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Jewish Insights on Bullying and Social Exclusion

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Introduction

Schools and youth groups are places to which we send our children for them to flourish and develop. Whilst most children will enjoy a highly positive experience of school education of youth activities, a significant number experience a degree of bullying. For such children, school and youth clubs are frightening places in which they are targeted for humiliation and even violent attack.

While the dangers and harms of overt bullying are well understood and many schools have adopted effective policies for addressing such behaviour, many children experience a covert form of bullying that goes unaddressed. This type of bullying is often inadvertent and sometimes so casual as to go unnoticed by the teachers and youth leaders. In some instances, even the victim of this behaviour is unaware of what is happening – even though the impact can be devastating nonetheless.

We are referring to what we term inadvertent social exclusion, whereby the dynamics within a group create the conditions that keep some young people outside the group. Those within the group may often assume that the outsider has chosen to be excluded, but in fact the exclusion was created by the active group members. In a different context, this has been called oblivious ostracising¹, whereby neither party is aware that exclusion is occurring but which exhibit all its signs and consequences nonetheless.

It is therefore the role of group members, and in particular group leaders, to be aware and conscious of this phenomenon in order to be vigilant against such behaviour and to take corrective action should it arise. We argue that in-group cohesion and good relations, while vitally important, is no substitute for concern for the impact on those outside the group – especially as they may well be in that position because of the interaction within the group.

In this paper, we set out how Judaic sources and ideas can influence the issue of social exclusion and how it may enrich it further. We will explore the causes of bullying, appropriate reactions to bullying and a deeper sensitivity to the notion that bullying can be a passive act enabled by indifference and lack of awareness.

The responsibility to be inclusive

At the heart of our approach to social exclusion is the notion that those in a group are not only responsible to behave ethically to others, but also to consider the wellbeing of those outside the group (in particular as the group dynamic may in fact be a large part of the cause that some remain on the outside). This sentiment is thread throughout much of Jewish thought.

In Jewish thought personal culpability is by no means the only form of guilt. Standing by and doing nothing is an offence. 'Do not stand idly by your brother's blood' (Leviticus 19:17) obligates us to intervene to not only save another's life, but also to assist in any way that would prevent harm coming to another.² We are asked to take part in the struggles and pain of others³,

¹ Williams, K. D. 2001. *Ostracism: The power of silence*. New York: Guilford.

² Sanhedrin 73a; Maimonides Mishne Torah, Laws of Murder 1:14.

³ In reference to the verse (Exodus 17:12) that Moses had his hands raised throughout the duration of Israel's battle with the Amalekite tribe, the Talmud (Talmud, Taanit 11b) explains that Moses wanted to experience the discomfort of his people. It adds based on Genesis 41:50 that one should not exclude oneself from the distress of others. Halacha

and not ignore the difficulties others endure⁴. Indeed, to act in a Godlike fashion, says Rabbi Isaish Halevi Hurwitz⁵, one has to act in the spirit of the verse (2 Samuel 29:11) “he devises means so that the banished one will not remain an outcast.”

From a Judaic perspective, it is insufficient even to oppose bullying or exclusion when it occurs; members of the group need to be seen to oppose such behaviour so as to reduce the likelihood of it occurring in the first place. A rather striking rabbinic comment captures this point. The Midrash⁶ records a view that biblical Rueben was given a share of the income from the sale of Joseph and was included in the group of ten that were party to the deed (as expressed in the Talmud⁷). The problem with this view is that the Bible (Genesis 37:21) is clear that Rueben tried his best to save Joseph. A major commentator to the Midrash understands this to mean that Rueben had not made it clear that he opposed an attack on Joseph, which the other brothers interpreted as implicit acceptance of their hostile intentions. The best way to discourage bullying or exclusionary behaviour is for group members to be active in promoting inclusivity.

