



DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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My policy has always been that my column should reflect the positive attitude that I try to have in life, and that the message that I give over on a weekly basis should always be one that is uplifting, inspiring, and makes people feel good about what is going on in the Jewish world, at OU Israel, or in my own life. With the long Torah Tidbits break from Sukkot to now, I had so much to share with you in good news and experiences. But like many of you, I awoke on Thursday morning to the horrific and shocking news of the sudden passing of Rabbi Moshe Hauer, *zecher tzaddik levracha*, who was the Executive Vice President of the OU. And so, my message this week will be very different from my previous Torah Tidbits columns.

I can't help but feel unworthy as I write these words, yet I must. It is not easy to write about someone who was not only my boss, but my mentor; not only my colleague, but my dear, dear friend.

Rabbi Moshe Hauer, of incredible blessed memory, passed away on *Erev Shmini Atzeret*, hours after *Klal Yisrael* experienced such a high of our live hostages coming home, of the President of the United States coming to Israel, speaking in the Knesset, of knowing that we were all living through moments for the history books. On that day, Rabbi Hauer sent messages out that reflected how excited he was to see what was unfolding. But that night he gave back his neshama to the *Borei Olam* after 60 years of incredible accomplishments in this world.

Instead of talking about the loss so many of us feel, I want to focus on the many gifts he gave us during his life. In particular, I want to consider how we can lift up the greatness of Rabbi Hauer and embody his values. How do we take the stories, the messages, the *derech erez*, the *middot*, the love of Torah, the knowledge of Torah, the love for every single Yid, the *kibud av v'em* so evident toward his parents, the way he loved his wife and children and grandchildren, the way he created such a strong and tight bond with the OU family, the way in which he got Jews from around the world from every type of community to adore him, to look up to him, to learn from him, to seek his advice? We cannot allow a giant like Rabbi Moshe Hauer to leave this world without us striving toward continuing in his path, to bring *achdut* and a love of Torah to *Klal Yisrael*.

I was with Rabbi Hauer in many, many meetings over the last almost six years that he was with us at the OU. There is an idea that he would always say to those of us going in with him into the meeting, whether with Jewish leaders, *gedolim*, politicians, or an OU mission in Israel: Let's make sure that every meeting that we have leads to a *kiddush Shem Shamayim*.

That was his motto. How did he accomplish this goal? I saw it in the way he spoke in these meetings. He always spoke softly, and more often than not, despite his position, he would listen instead of speak. He wanted to hear what others had to say, what was on their

mind and on their heart, in order to be able to understand before speaking himself. He always listened in order to be able to hear other viewpoints, because he was so humble that he knew everyone had something to contribute.

Allow me to share a few more stories that stand out in my mind right now.

On October 8th, 2023, right after Simchat Torah was over in America, I received a call from Rabbi Hauer, together with Rabbi Dr. Josh Joseph, our Executive Vice President and COO, *lehavdil bein chaim l'chaim*, with one urgent question: "What is happening in Israel and how can we help?" In this call, Rabbi Hauer said to me, "Avi, I'm looking for a flight. I'm on my way." A little over a week later, he arrived in Israel.

When we met, he asked for two things. The first thing was to meet with all the OU Israel staff who were evacuated from their houses in the south. And so, together with President of the OU Mitch Aeder, and President of OU Israel Stuie Hershkowitz, we were able to sit down in the Ramada Hotel with about 20 OU Israel staff that run our teen center in Sderot. Rabbi Hauer sat there for many, many hours listening to each and every story, where they were when everything started, what they went through, how they were able to get out of Sderot, the challenges that they are having in the hotel and being evacuated from their homes.

Rabbi Hauer sat there with such endless compassion for them, with tears in his eyes at hearing their stories and understanding that they are just tens out of thousands of Jews that were evacuated from their houses. The hug that Rabbi Hauer gave to each person that evening, of connecting his heart to our hearts



is something that we will never, ever forget.

He went further. His second request of me was to go with him down south to see what had happened (and remember, there were reports that some terrorists were still on the loose at the time). He said, "Avi, unless I see it, I won't fully understand what they went through." We went. As missiles fell continuously, I said, "Rabbi, are you not afraid?" And at that moment, we looked at each other and said, "*shluchei mitzvah einam nizakin*" - we know that since we are doing this to help *Klal Yisrael, bezrat Hashem, HaKadosh Baruch Hu* will watch over us.

