



DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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When people ask me how my *Yom Kippur* went, I always say, “I guess I’ll let you know in a year!” The davening of the *Yamim Noraim* helps create the impression that our efforts in our prayers will determine the coming year. With its words and music, the prayers draw us in and help increase our *kavanah*. I know it certainly has this effect on me.

After having the year we’ve had, one can’t help but wonder if our davening somehow just wasn’t enough. Did we not connect enough? Were we not united enough? These are unanswerable questions, but they should spur us to further work on our *tefillot*.

This is a year where we went into *Rosh HaShana* with the news that nine soldiers died in battle up North and then ended *Rosh Hashana* with the news that two more were taken from us. It continues to add to the intensity of our davening. I am thinking of *U’netaneh Tokef*, with its language of *mi yichyeh u’mi yamut* (who will live and who will die), which seems to loom over us.

Yet, on the other hand, that sense of vulnerability puts us in a place where we can feel, through the platform of the *tefillot*, a hug from our Father in Heaven, the *Ribono Shel Olam*. This is a feeling that those who have never had a good davening on *Rosh HaShana* and *Yom Kippur* will think I’m crazy for having, but it’s true. We have an opportunity to close our eyes, feel the tears coming down our faces, and be strengthened by the fact that we have a close connection with He who created and runs the world. It’s nothing less than empowering. When Elul came around, I began to actually yearn for this davening, to feel that embrace.

I didn’t realize how radically different my *Rosh HaShana* davening would be. We always care about the Jewish people as a whole. We are one people, a national family. It is no secret in our community that when we hear of tragedy befalling even one of us around the world, we all feel it. When we hear of someone being sick with a terrible illness, we seek ways to help, whether to donate, visit, or add their name to *Refaeinu* in our *Amidah*. After this year, a year when the entire Jewish people has been awakened to the dangers of antisemitism all over the world and especially the terrible blow from Hamas which began on October 7th and continues, we see how our family step ups and shows unity so very clearly.

It impacted my davening so much this year. Every time I said in *U’netaneh Tokef*,

לעילוי נשמת
My beloved sister

HANNAH BRAUN a”h

חנה בת מנחם מנדל

וציריל רות ע”ה

ט’ תשרי Yartzeit

You are terribly missed

Judy Wasserman

“Who will live and who will die. Who will die in his time and who before his time. Who by water and who by fire. Who by sword and who by beast”, I knew that Jews around the world would have the same feelings as me. Thinking of those killed on October 7th before their time. Of those soldiers who have died by the modern “sword” fighting to defend the Jewish people. Of the missile fire from Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran threatening so many lives. It is felt on a level I have never seen before by every Jew reciting the words of *Avinu Malkeinu*, “Our Father, our King, do it for the sake of those who were slain for Your holy name... do it for the sake of those who went through fire and water for the sanctification of Your name... avenge the spilled blood of Your servants.”

We are about to enter *Yom Kippur*. For the first time, I am not entering with the usual sense of fear, or trepidation. Rather, I am entering with a yearning. I want to be embraced. I want to stand with my children (this year, I'll be in shul with my son Mordechai), and witness a davening that is so different than any other, one with so much more emotion and so much more powerful than ever before. Soon after, we will enter *Sukkot* which will certainly be different this year. It is difficult to imagine now the mix of feelings we will have on *Simchat Torah*, feelings perhaps never experienced so viscerally on this *chag*.

This past Shabbat when I was *leining v'Zot Habracha* during *mincha*, I was standing in the exact same spot as I was last *Simchat Torah* morning *leining v'Zot Habracha*. During that *leining* we started getting the news of the events of October 7th. My neighbors who were called up to

fight came fast to get *Aliyot* and then went off to war. This Shabbat I found my voice shaking, throwing me back 12 months to that devastating morning.

With *Yom Kippur* almost here, I look to *shamayim* and I say, “*HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, we are going to do this together. We, the Jewish people, all feel the hurt and the need for unity. We have grown and gotten stronger. We are rising out of crisis, and we are learning. Our enemies look at us and think we are a divided nation. They do not understand that we are one nation. Our enemies cannot understand how despite our many disagreements, when we stand in shul on *Rosh HaShana* and *Yom Kippur*, we have one heart.”

Together, *beyachad*, we will succeed. May these holy days and our collective prayers bring *Mashiach* and the *Beit HaMikdash* very, very soon.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat and a *Gmar chatima tova*,



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May the Torah learned
from this issue of Torah Tidbits
be in loving memory of
my beloved husband

Marvin Stokar ז"ל

לייב אריה בן מאיר ז"ל

Beloved husband, father,
grandfather, and great-grandfather
and veteran of WW2

Frances Stokar