



# YACHAD ISRAEL

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As February is inclusion month, OU Israel and Torah Tidbits are pleased to share a dvar Torah from Yachad at this time. OU Israel's Yachad program is a premier program that serves young adults with special needs.

## Blind Acceptance

I wonder what the Children of Israel's reaction was to the onslaught of commandments in this week's parsha, Mishpatim. They promised uncompromising obedience to Hashem before knowing what was to come, *na'ase v'nishma*. After the "Ten Commandments" were given they were probably thinking, "Alright, we can do this," but then *mishpatim* came along. Could there have been an element of regret to their supreme blind faith?

The modern Western mind seeks to deeply understand a commitment before signing the dotted line. Rav Jonathan Sacks zt"l says this hesitation is fine for everyday transactions such as buying a mobile phone, but not when making a deep existential commitment. The only way to understand leadership is to lead. The only way to understand marriage is to get married. The only way to understand parenthood is to

be a parent. The only way to understand whether a certain career path is right for you is to work in it. Those who hover on the edge of a commitment, are reluctant to decide or aren't willing to take a risk until considering all of the facts, will eventually find that life has passed them by.

Verse 22:21 says, "You shall not ill-treat any widow or orphan". Rashi explains that no one should be treated poorly, however, because the widow and orphan are usually at a disadvantage, they are often taken advantage of. Thus, the Torah puts an extra emphasis on ensuring they get a fair chance at life like anyone else. This mitzvah conveys the idea of inclusiveness.

At Yachad, treating everyone with respect is intuitive. Our programs break barriers of language or upbringing towards a common goal of being *B'Yachad*, together. We find that the spectrum of disability, age, gender, and religiosity of our members only enhance our programs.

Rav Sacks' message is that the only way to truly understand and accept someone is to try to get to know him/her first. There could have been an initial element of surprise or regret from the Children of Israel but, once they continued to learn, that shock dissipated in place of an understanding of how these commandments would positively, and fundamentally, improve

their lives. Rav Kook said, "Just as there are laws to poetry, there is poetry to laws." Each new commandment offers another opportunity to connect with Hashem and emulate His ways – especially in the area of how to treat one another. ■

*Inclusion knows no bounds. That's why Yachad is proud to have a chapter in the eternal Jewish homeland, Israel. Yachad Israel covers the gamut of inclusive programming. Out of our offices on Emek Refaim, we offer a daily vocational program, weekly Relationship Building Courses, chugim, and more to Anglo-Israelis looking for inclusive programming in English.*

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