

B”H

## A Tale of Two Children

### Living in Two “Tomorrows”

One lives in a “tomorrow” which is a continuum of “today;” the other lives in a “tomorrow” alienated from the “today.” How do we build bridges between the two?

**By Rabbi Y.Y. Jacobson**

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Dedicated in the merit of  
**Avraham Moshe ben Esther Avigayil**

Dedicated by **David** and **Eda** Schottenstein  
in the loving memory of  
Rabbi **Gavriel Noach** and **Rivki Holtzberg**  
and all of the **Mumbai Kedoshim**

And in the loving memory of a young soul  
**Alta Shula Swerdlov**  
daughter of Rabbi **Yossi** and **Hindel Swerdlov**

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#### Curriculum:

1. Class Description
2. Sources
3. Questions and Exercises

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#### **1. Class Description:**

The Torah is unquestionably history’s greatest manual for education. For three thousand years, a nation has scrupulously observed its heritage and traditions. For three millennia, they studied, debated, and authored countless libraries of books on its every word. For three thousand years, through the hardest of circumstances, the chain of Jewish education has never been broken.

This is not a coincidence. Immediately following the Exodus, Moses emphasizes the critical importance of communicating the message to the children. “And it will come to pass that tomorrow your child will ask ‘What is this?’ And you shall tell him...” Instead of being scared of questions, Judaism always encouraged and embraced questions. When you have the answers, you are not afraid of questions.

Rashi comments that the word ‘tomorrow’ refers to “the tomorrow of now,” but also to “the tomorrow of a later time.” What does this mean? What is the tomorrow of ‘today’ and what is the ‘tomorrow’ of a later time?

There are two types of Jewish children, asking very different types of questions. One lives in a 'tomorrow,' yet it is a part of and a continuation of the 'today.' This a child who cherishes the values and ideals of his ancestors. But the other is a child who lives in a 'tomorrow' completely alienated from the 'today.' A powerful gulf separates the weltanschauung of the parents and the children. Their paradigms vary drastically. We sometimes feel compelled to reject and give up on this child, but the Torah instructs us to embrace and engage him.

The class will explore these two types of children throughout Jewish history, and our sacred calling to each of them.

2. Sources:

מקורות:

<p><b>1. Exodus</b> 13:14</p> <p>And it will come to pass if your son asks you <u>tomorrow</u> (<i>machar</i>) saying, "What is this?" you shall say to him, "With a mighty hand did the Lord take us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."</p> <p><b>Rashi:</b> "If your son asks you tomorrow"—The Hebrew word <i>machar</i> (מָחָר) 'tomorrow,' sometimes means "now" and sometimes means "at a later time." An example of this is here and in Joshua 22:24: "In time to come, your children might say to our children" which refers to the children of Gad and the children of Reuben.</p>	<p><b>1. בא</b> יג, יד</p> <p>וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁאַלְךָ בֶּןְךָ מָחָר לֵאמֹר מַה זֶּאת וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו בְּחֹזֶק יָד הוֹצִיאָנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים.</p> <p><b>רש"י</b> <b>כי ישאלך בנך מחר</b> : יש מחר שהוא עכשיו, ויש מחר שהוא לאחר זמן, כגון זה וכגון (יהושע כב, כד) מחר יאמרו בניכם לבנינו, דבני גד ובני ראובן.</p>
<p><b>2. Deuteronomy</b> 6:20</p> <p>If your son asks you <u>tomorrow</u> (<i>machar</i>), saying, "What are the testimonies, the statutes, and the ordinances, which the Lord our God has commanded you?"</p> <p><b>Rashi:</b> "If your son asks you tomorrow"—The Hebrew word <i>machar</i> (מָחָר) 'tomorrow,' sometimes means "at a later time."</p>	<p><b>2. ואתחנן</b> ו, כ</p> <p>כִּי יִשְׁאַלְךָ בֶּןְךָ לֵאמֹר מַה הָעֵדוּת וְהַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶתְכֶם.</p> <p><b>רש"י</b> <b>כי ישאלך בנך מחר</b> : יש מחר שהוא אחר זמן.</p>
<p><b>3. Joshua</b> 4:6</p> <p>That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask <u>tomorrow</u> (<i>machar</i>), saying, "What are these stones for you?"</p>	<p><b>3. יהושע</b> ד, ו</p> <p>לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה זֹאת אוֹת בְּקִרְבְּכֶם כִּי יִשְׁאַלְוּ בְּנֵיכֶם מָחָר לֵאמֹר מַה הָאֲבָנִים הָאֵלֶּה לָכֶם.</p>
<p><b>4. Joshua</b> Chapter 22</p>	<p><b>4. יהושע</b> פרק כב</p>

21. Then the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh answered, and spoke to the heads of the thousands of Israel.

