

Parshas Nitzavim

THINK OF THE CHILDREN

A fundamental precept of Teshuva is that it is not necessarily confined to the individual's personal relationship with Hashem. The obvious examples are transgressions against other people, in the event of which their forgiveness must be sought; and acts of public disgrace – Chillul Hashem.

When Moshe exhorts the people to commit to being God's people, he warns them not to ascribe any negativity to God, because it is only projection:

לֹא-הִשְׁחִית לֹא-לָא, בְּנֵי מִוֶּמֶם : דֹּר עֲקֹשׁ, וּפְתִילֵתֵל
Destruction is not His; it is His children's defect, crooked and twisted generation. (32: 5)

R' Avrohom Shor points out that by saying this, Moshe was raising awareness of the realities people create. Transgressions and mistakes are genuinely bad – for you and the people around you. It's quite simple – if you gossip a lot, the people you surround yourself with will gossip lots too. If you shout, people will shout at you, etc.

When a person wishes to change, although ideally, the slate is wiped clean, that is not always so simple. There are some things that can't be taken back. Imagine the angry, rude, gossip around young children over a period of time. If, some time in the future, this person wished to change, he could change his behaviour – but what of all the young, impressionable people who observed and learnt from his conduct? The children don't necessarily see the changed man, his Teshuva – they see the example that was set.

This was Moshe's warning – לֹא-לָא, בְּנֵי מִוֶּמֶם – wayward children are not God's fault. We are the ones responsible.

In our prayers over the Yamim Noraim, we frequently say how only God truly knows the reality of all things as they are:

אֲ-לֹהֵינוּ וְהַנְּגִלָּת לָנוּ וְלִבְנֵינוּ עַד עוֹלָם – הַנְּסִתֶּרֶת לָהּ –
What is hidden is for Hashem; the revealed things are for us and our children together. (29: 28)

R' Ahron Belzer would often remark in the buildup to the Yamim Noraim that sometimes, it's ok to reveal certain hidden things. Let your family see the changes in you, and not go on thinking that you're just the same. This is

especially important regarding young children – make sure that who you really are is someone worth showing them.

There is a skill to receiving a compliment, and stating the truth of things, that does not have to be arrogance. There is nothing more arrogant than faux humility – always be proud to say you've work hard for something.

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