

## **You shall surely return them to you brother. (22:1)**

*Horav Shmuel Hominer, zl (Eved HaMelech)*, writes that included in the *mitzvah* of *Hasheiv teshiveim*, the obligation to return a lost article to its rightful owner, likewise applies with regard to the spiritual sphere. One Jew is responsible for the other. Therefore, if my brother is plagued with a spiritual shortcoming, my attitude should not be: “How does this involve me? He is responsible for his life. I am responsible for mine.” It does not work that way. We are responsible for one another. One should not ignore his fellow’s plight by turning a blind eye to his spiritual failings. He obviously requires assistance. Someone should be there for him. Interestingly, the word the Torah uses for returning a lost object is *hasheiv/teshiveim*. Another word would be *chazarah*. *Hasheiv* is related to *teshuvah*, repentance, implying that the obligation to return a soul is total: one must do everything possible to motivate the soul to return to its Source, to perform *teshuvah*, repent to Hashem.

*Horav Yehonasan Eibeshutz, zl (Yaaros Devash)* writes: Hashem destroyed the *Bais Hamikdash* (Second Temple) as the result of the sin of *sinaas chinam*, unwarranted hatred, between Jews. The sin has obviously not been ameliorated; otherwise, we would once again have the *Bais Hamikdash*. All this, despite the extraordinary measure of *gemillas chesed*, outpouring of lovingkindness, that is carried out by so many members of the Jewish community. Clearly, a deep-rooted love for our fellow Jew motivates these acts of lovingkindness. If so, why do we not have the *Bais Hamikdash*? *Rav Yehonasan* distinguishes between physical relationships in which we demonstrate care of our fellow – his physical essence and being – and the care that we should manifest toward his spiritual well-being – in which we are sorely deficient.

The examples we have presented of spiritual paucities are an indication of the high level of spiritual demeanor and practice that existed then. For instance, *Shabbos* and *kashrus* seem to be no-brainers. People observed *Shabbos* and maintained a kosher home. The author’s idea of a deficiency is talking during the recital of *Kaddish*. The observer takes note but does nothing about it, claiming, “Why should I be the one to rebuke him?” This, posits *Rav Yehonasan*, is an example of unwarranted hatred.

Another excuse for not following through is, “It is the job of the *Rav, Rabbanim*, to give *mussar*, rebuke. Who am I to rebuke my fellow? I am a simple Jew.” What the person fails to realize is that the subject of the rebuke would probably be more likely to acquiesce to accepting rebuke from a peer than he would from a spiritual leader whom (he feels) does not “understand” him. Last, is the most common excuse, “I am not any better than he is. I also speak during *Kaddish*. Who am I to rebuke him?”

*Rav Yehonasan* cites the *Zohar HaKadosh* who makes a frightening statement: “When the *Shliach tzibbur, chazzan*, recites *Shemoneh Esrai* and reaches the *brachah*, blessing, of *Mechayeh ha’mesim*, ‘Who remembers the dead,’ Hashem says, ‘Bring before Me anyone who cares about My children.’ The Ministering Angels then present to Hashem the *d’mus d’yukno*, image, of the person who rebuked his fellow and thereby caused him to cease from sinning.”

*Rav Yehonasan* asks: Why does Hashem make His request specifically when the *Shliach Tzibbur* is about to recite the blessing of *Mechayeh ha'meisim*? He explains that one who rebukes his fellow, thereby causing him to put an end to his spiritual decline, is truly *mechayeh meisim*, resurrects the dead. He catalyzes his fellow's return to a life of inspiration, purpose and value. *Eliyahu HaNavi* resurrected a deceased person, allowing him to live for another seventy years. One who is a spiritual interventionist, who causes his fellow to alter his life of abandon and return to a committed life, saves generations! He enables him to have a share in the eternal life and, as a result, has saved his future descendants from a life of infamy.