

From the desk of Rabbi Baumann



A HOME... TO LAST FOR ETERNITY

Dear Parents,

Erev Shabbos Parashas Vayakheil-Pekudei Parashas HaChodesh 5780

Stuck at home? Housebound? Locked down? The situation we face is not of our making, but we can make the most of it. We are so used to going places to learn, to daven, to do things - that we may be unfairly limiting the capacity for growth and accomplishment in our own homes.

“... all the synagogues should be closed down, because their closing would not affect even one iota of Torah law.

In 1860, *Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch*, the great leader of Orthodox Jewry in Germany wrote an article in which he made an audacious proposal. He suggested to Reform Jews who thought that all religious life centered in the synagogue, that all the synagogues should be closed down, because “their closing would not affect even one iota of Torah law.” But, if one would propose removing even one of the 613 *Mitzvos*, it would cause the destruction of Judaism.

In a somewhat similar vein, the *Kedushas Levi* (*R' Levi Yitzchak of Berditchov*), commenting on *Pirkei Avos* (1:4) which says “...Let your home be a meeting place for the wise (*Chachomim*)...” says the following: “In the times of *Mashiach*, all Jewish homes will be transported to *Eretz Yisrael*.” This can be learned from the fact that all shuls will be relocated to the Holy Land (*Megilla 29a*). He says: “If shuls, whose essence is for *Tefila*, which is a *D'Rabbanan* (*Rabbinic*

Mitzva), and *Krias Shema*, about which there is a dispute if a Torah or Rabbinic *mitzvah*, will be transported, then a Jewish home, in which there are (fulfilled the Torah *mitzvos* of) *Mezuza*, *Birkas HaMazon*, *Torah* and *Tzedaka* among others, they (*Jewish homes*) will certainly be transported to *Eretz Yisrael!*”

The *Kedushas Levi* then qualifies which homes will be treated as places holier than a shul. They are those homes in which *Mitzvos* are fulfilled, Torah is learned, and there is fear of Heaven. I would add, where *Ma'asim Tovim* are performed and sensitivity to others is shown.

Our lives have been upended and we have been banished to our homes! We use terms like, quarantine, isolation and shelter in place, but we need a paradigm shift and realize we are secluded in the place that *Hashem* will realize the most potential *Nachas* from His children – a Jewish home. There is no question that it is the home that has kept *Klal Yisrael* alive and vibrant for 3,300 years.

Change is extremely hard and the familiar routines and surroundings that we took for granted one week ago are now so far from us, and how we miss them. But realize, that *Hashem* has turned the world upside down and presented us with a rare opportunity. We can and need to look at our homes in a different light. It is the place in which we will achieve real spiritual growth. It is the place in which our care for and sensitivity to others can grow to their greatest heights. And where we can achieve the greatest peace of mind and the *Nachas* that comes from investing in something truly valuable.

“...take a deep breath and realize these are special times...

We need to regard our children not as obstacles to surviving in the house for several weeks, but a vital part of an incredible journey to transform ourselves into virtual *Kohanim* doing the service in the *Beis Hamikdash*. We can work on our patience and transform our self into a more patient person. When we hold back from expressing frustration over the incessant bickering and sibling quarrels and handle the situation with a measure of calm, we can take great satisfaction that we have moved the needle of our spiritual barometer a notch higher.

As we enter a *Shabbos* that is totally home centered, against a backdrop of a world in which there may be no public *Chilul Shabbos* worldwide for perhaps the first time in thousands of years(!), take a deep breath and realize these are special times, calling for special attitudes to help bring out the absolutely great potential that lies within us and each of our special children.

Best wishes for a *Shabbos* and home of holiness, peace and health

Rabbi Kalman Baumann

-I would like to acknowledge Rabbi Akiva Males and Rabbi Shmuel Silber who shared the sources cited in the letter.

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