



SHARE THE PAIN

Erev Shabbos Parashas Behar-Bechukosai 5783

Dear Parents,

One of the most anxiety producing and dispiriting feelings a person can have when they are experiencing a setback, failure or crisis is that they are alone in their struggle. Children especially, lacking a frame of reference, can be terrified when the unexpected occurs and they struggle to handle their feelings. They can easily catastrophize what may be a normal rite of growing up or inevitable bump in their childhood.

“Children...lacking a frame of reference, can be terrified when the unexpected occurs.”

HaGaon HaRav Avraham Pam, zt'l elaborates on an enlightening insight of the *Sefer HaChinuch*, found in this week's *Parsha*. In discussing the commandment of the *Yovel* year, the Torah sets forth the law of the freeing of one's slaves. The *Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 331)* says that the freeing of the slaves can be a traumatic experience for the slaves' masters. Having become accustomed to the services and loyalty of their devoted slave for decades and decades, it must be exceedingly difficult to have to lose that support.

Therefore, continues the *Sefer HaChinuch*, on *Yom Kippur* of the *Yovel* year, *you shall sound the shofar throughout the land (Vayikra 25:9)*. The Torah emphasizes *throughout the land* so people will realize “that this is something standard throughout the land and that everyone is doing so.” For there is nothing that encourages the hearts of human beings as something done by all. The wise man says: “The suffering of many is a consolation.”

Rav Pam extrapolates an important practical lesson. Life is filled with challenges. For some it is health, for others it is *shidduch* difficulties, *shalom bayis* issues, *parnassah* or *tzar gidul bonim* (child-rearing issues). At times, the anguish is greatly intensified because people mistakenly believe they are the only ones with this problem and must suffer alone. If they would realize that there are many others with similar problems, that would decrease the pain, as they could put their own suffering in the proper perspective.

“The suffering of many is a consolation.”

This is the lesson of the *Sefer HaChinuch*. It may be traumatic to have to free a slave who has been an indispensable part of the household for so many years. Nevertheless, if a person realizes that everyone has to do it, and everyone is going through this difficult experience, it is that much easier to bear.

For children, the distress and trauma in reaction to suffering may be greatly magnified. When they feel a certain pain, when their body begins to change, if they break a parent's item of value, if they cheat on a test, if they have some *milchigs* right after *fleischigs* they may be wracked with worry and or guilt and have no way to relieve those feelings. They may feel they are going to die, they may feel like the worst person in the universe, they may feel they have no hope for the future. All these feelings are greatly intensified because they don't realize that everyone else makes mistakes, everyone else has or will be going through similar upsets.

Parents need to be aware of and sensitive to this phenomenon and work proactively to help their children normalize the struggles of childhood and life. Open communication and non-judgmental listening to one's children is most important. When children trust that their parent will be supportive and loving no matter what the child reveals, they will be more inclined to share and be able to unburden themselves of what to them is a horrible, terrible, impossibly gargantuan disaster.

Sharing information, having age-appropriate discussions about different challenges in life, the concept of *Teshuva*, anticipating the onset of puberty, dealing with difficult people, what to do when someone makes you feel uncomfortable and how to ask for help will all go a long way in minimizing the emotional stress of a child bearing a difficult burden alone.

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Our *Chazal* understood long ago what has finally been realized in our times, that there is great therapeutic and emotional value in having support groups for scores of life's challenges. Their wisdom needs to be applied to children as well, to ensure they can feel secure and happy in their journey to a successful and fulfilling life, IY'H.

Best wishes for a wonderful *Shabbos*,

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Principal