

DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY



RABBI AVI BERMAN

Executive Director, OU Israel



As Jews we live by the concept of *כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה*. For those of us who are fortunate to live in Israel, we are often the focus of Tefillot and support from our brothers and sisters around the world. Whenever Israel is in need, Jewish communities overseas do what they can to help. Our military, hospitals, educational institutions, Torah centers and so many more vital institutions have been built using funds sent from brethren around the world.

Over the last few weeks I have come to realize how important it is to help people understand that the concept of *כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה* is a two way street. Earlier this week I was asked to speak to 60 Yeshiva high school students and I began with a question: today is Tuesday, March 1. Was your Davening this morning different from last week? I received many responses. I am davening for my friend's niece who is sick. I am davening for a family friend because he is sick. I am davening for our family friend who lost his job and needs Parnassah.

I continued to ask the same question and was saddened to see that no one mentioned what has been going on in Ukraine. To its credit, this Yeshiva high school does not allow the use of smartphones in an effort to keep the boys focused on their learning. But our brothers and sisters in Ukraine are facing a terrifying reality. Some are in hiding. Some are starving. Some are trying to find a way out of the country. Some are trying to

reach Israel. Some are trying to reach their relatives in other countries.

Our power as Am Yisrael is that we care for humanity - especially our brethren - no matter how far the distance between us. My conversation with these boys made me realize that it is incumbent on us to educate one another about the needs of those living in Ukraine and do what we can to help. Hearing their responses brought up many emotions for me. We are Am Yisrael. A nation that does everything in its power to help one another and it is what makes us special.

I once attended a wedding in Vancouver during one of the many military operations taking place in Gaza. Before the Chuppah started, the family asked the crowd to join them in saying Tehillim for the safety of our soldiers and success in our efforts.

*I once sat in a meeting in a New York office and the phone of the business man I was meeting began to ring with a *צבע אדום* alert. As he was not an Israeli he explained that he uses the *צבע אדום* app and set the notifications to send an alert whenever an alarm goes off in Israel so that he can stop what he is doing and say Tehillim for our safety.*

*I've stood in Shuls outside of Israel as they say *תפילה לשלום המדינה* and *מי שברך לחיילי צה"ל*.*

Each of these experiences embodies *כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה* and I could spend years talking about all the ways I have felt cared for and loved by Jews outside of Israel. OU Israel has also benefited from the donations

that pour in from around the world, helping us care for our youth, inspire Anglo-Israelis and solidify the foundation of Am Yisrael within Eretz Yisrael. Now it is time for us to take care of those in Ukraine.

Over the last few weeks, as the crisis in Ukraine began to unfold, I heard people ask why families were not picking up and moving to Israel as soon as events began to take a turn for the worse. But I have no doubt that our Torah Tidbits readers, so many of whom are Olim, know how hard and complicated it is to make Aliyah. Now imagine having to make such a significant decision in just a few days, packing up your life, saying goodbye to loved ones, and fleeing to the unknown. Now isn't the time for questions. Now is the time for us to do what we can to support those living in fear in Ukraine. Through Tefillah and action.

The power of Tefillah and our appreciation for it is evident. This past Tuesday, the Chief Rabbinate asked Jews to daven for our brothers and sisters in Ukraine. Take a few extra moments and have extra *kavanah* when davening Shemoneh Esrei - רפאנו, תקנו - שמתה קולנו and ולירושלים עירך. Cry out to the Almighty on behalf of the Ukrainian people and beg for their safety.

Please help me educate our children, friends and families in Israel on what is taking place in Ukraine. Raise awareness of what is happening by posting about it on social media. Join chessed campaigns that are doing everything possible to lend a hand. Share content posted by Chabad families in Ukraine who are on the ground and detailing what is happening. Donate to organizations sending food and clothing to Ukraine such as the OU www.ou.org/ukraine campaign. Connect with your communities and identify

other ways to offer support.

To our heroes who have gone to the ends of the earth and back to lend a helping hand, thank you for your sacrifices and commitment. We wish you continued Hatzlacha and success in your efforts. B'ezrat HaShem, Na'aseh V'natzliach. Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

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P.S. In the spirit of *כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה* I would like to remind you that we are collecting *זכר למחצית השקל* and putting the funds towards saving teens at risk in the Zula. Thank you for trusting us with your donations. Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat and Purim Sameach.