



DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OU ISRAEL
ABERMAN@OUISRAEL.ORG

There are certain words that can sound harmless, but they reveal something much deeper about how we see ourselves. Not because anyone is trying to make a statement, but because language has a way of showing what sits quietly in the heart.

One word that still makes me pause is when Jews refer to Yerushalayim as "Jerusalem." I understand why people do it. English has its habits. But if this is the beating heart of our people, if Tanach itself calls it Yerushalayim, why would we give it a different name when we speak about it with love and longing?

And it is not only a name. It carries meaning. *Yeru* points to *yirah*, to awe of Hashem, and *Shalem* points to wholeness and peace. It reminds us what Yerushalayim stands for and what our lives are meant to strive toward. So it puzzles me when even very religious Jews, people who feel a deep connection to the

city, casually switch it into its English form. Especially because we do not do this across the board. Most people do not say "Hebron" when they are speaking about Chevron, or "Nablus" when they mean Shechem, or "Tiberias" when they are talking about Tiberia. But Yerushalayim becomes "Jerusalem," more often than not. If you look back at my columns, you will see that I have always used Yerushalayim. For me it has always been about the principle. The way we speak says something about what we value.

That same idea comes up in another word I hear Jews use all the time, and I say this with a great deal of love and respect for Jews living all over the world. As part of my job, I have the privilege of meeting Jews from many backgrounds, in Israel and across the Diaspora. I speak to people at OU events and at synagogues and conferences, in communities large and small. I have extremely close friends and family living in Vancouver, Miami, New York, Toronto, Los Angeles, and many other places. Beautiful families, sincere Jews, devoted communities.

But I still find myself uncomfortable when I hear Jews refer to their "home" as America, Canada, or anywhere else outside the Land of Israel. I know and recognize that more than half of the Jewish people live outside the Land of Israel. There are many legitimate reasons that bring people there, and many legitimate reasons that keep them there. This is not about judging anyone's situation.

It is about what the word "home" implies.



**OU Israel mourns the passing of
Rabbi Julius Berman zt"l**
Former President of the Orthodox Union,
Chairman of the OU Kashrus Commission,
Founding Chairman of OU Press,
and one of the most significant lay leaders
of twentieth century Orthodox Jewish Life.

**May his entire family
be comforted among those who
mourn for Tzion and Yerushalayim.**

When someone says “home,” it usually means more than where they have a house. It means “this is where I belong.”

It is one thing to talk about where your job is, where your family is, where you have built a life, where you hang your hat. But “home” is a different word. When my friends come to Israel, I make a point of sending them a message that says, “Welcome home.” I write it to remind them that while they may have a temporary home outside of Israel right now, and they may indeed have a beautiful house and community, the Land of Israel is where we truly belong and where we will all end up.

We also see how this Land blossoms when its children come home. In the nineteenth century, Mark Twain famously described the Land of Israel as barren and desolate. Today, anyone with eyes can see the blessing around us. As the Jewish people return, the fruit trees grow, the roads expand, the fields blossom, and the Land itself seems to respond. Baruch Hashem, there is a clear sense that when Am Yisrael comes home, the Land comes alive.

All of this has always lived inside me as a feeling, but this week’s parsha helped me see it even more clearly through the words of Chazal. At the end of Sefer Bereishit, Yosef makes his brothers take an oath. He tells them that Hashem will surely remember them, and when that day comes they must carry his bones up from Egypt and bring him to the Land of Israel (Bereshit 50:25). Yosef’s final request is not about honor. It is about belonging. He wants his resting place to reflect who he is and where he truly connects.

Hundreds of years later, Moshe Rabbeinu



fulfills Yosef’s wish. Chazal describe how Moshe searches for Yosef’s remains and ensures that they are taken out with the people. *Bnei Yisrael* carry Yosef with them through the *Midbar* and ultimately bury him in Shechem 40 years later.

And that brings up a painful question that many people have asked. Moshe Rabbeinu was just days from entering the Land of Israel. How could it be that Yosef merited burial in the Land, and Moshe did not?

