



DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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

Sometimes, when siblings grow up and build their own homes, they choose different paths – different communities, different *rabbanim*, different schools for their children. And yet, when they all sit around the same table, something beautiful can happen: that despite these differences, they can recognize that they are one family, with shared values and shared love.

I experienced this, once again, last week when I went out for an evening together with my brother, my brothers-in-law, and my father. We realized that time passes and we don't always get the chance to sit down together, just the men, and really talk. Each one of us comes from a different world. I have one brother-in-law who is Chareidi Litvish, another who is a *shtreimel*-wearing Chasid, a brother-in-law who wears a big white *yarmulke* with long *peyes*, another brother-in-law who is a Kurdish Jew with a big white *yarmulke* but no *peyes*, a brother who wears a black knitted *yarmulke*, and myself who wears a *kippa sruga*. I am clearly

aware of the differences of the *hashcafik* and political differences between us, but the true beauty is that we are all able to get together and have the best time.

I think it's rare when you get to see this type of connection, this array of different types of individuals, in one family. But I think the beauty in which my parents brought us up was a deep understanding that we love every single type of Jew. No matter where we come from or where we're going, we respect those who love and teach Torah, we respect what they have to say, and we can fundamentally disagree without losing that respect.

In this week's *parsha*, Yitro, we receive the Torah at Mount Sinai. Our tradition tells us that the Torah was given with "*shivim panim*," seventy different faces. These seventy faces represent beautiful, diverse approaches to the same truth. As those who open up even one page of the Talmud know, many arguments exist in Judaism. Abaye and Rava, Rav and Shmuel (sages in the Talmud), they hardly ever agree with each other in their *halachic* opinions. But that does not stop them from sitting on the same page and learning together. Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai – their children married each other (Yevamot 14a). They fundamentally disagreed on how to decide the law, but that did not prevent them from seeing each other as friends and marrying off their children together.

In today's world, I often ask myself: are we losing that? Are we losing respect for each other's rabbinic leaders and thinkers? Are we losing respect for each other's *minhagim* and each other's *derech*? Is each person thinking

**In loving memory of
our beloved Father, Grandfather
& Great-Grandfather
Saba Sababa**

Irving Maisel ז"ל

ר' ישראל בן פסח ז"ל

on his 16th Yahrtzeit

**May the Torah learned from
this Torah Tidbits be in his merit**

*The Maisel, Bodenheim
and Gottlieb Families
Efrat, Bet Shemesh and Kiryat Sefer*

that only their way is the right way? Or are we able to appreciate the beauty of a *dvar Torah* that includes a quote from a *Chasidische* Rebbe alongside a Litvishe *Gadol*, a Rav Mordechai Eliyahu zt'l, a Zionist Rabbinic leader, a Rabbanit Nehama Leibowitz zt'l, a Rebbetzin Shira Smiles, and a Rabbanit Shani Taragin, all woven together?

I got to experience exactly this kind of *achdut* this past week when we celebrated eight years of Midreshet Zusha, which is part of OU Israel's Pearl and Harold Jacobs Zula Outreach Center. For those unfamiliar, the Zula operates two branches – one in Yerushalayim and one in Tzfat – serving over 5,500 teens at risk every single year. Midreshet Zusha was created because of a real need in Israel to help young women experiencing hardship, at times a girl who experiences drug abuse or physical abuse, providing them with guidance and support to overcome trauma and reach their unique potential. A day in Midreshet Zusha includes volunteering in *sherut leumi*, Torah learning, and individual growth with their mentor. All tailored for the girls to understand, connect, and be continuously inspired.

The *midrasha* was actually named by the young women in the program themselves. The name comes from the famous story of Reb Zusha of Anipoli, the Chasidic rabbi, who once said that he worries that after he passes away, he will not be asked why he wasn't Moshe or Avraham, but why he was not Zusha – why didn't he live up to his own potential? These young women understood the need for a *midrasha* that would continue to provide the necessary support of the Zula, one that would not try to change them into something else, but help them be themselves and fulfill their true potential.



Hundreds of young women came to the celebration, all excited for a party that gave them the chance to come together, learn, sing, and dance in a truly beautiful way. What struck me most was the togetherness of girls coming from very different backgrounds – in fact, a spectrum even wider than my own family. Some came from secular backgrounds, others from Dati Leumi, Chareidi, or Chasidish backgrounds, all coming together in order to grow in Torah.

The connection they found together was remarkable. Some got up and spoke about Rav Kook. Others spoke about Rebbe Nachman of Breslov. Others about the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Others about Rav Chaim Kanievsky. Each one came from a totally different place, and yet they were able to see the beauty in each other's traditions. Alongside Harel Chetzroni, the founder of the program, and Oren Asulin, the director of the Zula, several members of our incredible female staff spoke, as well as the inspiring Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi.



**The OU Israel family
sends heartfelt condolences to
Shlomo Schwartz and family
(CFO Orthodox Union)
on the passing of his father z"l**

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

We were also graced with a performance by Yair Elitzur, whose song “*Tamid Ohev Oti*” has taken the Jewish world by storm and uplifted so many spirits during the war. I caught him at the entrance and asked him to record a video with our Director of Social Media, Nina Broder, about the event. He shared something that meant the world to me. He said, “I assure you that the equipment we’re using here is not what we’re used to on stage, and this is definitely not my first time coming to sing here, but there is something just special about the Zula – you feel at home here.”

Those words capture exactly the feeling we try to create at the Zula for the thousands of teenagers who have come through its doors. The goal is not that they feel like they’re walking into a school or an office, but that they feel at home. That’s why when you walk in, you see a comfortable kitchen, so generously gifted by my dear friends Dvora and Roy Spiewak in memory of their dear parents Barbara and Martin Spiewak z”l, with food on the counter, couches, music being played by dedicated staff in the center of the room, dim lights with candles shining in the middle,” a therapeutic drawing room, a creative writing room – an entire atmosphere designed to make every teenager feel welcome and safe.

This is the essence of *Shivim Panim LaTorah* in practice. Because we are able to bring such a wide variety of backgrounds and *hashkafot* into one room and speak to these young women about so many different types of Jews, so many different *rabbanim* and *rebbeztins*, so many different *divrei Torah*, we reach them in a language they understand. They know that we come from a place of love, that we care about them, that we are doing everything in our ability to help them grow – to learn a profession, be active members of their communities, and wake up in the morning and want to accomplish more every single day. And *Baruch Hashem*, with great success.

So it is truly a breath of fresh air to experience this when we read about *Matan Torah*, in these pages of Torah Tidbits where we see so many rabbis and leaders write about this week’s *parsha*, each one with their own angle, each one with their own *hashkafa*, and yet together they bring *Klal Yisrael* together in such a beautiful way.

May we all learn to acknowledge, recognize, and embrace the fact that we are one family. Even if we have different ways of dressing, different garments, different head coverings – some of us wear pants and some of us wear skirts, some of us wear this *yarmulke* and some of us wear that *yarmulke*, and some of us don’t wear a *yarmulke* at all – we are one nation, one family, and we love each other. *B’ezerat Hashem*, we will continue to take from the rich diversity of Torah that our tradition provides, internalize it in our lives, and become better people.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



Rabbi Avi Berman

Executive Director, OU Israel
 aberman@ouisrael.org

לעילוי נשמת

**Our beloved husband, father,
 grandfather and great grandfather**

Rabbi Lipman Z. Rabinowitz z”l

הרב חיים ליפמן זאב

בן אבא שמואל ולאה ז”ל

On his 17th yearzeit

ט”ו בשבט

**Renee Rabinowitz
 Rabinowitz and Adams Families**