

Rabbi Yisroel Weinberg
 Director,
 Kiruv Activism
 Department
 Project Inspire
 (646) 961-4961
 yweinberg
 @projectinspire
 .com

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 Presents:

Shabbos INSPIRE.

MONTHLY PARSHA SHEET

Parshas Shoftim
 פרשת שופטים
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Those Obligated to Go to Battle

By Rabbi Moshe Zionce

The Medrash (Eichah Rabbah) relates that the double expression of consolation in our Haftorah “Nachamu, nachamu” is to console Klal Yisroel for the two-fold destruction that was experienced at the time of the destruction. This double destruction was in response to a “doubling” of transgressions. “Chet, chatah Yerushalayim,” Yirmiyahu lamen Parshas Shoftim lists those who are exempt from war: “A man who has built a new house...let him return to his house...And a man that planted a vineyard...let him return...” (כ:הו,ו) The Rambam (פרק ז:ד) explains that these exemptions apply only when the war is optional. However, when the war is obligatory, all must participate.

Fighting the war against assimilation is unlike any previous conflict Klal Yisroel has experienced. There are neither swords nor artillery, yet thousands suffer. There are neither injuries nor bloodshed, yet millions have been lost. We know the enemy well, however, he has no name. It is a silent war. It is a war without a face, a war without an army.

Every day *neshamos* are lost. Those at greatest risk do not suffer physically, nor do they recognize their own dire situation. Slowly, sadly, unbeknownst to them, they are disappearing without a whimper. Ninety percent of Klal Yisroel has little or no connection to Torah and Mitzvos. It is simply a matter of time until they all vanish י"ח. This war is real and the enemy has apparently been granted free reign without opposition.

There are approximately five million Jews living in North America, 500,000 of whom are Torah-observant. It is estimated that there are 1,500 kiruv professionals in North America. If every kiruv professional would make a deep impact on 100 Jews, reaching 150,000 people in total, over four million Jews would remain unaffected! (Even if the number of kiruv professionals doubled, there still would be over four million Jews on the path to spiritual extinction.)

What steps can be taken to turn the tide of assimilation? The only answer is YOU. If every frum Jew would reach out to his/her neighbor, we could touch every Jew across North America and eventually the world.

Is it an obligation? On the pasuk על דם – “Do not stand idly by your friend’s blood” (ויקרא י"ט:ז), the Shelah Hakodesh writes, “If we are obligated to save his physical life, all the more so his neshama.”

Similarly, HaRav Shlomo Miller שליטא, Rosh HaKollel of the

The Champion Weight Lifter

By Gavriel Horan

Everyone knew Shloimi. He wasn’t hard to miss. Shloimi was the friendliest guy around and he made sure to say hello to everyone he encountered--on the street, in the supermarket, or in shul--and everyone always reciprocated with a smile. Not only that, but any stranger who responded with a nice word, would also be asked their name, where they davened, and what Daf Yomi shiur they attended. He had the uncanny ability to make the large frum community feel like a small town. There was one other reason you couldn’t forget Shloimi: he was mentally disabled. Although he spent most of the time in his own world, he reached out to everyone around him until his world became their world. Everyone had a place in their heart for Shloimi.



Each week, Shloimi’s brother used to take him to the local JCC to exercise. Shloimi would lift weights a little, jog a little, and smile a lot, making conversation with anyone who would listen. It was in this way that he met Mike. Mike had recently moved to the city after graduating law school and was working for one of the most

successful firms in town. That day, he happened to notice that Shloimi was lifting more weight than was suitable for him. “Hey kid,” he said. “You better be careful—you can hurt yourself if you don’t lift properly. How much do you weigh?”

“What’s your name?” Shloimi asked, ignoring his question.

“Mike Schwartz. What’s yours?”

“Shloimi,” Shloimi said smiling profusely. “Where do you daven?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about, Shloimi,” Mike said. “I haven’t been to shul since my Bar Mitzvah!”

“Come to Daf Yomi shiur in our shul!”

“Ok, Shloimi, whatever you say. It’s been nice to meet you. Take it easy with those weights.”

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Lakewood Kollel in Toronto, said at a Project Inspire event, "Many frum people are complacent about kiruv. We feel 'I'm happy with my life,' and forget the non-frum are our brothers and sisters. We cannot say, as Kayin said 'השומר אחי אנכי?' Is it my business what happens to my brother? Yes! If my brother is drowning, I have a *chiyuv* of 'לא תעמוד על דם רעך' - 'Do not stand idly by your friend's blood.' You cannot just occupy yourself in your business. You have to be concerned about Klal Yisrael. This is why Project Inspire is so important."

