

A Thought Before Shabbat

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Last week, my husband and I completed a two and a half-year long journey. It started when we made the decision to grow our family and began learning about adoption, gathering necessary paperwork, and completing a home study with a social worker. It ended on Monday, in a Zoom hearing of the Franklin County Probate Court, when the adoption was legally finalized. Though we've known in our hearts that Ezra was our son for the past six months, it's both a joy and a relief to have that relationship formalized in the eyes of the law, with a new birth certificate and social security number arriving at our home in the next 4-6 weeks. We would never have imagined we'd be marking this moment by staring at a computer screen in our living room.

We're all familiar with the ins and outs of video chat by now, a lifeline that's allowed us to maintain something of a sense of normalcy in our abnormal new reality. We can't sing in unison, it's not really very easy to make eye contact, and it's difficult to have the types of small side conversations that make gatherings feel natural in real life. Many of us have also experienced some of the surprising upsides of this new technology, too: We can "be" with people near and far, celebrating, socializing, and even mourning with people who wouldn't have been able to join us in person under normal circumstances. As we celebrated Ezra's finalization with family and friends on Monday, I felt very acutely both what we've lost — the ability to receive hugs from family, the ability to let Ezra's grandparents hold him and kiss him, and what we've gained — the ability for loved ones from California to the UK to share a virtual space together.

We don't know what type of world our son will be entering. We barely even know yet what type of world we're living in, or what that world will look like in the weeks and months ahead. But we do know very clearly what type of family he's landed in. We know how deeply his friends and relatives around the world love him. And we know how much his shul has embraced him, even if that embrace can't yet be physical. Despite all that's lost in translation over Zoom, we've felt that love come through quite clearly over the Internet.

We've worked hard as a community to make sure that our joy is felt just as strongly for simchas as it ever was before, and that our comfort is just as tangible for those in need, too. I've felt it in my own life and pray that each and every one of us experiences that closeness, too.