

You should know in your heart that just as a father will chastise his son, so Hashem, your G-d, chastises you. (8:5)

We have undergone much hardship throughout our tumultuous history. These were not isolated occurrences during which we were subject to the whims and fancies, disdain and loathing, all products of a cruel, envious world who blamed every one of life's incongruities on the Jews. Whatever happened to us did not "just happen." It was all Heavenly-designated by a loving Father, Who, at times, was either meting out fatherly discipline or providing us with "opportunities" to secure our spiritual future. Everything was the result of the profound love that a father has for his son.

The *Kedushas Levi (m'Berditchev)* explains why the month of *Av* is the month during which we minimize *simchah*, joyful expression. He quotes the *pasuk* in *Shemos* 17:8, *Va'yavo Amalek va'yilachem b'Yisrael*, "Amalek came and battled *Yisrael*." Previously (*Perek* 7), the people tested Hashem, saying, *Ha'yesh Hashem b'kirbeinu?* "Is Hashem among us?" The *Midrash* explains the juxtaposition of the people's questioning Hashem's Presence among them upon Amalek's arriving to battle them, comparing it to one who is sitting upon his father's shoulders, so that he is carried in this manner. While they are moving, he meets his friend and asks him, "Have you seen my father?" His father interjects, "You are riding on my shoulders, yet you ask, 'Where is my father?' I will show you. I will put you down on the ground and see how you react when your enemy attacks you." Likewise, Hashem protected *Klal Yisrael* ever since they departed from Egypt. The Pillar of Clouds and Pillar of Fire sheltered them from their enemies. Yet, they had the unmitigated audacity to question, "Is Hashem in our midst?"

We derive from here (says the *Berditchever*) that, in some instances, the Father causes adversarial diversions as a way of imbuing us with fear, in order that we should realize that we have a Heavenly Father who has not, and will not ever, forsake us. Thus, the month during which both our *Batei Mikdash* were taken from us is called *Av*, Father, so that we always remember that whatever tragedies occurred during this month, it was all about reminding us that it is the work of our Father, Who cares deeply about each and every one of us.

Horav Yissachar Shlomo Teichtal, zl, applies the words of the *Berditchever* to explain our opening *pasuk*, "As a father cherishes his son," as Hashem's message to us: "I am doing this to remind you that I am always here and I love you. This is not discipline. This is love."