



## DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN  
Executive Director, OU Israel

“Excuse me, you’re in my seat...” is one of the more common phrases a Jew hears in shul. Although I share this in jest, whenever we travel together as a family with eight men/boys, we are conscious of taking up community members’ seats and try to find seats that seem less utilized.

This past Shabbat my wife and I took seven of our children to Netanya and were touched by the ways in which communities welcomed us into their respective shuls. To give you an idea, despite the fact that the shul we visited on Shabbat morning was celebrating two *smachot*, the *gabbai* himself - a man named Eli - approached us and brought us to our seats. This was one of the many moments throughout Shabbat when we were reminded how incredible our nation is and how fortunate we are to be a part of it.

Every Wednesday and Thursday, the OU Israel building is filled with volunteers who come to *schlep* large boxes filled with the week’s issue of Torah Tidbits from our offices to communities around the country. Rabbi Baruch Taub, who gives a weekly

*Parshat HaShavua shiur* at OU Israel, is among the crowd of volunteers and brings large boxes of Torah Tidbits to Netanya where they are distributed to local shuls.

Having spent many *Shabbatot* with my family in Netanya, we are well acquainted with some of the Anglo shuls in the city, including the McDonald International and the South Netanya Ashkenazi Congregation (SNAC). And yet, despite many visits to the area, we feel we have only begun to scratch the surface in exploring the new Anglo communities that have developed within the city, as evident by the growing piles of Torah Tidbits boxes picked up and delivered by Rabbi Taub each week.

Although my family decided to spend Shabbat in southern Netanya once more, we stayed in Ir Yamim right next to Ramat Poleg. On our way to shul on Friday night I was greeted by a friendly face, that of Rabbi Stewart Weiss from Ra’anana who often spends Shabbat in Ir Yamim with his wife. Of course, I gave him a copy of Torah Tidbits in exchange for his personally penned weekly *parshat HaShavuah* sheet which offers unique ideas and personal anecdotes relating to the *parsha*.

Eager to explore new areas of the community I decided to join Rabbi Weiss at a shul I had never been to - Tefilat Yamim - led by Rabbi Mendel Wuensch. The *davening* was beautiful and filled with lively singing. Rabbi Wuensch addressed the crowd in English. I was also delighted to

May the Torah learned from this issue  
be לעילוי נשמת  
our beloved husband, father,  
grandfather and great grandfather  
RABBI I. FRED HOLLANDER z”l  
on his *yahrzeit*  
ROSH CHODESH ELUL

see my second cousin in shul, Ronnie Katz, who made *aliyah* from Dallas to Ir Yamim. He told me about the shul's Monday morning *Kollel* and the vibrancy and growth of the community since its founding. All in all, it was well worth the humid walk to and from the apartment we stayed in.

On *Shabbat* morning Rabbi Weiss took us to the Young Israel of Ramat Poleg led by a newly appointed rabbi, Rav Yuval Granot. As soon as we entered the shul we knew we were somewhere special. Walking into a shul with five of my boys presented yet again a challenge and we expected to separate ourselves in order to find seats throughout the crowd, but as I mentioned earlier, the *gabbai* made sure we were taken care of.

This was particularly notable as the shul was celebrating both a *sheva brachot* and a Bar Mitzvah and was therefore packed.

The beauty of the community's *hachnasat orchim* was extended to friends and families of the *baalei simcha*. After reading *Maftir* and the *Haftorah* flawlessly, and

with a pride that was palpable for all those present, congregants embraced the boy. I found this touching because it was clear that the Bar Mitzvah boy and his family were not regular "shul goers," yet the community did what they could to make the day a meaningful experience for them. The boy was elated. I davened this experience stays with him throughout his lifetime. We also benefited from hearing Rabbi Weiss's *shiur* after kiddush.

We davened *Mincha* and *Maariv* at Heichal Eliyahu, named after my Rav, the former Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rav Mordechai Eliyahu zt"l. The *shul* is led by his granddaughter Rachel's husband, Rav Betzalel Bazak. While Rav Bazak attracted an Israeli *baalei teshuvah*

crowd for his hour and a half *Shabbat shiur* that touched upon topics such as *daf yomi*, *hashkafah* and *halachah* which my boys and I attended, his wife gave a *shiur* in an open outdoor area to a crowd of over 100 women, which my wife and daughters enjoyed immensely. Per their request, during *seudah shlishit* I spoke about the OU's work in kashrut and our programs for at-risk youth,

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including our OU Israel Youth Center in Netanya, as well as my relationship with Rav Mordechai Eliyahu zt"l.

We ended *Shabbat* with my kids asking us to take them to SNAC for *Shacharit* the next morning before heading home. We saw many familiar faces there and once again felt the warm embrace of the local community.

When reflecting on the *Shabbat* my family experienced in Netanya I cannot help but feel inspired by the Anglo communities developing across the country, each one offering warmth to strangers. I appreciated the integration efforts of these communities and took note of the fact that the *drasha* on Friday night was given in English, and on *Shabbat* morning in Hebrew. *Kibbutz galuyot* is taking place before our eyes and we are fortunate to witness the miracles around us.

I am grateful for all those who made our *Shabbat* so special and for Rabbi Stewart and Rebbetzin Susie Weiss who guided us around Netanya and allowed us to experience the beauty of its communities. I was proud to see Torah Tidbits prominently displayed in every Shul I walked into and to hear from so many how much they enjoy reading them. A very special thanks to the wonderful member of our family who allows us to stay in their Netanya apartment.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring *Shabbat*,



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