



ACHDUS IS OUR STRENGTH

Erev Shabbos Parashas Ki-Seitzei 5780

Dear Parents,

The anticipation, jitters, excitement and relief that we experienced this week as our children returned to Yeshiva and a full schedule of school life, need to be appreciated and understood for the great step forward that it is. We cannot know what the future weeks and months have in store for us, and we need to maintain the highest level of vigilance and care possible to keep ourselves and others healthy and safe, nevertheless, we can take encouragement and inspiration from our return to in-school learning for most, and hybrid learning for everyone else.

...we can take encouragement and inspiration from our return to in-school learning...

Facing enormous challenges, uniting and dealing with the myriad obstacles and uncertainties bears an uncanny resemblance to preparations for an impending war. It is interesting to take note that this week's *Parsha* begins with the words: *Ki Seitzei LaMilchama al Oyvecho* – "When you go out to war on your enemies..." (*Devarim* 21:11) The *Kli Yakar* closely examines the words of the *Pasuk* and has several questions: 1) Why the word – *Teitzei* – "go out". *Teileich* – "go" is sufficient. 2) Why say *Oyvecha* – "upon your enemies." Who else would you wage war on?

To answer, the *Kli Yakar* explains things are not so simple. Internal strife is quite common. Just look at what happened to the Jews at the end of the second *Beis Hamikdash*. Fighting among brothers lead to the Temple's destruction and the exile of the Jews. Part of the Torah's message here is – when you choose to go to battle – don't let that battle happen within your own locale, rather – go out and away from those close to you. When going to war, you can choose who you fight – make sure you are battling with your true enemies, not members of your own community.

If the Torah needs to point out to us this seemingly simple message – when you fight, fight enemies, not friends, it becomes obvious that it is easy to fall into the trap of becoming adversarial with those closest to you. Fighting with allies, battling with comrades is not uncommon. Maintaining peace and harmony within one's ranks, especially in times of high stress, takes work.

When going to war... make sure you are battling with your true enemies, not members of your own community.

Reflecting upon the efforts our different 'battalions' have expended over the past many months, we can perhaps point to our greatest strength, and understand the factors that have brought us to this day. Our parent 'battalion' circled the wagons and carried their children's education forward with tremendous sacrifice, never losing sight of the value of study and growth within the Yeshiva. The teaching 'battalion' persevered, learned and adapted on the spot and with great courage and determination returned to a new educational reality, with all of its challenges. The many friends and supporters of the Yeshiva demonstrated their conviction in the necessity of Torah study, and their confidence in the Yeshiva to carry on the legacy of *chinuch* and *mesorah*. The various administrators, directors and support staff of the Yeshiva soldiered on throughout the many months to enable the reopening of school.

While each of the efforts and accomplishments are noteworthy, they achieved success because there was *achdus* – unity. Despite untold differences of opinion, attitudes, approaches and principles, we were all unified in our goal of doing what is best for the potential that lies within each child. We never allowed those differences to turn us into 'enemies' and we kept our eyes on the prize.

...we were all unified in our goal of doing what is best for the potential that lies within each child.

The joy and *nachas* of seeing our precious children back in Yeshiva is indescribable. They each represent a world of potential, whether we see them in person, or on the screen. Let us take this achievement of *achdus* and treasure it, nurture it and continue to make the great effort to maintain it, for the sake of our children and the future of *Klal Yisrael*.

Best wishes for a Shabbos of pride and *nachas*,

Rabbi Kalman Baumann