22. "God, God, the Lord, God, God, the Lord, He knows, and Israel, he shall know; if it be in rebellion, or if in transgression against the Lord, save us not this day.

23. If we have built us an altar to turn away from following the Lord, or if to offer upon it burnt-offering or meal-offering, or if to offer peace-offerings upon it, let the Lord Himself require it;

24. And if we have not rather done it for fear of this thing, saying, tomorrow (*machar*), your children might speak to our children, saying, 'What have you to do with the Lord God of Israel?

25. For the Lord has made the Jordan a border between us and you, you children of Reuben and children of Gad; you have no part in the Lord.' So shall your children make our children cease from fearing the Lord.'

26. Therefore, we said, "Let us now prepare to build an altar for ourselves, not for burnt-offering, nor for sacrifice.

27. But that it may be a witness between us and you, and between our generations after us, that we might do the service of the Lord before Him with our burnt offerings, and with our sacrifices, and with our peace offerings, that your children will not say to our children tomorrow (*machar*), 'You have no part in the Lord.'

28. Therefore, we said, 'It will be when we shall say, "Behold the replica of the altar of the Lord which our fathers made, not for burnt-offerings, nor for sacrifices, but it is a witness between us and you.

29. Far be it from us that we should rebel against the Lord, and turn away this day from following the Lord, to build an altar for burnt offerings, for meal-offerings, or for sacrifices, besides the altar of the Lord our God that is before His tabernacle."

כא ויענו בני-ראובן ובני-גד, וחצי שבט המנשה; וידברו, את-ראשי אלפי ישראל.

כב אל אלקים ה' א-ל אלקים ה', הוא ידע, וישראל, הוא ידע: אם-במרד ואם-במעל בה', אל-תושיענו היום הזה.

כג לבנות לנו מזבח, לשוב מאחרי ה'; ואם-להעלות עליו עולה ומנחה, ואם-לעשות עליו זבחי שלמים—ה', הוא יבקש.

כד ואם-לא מדאגה מדבר, עשינו את-זאת לאמר: מחר, יאמרו בניכם לבנינו לאמר, מה-לכם, ולה' אלקי ישראל.

כה וגבול נתן-ה' בינו ובניכם בני-ראובן ובני-גד, את-הירדן--אין-לכם חלק, בה'; והשביתו בניכם את-בנינו, לבתתי ירא את-ה'.

כו ונאמר--נעשה-נא לנו, לבנות את-המזבח: לא לעולה, ולא לזבח.

כז כי עד הוא בינו ובניכם, ובין דורותינו אחרינו, לעבד את-עבדת ה' לפניו, בעלותינו ובזבחינו ובשלמינו: ולא-יאמרו בניכם מחר לבנינו, אין-לכם חלק בה'.

כח ונאמר--והיה-כי-יאמרו אלינו ואל-דירתינו, מחר; ואמרנו ראו את-תבנית מזבח ה' אשר-עשו אבותינו, לא לעולה ולא לזבח--כי-עד הוא, בינו ובניכם.

כט חלילה לנו ממנו למרד בה', ולשוב היום מאחרי ה', לבנות מזבח, לעלה למנחה ולזבח--מלבד, מזבח ה' אלקינו, אשר, לפני משכנו.

**מקורות:**

לקוטי שיחות חלק ו' הוספות פרשת בא

לקוטי שיחות חלק לא פרשת בא

### 3. Questions and Exercises

1. There are two types of children living in two types of 'tomorrow.' Can you describe them?
2. How do you define yourself vis-a-vis your parents? And your children vis-a-vis you?
3. Do you find your children following in your footsteps, or not? What do you think is the primary reason for this?
4. If you can raise your children a second time, what would you do differently?
5. Why do you think the Lubavitcher Rebbe presented this idea—about the need to engage both types of Jewish children—in 1970?
6. Why are we obligated to engage even the second type of child?
7. How do you engage this type of child whose very paradigms are so drastically different from the Jews of yore? How do we build a bridge between the past and the present?

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