

## Parshat Beha'alotecha

Did you ever wonder why children can't wait for school to be over? Is it just the anticipation of summer vacation or camp? What happened to their natural desire to learn? The truth is that they retain their natural curiosity to learn and understand the world. But what they have lost may be their original excitement for learning - the desire to wonder.

We can better understand the problem and offer some solutions by observing the behavior on Aharon, the *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest), in his performance of the Mitzvah of lighting the *menorah*, discussed in this week's Parshat Beha'alotecha. After Aharon is given the command to light the *Menorah*, the Torah briefly comments on his response: And Aaron did so... he kindled the lamps, as Hashem had commanded Moses (Bamidbar 8:3). Rashi, commenting on the redundancy of words in the verse, states - "This is to teach the praise of Aharon, that he did not deviate."

Why the adulation for Aharon that he didn't deviate? Is the lighting of the Menorah difficult? Would any of us consider doing anything else in response to a direct command from Hashem? The *Sefas Emes* explains that the greatness of Aharon was that he didn't change in his level of excitement for the rest of his life. Over time it is natural for a person to lose enthusiasm for a repetitive action. But Aharon maintained the same feeling of excitement and wonder all the years he served in the *Mishkan*.

Children enter school with unlimited enthusiasm to learn and discover. However, the repetitive action of coming to school and the daily routines can often lead to boredom with school. As we approach the end of the school year, here are some ideas and suggestions for parents, recommended by educators and psychologists that can help children maintain their curiosity and sense of wonder during the summer and the entire year.

Children need to:

- \*hear their parents speak positively about school, teachers and learning.
- \*be asked: "why" and "how do you know".
- \*have ample time to run, jump, ride, climb, and play.
- \*feel secure in receiving the love and attention of parents.
- \*have parents who regularly model surprise, interest in the world.
- \*be guided to marvel at the natural world and its happenings. (*Chazal* instituted many *brochot* for these experiences)
- \*have their parents model natural curiosity, spontaneous humor, and joy.
- \*be free to experiment, taste, feel, hear, see, imagine, explore.
- \*have their parents to show pleasure and delight and create novelty in daily chores and routines.
- \*see and hear their parents become engaged and animated when reading a story, playing, performing mitzvot or listening to music.
- \*enact the stories in their imaginations.
- \*act out stories in *Chumash* and *Navi*.
- \*have parents teach them to learn from their mistakes.
- \*be encouraged to ask questions.
- \*to voice their emotions and to talk about their feelings.
- \*have their efforts regularly encouraged and prized, and not criticized.

Wonder and enthusiasm play a central role in maintaining the natural desire to learn. Aharon HaKohan, whose responsibility was to learn and teach while serving in the *Mishkan*, guides us in this important lesson. By following his example, we will not have to wonder why children can't wait for school to be over; because their desire for learning will never end.

**Shabbat Shalom**  
***Rabbi David Leibtag***