



Erev Shabbos Parashas Bo 5780

Dear Parents,

The events and *Mitzvos* surrounding *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, the Exodus from Egypt, form the foundation of our belief in *Hashem* and His Torah. A myriad of lessons can be gleaned, which have meaning and significance for us today,

The command to eat the *Korban Pesach* for an individual or small family who wouldn't be able to finish the whole *Korban* is to join with a group and all eat together. The *Pasuk* says: (*Shemos 12:4*) ...then he and his neighbor who is near his house shall take... *Rav Moshe Feinstein zt'l* in *Sefer Darash Moshe* quotes the *Yalkut Shimoni* on this *Pasuk* as saying that 'near his house' refers to the closest neighbor possible, meaning an upstairs or across the hall neighbor. This means that *Chazal* saw a qualitative difference between a neighbor within one's own building and between a next door, next building neighbor.

Rav Moshe explains this by quoting from the *Rambam*, (*Hilchos De'os 6:1*) that since it is the nature of a person to be influenced by those around him one should seek to associate only with *tzadikim*. It stands to reason that the more contact one has with a neighbor, the more important it is for that neighbor to be one who exerts a good influence on him. Therefore, one should be more careful in his choice of neighbors with whom one shares a hallway or stairway, than with a next door neighbor who he will come across less often, when passing in the street.

Accordingly, if one has worthy upstairs neighbors, they are the best candidates with whom to share the *Korban Pesach*. If one hasn't merited virtuous upstairs neighbors, he should try at least to have worthy next door neighbors. In that way he will have suitable companions with whom to share the *Korban Pesach*. If no immediate neighbors are suitable, he will need to widen his search until he finds worthy groupmates, even if they are far away.

The issue of influence and appropriate neighbors has become one of great significance in our generation. The *Baal Teshuva* movement which has brought back tens of thousands of Jews to their spiritual roots is largely powered by the positive influence that *Rabbis*, *Rebbitzens*, neighbors and friends have had on them. On the other hand, negative influences nowadays come not just from a less than desirable neighbor. Now, the entire society exerts a negative influence with values that are antithetical to Torah.

Society's negative influence has exponentially increased through ...the internet and social networking.

he is unable to, he should stay home wilderness."

This bizarre sounding command is part of the same normative *Halacha* that commands us to make a *Bracha* before eating, place a *Mezuzah* on our doorposts, not eat *treif* food, etc. The *halacha* is that we need to go very far to avoid negative influences. It should at the very least awaken us as to the seriousness with which we are commanded to protect our surroundings and find healthy, positive environments in which to grow spiritually.

Viewing the issue from the opposite vantage point, this *halacha* can help us gain a perspective as to our and our children's responsibility to be those good neighbors and positive influence. If bad influences have the impact of forcing people to flee for their spiritual lives, how much responsibility we must have to be a source of positive influence, helping others grow in *Yiddishkeit*. We can accomplish so much by acting in a refined and kind manner, by being extremely careful with the words that cross our lips and by sharing ideas, thoughts and images that are uplifting and inspiring. If our behavior brings others down, we deserve to have others run away from us.

Living a proper life in the world today is a very delicate balancing act. Our focus and responsibility is to become that neighbor with whom everyone would wish to share their *Korban Pesach*.

We eagerly await that day.

Best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos,

Rabbi Kalman Baumann

...since it is the nature of a person to be easily influenced by those around him, one should seek to associate only with *tzadikim*.

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