



## DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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What harm can a silly meme (often a captioned photo) truly cause? While I set very strict social media limits for myself, every now and then I come across a meme or photo that I think will bring someone a smile, and forward it along. But while I enjoy content that captures the honesty of the lives we lead, there are two subject matters I never engage with: those that are lighthearted about the education of children or put a negative light on marriage.

While most content is shared in good fun I believe there is a strong possibility a person will choose to adopt the perspective of what they see as their truth. This might not seem particularly significant, but when that person is a child, it can have a direct impact on their growth. While in jest, as a parent I am fully aware that the things I choose to laugh at will likely shape how my children view that subject matter whether or not they understand my viewpoint.

This Shabbat signals the end of summer vacation, and summer break is never easy for parents - especially those living in Israel. The late-August pressure in which camp ends and parents are tasked with finding meaningful activities to keep their kids engaged while juggling jobs is a significant burden. OU Israel is made up of 10% of the OU's global employee base, with roughly 350 dedicated employees - many of whom are parents. During this time OU Israel offices around the country are often emptier than usual as parents take

vacation to be with their kids, and I remain grateful for their dedication while juggling between supporting the needs of *Am Yisrael* and their children.

This pressure is reflective of a larger dynamic that is challenging for those who have the *zechut* of raising children in *Eretz Yisrael*, where the high cost of living forces many parents to work to keep finances in order. During the school year this means many parents are unable to shoulder the responsibility of *chinuch habanim* alone, and rely on teachers to guide the bulk of their children's growth. As a result, come September 1st my phone begins to buzz with the latest memes shared by tired parents, reflecting relief that teachers are once again taking charge of creating structured learning for their kids.

Such memes often showcase parents dropping kids off at school with a caption, "Tag, you're it!" as they head out to the beach for a vacation. I deeply struggle with this sentiment and am disheartened by this type of content. As parents, we are never



The OU Israel Family mourns the passing  
of our beloved friend and long-time supporter

**Mel David z"l**

We send continued wishes  
of nechama to his entire family

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

absolved of our responsibility to teach our children and involve ourselves in their growth - even when they are in school. During the school year teachers and parents engage in a direct partnership, sharing the burden of *chinuch habanim* while molding our children to follow in our shared vision. This partnership must be treated seriously.

While a meme might only be a meme, I find it indicative of a larger issue of *chinuch habanim* facing our generation. Too often I hear complaints from parents, "I have a hectic work schedule and spend money to send my child to an amazing school. And yet I'm not impressed with the results I'm seeing." Of course, while every teacher - including Moshe Rabbeinu - makes mistakes, there is so much to be grateful for and the attitude we show our children toward their teachers will be the one they too adopt in the coming year.

I believe there is a connection between the input of parents and the outcome of children - that one action leads to another, and this week's *parsha* shows us this in an extreme form. *Ben Sorer U'moreh* is the wayward and defiant son who does not listen to his parents when they discipline him. According to Rashi in *passuk* 18, the wayward son follows a path which ultimately leads to his destruction.

As a rebellious child he steals. When he steals he uses the money to maintain his gluttonous habit. To maintain his lifestyle,

the son abuses those around him to steal from them. The *sifsei chamamim* explains that ultimately, the son will become so wicked in his ways that he'll stop at nothing to get what he wants that the *Torah* predicts he will eventually kill people to get what he wants. Because of this, the *Torah* decrees that the *Ben Sorer U'moreh* be killed. Chazal teaches us that the case of *Ben Sorer U'moreh* never existed and provides insight into the ways in which one action can lead us down a dangerous path.

Parents today face unprecedented challenges in *chinuch habanim*.



Rav Lior teaching Mordechai Berman and his friends

The streets of Israel are flooded with teenagers, many of whom are involved in dangerous behavior. OU Israel's programs for teens, including The Pearl & Harold Jacobs Zula Outreach Center, the Jack E. Gindi Oraita

Program and Makom Balev centers in 20 cities across the country are brimming with teens looking for stability.

In many cases, these teens have dropped out of school systems and do not have structured learning to support healthy productivity and growth. In this setting OU Israel advisors strive to serve as the positive role models these children cannot find at home, and I admire their ability to connect with kids from all backgrounds, giving them a place of comfort and warmth to turn to.

My wife and I recognize that if we adopt a lighthearted approach to education, our children will most certainly follow suit. We

therefore make a concerted effort to show our kids the respect we have for education and gratitude for their teachers. Fortunately, we have seen the impact of amazing teachers on our children - last Shabbat being our most recent example.

As I wrote last week, my family spent last Shabbat in Netanya. For *Seudah Shlishit*, I took my boys to Heichal Elyahu. I struck up a conversation with the man sitting to my left. Once I introduced myself the man shared his enjoyment of the Radio Galei Yisrael radio show I host with Rav Shmuel Elyahu *shlita*, and we chatted a bit more.

Realizing the man looked familiar I asked where he was from, when my 10-year-old son Mordechai leaned over and said, “Abba, this is my *rebbe* from *gan!*” The rav looked at him again and burst into a huge smile and with tremendous warmth began to catch up with my son.

I wasn't surprised to see Mordechai's face beaming with joy and pride. Although I'm not quite sure how much my son remembers from *gan*, the love he felt from his *rebbe* and the *girsas d'yankuta* (lessons learned as a young child) clearly made an impact on him. As they continued their conversation I was overcome with heartfelt gratitude to the *Borei Olam* for allowing my children to be molded by such caring and impactful

educators who are helping my wife and I raise our children to become *bnei Torah*.

This week in particular, parents are presented with a critical moment in *chinuch habanim*. As we send our kids off to school I *daven* that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* gives us the *sechel tov, binah* and *daat* to identify the opportunities for our children's growth in the coming year. I encourage parents to take a moment to be *mechazek* the educators taking on the responsibility of teaching our children in the coming days. May we all be successful in our shared mission of raising children who follow in the path of Torah.

In the spirit of recognizing the importance of education, I turn my attention to the recent loss the OU experienced with the passing of Mel David a”h. A dear friend and mentor, Mel was instrumental in supporting many OU educational programming together with his wife Sylvia. They helped get Yachad off the ground in the US, supported the development of OU Israel and The Zula.

Giving everything they could to ensure the next generation of Jewish children would receive what they need to thrive and reach their potential, Mel was a role model to many struggling teens who came his way. I remain deeply moved by the heartfelt way with which Mel gave himself to *Klal Yisrael*. May we merit to follow in his footsteps. Wishing the David family comfort during this time.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



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May the Torah learned from this issue  
of Torah Tidbits be ז"ל my son

**Eliezer Shmuel ben Yosef  
(Jeffery) z"l**

on his 30th Yartzheit - 7 Elul

*Yehudit Lipman*