

DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN

Executive Director, OU Israel



Baruch HaShem, my wife and I have five boys in Yeshiva, each of whom dorms in their respective school. While it might seem strange to send a young teenager to a school that requires dorming instead of sending them to schools near our home, the years I spent dorming - both in Yeshivah high school and in Yeshivat Hesder - were some of the most incredible years of my life. I found that dorming forces teens to mature, bond with friends in new ways, connect with teachers outside of the classroom, and can play a tremendous role in shaping the personality of a child.

Based on my experiences, my wife and I decided that when looking for Yeshivot for our boys, we would be particularly open to schools with dormitory options. Currently, our kids attend four main Yeshivot - ישר"צ - (ישיבת ירושלים לצעירים), מרכז הרב, חרשה, אלון מורה. As you can imagine, it's not easy to gather all our kids together, and so my wife and I always look forward to בין הזמנים, the few times throughout the year when all Yeshivot have vacation (Sukkot, Pesach and the weeks between Tisha B'Av and Rosh Chodesh Elul). During בין הזמנים, my wife and I find ourselves marveling at our children, whose time away continues to shape their personality, their Hashkafa and their way of Limud Torah. But when it comes down to it, בין הזמנים is always family time in the Berman household.

And so when Rosh Chodesh Nissan arrived, and we stopped saying Tachanun and began saying Korbanot HaNasi'im, I got a thrill. Pesach is coming! Finally, the Berman household goes from a quiet home with three little ones, to a bustling, noisy, and upbeat environment, with more dishes in the sink than I could possibly count. Overnight our home fills with tremendous simcha. Seeing my oldest (almost 24) and my youngest (six years old) interact, enjoy each other's company and connect, is a joy I feel cannot be contained. During this time period, my wife and I so often find ourselves turning to HaKadosh Baruch Hu with overwhelming gratitude, thanking Him for the amazing gift of children who have an opportunity to appreciate one another and make memories to last a lifetime.

And as I continue to enjoy the bustling household around me, it is a reminder that Pesach is coming, which signifies a time that places a very important responsibility on me as a parent. Since this will be the last article I write before the Pesach addition, I feel it important to call attention to an incredibly valuable mitzvah that is just around the corner. As parents we are told, "והיה כי ישאלך בןך מחר לאמר מה זאת."

Children are commanded on Pesach to ask questions during ליל הסדר as we reenact what happened to the Jewish people when leaving Egypt. On Seder night, HaKadosh Baruch Hu sets the stage for us to traverse history with our children and guests,

learning about the tremendous hardships we endured that led to us becoming Am Yisrael. But beyond asking questions about **יצאת מצרים**, Seder night gives us an opportunity we cannot miss.

During just this year alone, children have experienced unique hardships. Covid-19 challenged children's friendships, connection with teachers on Zoom, it complicated the dynamics of entering or graduating schools via a virtual format, and that's just to name a few. But just like the Jewish people faced hardships of their own that allowed them to become Am Yisrael, those sitting around our Seder tables are also facing difficulties and can benefit from openly discussing them with their loved ones and offering chizuk.

As Jews, we are shaped by the trials, tribulations and triumphs of our Avot and Imahot, making their lives the most natural source of inspiration and education. With so many topics to choose from in the Haggadah, preparation is crucial for parents and those leading the Seder. There is so much that we can learn from the Haggadah, and as a parent, I have an opportunity - and a responsibility - to give these stories practical application to our lives.

The Jewish people went through tremendous suffering. How did they cope?

How did the suffering we endured allow us to become Am Yisrael?

What can we learn from the leadership of Nachson?

What can we learn from the leadership of Moshe Rabbeinu, someone who was resistant to leadership at first, but stepped up once he appreciated the need for his role?

What about the brotherhood of Moshe and Aharon, who complimented each other in their leadership?

In the coming days, my family and I will undoubtedly be busy shopping, cleaning, organizing, cooking, among so many other tasks. But the more this idea hits home, the more I realize how important it is that I not lose sight of what is crucial. With the

pre-Pesach frenzy, making time to prepare how I lead my family's Seder, taking into consideration everyone who will be seated at our table, will make an impact. I invite you to join me in this effort, as I sit down to think about which discussions would be most appropriate for each of my kids and guests, which stories to highlight that



lend themselves to meaningful conversations and where to provide moments of reflection.

Now is the time to take advantage of the unique experience **ליל הסדר** provides. May we all have meaningful, impactful and impressionable Sedarim this year.

Wishing you all an uplifting, inspiring Shabbat, and a **חג כשר ושמח**,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Avi Berman'.

Rabbi Avi Berman

Executive Director, OU Israel

aberman@ouisrael.org