



SERMON RESOURCE FOR SHLUCHIM  
KI TEITZEI • **כי תצא** / WHAT REALLY TAKES PLACE WHEN A BABY IS BORN?

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## **PARSHAS KI TEITZEI: WHAT REALLY TAKES PLACE WHEN A BABY IS BORN?**

Although I've never been all the way inside the delivery room during the birth of my children, I have, however, heard my babies cry from behind the curtain.

But why do babies cry as soon as they are born? What happens just as the baby emerges from the womb?

The Talmud describes the life of a fetus in the mother's womb as exceptionally serene. "A flame burns above its head and it observes and sees from one end of the world to the other, and an angel teaches it the entire Torah." There is no time in a person's life as perfectly good as the time a baby spends in its mother's womb. It's warm and comfortable both physically and spiritually, without having to worry for even the most basic necessities, "for it eats what its mother eats and drinks what its mother drinks."

The turning point for the child is the very first moment outside of the womb. The child must now begin to face the harsh realities of life, which is why Heaven won't allow the child to be born until they have administered that famous oath, "to be a Tzaddik and not to be a Rasha", and that even if the whole world lauds you saying, "you are a Tzaddik" you should view yourself as a Rasha. The angels then warn the child, "G-d is pure and His angels are pure and the soul which He gave you is pure. So it is worthwhile for you to preserve its purity for if you don't G-d will take it from you." As the baby emerges from the womb, the angel who has spent nine months



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teaching it the entire Torah taps it above the mouth, causing the child to forget the entire Torah.

The dream is over.

So it's no wonder that the baby cries at birth! Until now the child has been nourished physically by its mother and spiritually by an angel of G-d, but now it has entered a cold and strange new world and it must begin its fight for survival.

This would be the Chassidic interpretation to the opening of this week's Torah portion, "When you go out to do battle with your enemy". The verse is discussing an actual war but in Chassidus, where everything is translated into a lesson for our divine service, the battle discussed in the verse is the new soul's fight against its sworn enemy, the (*Yetzer Horah*) evil inclination. Not only to disarm it but to change it from the evil entity that it is, into a vessel for G-dliness.

In simple terms:

Until a person is born he cannot contribute anything to the world. But as soon as he emerges, he immediately begins to contribute his gift to the world. As a baby he gives joy and pleasure to his parents and grandparents especially as the friends and neighbors ooh and ah at his gorgeous little face. When the child turns Bar Mitzvah he becomes responsible to fulfill the mitzvahs and can complete a minyan. When the child will become an adult and gets married, he will have to share his life with his spouse and eventually with their children as well, for many long healthy years. And on goes the cycle of life, the more he grows the more he is expected to give,



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the more he must take upon himself the responsibilities of helping the people around him, becoming less focused on himself, and more on the community.

This is the Chassidic interpretation of birth. Birth is when a person receives the ability to contribute to the world.

In truth every day is a new beginning for each of us, it's like being born again. That means that every day each of us receives another opportunity along with the responsibility to contribute, and make a difference.

But how do we go about fulfilling this duty?

The Alter Rebbe in his famous work the Tanya describes different types of people. One of the descriptions is of a quiet and unassuming person, who in his service of G-d, even when doing a mitzvah like giving charity, he will do it in a way that nobody will know about it. But this type of divine service is not encouraged in this day and age. Today, the divine service of a Jew must be done in public, firstly, so everyone may see it and take a lesson from it.

But there is another, more important, reason why mitzvahs should be done in public. The Tanya explains "that a person who serves G-d in a quiet and reserved manner and does mitzvahs anonymously often will also do only the bare minimum, because his reserved personality lends itself to this type of behavior."

Being a 'Hatzne Leches', and performing mitzvahs in a limited way, are two traits that stem from the "left side" the controlled and calculated side of divine service.

The right side of divine service, on the other hand, the side that enjoys the public eye and the trumpeting of his magnanimity, which typically is frowned upon, is also



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the source of liberality and openhandedness. This brings a person to fulfill his obligations generously, without any 'cold calculation', while when no one is watching it is quite a simple matter to give less.

Hence a person who gives charity publicly and with a lot of noisy advertising will inevitably end up giving far more than the one who strives to remain a "humble anonymous benefactor".

In light of all of the above, each of us must view ourselves as if we were 'reborn' everyday. We must not remain the nurtured rather we must become and continue to be the nurturers. And not do so quietly like the baby in his mommy's wombs who knows the entire Torah but does no good with his vast knowledge, it is only once the baby has emerged from the womb, that he can begin to make a difference in the world.

And this is 'Childbirth' under a Chassidic lens.