



TORAH 4 TEENS

BY TEENS NCSY ISRAEL



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THE POWER OF INFLUENCE

In this week's parsha, פרשת שופטים, Hashem commands Bnei Yisrael to destroy every single evil influence from other nations in order to prevent בני ישראל from adopting their sinful actions and behaviors.

The importance of removing evil influences on Bnei Yisrael is stated clearly in the pasuk
לִמְעַן אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִלְמְדוּ אֶתְכֶם לַעֲשׂוֹת כָּכָל תּוֹעֲבֹתָם
אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ לֵאלֹהֵיהֶם וְחָטְאוּתָם לֹא אֶלֶיכֶם:

Why does Hashem require complete destruction? Why can't Bnei Yisrael live beside them, each with their own beliefs and practices?

The Ramban states that even one עובד זרה living amongst them can influence the entire nation.

We learn from this just how powerful the people around us are. We can strive to do all the right things, but even a single negative influence in our environment can affect us

more than we realize.

The Ramchal, in Mesillat Yesarim, explains this idea of פרישות in depth. The thought that we can be surrounded by a certain atmosphere and not become part of that atmosphere is false. Often, the desires we have in life are a result of being surrounded by those things exactly.

Hashem is telling Bnei Yisrael to be very careful about who they allow to be their neighbors.

Today, most of us aren't surrounded by עבודה זרה, but we are surrounded by influences every single day. The friends we spend time with, the videos we watch, the music we listen to, and the people we choose to admire all shape the people we become. We often think we're strong enough not to be affected, but this commandment reminds us that our environment has an incredible impact on us, whether we realize it or not.

Our ultimate goal should be to surround ourselves with people who impact and uplift our lives, who push us to be kinder, more honest, and more connected to Torah and mitzvot.



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JUDGES AND OFFICERS

At the beginning of Parshat Shoftim, the Torah says:

שופטים ושוטרים תתן לך בכל שעריך - "You shall appoint judges and officers for yourself in all your gates"

At first, this command brings up a question. If we already have judges who decide what is right and wrong, why does the Torah need to add another role? What can officers contribute that judges cannot?

Rashi explains that the officers were responsible for carrying out the decisions of the judges. The judges determined the ruling, while the officers made sure that it was followed.

This teaches us a deeper idea about justice.

A correct decision is important, but it is only the beginning. Justice cannot remain only as an idea; it needs people who are willing to take responsibility and make sure it happens.

The Torah's message goes beyond the role of judges and officers. A community does not become better just because people know what is right. It improves when people are willing to stand behind those values and act on them.

The same idea applies to each of us. Many times, we know the right thing to do, but the challenge is following through. The Torah reminds us that having good values is important, but turning them into actions is what allows those values to truly make an impact. ■

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