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Dear [REDACTED]

You may not remember me. I remember you. We were at a wedding together six years ago and I need your help. I don't need your money - this is not an appeal for a shul, a yeshiva or a poor family. It's an appeal for you to simply say something about an urgent matter. Your speaking out could be the difference in whether a young woman who desperately needs her life back can resume her life after being held hostage for 3 long years. And although your initial inclination may be to think that your actions won't make a difference and to stay uninvolved, the fact is, you are wrong! We are a community, we need one another, we depend on one another, and we simply cannot function as a religious community unless each of us does what we can for one another. Today, it's about somebody else, tomorrow it may well be about your own family member and if we don't stick together as a community, with each one of us doing what we can, well...

Six years ago, you and I were invited to the same שמחה – to the wedding of two young people who were supposed to spend their lives together – Huvi Levitin and Duvie Wieder. The marriage failed. And while it would take only one phone call to learn that Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l might have paskened here that a "get" is not required because of critical facts hidden by Duvie and his family from Huvi at the time of their wedding, the fact is Rav Moshe zt"l is not here, the Rabbanim of today are not comfortable paskaning this way in his absence. Huvi desperately needs a get, and Moshe Wieder, Duvie's father, has stated that Huvi will be able to remarry only when his son, Duvie, dies – in other words - that she will never receive a "get".

It has now been three years since the couple separated and not surprisingly based on the above, no "get" has been issued despite the tremendous efforts invested to obtain one. When I heard about this, I could not stand idly by. I went to law school with Eli, Huvi's father. I love him like a brother and I have personally witnessed that this man and his family have ALWAYS been there for every community need. I know how strongly they believe in "כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה" and how much they have invested in that value from their own successes, sometimes in ways known to the public but often not – it's simply core to their being. I have personally been the beneficiary of their friendship and support over the last 30 years and I don't even live in the same community.

With all of his success, Eli and his family need us – all of us – now and we have an obligation to respond. And so, I have decided to write this letter. I ask each of you to join me in doing what we can to help. Please do not minimize what you can do.

1. I enclose a response card like the one you got for Huvi and Duvie's wedding. You were invited by the Wieders. I ask you to send this to Duvie's family asking that Duvie give Huvi back her life by giving her a "get".

2. If you see the Wieders – Duvie, his parents, or his siblings, say something! While some think "I should stay neutral" or "it takes two to tango", the fact is "it only takes one to make war" and "Switzerland was neutral". We are a community and as Jews, we have been taught not to be silent, e.g. Yosef Hatzadik was punished for being silent when his brothers described their father Yaakov in Yosef's presence as "your slave" - "שתיקה", i.e. silence – can be interpreted as acquiescence. And we must never acquiesce in the face of impropriety.

3. Take a position! Your personal act can absolutely make a difference! To quote Mordechai from the story of Megilas Esther "ומי יודע אם לעת הזאת הגעת למלכות". "Esther, who knows whether this is why you are where you are?" and his follow up message, "כי אם החרש תחרישי" – "for if you remain silent..." This is a time to speak up! So take a position in Shul and elsewhere in support of Duvie returning Huvi's life to her by giving her a "get" immediately.

4. At a minimum, demand accountability! Expect your Rabbonim and organizations to refrain from honoring or in any way showing כבוד to people who would do harm and CALL THEM OUT when anybody is inclined to show such people כבוד in Shul or anywhere. Speak up! Challenge the allowance of such people in our shuls and in our yeshivas! It is certainly far from a mitzvah to stand by silently when somebody is being tortured and there is no question that Huvi and her entire family are being tortured here. Speak up - לא תעמוד על דם רעך!

5. הרחק משכן רע. At a bare minimum, stay away from a bad neighbor and let him/them know why. Pirkei Avos gives great advice in 3 simple words translated as "STAY AWAY". Do not invite these people to your שמחות, do not have them in your homes, do not sit with them in shul, do not socialize with them and if they walk into a room, walk out and do so proudly. Certainly, move to the other side of the room even in a ballroom. הרחק!! Stay away.

I am truly saddened to write this letter. I didn't want to. But I cannot stand idly by while Huvi and her family are suffering so terribly. I am especially galled that our religion is being used as a weapon here. What a chilul hashem! How disgusting! It should never have come to this. But we must not be silent lest our silence enable Duvie's despicable conduct, conduct apparently enabled by his family. Please, I ask you to do what you can and please do not underestimate what role each of us can play. Finally, please feel free to call me with any questions that would cause you to hesitate about acting. In this regard, I know that the Wieders are trying to portray Huvi and her family in a bad light and blaming her for the lack of a "get". But let's be honest, all it takes to write a "get" and free a woman is a Rav, ink, a quill and a man willing to do the right thing. And rest assured, the Levitins have done everything possible to free their suffering daughter. After all, if it were your daughter, wouldn't you? Unfortunately, after 3 long years of exhausting all efforts, there is simply nothing left for this family to do and it is now up to each of us to do what we can to help this young woman get her life back.

May we be זוכה again soon to come together at weddings where we will G-d willing have the opportunity to feel the true שמחה of בנין עדי עד as opposed to feeling the pain of חורבן that we are unfortunately and so unnecessarily subjected to today. I dare say that it is in our hands.

Respectfully,

Meyer Muschel