

DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN

Executive Director, OU Israel



What is the significance of raising an Israeli flag, inside and outside of Israel's borders? This past week, on the streets of Manhattan, I connected with the miracle of *Am Yisrael* and *Medinat Yisrael* from a new perspective while gaining a newfound appreciation for the Israeli flag.

In this week's Torah portion we hear *Eretz Yisrael* described as the Land flowing of milk and honey, *Eretz zavat chalah u'dvash*. Despite making *aliyah* 38 years ago, Israel still takes my breath away, and I remain grateful for every reminder of how fortunate I am to call this precious Land my home. I was acutely aware of this *zechut* when walking the streets of Manhattan, together with my wife and the OU team, as we joined 40,000 marchers at the annual Israel Day Parade.

Although I spent the first nine years of my childhood in the United States and heard my parents talk about marching in the parade with their schools, this was the first time I participated in the Israel Day Parade, and my only point of reference was the *rikud degalim* that takes place every year on *Yom Yerushalayim*. But as we marched from 55th Street to 75th street my wife and I couldn't help but notice the differences.

During the *rikud degalim* on *Yom Yerushalayim* the streets are filled with marchers. There are only a few designated areas for bystanders as everyone is

encouraged to join. In contrast, reports following the parade noted there were "tens of thousands" of onlookers. We noticed the people standing behind the barricades and asked a friend to explain. He shared that parents with kids in multiple schools choose to cheer on their children as they pass by, rather than march with a specific institution. He also pointed out the non-Jews who joined us in celebrating the 75th anniversary of the State of Israel, waving Israeli flags from the sidelines, and I was tempted to ask each one about their connection to Israel. Unfortunately I didn't have time.

Seeing the diverse crowds filled me with pride. We are a nation that supports one another - and welcomes foreigners - regardless of physical, socioeconomic, religious or political distance. Jews in the Diaspora could simply choose to celebrate Israel when visiting the country. And yet, Jews flooded the streets of Manhattan, which were decked out in blue and white paraphernalia, celebrating the miracle of

May the learning from this issue of Torah Tidbits serve as an עילוי for the נשמה טהורה of our dear son

ר' מרדכי גדליהו ז"ל בן משה ואסתר

Franky Ehrenberg z"l

on his 20th *yahrzeit*

הובא לעיה"ק ו' אייר תשפ"ג, ב"ה

היה רק בן כ"ג שנים ביום כ"ג סיון תשס"ג, בני ירוק תנצב"ה

Dr. Moshe & Esther Ehrenberg



Eretz Yisrael for all to see.

There were a few elements of the day that made me miss *Medinat Yisrael* dearly and count down the minutes to my return flight. Chief among them, my wife and I were struck by the realization that unlike the *rikud degalim*, we would not end our parade at the *Kotel* where we could thank HaShem for the gift of *Eretz Yisrael*, next to *Har HaBayit*, the holiest place on earth. Instead, we ended the parade in a nondescript section on Madison Avenue.

I was also shocked to see Palestinian protesters on the sidelines, which served as a sobering reminder of the reality *Am Yisrael* faces in *Galut*. I left the parade with a better understanding of the acute need for programs such as OU's JLIC that teach students how to fight antisemitism and misinformation.

Before I bring up my final reflection of the day, I'll preface with the following story. A few years ago I was interviewed by an Israeli newspaper and we played a game of word association. The reporter said the name of an Israeli politician that I personally did not agree with - on many levels. However, I highlighted the fact that whenever he was outside of Israel's borders, he used his platform to share the beauty of the Land and his love for the

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people, spreading a *shem tov* wherever he traveled.

I find this story especially relevant as we learn about the *meraglim* in this week's *parsha* and see the impact of the *lashon hara* they spoke about *Eretz Yisrael*. The Israel Day Parade - celebrated on the streets of Manhattan - is a powerful day for Jews in the Diaspora as they reconnect with *Medinat Yisrael* and *Klal Yisrael*.

During the parade I was disappointed to see a gathering of Israelis protesting the government. While I understand such activities stem from pain and fear, and I recognize there is value in standing up for what we believe is right, I felt saddened to see Jews use the Israel Day Parade as their platform for political protest. Especially when doing so outside of Israel's borders where the nuances of our politics are easily misunderstood and at times used as fuel for hatred. As I drew near, I *davened* that the shouts of the protesters did not dampen the pride I had hoped participants felt in the mass gathering of *Am Yisrael* on the streets of Madison Avenue with our blue and white flags waving in the wind.

Just as the crowds disbanded, my heart was uplifted hearing people sing, *Eretz*

zavat chalav u'dvash. Fortunately my wife and I knew we would be returning home just days later. But for Diaspora Jews who do not yet have this *zechut*, I remain empowered and inspired by their ongoing commitment to maintain their connection and alignment with *Eretz Yisrael*. We truly are a remarkable people, filled with all types of Jews, with supporters around the world. I am grateful for the opportunity to celebrate the elements that unify us - that of being the children of the *Borei Olam*, fortunate to call Israel home.

I wish a tremendous *yasher koach* to Yoni Cohen, OU's Chief of Staff, for all that he does including putting together the packages, t-shirts, banners, and OU paraphernalia that allowed us to walk together and march among the masses.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



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We mourn the passing of
Marta Wise z"l
כ"ה אייר תשפ"ג

A woman of chesed
who dedicated her life
to her family, Am Yisrael and
Holocaust remembrance.

She will be sorely missed
by husband, Harold Wise and family

May the Torah learning in this issue be in
loving memory of and
לע"נ צבי בן ישראל יצחק ז"ל
Zvi Tyberg z"l
on his 25th Yahrzeit
Tyberg Family