

DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY



RABBI AVI BERMAN

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Parshat Korach always reminds me of the idea of a Bar Mitzvah parsha because it is my father's Bar Mitzvah parsha. Each year, he would lein the parsha. I recall going to shul as a young boy and feeling proud of my father as he leined his Bar Mitzvah parsha on the anniversary of his Bar Mitzvah.

In my mind, the Shabbat of one's Bar Mitzvah parsha serves as an annual remembrance of a boy's Bar Mitzvah throughout his life. When we don tefillin for the first time, we associate that significant mitzvah with our Bar Mitzvah, but as we wear our Tefillin every day it becomes routine for many of us and we don't feel that magical moment of becoming a Bar Mitzvah when we daven with our tefillin each day. Yet, when our Bar Mitzvah parsha comes along, it connects us to that special occasion in our lives year after year.

I find it beautiful that many shuls encourage their congregants to lein their Bar Mitzvah parsha in shul – even decades after they turned 13. There's a special bond that's created when a man leins his parsha in shul. He becomes more connected to the

people in his community, and to his Rav.

As many of you know, my first 6 kids are boys, and my wife and I had numerous discussions about the most meaningful way to mark their Bar Mitzvahs. Seeing that we B"H have a large family and we live in a community that does not have a hotel, youth hostel, or Yeshiva dormitory where guests can sleep for Shabbat, it was tempting to say that in order to accommodate our families maybe we should go away for the Shabbatot of their Bar Mitzvahs to a youth hostel/dormitory which could accommodate everyone. This is a convenient yet expensive solution. Each time this discussion came up, we made the conscious decision to stay home for their Bar Mitzvahs. We wanted our sons to have the opportunity to celebrate their Bar Mitzvah in our shul – connecting not only to Hakadosh Baruch Hu and the Torah, but leining for the congregation and forging a bond with our Rav and our community.

I must note, that we have such a special community that each time we hosted a Bar Mitzvah, friends of ours offered to go away that Shabbat to accommodate our relatives being able to join us. As we told each of these families, we would have loved to have them home to share in our smachot, but their hospitality reinforces the sense of community we try to impart to our children.

An advertisement for Efrat. On the left is a photograph of a young girl with dark, curly hair, wearing a patterned headscarf and a dark jacket, looking towards the camera. To the right of the photo is a blue rectangular box with white and yellow text. The text reads: "Save a Life - Gain yours" in white, "1 of 79,269" in large yellow numbers, "EFRAT" in large yellow letters, and "www.efrat.org.il 02-5454500" in white at the bottom.

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These thoughts were going through my mind as I reflected on a second visit to Lod this past Sunday. I started by going to a different shul which we did not visit last week. Beit Knesset Ohel Yehuda was established approximately 80 years ago. The Rav shared something beautiful with me. He told me that Yizkor on the holidays takes a very long time because the community recites the names of each of the deceased congregants from the Shul going as far back as the founding congregants. They divide the hundreds of names between the 40 men that currently pray there, and the current members memorialize people that they have never met and have no connection to other than the fact that they share a shul. I found this to be incredibly touching, and it strengthened the notion of the unique role of one's shul and one's community. While we pray and hope for the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash speedily in our days, in the interim, our shuls serve as our Mikdash Me'at. Our shuls help connect us to Hashem and our Judaism.

The Shuls and residents of Lod are in need of chizuk from the broader Jewish community. I felt tremendous pride when I found out that last week's OU staff visit to Lod resulted in a group of our OU Israel Makom Balev Youth Center 12th graders spending this past Shabbat at the Mechina which was burned in Lod. These youth heard about the situation in Lod and wanted to spend Shabbat there to help bring chizuk and energy to the young men learning in the Mechina. Because of this Shabbat, some of our 12th graders are even considering going to the Mechina in Lod next year before

enlisting in the IDF.

What was so meaningful about this visit is that it showed the results of our labor of love with these youth over the past 7 years. This was a group of boys who started in Makom Balev in 6th grade. One of the goals of Makom Balev is to inculcate the value of Chesed, of helping others. We try to give this over through volunteering, visiting the elderly and sick, encouraging the youth to call their grandparents, and multiple other initiatives. Hearing that these graduating seniors wanted to end their 7 years in Makom Balev (they'll stay involved through our Alumni Initiative) through a Shabbat in which they provide chizuk to others warmed my heart tremendously.

The phone calls, emails, messages, and donations which so many of you shared supporting the residents of Lod and other cities affected by the recent rioting and rocket fire warmed my heart tremendously as well. The Rabbanim and other community leaders which I met with the past two weeks have all expressed how much this outpouring of love and support from Jews in Israel and all around the world is making a difference.



Avi,

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Condolences to
Yaacov Peterseil and family
on the passing of his mother

Esther Peterseil a"h

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים