



LET YOUR SPIRIT(UALITY) SOAR

Dear Parents,

Erev Shabbos Parashas Netzavim 5781

This week's *Parsha* describes the special *Bris*, the oath, that *Klal Yisrael* made with *Hashem* on the last day of *Moshe Rabbeinu's* life. As explained by *Rashi*, the reason for this special *Bris* (*Devarim 29:15-16*) was to strengthen the connection between the Jewish People and *Hashem*. What was the matter that prompted this? *Rashi* describes how the Jews observed the Egyptians and other nations worshipping idols, and the concern was perhaps one or more of them were negatively influenced by what they saw. To counteract that, the force of an oath was necessary to ensure their fidelity to *Hashem*.

“...the Jews observed the Egyptians and other nations worshipping idols...”

Rabbi Shlomo Yonasan Harris, Shlita, quotes *Rav Moshe Feinstein zt'l.* as brought in *Sefer Kol Rom*, who questions how great could the influence have been? The Jewish People traveled out of Egypt and passed through other countries. They had no interaction with the locals and their exposure was fleeting. Furthermore, the Torah describes how disgusting and loathsome *Avoda Zara* was to the Jewish People. Nevertheless, the Torah is telling us that on a sub-conscious level, there was an impact. The vast majority of people were not affected by it, but some individuals may have been susceptible.

If someone can be negatively influenced by a brief, passing exposure to something that on a conscious level he finds disgusting, how much more pronounced will the bad influence be from something that seems very appealing and is constantly present. We live in a society that continually tempts us with superficially beautiful and attractive things and activities. This is clearly a set up for significant negative influence. When we throw modern technology into the mix, that makes all these temptations so accessible, we are in very great danger of being pulled, stumbling and falling spiritually.

“...we ourselves are throwing obstacles in our path by heavy involvement with our devices.”

As we approach *Rosh Hashana* and look for areas in which to improve and make a meaningful upgrade in our spiritual life, resolving to take our exposure to media down a notch or two seems to be a great place to start. We all want to improve our davening and learning, but may not realize that we ourselves are throwing obstacles in our path

by heavy involvement with our devices. Cutting down the amount of time, the number of sites and limiting the type of entertainment we engage with, are all positive steps that will yield real benefits to our spiritual side.

The beauty of such an approach is the impact it will have on our children. I venture to guess that there are very few among us who have not at some point regretted the amount and type of involvement they have had with their devices during the past year. When our children see we are taking concrete steps to change a very real part of our daily activities and are consciously working to increase the quantity of our learning and quality of our davening, they will internalize a most important message: A person can make mistakes and get carried away, but if ultimately, we are working on ourselves, trying to be more in control and making better choices, then we are on the path that *Hashem* desires. Then we are being positive role models of growing individuals. This will help our children in life as much as anything else we can provide for them.

“When our children see we are taking concrete steps to change ... they will internalize a most important message.”

Best wishes for a *Kesiva V'Chasima Tova*, a year filled with blessings of good health, *parnassah*, *nachas* and spiritual accomplishments,

Rabbi Kalman Baumann