



DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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Walk into a *shul* almost anywhere in the world and look above the *aron* where the Torah scrolls are stored. Somewhere there, or sometimes stitched into the *aron*'s curtain itself, is a verse that in some way represents the *shul* and the community. I always find this so fascinating. Sometimes it's one that was argued over, voted upon, and decided. Sometimes it was simply inherited from founders long gone. But what is written there is what that community wants to have before it every time it rises to be present before Hashem every day.

Because I am constantly visiting *shuls* around Israel and North America, I notice these choices, and to a certain degree they tell me something about where I am standing. The *shul* my family went to in Har Nof when I was growing up had one that has stayed with me for years: "*Hashkifa mimeon kodshecha min hashamayim uwarech et amcha et Yisrael* - Look down from Your holy dwelling in heaven and bless Your people Israel." It is a verse bound up with the Land of Israel, as the Torah

makes clear: the verse ends with "*eret zavat chalav u'devash* - it is a land flowing with milk and honey" (Devarim 26:15). We will not read those words for a few more weeks, in Parshat Ki Tavo. But a very similar idea occurs in this week's *parsha*, where the Land of Israel is described as a Land that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* constantly seeks out, for "*einei Hashem Elokecha bah* - His eyes are upon it" (Devarim 11:12).

The imagery of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* looking toward us in the Land is an important theme. Years ago at an NCSY Shabbaton, Rabbi Steven Burg, then the regional director of West Coast NCSY, was trying to convey to a room of teenagers how special the *divrei Torah* and the singing of that particular Shabbaton really were. He offered an image I have borrowed many times since: *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* sitting with a map of the world spread out before Him, watching for the places where a point of *kedusha*, of holiness and goodness, suddenly lights up. He told that crowd of NCSYers that surely the map was pointing right there, at that place. It was such an amazing image for them (and me!) to hear. And it came with a call for action: how can we make that map light up more?

This is something I always think about around every Tisha B'Av, the time of my Bubby's *Yahrtzeit* — Chana Ita bat Reb Moshe HaLevi a"h passed away twenty-one years ago on Tisha B'Av, and on the *Yahrtzeit* of each of my four grandparents, I try to pack in as many *mitzvot* and as much good as one day can hold in their memory.

WE REMEMBER

18th of Menachem Av

(Shabbat, Aug. 1st)

- the actual day this year)

is the anniversary of the

1929 CHEVRON MASSACRE

in which 67 Jews were killed,

including 24 Chevron

Yeshiva students

ה' יקום דמם

This year that effort had a great deal of company. All through the fast, message after message arrived about OU Israel's Tisha B'Av film, *Beit HaMikdash: In the Making*, which I had the privilege of preparing together with our OU Israel team and the amazing Jen Airley. We released it for Tisha B'Av, though in truth it belongs to every day of the year, and it has already passed 73,000 views. The responses came from Hebrew-speaking Israelis, from English-speaking Israelis and from our brothers and sisters across the world, and so many said the same thing: they had no idea how much is already underway to show *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* that we want the *Beit HaMikdash* now.

So I sat through Tisha B'Av thinking, *Ribono Shel Olam*, another light is going on, and this one is on the internet. Are You seeing how many Jews around the world are pining for the *Beit HaMikdash*? On my Bubby's *Yahrtzeit* of all days, I could not have asked for a better way to honor her.

Then came the final hour of the fast at the Kotel, sitting on the ground among an endless stream of NCSY summer program participants, among *olim*, among men who learned beside me in yeshiva and now come in from Raanana, Beit Shemesh, Modiin and Yerushalayim. Teenagers, advisors and counselors singing together to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. Over a hundred thousand passed through that plaza over the fast. It remains a highlight of my year.

Joining us, as he does every year, was the mayor of Yerushalayim, Moshe Lion, together with NCSY International Director Rabbi Micah Greenland, OU Executive Vice President and COO Rabbi Dr. Josh Joseph, OU President Mitchel Aeder, Elliot Tanzman, Director of NCSY Summer, Rav Zvi Sobolofsky, Rabbi



Yisroel Kaminetsky, and Rabbi Moshe Benovitz, who leads NCSY Kollel.

One difference from last year was impossible to miss. Last year we sat with parents of hostages still held in Gaza and sang *Acheinu*:

In loving memory of our dear
Mother and Grandmother
who we miss every day
JULIA KAHAN a"h
On her 19th Yartzeit - כא מנחם אב

Le'iluy nishmat
אסתר יהודית (יוליאנה)
בת חיים שלמה ע"ה

May the Torah learned
from this issue be in her merit.

*Channie Kahan,
Elisheva Kahan Ledee,
Yonatan Ledee,
Yitzchak Ledee & Zev Ledee*

אחינו כל בית ישראל הנתונים בצרה ובשביה
העומדים בין בים ובין ביבשה המקום ירחם עליהם
ויציאם מצרה לרוחה ומאפלה לאורה ומשעבוד לגאולה
השנה בעגלא ובזמן קריב ונאמר אמן

“Our brothers, the whole house of Israel, who are in distress and captivity, on sea or on land, may Hashem have mercy upon them and bring them out from narrowness to relief, from darkness to light, from subjugation to redemption, swiftly, soon, and in our days.”

Last year when I shouted those last words, I meant them as urgently as I have ever meant anything.

This year all of them are home, some to their families and some to *kever Yisrael*. They have carried more than anyone should, and they are rebuilding themselves and their families. Singing *Acheinu* this year was an entirely different experience, one filled with appreciation and hope for a better future.

And in this Land, the one His eyes are upon, the *chizuk* just keeps coming. Close to 2,000 NCSYers are here this summer, along with the JLIC students and the Yad B'Yad participants from Yachad, traveling the country and drawing strength from it. Having summer program participants at our home for Shabbat and hearing what these weeks have done for them gives every one of us what we need to keep going.

Another point of *kedusha* on the map, and another, and another. *B'ezrat Hashem*, He is watching every one of them light up; let's light as many as possible!

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



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