

RABBI AVI BERMAN

Executive Director, OU Israel



A few weeks ago I was blessed and delighted to write about the Seudat Hodaya I was *zoche* to make after Baruch Hashem recovering after having my kidney removed the week before Pesach due to a growth. I shared the excitement and enthusiasm which I felt in making a Seudat Hodaya. So often in life we don't have the opportunity or don't take advantage of thanking Hashem. I felt truly blessed to have the chance to make this Seudat Hodaya and thank Hakadosh Baruch Hu for my health.

Since my operation, I have had a dramatic change in my *kavanah* for the *bracha* of *Asher Yatzar*. Last week, I tested positive for Covid-19. Having Covid helped me appreciate the meaning of the *Birkot*

HaShachar which we say every morning. The blessings of פוקח עיורים or זוקף כפופים - we often take for granted that we can get up and straighten ourselves in the morning and open our eyes. Having Corona and being exhausted and unable to smell or taste really brought me to a greater level of appreciation for all the wonderful things Hashem provides us with in our lives.

This past Shabbat brought me to a new level of thanking Hashem. The wonderful Shabbat food my wife makes suddenly had very little flavor. The Besamim during Havdalah had no smell. This reminds me of the example of a papercut - we don't appreciate our fingers until we get a papercut and need to button our buttons using that part of the finger.

During this period of Corona, it is easy to become bitter and frustrated, and it is true that this past year and a half brought with it and continues to bring tremendous challenges. Yet, if we focus on the positive we will realize that we have so much to be thankful for. Personally, this week I was very grateful to have been vaccinated. While I had side effects, my understanding is that it could have been a lot worse had I not been double vaccinated. I am realizing how much there is to thank Hashem for, and I try to share this message with others having a more challenging time during this pandemic.

About a week and a half ago I was

ברוך דיין האמת

Condolences to our dear friend
Rabbi Dr. Josh Joseph
(OU EVP & COO) and family
on the passing of his father

Rabbi Howard Joseph zt"l

Rabbi Joseph was the longtime
Rabbi of the Spanish Portuguese
shul in Montreal and a community
leader for many decades.

*Zvi Sand, Esther Williams, Rabbi Avi Berman
& the OU Israel Family*

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

sitting in my office when Refael Saaleb (OU Israel Youth Centers Regional Director, Northern District) came in. Let me preface that I have very limited information about the security situation from my son who is sitting with his tank at the Lebanese border (obviously he can't share details for security reasons). Refael lives in Kiryat Shmona and does an incredible job overseeing all of our Youth Centers in the North. His goal is to constantly do more for Klal Yisrael, and he's had all of his shirts embroidered with the OU Israel Youth Centers logo - a literal walking ad indicating to everyone that he and OU Israel are here to help their communities.

Refael shared: They're not talking about this on the news, but I want you to know the following. I live in Kiryat Shmona, and Kiryat Shmona is packed with tourists and visitors on their way to other cities further north. The Hezbollah missile which hit Kiryat Shmona literally hit meters away from three places that were packed with people.

This is an open miracle (just like I realized this past week that smelling and tasting are also miracles from Hashem). So often, whether for security or other reasons, news like this is not told. Yet, it is an important reminder to give endless thanks to Hakadosh Baruch Hu - on the blessings we know about, things we usually take for granted, and blessings we don't even realize He does for us every day.

This Shabbat we read "כי תצא למלחמה על". Before we even start the battle, we know that Hashem is with us. G-d allows us to win. This is a constant reminder that, yes, we have an incredible



IDF, the most incredible soldiers in the world, and state of the art technology. But, at the end of the day we have to recognize that everything comes from Hashem.

By the time you read this I will B'ezrat Hashem be out of *bidud*, and I have a tremendous amount of Hakarat HaTov which I hope I am able to share with each of you. On that note, I want to utilize this column to thank the incredible OU Israel staff for working tirelessly throughout Covid (and the decades before that) literally saving Jewish *neshamot*. I pray that we will be *zoche* to continue to inspire Klal Yisrael together for many more decades.

Avi,
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