

"Have I conceived this entire nation?" (11:12)

The *Sforno* explains Moshe's statement in the following manner. A father can guide his sons even when their opinions differ. This is due to the sons' perception that their father love's them. Therefore, the sons attribute positive motivations to the fathers' leadership. *Klal Yisrael*, however, did not trust Moshe. They were suspicious of his behavior. This lack of trust undermined Moshe's attempts to effectively lead *Bnei Yisrael*. In his unparalleled humility, Moshe reinforced his perception of his shortcomings and inability to evoke *Klal Yisrael's* trust.

The *Sforno* offers an invaluable lesson in education, which is applicable both to the home and the classroom. Evoking the trust of a child is an indispensable prerequisite for success. There is no surrogate for love and the reciprocal respect it engenders in a child towards his mentor. Indeed, the honor we owe our children and pupils is vital. The educator who dismisses a child as "bad" restricts his ability to help make the child a better person. One who does not harbor a good opinion of his charges will reflect his personal conviction in his interaction with them, compromising his chances for success.

Horav S.R. Hirsch, z.l., writes that gentleness and kindness enable the development of the firmness needed to guide a child. Teachers who show no consideration for the personal dignity of their pupils and who demand respect by coercion will quickly watch their efforts result in a failure. A child has a mind of his own and seeks to assert his individuality.

We must always demonstrate the love we maintain for our children and pupils. Their moral frailties must be viewed as temporary weaknesses, which can be overcome. When we give up our aspirations for our students, they will certainly lose hope, too. Our own courage can stimulate their courage, and our hope can uplift them. Our cheerfulness can inspire within them the serenity which can alone foster mental and spiritual growth. This can only occur when the child senses that his mentor loves and respects him.