



DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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PURIM

Parshat Zachor is a very meaningful Shabbat every year, but this year people will be having a different feeling when they listen to the *pesukim* in shul than they have in past years. Remember what Amalek did to us. Memory is something we're acutely aware of right now. After October 7th, for the first month, we were shocked and traumatized. There was no issue remembering Hamas' atrocities. As time passes, the need to remember becomes urgent. We still have soldiers fighting and thousands of people recovering from injuries. We still have 134 men, women and children held hostage in Gaza. The nation still has wives and children waiting for their husbands to come home, fathers and mothers waiting for their children to come back from war. We still have over 100,000 people displaced from their homes.

This week, *Am Yisrael* received the tragic news that Captain Daniel Perez was confirmed dead. Many of us were praying for Daniel HY"D and know his parents, Rav Doron and Shelley. Rav Doron (Executive Chairman of the Mizrahi World Movement) is a dear personal friend and someone who I make sure to speak to our Israel solidarity

missions. When the news came out, I received message after message from the many people who heard Rav Doron speak about his son. After listening to him speak so meaningfully about Daniel, everyone felt connected and felt the pain. On behalf of myself and the extended OU family, we send our heartfelt condolences to the Perez family along with the many other families who lost loved ones.

Recently, many people told me that they are afraid of living a normal life, because they want to remember. How can they go back to normal when all these things are happening? Especially on Purim, a day of absolute happiness and celebration, they ask me, "Avi, how can we have our regular *seudah* when so many have - and currently are - suffering? How can we have our regular *kiddush* in shul?" These questions are coming to me, and I'm sure, to many other rabbis, both throughout the country and around the world. This is a challenging time for each and every one of us, which is one of the reasons OU Israel ran last week's conference, "Caring for Klal Yisrael in Times of War" for English-speaking Rabbis, Rabbaniot, educators and community leaders, in partnership with Barkai and Get Help Israel.

Parshat Zachor is all about remembering, and so is Purim. We remember what happened through the mitzvot of *matanot le'evyonim* and *mishloach manot*, and we read the *Megillah* in order to remember. Thousands of years later, we still remember because of the mitzvot of the holiday. So I ask myself, what should I do this year? How



The OU Israel family
wishes heartfelt condolences to
David Hochhauser and family
on the passing of his

GRANDMOTHER a'h

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

can I make sure never to forget what happened on October 7th and the current suffering of our citizens today? What can I do to continue on, but also never forget?

I'd like to share two ideas that are helping me respond to these questions. The first is the following. Last week, like many times before,

I went to visit injured soldiers. This time I was with the OU's lay leadership mission to Israel, alongside the President of the OU, Mitch Aeder, the two Executive Presidents of the OU, Rabbi Moshe Hauer and Rabbi Dr. Josh Joseph, as well as many OU board and committee members. As part of this mission, we went to Beit Loewenstein in Raanana. Beit Loewenstein is a rehabilitation center that is helping hundreds of people, including many, many soldiers. All the soldiers I met there expressed the same desire - to be well enough to get back to their units in combat and rejoin their friends defending our Homeland. Many of them are thinking of the possible war in Lebanon and how important it is for them to recover in time to be able to continue to fight. Others want to rejoin their units in Gaza. Why is that? Because they remember, and they seek to continue to remember and stay focused on their missions.

This sentiment is something I also experienced when visiting injured soldiers at Hadasah and Tel Hashomer hospitals. These brave *chayalim* have a fire, a passion. They all want to get back and fight because they understand that this is a war where there is no choice *but*



to fight. I plan on continuing to go to these hospitals and rehabilitation centers in order to constantly remind myself that my *tefillot of refa'einu* (heal us) is focused on our brothers and sisters who have been injured trying to protect you and me and every single one of us. To continue to remember.

The second idea pertains to my family's Purim plans. A few weeks ago, my family and I were discussing what we should do this Purim. This is usually a pretty standard discussion about costumes, whether we have a theme this year, and what we should do for *mishloach manot*.

This year I said, "Guys, we should do something different this Purim. We can't just do what we always do." The ideas started to fly around the table. Between my wife, my children, and myself, we discussed and debated it for a while.

The idea we decided on was that instead of

**Heartfelt condolences
to the family of
Mrs. Leah Goldsein a"h
on her passing**
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celebrating at home in Givat Ze'ev, we would take our family and friends and go up to Teve-ria. This is a place that isn't getting a lot of visitors, and we decided that we would go and bring *simcha* to a city that has thousands of evacuees, mostly from northern Israel, who are in the hotels there and who will not be able to celebrate Purim as usual and who can use added joy this Purim.

The evacuees are having an incredibly challenging time. A few weeks ago, OU Israel Youth Centers ran our annual girls *Shabbaton*. Forty of the girls who attended were evacuated from their homes in Kiryat Shmona, and we told them that we would pick them up to bring them on the Shabbaton wherever they were. We hadn't fully realized - or appreciated - just how spread out these girls were throughout the country. We ended up picking up these girls from 17 different places. Can you imagine what it is for a ninth or tenth grader to go for five months without seeing their friends because they have been displaced to 17 different cities?

So this Purim this year, my family, friends, dozens of boys from Yeshivat Mercaz HaRav, and a number of OU employees and their families, are heading up north. Instead of our normal Purim, we will celebrate with our brothers and sisters we have yet to meet and enhance their *simchat* Purim. We will be giving out *mishloach manot* to our new friends, having a Purim *seudah* together and putting on a carnival for them.

There will be one goal in mind: make sure that on the holiday that we celebrate the fact that we defeated our enemy, we will show them while they might be going through a very difficult period now without a solution in sight, Purim is here to remind them that the eternal

people have overcome many challenges before, and we will overcome this as well.

I want to take this opportunity to encourage you to help us with this endeavor and the many other programs at the OU Israel Center through our *Zecher Le'Machatzit Hashekel* drive and our *mishloach manot* for *chayalim* campaign. It is beautiful to see so many volunteers packing up these *mishloach manot* which is another example of the incredible *achdut* of *Klal Yisrael*.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat and a Purim *sameach*,



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