



DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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When parents give their children names, it is never a simple decision. There is always deliberation, going back and forth, thinking about what is most appropriate, whether there is someone to name after, and trying to make the name as meaningful as possible. *Baruch Hashem*, my wife and I have been blessed with nine children, and with each one, we went through this process.

Our third son was born in the month of *Iyar*, and his *brit milah* fell out exactly on Yom Yerushalayim. We decided to give him the name Tzvi Yehudah, after the son of Rav Kook. My own name is Avraham Yitzchak, and at that moment, we felt it appropriate as Jews living in the Land of Israel, following Torat Eretz Yisrael, to highlight the influence of Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook, the first civilian rabbi to be at the Kotel after its liberation, and someone who spent his entire life spreading Torah about the importance of the whole Land of Israel.

My wife and I thought about whether we

would call him Tzvi, or his full name, Tzvi Yehudah. I know for myself that although I go by Avi, it warms my heart every time my mother calls me by my full name, Avraham Yitzchak, because I know that on some deep level, my true identity is Avraham Yitzchak. When I read the stories in the Torah about Avraham and Yitzchak, I relate to them personally. So it gives me great *nachat* that our son Tzvi Yehudah decided to go by his full name - even in the army, where his commanders call him Tzvi Yehudah. While Tzvi is a beautiful name, Yehudah is such an important name in the Torah. Besides the simple fact that the *Shem Hashem* is contained within Yehudah's name, Yehudah's entire story and personality teach us such important lessons about what it means to be a Jew.

Have you ever asked yourself why we call ourselves “*Yehudim*,” and not “*Reuvenim*” or “*Shimonim*” or “*Yissacharim*”? And if the answer is derived from Judea, the province in Eretz Yisrael, how did the name stick to the Jewish people throughout the centuries? A common answer is to look at the source of Yehudah's naming. Leah says, “*Hapaam odeh et Hashem* - this time I will thank Hashem” (Bereshit 29:35). Judaism places supreme importance on *hakarat hatov* and thanking *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* for everything He gives us, whether it be a child, a job, good health, a comfortable place to live, good friends - for all of these, we must thank Him. One of Chanukah's greatest themes is giving thanks - Chazal say the holiday was established “*lehodot u'lehallel*,” to give thanks



**The OU Israel Family wishes
a warm Mazal Tov to
Stuie & Claire Herskowitz
OU Israel President
and to Jonathan & Abby Kaplan
and families
on the birth of their grandson
son of Moriah & Ezra Kaplan**

and sing Hashem's praises.

This past Shabbat, I opened a *sefer* on the *parsha* called *Divrei Yaakov*, authored by Rav Yaakov Bender, Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshiva Darchei Torah in Far Rockaway, New York, and someone who I had the privilege of meeting when we brought a mission of *Rabbanei Eretz Yisrael* to America. In this *sefer*, he adds another reason for how Yehudah's name became synonymous with Bnei Yisrael.

Yehudah's redemption arc is found in taking responsibility for his brothers. In last week's *parsha*, Yehudah comes over to Yaakov and takes responsibility for Binyamin. He tells Yaakov, "*Anochi e'ervenu, miyadi tevakshenu* - I will be his guarantor; from my hand you may demand him" (Bereshit 43:9). In this week's *parsha*, we are told at the very beginning that, "*Vayigash eilav Yehudah*" - Yehudah goes before Yosef, whom he does not know is his brother, but he knows is second in command in the greatest superpower of the world of that time, and thus very dangerous to challenge. Nevertheless, he takes responsibility and stands up to Yosef. Yes, he knew he had the other brothers, including Shimon and Levi, behind him, ready to defend him. But that only made his resolve stronger, and his willingness to take responsibility greater.

Rav Bender states that at that moment, Yehudah was instilling into the *neschama* of every single Jew that we have an *achrayut*, we have a responsibility, an emotional connection, a great and overwhelming love, towards each and every single Jew in the world. And that we should always have each other's back, just as the brothers had for Yehudah.

This is part of what it means to be Jewish. When one of us laughs, we all laugh together.



And when one of us hurts, we all hurt together. The outcry and the outpouring of grief and support for the Jews of Bondi Beach in Australia by Jewish people around the world last week shows this inner unity of *Yehudim*. That feeling that we as *Yehudim*, as Jews, have a deep place inside our heart where we care for each and every Jew, where we show endless love to each and every Jew - that is a feeling we get from Yehudah. The fact that we call ourselves *Yehudim* means that we want to be in the place where we are taking *achrayut* for each and every Jew, that we care for each and every Jew, and that we love each and every Jew.

We feel it when our brothers and sisters are yelled at in the subway in New York City, or when Jews are attacked in California. We felt it when our brothers and sisters were taken hostage in Israel. We still feel it as the body of one hostage - Ran Gvili - remains in Gaza. This *achrayut* is what gives me and so many of my OU colleagues around the world the strength to work hard to help the Jewish people grow and prosper. Whether it is the staff of NCSY or JLIC going out to campuses and public schools, or those staying up until 3:00 in the morning working with teens at risk in low socioeconomic periphery neighborhoods here in Eretz Yisrael, or those spending a Shabbat in Katzrin or Pardes Chana or Nahariya to bring programming to our English-speaking brothers and

sisters who have made *aliyah* to communities where they are thirsty for more Torah.

I want to publicly, because I am a Jew, because I am a *Yehudi*, thank Yehudah for showing us that this is the way to behave - to always recognize the goodness of the *Ribono Shel Olam* and to always take responsibility to strive toward helping our brothers and sisters. It is therefore quite logical that Yehudah's tribe should produce not only David and his dynasty, but that the future *Mashiach* will come from a descendant of Yehudah. Why? Because Yehudah takes responsibility, and a king must take the greatest responsibility - for all of *Klal Yisrael*. To love each person as a brother and sister, not as a stranger.

As we come towards the end of the calendar year, I want to publicly thank all those who have supported our initiatives here at OU Israel. We greatly appreciate your support. It is your support that enables us to do what we do with the heart and passion that we have. While Yehudah gets the credit in this week's *parsha*, it is the fact that he knows he has his brothers standing right behind him that gives him the *koach* to stand up and deal with the challenge before him. So too, when we see donations coming

in, whether of 18 shekels or 10,000 shekels, it means the world to us and gives us strength to continue. *Be'ezrat Hashem, na'aseh v'natzliach.*

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat and *besorot tovot* to all of *Klal Yisrael*,


Rabbi Avi Berman

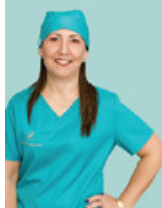
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