



THE RESET BUTTON

Dear Parents,

After thirteen months of struggling with the Coronavirus, we all see the light at the end of the tunnel. Whether we are among those who feel it's a thing of the past, or maybe just a small problem now, or at the other end of the spectrum that it's still of significant concern, no one views our current circumstances the same as six, nine or certainly twelve months ago. We are entering a period of change and a lowering of the alarm and concern that has governed our behavior over the past year.

In contemplating our return to 'normal' or 'new normal' we owe it to ourselves, family and community to examine what we permitted ourselves to do and not do during Covid. Many of us took on new projects, resolutions and practices and those should be continued and strengthened. On the other hand, we all accepted the necessary compromises in our behavior, in following the Torah's rule of *V'Nishmartem Meod L'Nafshoseichem*. (based on Devarim 4:15), *carefully guarding our health*, including learning commitments, communal *Tefila* and even *Mitzvah* observance.

What should our focus be now? It's important to analyze our own behavior in terms of going to *shul*, *shiurim* and reinstating our *chesed* involvements. With care and sensitivity, we should be ratcheting up our *Hachnosas Orchim*, attendance at *Simchas* and sharing in others' difficulties. Our thoughts should include looking out for others who may not be doing so well and are perhaps suffering serious aftereffects of illness or isolation.

Perhaps our biggest task and greatest effort needs to be in caring for our children's spiritual, emotional and physical health. A six-year old has just spent nearly 20% of his life in difficult times. Parents have tried heroically and with great effort and perseverance to maintain a happy, productive home for themselves and their children. The unnatural circumstance of spending some huge chunks of time at home, an inordinate number of months almost exclusively with immediate family, may have left some unhealthy practices or even scars.

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aimlessness, fighting and carrying-on were filled with newly granted screen time for learning and for other things. Like so many facets of life, technology is both a blessing and a curse.

As we experience entering a period of time where technology is not so essential for our children's successful functioning, we need to take stock of what new habits have become engrained in the fabric of our family life. Have we given our children access to devices that we didn't permit them before Covid? Have we allowed an increase in their screen time to an amount that we wouldn't have, if not for Covid? Have we stopped feeling that twinge of pain when our child sits in front of the screen and have we given up and accepted it as part of the new normal?

If these scenarios and related ones accurately describe your current situation, STOP. Take a look at what your children are doing, with a fresh set of eyes. Think back to what your standards and principles were in early 2020. Think about what you wished those standards had been back then. Regain control of the devices in your home and family. Think twice and three times before handing your child your smart phone for 'a few minutes' to keep them occupied while waiting for you to be ready for them. If you gave them a device as a gift, feel empowered to greatly limit their access. Make your values clear to your children and promote pride in having elevated standards in your family.

It's too easy to get caught in an unhealthy pattern of behavior. One cannot get out of such a rut without concerted effort. Things won't just get better by themselves. Parents usually do right by their children, when they give some focused thought to what is needed at that time. Now is the time to hit RESET and reclaim your ideals and your children's future by climbing out of the covid rut and courageously climbing up the ladder to a successful and wholesome future for you and your family.

Best wishes for a healthy and happy Family Shabbos.

Rabbi Kalman Baumann

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