Rabbi Elijah Dessler in several essays⁸ demonstrates how seriously the Bible takes the idea of social responsibility. When only a small percentage of people committed the sin of the Golden Calf, we find the entire nation is condemned for allowing it to happen⁹. Similarly, when a single individual stole from the booty after the capture of Jericho in the book of Joshua (chapters 6-7), we find the entire group was held responsible:

“Israel has sinned and they have violated My covenant! They have taken from the spoils forbidden to them; they have stolen. They will not be able to overcome their enemies until the forbidden objects are removed from their midst”

Explains Rabbi Dessler:

For the influence of the collective on the individual is well known. And Scripture bears witness that if they had looked upon the contraband with a very great sense of repulsion, scorn, and disgust, it would have been impossible for there to be even one individual who would have actually dared to steal. Yet the Torah speaks of this subtle deficiency, which we can hardly discern, in terms of a gross sin: ‘They took... they stole... they lied...’ all expressed in the plural.

From the perspective of Jewish ethics passivity in the face of wrongdoing is almost as bad as committing the wrong. This echoes the famous quote from Edmund Burke that ‘All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing’. A key concept in Judaism is the idea of *Arvut* – mutual responsibility¹⁰. However, in Jewish thought *Arvut* goes beyond positing that one is simply ethically bound to help others deal with *their* problem; rather it is the statement that another’s problem genuinely constitutes a problem for me too – it is, in fact, my own problem.

rules (Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 570). Similarly, it rules that a person who travels to a place where the community is fasting, the visitor is obligated to join in the fast.

⁴ See Bava Batra 91a, Midrash Rabbah Ruth 1:4 and Rashi to Ruth 1:1 that Elimelech was punished for abandoning his people when they were struggling.

⁵ Shelah in *Aseret Mamarim* (seventh mamar)

⁶ Genesis Rabba

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⁸ Michtav Me’elياهو vol 1 page 162, 248; vol 2 page 112.

⁹ Exodus 32:1.

¹⁰ Shavuot 39a; Talmud, Sanhedrin 27b based on Leviticus 26:37, cited in Rashi ad loc. See also Sanhedrin 43a based on Deuteronomy 29:28 that when an individual wrongdoing becomes known to the community, it becomes the community’s responsibility. According to Jewish mystics (see Tomer Devorah chapter 1, fourth midah) we are also spiritually intertwined with one another. Although in Jewish sources the concept is specified in relation to the mutual responsibility of one Jew to the next, we may reasonably suggest that mutual responsibility among members of a family, community and country is something implied by this ethic.

Halacha (Jewish law)¹¹ uses the concept of *Arvut* to explain how one can recite *Kiddush*¹² for another even if the person has already recited it¹³, because if even one person has not fulfilled their *Kiddush* obligation that there is something lacking in my own. This means that when one repeats the *Kiddush* for the sake of another person they are not only doing it to help another fulfil *his or her* obligation, but are doing so to settle their own *personal* obligation. There is a radical difference between these two mind-sets.

The Midrash¹⁴ offers a parable that captures this sentiment:

A group of people were travelling in a boat. One of them took a drill and began to drill a hole beneath himself. His companions said to him: "Why are you doing this?" Replied the man: "What concern is it of yours? Am I not drilling under my own place?" Said they to him: "But you will flood the boat for us all!"

Many aspects of Jewish law are driven by the consideration of how one's actions can unfairly exclude others. The verse (Leviticus 25:36) וְחִי אִחִיךָ עִמָּךְ – 'your fellow shall live *with you*' when prohibiting usury is worded in such a way as to suggest that it is not enough that he lives, but that he lives inclusively – 'with you'. There is an evocative description in the Mishna¹⁵ of the encounter between the High Priest and the elders on the eve of Yom Kippur¹⁶ when the latter needed to caution him against any deviation: "He turned away and cried and they turned away and cried." That the elders felt the need for that moment to treat their colleague, the High Priest, as a potential other – creating an 'us' and 'them' situation – was cause for true sadness.¹⁷

Even a criminal who in biblical times was sent to a City of refuge¹⁸, the Talmud¹⁹ states that they were not to be entirely excluded from mainstream society. The Talmud²⁰ tells of a great sage, Choni the Circle, who felt rejected by his peers and despaired of life, declaring: "Give me fellowship or give me death." Being cut off from society is regarded as a terrible hardship akin to death²¹, which is why a blind²² or leprous²³ person has also been described in this way as historically blindness prevented a person from full participation in society.

