

DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY



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Zoom - most of us had never heard of Zoom, let alone used it, prior to the outbreak of Covid-19. Yet, it is now a part of our lexicon. Many people seem to have a love-hate relationship with Zoom. On the one hand, it is connecting us to family, friends, learning and social opportunities. On the other hand, we've had Zoom overload and been "Zoomed out."

Someone recently sent me a message saying that if this pandemic was 15 years ago things would have been drastically different. We would all be in our homes with our Nokia phones paying thousands of shekel a month on airtime and barely being able to see or hear anyone. The fact that Hashem brought the coronavirus now enables us to be more connected to each other. While we must maintain physical distance, we are able to be connected and see each other virtually. B"H Zoom also enables us to continue offering OU Israel Center Shiurim and youth programming via Zoom.

As part of my role in working on getting government funding for OU Israel's programs, I meet with many Knesset

members. Last week, I had a meeting with MK Tehila Friedman exploring additional ways to receive government funding for our OU Israel youth at-risk programs. She mentioned that she usually attends the UJA General Assembly this time of year, but instead of flying she addressed the conference virtually. She shared that instead of taking a week and flying to America, spending money on flights, pollution, etc, she was able to stay with her family and help her kids right before and right after her talk.

Zoom has major advantages. On a personal level, it enabled me to see my parents who live next door while we were in lockdown over the chagim, and it enabled me to meet with friends and colleagues across the world. If Zoom existed in Biblical times, in this week's Parsha when Rivka left her family to marry Yitzchak, she would have had a way to stay in touch, the same way so many of us are now connecting.

Yet, Zoom also brings with it tremendous frustration. B"H as a family with 9 kids, we are well aware of the difficulties of virtual school. Two of my kids are out of the house (one married and one in the IDF), but juggling 7 schedules and kids on Zoom school almost every hour of the day has us scrambling to plug in ancient computers and placate the teachers who understandably want the kids to join Zoom classes on time, but the kids are dependent

Happy B-day, Ernie!

on another sibling finishing the previous hours' class to then take over the computer.

Adding to the complexity of everything going on, while I eagerly await my kids going back to school to have a break from this juggling act and provide them with the opportunity to see their friends and teachers in person, there's also unease after seeing what happened the last time the country opened up again.

One thing that helps balance the challenges of this "Zoom period" is the feedback I have received from so many of you via email, fax, and handwritten letters. Hearing how Torah Tidbits and our virtual OU Israel Center Shiurim have impacted you warms my heart. Please continue to reach out (aberman@ouisrael.org).

I'd like to share one of the many notes I received that illustrate the positive aspects of Zoom. One woman wrote, "I need to tell you about something I always wanted to do but couldn't and that is come to OU Center for classes. I live in Ramat Beit Shemesh and 9 a.m. was a bit early for me. So now, I can have the shiurim come to me but never expected it would happen because of a world wide virus."

We are all familiar with the concept עבוד את ה' בשמחה, perhaps one way we can accomplish this during these trying times is to continue to share the growth going on in our lives and focus on the positive things around us, Zoom included.



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