

DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY



RABBI AVI BERMAN

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As the lights of the *menorah* dwindled on the last night of *Chanukah*, the *neshama* of Rav Chaim Drukman returned to its Maker.

In just 90 years Rav Drukman had a direct hand in creating a foundation upon which *Am Yisrael* could thrive in *Eretz Yisrael* for generations to come. For those unfamiliar, Rav Drukman was born in Poland in 1932 and fled to Israel in 1944, surviving the Holocaust. Following his army service Rav Drukman studied at *Mercaz Harav Yeshiva* and became a close *talmid* of Rav Zvi Yehuda Kook. With Rav Kook's direction, Rav Drukman moved to *Merkaz Shapira* and founded *Yeshivat Or Etzion*, named for the victims who struggled for the protection of *Gush Etzion* settlements during the War of Independence, which he led until his passing.

Identifying the opportunities for the development of Religious Zionism early on, Rav Drukman established *Kibbutz Tirat Zvi* and *Kibbutz Saad*, founded both the *Yeshiva Tichonit* and a military boarding school, while also serving as the head of *Yeshivot* and *Ulpanot Bnei Akiva*. Looking beyond the borders of Israel, Rav Drukman also spent time in Northern America where he served as a *Bnei Akiva shaliach*.

With a vision of uniting *Torah* with *yishuv ha'aretz*, Rav Drukman was one of the initial founders of the *hesder yeshiva* concept and helped found *Yeshivat Kerem*

BeYavne. In time, Rav Drukman became a leading political figure in the Religious Zionism movement in his various roles in the *Knesset* and was a staunch advocate for Jewish settlements throughout Israel and its borders.



Rav Drukman with Rav Schechter and Rav Ezra Friedman less than a year ago

Although he ran from *kavod*, Rav Drukman was awarded the Israel Prize for his contributions for Jewish education in 2012. I am among those who were *zoche* to be a *talmid* of Rav Drukman during my high school years when I studied at *Yeshivat Or Etzion* from 1990 to 1994, and his impact on me remains. Rav Drukman was a passionate educator and gave his students the vision of *geula*, teaching us to look at everything that happens in *Medinat Yisrael* as a means to redemption. Some stories come to mind...

I fondly recall the excitement with which Rav Drukman would describe what took place on November 29, 1947, when the

UN voted on enabling the establishment of the State of Israel. In the span of hours, a people filled with quaking hearts suddenly transformed into a euphoric nation, and thousands of Jews filled the streets of Eretz Yisrael to celebrate with one another. “We didn’t stop dancing for one moment. Not to drink, not to eat or to rest. Our simcha was simply too great.” Rav Drukman also shared how it pained him to hear how people prepared for Yom Ha’atzmaut - planning parties instead of appreciating the tremendous neis and channeling our gratitude to the Borei Olam.

Prime Ministers and leaders of the Knesset frequented Rav Drukman’s home where many critical decisions were made. However, despite the influence he wielded, Rav Drukman’s enthusiasm for any initiative that would support the growth of Am Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael never dwindled. He would encourage his students to seek opportunities to contribute to Am Yisrael and gained tremendous sipuk from those who identified needs within Am Yisrael and implemented meaningful initiatives to bring their vision to life.

After many years of watching others approach Rav Drukman with their efforts, I was eager to share with him the newest OU Israel employee who would spearhead our Kashrut efforts in Eretz Yisrael - Rav Ezra Friedman who himself was a talmid of Rav Drukman. Rav Drukman was brimming with nachas and eagerly asked about the OU’s provision of Kosher certification and education to Am Yisrael within Eretz Yisrael.

