

While removing the yellow ribbon

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Today, January 26, as I write these lines, we removed our yellow ribbon. With the return of Sergeant Ran Gvili z"l, the last hostage in Gaza, to his final resting place in Israel, a long and painful chapter has finally come to a close.

Before being known as "the last hostage," Ran was a person: a baby born to Itzik and Talik, a child, a teenager, and a soldier. He became a hero, a police officer who went to fight, even with a broken shoulder, defending Kibbutz Alumim on October 7.

Today, Ran Gvili marks, for Am Israel, the moment when the yellow ribbon was finally removed. With its removal, I felt a burden I had carried for so long, perhaps even grown used to, finally lifted.

The reason for this weight, and for our greatest joys as well, is the unique fabric of Am Israel: the bond that connects us to people we may never meet, linking our fate to theirs, part of a larger, living thread that binds our people together.

I first felt it deeply when I arrived in Westchester and saw the signs at the entrances of homes: I Stand With Israel.

Thousands of kilometers away, yet this fabric was so visually present. Today, I saw the same signs covered in snow.

The distance -the New York cold and Israel so far away- made the delicacy of this fabric even clearer: how fragile, yet how strong it is, and how carefully it must be nurtured.

As I remove the yellow ribbon, I wish to put on again this awareness: that nothing is more precious than this connection, this living, human thread that binds all of Am Israel together. I pray that in these new times, we will continue to protect and cherish this sacred bond.

May Ran Gvili's family find strength and comfort in the love surrounding them.

