

With great power... (Acharei Mot – Kedoshim)

“He who is false to present duty breaks a thread in the loom, and will find the flaw when he may have forgotten its cause.” -Henry Ward Beecher

In the fabricated mythology of our modern era, perhaps one character stands alone as the epitome of responsibility. I am talking, of course, of Marvel Comics’ angst-ridden, smart-mouthed, arachnid-powered Spider-Man.

In the story of his genesis, the super-powered youth hailing from Forest Hills, NY, (my neighborhood!), uses his newfound abilities exclusively for fame and glory. He witnesses an armed robbery, and in his egocentric blasé, allows the thief to escape, though he could have easily stopped him. However, fate is not kind to the unhelpful bystander. The same thief later accosts and kills Spider-Man’s beloved uncle and guardian, Uncle Ben.

Awakened harshly and directly to the consequences of his inaction, Spider-Man vows to dedicate his life to fighting injustice, living by his dead uncle’s motto, which Marvel has made so famous: “With great power, comes great responsibility.”

Ibn Ezra is of the opinion that Spider-Man’s self-blame is well placed. In Leviticus 19:11 he explains the unusual usage of the plural form in the commandment of not to steal. He explains that it means to include not only the direct perpetrator of a crime, but also those that stand by quietly and do nothing when they could have. They are equally guilty of the crime.

Spider-Man took the lesson to heart. May we never stand by idly when duty calls.

Shabbat Shalom,

Ben-Tzion

Dedication

To the archeological discovery of charcoal used in Israel around 780,000 years ago.
<https://www.jpost.com/archaeology/article-893017>

Makes me think of the Midrash of their being many “worlds” (civilizations?) that God created and destroyed before our current one.