



Rabbi Avi Berman Executive Director, OU Israel

While most of us are limiting leaving our homes and offices, if you were to go to downtown Yerushalayim on a Thursday night you would see groups of teenagers and young adults wearing black masks with the slogan “V’ahavta l’zulatcha kamoach.” This is clearly a play on words of the famous phrase “V’ahavta L’reiacha Kamocha,” but why and who are these youth?

One of OU Israel’s flagship programs is the Pearl & Harold Jacobs Zula Outreach Center, a safe haven in the heart of Yerushalayim for at-risk teens. Due to Corona, our dedicated Zula staff have been running programming outdoors. To incentivize the participants to wear masks, we gave out masks with the “V’ahavta l’zulatcha kamoach” slogan.

How can we illustrate our commitment to these kids as the winter gets colder? How can our counselors play guitar or have deep conversations until after midnight when



they are freezing? And most importantly, what will happen to these kids when the weather gets too cold and they have nowhere to go and no counselors to help them navigate the extremely challenging times? There is not a single person who has not been affected by Corona, and for youth who are struggling these challenges are even more profound.

Last Thursday the Zula staff and myself had the honor of welcoming the Mayor of Yerushalayim, Moshe Lion to the Zula along with Deputy Mayor Hagit Moshe and other VIPs. We began by taking them on a tour of the greater downtown Yerushalayim area which is unfortunately full of young kids getting into trouble. Then, we had a meeting inside the Zula which is now empty of kids. The Mayor and his staff pledged his support, and we are grateful from the bottom of our hearts.

One of the newest additions to the Zula is Midreshet Zusha, a unique learning program we established 4 years ago to help young women from the Zula as they graduate from high school. Many of them are thirsting for spiritual growth but do



not fit into traditional Midrasha settings. They do Sherut Leumi or work during the day and learn at the Zula in the evenings.

On Sunday, I had the Z'chut of delivering Chanukah packages to OU Israel Center members and friends that have been stuck at home for months on end. We went to visit a number of senior citizens, and seeing these young native Israeli women bring light to the older Anglo community in Yerushalayim warmed my heart tremendously. One woman told us she has not left her house in months, and thanks to this visit her Chanukah will be filled with light.

The young women and the recipients of the packages both expressed Hakarat Hatov for this experience. And on that note, I would like to express Hakarat Hatov to those of you who have donated to our Annual Torah Tidbits Appreciation campaign. B"H donations are coming in, but we need more support in order to publish Torah Tidbits. **Please support the TT campaign at: upreaching.com/ouisrael/TT-campaign.** The raffle for donations of 180 NIS and above will take place on Sunday (3rd day of Chanukah, Dec. 13).

On a final note, I am excited to share that the OU Kosher restaurant Papagaio reopened this week for take-away and delivery. If you're looking to order food, I encourage you to support this wonderful establishment that's part of the OU family. Wishing you a Chag Urim Sameach.



Avi
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