



DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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Twenty-five years ago, my wife and I went on *shlichut* to Vancouver, British Columbia, together with our three sons at the time, in order to run NCSY in the Pacific Northwest. We met an incredible community, full of giving, full of Jewish pride, full of caring for one another. We were there to work primarily with teens, but through these teens we met their parents and families, and of course we met so many wonderful people as part of the wider community. The fact that so many teenagers wanted to spend Shabbat with us, to come for a meal and enjoy my wife's delicious food, created a bond between us and that community that has lasted to this very day.

For the past twenty-five years, I have made it a priority to stay in touch with those

teenagers. Wherever I go around the world, I try to visit them, call them for their birthdays, and follow up with them. The best part is seeing their progress. I have been so privileged to watch them earn their degrees, start careers, get married, have children, and become incredible individuals. It is truly something extremely special.

This past week, right before Shavuot, I was deeply moved to see two of these former NCSY teens reach a very special moment. The first is Tammi. Tammi moved with her family from South Africa to Vancouver, and she and her brother Jesse were integral members of NCSY. I was there for Jesse's bar mitzvah. I was there to see Tammi grow in her connection to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, taking upon herself Shabbat, kashrut, and more and more of a life built around Torah. Tammi was very involved in NCSY and even received the NCSYer of the Year award. After spending her gap year in Israel, Tammi earned a scholarship to Touro, where she attended, & continued growing in both her professional and Torah life.

Then Tammi, *baruch Hashem*, made aliyah. She ended up dating a young man named Max, who had grown up in Los Angeles and who had also connected to Torah through NCSY. He came to Israel, studied at Or Etzion under Rav Chaim Druckman zt"l, served in the IDF as a combat soldier, and afterwards went to Machon Lev to earn his degree. He and Tammi got married and built a beautiful family. We have a tradition that Tammi and Max and their four children come to our house every Sukkot, and it is such a blessing

**In loving memory of
our parents, grandparents
and great-grandparents**

Elaine Zimmerman a"h

עלקה ג'אנה

בת חיים שלום הכהן ע"ה

נפטרה ט"ז סיון תשע"ג

On her 31st yearzeit

Dr Charles Cohen ז"ל

ישעיה יצחק

בן מנדל אריה הלוי ז"ל

נפטר י"ד סיון תשע"ו

On his 10th yearzeit

*The Zimmerman family
Nof Ayalon, Kerem Reim,
Jerusalem, Nairobi*

to see how they each contribute to life here in Israel. Max works in high-tech at Mobileye, just a few blocks from the OU Israel office in Har Hotzvim, and Tammi has been working at OurCrowd, a venture investing platform.

Tammi's cousin, who back then went by Ricki, came to Vancouver for Jesse's bar mitzvah just a few weeks before heading to Israel for the year. I remember sitting down and talking to him at length about the year ahead. But I never expected the phone call I received after he finished his year at Yeshivat Har Etzion. He called to thank me, telling me that the advice I had given him really helped him make the most of his time in yeshiva, and that he had decided to stay for a second year. After his second year, he returned to Australia to complete his degree in accounting, and ultimately finished his studies back in Israel. *Baruch Hashem*, he married Shelley, who had made aliyah from England, and today Shmuel, as Ricki is now known, and Shelley live in Harish with their four children and are pillars of the Anglo community there.

About seven and a half years ago, both Max, with the support of Tammi, and Shmuel, with the support of Shelley, decided to start participating in a program that had begun right here at the OU. The Semichat Chaver Program was the brainchild of Rav Elyada Goldwicht, who came to my office nearly nine years ago with an idea. He wanted to create a program that would enable *baalebatim* who felt like they constantly had to call a rabbi for every halachic question, to come and learn halacha in an organized way, topic by topic, and ultimately receive a certificate recognizing what they had accomplished.

Rabbi Goldwicht started his first *shiur* at the OU Israel Center on Rechov Keren Hayesod in Rechavia. I remember standing at the first



siyum. It was inside the Seymour J. Abrams Jerusalem World Center OU hall downstairs, with a small group of a few dozen men who came together with their wives and children to celebrate having taken a tough *bechina* on the halachot they had learned. And I remember seeing Rav Zalman Nechemia Goldberg zt"l, together with Rav Shlomo Amar *shlita*, who was then the Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel and former of Rishon LeTzion, both come to the OU building to give the *teudot* to those participants who had excelled. It was extraordinary.

