



EVERYONE ELSE...

Dear Parents,

Erev Shabbos Parashas Emor 5782

Last week's letter spoke of various areas requiring parental strength and assertiveness, especially when dealing with a child who refuses to comply with instructions. Among those challenges is contending with a child's pressure to acquiesce to their request for some thing or some activity that "everyone else is doing." A parent's resolve to firmly stand up for what he or she believes is right for the child is juxtaposed to a fear of alienating the child by disappointing the request of the moment. How can we help ourselves stand strong?

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A fascinating insight from this week's *Parsha* comes by way of the wisdom of *Rabbi Yissocher Frand, Shlita*. The very first *Pasuk* tells us: "*Hashem said to Moshe: Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon, and tell them...*" (*Vayikra 21:1*) Can you say something to people *without* telling them? *Rashi* answers this question by explaining that *Hashem* was commanding *Moshe* to tell the adult *Kohanim* to teach their children the *Halachos* that apply specifically to *Kohanim*.

It turns out, this *Pasuk* is a primary source for the *mitzvah* of *chinuch* for all Jews, not just *Kohanim*. Parents are obligated to teach their children the *Halachos* that apply to them. *Rabbi Frand* asks – why here? If the Torah is choosing one place to instruct all parents that they need to educate their children to follow the Torah's laws, why place that command in a relatively obscure spot that ostensibly is addressing *Kohanim* exclusively? If the message is for the broader community of Jews, place the command where it will be most prominent, such as by the laws of *Pesach*, *Yom Kippur* etc.

Rabbi Yaakov Weinberg, ZT'L, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Ner Yisrael explained that placing this *chinuch* command by a *halacha* only relevant to *Kohanim* is actually very appropriate. As he explains, and as stated above, so much of parenting is the ability to withstand that 'famous personality', "Mr. Everyone Else." "But everyone else is going. It's not fair. You never let me go along with everyone else."

Who has to deal with these complaints more than anyone else – the most restrictive parents of all, (at least during the times of the *Beis HaMikdash*) - the *Kohanim*! Imagine the following: Little Shmulik is heading out the door with his bat and ball. "Where are you going?" asks his father. "To play baseball." "I meant *where* are you going, what field are you playing in?" "You know, that empty lot at the end of town," responds Shmulik. "Ahh. Shmulik, as far as I know, the only way to get to that field is to cut through the cemetery. We *Kohanim* are not allowed to walk through a cemetery." "It's not fair!" Shmulik shouts

indignantly. "Last week I couldn't play in back of our house because there were *shertatzim* (crawling creatures that transmit impurity) and you were afraid I would contaminate all the *Terumah* in the house, and now I can't play baseball with my friends. You never let me do what everyone else is doing."

What comes next is well known to all parents. The tears, the shouting, the sulking. It's painful to watch, but our better judgment tells us not to let them go. From where can a parent get the fortitude to stand firm in doing what's best for the child? How can we teach our children the proper path of Torah without alienating them?

Rabbi Frand suggests that the answer lies in this *parasha* in which the Torah decides to teach us about *chinuch*. Why is Shmulik not allowed to become *Tamei*? Is it because his father is meaner and more restrictive than other parents? Certainly not. It is because Shmulik's father is aware of Shmulik's special status as a *Kohein*, and he wants Shmulik to know and appreciate his role in *Klal Yisrael*. He will do more than simply say no – he will sit down with Shmulik and explain to him how special he is and what a privileged status he has, to one day be able to serve in the *Beis HaMikdash*.

We can be the same. Merely saying no constantly to our child's wishes will lead to endless fighting and possible alienation, R'L. What we need to do is to discuss with our children, the special role we have in the world. Our holy eyes cannot see things that others can see, our *kedusha*-filled hearts will be contaminated if we eat food that others are allowed to eat and our holy *neshamos* could be tarnished by listening to music that others listen to. We are special, with a unique role to play in the world.

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If we emphasize and focus on what a privilege it is to be part of such a holy nation, we will be able to find relief from our difficult enemy, 'Mr. Everyone Else'.

Best wishes for a very special Shabbos,

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