YESHIVA TORAS CHAIM TORAS EMES

From the desk of Rabbi Baumann

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Dear Parents, *Erev Shabbos Parashas Behar5782*

The demands on a parent can at times seem overwhelming. Despite our best efforts, we frequently fall short of our own expectations, lose our equilibrium and can at times wonder in the deepest recesses of our heart – why is Hashem doing this to me? I must be the worst parent ever. My children deserve better. Such feelings, if allowed to fester and persist, can cause real damage if they lead to our giving up the effort to guide our children on the path in which we truly believe.

"…– why is Hashem doing this to me?"

A reassuring perspective can be gleaned from this week's *Parsha.* In the *Yovel* year, the 50th Jubilee Year, one of the commands is to blow a *Shofar* on *Yom Kippur*, *in the entire land. (Vayikra 28:9).* What is the purpose of blowing the *Shofar?* We have many *Mitzvos* – we don't blow the *shofar* for other *Mitzvos?*

The *Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 331*, explains: Freeing one's slave after so many years (one of the *Mitzvos* of *Yoveil* is that slaves go free) is extremely difficult. The master has come to rely on the help that has become part of his life's routine and it is very hard to change and now have to manage without. Therefore, in order to uplift his heart and give him the fortitude to carry out this *mitzvah* (of freeing his slave), the *Shofar* is blown for all Jews, everywhere, to announce and remind everyone of the command to free their slaves.

How does that help? The *Sefer HaChinuch* continues: *The realization that this painful process of separating from one's slave(s) is not his to suffer alone, but that all of Klal Yisrael is in it together, is the most powerful force possible to strengthen the individual's resolve. As the wise man said: "צער רבים - נחמה – shared pain brings comfort."*

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When a person thinks that a challenge he is facing is a private battle, a personal difficulty that he and he alone is enduring, the pain can be crushing and devastating. However, when a person sees he is one of many in the same boat, enduring a similar hardship, he feels so much better. He no longer feels like *Hashem* is out to `get him' C'V. His challenge becomes normalized and loses its stigma.

This clearly applies to parenting. We (too) frequently make comparisons between our children's behavior and what we observe in the children of Family x. We mistakenly assume that what we see is a constant and that Family x is typical of most everyone else and that we are the outliers. Our kids can't sit still, they disturb and embarrass us. Everyone who sees us must think we are the worst parents ever. We are suffering and endure it in the privacy of our hearts. We should apply the words of the *Sefer HaChinuch* to our situation, addressing our perspective and realize – we are looking at it the wrong way. What we think is a problem only for us, exists everywhere. It is commonplace for parents to struggle, it is normal and you are part of a very large group that exists everywhere.

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We see from the fact that Hashem created a new *Mitzvah* – the blowing of the *Yoveil Shofar* – just how much importance He gives to people's feelings and resolve. The *mitzvah* didn't change anything else – it was only to give *Chizuk*, strength, to a regular person who may be struggling with his emotions and resolve to fulfill a difficult *Mitzvah*. We need to take from this the importance of what we allow ourselves to think. We must make every effort to gain the proper perspective, recognize we are in a normal situation with our challenges with our children and thereby redouble, not abandon, our efforts to raise our children to rise to greatness.

Best wishes for a very positive Shabbos,

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