BS"D

Why Have Kids

L'ilui Nishmat Tzion Harel Tomer Ben Avner V'Ruti Sharon

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Beit HaKenneset HaSefaradi BeRimon – Parshat Tzav 5782

This week's parsha of Tzav, like most of the book of Vayikra is dedicated to the work in the mikdash, primarily the korbanot. But if we read closely, between all the fire and smoke (האש והעשן), there are a deep and important messages being transmitted.

The parsha starts:

<u>ויקרא פרשת צו פרק ו פסוק א - ב</u>
(א) וַיְדַבֵּר יְקֹוָק אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵּאמֹר׃ (ב) צַו אֶת **אַהֲרֹן וְאֶת בָּנָיו** ...

"Aharon and his sons" are clearly the stars of this parsha as they appear by name in 26 pesukim! There are only 97 verses in the Parsha, so that means they are being addressed explicitly in just over a quarter of the verses! This overwhelming repetition – "Aharon and his sons", "Aharon and his sons" – begs the question: what is the message here?

To answer that question, we need to answer an even more fundamental question that my son Asaf has asked me on a number of occasions:

> Why have children, at all? (למה להביא ילדים) What's the point?

His question is not that of the wicked son, but that of the wise son. His question is not motivated by any hidden agenda – he actually wants to have kids. Nevertheless he wants to understand the reason. It is a deep philosophical question:

> Why is it that we have kids?

So, I answered him, quite simply: Because the good book says:

<u>בראשית פרשת בראשית פרק א פסוק כח, כח</u>
(כח) וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים **וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמִלְאוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ** וְכִבְשֻׁהָ וּרְדוּ בִּדְגַת הַיָּם
וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל חַיָּה הָרֹמֶשֶׂת עַל הָאָרֶץ׃

He said: That's not good enough. I want to know why; I don't just want the hok (unquestioned demand), I want the taam (reasoning).

So, of course that is certainly a legitimate endeavor. It is called "Taamei HaMitzva" – our subjective attempt to understand God's objective law. We are, explains the Beit HaLevi, of course permitted to engage in understanding the reasons for the mitzvot, for that is part of the mitzvah of Torah Study. However, he cautions, this endeavor is not to

affect our performance of the command in the slightest way – i.e., we are to do God's will precisely because it is God's will.

בית הלוי בראשית פרק יז פסוק א
התהלך לפני והיה תמים. ענין התמימות הוא שיעשה רצון הבורא ולא יחקור למה ציוהו כן, ואף על פי שהאדם רשאי לחקור אחרי טעמי המצות, זה בכלל לימוד תורה שמצוה ללומדה ולידע אותה וגם הלימוד הזה יעשה אותו מפני שמצוה כן הוא ללמוד אבל בעיקר העשיה שלו וכן בהלימוד יעשה רק מפני שכן הוא רצון הבורא יתברך ולא מפני שהוא רוצה לחקור אמאי ציוהו כן.

So, the first "taam", reason for bringing children in to the world is brought by the Midrash Hagadol, which quote Isaiah: "God created the world not as a wasteland, but formed it to be inhabited." In short, we are to have children to keep the world populated.

מדרש הגדול בראשית פרשת בראשית פרק א פסוק כח
מצות פריה ורביה, **לשבת יצרה** (ישעיה מה, יח) בענן
ישעיהו פרק מה:יח - כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְקֹוָק בּוֹרֵא הַשָּׁמַיִם הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים יֹצֵר הָאָרֶץ וְעֹשָׂהּ הוּא כוֹנְנָהּ **לֹא תֹהוּ בְרָאָהּ לָשֶׁבֶת יְצָרָהּ** אֲנִי יְקֹוָק וְאֵין עוֹד׃

This is echoed by the Ohr HaHaim and others:
אור החיים בראשית פרשת בראשית פרק א פסוק כח
שבירך אותם שלא יכרת מין האדם מן העולם.

The first response is not very convincing for someone living in a world that is worried about overpopulation.

So the Midrash Hagadol brings a mystical explanation, teaching that the Mashiach cannot come until all created souls have been brought down to earth.
מדרש הגדול בראשית פרשת בראשית פרק א פסוק כח
[ר' יוסי אמר] אין בן דוד בא עד שיכלו כל הנשמות שבגוף

Having children, then, is a way to move God's plan of creation forward.