In the early part of Genesis there are two major examples of collective wrongdoing: the wickedness of Noah's generation, and the rebellion against God by the builders of the Tower of Babel²⁴. The Midrash and Rashi¹² ask why the former were severely punished and not the latter, to which they answer: For while those constructing the tower offending against God, they were treated leniently because they acted cordially towards one another.

¹¹ Shulchan Aruch Harav 167:23 based on Rabbeinu Yonah Berachot 20a; Magen Avraham, 167:40; Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 273:4; Mishnah Berurah s.k. 20.

¹² Sanctification over wine on the Sabbath.

¹³ One is not permitted to recite blessing (containing God's name) unnecessarily (*Berachos* 33a based on Exodus 20:7; *Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Berachos* 1:15. See *Minchas Chinukh* (30:8) who derives the prohibition from *Temurah* 4a). *Kiddush* may therefore only be recited once.

¹⁴ Leviticus Rabbah 4:6.

¹⁵ Yoma 1:5.

¹⁶ Day of Atonement, when the High Priest would lead a day of prayers, offerings and sacrifices.

¹⁷ Yoma 19b. We are suggesting that those tears were not only sorrow over the depressing requirement for such warning, as the Talmud explains. See Haemek Davar on Genesis 50:17, that Joseph's tears were shed for a similar reason.

¹⁸ Deuteronomy 16:18–21:9.

¹⁹ The Talmud (*Makkot* 10a) teaches that if a student is exiled his teacher must go with. It adds (*Makkot* 10b) that the majority of the inhabitants needed to be regular people.

²⁰ Taanit 23a. See Talmud (*Avoda Zara* 72b) "Said Rava: Either friends like the friends of Job or I prefer death."

²¹ Rashi on Genesis 28:13.

²² Nedarim 64a.

²³ Nedarim 54b.

²⁴ This is how it is often interpreted by the Rabbis. See Genesis Rabba 38:6, Rashi on Genesis 11:1; Avot d'Rebbe Natan 12:7. However, see Ibn Ezra to 11:4.

In traditional Jewish sources unity is much prized. Emphasis is made not only on unity among family or friends, but also in being inclusive of all on the basis that all the members of a society complement each other²⁵. For this reason, division and conflict are always much to be regretted²⁶.

Ignoring someone is regarded as hateful²⁷. Not interacting with someone for three days is seen by the Talmud²⁸ as sign of animosity. Hence, we also find that greetings others was given strong emphasis in Judaic sources. It was pointed out that the great sage Rabbi Yochanan would always be first to offer the greeting, no matter who it was he encountered²⁹. The Talmud³⁰ goes so far as to cite an opinion that failure to return a greeting amounts to theft! Allowing one person to be singled out for exclusion from the group is to be avoided even at extreme cost. Here is a startling segment from the Talmud³¹:

It once happened that Rabban Gamaliel said: 'Send me up seven [scholars] early in the morning to the upper chamber.' When he came in the morning and found eight, he asked: 'Who is he who has come up without permission? Let him go down.' Thereupon, Samuel the Little arose and said: 'It was I who came up without permission... But in reality it was not Samuel the Little but another; he only wished to save the intruder from humiliation. Similarly it once happened that while Rabbi was delivering a lecture, he noticed a smell of garlic. Thereupon he said: 'Let him who has eaten garlic go out.' R. Hiyya arose and left; then all the other disciples rose in turn and went out... And from whom did R. Hiyya learn such conduct? — From R. Meir, for it is taught: A story is related of a woman who appeared at the Beth Hammidrash of R. Meir and said to him, 'Rabbi, one of you has taken me to wife by cohabitation.' Thereupon he rose up and gave her a bill of divorce, after which every one of his disciples stood up in turn and did likewise.

