



## DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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I joined the OU family twenty-five years ago, and to be quite honest, at the time I did not even know what NCSY was. I came to Vancouver, British Columbia, together with my incredible wife and our three sons at the time. I understood it was a position that would involve working with teenagers within the framework of NCSY, though I truly had no idea what exactly I was stepping into. Looking back now, I can say without hesitation that NCSY changed my life. It taught me a methodology of connecting with teenagers that I, and the entire OU team that works with teens, whether in our Teen Centers, at the Pearl and Harold Jacobs Zula Outreach Center, or at NCSY, continue to use to this day.

It's about connecting with teenagers because we see their beautiful souls and because we know they are tomorrow's leaders. Giving them love, attention, and guidance is, ultimately, how we build the future. To connect is to build deep relationships with them and invest in them. During our years in Vancouver, my wife, our children, and I had the

opportunity to be at and run NCSY Shabbatons every month or two, and they were, and are, not only fun, but well prepared, uplifting, and inspiring.

NCSY Shabbatons are designed so that any teenager who walks in with an open heart can walk away with their heart filled with love, Torah and community. Through NCSY, I have watched countless teenagers turn their lives around, transform their families, and change the entire trajectory of their futures.

NCSY has also given our own children so much. In Vancouver, they grew up watching my wife and me prepare to meet these teenagers where they were, with speeches, events, you name it. They saw us open our home to tens of teenagers every Shabbat for meals and Friday night onegs. They saw us hold deep, personal, emotional conversations with teenagers for hours on end, late into the night. Sometimes we barely slept. Our children were able to see firsthand how deeply their parents believe in the next generation and how much we are willing to dedicate to it. Every action we took in NCSY demonstrated to them, again and again, how much we value them, as well as every teenager who walks through our door.

This past Shabbat, my wife, two of our sons, our two daughters, and I had the privilege of going to Masada to join the NCSY Israel Spring Shabbaton. It had been a number of years since I was last at a Shabbaton here in Israel, and I was able to see how, under the leadership of Rabbi Yosef Zeev Ginsberg, Rabbi Moshe Zev (Michael) Kahn, and Emily Stemp,

**May the Torah learning  
be in loving memory of  
my dear, only sister**

**Roberta Gail  
(Silverberg) Lopez a"h**

**רוכל גיטל ע"ה**

**On her 7<sup>th</sup> yartzheit**

***Malka Shrybman***

NCSY Israel has moved forward in leaps and bounds in how organized it is and how thoughtful and methodical its entire approach to working with teenagers has become.

Working with NCSYers here in Israel is fundamentally different from working with NCSYers in North America. In America, we are often dealing with public school teenagers, where the foremost challenge may be assimilation, intermarriage, or simply the challenge of keeping kosher. Here in Israel, we are working with teenagers who, Baruch Hashem, have already come home and are living in the Land of Israel. Sometimes our task is helping them appreciate just how fortunate they are to live here, though for the most part they already carry that pride deeply. You can hear it in the songs they sing, songs like “Am HaNetzach Lo Mefached” (“an eternal people are not scared”), “Kol Makom SheAni Holech Ani Holech L’Eretz Yisrael” (“every place that I go to is to the Land of Israel”), and “Tovah HaAretz Me’od Me’od” (“the Land is very, very good”). Hearing so many of their songs centered on the Land of Israel and the State of Israel was a beautiful breath of fresh air, and you could not miss the enthusiasm and passion being expressed.

But that is not to say they do not have their own unique challenges. This is a generation of teenagers who, over the past six years, have lived through COVID and two and a half years of war. That leaves them, in effect, with relatively little normalcy across that entire stretch. Even those graduating high school now have been through a great deal, and we see the effects across all of our teen programs. Families themselves are carrying so much that they do not always have the capacity to help their teenagers navigate everything they are going through.



And being a teenager is not easy to begin with. Teenagers are full of passion, full of drive, full of deep emotion, full of ambition, full of ideas, and constantly striving to make the world better. Very often they feel misunderstood. Very often they feel that no one is truly listening to what they have to say. What is so moving is to watch the amazing team of NCSY Israel, together with the rest of our teen program staff, listen to these teenagers, take their ideas seriously, and help them bring

those ideas to life so that they feel they are contributing in a real and substantial way. Ultimately, the goal is to connect them to their heritage, to show them that even as they are young, vibrant, and bursting with new ideas, the Torah that was given to us thousands of years ago is as alive and relevant today as it ever was.

Part of that is showing them how embracing Torah, embracing tradition, and embracing their love for Israel translates into real decisions: making wise choices about what to do after high school, not wasting their time while in school but using it to their advantage, taking their studies seriously, and passing their matriculation exams that will set them on course for the rest of their lives. When teenagers are able to do all of this with advisors and staff spread throughout the country who genuinely believe in them, it is such a powerful force for good.

Spending a Shabbat with the NCSY teams from Yerushalayim, Bet Shemesh, Ra'anana, Gush Etzion, Modiin & Chashmonaim, and seeing the relationships they are building with these teenagers, was such a tremendous

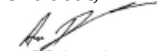
treat. The staff bring their families on these Shabbatons, the teens get to know them, and genuine bonds are formed. The Shabbaton also brought back so many memories for me of my NCSY Vancouver days. Watching these couples dedicate their lives, their families, their Shabbatot, and so much of themselves to these teenagers is truly incredible, and I want to give them, and all the supporters who stand behind them, a tremendous amount of recognition.

To those of you who help cover the cost of a home oneg, a local NCSY trip, or a national Shabbaton, please know that you are genuinely changing lives. I see it firsthand. Joining us on the Shabbaton was Mitch Aeder, the President of the OU, who came from America specifically to be with us, along with many others from the OU Israel team and Board who work tirelessly on behalf of these teenagers. Together we saw, up close, how these young teens are transforming their lives through NCSY.

To all of you who already support this work, I only wish you could have been there to witness how impactful it truly was. And to those who do not yet support it, I encourage you to invest in NCSY and in our other programs for teenagers across the country. NCSY Israel is currently running their annual fundraising campaign. When we invest in the next generation, we ensure that everything we have built in our lives will continue.

May we, B'ezrat Hashem, continue to take such tremendous pride from our own children and from all the children in whom we are investing.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



Rabbi Avi Berman  
Executive Director, OU Israel



**Rabbi Yona Reiss**  
**Av Beit Din CRC**  
**and Rosh Yeshiva RIETS**  
**will give his annual yahrzeit shiur**  
**in memory of his father**

**HARRY REISS z"l**  
**Zvi ben Ephraim haKohen z"l**

**Thursday, June 18, 8:30pm**  
**Beit Medrash Torah Leumi**  
**1 Asher Street, Beit Shemesh**

For ZOOM link:  
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