



## DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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Every week, Torah Tidbits gets printed early on in the week so that it can be organized and distributed over the course of the week to hundreds of shuls in Israel. Given that Purim this year falls on Sunday and Monday, I am writing this column the week before Purim. I would ordinarily discuss the holiday that, by the time you're reading this, we all just experienced, but it hasn't happened yet so allow me to reflect on something that occurred to me this past week.

A few days ago, I received notice from the OU Israel Teen Centers Director Chaim Pelzner about an event that was happening in Kiryat Gat. It was the celebration of the opening, the *chanukat habayit*, of Beit Gujo, the Ethiopian home that OU Israel built in Kiryat Gat. Not only was I involved in the building process, but my children were as well so I decided to take my three younger kids down to Kiryat Gat to attend the event. Knesset member Dr. Segal Malakol, herself part of the Ethiopian Jewish community, along with representatives from the local municipality,

the commander of the police department in Kiryat Gat, and other distinguished members of the Kiryat Gat community, were present for the *chanukat habayit*.

I was asked to speak and put up a *mezuzah*, which was a tremendous honor. (It was the first time in my life putting up a *mezuzah* on an Ethiopian hut!) In my speech, I made sure to mention how my wife and children were here, and how my children took part in building this place. I told the crowd how I wanted my children to see how even when you think you only had a small part in a project, it can accomplish great things. When everyone does a small part, we can all build together. The speeches there were incredibly moving. For example, hearing Azarya speak about the beauty of the Ethiopian community, how they kept themselves in huts in Ethiopia to prevent themselves from assimilating in the big cities, the stories moved me deeply.

After this event, there was a secondary event nearby, and this was extremely emotional for me. Last year, the OU Israel Teen Centers ran a joint program with the Israeli police to have teens from our program meet with local police for educational programs. Specifically, many of the teens who participated had police records. This is a police program called Mila which takes place in many cities, and the idea of the program was that they would come, meet with police over the course of a year, and after finishing the program, their records would be erased. The program was filled with learning and

May the Torah learned  
from this issue of Torah Tidbits be  
לעילוי נשמת

נפתלי צבי בן שמואל נטע והדס ז"ל  
'לב"ע כ"ג אדר ב'

In loving memory of  
**Harry Naftali Manheim ז"ל**  
on his 10th yahrtzeit  
23 Adar II, 5784

volunteering opportunities focusing on communal responsibility and sensitivity to the needs of others. The program met 34 times over the course of 2023 and was a great success, ending around Rosh Hashanah time. They had planned to have a graduation ceremony for the group after the holidays, but, of course, those plans were pushed off.

So that night, we attended the graduation ceremony of 23 young women who took part in this program. The police officers Liron, and Avraham spoke about these girls and how dedicated they were and how many of them didn't even miss one week of the program. They saw how these girls took the program seriously. He spoke about how these girls would participate in communal volunteering activities with the police, giving out food packages to the poor and the elderly, with a determination that was truly inspiring. Liron spoke about how he saw exactly how impactful the process was to these girls.

These girls came from many different backgrounds, from all different communities within Kiryat Gat. My eyes teared up seeing the girls, somewhat shy, yet proud, come up to receive their awards. The police even went out of their way to get them vouchers as well to show their appreciation, which was something way above and beyond the call of duty for them. Keep in mind that this program was not part of their job - the police officers participated in the program after hours and at other times that they were not on duty because they saw how important the program was to these girls and the community at large. These police really showed the girls how much they care, and the girls saw this. They prepared a beautiful canvas that they presented to Liron, to show their appreciation



for all his hard work. I could see clearly how much Liron was touched by this gesture.

We were proud that the police agreed to allow this program to run through our Kiryat Gat OU Israel Teen Center, showing they believe in the work that we do. We are proud of such programs and we are making such a big difference in our communities all around Israel.

As we start the book of *Vayikra*, and we read about the *korbanot*, sacrifices, we remember that the root of the word *korban* is *k-r-v*, to come close. The point of the sacrifices is to bring us closer to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

**Condolences to  
Miriam & Rabbi Aaron Adler  
and family  
on the passing of Miriam's mother  
Gertrude Halberstadt a"h**  
המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

The sacrifices of these police officers, as well as the OU staff in Kiryat Gat, to go that extra mile and go *lifnim mishurat hadin*, in order to make sure these teens know that they are loved, that people believe in them and their potential, is so tremendous.

For me to be there and experience it, together with my wife and children, was very meaningful. For my eleven year old son to hear a police officer talk about the right direction to take in life, and how he should do his homework, be a good kid, and move forward to greater and great success, was so incredible. This was also a great message to pass along to my children - Tzofia Chana, Mordechai Tzemach, and Moriah. I hope that they take these important messages of understanding that every little bit counts, and how a small amount of help can be impactful on the big picture, as well as ideas of communal responsibility that they learned from the mouths of our kind and compassionate police officers.

I am grateful to our teens, our communities, but most of all, I am reassured once again that the OU Israel staff that we have in our Teen Centers are really the best staff in the world.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,



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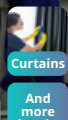
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