

Aninut, Shiva, Shloshim, Avelot

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This article contains descriptions of SA and extreme violence. Proceed with caution.

Aninut

The first stage of mourning is Aninut. From the time of death to the burial, the mourner's sole responsibility is caring for the deceased and preparing for the burial. Aninut lasts until the burial is over.

There's this one video circling the internet, or rather being abused online, which was one of the first visual documentations I saw of the October Seventh Massacre. It shows a young woman, only two years older than me, her family from a town located only half an hour drive from my home, thrown naked, face down, limbs dislocated, on the back of a pickup truck. Mens legs are sprawled over her. They spit on her body, joyfully.

I can't get over the fact that she could have easily been me. It could have easily been my body paraded and abused, raped, butchered, and dehumanized. It could have easily been my body being used as a political playing card. It could have easily been my molested body used as a justification for genocide (*noun, the murder of a large number of people from a particular nation or ethnic group, with the aim of destroying that nation or group*) of Palestinians. My corpse is not propaganda. Look me in the eye as you categorize my raped, beheaded body as Israeli propaganda. Look me in the eye as you abuse my body against innocent people.

She has yet to receive a proper burial. Her family has only received a small amount of her body parts and bones. Palestinian bodies, murdered, trapped under the rubble, have yet to receive a proper burial. Israeli bodies, murdered, taken away, have

yet to receive a proper burial. These bodies may never receive the honorable rest they deserve.

Thousands of humans are forcefully stuck in the *Aninut* stage of mourning.

Shiva

Shiva, (שבעה, Hebrew, seven), signifies the seven days of mourning, providing a time for spiritual and emotional healing, where mourners join together. The sense of community is given a big priority. The mourner is receiving all the necessary support from the people surrounding them. Shiva is held in the home of the deceased. It is believed that that's where the spirit of this person will continue to dwell and where memories have occurred.

I have grieved many deaths and losses over the past month. Family members, classmates killed while serving their mandatory time in the IDF, Palestinian friends and acquaintances. I wish I could write as myself - a 19-year-old in mourning. When I write to you I write as an activist in the West Bank, as a political photojournalist, and as an Israeli. I write as a person who uses their immense, unparalleled privilege as a tool to advocate and document. When I write to you I must first introduce all the things I do that compile my ideologies before I write about how much pain I am in. I am still battling within myself if that is a fair request of me. The extreme right-wing leaders of my country are committing ethnic cleansing (*noun, the mass expulsion or killing of members of one ethnic or religious group in an area by those of another*), funded and supported by the leaders of the country we are now in. These same leaders, while they are busy with the mass murder of Palestinians, have abandoned about 220 abducted babies, children, women, peace activists, foreign workers, people, and their families.

The Israeli government has abandoned everybody except for the illegal settlers in the West Bank, who are running rogue, creating even more displacement of Palestinians. This government is silencing any voice that doesn't line up with their ideologies, both Israeli and Palestinian, with sanctions up to ten years in prison. I feel

unsafe at this institution. I forced that feeling down, until it blew up in my face, leading to a triggering of suppressed war trauma I didn't even know I had. I have not slept nightmare free for so long. I am terrified of traveling back home, where my political actions are considered extreme and controversial. I've had relationships crumble over them, I have activist friends receiving death threats over their anti-government actions and beliefs. Wherever I go, my body and identity are weaponized. There are very few spaces in which I feel like my voice is heard and represented.

At the end of the first week of the war, I was invited to a joint memorial of Israelis and Palestinians. In this memorial, a row from the Talmud was mentioned; since all mankind is descended from a single person, taking a life is like destroying an entire world. During the service, I cried like I never had before, shaking and coughing, allowing myself to take out all the pain. I was on my knees, digging into the mud of Washington Square Park. I had unknown hands holding my shoulders. The sense of community and shared pain was the only thing holding me from collapsing completely. I hadn't felt so small and helpless in a long time.

Shloshim

Shloshim (שלושים, Hebrew, thirty) represents the 23 days following the Shiva. The mourners resume normal social and professional duties but are still restricted in certain ways. This 30-day period eases the mourner back into normal routines by allowing the resumption of many but not all of one's regular patterns of social behavior.

I am writing this November 7th. It has been one month.

Everything I write feels flat, misinformed, privileged, for the simple reason that it is. I am not in the West Bank, acting as a shield. I am not in the demonstrations in Israel for a return of the hostages and ceasefire. I am not at the Gaza border using my voice, my privilege, making sure the inhumane actions carried out are not turned a blind eye upon. I am not hugging my brother and dog in the bomb shelter. I am not being hugged

by my father as I cry. I am not talking to people, advocating for peace and the end of the occupation. I am here, in NYC, disheveled.

When I first attempted to put together bits of my writing to form this essay, I thought I would compile it with firm political statements and sophisticated phrasings. I could write that I am praying for a ceasefire, while simultaneously knowing that is not a permanent solution. Every time I see a poster of a child that has been abducted I break down crying, every time I see one of these posters ripped down, as if their lives are not of value, I feel the little shred of hope for humanity fade, and when I see the faces of these innocent people used as a political weapon - put against the freedom of innocent Palestinians - I want to scream; how can you be so blind, how can you not understand how the two are interlinked, how can you use the face of an abducted child against the face of genocide. But I hold myself from being quick to anger. That is not beneficial to me or to the lives I am fighting for.

It has been thirty days. After thirty days, you're supposed to be able to face the world again. You're supposed to be composed, eloquent, patient, understanding, supportive. You're supposed to be able to get yourself out of bed every morning and go to university, hand in studio projects, humanities papers, and structural models of pavilions. Thirty days isn't nearly enough. I don't think any timeframe will be enough to heal the loss of humanity surrounding me.

Avelot

Avelot (אבלות, Hebrew) refers to the remainder of the initial year of mourning. This period, following Shloshim, is traditionally only observed by children of the deceased, although many adopt this practice for any significant loss, like the loss of a child.

My younger brother was a NICU baby. He was born three months premature, just the size of an apple when exiting the womb. Scrolling through instagram the other day, the regular hourly dommed, passive, and depressing act, I paused over one of the

many horrifying images from al-Shifa Hospital. Dozens of incubated babies were moved, oxygen supply ran out, two had passed away. Looking at these heart wrenching images, I couldn't help but remember my brother's small body, curled up in an incubator. These babies looked exactly like him, same tiny feet, same scrunched limbs, small enough to hold in the palm of your hand. I remember the fear and distress my family was in while my brother was incubated. I cannot begin to imagine the distress and pain of seeing your child at the mercy of violence, them not having been alive long enough to breathe into. Yesterday (November 14th), an Israeli hostage gave birth in Gaza, the news brought up similar thoughts. My mind cannot even begin to grasp the experience of giving birth under captivity.

Children and mothers are facing unbearable agony. Some do not have a community of mourners, people to support them through the atrocities of dehumanization that war brings. All death and all life is sacred.

Murder of innocent humans cannot be morphed into a political ideology.