This explanation, while certainly expressing a deeper motivation for the commandment still leaves the mystic and the modern Jew in a quandary. First, the mystic asks how exactly does this work? Doesn't Jewish mysticism also contain the notion of *gilgulei neshamot* (reincarnation)? If so, parents don't really have it in their power to bring "new" souls to the world. This seems to be something left to the calculations of heaven. Second, the modern asks if this is really the intent of the mitzvah? For this argument – to bring as many children to the world as possible in order to bring creation to its halcyon completion – seems to prioritize quantity of children over quality of children to the point of disregarding the environment and the quality of life itself – surely that is not the intention of the mitzvah.

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch (RSRH) wholeheartedly agrees that goal is quality not quantity. The goal is not to simply populate the world, but to ensure a harmonious society. He learns from the word "pru urevu umilu" – be fruitful and multiply and fill – a different aspect of the command. The word "fill" indicates that each individual has the

responsibility not only to raise his own family but to help other families do so such that each individual is responsible for the peace of society as a whole.

רש"ר הירש בראשית פרשת בראשית פרק א פסוק כח
מלאו : החברה. כל זוג נצטווה לתרום את תרומתו לכך, - שהארץ תימלא אדם ; ורק משהארץ תימלא בני אדם, יתקיים ייעודה במלואו. אמור מעתה : אין אדם יוצא ידי חובתו - בהקמת ביתו שלו ; אלא שומה על כל יחיד לתת את ידו להקמת בתים רבים. **כך נצטווה היחיד על שלום החברה**.

Furthermore, RSRH explains that the term "revu" though translated to "multiply" does not simply mean "multiply" – it is related to the word raba (many) and rafa (weak):

רש"ר הירש בראשית פרק א פסוק כח (פרשת בראשית)
... ודרך אגב נצביע על הקרבה המעניינת בין שורש "רבה" ל"רוה" ו"רפה". ... מושג "רבה", המעסיק אותנו כאן, גורר אחריו "רפיון" : אין חינוך אלא התמסרות תוך הגבלה עצמית. משאדם נעשה אב למשפחה, **הוא חדל להיות אנוכי,** - הוא נעשה "רפה". דאגת לבו נתונה לרבים, וככל שההתמסרות גדולה יותר, כן מתקיים התפקיד במלואו, וכן מצויה הברכה.

Accordingly, RSRH here explains that the command to multiply (r'vu related to raba and rafa) hints at the notion that to multiply, to truly ensure that the next generation succeeds, the parent needs to make himself "weak" (rafa) in the sense of sacrificing for the child. "The moment the individual becomes a parent he ceases to be egocentric." And the greater this self-sacrifice the greater is the task of the parent fulfilled and the more blessed is the outcome.

Interestingly, Jordan Petersen explains that this is one of the main reasons one should have children:

> People grow up when they get married. It is probably better to get married when you are young because then you grow up. And then what else matures people? I have met very few people who have fully matured who do not have children. I think there is a reason for that, a real technical reason. You are not mature until someone else matters more than you—period. Maybe that will be your wife or your husband, but probably not. They might matter as much as you, and maybe that is the right amount. But when you have children, they matter more than you, unless there is something seriously wrong with you. Very few parents, if push came to shove, would not die for their children. As soon as someone else matters more than you do in some fundamental sense, you have taken another step toward a true, mature responsibility. I do not see that you can do that without necessity, and there is nothing that screams necessity more than an infant. (Jordan Peterson. Tweet. July 27 2024).

In the words of RSRH above, "The moment the individual becomes a parent he ceases to be egocentric." So another reason to have children is to mature. While that in itself might sound egocentric in the sense that you are having the child for yourself, nothing could be further from the truth. For if you are doing something that will force you to

not be egocentric, then such an act cannot be egocentric, at least not in the negative way it is contemned.

Be that as it may, there is more to having a child as RSRH goes on to explain that "multiply" (r'vu) includes the raising the child for the child's sake:

> A human child would have no chance of survival at all were it not cared for by its parents right from birth and its bodily preservation and development furthered by this parental care. Not the birth, the aftercare is the real factor of increase of the human race. But "rvu" (multiply) is something more and higher. The parents are to multiply themselves by their children, they are to repeat themselves in their children. The children are to be the replicas not only of the physical bodily traits of their parents, but also of their spiritual, intellectual and moral selves. Accordingly the parents have to plant the spiritual and moral best of themselves in their children, and carefully nurture and mature its development. In short, they have to form, educate and cultivate them.

