



DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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In my house growing up, there was a magnet on the refrigerator that read, “If I knew grandchildren were so great, I would have had them first.” It’s a funny joke, but I never fully understood the depth of that sentiment until recently. Last week, I had the tremendous privilege to attend an event that brought together two cherished memories and turned out to be one of the most emotional experiences I’ve had in a long time.

My grandson Binyamin, who is in first grade, received his first *siddur* at a beautiful school ceremony. So many positive memories came back to me from when I first received my own *siddur* in first grade. I was learning at RJJ in Staten Island, New York, and my teacher was Rabbi Pollack. Rabbi Pollack taught first grade for over six decades, and to this day I remember him as a remarkable teacher. He made sure to decorate the classroom with Hebrew words, and he encouraged all of us to learn the language so we could understand the *siddur* and *Chumash* we were going to study.

I can clearly remember the *siddur* we

received, a *Siddur Shilo*. You don’t see these around anymore; apparently, it was first printed before the Holocaust, and went through many editions since then. Anyway, I held onto this *siddur* so dearly, until it started coming apart just from sheer daily use, at which point we put it in the *genizah*.

At the ceremony, I had another memory, not as far back. I remember taking my children to their *siddur* parties when they learned at the Talmud Torah HaNachala in Har Nof. The head rabbi of the school, Rav Shmuel Katz, would speak and uplift the children, while Rav Mordechai Eliyahu, *zecher tzadik kadosh livracha*, the former Chief Rabbi of Israel and my personal rabbi, would be the one giving out the *siddurim* to the first graders. It was always so inspiring to see our children receiving their *siddur* from the rabbi, taking pictures, so happy and proud to get their first *siddur*. Every parent there treasured the moment and knew that their child would be taking this *siddur* and would be sitting next to them in *shul* and would be praying from it for many years to come, together with their siblings. But the thought of one day doing this for a grandchild felt very distant at the time.

What made last week’s event even more special was the fact that my grandson Binyamin is now learning in the exact same school that I attended when we moved to the greater Yerushalayim area: Beit Sefer Noam Kiryat Moshe. Noam Kiryat Moshe is where I met many of my friends, people I am still close with to this day. Some of them became rabbis and teachers, and even taught some of my

In loving memory of
Rabbi Yakov Chaim Hilsenrath z"l

הרב יעקב חיים ב"ר משה ז"ל
on his 12th yearzeit - י"ח אדר "

Deeply missed by his children

*Chaya & Azriel Heuman
Baruch & Sima Hilsenrath
Rochelle & Phil Goldschmiedt
Aviva & Michael Rappaport
grandchildren
and great-grandchildren*

own children. Others became accountants, lawyers, and professionals in many fields. Whenever we meet, it is a real pleasure.

Standing at my grandson's *siddur* party, watching him do the movements for the play, all dressed up with the crown and the vest and everything to make the moment as beautiful as possible, was truly something. The way in which the school gives a *siddur* to a child, with his class *Rav* up there smiling, holding his hand, presenting him with the *siddur* with such love, together with the principal and the other teachers all enjoying an uplifting moment, was so incredibly executed. The older grades came up to sing as the choir for the evening, including my nephew Yosef Tuvia, who got up there to sing knowing that his cousin's son, Binyamin, was receiving his *siddur*. It was a very emotional moment for me.

But what stood out more than anything was the way the children spoke about their *siddurim*. They were all talking about the fact that *Mincha* was the last *tefillah* they had to pray without a *siddur*, and that now they would have their own. Of course, nobody ever stopped them from going to the shelves and taking a *siddur* to *daven* from. But now they have a *siddur* that is theirs, one that they feel personally connected to.

Whenever I think of my own *Siddur Shilo*, I have such positive feelings. It might not have been the most beautiful *siddur* in the world.



It might not have been the most updated edition or the most comfortable to hold. But the reality is that, that *siddur* will always have a warm place in my heart. And seeing my grandson Binyamin receive a *siddur* from his school, one that is so well put together, clear to the eye, the right size and colors, I know it will inspire him to connect so much better to his *siddur* and to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.



Whenever I come to visit

Binyamin in school, whether to talk to his class about my *Aliyah* story or for the school events, he always makes sure to point out to his teachers that his grandfather's picture, his *Zayde's* picture, is hanging

up on the wall as part of the eighth grade

Forever in our hearts
לעילוי נשמת

אסתר בת זושא ע"ה
Elyse Gelfand ע"ה

On her *yahrzeit* – י"ט אדר "

Gelfand, Samber,
and Saban families

graduating class of Noam Kiryat Moshe. He is extremely proud to be learning in the same school that his *Zayde* attended.

I join my wife, my son, and my daughter-in-law in prayer that *b'ezrat Hashem* Binyamin should always *daven* from his heart and that his *tefillot* will go straight to the *Ribbono shel Olam*. May Hashem always shine him with blessings. May he and his siblings have successful lives, giving their parents endless Yiddishe *nachas*. May he take pride in the school where he is learning, and in the fact that at a young age he had a truly meaningful and emotional day together with his *Zayde* and his family. May that moment, *b'ezrat Hashem*, symbolize the beginning of a long life of heartfelt *davening*, deep connection with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, and may his *tefillot*, together with those of his classmates and siblings, help bring *Mashiach* speedily in our days.

As Purim celebrations come to an end and we start preparing for Pesach and the special days that follow it, I'm thinking a lot about continuity, how Jewish life is built one moment at a time, in families and in communities. In our homes, we begin the careful work of getting ready for Pesach, clearing space and preparing for a renewed beginning. And at OU Israel, in these weeks, I am sitting with my incredible team working on a number of OU Israel flagship events that take place on Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim. While

we are deep in the planning stages, working closely with the Jerusalem Municipality and our different partners coordinating the many details that allow a moment of *tefillah* to feel worthy of the day, I keep coming back to what these gatherings are really about. Yom HaAtzmaut in Yerushalayim is our collective pause to say thank you for the miracle of Jewish life restored in our land and for the privilege of building Jewish homes, families, and communities here. And Yom Yerushalayim on the *tayelet* in Armon HaNatziv, facing *Har Habayit*, reminds us that alongside gratitude we carry yearning, and that our *tefillot* are meant to lift us toward something even greater. I look forward to seeing you all at these events, as well as standing with Binyamin at the Yom HaAtzmaut Musical *Tefillah*, this time with his new *siddur*.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



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In loving memory of

Jack (Yaakov) Singer z"l
on his *yahrzeit* - March 2nd

May the Torah learning
in this issue be לעילוי נשמתו

From his daughter - Judith Lipman