

Did I not speak to you saying, ‘Do not sin against the boy,’ but you would not listen! And his blood as well– behold – is being avenged. (42:22)

Reuven cast the blame for Yosef’s debacle on his brothers, claiming, “I told you so.” Veritably, they did not shed Yosef’s blood, but, since he had been held in captivity all these years, anything could have happened. If something actually had happened to Yosef, the brothers needed to be aware they were responsible. The *Yalkut Chamishai* quotes the **Gerrer Rebbe, zl**, the *Bais Yisrael*, who employs this *pasuk* as a *remez*, allusion, that the one who sins with regard to a child is guilty of a grave sin. A child is unable to protect himself, and, thus, he is susceptible to the reprehensible actions of adults who abuse him – be it physical, emotional or spiritual abuse. Whether the abuser is a stranger, a mentor, or even a parent, the innocent child is a victim, and the adult is guilty of an unpardonable sin.

Sadly, there are those who still think that their innocent children are their personal property, so that they are permitted to do what they want, especially concerning the children’s education. They forget that Judaism is not a culture to which one either acquiesces -- or ignores. Furthermore, it is more than a religion, which one may feel that he has the option of modifying to his comfort level. Judaism is the Jew’s life, without which he is not alive; he may exist – but this is not living. Moreover, we have no exit strategy for Judaism. One who is born a Jew will die a Jew, regardless of what he has convinced himself.

The *Sefer Marbitzei Torah u’Mussar* relates an incident that took place in the city of Slutzk, Poland, which was then under the rabbinic leadership of **Horav Yosef Dov HaLevi Soloveitchik, zl**, later *Rav* of Brisk, patriarch of the *Brisker* dynasty, and author of *Bais HaLevi*. *Rav* Yosha Ber was told that a group of parents had decided to send their children to secular schools, called gymnasiums, where there was no semblance of Judaism – either contained in the curriculum or represented by the teachers. These were wealthy members of the community who really did not listen to reason. Their financial portfolios determined their mindsets and spiritual leanings. The *Rav* called each of the parents in separately to discuss the issue and to impress upon them that what they were doing was not only harmful to their children, but devastating to their family’s Jewish future. Alas, the great *Rav*’s pleas fell on deaf ears.

Seeing that subtle persuasion was insufficient to warm up their cold hearts, the *Rav* convened a community gathering in the main *shul*. He announced that he would address the community on an issue of grave significance to the future of Jewish Slutzk. He began his lecture by citing the *Talmud Kesubos* 54a, which states that a widow is supported from the estate of the orphans. For the duration of her widowhood, if she demonstrates signs (such as dressing differently, applying makeup, etc.) that she is seeking to move on and remarry, she is no longer sustained by the estate. She is thinking forward; her mind is no longer preoccupied with the memory of her late husband.

“*Knesses Yisrael* is quite like the widow who is supported from the proceeds of the estate. Hashem supports the Jewish People because they maintain fidelity to the memory of their earlier lives when we had a *Bais Hamikdash*, and we all resided happily in *Eretz Yisrael*. When we begin to apply makeup, to color ourselves both in dress and action like our gentile neighbors; when we are willing to destroy the lives of our children, so that we may gain admittance into their cultural hedonistic sanctums; when we beg to be accepted by them as one of their own – by our actions, we indicate that we are prepared to move on from Hashem. Then, there is no longer any reason for Him to continue to sustain us. We want to be on our own – so be it! We will be rejected and compelled to subsist on our own!”

The *Rav*’s words had a powerful impact on his community. (How things have changed. In those days, they actually listened to a *rav*.) Our children’s future stands at the forefront of our nation’s agenda. Nothing takes precedence over the education of our children, our People’s future. We have no room for negotiation, no option of compromise when it involves the purity, propriety and excellence of our children’s education. A *rebbe*, who apparently was not cut out for this vocation, was performing poorly in the classroom, and, as a result, he took out his frustrations on his students. In response, he was dismissed from his position. Understandably, no Torah institution would make such a decision without consulting with *daas Torah*, a Torah leader who personifies and possesses an uncanny wisdom inspired by his total immersion in the sea of Torah erudition. They consulted with **Horav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, zl**, the *Rav* of Yerushalayim and the preeminent Torah leader in the Holy Land. The *rebbe* came and complained to *Rav* Yosef Chaim, accusing the board, and, by extension, the *Rav* of cutting off his children’s food supply. If he does not work, how will he support his family?

Rav Yosef Chaim replied, “Would his honor rather eat Jewish children?!” This is how *gedolei Yisrael* viewed abuse.