

# From the desk of Rabbi Baumann



Dear Parents,

Erev Shabbos Parashas Nasso 5780

Motivation is a topic that is always relevant, and especially important as 'Coronavirus Fatigue' is coupled with our entering the closing weeks of this most unusual (and seemingly longest) school year. Motivating children and parents to maintain the same level of enthusiasm for learning now as several months ago, may be truly beyond reach, but it is the perfect time to explore the factors that are essential for any person to be properly motivated.

This week's *Parsha*, which deals with the unique subject of *Sotah*, describes an unfaithful woman who has apparently stooped to behavior that is ranked among the worst *aveiros* (sins) a person can commit. There are numerous details surrounding the procedure and sacrificial offerings of the *Sotah*, and there is an astounding lesson buried in one of the details.

**Levona (frankincense) is not added .. because ... this woman has departed from the ways of our Mothers.**

of our *Imahos*. How can this be a complaint against this woman? It would seemingly be more to the point to say this woman's behavior was sub-human and that she possibly violated one of the three cardinal sins! But to accuse her of not going in the ways of our *Matriarchs*, is seemingly way off the mark.

The *Rosh HaYeshiva* *zt'l* explains that in fact, the *Torah* is not finding fault that this woman did not reach the *Madreiga*, the lofty level of the *Imahos*. Her shortcoming was a lack of interest and desire to try following in their footsteps. She followed a path in life in which pursuing the high bar of exalted behavior was never a serious consideration. For that, the *Torah* is exceedingly hard on her – had she attempted to emulate to some extent, the superior morality and refinement of the *Imahos*, she would not have sunk to such a level of depravity.

When we try to analyze why some children turn out this way or that way, why some follow in the path of their parents and others go in a different direction, it is very tempting to find an event, a watershed moment, a particular 'right' or 'wrong' decision made by a parent, as the reason to explain the outcome. That may be missing the point. Rather, by focusing on our children's motivation and their aspirations, we will more likely be tapping into the strongest predictor of the type of person they will become. This is where we should focus our efforts to influence them.

What the *Sotah* was apparently lacking is precisely the area we should look to, to help our children. They benefit greatly from being introduced to positive reasons to improve and shine. Extrinsic motivators, like candies, toys and fear of punishments may work in the short run. True motivation, however, comes from inside. They need to hear from parents and teachers how great is their potential, how meaningful is every *mitzvah* performed and each *Bracha* recited. How they act and how hard they try makes a difference in the world, and they bring *Hashem Nachas* when they keep trying something even though it is hard.

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or bribing to do this *mitzvah* or that *chesed*. The children's efforts, with our encouragement, need to be focused on deep internal feelings of wanting to emulate our people's great role-models. By keeping our eyes on the long-term prize, we will truly be fulfilling our obligation as parents. May *Hashem* bless our efforts to stay the course, to maintain our motivation to be the best parents we can be.

Best wishes for a wonderful, fatigue-free *Shabbos*,

*Rabbi Kalman Baumann*

The *Pasuk* tells us (*Bamidbar* 5:15) that the woman brings a *Korban* (offering) but highlights the fact the the spice *Levona* – frankincense, is not put on the *Korban* as is usual for meal-offerings. *Rashi*, quoting the *Medrash Tanchuma* (*Paragraph* 3) explains the reason why *Levona* is not added is because *Levona* is a reference to the *Imahos* (*Matriarchs* - *Sarah*, *Rivka*, *Rachel* and *Leah*) and this woman has departed from the ways of our Mothers.

Our late *Rosh HaYeshiva*, *Hagaon Harav Alter Chanoch Henach Leibowitz, zt'l* finds this difficult to understand (*Sefer Chidushei HaLeiv* p. 21-22). Many righteous women have not achieved the level

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We can be fairly confident that were *Avraham*, *Yitzchak* or *Yaakov* forced into quarantine, their patience, calm demeanor, *kavana* in *Tefilla* and *Torah* learning would not have been affected to any perceptible degree. The same cannot be said for anyone alive today. However, what will ultimately spell the difference between those who grow from the current difficulties and those who slip or fail to grow from them, will undoubtedly be traced back to how strongly they were motivated to attempt to continue to follow the path of greatness, despite the rocks, potholes and thistles along the way.

Developing strong motivation to work hard, be kind, do *Mitzvos* and in general to follow in the ways of *Hashem*, to aim high and keep on trying, will do much more for the children than pushing