The beauty of kiruv is that it can transpire as you are waiting in the doctor's office, as you sit on a city bus or in your place of business.

Everyone can reach out. I believe the message of Project Inspire is often misunderstood. We are not suggesting that kiruv should come at the expense of Talmud Torah or any other *chiyuv*. The beauty of kiruv is that it can transpire as you are waiting in the doctor's office, as you sit on a city bus or in your place of business. A conversation in a supermarket line could begin a relationship leading to a Shabbos invitation. That Shabbos seuda could impact your guest's life and the lives of future generations for eternity!

The Chofetz Chaim, in חומת הדעת, explains that if you see someone drowning you have a *chiyuv* to save him. If, unfortunately, you don't know how to swim, the person will drown. However, if you see people drowning daily, you have an obligation to learn how to swim.

It is easier than you think. Project Inspire offers the "Home Kiruv Training Experience" free of charge. It is a two-part series which gives you the confidence and tools to reach out to your less-affiliated neighbors, relatives, friends and co-workers. You will learn the basics of successful kiruv in this informative and entertaining presentation, complete with a great teacher, videos and lively discussion. You can host the home kiruv training. Ask us how. Contact Chaya Wolbe at cwolbe@projectinspire.com, 845-364-7067. (The Home Kiruv Training is not available in all areas. There are alternatives available).

The obligation of kiruv we are referring to is no different than any other *chiyuv*; one is only obligated to make sincere *hishtadlus*. The rest is in Hashem's hands. With His help, we can stem the seemingly unstoppable tide of assimilation through care and love. In this war there is a battle plan.

"You are coming near to the battle against your enemy; let your heart not be faint; do not be afraid, do not panic and do not be broken before them. For Hashem your G-d is the One that goes with you, to fight for you..." Shoftim (ג:ג) **PI**

Good Shabbos,

Rabbi Moshe Zionce

Director, Project Inspire Toronto

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The next week, Shloimi ran up to Mike as soon as he walked into the weight room.

"Hi Mike! When are you coming to shul with me?" Shloimi asked.

"Hey Shloimi, right? How you doing? I was wondering if I would see you around here again."

"Come to our house for Shabbos!"

"Gee, thanks Shloimi, that's really sweet of you. Maybe some other time. I already have plans this weekend."

This persisted week after week, until at last Mike agreed to come with Shloimi to shul on Shabbos morning, just to get him to stop asking. To Mike's surprise, he actually enjoyed it! Although the shul wasn't used to not-yet-frum guests, they received Mike with the utmost warmth and kindness and he immediately felt at home, despite all the time that had elapsed since he last attended Synagogue. A few weeks later, he attended again—this time on his own initiative. He soon gave in to Shloimi's invitation for Shabbos as well. It was his first traditional "heimish" Shabbos seudah experience and he once again was pleasantly surprised. He loved the warm family time, the break from his busy work schedule and the incessant ringing of his Blackberry, the stimulating conversation, and even the chollent! Soon, other people in shul started to invite Mike for Shabbos meals and before long, people were even fighting over who got to have him that week. Mike was basically adopted by the shul and he became a regular. When Mike's brother Eric was over at his house one day he noticed a great book on Jewish ethics in the living room and asked where he could get one. Mike immediately called up Shloimi's house to ask them. Soon Eric was also a regular at the Shloimi's parent's Shabbos table and at the shul.

Today, Mike lives in Eretz Yisrael with his wife and six children and learns in kollel. Both he and his brother Eric are now completely frum simply because of Shloimi's desire to say hello to another Jew. The irony is that Shloimi may not even know what he accomplished. The truth is that it's the same with all of us. When you go out of your way to say hello to a not-yet-frum Jew, you never know what the outcome will be. Every kind word, every smile, every warm gesture is planting a seed that may someday blossom into a beautiful flower. Like Shloimi, you may never know what you've accomplished, but years later, someone may be raising frum children somewhere in the world because of you. **PI**

ykd designs@gmail.com

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If you would like to bring the Shabbos Inspire Parsha Sheet to your shul, or to get involved with Project Inspire, please call (646) 961-4961 or email yweinberg@projectinspire.com.

Project Inspire is a grassroots movement inspiring the Jewish people to share the beauty and relevance of our heritage with our fellow Jews.