

From the desk of Rabbi Baumann



HONOR YOUR TEACHER

Dear Parents,

Erev Shabbos Parashas Ki Sisa 5782

Embedded in this week's *Parsha* is a fundamental principle that shows us to how increase success in one's learning.

The *Gemara* in *Eiruvin* (54b), partially cited in *Rashi* on *Shmos* 34:32, describes how *Moshe* taught the *Torah* to *Klal Yisrael*. Turns out, it was a rather complicated procedure. *Moshe* taught it first to *Aharon*, next to *Aharon* and his sons, after that to *Aharon*, his sons and the *Zekeinim* (Elders) and finally to *Aharon*, his sons, the *Zekeinim* and all of *Klal Yisrael*. By the end, *Aharon* heard the entire *Torah* four times from *Moshe*, his sons *Elazar* and *Isamar* three times, the *Zekeinim* twice and *Klal Yisrael* once. Subsequently, *Aharon* taught it to *Klal Yisrael*, then his sons taught and then the *Zekeinim*. In this way, everyone heard the *Torah* taught a total of four times.

The *Gemara* asks – would it not have been more effective to have *Moshe* himself teach it four times to everyone? The *Gemara* answers that it was to give honor to *Aharon*, his sons, and the Elders, which was shown by the private lessons with *Moshe* that they received. If so, the *Gemara* continues, why didn't *Moshe* teach it four times to *Aharon*, then *Aharon* teach it four times to his children and so on. The conclusion of the *Gemara* is that hearing directly from *Moshe* helped the *Klal Yisrael* be more successful in their understanding of the *Torah*.

What this means to say, is that while it would have made the most sense educationally to learn directly from *Moshe*, the Jewish people were made to settle for the seemingly second best educational approach, because the need to honor *Aharon* and the other leaders outweighed that consideration. Instead of hearing from *Moshe* four times, they only heard from him once.

Our *Rosh HaYeshiva*, *HaGaon HaRav Alter Chanoch Henach Leibowitz zt'l*, asks - was it right to sacrifice even to a small extent, the quality of the eternal transmission of *Torah* and the spiritual level of *Klal Yisrael*, just to give honor to our leaders?

The *Rosh HaYeshiva* zt'l offers an eye-opening insight into the secret of how *Torah* is transmitted from one generation to the next. Even more than the quality of the educational instruction, it is the honor and esteem in which the *Torah* teachers are held, that impacts the transmission. With proper respect, the leaders' teachings will enter one's heart and their full impact will be absorbed and appreciated. On the other hand, where respect is lacking, the lessons and truths of the *Torah* will not be absorbed properly. By giving honor to *Aharon* and the other leaders and enhancing the esteem in which they were held by the people, their giving over of the *Torah* was enhanced and the understanding was deepened to a degree that may have exceeded that which *Moshe Rabbeinu* himself could

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have provided. They were not losing out by this arrangement; they were harnessing a powerful tool to acquire the beauty and wisdom of the *Torah*.

We are all attuned to the importance of a good relationship between our children and their teachers, in terms of our children's motivation and positive attitude. How much have we considered the importance of the honor and esteem in which our children relate to their teachers, especially *Torah* teachers, *Rebbeim* and *Moros*? Have

we considered our role in strengthening our children's respect for their teachers, and despite occasional differences of opinion worked proactively on building up the stature of the teachers in our children's eyes?

We see from this episode that being supportive and respectful of teachers is more than good *Midos* – it is a key to ensuring our children's success in effectively and thoroughly absorbing the truths of our *Torah*. This is a responsibility shared by school and home alike – to speak and act in a manner that elevates, in our children's eyes, the stature and honor of their teachers.

How does this work on a practical level? Fathers – do you train your sons to 'give *Shalom*' to *Rabbonim* and older gentlemen? When you are at shul or any occasion with your son, and you notice the presence of his *Rebbi* (past, present or future) do you make sure to show honor to the *Rebbi* and encourage your son to greet the *Rebbi* properly and respectfully? Mothers, when you've sent a note of appreciation to your daughter's *Morah*, have you shared your feelings of gratitude with your daughter and shown a genuinely high regard for her teacher? At the *Shabbos* table, when the topic of discussion turns to *Rabbonim*, *Mechanchim* and *Gedolim*, are they referred to in reverential tones, and are their positive traits and greatness illuminated and emphasized?

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By realizing that our attitude towards our *Torah* teachers and leaders are not just 'another thing' that *Torah* Jews are supposed to follow, but lie at the core of our and our children's success in *Torah* learning, we'll find it easy to excel in developing such an attitude, and thereby merit the *Nachas* of having children who follow in our ways.

Best wishes for a *Shabbos* of honor and *Simcha*,

Rabbi Kalman Baumann

