

# Dare To Care

Dear Parents,

It is hard to imagine something more insensitive and heartless than placing a stumbling block in front of a blind person. Only a person with significant gaps in their basic humanity could prey on such an obviously vulnerable person and deliberately cause them hurt and damage. Nevertheless, the Torah found it necessary to warn against such an act - לפני עור לא תתן מכשול - (Vayikra 19:14), meaning it is not beyond us to behave in such a manner.

Our *mefarshim*, *Rashi* most prominent among them, point out that this applies to numerous other, less obvious, scenarios where a normal person is liable to take advantage of another's vulnerability. There may be various justifications that can convince someone he is entitled to act in such a thoughtless, but basically hard-hearted fashion and therefore the Torah needs to place a hard stop on such behavior.

Even with this expansion of the *Issur of Lifnei Evair*, most of us are pretty confident, rightly or wrongly, that we are not likely to stoop to such lowly behavior. However, it does not end there. The *Be'er BaSadeh* (*Rabbi Meir Danon zt'l*), one of the *Meforshai Rashi*, says that the prohibition of *Lifnei Evair* applies not merely to the act of placing the stumbling block, but it also includes the obligation to remove an existing stumbling block, before any potential victim comes to harm. **It is immaterial who placed the obstruction in the first place; everyone who can do something about it, is required to act.**

This extension of not actively doing something harmful, to include the obligation to remove a danger to others, also touches upon the Mitzvah of לא תעמוד על דם רעך - *Lo Sa'amod Al Dam Raecha* - *Do not stand idly by while your fellow's blood is shed*, stated a few *Pesukim* later. That command obliges us to actively intervene when something or someone is actively threatening another person. Our *Pasuk*, *Lifnei Evair*, addresses a more passive situation of potential or likely harm.

It should be obvious to us by now, how relevant the commandment of *Lifnei Evair* is to all of us. One cannot shirk the responsibility to protect our community's and society's vulnerable merely by not being the one actually harming them. One must act to ensure their safety by maintaining a safe environment for all.

What a different lesson this now becomes for us and our children. We do not fulfill our obligation to be *mechanech* our children to be kind and considerate by training them not to hurt other people. **One can be a harmless person while also not being a helpful person.** The mantra of "Do No Harm" is not a Torah concept. We must sensitize our children to be a source of goodness and support for others. Being insightful as to the needs of others, anticipating potential pitfalls and removing them, is the responsibility of every Jew.

We need to model and instruct our children to look for things in their surroundings which could be potentially harmful and act to remove the danger. A banana peel on the floor, an exposed electrical socket, a tree branch that is about to fall, a hole in the ground, a parked car with a flat tire, are examples of circumstances that one can easily ignore and make believe they were not noticed. That is not what Hashem wants from us and our children. Children are to be trained to notice, inform a responsible adult and care that the potential harm be removed. **We are to be concerned for others and to emulate Hashem's ways by acting to protect, defend and keep others from harm.**

Those who look out for, anticipate and uphold others' physical and emotional safety and well-being are *Hashem's* special partners. Let's focus on making our children part of this elite group - beloved by *Hashem* and admired and appreciated by friends and peers.

May you have a wonderfully caring *Shabbos*,



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