We went to Sderot. Rabbi Hauer was visibly in shock, seeing the police station totally destroyed, the tractors there trying to pick up the rubble of the police station, and taking it all in in order to be able to give the message over to the world. We stopped in

the street, and Rabbi Hauer said, “We need rabbis from North America to come and see what happened here.” And it was there that we reached out to our loyal colleagues in America and put together a mission that came on the 28th of October, which I believe was the first mission to come and see the story of what happened. This mission consisted of 22 OU Rabbis and 22 laypeople, who all came to hear and to hug those who needed it.

For Rabbi Hauer, this was not about saying “I was there” in order to praise himself. It was to be able to tell people from the south that he was there so that he can connect to them and their hearts that much better. It was to be able to approach American politicians and give them his eyewitness testimony in order to advocate and ask for help. It was so he could speak to others and explain the devastation that we saw that day.

I remember hearing from Rabbi Hauer so many times the concern of how to take the *achdut* that was felt so acutely across *Klal Yisrael* during those difficult times and hold onto it, not just at a time of war, but on a regular basis. Rabbi Hauer, in so many meetings with the more extreme politicians from right and from left, would make sure to sit down with them, listen, hear, and then try to give in the most delicate, calm and loving way, words of advice as to how to say things in a more loving and positive way, that there are ways to accomplish their goals without belittling others and making them feel bad. He sought to build bridges amongst all of *Klal Yisrael*, of the right and the left and the in-between. It is because of his openness and love of all factions in *Klal Yisrael* that we see Jews today from every type of denomination putting out condolence letters and posts, all mourning

Rabbi Hauer’s passing. From the most right-wing hashkafically and politically to the most left-wing hashkafically and politically, they are all talking about this gigantic loss. And it is because of his attitude and approach which was so overwhelmingly positive and uplifting.

I was always amazed at how much Rabbi Hauer was able to accomplish in a day. Rabbi Hauer would not waste a minute. Yet, when he was with you, he was truly with you. He was not looking at his phone. His mind was with you, his heart was with you, and he was listening. He had many things on his plate, but he gave you all the time in the world and all the attention possible. That listening ear, that soft-spoken voice, that passion, that love.

These attributes are things all of us can and should emulate. Can we incorporate a time of day to practice speaking a little bit softer? Of working to develop a love and passion for every single Jew? To connect to the worries and challenges of others and work on being able to help?

Rabbi Hauer was not about grabbing headlines with his work and advocacy for the Jewish people. So many times in meetings, he would be asked, “Rabbi Hauer, what about getting in a picture with this politician at the table?” He would say no, because he didn’t want the person he was meeting with to feel that the purpose of the meeting was just photo opportunities and PR. He truly wanted to help.

There are so many stories I want to tell about Rabbi Hauer, but I am probably already getting close to the record for my longest message in Torah Tidbits ever. And I could probably go on and fill up all 80 pages with stories and incredible messages that I and the OU team have learned from Rabbi Hauer. But for all of us to take just some of these

ideas into our lives would be an incredible accomplishment and an amazing testament to the life of Rabbi Hauer and his influence.

Let us work on enhancing *achdut*, on listening more, on loving more, and *b'ezrat Hashem*, doing as much as we can. These are giant shoes to fill. Perhaps no one in the world can properly fit in these shoes. But with many people trying, we will be able to make up for this tremendous, tremendous loss by adding these attributes to our own lives.

If you never had the merit of meeting Rabbi Hauer personally, I highly recommend you make sure to go and look for videos of him speaking. Make sure to take the time to learn about this incredible individual, because every minute with him was a learning experience. I assure you, you will not regret any minute that you give learning from Rabbi Hauer Zt"l.

Rabbi Hauer Zt"l contributed almost weekly to Torah Tidbits sharing his wisdom with Klal Yisrael. His last message in Torah Tidbits before passing was titled **Between Heaven and Earth**, how apropos for his last article. Rabbi Hauer has written a lot of material in advance and *bezrat Hashem* we will continue publishing his writings in editions to come. May all of the incredible messages and life lessons that we have learned from Rabbi Hauer be used as a tool by Rabbi Hauer in **Heaven** to be *Meilitz Yosher* for Klal Yisrael, his family, friends and the OU. May the values and attributes that he taught us in this world continue servicing us on the **earth** to continue walking in his footsteps to be true servants of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

Rabbi Avi Berman




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