רש"ר הירש בראשית פרשת בראשית פרק א פסוק כח
רבו - המשפחה. "רבה" =להתרבות. אין די בהולדת ילדים כדי שמין האדם יתרבה. הטיפול בוולדות הוא תנאי להתרבות - גם ברבים מבעלי החי; והוא הכרח גמור במין האנושי – ולא רק מבחינה פיסית גרידא. ולד האדם יאבד מיד, אם הורים לא יטפלו בו משעת לידתו ולא ישקדו על קיומו והתפתחותו הגופנית. **לא הלידה, אלא הטיפול הוא הגורם האמתי של הִתְרַבּוּת האדם.** אולם, "רבה" כולל למעלה מזה. חובת ההורים להתרבות בבניהם: הם יקומו בדמות בניהם; והבנים יהיו דומים להוריהם - לא רק מבחינה גופנית, אלא מבחינה רוחנית ומוסרית. על ההורים לשתול ולפתח בבניהם את מיטב כוחותיהם הרוחניים והמוסריים; קיצורו של דבר: עליהם לעצב ולחנך את בניהם מבחינה רוחנית ומוסרית. רק אז יקומו ההורים בדמות בניהם ויקיימו את מצות "רבו". ... "רבו" מצוה אפוא על ייסוד הבית והמשפחה, - שרק בהם יצלח חינוך האדם. **רק משנתקבלה מצות "רבו", ניתנה ל"פרו" חשיבותו המוסרית הנעלה,** ...

So the point is that we have children that carry on our values, that we develop within them spiritual and moral values. Only thus do we really fulfill the command of "PRU" which RSRH explains indicates that the offspring of the couple is like fruit – it is the expression of the very potentials of the parents, now brought out in the child.

רש"ר הירש בראשית פרשת בראשית פרק א פסוק כח
פרו - חיבור המינים כדי להוליד את פרי האדם, - את הבנים. כי האדם עץ השדה: מיטב הכוחות והמיצים של העץ "משתחררים" בפריו כנבט עצמאי (ראה לעיל פסוק י"א); וכך, מיטב הכוחות של האב והאם מתחברים כדי להוליד בר - אנוש עצמאי:

So my son said: What I hear is that having kids is all about you. You have a kid to leave of yourself to the world, to continue your values, your being.

So I answered that actually, if you read between the lines of RSRH, he is saying something much more powerful than that. He is really talking about developing relationships. That is, when he teaches that the command to sire offspring, includes raising them and caring for them, teaching them – this is about developing a relationship.

This is not a one-way street, but rather a development of both parents and children and the relationship between them.

Interestingly, it is this relationship that philosophy professor Christine Overall, in her book "Why Have Kids?", argues is the strongest reason to have kids:

> [After] exploring the nature of the biological parent-child relationship—which is not only genetic but also psychological, physical, intellectual, and moral— [it can be argued] that **the formation of that relationship** is the best possible reason for choosing to have a child.

[לאחר] בחינת טבעו של מערכת היחסים הביולוגית בין הורה לילד - שהיא לא רק גנטית אלא גם פסיכולוגית, פיזית, אינטלקטואלית ומוסרית - ניתן לטעון שהיווצרות מערכת יחסים זו היא הסיבה הטובה ביותר לבחירה להביא ילד לעולם.

I think that this is a wonderful explanation that aligns both with RSRH's explanation of pru urvu and the repetitive addresses of "Aharon and his sons" in this week's parsha. That is, we read, over and over again "Aharon and his sons" as they engage in a myriad of "mundane", everyday activities:

- "Aharon and his sons": they dressed together,
- "Aharon and his sons": they sacrificed together,
- "Aharon and his sons": they ate together,
- "Aharon and his sons": they prayed together.

In the end, "Aharon and his sons" developed a relationship together. A relationship that could only be developed between father and son, between parent and child. It is this unique relationship that influences both parent and child in a way that has no parallel in any other relationship, that is the reason to have children.

That is why one has children.

So my son said: Very nice, but I still don't buy it.

So I told him: Well, in hindsight, I can say that if I didn't have kids I would never have met such an amazing person as you!

He said: "Hahaha, got me good!" (תפסת אותי טוב)

Shabbat Shalom.

