

exponentially. In fact, prior to the company's sale, I would not have been able to give this amount of money to Israel even if I had wanted to.

I believe that, through all of my past experiences, God had been "priming" me for years to make a difference in this very way. And I am proud to be a participant in all of the good that can come from "surrendering" to the greater plan.

My Thoughts on Provision

I know that my family and I have been blessed financially, but to me, the point of this story isn't the money I gave. It's that when you are open to doing God's will, He will provide for you. I believe that if you contribute what you can (whether it's money, time, energy, advice, or compassion) when you see a need, God will make sure that you don't run dry. As I have said before, I don't believe that God gives any of us our gifts to be hoarded. He wants us to share them! And when you do, you will be rewarded tenfold in terms of your own personal satisfaction and happiness—and often, more gifts will come back to you, too.

Dream On

You meet many amazing people and make great friendships when you are giving to wonderful causes and allowing God to direct your path. And sometimes you find yourself in places you never expected to be—like backstage with one of the all-time legends of rock and roll and a grieving yet impassioned woman on a mission! But let me start at the beginning...

Marvin Markowitz, owner of Factors Deli in Beverly Hills, is, like me, a major JNF supporter. One day in early October 2006, I got a call from Marvin regarding Karnit Goldwasser. Karnit, he explained, was the wife of an Israeli reservist Sergeant-Major Udi (Ehud) Goldwasser. Udi, along with another soldier named Eldad Regev, had been taken hostage by the Hezbollah terrorist organization on July 12, 2006, while they were patrolling the Lebanon border. This event sparked the Israeli-Lebanon conflict that raged during the summer of 2006.

Marvin asked me to help him raise \$100,000 within two weeks for Karnit so that she could continue to travel throughout America and Europe keeping the issue of her husband's captivity in the public eye. Willing, of course, to do whatever was in my power to aid this brave soldier and his devoted wife, I agreed.

About three months after I helped to raise this money for Karnit, I learned that she would be coming to New York to speak at the UN. Figuring that she could use a fun night out as a distraction from all of her suffering, I invited her to an upcoming Aerosmith concert taking place in the New York area, at which I knew I could get her backstage to experience the thrill of meeting Steven Tyler, Aerosmith's lead singer extraordinaire. (I have a connection to Steven—he actually came to my fortieth birthday party! But that's another story.) Karnit told me that she would indeed like to go to the concert.

On the evening of the show, I picked up Karnit and her sister-in-law Rotem. Although I was hoping that the evening would be an opportunity for Karnit to forget about her grief for a little while, she begged me all the way to the show to push Steven to ask for Udi's release during his performance. Of course, I agreed that Steven publicly asking for Udi's release would be very powerful, but I doubted such a plea would really make a difference—and I doubted that it would ever happen. Nevertheless, I told Karnit that as far as I was concerned she was welcome to ask Steven for this favor herself.

Once backstage, we met John Seidl, Steven's manager at the time, whom I already knew. Part of John's job was to be the gatekeeper for his employer, so when I told him about Karnit's plan to ask Steven to help her publicly that night, John wasn't very happy at all and told me to pull the plug on this plan. After all, this wasn't scheduled, and Steven was due on stage in less than two hours!

I didn't know what to do. I didn't want to anger John or Steven, of course, but on the other hand, Karnit was a desperate woman whose husband was being held hostage by terrorists thousands of miles away. Knowing what I did of Karnit's resolve, I took her aside and explained to her that this was her chance...so she should really go for it, and with full theatrics, in order to make sure her plea to Steven was successful.

You've got to go out on a limb sometimes because that's where the fruit is.

—Will Rogers

And what a couple of minutes it was—watching this meeting between Karnit, the extremely loving and impassioned wife, and this megastar really was incredible! Steven had already gone through his pre-performance preparation and even had his make-up on, and I doubt that he knew very much about Israel, Lebanon, or Hezbollah. I’m almost certain he hadn’t heard of Udi. To Steven’s immense credit, though, he listened intently and totally focused on Karnit, visibly moved by her story. He was extremely sensitive to the pain she was experiencing, which was very poignant to witness.

After Aerosmith had been on stage for about an hour, Steven stopped the music and told the crowd that this evening he wanted to dedicate tonight’s performance of Aerosmith’s mega-hit “Dream On” to Udi Goldwasser, the Israeli soldier being held hostage in Lebanon, and that he hoped Udi would soon be released. Karnit cried uncontrollably through the whole performance of the song, and confided in me that Aerosmith was her husband’s absolute favorite band. As for me, I felt so happy that I had been able to make this happen for Karnit and so proud that I could make such an improbable connection work in a way that few would have thought possible. Dream On, indeed!

The next day, the *Jerusalem Post* covered the story of how American rock sensation Steven Tyler dedicated his smash hit “Dream On” to Udi Goldwasser, the Israeli soldier still being held hostage in Lebanon, while his wife, Karnit, sat in the crowd. Thank you so much, Steven! You really are a great person.

Sadly, two years later in 2008, Udi’s body was returned to Israel in a prisoner swap. It is likely that Udi was killed the very day he was captured.

Where Love Lives

Although seeing Steven Tyler make a public appeal for Udi Goldwasser’s release stands out in my mind as an electrifying highlight, it certainly wasn’t the end of the road in terms of my ongoing relationship with Israel. Specifically, a group of young people at the Yemin Orde Youth Village have captured my attention and my heart, and remain very important to me to this day.

During my campaign to raise the money for MDA, I first learned about the Yemin Orde Youth Village in the Carmel Mountains in Northern Israel—and several years later, I was able to visit it in person. Many of the children who come to Yemin Orde from over twenty different countries, I learned, have been separated from their families and are far away from their native lands and cultures. Yemin Orde is dedicated to giving these children the highest quality of care and education, and since its creation, Yemin Orde has occupied a unique