



OUR LOVING G-D

Dear Parents,

Erev Shabbos Parashas Vayeilech 5782

The attitude with which we approach the *Aseres Yemei Teshuva*, The Ten Days of Repentance, and the *Yomim Noraim* (High Holy Days) in general, can have a big impact on how successful we are with our *Teshuva* and our *Tefila*. We can be filled with fear, as is appropriate when facing the tribunal of justice, with the *King of Kings*, who knows all and sees all. But this perspective might lead us to a feeling of disabling dread. Like a root canal, it may be necessary, but we just want to get it over with.

We can, however, focus our thoughts on a very different aspect of these special days. We say in the *Haftara* for Fast Days (*Yeshaya 55:6*) *Seek Hashem when He can be found, call upon Him when He is near. Chazal (Rosh Hashana 18a)* tell us this refers to the ten days between *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur*. Rather than a cold, distant and heartless judge, *Hashem* is making Himself available to draw us close.

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In *Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 185)* in explaining the *Mitzvah* of the *Kohein Gadol's* service on *Yom Kippur*, the *Chinuch* emphasizes that *Hashem* implanted in the creation, out of His lovingkindness, a day each year to help every one of His creations to achieve atonement. This is a wonderful opportunity, for if a person's misdeeds were to accumulate for even a couple of years, he would most likely be deserving of a great and inevitable punishment. Despite the fact that our *aveiros* (sins) are in essence acts of rebellion against our Creator, He nevertheless approaches us, so to speak, enables us and encourages us to return to Him.

When viewed in this light, these days can become so precious to us. Rather than a burden that we wish to quickly rid ourselves of, we should relish the opportunity to bask in *Hashem's* closeness. We should strive to improve our ways not merely because we dread the consequences, but because we see the positive in drawing closer to *Hashem*. Life should not be an exercise in beating the system and begrudgingly fulfilling the bare minimum requirements to avoid taking the rap. Rather, our lives should be filled with making use of every moment for good. Our days should be filled with the tremendous *Simcha* of being on close terms with our Creator, and basking in the light of His *Torah* and *Mitzvos*.

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The impact of such an attitude will transform not only our *Aseres Yemei Teshuva*, it will potentially be life-changing for our children. Young people are discovering the world and are researching what is acceptable and unacceptable. Their conclusions in determining what is right and what is wrong are shaped and influenced by how the important adults in their life react. If parents' reactions to their mistakes or misdeeds are harsh and unforgiving, they may comply for the moment, but they will not be inspired to take their parents' values into their own adulthoods.

Similarly, if children's mistakes are corrected by embarrassing and painful exercises in apologies and negative consequences delivered by parents they perceive as cold and distant, children will learn how to avoid getting caught, and develop the ability to bear the harsh punishments, without internalizing any constructive message. They might grow apart from their parents, *R'L*, and not adapt as their own, the values the parents hold so dear.

However, if we parents can emulate *Hashem's* approach with our own children, we will learn to be available, attentive, and forgiving, while holding firm to our beliefs and values. This will enable that closeness to lead to the children's true feelings of regret for misdeeds, and a sincere desire to improve and correct their behavior, out of a desire to emulate their parents and make them proud. They will embrace the value system that is presented with love and closeness, just as we will, *B'ezras Hashem*, return and remain close to our loving Father in Heaven.

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We wish everyone a most meaningful and satisfying *Aseres Yemei Teshuva*, focused on our goals, drawing closer to *Hashem* and bringing our children along to a life of *Dveikus*, closeness to *Hashem*.

G'mar Chasima Tova,

Rabbi Kalman Baumann