

MOTHER'S MUSINGS

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squares and historical houses and buildings. Suffice it to say that despite my "backseat driving" tendencies, we had a good time and learned a bit of Savannah history at the same time.

Our tour of the area (both official and unofficial) came to a close and we were off to our final destination of this jaunt: Hilton Head. With a little help from our trusty GPS, we arrived at the Sonesta Beach Resort—a little bit of heaven! After we settled ourselves in our beautiful room overlooking the lagoon and ocean, and I slipped on my swimming gear, we went to explore the area. The sun had set, but the pool was heated to a warm 80 degrees, so with Leib as my life-guard, I had a chance to swim some laps. There is something about night swimming that makes me feel even closer to nature.

Monday arrived and it was time for us to do some biking. I think I did more biking on this trip than I have done the entire year that I have owned my bike. Again we had the opportunity to ride

along the shore, stopping on occasion to pick up some pretty shells. What does anyone do with the shells they find at the beach? I always have hopes to do something with these keepsakes. Maybe this time I'll be creative.

Monday afternoon we were out and about again on our bikes—this time for a three-mile excursion on the beautiful bike trails to end up at a place with a taste of home: Starbucks. It is comforting to know that my gold card is accepted in far-off Hilton Head.

...

It's a Tuesday morning and I'm basking in the sun at our luxurious pool, contemplating how I will fit everything into my carry-on luggage. But there is time to think about that later; now I'd like to take in just a bit more of this inviting pool before our vacation comes to a conclusion. ♦

Phyllis Joy Lubin is an attorney with Maidenbaum & Sternberg, LLP, who resides in Cedarhurst with her husband, Leonard. They have six children—Naftali, Shoshana, Rivka, Rochel, Yosef, and Lea—and a daughter-in-law, Nina. The author welcomes your questions and comments at MothersMusings@gmail.com.

Hamburgers As Hakarat HaTov: Thanking The IDF

BY Yael N. Ehrenpreis Meyer

Just another night at a base near Jerusalem. Khaki-clad young men stifle yawns as they return from day tours of duty at watchtowers, bus stops, train stations, and highway patrols. Young women, several attired in the uniform of the IDF educational corps, gather for

luck with this new "mission," when in the corner of the sprawling base, suddenly . . . a spark of light, the smell of burning charcoal, the sight of unfamiliar figures chattering in English while chopping never-ending rows of onions catches their attention.

An act of *hakarat ha'tov* has turned into a massive *kiddush Hashem*.

a late-evening meeting. The burden of their infinite mission weighs heavily—but these are eighteen-to-twenty-some-things, and so these hundreds of soldiers look to each other for some way to lighten the mood and enjoy a few hours of "off time." They haven't had much

In the midst of the current wave of terror, the mostly secular volunteers of Tzevet Paamon (the Paamon Team) were busy going from checkpoint to outpost to watchtower, handing out snacks and support to soldiers on alert. Paamon was founded to memorialize Major Chaggai Bibi, a man who was "the epitome of giving," in the words of his best friend, Amit Amar, who has dedicated his time to trying to fill in the gap of what was lost that day 12 years ago when Chaggai was killed in the line of duty.

Yossi Goldberger, too, is a known figure on Israel's "giving scene." Hearing about Paamon's initiative on a local secular radio station, he became determined to expand it to an even larger scale. Goldberger turned to his partner-in-giving on the other side of the Atlantic, Rabbi Pesach Lerner, executive president emeritus of the National Council of Young Israel. As co-chair of the American Friends of the International Young Israel Movement, Israel Region, which contributes to the physical and spiritual welfare of the IDF, Rabbi Lerner is all-too-familiar with the challenges that Israel's soldiers face on a regular basis. Looking through the prism of his experience, Rabbi Lerner saw this plan as a perfect way to give the North American Orthodox community the privilege of expressing *hakarat ha'tov* for the boundless devotion of the young men and women in the IDF.

Rabbi Lerner and Yossi Goldberger told Amit, "Give the soldiers a barbecue—with all the extras! Let them know we care about them. We will take responsibility for the cost." Rabbi Lerner made a few phone calls to guarantee the first few barbecues. He was interviewed on the Nachum Segal Metro New York Jewish radio program, he sent out a mass e-mail—and the Jewish people responded.

