Beginning Again

Yosef Levenstein | RMBA Parent

I spend a lot of time thinking about Torah learning. How much of it there is, how it gets taught, what our children will carry forward. It's close to endless, and that's the point. You don't get to the bottom of it, you just keep going deeper.

We have three children, and each of them is somewhere different. Anaelle is fifteen and came home from school wanting to talk about Lonely Man of Faith. Liam is eleven, and at Mishmar at UOS we worked through the Mishnah on building a kosher sukkah, where the conversation kept sliding past the rules into what they're actually for. Aria is eight, and with her it's the foundations. Why we keep mitzvot at all? What Shabbat is and why it matters.

Three conversations, three altitudes, the same subject. They happen in all kinds of places. Around the Shabbat table, in the car, walking to shul on a Shabbat morning.

What Tania and I try to do is show up for the question each of them is actually asking, at the age they're asking it. What we want is not that they live exactly as we do. Each of them will find their own relationship with Torah, with Hashem, with being Jewish, and we expect those three relationships to look different from each other and from ours. What we want is that they're confident in what they know and comfortable in it, fluent enough to belong in any Jewish room they walk into, whether it's more observant than ours or less. Knowledge is what makes that possible.

That's what we hope the cycle of Simchat Torah teaches them, finishing the Torah and beginning it again the same day. You never really finish. You just go around again and learn more.

Chag Sameach!