

"Lest there be among you a man or a woman, or a family or tribe, whose heart turns away from Hashem our G-d ... a root that bears gall and wormwood." (29:17)

In describing the individual whose arrogance causes him to go astray, the *Ramban* writes, "*Bad roots producing bad growths.*" The *Ramban* views the father as the root and the son as the outgrowth of that root. A child learns to emulate what he sees at home. He values that which is highly regarded at home, and he denigrates that which is reviled by his parents. What he hears, sees, and where he goes, leave a lasting impression on him. Indeed, the child is the proverbial "apple," which usually does not fall far from the tree.

Horav Moshe Swift, z.l., asserts that this is the specific reason that Moshe *Rabbeinu*, in admonishing *Klal Yisrael* prior to his demise, was able to make the terrible indictment of *וְיָבֹאוּ אֵלֶיךָ בְּיָמֶיךָ וְיָבֹאוּ אֵלֶיךָ בְּיָמֶיךָ*, *"For I know that after my death you will surely become corrupt"* (*Devarim 31:29*). He did not say, "I think," or "I prophesize." Rather, he said, "*I know.*" He was sure of this outcome, because he saw what the parents were like. He looked at the parents and saw a vision of their future children -- all bearing their imprimatur. He saw the roots and was able to behold the branches.

What a poignant and striking message for us as we embark upon the most solemn and fateful days of the year. At times our base instincts take hold and sway us from reality, causing us to do actions that can at best be described as inane. There are instances in which we simply do not care, electing to follow our hearts' demands without rhyme or reason. The excuses are standard, "We only live once," or "We cannot be restricted with demands we do not understand." What we fail to realize is that while we are conceding to iniquity, we are taking along passengers -- our children! What right do we have to "decide" for them the life to which they will be relegated? Indeed, if we would only think about our children we might acquire a little *seichel*, common sense, and refrain from foolishness. We must remember that to be a parent is a privilege which carries with it enormous responsibilities.