

## Kol Ha-Rav

Have you seen the series "Thirteen Reasons Why"? It is a TV series based on the hugely popular novel by the same name. It's a fictional story, meant to be a cautionary tale revolving around 17-year-old Hannah Baker who takes her own life and leaves behind audio recordings for 13 people who she says in some way were part of why she killed herself.

How dangerous is a show that explores in great depth the feelings surrounding teen suicide, rape and bullying? Should we be grateful for the artistic insight the TV show provides or should we be worried about the instigation and motivation it may provide?

If your child is watching the show, let me suggest the following. Talk to them. Make sure they are not processing these all-important issues without the benefit of adult input. Make sure they understand the relationship between feelings and actions. Feelings are always understandable and neither right nor wrong. But actions are subject to a stricter accountability. There may be no right or wrong with feelings, but actions must be constantly subjected to a different kind of calculus-one in which right and wrong is always relevant.

So how does one help a troubled soul, especially when that soul belongs to a child?

Just as God knows the heart of His people, a parent needs to know the heart of a child. If your children are watching "13 Reasons Why", you must watch it with them, and if you don't watch it with them you must discuss it with them. If a child feels lonely, depressed, abused, unwanted or unloved-it is the job of the parent to know that heart and what it is feeling. It is the job of the parent to make a child feel loved so it will be easier for them to act out of love rather than hate and resentment. It is the job of the parent to make sure their children know that all feelings are understandable, but it is not ok to hurt yourself, regardless of how you feel.

And if you feel you are not up to the task and you worry about the thoughts and feelings your child is having-there are professionals who have the skills that are needed to guide a young person who is drowning. And that is also why you have a rabbi, to help you whenever you need help.

Children: know that we love you. Your parents love you, your teachers love you, your rabbi loves you and we will be there for you day in and day out. We want you to see a world of possibility rather than frustration-we want you to love and to feel our love.



*Rabbi Jonathan Z. Maltzman*