A sentiment that has been repeated since his passing is that Rav Drukman loved Am



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Yisrael, looked for the good in everyone and refused to say a bad word about a fellow Jew. Rav Drukman was the *chazan* for *Rosh HaShana* and *Yom Kippur* in the *yeshiva*. During *Chazarat HaShatz* of *Ne'ilah*, before concluding the *tefillah* of *Modim*, he would chant the following paragraph with heart-felt emotion:

”אָבינו מִלְכֵנו זָכֵר רַחֲמֵיךָ וְכֹבֵשׁ כְּעַסְךָ וְכֹלֵה דָבָר וְחֹרֵב וְרָעַב וְשׂוֹבֵי וּמִשְׁחִית וְעוֹן וּמִגְפָּה וּפְגַע רַע וְכֹל מַחֲלָה וְכֹל תַּקְלָה וְכֹל קִטְטָה וְכֹל מִיָּנִי פְרַעֲנוּיֹת וְכֹל גְּזֵרָה רָעָה וְשִׁנְאָת חֲנָם מִעֲלֵינוּ וּמַעַל כָּל בְּנֵי בְרִיתְךָ: וְחַתוּם לַחַיִּים טוֹבִים כָּל בְּנֵי בְרִיתְךָ”

Our Father, our King, remember Your compassion and suppress Your anger. Bring an end to pestilence, bloodshed, famine, captivity, destruction, iniquity, plague, mishaps that are evil, all illness, all accidents, all strife, all manner of calamity, all decrease that are evil, and [all] hatred that is baseless from upon us and from upon all members of Your covenant. And seal a life that is good for all the members of Your covenant.

When he reached the phrase “וְשִׁנְאָת חֲנָם וּמִעֲלֵינוּ” the entire *Beit Midrash* shook with hundreds of *talmidim* who were moved to tears by the pain in Rav Drukman’s voice. I think of him during the *Yamim Noraim* every year, and am brought to tears once again as I share this memory with you.

My wife and I consider ourselves fortunate to have Rav Drukman serve as the *mesader kiddushin* at our wedding, and he has continued to serve as a role model for our family. Rav Drukman will always be my *Rosh Yeshiva*. Standing at his *levaya* beside my five older boys, witnessing the thousands of people who gathered in the torrential rains to escort the *neshama* of

Rav Drukman to its final resting place, is an experience that I know will impact us for years to come.



Rav Drukman with my father and Zaidy ע"ה at my wedding



The levaya of Rav Drukman

It is no surprise that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* took a *tzaddik*, who brought tremendous light to *Am Yisrael*, on the eighth night of *Chanukah*. May Rav Drukman’s dedication to *Am Yisrael* and *Eretz Yisrael* inspire us all to support the needs of our fellow Jew.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

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Orthodox Union Deeply Mourns the Passing of HaRav Chaim Drukman zt"l



Rav Drukman was a significant leader of the Dati Leumi (Religious & Zionist) community in Israel for over 60 years. He served as a rebbe, mentor and adviser to many in the OU, and was a warm and uplifting presence when he interacted with OU Israel programs. Rav Drukman was a disciple of Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook zt"l and a student at Yeshivat Mercaz Harav.

A consummate Talmid Chacham, Rav Drukman's contribution to Jewish education around the world is legendary. As one of the first shlichim to the US in the 1950's, Rav Drukman helped create numerous Torah initiatives in North America. Back in Israel, Rav Drukman was a pioneer of Torah education in Israel including the Hesder yeshiva movement, Yeshiva High schools, Kollels for Rabbinic education, post high school seminaries for girls, cheders for children and more. Rav Drukman was the founder and Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Ohr Etzion in Mercaz Shapira. He also led the network of Yeshivot Bnei Akiva which include over 100 institutions throughout Israel. His indefatigable and energetic leadership inspired thousands. Rav Drukman was a dedicated leader and teacher. He was caring, warm and loving to all who knew him, despite his extraordinarily busy schedule. He was a member of the Israeli Knesset for 14 years, and a recipient of numerous honors and awards, including the Israel Prize and the Jerusalem Prize. May his family and myriad talmidim and followers be comforted among the mourners of Tzion and Yerushalayim.

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים