

# Guiding Children in Troubled Times

Dear Parents,

**We have been thrust into a new reality**, that for the moment is filled with pain, anxiety and great uncertainty. Along with the grief we feel for the terrible tragedies that have befallen our extended family in Eretz Yisrael, we are experiencing a sense of bewilderment, unable to grasp the events of the past week. Maintaining equilibrium, clear thinking and the motivation to proceed productively with our roles and responsibilities is now a challenge that threatens to overwhelm us.

Without a precedent, we are in unfamiliar territory, which is disconcerting to many, and even terrifying for others. Consciously or subconsciously, we all rely on various certainties in our lives that give us security. In their absence, what should we think, what should we do, how do we find meaningful steps to take for both ourselves and our children.

See how Klal Yisrael immediately responded in amazing ways, instinctively turning to Hashem and intensifying our prayer, increasing our Tzedaka and Chesed, being more careful with our Mitzvos. We are taking on kabbalos (resolutions) to improve our maasim tovim, working on increasing our Torah learning and acting and dressing with greater modesty. We have reacted to brutality with increased sensitivity to each other and an unprecedented outpouring of love for our fellow Bnei Yisrael.

What should our thoughts and attitudes be? What do we tell ourselves in our heart of hearts? Many of our Gedolim and Talmidei Chachomim have spoken and provided guidance, insight and encouragement. What are some of the messages, that are meaningful to us and can also resonate with our children?

1. Pride in being part of Am Yisrael – the very fact we feel such pain and anguish for people we've never met and don't know, and feel their pain as ours, indicates a specialness and uniqueness to Klal Yisrael. What a privilege to be part of such a people. Our children can feel that pride and appreciate how special it is to be a part of the Chosen People. MI K'AMCHA YISRAEL!

2. Our Tefillos and Mitzvos make a real difference. Ultimate salvation comes from a spiritual reality. We are making a concrete difference when we have more kavana in davening, take extra time to say additional Tehillim, increase the time and intensity of our learning, treat each other with greater love, concern and sensitivity. It all resonates in the spiritual realm and provides the firepower for the efforts of our brave soldiers and those on the front lines. Our children need to be told that young children have a special

power in their Tefillos. Prayers from the mouths of innocent children are especially potent and precious to Hashem.

3. We need to strengthen our Emuna – our straightforward faith in Hashem. In our limited, human perspective we cannot possibly fathom why Hashem would allow this to happen, but we believe Hashem orchestrated every step. He knows what he is doing and he cares deeply about us. He will never abandon us (ki lo yitosh Hashem amo). **We make a bracha acknowledging Hashem's total dominion over all aspects of the world in both good times and bad times.** We can experience the sadness and yet be calm and resolute at the same time. Just as He, in His infinite wisdom brought a decree of pain and destruction, so will He bring salvation and healing.

There are also things that must not be shared with children. Images of the bestiality that took place can traumatize a child (or adult) and leave a permanent disturbing image in their psyche. Media and especially social media should be avoided at all costs.

Providing too many details can be harmful. Children's understanding is limited and varies greatly by age. Young children can be told that bad people have done some bad things and people are suffering. There is a war going on and we daven to Hashem that our soldiers come home safe and victorious over our enemies. Details can be added, according to the age and awareness of the child.

When Hashem upsets the normal, natural course of events, **He is sending us a message and expecting a response.** Our children will remember these times for the rest of their lives. Let us make sure that we have modeled appropriate, Torah-true attitudes and reactions. With our sincere and heartfelt efforts, may our bewilderment turn into fortitude to build a bed-rock solid faith in Hashem and may we emerge from this situation stronger and more successful than ever as we await the ultimate salvation with the coming of Moshiach Tzidkeinu, Bimheira V'yomeinu.

Best wishes for a Shabbos of comfort and spiritual growth,



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