

Solidarity instead of atonement

The Schneider family had the opportunity to meet Hanna Mann, a former concentration camp prisoner in Geislingen.

The Israeli flag hangs from the balcony, visible from a far, and a bast Star of David can also be seen on the wall in the living room. The married couple Rosemarie Schneider and Hermann Schneider, as well as their daughter Debora, have maintained an intimate relationship for years with the state of Israel, the land of Jesus Christ.

For the Christians the Savior, not so for the Jews. "We feel connected to Israel through Jesus Christ. "He was a Jew," says Rosemarie Schneider about the strong bond between her family and her loved ones in Israel.

One of these loved ones was Hanna Mann, once a prisoner in the Geislingen concentration camp. In 2014, the Schneiders had the impression of having to visit Hanna Mann. An "inner impression of God", as Rosemarie Schneider says, to take care of survivors of the Holocaust.

The fact that she came across Hanna Mann was another coincidence: "I know someone in Israel who knows a survivor of the concentration camp in Geislingen," says Rosemarie Schneider of a young woman from Lonsee, who told her that she had met Hanna Mann's grandson in Israel: Mordi Zissmann, a tour guide.

The grandson said that his grandmother had once been interned in the concentration camp in Geislingen.

"That's where I come from," said Rosemarie Schneider. The family had invited the woman to the Shabbat, they had met Hanna Mann at a time when dementia had not yet taken her into her own world. In the same year 2015 there was a meeting between the family Schneider and Hanna Mann. The thread of conversation that developed between Hanna Mann and the family was correspondingly thin. "She lived in her own world and only spoke confusedly," says Rosemarie Schneider.

Sometimes it didn't need words. It was one of the last encounters. Back then in 2018, when Debora Schneider grabbed Hanna Mann's hand and felt the warmth emanating from this old woman. Even if she was sitting there with a thick jacket and a woolen hat at that time. "That wasn't planned, it just came," says Debora Schneider. Hanna Mann had looked at Debora, reacted for the first time to this impulse from the outside. "It's all good," said the then twelve-year-old. "You are safe here." A touching moment, not only for Debora Schneider, but also for the family of Hanna Mann. Almost as therapy for the relatives they had seen the handle of the young woman.

Hanna Mann's story of suffering begins at the age of 15, when she and her family lived in a small village in Transylvania. With the occupation of the area by the Germans, Hanna and her relatives were deported to Auschwitz. Only the impression of an officer, the

young Hanna was able to work, saved her life. She was sent to the Geislingen concentration camp, where she had to work twelve-hour shifts every day, day or night.

Some of what she experienced in these dark years was reflected in her behavior, as the Schneiders report. Mann often ate more than would have been good for her. The memory of starving during the war years had had such an effect.

When the family describes their relationship with Israel, it sounds less like atonement for one of the greatest crimes against humanity. Rather, it seems that a love for the land and people has grown from the divine inspiration. A hope that people will be able to do more than harm each other. Especially in these times, this seems to become increasingly important. Because the humanitarian dilemma caused by the recent Gaza war has not gone unnoticed by the Schneider family.

Also, because the family knows that some sons of their acquaintances in Israel had to go to war. "You know the people," says Debora Schneider.

That's why the Israeli flag is above the balcony, a photo of which the family has already sent to friends in the Holy Land." "That gives us courage," they would have replied, if they knew that there are people who stand by them. Where "Never is now again" is not pure lip service.

"But that doesn't mean that Israel is doing everything right," says Rosemarie Schneider."

"But we stand by them."