

# Memorial quilts for terror victims

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Memorial quilts, sewn by Americans in memory of Aids victims and later of those people killed on 9/11, are now making their first appearance in Israel, made by people who lost loved ones in a suicide bombing almost nine years ago.

The person most involved in this project is Marlyn Butchins of Hod Hasharon, a Tel Aviv suburb, whose mother and sister were murdered in that terror attack at Dizengoff Centre in Tel Aviv on the eve of Purim, 1996.

It occurred when the family was near the centre, where Marlyn's niece, Lauren, had gone to try on a wedding gown. Altogether 13 people were killed and several more injured.

Every March there is a memorial ceremony at the spot where the tragedy took place, a ceremony attended, of course, by Marlyn and other members of bereaved families.

She always appreciates the remarks made by Tel Aviv Mayor Ron Huldai and other dignitaries, but she has long felt that something is missing, a concrete reminder of the victims. And when she became a quilter, she decided that future ceremonies - beginning with the one next March - should take place against the backdrop of 13 memorial quilts, each representing one victim.

And they are now being sewn by Marlyn and a number of her friends.

Marlyn is among the thousands of Israeli women who have taken up quilting in recent years, making it one of Israel's fastest growing hobbies. Though started in China thousands of years back and having been popular in Europe since the Middle Ages, quilting was brought here primarily by American immigrants and Is-



A wedding canopy made by an enthusiastic quilter for her daughter's marriage.

raelis who spent some time in the US.

However, as it happens, the person running Israel's first quilt shop, Nurit Kapara, picked up the quilting bug in Australia, where she lived for several years while her husband worked as a Jewish Agency emissary.

Nurit's shop, in Moshav Kidron south of Tel Aviv, stocks hundreds of imported fabrics and a full range of quilting tools. In addition, it hosts classes for new quilters, and such classes are also held in various other parts of the country.

All the participants in these classes are women, unlike the situation in the United States, presumably because Israeli men don't think it is sufficiently macho.

Nurit sees the growing interest in quilting here as part of a worldwide trend towards do-it-yourself crafts. In addition Israeli quilters often get together on a social basis, holding quilting bees.

They also take on projects

that will help the community. A case in point is a group of English-speaking women in a Tel Aviv suburb who make quilts for distribution to children who themselves, or members of their family, have been victims of terrorism. These quilts aim to comfort the youngsters.

Quilters can let their imagination run wild as the fabrics in Nurit's shop can be used to depict almost anything.

Among others, she stocks fabrics that incorporate traditional Japanese motifs, designs based on the folklore of the Australian aborigines and, of course, Jewish themes.

They include the menorah, Sabbath candles and Israel's national colours. Quilters are apt to use them for covers to keep Sabbath foods warm, matza holders or Torah coverings.

Nurit is pleased to see the variety of themes her quilters dream up. She only hopes that the day will come when none will be linked to terror and its consequences.