



DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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There is an idea in parental philosophy that I think about a lot. A child rarely remembers the lectures and speeches from their parents and teachers. When they grow up, what they remember is the moments. They remember the time a parent stopped everything to help a stranger, when a parent rushed because they wanted to be on time for a Torah event, when they ran across the street to return a lost object to someone. These moments stay with us so much more and help form our values as adults.

I was reminded of this again this past Friday, just a few hours before Shabbat. Our son Shlomo, who lives in Elon Moreh, was driving to us for Shabbat when he called to say he was approaching Sha'ar Binyamin, the junction between the *yishuvim* of Kochav Ya'akov and Adam. My son Meir was standing next to me, and the moment he heard where Shlomo was, he said, "Wait, he's right near there? There's someone who needs his help."

A number of my children volunteer for Yedidim, the incredible organization that comes to the aid of stranded drivers across the country. They were inspired by my brother Moe, one of its senior volunteers. Through the Yedidim app, Meir saw that a woman was stranded near the town of Hizma, alone in an electric car that had run out of battery less than three hours before Shabbat. Shlomo drives an electric car himself and had the equipment to share some of his charge, so when Meir asked if he could stop, he answered without hesitation, "Of course."

Transferring charge from one car to

another is slow, but Shlomo pulled over with his young daughter, connected the two cars, and fed the woman just enough battery to reach the nearest charger a few minutes away. He followed behind to make sure she made it, and when her battery gave out again on the uphill climb, he stopped and charged her a second time, until she had enough to reach the supercharger and drive into Yerushalayim before Shabbat. Shlomo and his daughter reached our home only about twenty minutes before candle lighting.

And yet the most meaningful part of the story for me came when my two-year-old granddaughter, Naama, walked through our door. Before she had even showered for Shabbat, she looked up and announced, "*Azarti la'isha hazot*," which means, "I helped that woman." Not "we helped her." I helped her. At two years old, she had already made that act of *chesed* her own.

That is precisely how *chinuch* works. My children knew their beds were made, the food was ready, and the house was clean. They knew that *chesed* is a supreme value in our home. They knew that it was more than fine to arrive so close to Shabbat in order to help someone else. This knowledge is part of who they are and what they stand for. And standing on the side of the road for an hour, charging a stranger's car with a smile, is the lesson they passed down to their own children. I know what my own parents' *chesed* did for me, and what my in-laws' *chesed* did for my wife. That is why I say that we do not shape our children by telling them what to

do. We shape them by showing them. Every chance we get to do that builds them into the people they become.

This week we read Parshat Matot-Masei. In most years the two *parshiot* are joined together, and Masei tends to receive less attention than Matot. I assume it's because Parshat Matot is read every single year, so a *dvar Torah* for that *parsha* will always be relevant, while Masei stands on its own only like 30% of the time. That's why when you open the OU All Parsha app, or watch *parsha shiurim* on our YouTube channel (@OUIsraelShiurim), or anywhere else, the vast majority of speakers are going to talk about Matot. There's also the fact that Masei can seem somewhat dry: a line-by-line accounting of Bnei Yisrael's stops in the desert.

Yet, I believe that that is actually the beauty of Parshat Masei. We know that the Torah never wastes a word. If *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* records for *Klal Yisrael* in the Torah every stop they made on the journey out of Egypt toward the Land of Israel, then clearly, we are meant to learn something from it. Perhaps it's the importance of the journey itself that the Torah is relating to.

That brought me back to Shlomo and Naama at the side of the road. I know that even if Naama grows up and doesn't remember that exact story, there is no doubt it will help shape her into the person she will become. When people ask why basic training in the IDF must be so long, I believe the answer is the lesson of Masei. Just as every stop in the desert was crucial to building *Klal Yisrael* into the nation that could enter *Eretz Yisrael*, every stage our soldiers pass through is building them into who they need to become, giving of themselves with their whole heart and their



whole *neshama*.

That is how we win. We have tremendous *siyata dishmaya*, divine help, but we are also tasked to put in our *hishtadlut*, personal effort. Each step our soldiers take is a chance for growth to become better people, better soldiers, better Jews.

Everything *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* gives us works the same way, whether or not we understand it. Some stages are joyful and others painful, but every one is meant to build us into better people and carry us forward. As I write these words, almost three years into the war, when so many have lost loved ones or are caring for the wounded, I see how these journeys are turning us into a community that cares more and gives more. I look at this generation doing such extraordinary *mitzvot* and find myself thinking that my children are far stronger than I am. And I find solace in that.

It is a *masa*, a journey, one that is still unfolding and that will lead us, *be'ezrat Hashem*, to a far brighter future very soon, and to the rebuilding of the third Beit HaMikdash, *bimheira biyameinu*.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Avi Berman".

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