



Rabbi Avi Berman Executive Director, OU Israel

Until this year, we were used to a world where for the most part we have been in control of our lives. We decided when to go grocery shopping, when to vacation, or whether to travel for a simcha. The primary example I came up with for something being out of my control was being stuck in traffic or having someone slam into my car. Otherwise, there were few instances in which I felt that life was out of my control. Pre-Corona, my wife and I would discuss an issue, make decisions about our lives, and share the plans with our kids.

I am writing this after coming out of a ten day *bidud* which gave me ample time to reflect. Most people are very respectful of other people's time. If we know someone is traveling to a certain city and we need to send a package to someone in that city, we recognize that the person's time is valuable and politely ask if they would do us a favor and deliver the item. We will bring them the item and thank them.

Yet, this era is different - not because we

are any less polite, but because the germs are invisible. Without even realizing it, people are putting other people into *bidud*, essentially removing them from their "regular" lives for 10-14 days. Someone woke up feeling fine and came to meet with me in my office, and a couple days later he notified me that he apologizes but he found out he is Covid-19 positive, and I need to go into *bidud*.

This was my second time in *bidud* (the first was upon returning from AIPAC Policy Conference towards the start of the pandemic when *bidud* was a new concept), and due to her work as a nurse, my wife has been in *bidud* four times. Just as I got out of *bidud*, one of my sons went into *bidud* after coming in contact with someone in his Yeshiva who tested positive. In some ways, it is a surreal experience. I couldn't hug my kids, and I had to cancel my Thursday night radio show and many other meetings.

All of this caused me to ask myself, "Do I really have control over anything?" I don't mean this in a depressing way. Rather, it helped me strengthen my priorities. At the end of my first day in *bidud* I realized that it was up to me to take advantage of



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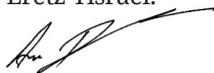


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a week without traveling or face to face meetings. I wanted to maximize my time in *bidud* and decided to spend my time learning Torah and enjoying seforim I've been wanting to pick up for a while. I called people I haven't spoken with in a long time to see how they are doing and catch up.

Whether we are home due to the *seger* or are alone in *bidud*, the one thing nobody can take away from us is our thoughts and how we spend our time.

I cannot think of a better example of remaining positive and not letting circumstances break someone than Yonatan Pollard. *L'havdil elef alfei havdalot*, I am in no way comparing being in *bidud* to what Yonatan Pollard went through. Yet, I think we can all learn from the decision he made to remain a free man in his mind and aspire to come to Israel, and on that note, I'd like to give a special welcome to Yonatan and Esther Pollard. The OU Israel family is praying that you have long, healthy, and fulfilling lives together in Eretz Yisrael.



Avi
Executive Director, OU Israel

May the Torah learned in this issue
be dedicated in loving memory of
our mother and grandmother

Lillian Stein a"h

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