

“It will happen when he sees the youth missing he will die.” (44:31)

An elderly *chassid*, a follower of *Horav Menachem Mendel, z.l., m’Kotzk*, came to the *Kotzker* complaining about his current financial straits. What disturbed him most was the fact that his grown children, whom he had supported with great *mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice, manifested no gratitude. They were all quite capable of helping him in his moment of need. Yet, they completely ignored his financial circumstances. At a period in his life when he should have been retired and relaxing, he was compelled to work hard to support himself.

The *Rebbe* listened intently to the *chassid*. After he finished his diatribe, the *Rebbe* said, “You should not be shocked by your children’s behavior. It is not something new. In fact, a similar situation reigned in the home of *Yaakov Avinu*. This can be inferred from *Yehudah*’s dialogue with *Yosef* concerning the release of *Binyamin*. Among his entreaties, *Yehudah* argued, ‘It will happen when he sees the youth is missing, he will die.’ *Yehudah* implored *Yosef* to take pity on *Binyamin*’s aged father, who had suffered so much in his life. To sustain the loss of *Binyamin* would surely kill him.

“When we read this account, we are immediately confronted with a glaring question. While it is true that *Yaakov* would suffer greatly, what about *Binyamin*’s ten sons, who would now be bereft of their father? Why does *Yosef* not have compassion on *Binyamin*’s children, who would probably suffer irreparable emotional and physical damage with the loss of their father?

“This teaches us,” submitted the *Kotzker* with his head bowed down, “that parents feel their child’s hurt – and sense their child’s pain – much more intensely than children feel for their parents.”

Horav Meir Yechiel z.l., m’Ostrovze gives the following rationale for this phenomenon. All the generations since Creation follow in a chain from the earliest generations to the present. The various attributes, personality and character traits are transmitted from father to son and on. In other words, everything comes to us from *Adam HaRishon*, who bequeathed it to his offspring. This idea applies only to what has been transmitted from father to son. In regard to a son’s compassion and sensitivity toward a parent, there is no precedent, because *Adam HaRishon* had no parents.