From vulnerable to victim

A key argument of this project is that exclusion may look innocent enough, but that it is the beginning of a potentially worsening situation where people are isolated by their peers, leaving them vulnerable to greater victimisation. When a person is included in the group, the group members offer a measure of protection. When excluded from the group, the individual is more easily targeted for abuse – both verbal and physical.

We see this with the biblical story of Joseph and his brothers³², whereby initially he was just excluded by the other brothers, but that this exclusion was the beginning of a rather dangerous dynamic of creating an 'other'. The result was his attempted murder and eventual sale into slavery³³. A seminal incident recorded in the Talmud³⁴ articulates the consequences of rejecting another:

The destruction of Jerusalem came through a Kamza and a Bar Kamza. A man had a friend Kamza and an enemy Bar Kamza. He once made a party and said to his servant, Go

²⁵ Talmud Keritot 6b that only a fast that includes sinners is to be regarded as a proper fast. See *Meshech Chochma* Haftorah Deuteronomy.

²⁶ *Menorat HaMaor* (Ner 2 Klal 7 Chelek 1 chapter 1) that cooperation and closeness among people is vital to the functioning of civilisation.

²⁷ Abrevanel 2 Samuel 13:22. He says it is better to criticise than ignore.

²⁸ Mishna Sanhedrin 3:5; Mishneh Torah Hilchot Rotzeach 6:10.

²⁹ Brachot 17a. Viz Rabbi Matya ben Charash: "Initiate a greeting to every human being" (Pirkei Avos 4:20).

³⁰ Berachot 6b.

³¹ Sanhedrin 10a-11b.

³² Genesis 37:4.

³³ Genesis 37:27.

³⁴ Gittin 55b; Midrash Eicha Rabba 4:3.

and bring Kamza. The man went and brought Bar Kamza. When the host found him there he said, "You tell tales about me; what are you doing here? Get out". Said the other: "Since I am here, let me stay, and I will pay you for whatever I eat and drink." He refused. Then let me give you half the cost of the party. He refused. Then let me pay for the whole party. He still declined, and he took him by the hand and put him out.

This act of exclusion resulted in total destruction, when the offended party went to the Roman authorities to pay revenge.

We see that Judaic teaching is alert to the impact of leaving someone exposed by its response to the death of a stranger on the road. The Bible (Deuteronomy 21:4) states that if a person is found dead on the road and it is not possible to discover the cause of death, then the elders of the nearest town need to enact a ceremony of penance in which they declare "Our hands did not spill this blood." Upon this the Talmud³⁵ asks: "Does anyone really think that the Elders of the Beth Din were murderers? Rather, for them perhaps not having left him without provisions or not having accompanied him along the way." A wayfarer who seems neglected is a ready target for bandits; a more visible interest from the community for his welfare may have afforded a greater measure of protection.

For this reason, biblical Joseph sent vast gifts with his brothers when we sent them back to Canaan to collect Jacob³⁶. Even though he had urged them to return in haste, in which case all those food gifts would not have been necessary, he wanted to demonstrate that they were now being looked after, thereby enhancing their security. The Talmud³⁷ relates how a great sage was snubbed for a tragedy that occurred in his proximity:

Much like the case when a lion devoured a man some three Parsa [a distance of around seven miles] from Rabbi Joshua ben Levi and Elijah avoided him for three days.

From this we see that even a mild act of exclusion has the ability to render someone a greater potential victim. What this suggests is that when someone is perceived as an outsider to a group, this leaves them vulnerable, and in extreme cases the consequences can be dire. The dramatic Talmudic tale about the exclusion of Rabbi Eliezer ben Horkonos similarly alerts us to the significance of this issue, as the rejection of this great sage ultimately led to his demise³⁸.

