

# From the desk of Rabbi Baumann



Dear Parents,

Erev Shabbos Parashas B'haalosecha 5780

As the school year draws to a close, after three extraordinary months filled with their own challenges, schools everywhere face the daunting task of keeping learning exciting and fresh to the very end of the year. Remaining productive and enthusiastic after months of the same quarantine surroundings seems like a mission impossible! When we started distance learning in mid-March, along with the anxiety, there was also excitement. Is there a way to be excited about learning in June?

**Aharon HaKohein did not deviate from his initial excitement in carrying out the *mitzva*.**

In the beginning of this week's *parsha*, after *Moshe* instructs *Aharon* regarding the kindling of the *Menorah*, the Torah tells us: (*Bamidbar* 8:3) "*Aharon did so...*" *Rashi* says this was a praise of *Aharon* in that he did not deviate from the command. The *Sifsei Chachomim* (quoting from the *Sifrei*) asks – would we have expected anything less from *Aharon* than following G-d's command? Is this so noteworthy that it must be mentioned in the Torah?

Among the various answers given to this question, the *Sefas Emes* says the following: *Aharon* did not deviate from his initial excitement in carrying out the *mitzva*. It never became a matter of routine for him. Despite a lifetime of daily lightings, the *mitzva* act remained fresh and vibrant throughout his life.

How did *Aharon HaKohein* do it? We all recall the worldwide excitement just a few months ago surrounding the *Siyum HaShas*. Everyone was so focused and enthusiastic at this once-in-seven years occasion. It was an incredible celebration of our devotion to *Hashem* and His Torah. However, if we stop to think about it, can there be any more of a connection to *Hashem* than the daily *Birchas HaTorah*? Yet, that is usually mumbled with scant concentration, let alone articulated enthusiastically. Objectively speaking, there should be no difference between the *Siyum* and the *Bracha*. Are we perhaps wired to be blasé about the routine actions of our lives, or can we do something about it?

**Are we perhaps wired to be blasé about the routine actions of our lives...?**

Clearly, there is an important factor that dampens our excitement. We usually take things for granted. Our health, our families and our *parnassah* all get scant attention until something happens to throw them into question, *R'L*. We and our children (used to) take school for granted. Let's stop to think how our mindset is so different now than it was just this past Purim. Our Yeshiva was suddenly taken away from us, and all that we took for granted is now the object of great longing. When we're denied something we long for it, even fight tenaciously for it, but once we have it back, we risk becoming complacent about it again.

To retain excitement for something done frequently we can first focus on the importance of what we are about to do. In *davening*, learning Torah, or performing a *mitzvah*, we can keep in mind to Whom we are praying, Who commanded us to learn Torah and do *mitzvos*. In practical terms, creating benchmarks can motivate us. Reading just a few words at a time (linear *siddurim* can help) helps concentration. Setting a goal, for example, of carefully reading three lines with absolutely no errors in *kriah*, counting the number of times we say "*baruch*" in *baruch she-amar*, keeps us tuned in to what we are doing. Celebrating when we finish learning even a small amount of Torah, can add so much enthusiasm.

Slurpies anyone? Or a special outing, special time with Abba?

**... will help create awareness and appreciation for what we hope will soon be our routine life once again.**

We can and should help our children appreciate what they have when they have it. Just as we shouldn't take our families and a loving home for granted, we can all appreciate any opportunity to learn Torah. The trying experience of the past three months can be harnessed to help children and parents appreciate the blessing of children being in a yeshiva, among wholesome, like-minded friends thriving in a supportive environment every single day. Focusing on this when we reflect and continue to experience the upheavals that Covid-19 has brought, will help create awareness and an appreciation for what we hope will soon be our routine life once again. Life and school should never again be seen as drudgery, but rather a golden opportunity to have a meaningful, fun and safe day.

This awareness should help us get through each day, looking forward to the treasure that will IY'H be in store for us again one day very soon. If we can internalize such an appreciation in ourselves and our children, we will be able to look back upon the Covid experience as one that made a permanent, positive impact on our lives. Can there be a bigger *Bracha* than that?

Best wishes for *Nachas* and *Hatzlacha*!

Have a most illuminating Shabbos,

*Rabbi Kalman Baumann*