

אחרי מות

Good Fences Make Good Children

'איש איש אל כל שאר בשרו לא תקרבו לגלות ערוה אני ה'

None of you shall come near anyone of his own flesh to uncover *ervah*: I am Hashem.

ונאמר "לא תקרבו לגלות ערוה". כלומר לא תקרבו לדברים המביאין לידי גלוי ערוה

do not approach to uncover *ervah*", which is to say **do not approach** things which will bring you to transgressing Arayos.

-Ramba"m Issurei Biah 21:1

אמר רבי חייא בר אבא אמר רבי יוחנן משל לאדם אחד שהיה לו בן הרחיצו וסכו והאכילו והשקהו ותלה לו כיס על צוארו והושיבו על פתח של זונות מה יעשה אותו הבן שלא יחטא

Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba said that Rabbi Yohanan said: This is comparable to a person who had a son; he bathed him and anointed him with oil, fed him and gave him drink, and hung a purse of money around his neck. Then, he brought his son to the entrance of a brothel. What could the son do to avoid sinning?

-Brachos 32a

I can resist everything except temptation.

-Oscar Wilde

Raising children in the modern world is, in some ways, harder than it's ever been. Children will grow up with access to every modern vice and temptation, and they will be bombarded by a well-oiled advertising industry trying to get them to yield to those temptations. Parents can no longer rely on circumstance to keep children away from trouble. In the very connected world in which we live, trouble will find them if they don't find it first.

But, parents do not simply have to throw up their hands in despair and lament the world that their children are growing up in. We can help our children by ensuring that we keep them safe from the vices that will otherwise draw them in.

The Torah places great emphasis on the need to place safeguards between ourselves and temptation. *Shas* is replete with *rabbinic* enactments whose purpose is simply to keep us from coming face to face with temptation. The Torah itself warns us in the *parsha* of *arayos* to stay far away from those things that will lead down the path to trouble. As the *Ramba"m* explains, the Torah keeps us far from that in which we are likely to fail. When a parent, instead, leads a child to the waters of temptation, he will not be able to stop the child drinking from those waters.

What are the temptations we fear our children will succumb to? Are we concerned about inappropriate boy-girl interactions as children move into their teenage years? Have we been careful about family interactions and the environments that

we expose our children to leading up to those tenuous teen years?

Are we worried about children and alcohol? What are they seeing in the home and community in our own relationship with alcohol? Are we taking our children to a shul where they witness fathers imbibing on a weekly basis?

Are we fearful that our children may be exposed to ideas and philosophies that are counter to Torah values? What access have we granted them to all sorts of blogs, websites and comment threads that may undermine every bit of *chinuch* we have paid so dearly to imbue in them?

Are we concerned that our children may fall victim to some of the horrible temptations of the internet? Again, what have we done to eliminate or to limit access to things that they are not yet mature enough to avoid on their own?

It is a terrible error and it is a terrible harm to our children to assume that they, as children, will be capable of resisting the temptations that so many adults succumb to. One of the most important jobs we have as parents is to erect the fences that will keep temptation at bay, thereby allowing our kids to grow up safe and healthy.

Good fences really do make good children.

Good Shabbos,
Rabbi Yisroel Gottlieb
Principal

קדושים

Do as I Say, Not as I Do

קדושים תהיו כי קדוש אני ה' אלקיכם

You shall be holy, for I, Hashem your G-d, am holy.

שיהיו קדושים וזה כדי שידמו ליוצרם כפי האפשר כמו שהיתה הכונה בבריאת האדם כאמרו נעשה אדם בצלמנו כדמותנו וזה ביאר עתה באמרו כי קדוש אני ה' אלקיכם וראוי שתדמו אלי כפי האפשר בעיון ובמעשה

the Torah spells out this, "For I Hashem am holy;" the message is that the original intention in creating man in the image of G-d (Genesis 1,26) had already had as its declared goal for this "image" to become something constant.

-Sforno

יש נאה דורש ואין נאה מקיים נאה דורש אתה נאה דורש ונאה מקיים

There are some who expound the Torah's verses well but do not fulfill its imperatives well, and there are some who fulfill its imperatives well but do not expound its verses well, whereas you expound its verses well and fulfill its imperatives well.

-Chagiga 14b

Don't worry that children never listen to you; worry that they are always watching you.

-Robert Fulghum

Doctors are often notoriously bad at following their own medical advice. Many a patient has been advised by a decidedly overweight doctor that he would do well to shed some pounds. Other doctors, seeing patients between smoking breaks, might recommend the patients quit smoking, and you are not surprised to see your doctor at the *Kiddush* indulging in the unhealthy. Yet, the intelligent patient knows that he needs to follow the sound medical advice of the physician rather than the unsound example he sets. When it comes to their parents, children aren't as discerning.

Parents, too are often guilty of advising their children in ways that don't match their own behavior. A child might grow up watching his father regularly exceed the speed limit by a wide margin, only to be told to follow the posted limits when he gets his own license. A parent might indulge in unhealthy foods while attempting to guide a child to only healthy choices. Parents might also demand of their children to be engaged in *davening* and Torah study, when the parents themselves are engaged in neither. Those parents are bound to be unsuccessful and frustrated. No matter how many times we tell children "Do as I say, not as I do," they continue to follow our example and not our words.

Rav Moshe Feinstein in the *Drash Moshe* notes that this is the underlying value conveyed in the directive of *kedoshim tihiyu ki kadosh ani*, "Be holy, for I am holy." Hashem, Himself, declares that He can and will demand of us that we be holy only because

He sets the example of holiness. The Torah here, recognizes and acknowledges the impossibility of placing demands on people without living up to those demands yourself.

One of the most daunting aspects of parenting is that you are on display 24/7. Your children are always watching and imitating your behavior, both for good, and not so good. If you are polite and respectful to others, your children are likely to be as well. If you are kind and compassionate, your children will likely follow suit. If you are engaged in and excited about Torah, *tefila* and *mitzvos*, your children are likely to be as well. But, if you only pay lip-service to the values that you want to instill in your children, but don't actually embody those values, your children will likely follow suit there too. They, too, will grow up not practicing, but making sure to verbalize the values that you have spoken of before them.

The *gemara* speaks of the value of being a *noeh doresh v'noeh mikayaim*, one who not only speaks well about the proper values, but fulfills those values. That is the distilled essence of parenting. Children follow our lead in behavior and attitude. They are always watching, and what we do will become what they do.

Let's do what we want them to be doing.

Good Shabbos,
Rabbi Yisroel Gottlieb
Principal



Mrs. Zipora Schuck
School Psychologist & Educational Consultant

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