



DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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A year and two months ago, the OU Israel offices moved from our longtime headquarters on Keren HaYesod Street to Har Hotzvim. One of the most interesting things about this new location is the breathtaking mountain view. However, we didn't get that view for too long. Shortly after we moved, things changed, and all we can see from that back view is the excavation efforts making way for new construction - *baruch Hashem*, Yerushalayim is constantly growing and building up.

Alongside all the excavations and the many large and loud trucks, you can see a flag planted in the ground. It was put there by the Israel Antiquities Department to mark an important historical site. The fact is that Har Hotzvim is named Har Hotzvim because it is believed to be the place where the stones of the *Beit HaMikdash* were quarried and chiseled out. Looking at these stones, you can see the shape of enormous blocks whose color,

composition, and size matched the stones of the *Beit HaMikdash*. And the fact that one could sit in an office and look out at the very place where stones were carved for the *Beit HaMikdash* - to know that such holy work was done right here - is deeply moving. I have shown it to many visitors who have come to the office.

This is one more example of something we all experience living in Israel: our history is intertwined and ingrained inside the soil and the stones of this land. I remember many years ago walking with an older man down Kanfei Nesharim Street, back when it had far fewer buildings. We were making our way back to Har Nof, and to pass the time, I was kicking a stone down the road. The older man turned to me and said, "You know, I try not to kick stones in Yerushalayim." I was puzzled and asked him why. He said, "This looks like a tiny pebble, but it might have been part of Jewish history. So if I don't have to kick it, I don't." I replied, "But what are the chances? There are so many stones in Yerushalayim." His answer: "Would you take a chance in kicking what might have once been part of the *Beit HaMikdash*?"

That conversation has stayed with me ever since. I try, even when walking with my kids in Yerushalayim, not to kick stones. I remind myself of what our history is, and what Yerushalayim is to us. We are walking in Jewish history.

This past Wednesday night, I had the distinguished honor of being invited to say a few words at the *siyum* celebrating the completion

In loving memory of
our beloved mother

Claire Chanover a"h

חיה בת עזריאל ע"ה

on her 10th Yahrtzeit - אדר י'

May the Torah learning in this issue
of Torah Tidbits be לעילוי נשמתה

*Rachel Leah & Fyvie Berman
The Simon, Sandberg
& Kober families
Her Grandchildren,
great-grandchildren
and great-great-grandchildren*

of the Orthodox Union's Nach Yomi program for women. Rebbetzin Dr. Adina Shmidman, Director of OU's Women's Initiative, invited me to speak alongside OU President Mitch Aeder and Executive Vice President and COO Rabbi Dr. Josh Joseph, as well as Rabbi Yaakov Glasser, Managing Director of Communal Engagement at the Orthodox Union. Each of us had the chance to share a few meaningful words. Also addressing the gathering were Rebbetzin Dafna Baer, wife of the Chief Rabbi, and Sivan Rahav Meir. It was deeply moving to see a room full of hundreds of women who had committed to learning a chapter of Nach every single day for the past two years, and who were already seven days into *Sefer Yehoshua* (starting the third cycle since the program began!).

When I got up to speak, I shared with the audience that today, when we learn Tanach here in Israel, we have the opportunity not just to read about the stories that take place in the Land of Israel, but to live it and see these places firsthand.

I then told them about a meeting I'd had earlier that day. I had the privilege of going with Rabbi Dr. Josh Joseph to the Knesset to meet with the Minister of Heritage, Rabbi Amichai Eliyahu. We heard about many exciting new initiatives taking place at the Herodian, in *Ir David*, and at other incredible heritage sites around the country. At a certain point, Minister Eliyahu took out a small box. Inside was a tiny coin, a *machatztit hashekel* from the period of the Great Revolt in 67 CE.

The coin weighs a little over seven grams. On one side are three pomegranates, and on the other is a goblet with the letter *aleph* above it, marking the first year of the Great Revolt. It is inscribed in ancient Hebrew letters: "*chatzi hashekel*" ("half-shekel") on one



side, and "*Yerushalayim HaKedosha*" ("the holy Jerusalem") on the other. It was found inside caves in *Midbar Yehuda* near Ein Gedi. Only three coins like it have ever been discovered, and the raw material it is made from comes from the *Beit HaMikdash* itself.

I could not help but think: here I am, sitting just a week and a half before I will perform the *mitzvah* of *zecher lemachatztit hashekel*, of reenacting the donation of the half-shekel coin before Purim, and I am holding in my hand an actual *machatztit hashekel* from the time of the second *Beit HaMikdash*. Suddenly, so much of Nach came to life; this made Jewish history so real. To hold a coin from the time of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai, from the time of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel HaZaken - it was just such an incredible experience.

Unfortunately, we cannot give our *machatztit hashekel* to the *Beit HaMikdash* today, but we can give our portion to important Jewish organizations doing vital work. I plan on using the money I set aside as *zecher lemachatztit hashekel* towards supporting the work that

May the learning from
this Torah Tidibits be to the לע"נ

Dudley L. Derdiger ז"ל
דוד לייב בן פנחס הכהן ז"ל

On his 21th yarzeiht, ט"ז באדר

His son, daughter-in-law,
grandchildren and great grandchildren

OU Israel does with teenagers at risk here in Israel, and I encourage you to do the same. As I give it, I say to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*: I hope that this is the last time I give *zecher lemachat-zit hashekel*, and that next time, *be'ezrat Hashem*, it will be the *machat-zit hashekel* itself, given in the *Beit HaMikdash*.

Seeing this piece of history reminded me of the well-known saying: a nation that does not have a history does not have a future. We are a nation with so, so much history, it's in the pebbles beneath our feet as we walk this Land and build it up.

On this *Shabbat Zachor*, we should remember that our task is to never forget the threat of Amalek and our *mitzvah* to oppose it. We know that in the generation of Purim, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* gave the Jewish people the strength to overcome their enemies, and may He give us the same *siyata diShmaya*

today. We should connect ourselves to the *Beit HaMikdash*, give our *zecher lemachat-zit hashekel* to the future generation, and invest in tomorrow's leaders. One of the best programs to support the future of *Klal Yisrael* is OU Israel's Teen Center programs. With your help, and with the dedication of our incredible staff working day in and day out, they are receiving the love, guidance, and support they need to become the leaders of tomorrow.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat and an incredibly happy Purim,



Rabbi Avi Berman
Executive Director, OU Israel



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