



## BECAUSE IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO

Erev Shabbos Parashas Noach 5781

Dear Parents,

In his characterization of the destructive behavior that doomed the generation of the flood, the *Seforno* (6:13) explains what “*and the world was filled with robbery*” looked like. Society had degenerated to the point that everyone was involved in acts of dishonesty. Landowners forcefully extorted money from their sharecroppers, the sharecroppers stole from the landowners through deception, to such a degree that all produce and all possessions were tainted with thievery.

One may be tempted to ask: What’s the big deal? Everyone is stealing and they come out equal. There is no victim and everyone survives. It’s a nasty system, but it works. The secular world believes that an act between two consenting adults is no crime. Why destroy the world over it?

The Torah tells us how this very rationale does indeed destroy the world. In fact, it is a fundamental principle of the *Torah*. *Hashem* is not overly concerned with the results of our actions – after all He controls the outcomes of our behavior. Our role is to behave according to the *Torah* –because our behavior is all that we can control. When everyone is committing *aveiros-sins*, they are ripping away at the fabric of the world. In this respect, our behavior in private has the same impact as in public. The *Mesillas Yescharim* spells this out clearly in Chapter 1. “When a person chases after this world (its pleasures and temptations), leaving *Hashem* behind and distant, he brings ruination upon himself and his world.”

*Rav Yaakov Weinberg zt'l* said we were not put into this world to see how little damage we do, rather for how much we can accomplish. This needs to be the focus with our children. The message to them must be that their behavior matters,

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even when no one is looking. Every person’s behavior has a far-reaching impact, for good or bad. Children can internalize the message to behave properly, because it’s the right thing to do. This is what we emphasize in Yeshiva - we focus on teaching and reinforcing proper behavior because it is part of building the *mentsch*, not merely to conform to the school rule. Children carry such a message with them, into adulthood.

While attitude, good intentions, effort and aiming to please are good and proper, the bottom line is the actual behavior. “Be good” is a meaningless statement – our children need to hear in detail what our behavioral expectations are and how they can live up to them. When they ignore, disobey or directly defy you – it cannot pass unnoticed and unaddressed, because the message you are sending is that nothing so terrible resulted as the outcome – “no harm done” so no response or correction needed.

Our children need to know that what they do does count and actually makes a ‘world of a difference’ (pun intended). Rationalizations abound to justify acting in ways that flatter, threaten, deceive, undermine and exert pressure and control. Our children will live happy, productive, meaningful lives when they habituate proper, respectful, purposeful behavior. Parents need to help their children behave properly – not because it makes life easier for the parent (which it does), but most importantly because it is one of the strongest guarantors of creating successful and happy adults.

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Have a wonderful, fulfilling Shabbos

Rabbi Kalman Baumann