

And two of Yaakov's sons, Shimon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each (man) took his sword... and killed every male. (34:25)

In his commentary to *Nazir 29b*, *Rashi* comments based upon the *Midrash* that Levi was thirteen years old at the time that he and Shimon took vengeance on the men of Shechem. Wherever the Torah uses the word *ish*, man, it refers to someone over the age of thirteen years. Likewise, we find that Betzalel, architect of the *Mishkan*, was thirteen years old when he made the *Mishkan*. Concerning him, the Torah writes, *Ish ish mimelachato*, "Each (man) of them from his work" (*Shemos 36:4*). Additionally, we find that the *Rambam* reiterated the *halachah* that the age of thirteen years constitutes *ish* status. *Horav Eliyahu Schlesinger, Shlita*, explains the rationale for this. The *Zohar HaKadosh (Shemos 128)* writes: *man gabeir d'is al yitzrei ikri ish*, "One who conquers (is stronger than) his (evil) inclination is considered an *ish*." *David Hamelech* told Shlomo, *v'chazakta v'hayissa l'ish*, "You should strengthen yourself and become a man" (*Melachim 1:11*), which is interpreted by *Targum Yonasan*, "A person who has the power to overwhelm his *yetzer hora/sin*." When one achieves *ish* status at age thirteen, he becomes a *bar daas*, has sufficient mature intelligence and responsibility.

Rav Schlesinger takes the concept of *ish* up one notch, explaining that when one reaches the age of thirteen years, he becomes a *metzuveh v'oseh*, he is commanded to perform *mitzvos*. It is no longer extra-credit. It is an obligation. *Chazal (Bava Kamma 87:1)* teach *Gadol ha'metzuveh v'oseh mimi she'einu metzuveh v'oseh*, "Greater is he who is commanded and performs the *mitzvah* than he who carries out the *mitzvah*, even though he is not commanded to do so." *Tosfos (Kiddushin 31:)* explain that one who understands that his actions count, that he must carry out the *mitzvah* appropriately to the full extent of the law, will be anxious that he do it correctly, unlike the one who performs the *mitzvah* because he wants to. He knows that if he did not act accordingly – it is not the end of the world. He does not worry. He is not anxious.

Horav Shmuel Rozovsky, zl, explains that one who is a *metzuveh v'oseh* lives his entire life – every moment of his existence – in fear, worrying that perhaps he did not make the grade. His anxiety extends far beyond the *mitzvah* that he is performing; rather, it permeates his entire being, knowing that he has a responsibility towards Hashem, to carry out His command to its fullest potential. Thus, the advantage that the *metzuveh v'oseh* has over his counterpart is not simply with regard to the actual *mitzvah* that he is now carrying out, but rather, it is all about his mindset – the *metzuveh v'oseh* has a totally different temperament. A Jew who is an *ish* is one who worries, who is in a state of concern with regard to his *frumkeit*, religious observance. "Am I practicing as well as I should?" "Am I performing *mitzvos* in the manner that Hashem expects of me?" "Am I making Hashem proud of me?" *Metzuveh v'oseh* is a lifelong experience that permeates every aspect of a Jew's life. This also defines *gadlus*, religious maturity. If a day passes in which he has not acted as a *metzuveh v'oseh*, then he was a *kattan*, underage, and not a *bar daas*. We begin each day with the realization that we are fulfilling our religious mandate to serve Hashem as mature, observant

Jews. This is our mission. This is our responsibility to Hashem.