



The Charedi Rally in Bnei Brak

Most people have not heard about this rally, and that's a shame because it's a deeply important part of our story.

Julie Kuperstein, mother of released hostage Bar Kuperstein, had been dreaming of this rally for almost two years. Her husband, Tal, who had been injured in a car accident, achieved astonishing physical and emotional milestones: He managed to stand again and regained his speech, “for Bar.” At the same time, Julie reached new heights of maternal and Jewish strength, forging a profound and unlikely bridge between the secular and charedi communities.

I had seen her on Shabbat, holidays, and weekdays slowly crafting a new, shared language. We last met just before the hostage

deal, when she led a Shabbat for students and young adults who observed the first Shabbat of the year together in Jerusalem.

Over the course of two years, she had imagined what Bar's homecoming would look like. She always said, “When Bar comes home, our journey will go through Bnei Brak. I don't really know this city, but it embraced me and became my second home. People simply are unaware of the extraordinary people who make up this community.”

And then ... it happened.

Thousands lined the streets of Bnei Brak, singing and dancing around Bar, accompanied by a motorcycle convoy that escorted the celebration. Bar arrived with family and friends, looking nothing like the stereotypical charedi crowd, for a reception in the City Council hall where Julie gave a moving speech. She shared that at Sheba Medical Center, Bar's first stop immediately after his release, they allowed her to sleep next to him at the hospital's maternity hotel — and she felt it was perfectly fitting. It truly was a birth.

At the end of her list of thanks, she thanked the Jewish people “for every single tear.”

Then the convoy brought this young man, who had worked at the Nova music festival, straight to the home of Rabbi Moshe Hillel Hirsch, one of the leading rabbis of the charedi community, for a short conversation. I watched as Julie spoke to the rabbi about the past two years, sharing insights and lessons. And I thought: someone like her really



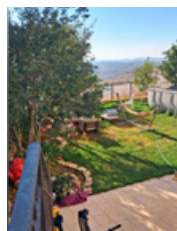
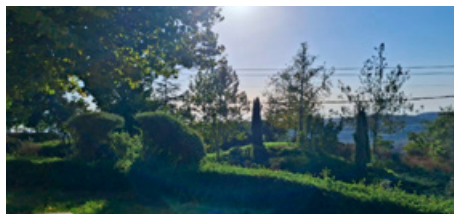
can bridge divides and find solutions.

Deputy Mayor Shlomo Elharar said at the event: “Bar, not only have you come home — you are bringing all of us back home!”

One can only hope. The tone and language of the former hostages as they appeared across interviews and broadcasts suggest that they have risen to a higher plane. They speak of meaning, spirit, and soul.

May they elevate us — in politics, in the media, and online — together with them. ■

Sivan Rahav-Meir is a media personality and lecturer. Married to Yedidya, the mother of five. Lives in Jerusalem, and formerly served as the World Mizrahi Shlichah to North America. Sivan lectures in Israel and overseas about the media, Judaism, Zionism and new media. She was voted by Globes newspaper as most popular female media personality in Israel and by the Jerusalem Post as one of the 50 most influential Jews in the world.



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