



RULES ARE MADE TO BE...FOLLOWED!

Dear Parents,

Erev Shabbos Parashas Bamidbar, Likras Shavuos 5781

Our Holy Torah is filled with many life lessons, stories of great inspiration, secrets of the universe and the most profound insights into human behavior. However, at its most basic level, the Torah is a compendium of laws (See *Rashi* on *Breishis 1:1*). *Hashem* in His infinite wisdom has created a world filled with His creations, and designed it to run according to laws – laws of nature, laws of science and for His chosen people, the pinnacle of *Hashem's* handiwork, He commanded us to achieve fulfillment under the rules delineated in the Torah.

Different societies and different cultures have related to rules and regulations with varying degrees of commitment. Our modern, Western culture does not do so well with rules. The 'sophistication' of our open society and access to on-line information has so eroded respect for authority and genuine expertise that regard for rules has taken a back seat. When a person considers himself as knowledgeable and expert as the professional, the feeling that one needs to follow the instructions and guidance of an educator, doctor, lawyer etc. dissipates. Our experience with Covid only reinforces that.

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This loss of a sense of rule-following, of obedience to a higher authority, has seemingly spread to a weakening in following instructions of parents and teachers. Young children no longer automatically listen to adults for what should be the obvious reason to listen - because they are the adults! This is having a devastating impact on our children. Many children have a hard time adapting to school and classroom rules because they have not been trained to follow the rule of an adult. Parents, out of fear of alienating even the youngest of children, compromise, negotiate and bribe their little ones into following (somewhat) the most basic of routines such as mealtime, bath time and bedtime.

What a disservice! Humans, especially children, find security and peace of mind within set boundaries, clear expectations and the confidence that adults mean what they say. When parents set and state rules and procedures clearly, are positive but firm in the follow through, and consistently maintain an expectation of proper behavior, they are building a self-confident child.

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Part of the challenge that parents face, is due to their failing to clarify in their own mind what is a reasonable expectation for the child at his or her particular stage in life. They may not have a clear plan for follow-through when the child delays or resists complying with that expectation. It is common for parents to not even realize or notice that their children's (mis)behavior is manifesting disrespect to them. The *Chofetz Chaim* in *Sefer*

Chomas Hadas (Fortress of Faith) *Maamar 2* towards the end) states openly that parents have an obligation to spend time thinking about and discussing at regular, frequent intervals, this specific aspect of child-raising, among others.

Just as *Hashem* gave us a Torah that is filled with lessons and laws, we give over to our children a world filled with wonders and also rules and procedures they need to follow in order to function. " *ונשמע ונעשה we will do and we will understand*" was the great secret that the Jewish people manifested at the giving of the Torah. Before we gained an understanding of the "why" we undertook the "what."

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Our children desperately need us to set limits, establish and follow through on rules.

They are ready to take on the "what" if only we are there to guide them. Once their ability to function successfully in a world of rules and procedures is firmly established, they can with maturity, approach the "why" with an open mind and searching heart.

It is up to us, to lay a solid foundation of rules, upon which our children can construct the edifice of their lives. May we all successfully achieve a true *Kabbolas HaTorah*, a renewed acceptance and internalization of the eternal truths of the Torah, this *Shavuos*.

Best wishes for an enjoyable Shabbos and inspired Shavuos,

Rabbi Kalman Baumann