



INTEGRITY – INSIDE AND OUT

Dear Parents,

Erev Shabbos Parashas Ki-Savo 5780

A struggle that is common to all mankind is balancing one's outer persona with one's inner secret world. One of the highest levels a person can attain is to become someone who is *Tocho K'Baro* – his inner self is the same as his outer behavior makes him appear. This is called integrity – a person with integrity can be trusted that his behavior away from prying eyes is as elevated and moral as when he is in public.

The eleven curses, enumerated in this week's *Parsha*, pronounced as half of *Klal Yisrael* gathered on *Har Ayval*, bring out this idea of inner integrity. The *Chizkuni*, (*Devarim 27:15*) points out that the eleven *Aveiros* are singled out for a curse, because they are all actions that cannot be easily discerned by others. For example – if a person curses his mother and father – who on the outside will know?

HaRav Shamshon Rephael Hirsch zt'l elaborates and explains that blessing is denied specifically “to him who outwardly plays the pious man devoted to G-d, but in secret denies the existence of One G-d and His Rule; who is outwardly respectful to his parents but inwardly considers himself vastly superior to them... One who does not dig a dagger into his neighbor, but under the cloak of conversation murders his happiness, his peace and his honor.”

In a similar vein, there is an old, popular, comical story from the Eastern European *shtetl*, with a very serious message. The villagers agreed to come together to provide wine for the communal *Shabbos Kiddush* they shared each week. Everyone agreed to pour or add a pitcher of wine into the community barrel, and this way everyone could share in the *kiddush* wine each week. One fellow, *Berel*, who was quite poor, came up with a plan to ‘participate’ in a way that would not cost him any money. He brought his pitcher to the barrel, and secretly poured in a pitcher-full of water into the wine barrel. No one would ever know...

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Imagine the surprise and astonishment that occurred the next *Shabbos* as the *Shamash* of the town's *Shul* opened the barrel and drew out a pitcher of... Water! Apparently, everyone had the same idea as *Berel*! This was a *shtetl* with a severe shortage of integrity.

We live in a world and time of great interdependence. The world of commerce and industry is multinational. Nations' prosperity depends on many factors beyond their border and beyond their control. The adage of “it takes a village to raise a child” rings very true. We are very dependent on each other's integrity, forthrightness and sensitivity.

As we navigate the new challenges of proceeding with ‘normal’ living in the midst of a pandemic, the need to rely on each other is greater than ever. As a Yeshiva and as a community, our very health depends on each other – to be precautionary and to be forthright when there is even a slight concern that someone may have been exposed to the virus or may have symptoms. The ability to accept the disruption, expense and inconvenience of a child with a fever, for example, and to quarantine and let the school know about it, calls for great integrity, honesty and sensitivity.

It is truly inspiring to have experienced firsthand over the past two weeks the level of integrity among our parents. Parents have stepped forward to report health issues that cropped up and were covid related. They have asked questions when even the slightest doubt arose. This clear measure of honesty and sensitivity to the needs of others will not only be the key to keeping everyone healthy, but it also bodes very well for our students, for it is well known that children learn from their parents' actions, way more than from their words.

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According to the degree that we can triumph over the pressure to cover-up, hide information and misrepresent ourselves and our actions, in such a measure will our homes be filled with the bountiful *Brachos* that *Hashem* bestows upon His people. *Kein Yehi Ratzon*. May it be His will!

Best wishes for a *Shabbos* of *Bracha* and *Nachas*,

Rabbi Kalman Baumann