



Dear Parents,

Erev Shabbos Parashas Chayei Sarah 5780

A fascinating concept can be gleaned from this week's *Haftarah* that contains an important lesson for us, and especially our children. Coming from the very beginning of *Sefer Melachim I*, the *Haftarah* begins with a description of an aging *Dovid HaMelech*, who could not be warmed by a cover of blankets.

In describing this unusual situation, *Chazal*, our Rabbis, explain (*Berachos 62B*) that *Dovid* was being paid back measure for measure. During one of the encounters (*Shmuel I 24:2-4*) in which *Dovid* was being pursued by *Shaul HaMelech* (who considered him a rebel against the throne and therefore worthy of being put to death) *Dovid* was hiding in a cave. In his search to find *Dovid*, *Shaul* came nearby and entered a different part of the cave to relieve himself. *Dovid* seized the opportunity to escape, and cut off a corner of *Shaul's* cloak as a sign to *Shaul* that he (*Dovid*) had been there and could have killed *Shaul* had he so chosen.

“...**Dovid HaMelech, ... could not be warmed by a cover of blankets.**”

“**While he showed greatness ... he showed ... disregard to an inanimate object...**”

The *Gemara* tells us that to some degree, *Dovid*, on his great and lofty level, committed a sin by cutting the cloak. While he showed greatness in exercising restraint and not killing *Shaul* who was pursuing him, he showed unnecessary disregard to an inanimate object. The consequences came years later, when he needed to be warmed and no cloak or blanket could warm him. The natural properties of a covering didn't work for him.

We know of laws between man and G-d, between man and man and even between man and himself. Here we learn of a law between man and an inanimate object. The object stopped performing its normal function for the great *tzaddik Dovid HaMelech*, because *Dovid* did not treat that type of object in a respectful manner.

In today's world of radical environmentalists and extreme views that refer to people as “animals of the human species,” it's easy for a Torah Jew to push back and reject all concerns for the environment along with the utter rejection of these bizarre ideas. That is not the *Torah* view. It is greatly more nuanced. The physical world is *Hashem's* creation and every tiny insect and blade of grass has significance. Every stone has a purpose and shouldn't be misused or abused when there is no benefit of some sort to mankind.

It is not simple to convey this idea to children. We should point out that the *Torah* forbids causing unnecessary pain to animals (*Tzaar Baalei Chaim*). We should role model respect for plants too, for example taking care to not arbitrarily tear leaves off branches, snap twigs off bushes etc. if there is no good reason to do so. Even in the world of inanimate objects, we should show respect for and value each object and its purpose and place. Throwing belongings, dropping things on the floor, leaving behind our papers and certainly littering, degrades what *Hashem* has created for us.

“...**develop a heightened awareness and appreciation for the beautiful world...**”

Developing care and concern for all of *Hashem's* creations and taking from the environment only those things that serve some purpose for mankind, helps us all develop a heightened awareness and appreciation for the beautiful world we have been blessed to partake of. This is part and parcel of the well-rounded *Torah* personality we strive to nurture in our children.

Best wishes for a wonderful *Shabbos*,

Rabbi Kalman Baumann