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IDF BBQ

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November 18, 2015: All of these “ingredients” came together on a dark and windy night at a central IDF base in Har Gilo, just south of Jerusalem, the third event organized by this new international coalition, *Chareidim L'ma'an HaChayalim*—Orthodox Jews in Support of Israel's Soldiers. Long tables are laid out and, in assembly-line style, thousands of round rolls are being smeared with *chum-mus*, ketchup, mustard, or mayonnaise, stuffed with lettuce, tomato, and onions, and then topped with a perfectly grilled *pièce de résistance* for a sandwich that is an expression of love and appreciation. The young soldiers—like hungry teenagers the world over—can't wait to eat these delicious “expressions.” One young corporal promptly wheedles himself a second sandwich; one young military officer has brought her own “security,” a stuffed bear sticking out of her backpack, to join her for a barbecue dinner. (“The older you get,” one volunteer comments, “the more you realize that all of these thousands of soldiers are really just 18–21-year-old kids who should still be at home with their mothers, not out on the frontlines of every danger zone.”) They ask, through the crunch of fresh lettuce, “Who is funding this barbecue and the new weekly barbecues that are now the buzz throughout the army? Tonight's event is the third in just three weeks.” They are told, “*Chareidim she'b'chut la'aretz she'ichpat la'hem*—Orthodox Jews outside of Israel who care, who appreciate your military service and want to say thank you.” Their reactions range from mere surprise to complete astonishment. An act of *hakarot ha'tov*, of appreciation, has turned into a massive *kid-dush Hashem*.

Despite the chill in the air, the atmosphere is warm—and not just from the smoke-filled barbecues. A potpourri of the Orthodox world, volunteers spanning the generations and the vastness of the North American continent, never pause from their chopping and stuffing even as they explain what brings them here, on this night, for this cause.

Naomi and Marc Gross live in Lawrence, a community that radiates always as a beacon of generosity on the global *chesed* map. They heard about the new “acknowledge the *chayalim*” enterprise on Nachum Segal's JM in the AM show. “Marc is a caterer,” his wife launches into their story without missing a beat in her vegetable-chop-



ping mission, “so this immediately jumped out as a way to say ‘thank you’ in our very own field of expertise.” Their next step was to call their neighbor, Rabbi Pesach Lerner, and let him know that they wanted

to sponsor a barbecue on their upcoming trip to Israel. “And here we are chopping tomatoes and onions,” Naomi concludes her story.

Her hungry listeners certainly couldn't be happier



about that happy ending. “Take note,” Marc jumps in for the final word, pointing out to both the soldiers on line for hamburgers as well as his unseen Skype audience, “that my wife insists on slicing every

tomato perfectly—all 700 or so of them.”

“The Gross family,” adds Rabbi Lerner, “exemplifies the motivation of our growing net-

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IDF BBQ

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work of supporters, the individuals, families, and entire shuls who see their commitment to Torah ideals as the ethical and moral imperative for demonstrating *hakarat ha'tov* and creating a *Kiddush Hashem* through the IDF BBQ campaign."

On the subject of ethical imperatives, it is only during their non-stop chopping and serving that the supporters of tonight's barbecue learn just what a critical role the Har Gilo base plays in providing character education for the entire IDF.

Reut is the kind of vivacious young woman you'd want as your child's teacher. She is serving an important role as an educator, but since this is Israel, this 20-year-old is teaching in the context of her army service. Reut explains to everyone, in enthusiastic albeit slightly error-prone English, the concept of "Education Week."



ber of the armored, artillery, or combat engineering corps of the ground forces, every combat soldier from the entire country spends a week at one of only two bases in the country (the other is in Latrun), for an intense

seminar exploring their Jewish and Israeli identity, recounting the tradition of the IDF and its military history, and learning about the principles and obligations incumbent upon those serving in the world's most eth-

ical army. And the fact that these new recruits are experiencing love from North American Orthodox Jews represents a perfect addition to their "Education Week" lessons. "In short," Reut summarizes, "it is here, to this very base, that all our soldiers come to learn the reasons why they are fighting. Every week a new cohort of 500 *chayalim* from around the country arrive at Har Gilo." She adds with a smile, "You could have a never-ending series of barbecues here, recurring festivities for every week's class of 500 visiting combat soldiers."

Thanks to the commitment and action of a few community leaders and several generous sponsors to date, thousands of soldiers have already been impacted, their hearts and hunger filled to capacity by the tangible, edible manifestations of gratitude being exported to their bases by the international Torah community.

But surely IDF BBQ should touch every soldier! We need our *chayalim* to assure our security throughout *Eretz Yisrael*—in Jerusalem, Gush Etzion, Chevron, the Golan, up north and down south. So shouldn't we make sure that IDF BBQ reaches everywhere they do?

Yossi Goldberger is pleased by the rapid pace in which their efforts have been realized. "When someone understands what life is like for our soldiers, they understand immediately that we all need to do this. The *chayalim* are on duty day and night, Shabbos and *yamim tovim*, sometimes for weeks on end. Our children sleep well at night because other people's children—our soldiers—are always on alert. Knowing this, what Torah-observant person isn't eager to thank the young people who protect *Eretz Yisrael*?" Concludes Rabbi Lerner, "Everyone wants to say thank you—all we've done is given Orthodox Jews around the world a direct way to embrace our soldiers with expressions of appreciation, to say to each and every one of them, 'we care'. That is why we are here."

Show the *chayalim* you care by sponsoring an IDF barbecue. For more information or to say "thank you" to Israel's soldiers, visit www.IDFBBQ.org or contact Rabbi Lerner at info@IDFBBQ.org. ♦

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