

## **If a man will have a wayward and rebellious son. (21:18)**

Seeing the whole picture is the only way one can say that he has actually seen something. Looks are deceiving, and what on the surface appears to be harsh may actually be the opposite. The case of the *ben sorer u'moreh*, wayward and rebellious son, is a perfect example. A boy who has just become a *bar-mitzvah* is persistently acting wayward and rebellious. He refuses to obey his parents, and he indulges in gluttony and stealing from his parents to support his drives. The parents bring him before *bais din* who rule that, in his case, since he will do anything – even murder – to support his habit, it is best to execute him while he is still innocent of a capital offense. As a result, he will neither descend to the *nadir* of depravity from which he will not ascend – nor will he be worthy of *Olam Habba*, The World to Come. Obviously, significant demanding and exacting *halachic* criteria must be met before such punishment may be carried out. At the end of the day, however, the reaction of most people will be shock and revulsion. What kind of loving parents would act with such cruelty to their young son? How can the *Torah* condone such punishment for a boy who has not yet committed a capital crime? Indeed, the instance of a *ben sorer u'moreh* never occurred, because the requisite conditions for carrying out the punishment are very narrow. The *Torah* includes the entire *parshah* for the purpose of *darash v'kabeil s'char*, to be studied for its moral lessons that refine us. All this is good and well, but we must have other laws which are less stringent, from which we may derive valuable lessons.

*HoRav Yechiel Tzucker, shlita*, relates a powerful story which sends a critical message concerning what should be our understanding of events to which we are “partial” (because we only see part). Spectators. *Darkei Miriam* is an organization based in *Yerushalayim*, which, among its many *chesed* activities, also transports gravely ill patients of all ages, together with family members, to medical centers for required treatment. One of its drivers, who do everything on a purely voluntary basis, related the following story. He first picked up a man who was seriously ill to be taken to a *Hadasah* hospital. Aside from his illness, or perhaps as a result of his illness, he was dealing with a host of other issues: economic, family, neighbor issues. When one is depressed, due to pain and fear of the future, everything appears bleak. This man entered the car with his “baggage,” his laundry list of *tzaros*, troubles, and his “questions,” “complaints” concerning why *Hashem* would do all this to him. This is not unusual; in fact, it is more understandable than one who walks around with a perpetual smile, acquiescing to everything that he is experiencing. We are human, and such is a human reaction.

On his way, the driver received a call from dispatch asking him to pick up a mother and her very ill young daughter from an address in Meah She'arim. They picked up the mother and her three-year-old who showed signs of illness. The man continued his harangue about his miserable life and why *Hashem* would do this to him. The mother listened patiently as long as she could. Finally, she asked “permission” to speak.

“My daughter was diagnosed a year ago with a fast-spreading form of cancer. The only hope for recovery was to receive a one-time treatment which is the only such treatment effective for this

dread disease. It must be administered within thirty days in order for it to be effective. Otherwise, it is worthless, and my daughter's life is in grave danger, since no other cure exists for this form of illness.

"We called the hospital, who said the earliest available appointment was in two months. We called around, spent every penny we had and that we could borrow; we used every ounce of protekizia we had, until finally we were granted a spot in twenty-seven days at 8:30 A.M. following eight hours of total fasting – not even water. Try explaining to a three-year-old girl that she cannot have her bottle of chocolate milk when she wakes up, or no cereal. It had to be done, and I was the "bad" mother who wanted her to live.

"My daughter did not understand the excuses. I had to hold on to her to make sure she did not grab food or water. At last, it was 8:00 A.M., and we entered the taxi on our way to the hospital. In a short time, she would once again be able to have her chocolate milk. My daughter, however, simply could not wait. She cried; she begged – but I was compelled to turn a deaf ear to her. It would only be a few more minutes. I turned my head for a moment, as the porter delivering breakfast to the patients walked by with her cart. In the flash of an eye, my daughter jumped up and grabbed a piece of bread and put it into her mouth! I became wild with fright, fighting with my precious little girl who was starving. I stuck my fingers into her mouth and dug out every crumb of bread! The people in the lobby that were watching me must have thought I was a deranged mother who was starving her child. Indeed, it was my quick actions that allowed her to receive the coveted and vital treatment."

She looked at the man who had been complaining, and said, "You did not ask me how I could be such an unfeeling mother to put her fingers in her little girl's mouth and grab every last crumb of bread, because you know the truth: it was for her benefit. We are little children, *Hashem's* little children. He knows far better what is best for us. We have questions because we are unaware of the past and the future. He knows – and He knows best!"

We do not understand the laws of *ben sorer u'moreh*, their purpose and their reason. *Hashem* does. We just have to "trust" Him. That is the definition of *emunah*.