

RABBI SHMUEL SILBER
Executive Vice President, Orthodox Union

Anything and Everything

OU Israel's Torah Tidbits is proud to welcome Rav Shmuel Silber, Executive Vice President of the Orthodox Union, to his new position. We are very much looking forward to gaining from his exceptional Torah learning and deep wisdom each week in our pages of Torah Tidbits. Bruchim Habaim!

So much has happened. The *Lech Lecha* journey that began with a childless, unknown, and untested Avraham has blossomed into a family, a legacy, and a dynasty.

But even as his legacy is taking root, Avraham must deal with the tragic loss of his beloved Sarah. In the aftermath of this loss, Avraham decides to send his trusted servant Eliezer to find a wife for Yitzchak.

Between these two defining moments – the loss of his past and the promise of his future, the Torah states:

"And Abraham was old, advanced in days, and the Lord had blessed Avraham (ba'kol) with everything." (Bereishis 24:1)

What does it mean to be "*blessed with everything*?" And why is this blessing mentioned here?

Some explain that *ba'kol* should be understood literally. Avraham was blessed with wealth, longevity, fame, and children; Avraham had it all. The Ramban (Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman, 1194-1270) advances an incredibly novel approach. *Kol* is one of the descriptive appellations for God. God is *Kol* - He is anything and everything. The entirety of universal creation begins and ends with God. Everything in this world is wholly and fully dependent on Him. As such, *Ba'kol* means that God blessed Avraham by giving him a little piece of God's Divinity. God blessed Avraham by implanting a little piece of Himself into His trusted servant.

The Netziv (Rabbi Naphtali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, 1816-1893) further develops this idea by explaining what it means that Avraham had a piece of God within him. God is the One we turn to in moments of crisis and need. God is the One we reach out to when we need assistance and reassurance. God is the One who heals the sick and mends the broken heart. This was the power of Avraham. Avraham's days were filled with counseling those who were lost. Avraham's sacred task was to infuse hope and optimism in those who were down on their luck. Avraham was the one who dispensed pearls of wisdom to those in need of direction. Avraham was the one who shouldered the pain of the other as if it were his own. The open tent of Avraham provided not only physical nourishment but also spiritual and emotional sustenance. This is how our first patriarch spent

his days and nights - devoted to and attending to the needs of the other.

But there is a challenge. Sometimes those who selflessly and tirelessly devote themselves to the needs of others can inadvertently neglect their own. Therefore, the Torah nestles this beautiful tribute of Avraham in between the burial of Sarah and the marriage process of Yitzchak. Avraham buried his wife and arranged for his son to find a partner. The man who was there for everyone else, made sure to always be there for his own.

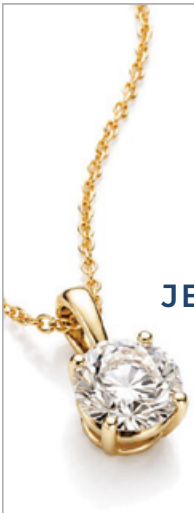
We all want a *ba'kol* life. We want blessings in abundance. We want health, family, *parnassa,* and happiness. True fulfillment, ba'kol fulfillment, comes from giving to and doing for the other; first by focusing on one's own family and then extending outwards to our community. When we help, when we roll up our sleeves and try to make a difference for others, that is when we truly feel we have everything. ■

Rabbi Shmuel Silber has served the Orthodox Union (OU) as its Executive Vice President since November 2026. As the executive vice president, Rabbi Silber is responsible for representing the OU's vision on both Torah and public policy, and providing hashkafic and halachic guidance within the organization and beyond. Prior to joining the OU, Rabbi Silber served for 23 years as the rabbi of Suburban Orthodox Congregation Toras Chaim, building it into one of Baltimore's most vibrant and dynamic kehillahs. Rabbi Silber is also the founder and dean of the Institute for Jewish Continuity (IJC), which provides contemporary Torah learning with Chassidic influences for adults at all levels. As the Founding Rabbi of the Berger Towers community in Katamonim, Jerusalem, Rabbi Silber oversees the community's rabbinic leadership and hashkafic direction. Rabbi Silber received semicha from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary at Yeshiva University and holds a master's degree in secondary Jewish education from the Azrieli Graduate School.

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