

"That, as a man chastises his son, so Hashem chastises you." (8:5)

The unique character of a parent's chastisement is poignantly characterized by *Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer Zt"l* in explaining the *posuk* in *Tehilim* (23): "*Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for You are with me*". He draws an analogy to a father who is walking with his son in a heavily wooded and uncharted forest. Prior to entering the area the father cautions his son very strongly against separating from him even momentarily. He vividly describes to him the life - threatening danger and peril associated with walking in this forest without an experienced guide. At the outset of their excursion, the son pays attention to his father's warning and his hand doesn't even briefly leave his father's hand. However, shortly thereafter, the son noticed something which drew his interest, so that he momentarily let go of his father's hand. The father, unaware of this sudden change, continued along his walk. Upon realizing his error, the son immediately searched for his father, alas, to no avail. The unfortunate child, terrified by his predicament, begins to cry, searching on and on for his father. As the sun sets, the child has wandered farther into the depths of this forest. The terrifying sounds of the night begin, causing the child even greater remorse and longing for the comforting arms of his beloved father. Suddenly, the child feels a glancing blow on his cheek from an unknown source. Even before he is able to cry out in pain, the child realizes that this blow is from none other than his father. Instantly, in spite of the pain, his reaction is one of joy and excitement in being reunited with his father.

The condition of a sinner closely resembles that of this lost young child. During the time that he sins, he is wandering farther and farther from Hashem, his Father in Heaven, undoubtedly causing great pain to himself. However, as he is chastised and punished for his disobedience, he is filled with joy at the realization that his punishment comes from a father's love for a meandering and lost child. Therefore, when a Jew walks in the "valley of the shadow of death", he does not despair, since he knows the chastisement a symbol of love and concern.