One answer that is often given is that Moshe was buried outside the Land so

Dedicated in memory of
our dear brother

Dr. Mark Weiner ז"ל

מרדכי נחמן בן חיים מאיר ושותנה ז"ל
נפטר ט"ז טבת

And our beloved father

Dr. Myer “Mike” Weiner ז"ל

חיים מאיר בן יעקב נחום וליבנה ז"ל
נפטר כ"ב טבת

Upon their yahrzeits

*By the Weiner, Miller,
Solomont, & Saar families*

that no one would know the location of his grave, and it would not become an object of worship. I understand the idea behind that answer, but it never fully sat well with me. If the concern was a known location, Moshe could have been buried in the Land in a place that would remain hidden.

Several years ago, I came across a passage in Midrash Rabbah that helped me understand this in a way that felt true and piercing. The Midrash compares two descriptions. When Yosef flees from the wife of Potiphar, she describes him as an *ish ivri*, a Hebrew man (Bereshit 39:14). But in this week's parsha, when Moshe saves the daughters of Yitro, they describe him as an *ish mitzri*, an Egyptian man (Shemot 2:19). The Midrash says that this difference helps explain why Moshe did not merit to be buried in the Land of Israel.

Think about that. Moshe Rabbeinu, the man who spoke with Hashem, the redeemer of Israel, the teacher of Torah, is described as an Egyptian man. Not because he was actually Egyptian, but because that is how he was perceived, and in some way how he allowed himself to be framed. Yosef, even in Egypt, is seen as an *ish ivri*. Yosef carries

his identity openly. His sense of self is tied to his people and to his homeland even while living in exile.

The Midrash is not trying to reduce Moshe's greatness. *Chas v'shalom*. But it is teaching a principle that is both subtle and powerful. Identity is not only what we feel. It is also what we project. It is how we speak. It is how we carry ourselves. It is the language we use to describe where we belong.

When I read that Midrash, it gave me *chizuk* for something I have always felt. As Jews, whether we are currently living in the Five Towns or Omaha, whether we are living in Australia or England, our desire, our heart, our connection should be to our homeland, to the Land of Israel.

Again, there are many legitimate reasons to be living outside of Israel. Life is complex. People have responsibilities, families, work, health, parents, children. But the question is not only where we live. The question is how we relate to ourselves.

Do we speak about ourselves in a way that sounds settled in exile, as if this is where we belong forever, as if this is the final address? Or do we speak with a sense of longing and direction, even if the timeline is not yet clear?

If a Jew can say, "Right now I am living in New York, or Florida, or London, but my home is Eretz Yisrael, and be'ezrat Hashem I hope to return," then that Jew is living with the identity of an *ish ivri*. Even while outside the Land, they carry themselves as someone who belongs to their people and to their homeland.

And I believe that Hashem sees that. When we speak with that attachment, when we keep the language of belonging alive, we strengthen the spiritual connection between

May the learning
from this issue of Torah Tidbits
serve as an עילוי for the נשמה טהורה
of our dear mother
יוכבד ע"ה בת הרב אלימלך זצ"ל
Judith Ehrenberg ע"ה
on her 60th yahrzeit
היתה בת חמישים ביום י"ט טבת, תשכ"ה
תנצ"ב
ד"ר משה ואסתר ארנברג

Am Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael. We remind ourselves, our children, and our communities that we are not only residents of wherever we live. We are בני הארץ. We are a people whose story is anchored in this Land.

This is also what OU Israel is here for. To help more Jews feel connected to their home, to help more Jews come home, and to help English speakers living here build lives of Torah, community, and belonging. We run programs across the country with an incredible staff, from Torah Initiatives to the Women's Division, from NCSY to Yachad to JLIC, and many other programs that bring Torah, chesed, and connection into the lives of thousands. Through Torah Tidbits each week, and through so much on-the-ground work, we try to strengthen the relationship between Jews and the Land of Israel, and

between Jews and their own identity.

We will continue investing, raising funds, and expanding our programming for English speakers across the country, because this is our home. And we look forward not only to hearing Jews speak about Israel as home, but to seeing more and more Jews take the steps to actually make Israel their home.

Be'ezrat Hashem, we look forward to seeing you at OU Israel programming, and we look forward to the day when the words we use reflect the reality we are building.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



Rabbi Avi Berman
Executive Director, OU Israel
aberman@ouisrael.org

The unveiling for Rabbi Moshe Hauer zt"l



Will be on Friday,
January 9th (20 Tevet)
at 9:30AM
Har HaMenuchot,
Gush: Mem
Chelka: Zayin
Row: Tet

**The Hauer Family
and the OU Family**

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