

## You are children to Hashem, your G-d... you shall not cut yourselves. (14:1)

Self-mutilation is prohibited by the Torah. *Rashi* explains the connection of this prohibition to our pedigree as *banim laMakom*, children of Hashem. "Since you are the sons of Hashem, it is appropriate to look nice and not mutilated." Obviously, it is not simply about appearances. It goes much deeper. The fact that we are Hashem's children is not merely a nice concept; it is a verity that is so real that it becomes the source of a *halachah*.

*Chazal* teach (*Kiddushin* 40a) that one who eats publicly in the marketplace is compared to a dog. One opinion even contends that one who acts in such an unrefined manner is deemed unfit to bear testimony. Why should such unrefined behavior invalidate a person from bearing testimony? Since when do witnesses need to be civilized?

*Horav Aharon Kotler, zl* (quoted by *Horav Levi Dicker, zl*), explains that this person's failing goes beyond his lack of *middos tovos*, positive character traits. Deficient *middos* do not render one's testimony unacceptable. One who eats in the marketplace, however, demonstrates a lack of awareness concerning his natural distinctiveness. As one of Hashem's children, he stands out as being special, which is an accolade that obliges him to act in accordance with his status. One who does not understand that he is one of Hashem's children cannot be trusted. One who does not realize who he is and what he represents cannot be expected to act in accordance with his exalted status.

*Rav Levi Dicker* explains that our prodigious personal value is deficient if we do not value it. If a person would know and realize the significance of being a child of Hashem, if he is imbued with the same inner strength possessed by the most righteous Jews, illustrious Jews whose names are etched in the spiritual firmament of our nation's history, he would hopefully strive to be like them.

Being children of Hashem is much more than a privilege, it is a *mechayeiv*, impels a person to live and act on a higher, more refined standard. He must walk the walk and talk the talk. He does not have the luxury of saying, "I am not in the mood" or "I want to live my life according to my standards, my decisions." When one is the son of the King, in making his choices he must consider how they will affect the King. When a Jew does not act in a genteel and dignified manner, it is an indication that he has yet to appreciate and internalize his position as a child of Hashem, or that he has (conveniently) forgotten his unique designation (which is due to a lack of internalization).