



## HITTING THE MARK

*Erev Shabbos Parashas Ki Sisa, Parashas Parah 5783*

Dear Parents,

In raising and guiding our children, we are occasionally prone to misjudging the severity or even relevance of their actions and behavior. We may focus on one particular misdeed and fail to see the overall picture that should receive far more attention than one isolated action. We can learn a lesson in how to avoid such a misguided perspective, from analyzing *Moshe Rabbeinu's* behavior at the incident of the *Eigel HaZahav*, the *Golden Calf*.

***“Why did Moshe Rabbeinu only break the Luchos, the tablets, once he came down from the mountain...?”***

Numerous *Meforshim*, commentators, raise the following question: Why did *Moshe Rabbeinu* only break the *Luchos*, the tablets, once he came down from the mountain and actually saw with his own eyes, the Jewish People dancing around the *Eigel*? *Hashem* had already told *Moshe* that the *Bnei Yisrael* had made the *Eigel* while he was still up on the mountain. What further proof could *Moshe* have required more than *Hashem* himself, the Ultimate in truth, having told *Moshe* what was transpiring? Did *Moshe*, *Chas V'Sholom*, need to be an eyewitness to prove what he heard from *Hashem*?

*HaRav Zalman Sorotzkin, zt'l in Sefer Ozna'im LaTorah on Shemos (22:19)* answers as follows: When *Hashem* told *Moshe* that the people had deviated from the ways of *Hashem* and had made an *eigel*, *Moshe* thought that the act of building and serving the *eigel* in and of itself was not the absolute worst *aveira*. He would go to the people, show them the *Luchos* he had just received and they would be inspired to stop serving the *eigel* and return to *Moshe*. However, what he actually witnessed was the people dancing and celebrating the *avoda zara* that they had made. Once *Moshe* saw that it was not merely their action, but it was their attitude that was misguided, he realized *Klal Yisrael* needed 'shock therapy' to change their behavior. He therefore took the shocking step of smashing the *Luchos* in their presence to bring them back to their senses.

*Moshe Rabbeinu* understood that the real issue was not the Jewish People's behavior, it was their attitude. Anyone can make a mistake, anyone can be seized by foolishness and act willfully in a way they know is wrong. Anyone can commit an *aveira*. *Hashem* has given us the blessing of *Teshuva* ***“...he realized Klal Yisrael needed 'shock therapy' to change their behavior.”*** inappropriate and still unchanged attitude.

This dichotomy applies as well to children. We need to distinguish between childish misbehavior perhaps due to selfishness, impulsiveness, mood or immaturity and between a real attitude that permeates the child's way of thinking. We often react emotionally to a child's misdeed and immediately punish for a particular action or lack of action. We see the broken toy, the crying sibling, we hear the cruel or inappropriate word and take the child to task for it. We may be missing the point entirely.

When considering how to react to misbehavior (and yes, we should always 'consider' before enacting consequences) we must look beyond the present incident and analyze if perhaps this is part of a pattern. Maybe the child expressed something a week ago. Could this incident be reflective of those thoughts and ideas? Are there other aspects to the child's behavior that can shed light on what is transpiring right now? What's the story and the mindset behind the story?

***“We see the broken toy, the crying sibling, we hear the cruel or inappropriate word and take the child to task for it.”***

We need to understand our children and why they are behaving in the ways they are. Are our reactions and consequences hitting the mark, or might we be guilty of the proverbial “rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic” – an exercise in futility in light of the bigger picture? In fact, we might be doing more than just being ineffective – we may actually be making things worse.

As our children grow older, there are more and more identifiable reasons as to why they do what they do. By moving beyond the specific 'misdemeanor' and trying to see a fuller picture, we can get to the root of what is making our child tick and truly fulfill our parental role of guiding, inspiring and educating our children to follow and live *B'Derech Hashem*.

Best wishes for a 'big picture' Shabbos,

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Principal