



DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
Executive Director, OU Israel

One of the most common questions I have been getting for the last four weeks is, “Avi, how can I volunteer?” “How can I help?” “Rabbi Berman, tell us what we can do.” I always tell them that the first response in the Jewish arsenal is prayer. After all, *Klal Yisrael* depends on *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, and first and foremost we must turn to Him and *daven* our hearts out. We have the most amazing soldiers in the world, but we must rely on *Hashem* to be successful and come home safely. As part of this effort, the OU has been providing *chizuk* calls and online *Shiurim* three times a day, where a person can call in and receive inspiring and encouraging messages from the OU staff, and recite chapters of *Tehillim* together.

However, the reality is that people also want to roll up their sleeves and get to work, to volunteer, to do something. Last week, OU Israel provided such an opportunity for rabbis and lay leaders from twenty one communities all across America. We hosted them on a rabbinic mission to Israel to do, in addition to pray. They came to embrace, give support, and be *mechazek*, our brothers and sisters who have been injured, lost loved ones, or have had family members kidnapped and taken hostage in Gaza. They were able to see firsthand what is happening here, and when they returned to America, they were able to tell their communities what they saw and encourage them to *daven* more, learn

Torah more, or to help support the volunteer work in Israel.

There was one main goal of this mission. And that was to make sure that every rabbi and lay leader who came on the mission would “adopt” at least one family among the families that we met. Whether that was the family of a soldier, a civilian in the hospital who was injured over the last four weeks, a widow whose husband died fighting for Israel, or any other person or family who needs support right now. We wanted these communities to see and show their support.

When my friends and colleagues in New York called me to ask about planning such a mission, I told them that I am all in favor of this mission, but on one condition: that the mission does not end when they board the plane back to America. A mission like this must continue so long as *chizuk* is needed, so long as our brothers and sisters are in pain, and this is exactly what they had in mind. These rabbis and lay leaders cannot just come to feel they’ve given support, and then forget about it two days later. This trip must be the start of a long term mission of care, concern, and support.

And so it was. We visited homes, hospitals, an army base. We went to Tel Hashomer, Soroka Medical Center, and Hadassah Har Hatzofim hospitals. We had the opportunity to *daven* at the *Kotel* and *Maarat Hamachpela*. We visited families from Sderot down south, all the way up to Akko

in the north, and throughout Israel, to give support during these difficult times.

To say it was emotional is an understatement. We had meetings afterwards with the members of the mission, divided into smaller groups, to talk about what they experienced. To see rabbis shed tears like this... it's hard to describe. But there was one comment that caught my attention more than anything else. And it was one that repeated itself among the different groups, separately. They would say, "Avi, I feel as if I received more *chizuk* from them than they did from me." I heard that sentiment over and over again.

What they saw was *mesirut nefesh*.

They gained a deeper understanding that they were part of a greater cause. The passion for the State of Israel. The sense of purpose and mission. The pride of parents for their children for the fact that they helped make history for Israel and helping to bring back security to the Jewish people. Our mission members saw all of this, and it inspired them. It was taken to heart.

Many soldiers do not receive the *hakarot hatov* that they really deserve. I knew we had to visit one particular unit that deals with probably the most unpleasant aspect of the job. And that is the Rabbanut Hatzva'it, which deals with identifying the bodies of the deceased, and preparing them for burial. Since *Simchat Torah*, they have unfortunately been working non-stop around the clock. I am not exaggerating when I call



these people angels. We met with soldiers that had run around to find and obtain DNA machines, fingerprint database machines, and all the rest, doing everything they possibly can to identify every soldier and every civilian, and bring them to respectful burials.

We spoke to them. I couldn't believe what they had to see, experience. I won't go into the gory details. But let me just say that they

had to see, smell, deal with, the most unpleasant things a person can experience. But when you talk to them, you get a sense far from being bothered by the job, they see it as their *zechut*. That they know

that they have helped yet another family have a Jewish burial. That they have brought clarity to a family that now no longer has to go on

**In loving memory of
our beloved father and grandfather
JOACHIM WEINDLING ז"ל**

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

**חיים יצחק בן נפתלי ז"ל
כ השון - on his 17th yahrtzeit**

**Greatly missed by his children
and grandchildren
Marsha, Melissa, and Becky Pottash
Steven and Lizzie Weindling
Shoshanah-Ruth, Naftalia Maya,
and Yaira Rachel Weindling
Nan Abbot and Lee DiTullio**

not knowing where their child or loved one is. These are absolute angels. They are performing this *mesirat nefesh* in closed rooms, behind the scenes, without any big ceremonies or parades.

So I knew we needed to visit them. We provided a well-deserved BBQ lunch generously donated by a loving brother and sister in North America, a big hug, heartfelt dancing, and we were joined by Rav Shmuel Eliyahu who gave all of us, rabbis, soldiers, and lay leaders, important *chizuk*. Once again, we were struck by the feeling that, on this mission of giving *chizuk*, we received a lot more than we were able to give.

The members of the mission left late last week, but already sent us their *shul* flyers dedicating *shiuirim* and other community events to the families they had adopted, and in memory of those lost loved ones of these

families. The mission is not over. It has only just begun. So I encourage all of you to go seek ways to give *chizuk*. What I suspect you will find, as I did on this mission, is that you will gain much more than you can give.

I want to take this opportunity to give tremendous thanks to the leadership of the OU in North America including the four representatives who led the mission Rabbi Yaakov Glaser, Rabbi Adir Posy, Rabbi Yisrael Motzen, and Rabbi Naftali Herrmann. And I want to thank my entire staff who helped tremendously to make this mission possible. Without them, it would not have happened. Unfortunately, the size of my column is limited, and I cannot tell you the endless stories I have from this unbelievable mission. So I invite you, dear reader, to visit the OU Israel Instagram page [@theouisrael](https://www.instagram.com/theouisrael) to view the incredible videos and pictures that Laya Bejell and Nina Broder are publishing there, and see what we are doing to provide and gain *chizuk* at OU Israel every day.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



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**In loving memory of
my beloved husband
of 71 years**

משה מרדכי הלוי סג"ל ז"ל
Martin M. Segal z"l
ר"ח ניסן, תרפ"ו - כ"ג אלול, תשפ"ג
March 16, 1926 - Sept. 9, 2023

**A wonderful husband, father,
grandfather, great-grandfather,
brother and uncle**

אהב את עם ישראל, ארץ ישראל
ותורת ישראל ובירך את כולם בשמחה

**Beverly Segal together with
the Segal and Kaufman families**

LIFE SETTLEMENTS

Do you have a life insurance policy you:

- No longer want?
- No longer need?
- Can no longer afford the premium?
 - Could you use extra money instead of keeping your policy?

I can guarantee that if you qualify with the underwriting process I can get you more money than if you cash it in with the company.

Please contact Moshe Russell at:
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