



DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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Two weeks ago, I had the tremendous privilege of *davening* at Bnai Jacob Shaarei Zion in Baltimore, the *shul* of Rabbi Moshe Hauer zt"l, who served as the Executive Vice President of the OU. *Baruch Hashem*, I have become close with the current rabbi of the *shul*, Rabbi Daniel Rose, as well as with many members of the congregation, and being among them was truly special. It was special because I sat in the seat next to where Rabbi Hauer zt"l used to sit, because I was able to see Rebbetzin Hauer and so many community members who miss him dearly, and because I witnessed the incredible impact he and his Rebbetzin had on Baltimore for so many years.

During *Musaf*, the young *chazzan*, Avi Wolman, sang *Kedushah* to the melody of *Ochilah La'Kel*, which many of us know from the High Holy Day prayers. I stood there singing every word, transported to the uplifted feeling of *shul* at the highest points of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. I was not the only one who felt it - many people approached him

after *davening* to thank him for creating that atmosphere.

It reminded me of the many melodies we look forward to hearing on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, melodies that evoke different times in our lives and our experiences of the High Holy Days, and sometimes remind us of specific *chazzanim*. These melodies touch a place deep inside us.

I was once talking to someone who cares deeply about *nusach hatefillah*, the distinct modes and melodic motifs used in *tefillah* for each holiday. He was upset because while *davening* on Sukkot, the person saying *Kaddish* mistakenly used the melody of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. I asked him why this mattered so much to him, wasn't it just a melody?

He then shared an insight that has stuck with me ever since. He said that the beauty of *nusach hatefillah*, and of having unique melodies for each holiday, is that the moment you walk into a *shul*, you should immediately know what holiday and time of year it is based on the melody. Using the *nusach* of Yom Kippur on Sukkot simply doesn't fit. I joked that I hoped the *chazzan* hadn't been fasting for Yom Kippur that day as well.

In recent years, however, there has been a significant shift. COVID and the war forced many of us into *minyanim* outside our usual routines. Ashkenazim *davened* alongside Sefardim, Yemenite Jews, and Jews of all backgrounds. As a result, a new generation has emerged that approaches Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur ready to embrace different melodies and styles of *davening* than the ones

לעילוי נשמת
הרב טוביה בן הרב אלעזר
ראובן ורודה ציפה ז"ל

Dedicated in loving memory
of our dear husband, father,
grandfather & great grandfather

Tuvia Muskin ז"ל

On his 4th Yahrzeit ו' תשרי

*Muskin, Chamudot
and Wilk families*

they grew up with. This trend is especially striking in *yeshivot*. In Hesder *yeshivot* and *yeshivot gevohot*, where students include both Ashkenazim and Sefardim, many divide up the *tefillot* so everyone feels welcome. In some places, for instance, they might *daven Nusach Sefard* on Yom Tov night, *Nusach Ashkenaz* in the morning, and yet another *nusach* for Mincha.

This is very different from when I was growing up. When I learned at Ohr Etzion, even though most of the students were Sefardi, the yeshiva *davened Nusach Ashkenaz* together with Rav Chaim Druckman *zt"l*. That was the set *nusach hatefillah*; Ashkenazim stayed in yeshiva, while Sefardic students had the option of returning home to their own *minyanim* for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. That was the norm.

Today, we see something new. In *yeshivot* throughout Israel, Ashkenazi students are learning Sefardi tunes and Sefardi students are learning Ashkenazi tunes, fostering a deeper sense of unity across *Klal Yisrael*. Just this past Motzei Shabbat, a neighbor asked me to *daven* with them on Rosh Hashanah. In addition to giving a *drashah*, they asked me to serve as *chazzan* in their Sefardic *minyan* to lead the prayer of *Unetanneh Tokef* composed by Rabbi Amnon of Mainz.

One beautiful *piyut* I was exposed to only about six years ago during COVID, and I am embarrassed to admit I did not know it before then, is the Sefardic *piyut* known by its refrain, *Okeid VeHaNe'ekad*. The words are profoundly moving and meaningful, describing *Akeidat Yitzchak* (the Binding of Isaac), which we read on Rosh Hashanah. It features a deeply beautiful melody. In our *shul* and in



many *yeshivot*, it has become a cherished part of the service since COVID.

I ask myself which is more precious to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*: Is it that Sefardim and Ashkenazim are discovering unfamiliar melodies, connecting to them, learning them by heart, and singing them with tears? Or is it seeing His children, coming from different traditions and backgrounds, sitting together and sharing each other's songs to build genuine unity within *Klal Yisrael*?

We are in desperate need of unity today. To see it expressed through song and uplifted hearts on Rosh Hashanah of all days is truly inspiring. We are no longer a nation locked away in separate *shuls* with isolated *nusachim*. We are one complete nation that understands, loves, and connects with one another. Together, we ask *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* to grant us a year in which we all recognize

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ר' חיים צבי בן אליהו ז"ל
Dr. Henry C. Romberg

Beloved husband, father,
grandfather and great-grandfather.
Dearest Doctor, Mohel and friend.

We miss you!

נלב"ע כ"ט אלול תשס"ה



him as King of Kings, bringing healing, hope, success, redemption, and endless miracles for Klal Yisrael.

If you have not yet experienced *davening* in a *minyán* with a different *nusach*, I highly recommend trying it for at least one of the *tefillot* during Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur.

May we utilize these melodies to connect to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* on a deeper level, and may all our *tefillot* be accepted.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat, Rosh Hashanah, and year,



Rabbi Avi Berman

Executive Director, OU Israel

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