



## DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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A few months ago, my son Dvir asked if he could come with a friend and work at the OU Israel Center over the summer. At the time, we did have some areas on the outside of the building that needed a good cleanup, especially during the summertime when we run events outside. I gave him and his friend this task, agreed on a salary to give them both (which I paid out of my own pocket), and they did a fantastic job.

Fast forward to last week. Many schools in Israel have not yet opened. Dvir is still home, and last week he turned to me and said, “Maybe there’s something I can do at the OU. I would love to help out.” I immediately said yes.

For the past week, my son and my nephew Yinon have come to the OU Center with me early in the morning and have been working nonstop to help with all the amazing volunteering opportunities at the OU. They, alongside many other volunteers, helped prepare more than 3,000 resilience packages (which include first aid supplies sent from the OU in NY, *Tehillim*, an Israeli flag and letter of *chizuk*) for families who have been severely impacted by the war. They helped package games for families from the south and north who have been evacuated from their homes.

One of the many hotels in Yerushalayim that is housing displaced families from the south is the Ramada hotel. Last Thursday, NCSY Israel

staff and teens organized a carnival for the families from down south, with hundreds of people in attendance. It was particularly heartwarming to know that our English-Speaking *olim* teens were running this program, and that so many of the kids and families who benefited from it belong to our Makom Balev Youth Center family in Sderot. This is one of

numerous examples of collaboration in which the various departments of the OU have been working together to help in any way possible.

Dvir joined me at the hotel and was helping distribute packages and toys to the families. I asked him to stand by the entrance



with the packages while I took care of a few logistical things. When I returned to him he had a look of shock on his face. “Abba,” he said, “you won’t believe it. Every minute, someone new has come through these doors in order to help out.” He described all these wonderful groups. A group of people came to bring cookies and cakes to the families. A caterer just came through to bring in fresh food. People came to take bags of laundry from the families to bring home and do the laundry for them, returning the clothes back dry and folded. Tons of clothes were dropped off for adults and for children. Manicurists, hair stylists, and barbers set up areas in the hotel to provide their services for free. It was unbelievable how much was

happening. Dvir was amazed. I was too.

This past Shabbat, we were sitting at the Shabbat table, and I asked Dvir what he thought about everything he did this week. I also mentioned my surprise that he had never asked to be paid for his incredibly hard work over the last few days since when he came to the OU with me over the summer it was for a summer job. He answered me in such a beautiful way. He said, “Abba, you *are* paying me. You are giving me the gift of feeling part of this movement of *chesed*, of what everyone in Israel is doing. There is no amount you could pay me to replace that feeling.”

What my son expressed in that conversation is exactly what is going through the minds of so many people right now. Everyone, from all across Israel and from all walks of life, are helping each other, are there for each other, showing love for one another. Every day you hear of a new initiative to get army supplies here or food there, to help these families and give more for those groups. The funerals attended by hundreds of thousands. Shiva houses so packed that people are standing outside the door. This is a beautiful grass-roots effort to make *Klal Yisrael* stronger and united. The overwhelming feeling is that we are all in this together. There is an atmosphere of *chesed*, of giving, and we all want to be a part of it.

The OU has stepped up in so many amazing ways. As part of the OU-JLIC program in Israel, students from our six OU-JLIC campuses here have mobilized and volunteered in every way possible - providing meals, visiting the

injured in hospitals, bringing dogs to evacuee locations to put smiles on the faces of children who have PTSD, and so much more. NSCY started an initiative working with Yeshivot for gap-year students to tie camouflaged *tzitzit* for our brave *chayalim*. Yachad Israel members spent hours writing cards and recording video messages of encouragement for their advisors who were called up to serve in the IDF. The atmosphere in Israel is electric with an atmosphere of giving.

I encourage every one of you to find something to contribute, to be part of this collective movement. Perhaps you haven't had the time or the emotional space, until now, to volunteer. Yet, this is such a beautiful time of *achdut* (unity). You won't want to look back after this challenging time has passed and ask yourself,

“Where was I?” The only way to stop that from happening is to continue to be a nation of doers. Ask the questions, “What can I do?”, “How can I help?”.

This week, I had the *zechut* of visiting my good friend Rav Doron Peretz (Executive Chairman of the Mizrahi World Movement) with OU Executive Vice President Rabbi Moshe Hauer and OU President Mitch Aeder who came to show their support for what is happening here in Israel and learn how the OU can best utilize its resources to help. Rav Doron's son Daniel is a tank officer who is missing, and last week Rav Doron and his *eishet chayil* Shelley married off their son Yonatan, who was injured in battle. Rav Doron told us how his entire community



rallied around his family to make sure the wedding happened. He shared the incredible giving taking place to ensure that the light dispels darkness, that joy overtakes hate. This is all part of the atmosphere we are feeling and experiencing now. I want to wish the Perez family a *mazal tov* and to pray that Daniel Shimon ben Sharon, along with all of the captives of Israel, will come home safely very soon.

When sitting with my staff this week with Rabbi Hauer and Mitch, I heard a story that moved me to the core. Talya Gefen (Director of Program Development at the Zula) described how her husband Yosef had been called up to the northern border, and she was left at home with their five young children. While dealing with her own worries and stress, she received a call from Oren Asulin (Director of the Pearl & Harold Jacobs Zula Outreach Center). After checking how she is doing, he asked if she could figure out a way to come to the Zula since there are thousands of teens who – now more than ever - need to be supported by her and her staff of advisors.

At first, she was ready to yell, “How dare you!” and slam down the phone, but a second later she reconsidered. “You know what? Maybe this is exactly what I need.” She made arrangements for her kids and was at the Zula until the wee hours of the night. She shared, “Once I got back to helping, to being part of this bigger picture, I realized that the best way to overcome this difficult time is by giving to others.”

Don't miss out on this moment to help. There are so many opportunities. Volunteer at the OU or at *shul* and community events around you, *daven*, learn Torah, reach out to family, friends and neighbors. If you're reading this outside of Israel, there are plenty of ways you can

help too. I encourage you to learn more Torah, to pray and fast, to protect Israel on social media, to donate, to call friends in Israel and show your love and support, to attend rallies supporting Israel. Start filling out Aliyah documents. Everyone can take a part. Not only does it help others, but, like Talya, Dvir and Yinon, it helps ourselves as well.

Let us not forget that this is the fourth Shabbat that many families are home without a father, spouse, children and other family members who have been called up to protect *Am Yisrael*. Let's think about them, reach out to them, increase our *tefillot* and our kindness. *Bezrat Hashem*, we will fight and we will win.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

Rabbi Avi Berman

Executive Director, OU Israel





בית הילדים ע"ש צבע (אלעזרקי)  
Elazraki Children's Home

Emunah Bet Sabah Elazraki Children's Home is deeply saddened by the loss of our beloved dear friend,

## Jenny Shay <sup>z"l</sup>

May her memories and legacy forever be held in our hearts.  
We extend our sincere condolences to Jenny's husband,  
Dr. Mel Shay and all the family.  
May the Omnipresent comfort you  
and the rest of the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

With sympathy,  
Yehuda & Riki Kohn, the staff and children

בית הילדים אמונה ע"ש צבע (אלעזרקי)  
הנהלה הצוות והילדים  
משתתפים באבל הכבד על פטירתה של

# ג'ני (חיה פרבר) ש"י ז"ל

נתחומינו לד"ר מייל שי וכל המשפחה  
המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

ריקי ויהודה כהן  
הנהלה, הצוות והילדים