We find an opinion expressed in the Talmud³⁹ that when praying in the synagogue a person may not abandon someone else and leave while the other has not finished, and that doing so will result in his prayers being rejected.

Cause of exclusion

At the heart of this project is a view that exclusion often occurs inadvertently, without intention to harm, but out of indifference to the feelings of others. This can happen most naturally, as people are not necessarily focused on consideration of another's perspective, and they will often assume that their perspective is normative. Our reading of Jewish thought suggests that this is a central issue governing human interrelations: the mandate to understand the pain of another, rather than to be self-absorbed.

³⁵ Sotah 45b.

³⁶ Genesis 43:11.

³⁷ Makkot 11a.

³⁸ Talmud Baba Metzia 59b.

³⁹ Berachot 5b-6a.

One of the most important notions in traditional Judaic sources is the condemnation of *sinat chinam*⁴⁰, often translated as ‘causeless hatred’. We argue here that, in fact, both parts of the translation are wrong. Firstly, no hatred is truly without cause, and secondly the word *sinah* can refer to dislike rather than hate.⁴¹ We therefore suggest that this widespread concept actually means ‘casual dislike’ and refers to social exclusion caused by the kind of in-group/out-groups dynamic we are addressing in this project. An important Chassidic discourse by Rabbi Sholom Dov Ber of Lubavitch⁴² explains this concept:

Sinat chinam happens when one person dislikes another just so, for no valid reason. Sometime he invents some reason for his dislike, but this is only an excuse to justify his antipathy. The real reason is his own self-importance, which does not allow space for anyone else. He is too important in his own eyes, and therefore seeks to diminish the values of others.

This idea is beautifully put by Rabbi Isaiah Halevi Horowitz⁴³:

Sometime people dislike others – not out of jealousy or competition, but – due to the poor personality traits of the one aroused. Just as people like each other due to their similarity, some people dislike others because they are different in their personality and character traits... We are therefore urged that even if others are different from you in their disposition or temperament that we should tolerate and love them, for the Almighty has created them thus.

According to this thesis, antipathy towards others is rarely caused by some offensive action; rather, the reverse is true, that a person takes a negative position towards someone and then they begin to dislike what they do.

More broadly, inclusivity comes from awareness that human beings are interconnected. The Talmud⁴⁴ asks “If a person’s right hand cut their left hand, would the left had think to cut the right hand in revenge?” In asking this question, the Talmud is suggesting that much animosity being humans is the result of exaggerated separateness, whereby we overstate our independence of others.

Peripheral vision

Another key aspect of this project is recognition that sometimes negative consequences of our actions go unnoticed because they are outside of our normal range of awareness. Reducing inadvertent social exclusion therefore requires the enhancing of adults and children’s peripheral vision, picking up on that which would normally go unnoticed. Yet, our not noticing does not reduce the harm, as Kipling D. Williams explains⁴⁵:

Ostracism does not have to be punitive or deliberate. It can be, using the terminology of Williams’s model of ostracism (1997, 2001⁴⁶), *oblivious ostracism*. When a waiter approaches the table and fills glasses with water, no one acknowledges his existence.

⁴⁰ *Gittin* 55b-56a Sources please

⁴¹ For example, Leah, wife of Jacob, rejoiced (Genesis 29:33) at having a son for she was ‘snuah’, which could hardly be translated as ‘hated’, but rather ‘less liked’.

⁴² Sefer Hamaamarim 5659 p. 56.

⁴³ Shelah section 1 shaar ha’otiot, ot 2. See futher there.

⁴⁴ Jerusalem Talmud Nedarim 9:4.

⁴⁵ *Obliviously Ostracizing Singles* by Kipling D. Williams and Steve A. Nida 2005: COMMENTARIES ON: Singles in Society and in Science, Psychological Inquiry, 16:2-3, 127-131.

