



DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

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This past week, I had the tremendous honor and pleasure to take another OU mission from North America (New York and South Florida) around Israel to show them various inspiring things that are happening across the country, as well as the many challenges that Klal Yisrael is dealing with during these times. We attended a Yom HaZikaron event at Binyanei HaUmah, headed by World Mizrahi and the World Zionist Organization, alongside thousands of participants. It was such a meaningful experience, with five families describing life both before and after their loved ones sacrificed their lives for the Jewish People. Hearing these families take such tragedy and use it towards inspiring others was truly emotional, and you could look around and see everybody in tears.

The next morning, we took the mission to Har Herzl to hear from the parents of Maoz Morell Hy”d, Eitan & Varda, about their

incredible son and the dedication that he had to the Jewish People and how many lives he saved in the IDF. Standing on Har Herzl for the ceremony, hearing the siren, talking to the families, seeing the tens, if not hundreds of thousands of people gathered on the sacred mountain to show their respects, and listening to the official ceremony of the State of Israel, was all very emotional for us. Yet, it’s what happened afterwards that showed me that something new is happening in Klal Yisrael.

The official ceremony ends with the singing of Hatikvah. Right as the last note of Hatikvah finished, the entire crowd seamlessly began to sing Ani Ma’amin, and they sang the whole song together, as one. With great trepidation and great emunah, the entire mountain sang and demonstrated that they understood in their hearts the great purpose of the State of Israel. One of the people on our mission turned to me and asked why they didn’t announce that they were going to sing Ani Ma’amin after Hatikvah. I informed him that it’s because the Ani Ma’amin is not part of the official ceremony; Ani Ma’amin is what the people are feeling. We are all yearning for Mashiach. Yearning for much greater days for the Jewish People.

As Ani Ma’amin ended, once again seamlessly, the entire sacred mountain started singing *Acheinu Kol Beit Yisrael hanetunim batzara uvashivya*, for our people, our brothers and sisters that are hostage in Gaza. Without a doubt, the singing of Ani Ma’amin and Acheinu after Hatikvah showed me the real



**The OU Israel Family
sends heartfelt condolences to
Mrs. Esther Benovitz and to
Rabbi Moshe Benovitz (NCSY Kollel)
and family
on the passing of
their husband/father**

Rabbi David Benovitz ז”ל

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

inner desire of this nation. This isn't the first time I've seen it either, but it solidified for me that a trend is happening here in Israel.

This same trend follows through on Yom HaAtzmaut as well. How many minyanim are there now with beautiful, long, singing Hallel's that go long into the night of Yom Haatzmaut? I remember well how we weren't sure how big the crowd would be the first year OU Israel began our Yom Haatzmaut night tefillah in the Tachana Rishona eight years ago. I remember saying that if we get 500 people, it'll be a major success. We ended up getting approximately 800 people. The amount of positive feedback that we received was just remarkable. It was clear to us that we were going to do it the next year and the next year. Aside from the one year of COVID that we weren't allowed to have it, Baruch Hashem we've done it every year since.

This year, as I was sitting with the mission in Miriam Peretz's garden on Yom HaZikaron day, gaining so much inspiration from her, I could feel the winds picking up. I could tell that this was not the fair-weathered Yom Ha'atzmaut we normally have. I started getting questions from the production team putting together the event whether or not we should still do the davening, because everything that they were putting up was flying off. Whether fences, posters, you name it, the wind was blowing them away. They couldn't even put up the speakers since they were so afraid of them falling down.

The decision was such an intense one. 5,000 people are waiting to come. How can



I let them down? However, when at around 4:20pm the police announced that it is forbidden to do the event because of the dangerous fires picked up by the winds near Yerushalayim, we right away got on a conference call with our incredible CFO, David Katz and the DanielPro production team to try to figure out what we should do. We suggested the Ramada Hotel, which has such an incredible relationship with the OU. We've done conventions and Torah Yerushalayim events with them and partnered with them for many years, and they are under our hechsher as well.

When we called the Ramada they said that their largest hall (which I believe is also the largest hotel hall in all of Yerushalayim), is available. They said, please, come on over. Regardless of how last minute this was, they said we had to do it. The davening is so

Dedicated L'iluy Nishmat
ר' חנוך ב"ר ברוך יעקב ז"ל
Henry Schiffmiller ז"ל
whose 24th Yahrzeit is on אייר

important. The only thing was, they didn't have the staff available to set up such an event. I said, no problem. I'll come with my sons to start setting up, and we'll find volunteers as well.

By 4:49pm, my team had already notified the public that the event was moving from Gan HaPaamon to the Ramada. When I arrived at the hotel at 5:15pm, the entire MMY seminary was there in full force, moving the chairs, putting up mechitzot, helping decorate, putting out the siddurim, and organizing the entire place together with the incredible OU Israel volunteers and staff. By the time I walked in with my boys, they had left us very little to do. By 6:45pm we were ready and started Mincha. Almost 1,500 people attended the Tefila. It was literally standing room only.

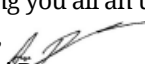
This, too, is an expression of that desire of the Jewish People in Israel. People yearn for a meaningful davening, especially on Yom Ha'atzmaut. So many Yeshivot and Midrashot came and joined us. Yeshivat Eretz HaTzvi, Yeshivat Orayta, Rabbi Aharon Assaraf came from Miami Beach with his school, so many joined.

The atmosphere was electrifying. My good friend, Rav Doron Perez, Executive Director of World Mizrachi, spoke and inspired all of us in the transition from Yom HaZikaron to Yom HaAtzmaut. But my son asked me a simple question. He said "Abba, if you were able to pull off this event in two hours, why do you plan this event every year for months?" Obviously we all laughed.

Many people, including Rabbi Yehoshua Fass of Nefesh B'nefesh, were unable to join due to the fires spreading around Yerushalyim. We apologize to those people who couldn't make it to Yerushalayim and join us.

Yet, the reality is that when you have a very dedicated and loving body of staff, volunteers and participants, you really have everything that you need in order to pull off a great event. But, the fact that we were able to mobilize in less than two hours to take an event of almost 1,500 people from one location on one side of the city to the other side of the city, when the weather is insane outside and so many are stuck in their houses is no less than a miracle. So I wanted to thank HaKadosh Baruch Hu publicly and the DanielPro production team as well as all the volunteers and staff that worked so hard to make it happen. Kol hakavod to all of you!

At the end of every mission we bring to Israel, we always sit together with the group to hear their feedback and reactions to everything they saw on the mission. Something we have heard a lot, from many different groups, is the question why our activities in Israel, as important and incredible as they are, are not known to so many people. Honestly, I don't have an answer for them. One way I try to tell people, is in these pages, but I know that as we, b'ezrat Hashem continue to do great things for Klal Yisrael, whether helping thousands of teens-at-risk in Israel, or through our shiurim, davenings, and religious programming for the English-Speaking public, we will tap into these trends that we can see plainly before our eyes and move the Jewish People closer to the desires of those singing Ani Maamin and Acheinu - the coming of Mashiach and the return of our brothers and sisters in captivity.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

Rabbi Avi Berman
Executive Director, OU Israel