



DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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Growing up, I had the tremendous *zechut* of having all four of my grandparents with me until I was already a father myself. That is something I do not take for granted. I was born in the 1970s, and because of the Holocaust, having all four grandparents was rare among my friends.

One of the things my siblings and I would discuss growing up was which grandparents' house was more fun to visit: Grandma and Grandpa's, or Bubby and Zaidy's? Bubby and Zaidy used to buy us more toys, but Grandma and Grandpa had a bigger basement to play in. Bubby and Zaidy had sugary cereals, but Grandma and Grandpa always had much better cake, and they had a machine that made malted milkshakes.

We loved them dearly, and they always spoiled us.

That was a long time ago. My family made aliyah when I was nine, and that put a stop to the regular visits and comparisons, especially after Bubby and Zaidy themselves made aliyah in 1989.

But there was one thing that I will always remember from Grandma and Grandpa's Shabbat table in America. Many people have the custom of having honey at the table for Rosh Hashanah. Some continue from Rosh Hashanah until Simchat Torah; everybody has their own custom. My grandfather had honey with his challah every Shabbat, whether it was the High Holiday season or not. He would show you how much he loved you by putting an ample amount of it on your challah.

It was always a very cute thing between

us and Grandpa, getting that honey. While my family does not have honey every Shabbat, we do continue the custom from Rosh Hashanah until Simchat Torah. We do it so that the beginning of the year, all the way until we complete the reading of the Torah in *shul*, should be a sweet time, and that, *b'ezrat Hashem, HaKadosh Baruch Hu* should give us a year full of sweetness and good things.

This issue of Torah Tidbits takes us through Shabbat Shuva, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot. Preparing such a large issue in advance takes real effort, and the Torah Tidbits team is working around the clock to get it to the printers in time for the holidays, all while preparing themselves and their own families for the *chagim*. For myself, I struggle to write about themes that carry over so many different days. My wife quips that I need not worry about writing so far in advance, since we know the *Beit HaMikdash* will be built by the time Simchat Torah comes around, and then all of our writing will be out of date anyway.

Nevertheless, when I think about this time of year, my mind often goes to Grandpa's honey and challah. There is something that connects Shabbat Shuva, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot, and there is a good reason why we refer to these few weeks together as "the *chagim*."

It is not just because we continue to say "*Le'David Hashem Ori ve'Yishi*" (Tehillim 27) from Rosh Chodesh Elul all the way until Hoshana Rabbah. It is not just because of the tradition that while *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* seals the judgment of our fate on Yom Kippur, the letter is metaphorically "sent off" on Hoshana

Rabbah. And it is not just because our love of Torah is so strong that we dance and sing on Simchat Torah upon completing the Torah. These are all beautiful connections, but I think there is something more.

This year, my team and I created a special Rosh Hashanah video message in which I wish everybody a *shanah tova*. In the video, I am standing somewhere very special: in the beautiful *yishuv* of Tekoa. There is an agricultural area there where different families from the *yishuv* acquired pieces of land, away from their homes, to develop and cultivate.

Nina Broder, our Director of Social Media, took me to meet two wonderful Jews, Yehudah Honickman and Shmaya Dovid Honickman, who decided that on their land, in addition to growing beautiful fruit trees of the Seven Species, including pomegranates, olives, and figs, they would also keep bees and produce honey.

While this was not the first time I had seen how honey is made, it was the first time I had been so close to the bees without a window between us. I saw how the hive was organized, with the queen kept in the lower section and the worker bees moving through the hive, each carrying out its role. Some were gathering nectar and pollen, while others were working inside the hive,

all contributing to the production of delicious honey.

It was especially meaningful to meet the two Honickman brothers because I remember their



grandfather, Tzvi Honickman, from Shilo. He and his wife, may she live until 120 in good health, lived in Shilo at a time when there were not many Anglo families there. I had the privilege of spending time with Tzvi in the yeshiva in Shilo, when he used to come and learn with us. But more than that, he would constantly invite us for Shabbat meals and even Rosh Hashanah meals. I still remember those meals very fondly, the singing, the Torah, the warmth and the delicious food.