Little could I have imagined how far this program would go. Little could I have imagined that participants would take vacation days in order to prepare for the tests. Little could I have imagined the impact it would

לעילוי נשמת
Nechama (Nancy) Gaerman a"h
נעבא לאה בת משה ע"ה
On her second yarhzeit, 12 Sivan

**She loved learning Torah
 and supporting Torah learning**

Forever in our hearts

**May we be zoche
 to follow in her footsteps**

***Families Bokow,
 Gaerman and Harel***

have on the family structure, as proud fathers hang up their certificates in their homes and show their children how much Torah means to them. Today, approximately 300 locations around the world are learning the exact same material every single week in five different languages (Hebrew, English, Spanish, Russian and French), with amazing rabbis teaching that material to over 6, 000 *baalebatim* across the Jewish world.

I got to watch Max and Shmuel receive one *teudah*, then another, then another. And then, two days before Shavuot this year, as we were all preparing for *kabbalat haTorah*, I got to see something truly incredible. Rav Hershel Schachter *shlita* and Rav Shlomo Amar *shlita* sat on the dais and called up twenty-nine *baalebatim* in a room of over a thousand people. These thousand attendees were the Israeli participants and their families, representing the 6, 000 participants worldwide, all gathering to celebrate this incredible moment of receiving Semichat Chaver. But these twenty-nine were called up to receive a certificate that has

been all but lost from the Jewish people for decades, the title of *Chaver*.

The title *Chaver* goes back a long way. David HaMel-ech says of himself in Tehilim (119:63), “I am a friend (*Chaver*) to all who fear You.” The Rambam defines a *chaver* as one who is knowledgeable in Torah. The Maharil writes that a *chaver* is not only someone who works for his *parnasah* but who dedicates real time to Torah. And the Chat-am Sofer encouraged people to earn this title as a way to

motivate continuous growth in learning. Seeing Rav Hershel Schachter, Rav Shlomo Amar, and Rav Avigdor Nebenzahl *shlita*, three giants of our generation, sign these certificates, reviving a title that means these men will now be called to the Torah not just as *Ploni ben Ploni* but as *HaChaver Ploni ben Ploni*, was deeply moving. It demonstrates how they are investing their lives, their time, and their families in growing in Torah.

It is with tremendous admiration that I look at the spouses of these participants. Tammi and Shelley, and the spouses of the other 6,



000-plus participants, give their husbands the time, an evening a week, give them the quiet space in the house to review, and encourage them to bring the halachot they learned to the Shabbos table and discuss how to deal with different halachic questions together as a family. The certificate was given to these individual men, but the true recognition should go to the families that stood behind them.

It was an incredible evening. Avraham Fried sang. Families came with tremendous pride. There was a dinner reception beforehand. And the theme of the evening was "Chaverim Kol Yisrael." I looked at the flyer and saw a soldier standing with a *sefer*, a *chassid* standing with a *sefer*, and a simple Jew, a *baal habayit*, standing with a *sefer*. All of them are looking at the same Torah, all saying that this Torah connects us all. One is thinking about the *eruv* in his neighborhood, one about the *eruv* in his yeshiva, and one about the *eruv* on his army base. They are the same halachot that guide us no matter where we are when Shabbos comes.

The fact that we, as one nation, are able, *baruch Hashem*, to connect through Torah; people I might agree with *hashkafically* or might not, makes no difference. When it comes to Torah, we are all able to sit around the same table, the same *shiur*, and learn together, no matter what language we speak. I cannot recommend enough how much I encourage each and every one of us to find

the closest Semichat Chaver *shiur* and start dedicating an evening or a morning a week to learning halacha. It is done in a fun, uplifting, dynamic way, and it truly changes lives, changes families, changes the *chinuch* of children. And *b'ezrat Hashem*, we will continue showing *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* how much we are one nation. With all the politics and arguments, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* can look and say, *chaverim kol Yisrael*. We are all able to sit in one room together, celebrate the achievements of Torah, and *b'ezrat Hashem*, no matter where we are in the world, no matter what language we speak, continue learning His Torah and growing our families in the beautiful Jewish way, toward the building of the Beit HaMikdash *binhera b'yameinu*.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



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**Shabbat afternoon
Parshat HaShavua Shiur
Given by Rabbi Chanoch Yeres
At Beit Kneset Ohel Yitzchak
Rehov Washington at 5:30pm**

**May the Torah learned
from this issue of Torah Tidbits
be in loving memory of and לע"נ**

**David Sova ז"ל
and Rachel Sova א"ה**

**דוד בן יצחק ז"ל
& רחל בת ליון ע"ה
on their Yahrzeits
ט' סיון & ט"ז סיון
respectively**

**Dearly missed
and always in the thoughts
of their children, grandchildren
and great-grandchildren**