

CHAPTER ELEVEN

by Rabbi Yitzchok Rubin

Grandchildren are great teachers, and having them for an extended visit is a virtual hands-on experience. I have just had the pleasure of such an encounter, and as my little teachers frolic their way into Tatty's car, I bid them a fond (though exhausted) farewell, knowing how much I owe them. Children have a way of seeing things with an open mind. Their vision is not obscured by the callousness of a world grown too weary to hope. To them, all is possible, and parents and grandparents are truly righteous and good.

Parents are often so busy trying to keep things under control that they don't really enjoy the truths their children reveal. Grandparents, however, not only have more time but have gained that extra sense of experience that allows their hearts to listen.

Don't think this ability comes easily. It's the result of years of living through the hard knocks we call life and finally learning to appreciate what's really important and meaningful. In fact, to be totally honest, even we old-timers aren't always listening, because in some areas of our minds, the difficulties of life have left us deaf to the chirping hope of the young. This is something I try to remember when opening my heart to my grandchildren's view.

One area in which my grandchildren always leave me with newfound strength is their all-encompassing trust in Hashem. They naturally accept that Hashem is the Creator of all they see, and that we adults are Hashem's prophets who are here to tell them how to live. In the world of a child, parents are the lawgivers, the Moshe Rabbeinu of their experience. This is a daunting situation we elders should never lose sight of, yet we are only human, and we do sometimes let the other side show.

During this particular visit, I had the great honor of entering a peekaboo contest with my two-year-old granddaughter. Besides being cute, sweet and innately brilliant, she even had time to humor her old zeidy. She did this by hiding her face behind whatever came to hand, usually an ill-used blanket of ancient derivation. There were no words in this game, only smiles and laughter. My little wonder (yes, I am prejudiced) hid her face in said shmatta while I pretended I didn't see her. Then she unmasked herself with glee, overjoyed at having successfully put one over on her zeidy. This went on for a long time until finally I got bored, and we found another game to play instead.

Often, this was the cue for the young lady's older brother to enter with a game of his own. At the sagely age of five, he has developed a penchant for fixing things. The fact that they may well not be

broken means little; he can soon rectify that inconvenience with a few well-selected bangs. This young genius received a new toy on his arrival. It is a plastic electric screwdriver-wrench a one-tool-contains-all of mass destruction. He liked to walk around, using it on any unwary piece of furniture. He graciously condescended to use it on any unsuspecting humans who came his way as well.

I mention all this while kvelling to illustrate a point. These children are still in their natural state of giving goodness and are reenacting things that should come natural to us. The peekaboo game is one that ignites a child's will to be found by a loved one, and my little grandson's fix-it mania (he asked me to tell you that he is a good yingele and that his name is Pinchas) shows a will to make things whole again. It may sound far-fetched to speak of children's games in such lofty terms. Let me explain through the words of our kapitel.

The chapter begins, *I have taken refuge in Hashem's Divine providence, so how dare they say to me, "Go wander off to your mountain, bird"?* This psalm speaks of the constant Divine guidance with which Hashem runs this world. Yet there are wicked people who seek to belittle our belief. They mock us, in effect saying, "You are like foolish birds flying about with no guidance. Go to your supposed mountain that is your belief. You will find nothing there but wind and rocks on which to crash."

These scoffers saw proof for their arguments in David's tribulations. However, the righteous David tells us, *"I have taken refuge in Hashem's Divine providence."* I have found my security in the knowledge that there is a Divine plan for me as an individual even in the throes of tribulation and nothing can move me from the truth.

Yes, *the wicked bend the bow, placing their arrow on the bowstring.*" They are always working to shoot at the heart of my beliefs, but they *"shoot at the righteous when it is dark."* Someone shooting in the dark cannot possibly strike his target a direct blow. The arrows shot by the wicked cannot find their mark if my heart is true. While they may sometimes wound me, they won't find their way into my soul if I remain conscious of Hashem's constant love.

"Hashem tests the righteous" He tests me so I may grow and become ever more sensitized to His Presence. In contrast, *"He despises the wicked and the lover of violence."* Hashem doesn't bother to test the wicked because they have shown their inability to see Hashem's hand in their daily lives. A Torah Yid is blessed when given the opportunity to act on these truths, and when we do so, we give positive reassurance to our young as well.

Sometimes we may think that just because, in our limited understanding, it seems as if Hashem has hidden His face, He does not see, G-d forbid. In reality, though, it is as David tells us, *"For Hashem is righteous, and He loves righteousness. The upright will behold His countenance."*

My granddaughter can hide her face, but deep down she feels secure because she knows that whenever she removes her mask, I'll be there for her. And my grandson reminds me that Hashem is the one true Creator Who wants only to fix our broken hearts through His "tests" of our inner selves.

Everything is in His loving hands. It is our challenge to understand this truth at every level and at all times.

King David spoke of his trials and tribulations. His was not an easy time, yet he strove to find Hashem's face at every juncture, even when he knew his troubles were due to his own misdeeds. Hashem never disappears; it is we who somehow withdraw and then fail to realize we have done so.

There is a famous story of a great chassidic master who once came on his grandchild in tears. "What's wrong, my child?" he asked.

"Zeidy," replied the child, "I was playing hide-and-seek with my friends, and when it was my turn to hide, they all went off without even looking for me."

On hearing his grandson's words, the tzaddik broke down in tears. "Hashem hides from us," he cried, "wanting us to find Him, and we don't even look for Him."

Children are so wise. They have an unshakable feeling for kedusha. We must keep them holy by giving them the fundamentals for the greatest understanding one can possess the knowledge that Hashem is with us every step of our lives.

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