I was very saddened to hear that he had passed away about a year ago, but I was so happy to see his grandchildren working the land, living in Tekoa, and building their families in such a beautiful way in the Land of Israel.

While we were filming the video, I felt like I had Grandpa with me, along with the values he taught me. The bees and the honey brought back those memories. But

more than that, Grandpa's involvement in the Jewish community, and his dedication to helping build it, was what he was all about. He used to blow *shofar* on Rosh Hashanah at the Young Israel of Flatbush. He would walk from



his house, which was not particularly close to the shul, in order to blow *shofar*, and he did it with great expertise.

Standing there in Tekoa, watching thousands of bees each doing their small part to create this delicious honey, produced in *Eretz Yisrael*, in the mountains of Yehudah, reminded me of something beautiful. It takes all of *Klal Yisrael* to create the sweetness that we have in this land.

Each and every one of us has our favorite *mitzvah*, our favorite *tzedakah*, our favorite way of doing *hachnasat orchim*. But what I saw in the honey-making process was that it cannot be accomplished by one bee alone. Every bee has its role, and together they create something that none of them could produce independently.

So too with *Klal Yisrael*. We are a nation in which each person takes upon themselves different *mitzvot*, different responsibilities, and different ways of contributing to the Jewish people.

I look at the OU Israel team, constantly working with so many different age groups and communities. Whether it is our Teen Centers working with teens at risk across the country, one teenager at a time, NCSY working with *olim* teenagers, programs helping English-speaking *olim* who have just made *aliyah*, mother-daughter programming for English speakers in Israel, our Women's Division, Torah Initiatives, or Torah Tidbits, there is so much going on here.

We have a team of almost 500 staff members, each working tirelessly in their own area. Could any one of them say that all of this is happening because of them? No. But could they all say together, "Wow, look at what we are accomplishing as a team"? The answer is yes.

And that is the beauty of *Klal Yisrael*. We

are all working hard, each in our own way, to bring *Mashiach*, to build the *Beit HaMikdash*, and to bring the Jewish people to a much sweeter place. Not every person has the same role, and not every contribution looks the same. But when we bring our efforts together, the result is something far greater than any one of us could accomplish alone.

That, to me, is the message of the honey. Sweetness does not come from one enormous act. It comes from thousands of small acts, each one contributing to something greater. One more *mitzvah*, one more act of *chesed*, one more person helped, one more moment of Torah, and together they create a sweetness that can be felt throughout *Klal Yisrael*.

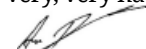
B'ezrat Hashem, as we enter the new year, may we each find our own way to add to that sweetness. May we see *Klal Yisrael* blessed with a year full of endless miracles, endless *achdut*, endless Torah, endless peace, and endless health.

I want to take this opportunity to wish each and every one of our loyal Torah Tidbits readers all the *berachot* in the world, and to thank you for all of your support. We know that "*teshuvah u'tefillah u'tzedakah ma'avirin et ro'a hagezerah*," that repentance, prayer, and charity remove the evil of the decree.

I ask you to please help us by contributing to our valuable programs here in Israel, because we cannot do it without your support. Your generosity allows our staff to continue reaching teens who need guidance, helping *olim* build their lives in Israel, strengthening families, and bringing Torah and community to Jews across the country. Every contribution becomes part of something greater, and together, *b'ezrat Hashem*, we can continue making the Jewish people in the Land of Israel stronger and stronger every single day.

May the sweetness we bring to our own Shabbat and holiday tables extend far beyond our homes, into our communities and throughout *Klal Yisrael*.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat, a meaningful Yom Kippur, and a very, very happy and uplifting Sukkot,


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