⁴⁶ Williams, K. D. 1997. Social ostracism. In R. M. Kowalski (Ed.), *Aversive interpersonal behaviors* (pp. 133–170). New York: Plenum. Williams, K. D. 2001. *Ostracism: The power of silence*. New York: Guilford.

They are also not out to punish him. Is this a problem for the waiter? Maybe, but probably not too much of one. On the other hand, consider the case of an undergraduate who attends a party that consists predominantly of graduate students and faculty. She floats around the party as if she were invisible; no one pays any attention to her, even when she puts herself into the middle of an interacting group. Are they intentionally ignoring and excluding her? Probably not. Does it matter? Yes, it probably does matter—it makes her feel worthless and invisible, and like a nonentity.

According to the Talmud⁴⁷ and codified in Jewish law⁴⁸ unintentional damage must still be paid for. Similarly, unintentional taking of life, even when no recklessness was involved in considered manslaughter. Lack of awareness is rarely a reasonable defence in Jewish law. A person is expected to maintain awareness of what's going on around one's self. Similarly, we are expected to hold a wider purview of those around us and what their needs are.

Jewish Values recognises that only focusing on maintaining a good relationship with 'our own' limited circle of acquaintances represents a narrow horizon. Constricting our kindness to friends is a stunted form of compassion. The Bible (Leviticus 11:19) lists among the non-kosher birds the stork, called a *Chassida*, which means 'kind one' in Hebrew. Says the Talmud (Chullin 63a): It is called *Chassida* because it is kind to its near ones. The question is asked: if it is a kind bird, why then is it considered non-kosher? An answer given⁴⁹ is that it is unkosher because it only shares its kindness to birds of its own feather, whereas a kosher bird would be kind with everyone. A truly compassionate individual not only behaves with sensitivity towards family and friends, but also has a finely attuned antenna to pick up on the needs of those at the periphery, those on the margins who often go unnoticed.

A story is told about a Rabbi who was approached by a poor person before Passover asking whether milk was suitable for the traditional four cups of wine. The Rabbi explained that it was not and gave the person a large sum of money. His attendant asked why it was necessary to give someone a large amount, as wine would have cost much less. Explained the Rabbi: "If he was asking to use milk evidently he could not afford meat for his meal,⁵⁰ so I gave him money for meat as well." The Rabbi in this story could have sufficed himself with addressing the matter at hand, but instead he took a broader view of the situation. It is not sufficient to deal with the immediate situation we are confronted with; we need also to recognise the wider issues that may be out of view. In a similar vein, the Lubavitcher Rebbe highlighted concern for the Fifth Son⁵¹ who does not even come to the seder⁵².

Response to bullying

Seeing another person being unjustly victimised can arouse strong feelings of resentment and indignation. Both the victim and witnesses to such acts can feel provoked into taking radical action to reassert fairness. Sometimes, the reaction can be counterproductive, and unless the victim is in danger it is best to find non-violent ways of helping redress such injustice.

If we reflect on the outrage sensed by young Moses when he first encountered the oppression his brethren were enduring in Egypt, we see how his spontaneous outburst to protest a very

⁴⁷ Talmud Bava Kama 26a.

⁴⁸ Mishneh Torah, Chovel uMazik 1:11; Shulchan Aruch 421:3-4.

⁴⁹ *Daat Chachamim, Peninei HaChassidut*.

⁵⁰ For meat and milk may not be consumed at the same meal.

⁵¹ The Passover Haggadah has the reader address 'four sons' present at the Seder table, from the most enthusiastic to the most hostile.

⁵² Sicha 19 Nissan 5749; Letter 11th Nissan 5717, Igrot Kodesh Vol. 15 pp. 33-37.

overt case of bullying did not produce a useful result. He struck out at the Egyptian⁵³, which led to attempts at his arrest and his fleeing Egypt preventing him from playing any further part in advocating for his brethren⁵⁴. Years later, an older Moses returned to Egypt to confront Pharaoh; this time putting to the aggressor, Pharaoh, that his behaviour had to change⁵⁵.

