

From the desk of Rabbi Baumann



Dear Parents,

Erev Shabbos Parashas Vayikra 5780

These difficult days are made all the more challenging because of our tendency to dwell on all the things that (we now realize) are not in our control. We are at the mercy of forces way beyond anything we can even remotely influence. Let's take a few moments to focus on something that is very much in our control. In fact, we have been handed a golden opportunity to make a substantial positive impact on those we love the most.

What can parents do to make *Tefilla* more meaningful to their children?

At the outset of this week's *Parasha, Vayikra*, we are reminded of how we express our yearning, at every opportunity, for the rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdash* and the renewed opportunity to bring *Korbanos*, sacrifices. What are *Korbanos*? They are a physical manifestation of our attempt to connect with *Hashem* – as the name implies – *Korban* – to bring *korov* – close. We give up something of ours, dedicate it to *Hashem*, and thereby strengthen our relationship.

What means do we use nowadays, when we do not have the opportunity to approach *Hashem* in this manner? We have *Tefilla* – *Avoda Shebalev* – the service of the heart. It is a much greater challenge to maintain focus on approaching *Hashem* without the assistance of a physical prop, so to speak. With a *korban*, standing in the awesomeness of the *Beis Hamikdash*, it was certainly easier to feel a closeness to *Hashem*. In our times, we are called upon to approach *Hashem*, purely through concentrating our hearts and words, something that requires tremendous focus and effort.

True teaching comes through role modeling.

If *Tefilla* is a challenge for adults, how much more so for the children. With at best a bare-bones understanding of the meaning of *Tefilla*, and hopefully an awareness that they are talking to *Hashem*, and He wants to hear their voices, whatever they understand of that, we ask the children to say words that they do not understand, for an extended period of time, and it is a formidable task. How can we help? What can parents do to make *Tefilla* more meaningful to their children?

This unsettled period in our lives may be a once in a lifetime opportunity. There is one thing that all of us can do – demonstrate in word and deed, that *Tefilla* is IMPORTANT! This does not occur through sermons and reprimands. It does not occur through cajoling and sticker charts. True teaching comes through role modeling. If *Tefilla* is important to you, don't rush through it. If *Tefilla* is important, texting, WhatsApping, e-mailing and talking on your phone have absolutely no place while davening.

Tefilla is now taking place exclusively at home. In front of the children. *Hashem* has turned the world upside down and we have so much to daven for. It's not so hard to summon up solid *Kavanah* (intent) these days. We have so much to ask for and to talk to *Hashem* about. Become the all-important role model for your children. Emphasize to them how important it is to *daven*. Let them see you daven. Make sure they know you see them davening and that you appreciate it. Bring *davening* onto center stage in

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your house. If you have enough space, set up a little 'shul' in your house for the family. Give *Tefilla* the *Chashivus* (prominence) it deserves. Go through all the motions (and emotions) that proper *Tefilla* calls for.

Let the children's natural interest and enthusiasm for *davening* guide you. Even if your child spends much less time on daily *Tefilla* than you feel is appropriate – don't pressure them. If they seem to speed through *davening* – appreciate that they went through the motions. Demonstrate without fanfare, how it should be done. Don't praise or criticize the teacher's davening video. Demonstrate that reaching out to *Hashem* through prayer is important to you. It will thereby become important to them.

Part of our daily *Tefillos* include beseeching *Hashem* to bring us back to the glorious days of bringing *Korbanos*. Let us show our children what an opportunity and *zechus* it is to be able to approach *Hashem* through *Tefilla* even though we currently don't have the privilege of *Korbanos*. Show them that when we are in trouble, the go to address for help is *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. When we do a good job *davening*, thereby coming close to *Avinu SheBashamayim* (our Father in Heaven), *Hashem* will remove the current difficulties and undoubtedly bring us and our children up to the next level, as in the days of old, *IY'H*. May it be with the coming of *Moshiach Tzidkeinu B'Meheira B'Yameinu*.

Best wishes for heartfelt *Tefillos* and a *Yeshua*(salvation) for us all,

Rabbi Kalman Baumann