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A Tale of Two Children Living in Two ‘Tomorrows’

By Rabbi Y.Y. Jacobson

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Dedicated in the merit of
**Avraham Moshe ben Esther Avigayil
Jacobson**
in honor of his birth, 20 Teves 5770

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>1. Exodus 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>Rashi: "If your son asks you tomorrow"—The Hebrew word machar (מחר) '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>1. בא יג, יד</p> <p>וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁאַלְךָ בֶּןְךָ מָחָר לֵאמֹר מָה זֶה אַתָּה וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו בְּחֹזֶק יָד הוֹצִיאָנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרָיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים.</p> <p>רש"י כִּי יִשְׁאַלְךָ בֶּןְךָ מָחָר : 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>2. Deuteronomy 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>Rashi: "If your son asks you tomorrow"—The Hebrew word machar (מחר) 'tomorrow,' sometimes means "at a later time."</p>	<p>2. ואתחנן ו, כ</p> <p>כִּי יִשְׁאַלְךָ בֶּןְךָ מָחָר לֵאמֹר מָה הָעֲדוֹת וְהַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲתָכֶם.</p> <p>רש"י כִּי יִשְׁאַלְךָ בֶּןְךָ מָחָר : יש מחר שהוא אחר זמן.</p>
<p>3. Joshua 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>3. יהושע ד, ו</p> <p>לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה זֶה אֹת בְּקִרְבְּכֶם כִּי יִשְׁאַלְוּ בְּנֵיכֶם מָחָר לֵאמֹר מָה הָאֲבָנִים הָאֵלֶּה לָכֶם.</p>
<p>4. Joshua Chapter 22</p> <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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>23. If we have built us an altar to turn away from following the Lord, or if to offer upon it burnt-offering</p>	<p>4. יהושע פרק כב</p> <p>כא ויַעֲנוּ בְּנֵי-רְאוּבֵן וּבְנֵי-גָד, וְחֻצֵי שִׁבְט הַמְנַשֶּׁה; וַיְדַבְּרוּ, אֶת-רְאִשֵׁי אֲלֵפֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.</p> <p>כב אֵל אֱלֹקִים ה' א-ל אֱלֹקִים ה', הוּא יֵדַע, וְיִשְׂרָאֵל, הוּא יֵדַע: אִם-בְּמֶרֶד וְאִם-בְּמַעַל בַּה', אֶל-תּוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה.</p> <p>כג לְבָנוֹת לָנוּ מִזְבֵּחַ, לְשׁוּב מֵאַחֲרֵי ה'; וְאִם-</p>

<p>or meal-offering, or if to offer peace-offerings upon it, let the Lord Himself require it;</p> <p>24. And if we have not rather done it for fear of this thing, saying, '<u>tomorrow</u> (<i>machar</i>), your children might speak to our children, saying, 'What have you to do with the Lord God of Israel?</p> <p>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.'</p> <p>26. Therefore, we said, "Let us now prepare to build an altar for ourselves, not for burnt-offering, nor for sacrifice.</p> <p>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 <u>tomorrow</u> (<i>machar</i>), 'You have no part in the Lord.'</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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."</p>	<p>לְהַעֲלוֹת עָלָיו עֹלָה וּמִנְחָה, וְאִם-לַעֲשׂוֹת עָלָיו זִבְחֵי שְׁלָמִים—ה', הוּא יִבְקֹשׁ.</p> <p>כַּד וְאִם-לֹא מִדְּאָגָה מְדַבֵּר, עֲשִׂינוּ אֶת-זֹאת לֹאמֹר: מָחָר, יֹאמְרוּ בְּנֵיכֶם לְבָנֵינוּ לֹאמֹר, מֵה-לָּכֶם, וְלֹהִי אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.</p> <p>כִּה וּגְבוּל נָתַן-ה' בֵּינֵנוּ וּבֵינֵיכֶם בְּנֵי-רְאוּבֵן וּבְנֵי-גָד, אֶת-הַיַּרְדֵּן--אֵין-לָכֶם חֶלֶק, בָּהּ; וְהִשְׁבִּיתוּ בְּנֵיכֶם אֶת-בְּנֵינוּ, לְבִלְתִּי יֵרָא אֶת-ה'.</p> <p>כּו וְנֹאמַר--נַעֲשֶׂה-נָא לָנוּ, לְבָנוֹת אֶת-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: לֹא לְעֹלָה, וְלֹא לְזָבַח.</p> <p>כַּז כִּי יַעַד הוּא בֵּינֵנוּ וּבֵינֵיכֶם, וּבֵין דְּרוֹתֵינוּ אַחֲרֵינוּ, לַעֲבֹד אֶת-עַבְדֹת ה' לְפָנָיו, בְּעֹלוֹתֵינוּ וּבְזִבְחֵינוּ וּבְשָׁלְמֵינוּ: וְלֹא-יֹאמְרוּ בְּנֵיכֶם מָחָר לְבָנֵינוּ, אֵין-לָכֶם חֶלֶק בָּהּ.</p> <p>כח וְנֹאמַר--וְהָיָה כִּי-יֹאמְרוּ אֵלֵינוּ וְאֶל-דְּרוֹתֵינוּ, מָחָר; וְאֹמְרֵנוּ רָאוּ אֶת-תִּבְנִית מִזְבֵּחַ ה' אֲשֶׁר-עָשׂוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, לֹא לְעֹלָה וְלֹא לְזָבַח--כִּי-יַעַד הוּא, בֵּינֵנוּ וּבֵינֵיכֶם.</p> <p>כט חָלִילָה לָנוּ מִמְּנוֹ לְמַרְדֵּ בָהּ, וְלָשׁוּב הַיּוֹם מֵאַחֲרֵי ה', לְבָנוֹת מִזְבֵּחַ, לְעֹלָה לְמִנְחָה וּלְזָבַח--מִלְבָּד, מִזְבֵּחַ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ, אֲשֶׁר, לְפָנָיו מִשְׁכָּנוֹ.</p>
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מקורות:

לקוטי שיחות חלק ו' הוספות פרשת בא

לקוטי שיחות חלק לא פרשת בא

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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 do things over, what would you change?
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?