



EASY GO, EASY COME

Erev Shabbos Parashas Beshalach 5783

Dear Parents,

For the past hundreds of years, our civilization has been searching for ways to make life more convenient, travel speedier and work easier. And indeed, today we live in an age of speedy fixes, instant gratification and incredibly diminished travel times.

Is this a good thing? We all certainly appreciate and rely on these advances, but the Torah shows us there is a significant downside, that has implications for how we live our lives and how we raise our children. **“The implication, as Rashi states, seems to be that being close is a negative factor...”**

This week’s *Parsha* begins by the Torah telling us that when *Bnei Yisroel* left *Mitzrayim*, *Hashem* did not lead them through the land of the *Pelishtim*, - *כי קרוב הוא* - because it (*Eretz Pelishtim*) was close (*Shemos 13:17*). The implication, as *Rashi* states, seems to be that being close is a negative factor. This is counterintuitive. When you are trying to get from point A to point B, logic would dictate to take the most direct, quick route.

The *Tzeida LaDorech*, one of the *Meforshei Rashi*, (super-commentaries) spells out the problem of something being *קרוב* being close and direct. Because the potential stopover (*Eretz Pelishtim*) is close, that makes it easy to return the way one came. Even though (a destination) being close is an advantage when going there, it is potentially damaging if one would think of retreating back to the starting point. A slightly negative experience while traveling might lead one (in this case, *Bnei Yisroel*) to abandon the journey, especially when it is so easy to return to where they started.

Hashem made the Jewish People struggle with a circuitous route through the desert, to discourage them from easily abandoning the march to *Eretz Yisrael*, and returning to *Mitzrayim* as soon as they encountered a slight obstacle on the way. If the pathway out of their previous location or situation was smooth and easy, that same pathway beckons as soon as the going gets rough. An easy exit would contribute to giving up easily on the mission, by enabling one to quickly scurry back to where he started.

This is certainly true of a physical pathway, but it also applies to any journey in life, especially the road from childhood to adulthood. If a child has things too easy, he may be constantly returning to a childish manner of dealing with things. If Abba and Imma are very protective and create a sterile environment where the child can never fall and get hurt, is protected to never get sick, to never experience failure in his studies because they always provide answers, this young person may sail through childhood without a scratch, but will just as easily fall back into a pattern of reliance on others to satisfy his needs. **“...there is great benefit for a child to experience the vicissitudes of life...”**

Just as there was great benefit to *Bnei Yisroel* traveling on a circuitous route, which was hard and time-consuming, there is great benefit for a child to experience the vicissitudes of life, at least in moderation, even at an early age. It’s ok to run and jump and then scrape one’s knee. It’s beneficial to play with others, even if he then catches a cold or flu. It’s even productive for a child to misbehave in class and to have to deal with the consequences and learn from the experience.

When parents swoop in and try to preempt the discomfort of a physical or emotional misstep, they are not properly serving their child’s needs. If they don’t allow a child to experience a poor grade due to his lack of effort, they are disabling their child. Rushing to blame others or outside circumstances when perhaps the real issue lies within the child and needs the child to work on fixing it, the parents are doing a clear disservice to their child. Parents walk a tightrope between protecting their children and allowing them to experience enough of life’s vicissitudes that they are fortified for the future. **“Parents walk a tightrope...”**

Our goal as parents is to raise children who will one day be able to manage successfully without us. Let’s make sure that the path we set them on is not controlled to be completely free of obstacles. Let’s be very sure that in their travels to adulthood, they won’t be tempted to run back to the imagined safe bubble of their childhood. Let’s do our best to make sure they reach their destination as strong, independent and capable adults.

Best wishes for a wonderful *Shabbos*,

Rabbi Kalman Baumann
Principal