EXTRA

1. **ויקרא פרשת צו פרק ו פסוק ב** (ב) צַו אֶת אַהֲרֹן וְאֶת בָּנָיו
2. **ויקרא פרשת צו פרק ו פסוק ט**(ט) וְהַנּוֹתֶרֶת מִמֶּנָּה יֹאכְלוּ אַהֲרֹן וּבָנָיו
3. **ויקרא פרשת צו פרק ו פסוק יג**(יג) זֶה קָרְבַּן אַהֲרֹן וּבָנָיו
4. **ויקרא פרשת צו פרק ו פסוק יח**(יח) דַּבֵּר אֶל אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל בָּנָיו
5. **ויקרא פרשת צו פרק ז פסוק לא**וְהָיָה הֶחָזֶה לְאַהֲרֹן וּלְבָנָיו ׃
6. **ויקרא פרשת צו פרק ז פסוק לד**לְאַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן וּלְבָנָיו
7. **ויקרא פרשת צו פרק ז פסוק לה**(לה) זֹאת מִשְׁחַת אַהֲרֹן וּמִשְׁחַת בָּנָיו
8. **ויקרא פרשת צו פרק ח פסוק ב** (ב) קַח אֶת אַהֲרֹן וְאֶת בָּנָיו
9. **ויקרא פרשת צו פרק ח פסוק ו** (ו) וַיַּקְרֵב מֹשֶׁה אֶת אַהֲרֹן וְאֶת בָּנָיו
10. **ויקרא פרשת צו פרק ח פסוק יד**וַיִּסְמֹךְ אַהֲרֹן וּבָנָיו
11. **ויקרא פרשת צו פרק ח פסוק יח**וַיִּסְמְכוּ אַהֲרֹן וּבָנָיו
12. **ויקרא פרשת צו פרק ח פסוק כב**וַיִּסְמְכוּ אַהֲרֹן וּבָנָיו
13. **ויקרא פרשת צו פרק ח פסוק כג**(כג) וַיִּשְׁחָט וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה מִדָּמוֹ וַיִּתֵּן עַל תְּנוּךְ אֹזֶן אַהֲרֹן ... (כד) וַיַּקְרֵב אֶת בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן
14. **ויקרא פרשת צו פרק ח פסוק כז** עַל כַּפֵּי אַהֲרֹן וְעַל כַּפֵּי בָנָיו
15. **ויקרא פרשת צו פרק ח פסוק ל** וַיַּז עַל אַהֲרֹן עַל בְּגָדָיו וְעַל בָּנָיו וְעַל בִּגְדֵי בָנָיו אִתּוֹ
16. וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֶת אַהֲרֹן אֶת בְּגָדָיו וְאֶת בָּנָיו וְאֶת בִּגְדֵי בָנָיו אִתּוֹ ׃
17. **ויקרא פרשת צו פרק ח פסוק לא**(לא) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל בָּנָיו
18. **ויקרא פרשת צו פרק ח פסוק לא**לֵאמֹר אַהֲרֹן וּבָנָיו
19. **ויקרא פרשת צו פרק ח פסוק לו** (לו) וַיַּעַשׂ אַהֲרֹן וּבָנָיו אֵת כָּל הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְקֹוָק בְּיַד מֹשֶׁה ׃ ס

1. **ויקרא פרשת צו פרק ו פסוק ז** (ז) וְזֹאת תּוֹרַת הַמִּנְחָה הַקְרֵב אֹתָהּ בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן
2. **ויקרא פרשת צו פרק ו פסוק יא**(יא) כָּל זָכָר בִּבְנֵי אַהֲרֹן
3. **ויקרא פרשת צו פרק ו פסוק טו** (טו) וְהַכֹּהֵן הַמָּשִׁיחַ תַּחְתָּיו מִבָּנָיו
4. **ויקרא פרשת צו פרק ז פסוק י** לְכָל בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן
5. **ויקרא פרשת צו פרק ז פסוק לג**וְאֶת הַחֵלֶב מִבְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן
6. **ויקרא פרשת צו פרק ח פסוק יג**(יג) וַיַּקְרֵב מֹשֶׁה אֶת בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן

Only place Aharon alone is for Cohen Gadol
ויקרא פרשת צו פרק ח פסוק יב
(יב) וַיִּצֹק מִשֶּׁמֶן הַמִּשְׁחָה עַל רֹאשׁ אַהֲרֹן וַיִּמְשַׁח אֹתוֹ לְקַדְּשׁוֹ ׃

Why have kids?

[18:44, 3/14/2021] Mois Navon / מואיז נבון: Philosophy of the day:
[Parents have] the right not only to feed and care for him but to educate him, to develop him both pragmatically, so that in the future he can look after himself and make his way in life, and morally, since otherwise the fault for having neglected him would fall on the parents. They have the right to do all this until the time of his emancipation [Bar/Bat Mitzvah], when they renounce their parental right to direct him as well as any claim to be compensated for their support and pains up till now. After they have completed his education, the only obligation (to his parents) with which they can charge him is a mere duty of virtue, namely the duty of gratitude.
[18:44, 3/14/2021] Mois Navon / מואיז נבון: - Immanuel Kant
[18:49, 3/14/2021] Asaf Navon: Yeah, but why have kids?

