



L'Chayim!

Dear Parents,

We wait with bated breath for news of our soldiers and their mission in Gaza. As such, much of our focus is on the young and not-so-young brave soldiers who are risking their lives to protect *Klal Yisrael*. Many volunteers from around the world, our own alumni among them, have voluntarily put themselves in harm's way for the greater mission of stopping the enemy, removing the threat and restoring the *Kovod Shomayim* that was so greatly damaged by the murderous terrorists. Where does this courage come from? **What inner strength do our fellow Jews draw from to enable them to act with such self-sacrifice?**

This week's *Parsha* informs us of the passing of our great matriarch, *Sarah Imeinu*, which took place in the month of *Marcheshvan*. *Sarah* was someone who was willing to sacrifice for her faith. The *Yalkut Shemoni* (22:98) says the following: As *Avraham* prepared to bring *Yitzchak* to the *Akeida*, he asked himself "How can I get *Yitzchak* to part from his mother?" *Avraham* informed *Sarah* that he was taking *Yitzchak* to learn Torah (in *Yeshiva Shem V'Ever*) and daven, and she gave her blessings. The *Yalkut* continues and says the *Satan* told *Sarah* that the situation is not as she thinks, but that she will never again see her son. *Sarah Imeinu* replied: "Hashem will do His will with my son."

The readiness to sacrifice is something that *Avraham*, *Sarah* and *Yitzchak* implanted in the DNA of their children and grandchildren down to our own generation. Every day we proclaim in the *Shema* our willingness to give up our very life if that's what properly serving *Hashem* calls for. Throughout history, Jews have been called upon to choose between staying alive and standing up for their faith as our forefathers did. **We are here today only because of their resolute courage in the face of life's most trying and fearful circumstances.**

Until a few weeks ago, very few of us thought in terms of this very Jewish imperative. The readiness to give up one's life was not a part of our own reality. We read stories in our history and marvel from afar at the great courage and strength of these heroes of old. Now that the world has turned upside down, and a nagging concern for our own future safety has started to creep into our consciousness, what message do we want our children to learn from current events?

Chazal teach us that there are two types of fear. One type was *Yaakov Avinu's* when confronted by *Eisav*. (*Bereishis* 32:8) That fear galvanized *Yaakov* to action, devising strategies and approaches to overcome his powerful brother and his formidable army of 400 men. The other type of fear has just the opposite effect. In the times of *Haman* and *Achashveirosh*, the Jewish People's fear paralyzed them (*Bereishis Rabba* 76:1), until *Mordechai* and *Esther* inspired and motivated them to action.

In a non-frightening way, we have the opportunity to teach our children that we are in the army of *Hashem*. We value life as precious and invaluable. Every life is an entire world. **Nevertheless, under certain circumstances, there can be something even more important than life.** As much as we may not want to face it - the possibility that we may be called upon to actually exercise the belief we state twice daily in *Krias Shema* - that we are willing to give up our very lives, has become part of our world.

When a person is willing to die for a cause or belief, it is a sure sign of what he lives for. It shows his steadfast commitment to live to uphold those causes and beliefs. It demonstrates what he values as the ultimate purpose for living. We can show our children how willing Jews throughout the ages have been, including right now in *Eretz Yisrael*, to give up their very lives to protect *Am Yisrael*. This most potent lesson can enable a child to understand how living as a *mitzvah*-observing, *chesed*-loving Jew, is the greatest life possible on this earth.

Just as the terrible suffering of our brethren has translated into an incredible outpouring of *Chesed* and connection around the world, so too may the willingness of our soldiers to risk losing their very lives produce a strengthened appreciation in all of us for what it means to live fully as a Torah-committed Jew.

Have a *lebedik* Shabbos,



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