

DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY



Rabbi Avi Berman
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This past week marked the first day of school for so many families here in Israel. Especially for families of children in 7th-10th grades who had an average of a handful of school days this academic year. When I arrived in the office last Wednesday, I realized that it was the first time since August that there was nobody in my house.

Usually, come September 1, there are many images and jokes being circulated on WhatsApp and social media with parents celebrating now that their children are out of the house and back in school. The parents can't wait for the quiet that comes along with the start of the school year. Often, the children are hesitant to go back to school, complaining that they wished summer vacation was longer. As an educator and head of an organization that works with at-risk youth, these images bothered me tremendously, and I was very pleased to realize that these "jokes" were not being circulated this week. I was also happy to see and hear that after so many

months away from school many children who may have complained about school in the past, now went excitedly.

We as a society are experiencing a re-opening of opportunities

I am well aware that this past year brought many, many challenges along with it. This year was difficult for everyone. I was personally involved in helping families of at-risk teens with extreme circumstances this year. At the same time, there are so many examples of families bonding this year.

One woman told me that her family ate breakfast together while everyone was home, and it bonded them and helped them start their days more relaxed. A grandfather shared that he spent more time on video calls with his grandchildren who were home during the week rather than rushing to Chugim or spending hours on homework. A young mother I know expressed that it's hard for her to adjust to not having her toddler home 24/7, and she misses him so much she has been leaving to pick him up from gan 20 minutes early.

While opening schools this week is a milestone for the children, we as a society are experiencing a re-opening



of opportunities as well. With so many people Baruch Hashem vaccinated in Israel and the new Tav Yarok guidelines, we are starting to “go back to normal,” and this is an adjustment for each of us in our individual lives. This past week, I went to my in-laws for Shabbat for the first time in over a year. With everyone either recovered from Covid-19 or fully vaccinated, we felt comfortable spending Shabbat together. Just as they were excited to go back to school, my children were thrilled to go to their grandparents for Shabbat. I saw that all of us – adults and children alike – appreciated being together in a different way that we would have when we took these visits for granted in many ways.

As things are opening up, all of us here at OU Israel are excitedly looking forward to welcoming you back to our building for in-person programming which has been missing for the past year. We hope you take advantage and join us as we open for special Tav Yarok programming before Pesach.



Avi
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