[18:49, 3/14/2021] Mois Navon / מואיז נבון: The good book says :)
[18:49, 3/14/2021] Asaf Navon: I must say that if that is your real answer
[18:49, 3/14/2021] Asaf Navon: ....
[18:49, 3/14/2021] Asaf Navon: It sucks
[18:54, 3/14/2021] Mois Navon / מואיז נבון: a) At the time of my marriage I wanted to fulfill the philosophy on life as espoused (taught) by the Torah. That of course includes an obligation to bring children to the world.
b) There are rationalizations for these obligations (taamei hamitzvot) and so one could understand the need to have children, beyond the need to keep the world populated, to also give the parents an opportunity to grow in ways they could not. They can learn love and sacrifice.
c) In hindsight, I can also say that I would never have met such an amazing person as you!
[18:55, 3/14/2021] Asaf Navon: Hahaha, got me good
[18:55, 3/14/2021] Mois Navon / מואיז נבון: 😎
[18:56, 3/14/2021] Asaf Navon: But ok i just feel like people have kids for their own selfish reasons
[18:56, 3/14/2021] Asaf Navon: Its either they need meaning
[18:57, 3/14/2021] Asaf Navon: Or they want to leave something with their own values
[18:57, 3/14/2021] Asaf Navon: You wrote to help yourself evolve
[19:20, 3/14/2021] Mois Navon / מואיז נבון: We've had this discussion before and I still haven't heard your answer(s). I mean, even if you don't think there is a good reason for YOU to have kids, what DO you think is a good reason?
[19:22, 3/14/2021] Asaf Navon: I dont have one thats whay drives me crazy

If you google the question: "why do people have kids?" you get lists of answers like:

1. Create a Family
2. Carry on the Family Name and Values
3. They Love Babies and Small Children
4. Human Biology
5. To Give and Receive Unconditional Love
6. To Give Their Children the Chance to Enjoy Existence
7. To Give Meaning to Their Life
8. To Create and Mold a Life
9. To Fix the Mistakes of Their Parents
10. Social Pressure and Expectations

On the Right of Domestic Society
Title II
Parental Right

§28

Just as there arose from one's duty to oneself, that is, to the humanity in one's own person, a right (*ius personale*) of both sexes to acquire each other as persons *in the manner of things* by marriage, so there follows from *procreation* in this community a duty to preserve and care for its *offspring*; that is, children, as persons, have by their procreation an original innate (not acquired) right to the care of their parents until they are able to look after themselves, and they have this right directly by law (*lege*), that is, without any special act being required to establish this right.

For the offspring is a *person*, and it is impossible to form a concept of the production of a being endowed with freedom through a physical operation. [62] So from a *practical point of view* it is a quite correct and even necessary idea to regard the act of procreation as one by which we have brought a person into the world without his consent and on our own initiative, for which deed the parents incur an obligation to make the child content with his condition so far as they can. – They cannot destroy their child as if he were something they had *made* (since a being endowed with freedom cannot be a product of this kind) or as if he were their property, nor can they even just abandon him to chance, since they have brought not merely a worldly being but a citizen of the world into a condition which cannot now be indifferent to them even just according to concepts of right.

[6:281]

§29

From this duty there must necessarily also arise the right of parents to *manage* and develop the child, as long as he has not yet mastered the use of his members or of his understanding: the right not only to feed and care for him but to educate him, to develop him both *pragmatically*, so that in the future he can look after himself and make his way in life, and *morally*, since otherwise the fault for having neglected him would fall on the parents. They have the right to do all this until the time of his emancipation (*emancipatio*), when they renounce their parental right to direct him as well as any claim to be compensated for their support and pains up till now. After they have completed his education, the only obligation (to his parents) with which they can charge him is a mere duty of virtue, namely the duty of gratitude.

From a child's personality it also follows that the right of parents is not just a right to a thing, since a child can never be considered as the property of his parents, so that their right is not alienable (*ius personalissimum*).[63] But this right is also not just a right against a person, since a child still belongs to his parents as what is theirs (is still in their *possession* like a thing and can be brought back even against his will into his parents' possession from another's possession). It is, instead, a right to a person *akin to a right to a thing*.

[6:282]

<nothing here TRADITION_PruUrvu_Neustadter.pdf in Research\ - discussion about pru urvu not incurring punishment, disconnect from God, if don't fulfill. Could be why the mitzva is given before Sinai but not repeated after.>

End with list of reasons to build atom collider – ends with "to learn what we could not even know we would learn"

(Side issue – current overpopulation. Jews make up 0.2% of world population. We are insignificant in terms of numerical impact. On the other hand, we are very significant in terms of meaningful impact in every human endeavor. As such, I see no reason to override a biblical commandment to have at least one boy and one girl.)