



DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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

In raising our children, my wife and I have always tried to make a point of looking them in the eye and engaging with them to understand how their day really went. So often, our children expect us to read their minds, to know what is in their hearts even when they do not express a single word about it. It becomes harder still once they are away from home, whether in yeshiva, the army, or ulpana. Still, we try to speak with them every single day to find out what is going on and to make sure they had a good day. Ultimately, understanding what is happening in someone else's heart and mind is almost impossible unless they are able to open up, share, and tell us what is really going on.

Over the last two and a half years, I have found that this challenge of connection does not exist only between parents and children going through hard times. We are privileged to meet many such families through our programs for teens at risk and our programs for English speakers across Israel. This challenge exists just as much between the Jewish communities on the two sides of the Atlantic. It is almost impossible to explain to Jews living

in America what Jews in Israel are living through. What it means to have a child in the army. What it means to have a son over enemy lines. Or several children serving at once. What it feels like to stand at the funerals of your closest friends' children, or beside the beds of wounded soldiers. What it means to schlep your children and grandchildren down the stairs to a public bomb shelter or, if you are fortunate, to the mamad inside your own home, two and three times in the middle of the night. Very often, we are not communicating that message at all simply because we ourselves are still living it and have a hard time putting it into words.

I feel fortunate that through my work at OU Israel, I have the ability to meet our brothers and sisters on the other side of the Atlantic. Fewer of them are able to visit Israel these days because of the shortage of flights and the exorbitant cost of those still operating. But when I travel and sit with our brothers and sisters in New York, New Jersey, Florida, Los Angeles, Vancouver, and Toronto, I try my best to convey what life in Israel is actually like. So much of what they hear on the news feels distant from what is happening here. I tell them it is like being handed the smallest sliver of cake and believing that the sliver is the entire cake. Is it part of the cake? Of course it is. But you are missing the enormous rest of it: the incredible miracles we are witnessing, triumphs alongside challenges, the extraordinary days the Jewish people are living through, and the clear hand of HaKadosh Baruch Hu bringing us toward

**In Loving Memory of
Rabbi Dov/Barry Sidelsky ז"ל
on his first yahrzeit**

**Sadly missed by
his wife Naomi and daughters
Michal Avior, Ariella Sidelsky Alcalay,
Lea Plotkin and their families**

the *geula sheleima* very soon. We are, in many ways, writing the next megilla of HaKadosh Baruch Hu. I know for certain that the stories that have come out of the last few years will be repeated by future generations.

And the truth is that our brothers and sisters overseas do try to feel what we are living through, each in their own way, and they are doing whatever they can to help. There is no denying that the numbers tell a hard story and that donations have dropped, the number of missions have dropped, in some cases dramatically. Yet they continue to send their support and stand with us through these unique days.

This past weekend, I once again had the privilege of marching in the Israel Day Parade up Fifth Avenue in Manhattan alongside so many Jews and non-Jews who had come from all over North America. Knesset Speaker Amir Ohana, who led a large delegation of Knesset members from both the coalition and the opposition, shared a beautiful thought with our OU Executive Vice President, Rabbi Dr. Josh Joseph. He explained that for as long as anyone could remember, the sitting mayor of New York had always walked in the Israel Day Parade and that the moment he realized this would not be the case this year, he decided he simply had to be there himself. He brought as many members of Knesset and ministers as he could so that we would all be marching together. There was something deeply moving about Israeli and American public leaders walking shoulder to shoulder. Moshe Lion, the mayor of Yerushalayim, came as well, together with a number of ministers.

Because so many people were in New York for the parade, the whole weekend filled up with gatherings and conferences. There was a Thursday night event with the mayor of



Yerushalayim centered on real estate projects across the city, the Arutz Sheva conference at Young Israel of Kew Gardens on Friday, where I had the zechut to speak, the Friday night dinner with Israelis at Park East Synagogue,

and the B'Sheva conference on Sunday that drew people from across the Jewish world. It was, in the best sense, a long weekend in Israel everywhere you turned, all in the most positive way. A tremendous yasher koach to everyone who made it happen.

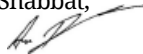
But when I stood at the parade and asked myself what the single most important thing happening there was, the answer was simple. It was the next generation. It was watching young people who spend their days seeing Israel attacked across social media come out, look around, and realize, "Look how many people support Israel. Look how many people feel what I feel." Jews of every kind, and non-Jews too, marched together with enormous pride, giant Israeli flags and floats, from Holocaust survivors to the JSU students from our Jewish Student Union clubs across the North American public school system. Many of them were standing up publicly, some for the first time, to say that they are proud to support

Israel, proud to support our IDF soldiers, and proud to support the good and true values that Israel tries to bring to this world.

Seeing that next generation with fire in their eyes, dancing in the streets, proud and happy to be Jewish, is something I will carry with me. B'ezrat Hashem, we should continue to watch our next generation grow up with the truth, drawing inspiration from Israel and standing up for Israel.

I daven that just as we try to listen to our children's hearts, the Jewish people, both in Israel and in the Diaspora, take the time to truly hear one another and understand what each side is feeling & experiencing. And B'ezrat Hashem, *k'ish echad b'lev echad*, may we be zocheh to see the *binyan beit hamikdash* very soon.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



Rabbi Avi Berman

Executive Director, OU Israel

aberman@ouisrael.org

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 13th yahrzeit

Dr Charles Cohen z"l

ישעיה יצחק

בן מנדל אריה הלוי ז"ל

נפטר י"ד סיון תשע"ו

On his 10th yahrzeit

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



**BROTHERS
MOVING CO.**

THE STRONGEST... THE MOST GENTLE

054-216-0087 • brothersmovingisrael@gmail.com

Dr. Eliezer Rosenblum
NYS Licensed and Board Certified
Chiropractor
Offices in Jerusalem, Ramat Beit Shemesh
052-662-4658