

DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY



RABBI AVI BERMAN

Executive Director, OU Israel



This is my 21st year working for the OU, and my 16th year as the Executive Director of OU Israel. Over the years, the idea had been raised for me to write a weekly Torah Tidbits column, and for a variety of reasons I concluded not to until the pandemic. There were several reasons why I did not start this column earlier. First, I don't particularly enjoy writing. Second, for my first 14 years at OU Israel, Phil Chernofsky wrote a wonderful weekly piece which included OU Israel's activities and I did not feel a need to duplicate his efforts. Third, writing, particularly to a broad audience, requires being very sensitive, and no matter how much the writer tries to take everyone's feelings into account there will generally be times that someone reading the piece will feel slighted, hurt, or insulted – which I never want to do. Fourth, pre-Covid I would see and speak with many Torah Tidbits readers each week, whether it be at the OU Israel Center, on the street, at

the Shuk, or at smachot. These interactions provided me with the opportunity to share what was happening at the OU and hear from you.

When the idea for me to start a column arose during Covid, I decided the timing was right. My staff and I missed seeing you face to face and wanted to utilize Torah Tidbits as a way of staying in touch. I appreciate all of the feedback you have and continue to send me and want to take this opportunity to share some insights into what I chose to write about.

Several times a week, I receive feedback asking why I phrased something a certain way, and approximately once a week someone asks why I didn't write about topic X. I am not writing this to discourage you from sharing your feedback in any way, shape or form. On the contrary, I love hearing your feedback.

One of the themes in the feedback is asking why I don't write about the yahrzeits of specific rabbis and community leaders. I recently received an email from a dear Jew wanting to know why I did not write about Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ZT"l in my column the week of his yahrzeit. While Rabbi Sacks' legacy remains an inspiration to us all and we are honored to publish his weekly Dvar Torah in Torah Tidbits, I felt it more appropriate that others write his tributes. Unfortunately, Klal Yisrael has lost too many Rabbanim and leaders to count,

May the Torah learning in this issue
be in loving memory of and

לעילוי נשמת my mother

רחל בת יצחק הלוי ע"ה

Rachel Gutman a"h

אשת חיל וחסד

On her 46th yahrzeit - יא כסלו

Tzippy Grunstein and family

and I do not want to make anyone feel bad or slighted by mentioning some but failing to mention others. This does not mean that I will never mention a specific rabbi, and I am more than happy to hear feedback about the rabbis that inspire you. Yet, since numerous such inquiries have come my way, I wanted to share my reasoning.

I look forward to spending Shabbat with this community

In general in life, I try to inspire others. I don't usually share sad stories or ideas that will make people anxious. Instead, I focus on positive messages to help make us into better people, better colleagues, better friends, better parents/grandparents/great grandparents, etc. Generally speaking, this is what guides me in writing this column. I try to update you with what's happening at the OU and in my personal life, and I aspire to share upbeat messages that will hopefully inspire people to be better.

This is a goal that I try to accomplish in other areas of my personal and OU life. I am very excited that after over a year and a half of minimal traveling, this Shabbat I will be the Scholar in Residence at Beth Torah in Brooklyn. I'm not excited to leave my family and fly again but I am excited to see my friends in North America. I look forward to spending Shabbat with this community, sharing the wonderful stories and positive messages coming out of OU Israel and the State of Israel.

As Executive Director of OU Israel, I am blessed to have many opportunities to speak to groups. Thank you to Mrs. Howitt for recently opening her house and inviting

her friends for an Emunah gathering and inviting me to speak to them. I shared the history of the OU and the work we're doing to save at-risk teens in Israel. Based on the audience, I spoke about the unique role that grandparents have in their grandchildren's lives – to provide them with unconditional love.

Those of us fortunate to grow up with our grandparents can attest to how special the relationship can be. The hugs, kisses, special foods, and even the name we call our grandparents provide us with warmth. I once heard from Moshe Berliner, a friend and psychologist I hold very highly of, that successful grandparents make sure to give advice only when they are asked, and they never ask if the grandchildren followed through with their advice. It's great if the grandchildren follow-up on their own, but don't ask if they took your advice. The role of a grandparent is to keep your door open and shower your grandchildren with love and goodies. By doing this, we can hopefully become sources of knowledge, direction, and role models for them.

Wishing you an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



Avi,

Executive Director, OU Israel

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The OU Israel Family
extends its heartfelt condolences
to the children and family of
Mrs. Lori Levmore ע"ה

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים