



INSIGHT

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Former Institute Students Killed in Jerusalem Terrorist Attack

The Jerusalem bus that was blown up by a terrorist on June 12, 2003 shattered the dreams and lives of many people. Yaniv Abayed, 22, and his fiancée Bat-El Ohana, 21, former students at the Jewish Institute for the Blind, were in the process of moving to Jerusalem, and they were beginning to talk about a wedding. On the day of the attack, Bat-El decided to accompany Yaniv to a meeting for a job interview, and a few stops after they got on the bus a terrorist blew himself up, destroying their dreams along with lives and property in downtown Jerusalem.

Eighteen people in addition to the terrorist were killed in the horrifying attack. "All of the teachers of the Institute were nearby, enjoying an outing in one of Jerusalem's oldest neighborhoods near the center of town when we heard the loud explosion followed by sirens," recounts school principal Rachel Skrobish. "We stopped the tour immediately and made contact with the school and other

staff members, checking that all were accounted for. It was only the next morning we heard the horrible news about our former students Yaniv and Bat-El."

Yaniv was born in Herzilia, and as a young boy he began studying at the Institute. Bat-El was from Kiryat Ata, but completed high school at the Institute. This year she was on the verge of completion of her first year at the Hebrew

University of Jerusalem. "Bat-El had a strong connection with many educators and students here at the Institute, and she volunteered weekly, helping a young pupil with her academic work," adds Skrobish. She and Yaniv had come by a few days earlier to say 'shalom', and now many of the pupils feel like they knew it was their last visit.

"Both Yaniv and Bat-El shared hearts of gold," Skrobish recalls. "If one of his classmates was reprimanded or punished, Yaniv always looked for a way to convince us to

retract the punishment." In a moving memorial ceremony held just over a month after their burial, family members, former students and educators all talked about their connections to the two former students. "Bat-El was the organizer, and she always wanted to make sure everyone was happy," adds one friend. "And both Yaniv and Bat-El had an outstanding sense of humor," agreed several classmates.

In addition to memorial plaques that were affixed in the synagogue of the Institute, a permanent memorial to Yaniv and Bat-El at the Institute will be erected after further consultation with their families. Unfortunately, the parents of Yaniv and Bat-El had not yet met each other when their children's lives were ripped apart, but now the shared memories of the two families will haunt them forever.



Bat-El and Yaniv in an undated Institute photo with friends and instructors