attack on Jabaliya, Eden's tank took a direct missile hit, and Eden was killed.

There's a chance that I won't be coming back home: The day after that conversation, Eden's father called him and asked him to take back those parting words — or to come right back home. "I asked him to find someone to take his place. That was the first time that Eden ever shouted at me. He said: 'That's not an option. You raised me for this — for leadership, for responsibility. This is the role that they gave me. If someone takes my place and gets hurt instead of me, I won't be able to live with it, not for a single day.'"

and all the things we loved to do. Dad, I'm serious; you can't do anything else. I want you to know that I'm proud of what I'm doing, and even if something happens to me then it'll happen, and it's all right. I'm on my life's mission, watching over the Land of Israel.

When it's all over and my friends tell you what I did here, you'll be very proud of me. You gave me everything in life and I ask that you really listen to me.

I had a good life, a full life, full of happiness and goodness. I hope that God will be with me, but even if not – you should all know that I loved you and I had a terrific life.

Dad, you have to promise me this, because that's the only way I can go on.

אבא אורה חייב אהבה'ת די אור צד
כי רק ככה אל יכא ערמאליך.

When it's all over and my friends tell you what I did here, you'll be very proud of me: After his death, Eden's friends told his family stories of his courage.

One story is that as they entered the Al-Shati Camp, Eden's battalion was ambushed by dozens of anti-tank missiles. When there was finally a lull after hours of fierce battle, the battalion commander updated their force about a high-ranking Hamas commander in the area who was about to escape.

Radio silence. After the intense fight, no one was in a hurry to return to the line of fire.

After a few moments of tense silence, Eden's voice echoed over the radio: "Commander, this is Three. We're going out to attack."

In a separate incident, Eden's tank was malfunctioning, so they moved out of the range of fire. As they were waiting, a few kilometers away from the battlefield, Eden noticed that a certain officer wasn't responding on the radio and he became worried about him. He rushed his crew back into the malfunctioning tank, which he miraculously managed to start, and on his own initiative, drove back into the heart of the battle. "A friend is trapped, and we all have to save him," he said to his soldiers. When they reached the officer, they discovered that he was wounded and unconscious, and they saved his life.

Yoav Malayev

Lieutenant Yoav Malayev, from Kiryat Ono, deputy battalion communications officer in the 77th Battalion, 7th (Armored) Brigade. He fell in combat at the Yiftah outpost on 22 Tishrei 5784/October 7th, 2023. He is survived by his parents, three siblings, and a partner. He was nineteen when he fell.



From basic training until his final moments, Yoav kept a small pocket journal. Inside its back cover was a page that Yoav had torn out of the pad. He'd written across the top: "Take a look when it gets tough." Under the title he had written: "Head held high. Set an example. Be the best. Pursue contact. Reset and switch mindsets. Go all out."

On October 7th Yoav led a fierce battle against Hamas terrorists who were trying to invade the Yiftah outpost next to Zikim.

After about an hour of tenacious fighting he was mortally wounded. In the few brief minutes between his injury and his death, Yoav chose to use the last of his strength to fish out his notepad, even though he also had his cell phone on him. He wrote down his last words in weak, blurred handwriting.

The Best Twenty Minutes of My Life

Yoav Malayev

The best twenty minutes of my life.

We crawled up to here, I got injured, and there's a barrage now.

I'm thinking of you and will be thinking of you the whole journey,

I love you.

אני אהבתי אותך כל הזמן

The best twenty minutes of my life: “In order to understand Yoav’s brief, astounding sentence,” his parents Maya and Alex explain, “you have to delve into everything that was encapsulated into those minutes, which were the essence of everything Yoav reminded himself of in the ‘Take a look when it’s hard’ note.”

Due to a medical issue, Yoav could have been exempt from combat service, but he fought for it, and managed to become a combat track teleprocessing officer.

During the days leading up to October 7th, Yoav decided on his own initiative, out of a sense of responsibility for his battalion’s readiness for combat, to devote whole nights to fixing — alongside another soldier — all the communications malfunctions of all the tanks in that sector, which was very quiet at the time.

On October 6, in response to a WhatsApp message from his father asking how he was, Yoav wrote: “I’m doing as well as my tanks are — not great.”

On the morning of October 7th, when the missiles started falling, Yoav managed to help that other soldier, who was gripped with anxiety. He hugged her and told her, “I want you to always remember that, thanks to you, there are now four more working tanks at the border fence.”

Yoav was the officer on duty, and despite his lack of combat experience, he took charge of the fighting at the outpost.

He instructed the armed soldiers in the shelter to stay and protect the unarmed soldiers inside instead of following him. Then, with five other soldiers, he ran to hold back the hordes of terrorists who were lying in ambush at the base’s gate.

In the first and last battle of his life, Yoav encouraged and supported the more experienced combat soldiers who fought at his side and together, outnumbered, they succeeded in preventing the outpost from being overthrown.

I love you: Yoav, who chose his words carefully throughout his life, didn’t specify to whom these words were addressed. “He chose exactly what to write and didn’t omit a word,” his parents say. “He wrote to everyone who loved him — and a lot of people loved him.” They are comforted by the knowledge that his last words were words of love.