



DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
Executive Director, OU Israel

I write this message, dear readers, with a heavy heart. I had intended to write about happy times, of celebrations, with uplifting and positive messages. We just finished the holiday of *zman simchateinu*, a time of joy and gladness, and I wanted to write about the beauty and *simcha* of Torah, of enthusiasm for learning, and the Jewish people's deep connection with this book, our life's blood. But traumatic, tragic circumstances have required me to reassess and rewrite. As of now, Monday of *Parshat Bereshit*, there are so many unknowns of our current situation in Israel. Every day, every hour, is a new update - of war, of Jewish casualties, more hostages, more horror. I am sure that we will have greater clarity by the time this message reaches your hands, as much as I am sure that there will remain many unknowns and many questions. Nevertheless, I hope that the words I am going to say in these pages will reach every reader's heart and mind.

I had the great merit of learning in *Yeshivat Ohr Etzion* with *Rosh HaYeshiva* Rav Chaim Drukman, *zt"l*. Unfortunately, during my years in yeshiva there, we knew many people who were murdered or injured in terror attacks at the time. There were times when we were shaken to the core, in pain

and grief. But every time, we could always see Rav Drukman powering forward, continuing to teach and to lead.

I can clearly remember one instance, when Rav Drukman was lecturing in his house, sometime after he had been in a terror attack where he had been shot, and his driver, Ephraim Ayubi, had been killed. Just a week and a half later, Rav Drukman



returned to teaching in his home. I was in his class on *She'elot uTeshuvot*, responsa literature, when a student raised his hand and asked, "How do you continue on? How do you continue when the person you spent countless hours with, your driver,

your assistant, was killed in front of you? When you yourself sit here, injured, how do you keep going?"

I remember Rav Drukman standing up, and I can remember how he responded, with his inflections and all, as if he said it yesterday. He quoted Yirmiyahu 30:7:

עַתָּה צָרָה הִיא לְיַעֲקֹב וּמִמֶּנָּה יוֹשָׁע *"Et tzarah hee l'Yaakov u'mimena yevashe'a"* - It is a time of trouble for Yaakov, but from it he shall be saved." He went on to explain that the verse does not say, "It is a time of trouble for Yaakov and afterwards, he shall be saved." The verse tells us, *"u'mimena yevashe'a,"* "from it he shall be saved."

This means, Rav Drukman declared, that it is precisely from within the trouble, the *tzarah*, that Yaakov is going through, that *Klal Yisrael* is experiencing, that makes us resilient, that makes us stronger. It is what gives us the ability to overcome the challenges that we have to overcome. This is the lesson that gave Rav Drukman the strength to keep going.

Looking at our situation now, there are so many questions. The questions themselves, unfortunately, have a weakening effect on us. And our enemies, these Hamas terrorists, know this. They are trying in every way, shape, or form to weaken our spirit. They know that what has brought *Klal Yisrael* back after 2,000 years, and what has enabled us to be victorious in our battles is our *ruach*, our fierce and tenacious spirit. It is our connection to G-d, our connection to the Torah, and there is no doubt that the Torah's spirit dwells within *Klal Yisrael*. Hamas is continuing to try to weaken us. They are using hacks, fake videos, misinformation, any way they can manipulate and confuse us. The chaos of the attack has meant that information about hostages and who has been murdered, has been slow to come. Nevertheless, it has already become so personal. Many of us know dear friends, and dear friends' children, who are among those murdered or taken hostage. So many of those around us have been drafted to fight. It is becoming more and more personal. How can our spirit stay strong? How

can we stay positive in this painful time?

Our enemies want us to buckle from the pain. They want us to be sad. They want our resolve to break and to be left in a depressed state. It does seem that this would be the appropriate reaction. I walk through my house, my children at home, schools canceled, and I wonder if I should smile. Will it seem as if I do not identify with the tragedy befalling *Klal Yisrael*? However, I can't help but wonder if this is the message we want to give over to each other, to our youth. A child looks up at you on the bus. Can you smile or has Hamas taken that away?



Hamas wants us to be broken. But the reality is, we are stronger than ever. We are more united than ever. Despite all the tragedy, the terrible pain this week has been, we still have so much to be grateful to God for. When you hear that 150%, 50% more than is needed, are answering the call for *miluim*, reserves... When you see cars, in the North and South, abandoned at intersections because the people in them immediately answered the call up to fight and left their car wherever it was... When you get so many people asking me, "Avi, how can we help?".. When you get phone calls, emails, WhatsApp messages, all of people volunteering, donating, seeking ways to get involved and provide aid and assistance... When you see how many Israelis are trying to fly back from *chutz laaretz* to join the reserves and be ready to fight...It's just unbelievably

inspiring."מי כעמך ישראל" Who is like Your nation Israel!"

We are not a broken nation. We are united. Strong. Flying higher and higher. "*Umimena yevashe'a*" - from within the pain, we will continue to rise. We will show our enemies that they can never break our spirit. Yes, they have hit us, and hit us hard. But we will overcome. We will grow mightier than ever.

After this is all over, there will be a time for introspection. How could such a thing have happened? But right now, we need to focus on one thing - keeping our spirits high. Yes, we must be there for those who have lost loved ones. But we must also take Rav Drukman's lesson to heart - "*umimena yevashe'a*", to understand that this too can make us stronger, more resilient, more passionate, and, with God's help, to move *Klal Yisrael* forward.

I encourage every Torah Tidbits reader to find ways to help, whether it be by donating blood at the blood drives happening now, packing up food packages being distributed throughout the country, or offering to take in families displaced from their homes. But I also encourage us all to take a step back and look at how much *achdut* (unity) we

have. Focus on these positives. And smile.

It may seem strange, but we should not feel bad to have smiles on our faces during these difficult times. We need the smiles to move forward, to focus on the positive. And we need to communicate to others, through encouraging and warm messages and actions, the need to keep our spirit high. Through this, we will win against our enemies, and we will be victorious.

The OU is embarking on a global campaign to address both the emotional and physical needs of those who rely on us, and we can't do it without you. I encourage those who can to support this campaign at ou.org/israelcrisis. We are also providing ongoing Chizuk programming which you can access via our website and social media channels.



Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

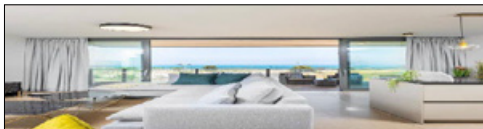
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**May the Torah learning
from this issue of Torah Tidbits be
לעילוי נשמת**

**JOSEPH (JOE) MANASSEH ז"ל
יוסף בן גבריאל מנשה ומעתוקה ז"ל
on his second Yahrzeit כ"ט תשרי**

**Greatly missed by his children,
grandchildren and great-grandchildren**

***Families Ross, Miller,
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