

DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY



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Executive Director, OU Israel



It is a special Zechut to live in Eretz Yisrael where the words of our Tefillot unfold so openly. Jews inside and outside the Land of Israel make the same request during the Shmoneh Esrei of the weekday Amidah, at Shacharis, Mincha and Maariv.

תקע בשופר גדול לחרותנו ושא נס לקבץ גליותינו
וקבצנו יחד מארבע כנפות הארץ: ברוך אתה ה' מקבץ
נדחי עמו ישראל

This past week I had two unique experiences that brought these very words to life: the first, at a Shiva, and the second, at a Bat Mitzvah. Both involved members of the Israeli government.

On January 10, 2022, Mrs. Aura Herzog, mother of President Isaac Bougie Herzog and wife to the late Sixth President of Israel, Chaim Herzog, passed away at 97. In my position at OU Israel I have had the honor of working closely with President Herzog on many projects and initiatives over the years. Representing both OU Israel and the OU in New York, I went to

be Menachem Avel at the home of the late Mrs. Herzog in Herzliya Pituach. I brought with me words of condolence from the OU, with direct messages from President Moishe Bane, EVP Rabbi Moshe Hauer, EVP and COO Rabbi Dr. Josh Joseph, and CEO and Rabbinic Administrator of OU Kosher, Rabbi Menachem Genack.

After passing through security at the gate, I found myself entering a large tent filled with visitors who came to pay their respects to the President and his siblings. While there were many aspects of the Shiva that were unique, what stood out to me most was the array of people in the crowd. Represented among the evening's attendees were Knesset members, ministers, businessmen, many different types of Chassidim, Dati Leumi Jews, Charedi Jews, secular Jews and TV personalities.

Truthfully, the diverse crowd should not have been surprising. In his role, President Herzog has touched Jews of all types, dedicating himself to bringing a sense of unity to Am Yisrael and leading with compassion for the residents of Eretz Yisrael. And it was apparent during that evening. Those who came to fulfill the mitzvah of Nichum Aveilim clearly held differing Hashkafot, likely voted for different government parties, and dressed according to their community. And together, we gathered to bring comfort to the President of Israel.

Deepfelt condolences to
OU Israel Vaad Member
Moshe Kempinski and family
on the passing of his mother

Yehudit Kempinski a"h

The OU Israel family

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

The following night I was invited to the Bat Mitzvah of the daughter of Pnina Tamano-Shata, the Minister of Aliyah and Integration (Misrad HaAliyah VeHaKlita). As the first Ethiopian-born minister in the Israeli government, Pnina made Aliyah from Ethiopia when she was three years old during Mivtza Moshe (Operation Moses) in 1984, when approximately 8,000 Jews emigrated from Ethiopia. Pnina and I have much in common, as I made Aliyah from America with my family in 1985.

Over the years Pnina and I stayed connected and often found ourselves reflecting on our shared experiences as Olim. We know what it is like to speak a different language than those around us, to adapt to new ways of life, to make new friends and to establish ourselves in a foreign land. In moving to Eretz Yisrael we adapted and integrated to Israeli life, embracing new customs while cherishing those from our roots, so that our children could grow up and thrive in Israel's borders.

The Bat Mitzvah was a special event with timeless Minhagim, singing and dancing dating back generations. Among these customs included a wonderful ceremony where all spiritual leaders present gave a Bracha to the Bat Mitzvah girl. It was particularly meaningful to see the respect given to Rabbanim / Kaisim and the joy that surrounded us all throughout the simcha.

Reflecting on the path I shared with Pnina, I took a moment to appreciate that we could literally see the impact of our efforts in the next generation. The Bat Mitzvah girl, an Israeli born and bred, was

surrounded by her relatives and friends, speaking in their native Hebrew tongue, and sharing in the joy of the evening.

And the truth is, Pnina and I were not the only Olim at the Bat Mitzvah. Sitting beside me were friends who had emigrated from Romania, another from Morocco, and looking around the room I'm sure there were many other places of origin represented. We each held on to our costumes of old, likely held different Hashkofot, voted for different parties and dressed according to our community. And together, we gathered to celebrate a momentous occasion in Jewish tradition.

These two experiences symbolize the beauty of Eretz Yisrael. It is a land that is made up of Jews from around the world. Jews who were once expelled during Churban Bait Rishon and Sheini, longing, aching and dreaming of one day coming home. And here we are, generations later, living in a time where we are able to fulfill a dream that our ancestors held dear for so many millennia. Today, we truly feel at home in Eretz Yisrael. And together, we continue to live the words we daven.

“וְשָׂא נֶס לְקִבְּץ גְּלוּיֹתֵינוּ וְקִבְּצֵנוּ יְחִיד מֵאַרְבַּע כְּנָפוֹת הָאָרֶץ.”

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



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Condolences to Dan Kfare and family
on the passing of his
FATHER z"l

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים