Miller’s Musings **פרשת מִּשְׁפָּטִים**

I think we can all agree that kidnapping and cursing one’s parents rank pretty low on the morality scales.  They are both acts that suggest levels of depravity beyond the norm. However the fact that they are found within a single Posuk suggests that there is more that unites them than merely their similarities in the immorality stakes.   So what indeed is the relationship between these two sinful crimes?

A fascinating idea suggested by the ibn Ezra is that under normal circumstances the notion of a child cursing their parent is simply inconceivable and bordering on an impossibility.  A regular instance of a child raised and nurtured by their parents would mean that the child would surely be unable to repay the selflessness exhibited towards them in such a cruel and vindictive manner.  In fact the only way this could happen would be if there would be an extended period of detachment from the parent, such as that effected by a kidnapping, hence the connection between the two sins.

Although the case of kidnapping may be an extreme one, I believe the underlying principal is relevant for any parent, educator or person trying to develop a positive relationship with another.  If you truly desire to nourish a healthy association with someone the key recipe is time.  If parents wants children to live up to the life that they hope for them, time spent connecting with the child and time spent ensuring the child realises how important they are to them is an absolute imperative.  How can a child desire to be like a parent that they do not feel they truly know and who does not seem to value knowing them?  Why will students want to emulate their teacher if that teacher has never shown that their achievements are important to them by giving the student of his time and effort to facilitate this?  In fact the amount one can hope to influence another is directly proportional to the time one has spent fostering the bond between each other.  The greater the involvement the more superior the attachment and the less time one is occupied in that person’s life the greater the disconnect and impact one can have.  The lesson is simple and apparent to all, but if we do not keep reminding ourselves of it, these precious moments can be lost and those opportunities for deep and profound connections along with them.

May we utilise the unique time of Shabbos for nurturing all those relationships we hold most dear.

לעילוי נשמת לאה בת אברהם

