

Misgav Am Security Road

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The second Lebanese war, in the summer of 2006, was a very difficult time for members of Kibbutz Misgav Am, which is situated on the Lebanese border and was directly hit by Katyusha rockets. The children were evacuated to safer areas, but the adults stayed at home and continued to work as usual, as the kibbutz was transformed into a military base behind the lines.

During this difficult period the security ring road constructed thanks to the generous contribution of KKL-JNF Frindes from America and Canada, acquired a new importance, as it allowed both kibbutz residents and IDF forces to move around the area in safety without exposing themselves to terrorist fire. It also provided a safe route for the evacuation of the children to the center of the country in the early days of the war, and enabled them to leave without being exposed to the dangers of travel along the main highways.

The kibbutz's henhouses sustained direct hits from Katyushas, but they have been rebuilt and returned to regular service immediately after the war as new chicks were brought in for rearing. Some of the members' homes were also damaged by rockets and shrapnel. In a new neighborhood homes as yet untenanted also sustained Katyusha damage, but their future inhabitants have not been deterred and are waiting for building to be completed so that they can move into their new homes.

The kibbutz was also provided with a new entrance. The new access road is further from the border, and follows a route which cannot be overlooked by terrorists in Lebanon. At present a new housing community is under construction on the kibbutz, and this, above all else, is tangible evidence of the way the ring road has contributed to the sense of security of those Israeli citizens who have chosen to make their home in Kibbutz Misgav Am and bring up their children there.

The Friends of KKL-JNF dedication site is located at a lookout point on the security road which provides a view of one of Israel's most magnificent panoramas: the Hula Valley, the Beqaa Valley and Mount Hermon.

Arye Guido, director of kibbutz maintenance and infrastructure: "KKL-JNF's contribution to the kibbutz has served as the basis for overall infrastructure development. Apart from the security road, which is a real life-saver, KKL-JNF has provided the infrastructure for the chicken houses – both new and old – access roads, the amphitheater and the infrastructure for the tourism village. KKL-JNF is part of our everyday lives, and it is in evidence everywhere. Even during the war, when my son was in Lebanon, I used to go up to the lookout tower every day and watch him through binoculars, just as if he were at home, when, in actuality, he was in a Lebanese village just below the kibbutz. It felt as if he were there to defend our home."

Ron Guri, kibbutz security chief: "This last war has proved how vital the security road is to our lives here. I was born here. My parents came to the kibbutz in 1947, and my children are growing up here, too. No war is going to make me move away. During the war we went on working, and we also did guard duty together with the soldiers. The Katyushas were the big problem, as they caused fires. The forest caught fire, and KKL-JNF woods close to the kibbutz went up in smoke, including the copse below the kibbutz, where we spent our childhood. If we had had a bigger fire truck here we could have saved a lot more trees. Now everything's burnt. It'll take years to replace."

IDF soldiers Nir and Ziv: "We fought in Lebanon and now we're still guarding the border. It's very important to us that people who live on the border continue to pursue their daily routine. Their ability to endure the difficulties of life on the Lebanese border and their Zionist convictions are a source of strength to us. It's important to us to continue to protect them and prevent their daily lives from being disrupted."

Sam Levi (10), Michael Marmelstein (9½), Nadav Haykin (6½) and Ofek Mostovoi: "Misgav Am's the most fun place to live. We've got friends here, a little zoo with great animals, our parents work here. We've got friends in other kibbutzim in the area. Living here is like being on holiday the whole time. There's a river, there's nature, trees, animals, a basketball court."

Yehuda and Yahav David-Pur, Moshav Margalio: "Misgav Am has a unique atmosphere. The people are very nice, and they have good values. It fits in with our way of life, as we are a farming family. I'm second generation. My father came to Margalio straight from Iran and ever since we've been working in our orchards, with strong links to the land, the Land of Israel. That's the battle we fight every day, the battle for the land, the crops and the children's future. We get help from the State, the ministry of defense and KKL-JNF. Since they built the security road I can take my daughter to the kindergarten in Misgav Am, because it's safer to travel here now that they can't shoot at us. I myself use the security road to get to my orchards, and I can feel the difference."

Julia, Yuval and Adam, veteran immigrants from Russia, 7 years on kibbutz: "Kibbutz life is wonderful for the children. I work every day in Kiryat Shmona and I know that the children are

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under supervision the whole time. People invest a lot in the children. Since the security road was built, traveling is much less stressful because the terrorists can't shoot at us any more, or fire on the school bus. I feel great, and that's why I've bought a house in the community extension. This is where I belong, and we're staying here."