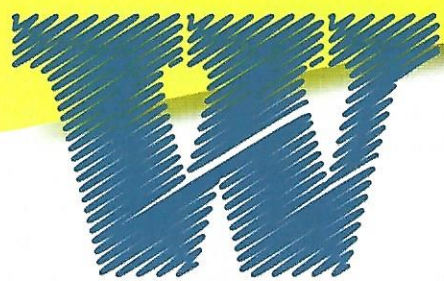


Rabbi Yoel Yormark South Bend Hebrew Day School Mishawaka, Indiana 28 years in *chinuch*



What is sweet and satisfying and comes in at least 70 different varieties? If you said Torah (and breakfast cereal) you would be correct.

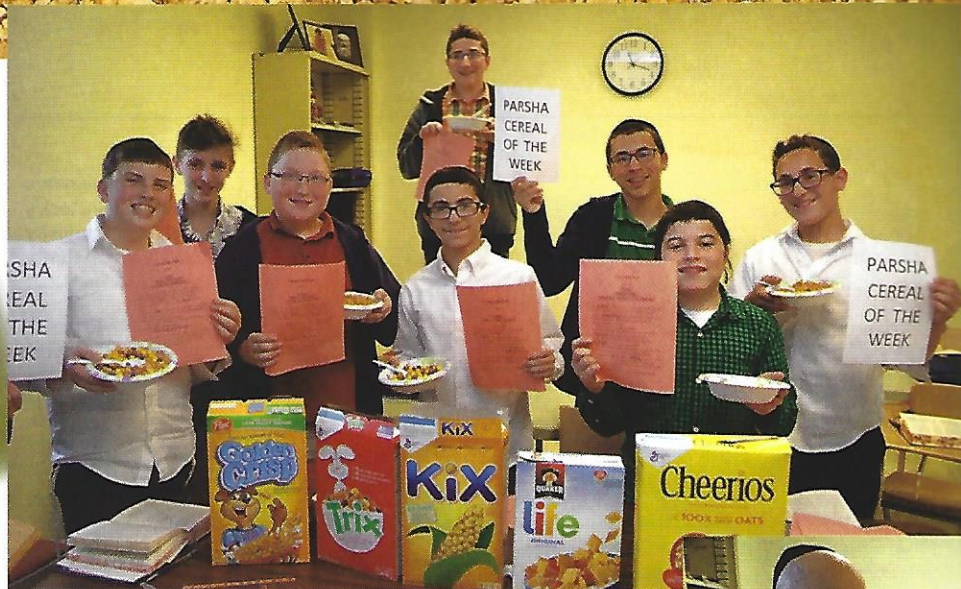
Rabbi Yoel Yormark remembers the day a seemingly simple *parshah* lesson turned into a curriculum that's been downloaded over 2,300 times on Torah Umesorah's Jewish curriculum materials website, Chinuch.org.

"In 1994 I was teaching the boys about *parshas Vayeitzei* and explaining how Lavan played a lot of tricks on Yaakov Avinu. I kept saying 'tricks' as I described Lavan's behavior toward his son-in-law. As an aside I told them, 'Tell your parents to buy you a box of Trix cereal this Shabbos so you'll remember the *parshah*.'"

Some students loved the directive so much that they begged Rabbi Yormark to continue writing his weekly *divrei Torah* utilizing Shabbos cereals. He didn't bite (pun intended), but figuring it was worth a shot to do it for a few *parshiyos* once in a while, he visited the breakfast foods aisle of his local grocery and created a few more similarly punned *divrei Torah*. Then, word got around school.

"One day, the principal Mrs. Gettinger asked me, 'What's the cereal of the week?' and it hit me. We really have a program here." Right then, the Parshah Cereal of the Week was born.

"I saw it as a mission," says Rabbi Yormark. "On Thursdays I worried if I could come up with a *devar Torah* that matched



a cereal. My criteria was that the name of the cereal and particulars of the *sedra* had to match. For *parshas Toldos*, I did Kix." Why? "When Rivkah is expecting Yaakov and Eisav, she has a very difficult time. When she passes by a yeshivah, Yaakov kicks to come out. When she passes by a place of *avodah zarah*, Eisav kicks to come out. Yaakov wore *kid* goatskins so he'd feel like Eisav. When Yitzchak asked Yaakov who he was, he *tested* him to give him the right answer. Yaakov did all of this because his *mother approved* it. 'Kid-tested, mother-approved' is the slogan for Kix."

The beauty of the program is that almost every kid loves breakfast cereals and feels connected to it — they're inspired to read through the *parshah* to find a connection.

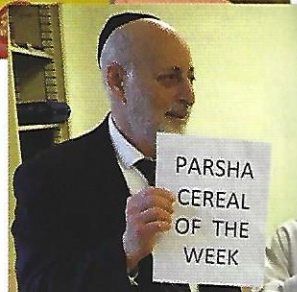
The *parshah* sheets became the highlight of many homes. A thought question accompanied each sheet, but the program was nice and simple.

"Sometime students gave me ideas for cereals," Rabbi Yormark says. "One boy begged me to do Cocoa Puffs, his favorite cereal. Together we brainstormed that 'co' is like Kohein and the *korbanos* were puffs of smoke when they were brought. It positively transformed his whole attitude toward school for the rest of the year. Fathers have told me that it gave their sons something to look forward to every week and really awakened their love of school."

Some week, Rabbi Yormark struggled to find a connection between the *parshah* and a cereal, but he credits *siyata d'Shmaya* with helping him through.

"I would go to the store and inevitably,

The cereal sale rack and weekly *parsha* fuse in Rabbi Yormark's classroom



the cereal on the sale rack was the one that I found a connection with. For *parshas B'haalosecha*, I saw that the Jewish People committed a sin [Cinn-] with complaining about the *mahn* [-mon], which had given them *life* in the desert. Cinnamon Life saved the week!"

Aside from learning about the connection when they learn the *parshah*, the school also offers the *parshah* cereal for breakfast to grades six through eight on Thursday mornings. Rabbi Yormark avoids cereals with nuts, because of allergies, and dairy, because those cereals aren't *chalah Yisrael*.

Rabbi Yormark's creativity is challenged throughout the year and he discovered an unexpected challenge. "I had to revamp a lot of the curriculum a few years ago when I realized that half the cereals we started with are no longer on the market."

Rebbeim in Silver Spring, Passaic, Milwaukee, Atlanta, and the Five Towns have called Rabbi Yormark with questions about the program. But the biggest *nachas* is when his former students come back to tell him that they teach the *parshah* cereal of the week in their classrooms.

"There is no *nachas* more delicious than that," he says.