

From the desk of Rabbi Baumann



Dear Parents,

Erev Shabbos Parashas Emor 5780

As week after interminably long week of Corona-mandated confinement unfolds, we could all use guidance as to how to maintain our equilibrium, our optimism and our enthusiasm to fulfill our needs and the best interests of our family. There is no rulebook for what we are facing, and the norms that govern our 'regular' life may seem to be somewhat irrelevant. Many of us are not going to work, we can't go to shul to daven or learn, the children are not in school and even our responsibilities to visit parents may be suspended. Perhaps, we might be

thinking, we can relax a little bit. Sometimes, unfortunately, that winds up being applied to our important standards, and we end up easing up a lot on our usual self-expectations for enhanced spiritual growth and commitment.

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A beautiful example of the Jew's response to this type of situation comes to mind as we mark *Pesach Sheini*, which falls out on this *Erev Shabbos* in the calendar. *Pesach Sheini* was instituted to provide a second chance, a 'do-over' for those Jews who were justifiably unable to fulfill the obligation to bring the *Korban Pesach* in its right time, on *Erev Pesach*. The Torah tells us (*Bamidbar 9:6-14*) that a group of people (who were *Tamei* (spiritually impure) on the 14th of *Nissan* presumably because they were carrying *Yosef HaTzaddik's* coffin) approached *Moshe* and said: *...Lamah Nigorah... – "why should we be excluded"* (from the *mitzvah* of *Korban Pesach*)? They sincerely wanted to have a part in the *mitzvah* even though the circumstances completely exempted them from participating.

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l (*Darash Moshe p. 116*) among others, questions the thinking of these people, who according to *Rashi*, were proposing ways to participate that were not *Halachically* effective. When all is said and done, questions *Rav Moshe*, they will not be fulfilling the *mitzva* according to the required *Halachic* guidelines. They were therefore exempt and should go on their way and not worry about it.

Rav Moshe says we learn an incredible lesson from here. A Jew doesn't stop when there is a technical roadblock to performing a *mitzvah*. Fulfillment of a *mitzvah* is at its essence, making a connection with *Hashem*. It is strengthening the relationship. If you can't go the route of the regular standard *Mitzvah* performance, because it is physically or *Halachically* impossible, if you truly want to connect to *Hashem*, you'll do whatever you can.

Some examples that *Rav Moshe* gives are: If for health reasons, one is unable to eat a *k'zayis* (olive-sized portion) of *Maror* at the *Pesach Seder*, nevertheless let him taste a tiny piece. One may be medically prohibited from sitting in a *Sukkah*, nevertheless let him have a *Sukkah* built. When one's motivation is to be close to *Hashem*, to have a meaningful relationship with *Hashem*, he will show it in whatever way he can, no matter what restraints the physical reality around him presents. He will try to show his yearning, his desire to connect with *Hashem*, however much he can.

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How pertinent is this for us in our current circumstances! We can't go to *shul* and benefit from a *Minyan*? – so let us make some extra effort in our personal *Tefila*. We can't learn in the *Beis Medrash* and we're distracted day and night by financial worry and the incessant needs of those around us? Any effort, even smaller than before, that we make to learn, to concentrate, is a tremendous and meaningful expression of desire for closeness to *Hashem*. Our children's education is disrupted and their academic skills won't progress in a way that was expected? - so let's cheer them on for whatever they do accomplish and let's use the opportunity to help them progress even a tiny bit, in different areas of their development; their

Midos, their *Emunah* in *Hashem*, in *Kibud Av V'Eim* and in gratitude.

Pirkei Avos (2:20) teaches us in the name of *R' Tarfon*: *"... Lo Alecha Hamelacha Ligmor V'Lo Ata ben Chorin L'Heebotail Mimena."* It is not upon you to complete the task, but neither are you freed from responsibility towards it. We are not expected to accomplish everything even in good times, but we are always expected and encouraged to do something. We need to appreciate that every 'something' is meaningful and can be of enormous significance. It can certainly be a game-changing benefit for us and our children.

Best wishes for a wonderful *Shabbos*,

Rabbi Kalman Baumann

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