



WORDS TO THE WISE

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An Apparent Parent's View

Our concern for the wellbeing of our children can be consuming. Parents typically spend more time, money, and emotional energy on our children, than just about anything else in their life. This time of year in our liturgy we refer to Hashem as our father, hundreds of times. Does this mean Hashem has the same focus and commitment to our success as we do for the success of our children?

In Parshas Ha'azinu, *Moshe Rebbelnu* addresses the nation in what can best be described as a long riddle. He refers to (Devarim 32:5) those who “destroy themselves” yet “their sons are not defective.” Some explain that this obscure verse is directed to those who focus on the spiritual wellbeing of their children but are less concerned about their own spiritual health. This dynamic is, in fact, more common than one might think.

Although many value a life lived by the directives of the Torah, a great many people find a total commitment to the Torah to be difficult. There are many excuses. Some may lack the drive. Others find it difficult to change and overcome their natural desires. Others fail to put in the necessary effort to become more observant. However, the situation changes dramatically when the issue becomes one of educating the next generation rather than changing ourselves. The excuses are no longer there. Suddenly no effort is too great. We want the best for our children; we are dedicated to their success. Even many who are lax in their own observance, are committed to providing their children with a serious Jewish connection.

R' Moshe Sternbuch uses this explanation to offer a relevant and timely explanation of the very next verse. Moshe continues, “To Hashem do you do this!? He is your Father?!” Moshe is pointing out the inherent contradiction in a lifestyle where one holds different spiritual standards for himself than he does for his children.

Ultimately, these parents are delinquent in their service to Hashem, who is their father. R' Sternbuch provides a logical approach to address the gap in the spiritual wellbeing of these parents. A parent should examine his own motivation in educating and encouraging his children to lead a religiously charged life as a reflection of Hashem's role as our Father who guides us as well.

A parent is entirely and selflessly motivated to provide his children with a good, happy, productive life. So too, Hashem wants us to relate to Him as our Father; a father like us, entirely motivated to benefit his children. The more we can connect to the Torah in this way, as a way of life designed to provide us with what we really want, the easier it will be for us to overcome our personal challenges which impede our observance.

The message from Moshe is that Hashem is our *father*. His desire for us is the same desire we have for our children, which is to live a happy, good, and meaningful life. This time of year, it is essential for us to reevaluate the way we relate to Hashem and the way we relate to the Torah. It is our duty to fight any notion we may have wherein the Torah and its laws are anything less than directives by a loving Father to His precious children.