

# We Are In This Together

Dear Parents,

The trajectory of every person's life begins in infancy when **the child is absolutely oblivious to the needs of anything and anyone outside of himself**. If the infant is wet, dirty, hungry or in any way uncomfortable, he immediately, loudly and passionately demands to be taken care of, no matter who he is inconveniencing or what may be going on around him. Passing through the various stages of early childhood, he begins to gain an awareness of others around him, and that others have needs and wants that inevitably differ from his.

As the child continues to grow, he becomes aware that he is part of a larger group, be it family, class, school or community. The ultimate expression of becoming part of an entity larger than oneself, is found in the principle of: כל ישראל ערביין זה בזה (found in numerous *Gemoras* and *Midrashim*). All Jews have a responsibility for each other. Not only is each person part of the larger Jewish whole, that membership comes with responsibility.

The source for this value is found in the beginning of this week's *Parsha*. Moshe Rabbeinu gathers the entire Jewish People. The *Ohr HaChaim* (29:9-10) questions the need for this additional gathering after the previous gathering described in last week's *Parsha*. The *Ohr HaChaim* explains the previous gathering was for the purpose of a Bris, covenant, to make each individual responsible to act in accordance with *Hashem's* will, while this new assemblage created mutual responsibility. Just as we are commanded to keep Torah and *Mitzvos*, we are obligated to act in a way that inspires others to do the same. Just as we are enjoined to do *chesed* and concern ourselves with the physical needs of our fellow, **so too must we feel responsible for our friend's spiritual growth** and development.

This concept of ערבות, shared responsibility, is the underlying principle for our practice of making *Kiddush* for others, *davening* with a *minyan*, having one person blow the Shofar for

an entire congregation, etc. It is also the beauty of *Klal Yisrael*, that we feel responsible for someone we've never met, never heard of and don't even know any of his relatives.

How do we teach this lofty ideal and practice to our children? It begins with the concept of interdependence. No one can survive or thrive in a vacuum. Take for example, something as simple and common as a cup of milk. How did it get into the child's hand? Was it created in the refrigerator? Does the child realize it took a cow, grass, a farmer, a milking machine, storage tank, refrigerator truck, pasteurizer, packaging machine, delivery trucks and grocery store workers and then one's parent to get the milk to the refrigerator!?

Understanding how the world works can help a child understand his role in being an important part of it. Each child has talents, strengths and abilities that no one else has. Each of us has our unique contribution to make to our family, community and *Klal Yisrael*. This builds self-esteem while simultaneously showing how every other person is worthy of respect and support.

By connecting the concept of each person's critical importance in the creation of a *minyan* for davening, to each individual's importance in their family, classroom, school and community, we will enable our children to gain a healthy and uniquely Jewish perspective on life. We live to interact with and support others. **Our role is to be givers and not takers**. When we teach and model familial and communal responsibility to our children, we are giving them a vitally important life lesson in fulfilling their obligations as a member of the Jewish People.

May the advent of the *Yomim Noraim* bring the *Geula Shelaima*, the ultimate redemption, which will occur when we all share the responsibility for elevating the honor of *Hashem*, and have Him recognized as the *Melech* throughout the world.

With best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos,



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