Leadership

While overturning injustice and promoting a fair society is a task that falls to every person, in Jewish thought special responsibility is accorded to the leaders. They bear a direct responsibility to prevent societal wrongs, and they are held directly to blame for failures⁵⁶. The Talmud⁵⁷ highlights the special role of the leader to stand up for what's right and failure to lead effectively means that they are considered culpable. In the aforementioned story of Kamza and Bar Kamza the reason for the revenge act against all Jews was the result of the offence occurring in the presence of Rabbis who failed to intervene:

Said the other, "Since the Rabbis were sitting there and did not stop him, this shows that they agreed with him. I will go and inform against them, to the Government."⁵⁸

However, while leadership involves a multitude of responsibilities, we see from Jewish sources that it is seen as exemplified by how the leader deal with those on the margins. The Midrash⁵⁹ says that the leader is tested through concern for those on the periphery:

The Holy One Blessed is He does not grant greatness to a person until He tests him over something small; only then is the person elevated to greatness. Here we have two of the world's greatest who the Holy One blessed is He, tested them first over something small and found them trustworthy and then elevated them to greatness. David was tested with his care of his sheep... Said the Holy One blessed is He, 'You have been found faithful with your sheep, not come and shepherd My Flock... Similarly with Moses [he cared ethically for his sheep]... so the Holy One blessed is He took him as a shepherd of Israel.

Leadership is defined by concern for the weak members of society. Thus, says the Midrash, Moses was chosen as leader when the Almighty witnessed his concern for a stray sheep⁶⁰:

Moses was shepherding his father-in-laws' sheep one day, when one of them bolted. Moses followed the runaway animal until it reached a body of water where it stopped for a drink. Moses compassionately said to the sheep, "If only I had known that you thirsted for water. You must be exhausted from running..." Saying this, he scooped up the animal, placed it on his shoulders, and headed back to his flock. Said God: "If this is how he cares for the sheep of man, he is definitely fit to shepherd mine..."

That is why, according to the Talmud⁶¹, the High Priest was blamed for all acts of manslaughter during his reign: "The should have done more to plead for mercy for the people of their

⁵³ Exodus 2:12.

⁵⁴ Exodus 2:15.

⁵⁵ Exodus 5:1.

⁵⁶ See Rashi to Numbers 31:14 that any ill that befalls the populace is put at the door of the leaders.

⁵⁷ Talmud Shabbat 33a; Shabbat 54b.

⁵⁸ Gittin 55b. See Midrash Lamentations Rabba 4:3 that the Rabbis present were uncertain whether to intervene and decided to remain silent.

⁵⁹ Exodus Rabba 2:2.

⁶⁰ Exodus Rabah, 2:2.

⁶¹ Makkot 11a.

generation.”⁶² The Talmud⁶³ describes a stinging encounter where the head of the Sanhedrin, Rabban Gamliel, came to seek out Rabbi Joshua in his home to resolve a dispute:

When he [Rabban Gamliel] arrived at his [Rabbi Joshua's] home, he saw that the walls were blackened, whereupon he exclaimed, 'from the walls of your house it would appear that you are a blacksmith'. Said he in response: 'woe to a generation that has you as a leader, for you know not the suffering of scholars, nor how they earn a living or how they feed themselves.

We concluded from the above discussion that while everyone bears a responsibility for inclusion, it is the leaders – teachers, parents and youth workers – who carry a higher level of responsibility to ensure that those in their care are not excluded.

⁶² The aforementioned story about Rabbi Joshua ben Levi, who was blamed for a tragic lion attack in his vicinity, is cited as explanation for the culpability of the High Priest.

⁶³ Berachot 28a.