

Shabbat Shalom! In previous years on Yom Kippur I have not fasted as I was not obligated to because I wasn't a bat mitzvah yet. My brother, Matthew, would keep it, although it is challenging for him. I, as his perfect sister, would eat in front of him to tease him and make him mad. I know that this may just seem like an act of annoyance, but it is really much more than that. I recently learned that it is actually defying the Jewish law by putting a stumbling block in front of the blind.

This weeks Torah portion is a double parasha; Acherei Mot Kedoshim. This is part of which is known as the holiness code which teaches us how to live our lives in an appropriate and respectful way. The text says, in front of the blind you shall not put a stumbling block, מכשל תתן לא עור לפני. This verse does not need to be understood literally but rather we have a lot to learn from it about how to deal with people in general. For example as we learn from the Etz Hayim Hamash quoting Rabbi Samson Raphael Hersch the term blind refers not to only one who is physically blind but also to one who is intellectually deficient, lacking appropriate information, or morally blinded by the emotions. By not putting a stumbling block in front of the blind, by not misleading somebody, we are bringing more holiness into this world. Nehama Leibowitz explains that each persons responsibility extends to the whole world. The phrase; you shall not put a stumbling block in front of the blind reflects the essence of our portion which requires us to be holy.

Nehama Leibowitz also gave three specific examples of how to fulfill this mitzvah in our world today based on Jewish thinkers and Rabbis who came before her. The first is, in the talmud Rashi comments that not putting a stumbling block in front of the blind refers to somebody who hits his eldest son. Being older he might strike his father, which would be an act of violence. So, his father showed an act of putting a stumbling block before the blind. If a person might commit a sin and we have given them the tools or the reasons to do so we are actually breaking Jewish law ourselves.

Secondly, Rav Yehudah explains that whoever has money and lends it without witnesses violates the prohibition of thou shalt not put a stumbling block before the blind. If there are no witnesses the person may not pay you back and therefore it would constitute stealing from you. Clearly the person who was lending the money was trying to do something nice, but didn't think about the consequences. Before doing something we have to think because it may be hurting somebody, even if you are trying to help.

Lastly, a priest is not allowed to walk over a dead body, so that is why a grave is marked according to the Talmud. A man knew of an unmarked grave in his neighbourhood and he didn't say anything about it. Technically, by not doing anything about it, he was not following Jewish law, because he had the power to prevent something but left it. The Talmud says that this is an act of putting a

stumbling block before the blind. As shown, it also matters what we don't do along with what we do do.

There are many ways for us to break the mitzvah of **מכשל תתן לא עור לפני**, we can do it actively and we can also do it passively. Now that I am a bat mitzvah I appreciate what I did to my brother and I feel bad. I hope that nobody will do what I did to me, but even more importantly I pray that as I grow and mature I will not put a stumbling block in front of the blind myself.