

Children change so much as they grow – from newborn to toddler to school age to teen – that, years later, one sibling can be mistaken for another in photographs. “My!” exclaims the slightly mortified parent. “The kids really changed – didn’t they?”

Are the kids the only ones who changed? Look back at pictures of yourself, and compare them to how you look today. A wrinkle here or there, some hair loss, or maybe a little belly are the most noticeable changes. One thing is certain – as we age, we change!

Did you change? Your external appearance certainly did. One of the benefits of looking at old photographs is the fact that they can serve as a wake-up call for self-evaluation. “My body has changed – has my soul? I’ve matured in appearance – have I matured in character traits?”

In *Pirkei Abot* (1:13), it is written, “*oodla moseef yasef*” – one who does not go forward – goes backward.

The mission of a Jew is to constantly go forward, to constantly change for the better.

Take a minute for yourself to think a little about change. You can use an old photo album, a box of loose pictures, or the family photos on your desk. Time is passing. Your body is changing. Are you growing – or just aging? Self-evaluation may hurt at first, but it will put things in perspective, so that as time passes, you will learn how to become better, not just older. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

## Good Call

The doorbell rang. A young man was at my door, holding a briefcase in one hand. Somehow I knew immediately that he was a *shaliach* from *Eress Yisrael*, whose worthy employers had sent him to my town in northern England to raise funds.

I invited him into the house and offered him a hot drink, which he refused. Nor did a cold drink, a piece of homemade cake or a plate of hot soup tempt him to accept any overtures of hospitality.

At last I offered him the use of my telephone to call home. The young man politely but firmly refused this, too. Knowing how difficult it probably was for him to keep in touch with his family, I offered again, assuring him that it would not cost me much and it would be a treat for his family to hear from him during his long absence from home.

When he realized that I was not going to take no for an answer, he reluctantly agreed to use the opportunity to say a few words to his family. I handed him the telephone and left the room.

Five minutes went by. Ten minutes. Fifteen minutes. Twenty minutes later the *shaliach* came looking for me. His face was white and he seemed shaken. He said there weren’t enough words to thank me for insisting that he make the call.

His wife had just arrived home after having been in the vicinity of a bomb explosion in downtown Yerushalayim. She was unhurt, *baruch Hashem*, but hysterical. In addition, one of the children wanted to go out with her friends to a birthday party she had long been looking forward to, but the traumatized mother would not permit her to leave the house. Now the child was hysterical, too. At that moment, the telephone rang. It was their father calling from England.

His voice had an immediate calming effect on his startled wife and, speaking to each family member in turn, he was able to soothe all the frazzled nerves with words of *hizuk*. (When the Time is Right)

*The Lorraine Gammal A"H Edition*

לְעִילּוֹי נְשֻׁמַּת לְאָה בֵּת בְּהִיָּה

בס"ד

## *Congregation Magen Abraham*

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SHABBAT NISABIM ☆ שַׁבַּת נִסְאִיִּם

Haftarah: Yishayahu 61:10 - 63:9.

**SEPTEMBER 23-24, 2022 28 ELUL 5782**

Shir Hashirim/Minhah:

**5:10, 6:23 pm (main & upstairs)**

Candlelighting: **6:33 pm**

Evening Shema after: **7:31 pm**

These times are applicable only for the Deal area.

Weekday Shaharit: **6:45, 7:10 am**, Sundays: **6:45, 8:00 am**, Weekday Minhah: **6:40 pm**

Shaharit: **5:47, 6:45, 7:45, 8:25, 9:00 am**

Morning Shema by: **9:02 am**

Shabbat Class: **5:10 pm**

Shabbat Minhah: **1:30 & 6:10 pm**

Shabbat Ends: **7:29, R"Y 8:01 pm**

*Hatarah will be this Saturday night at 7:39 p.m. One should say “Baruch hamabdil ben kodesh l’hol - Blessed are You Who separates from Holy to mundane” before driving a car.*

**We will be having Midnight Selihot this Saturday night at 12:30 am.**

## A Message from our Rabbi

”ברחמין הרבים באנו לפניך כדלים וכרשנים דפקנו דלתיך”

“We come before You seeking mercy, as paupers and as beggars we knock on Your doors.” (*Selihat*)

As we approach the New Year, we think back of the events of the previous year. So much has happened, but we look with great hope for a wonderful good year. As we say in *Selihat*, we come before You seeking Your great mercy, knocking on Hashem’s door as beggars.

Rabbi Paysach Krohn tells about a great scholar named Rav Naftoli Trop zt”l, known as the “*Garnat*.” The Rav asked, what is the symbolism of knocking on Hashem’s doors, and why specifically as paupers and destitute people? He answered that normally, when a poor man comes to a home where he hopes to be helped, he will knock softly because he is embarrassed or because he does not want the master of the house to become angry or afraid and therefore send him away empty-handed.

But the word דפקנו (*dafaknu*) means knocking on the door very firmly. Shouldn’t we come to Hashem as paupers in a quiet, respectful, dignified way?

The answer, said Rav Naftoli, is that when a pauper knocks softly, he indeed wants something. However, if G-d forbid, it is a matter of life and death – he is hungry and his

children are, and if he doesn't get money his family will die – then he bangs loudly on the door, in desperation!

Starting on *Rosh Hodesh Elul* through Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur, we make an honest self-evaluation. We don't look at ourselves as others look at us; rather we look in our "spiritual mirror" and see who we really are, not who others think we are. In our heart of hearts, we know how deficient we are. We know we are quite far from what Hashem wants us to be. Therefore, we are in a state of *Dafaknu*, as paupers and beggars knocking on Hashem's door, desperately begging that He allow us to gain closeness to Him. Shabbat Shalom and *Tizku Leshanim Rabot!* Rabbi Reuven Semah

### Admit It and Fix It

”וְהָיָה בְּשָׁמְעוֹ אֶת־דְּבָרֵי הָאֱלֹהִים הַזֵּאת וְהִתְבָּרַךְ בְּלִבּוֹ לֵאמֹר שְׁלֹם יְהִי־לִי כִּי בִשְׁרָרוֹת לִבִּי אֵלֶךְ לִמְעַן סָפוֹת הָרָחֹק אֶת־הַצְמָאָה”

*“And it will be, when he hears the words of this curse, that he will bless himself in his heart, saying, ‘I will have peace, for I am ruled by my own heart,’ in order to satisfy his thirsts.” (Debarim 29:18)*

How frightening these words are! Anyone can fall into the trap of complacency. One who decides to follow his own heart, rather than attempting to improve and better fulfill his obligations, falls under a curse!

But of course, we must examine the opposite side as well – simply admitting our defects, recognizing that our actions have been inadequate, is a major step forward. Maimonides and the *Sha'arei Teshubah*, outlining the necessary steps for return to G-d, both begin with admitting error. This is the prerequisite for the entire process.

Several months ago, I left my office unusually late. I took a shortcut down a rural road, which is just the sort of road “intended” to be driven at 50 mph, but which the powers that be have posted at 30 mph instead.

As soon as I saw the brake lights go red on the large car parked off to the side, I knew those lights were meant for me. By the time the flashers began rotating, I was already pulling off just ahead of him. Why make him follow me down the road? And when he walked over, leaned down, and said, “I pulled you over because you were doing 50 mph in a 30 mph zone,” I looked at my speedometer and said “I’m sure that’s exactly what I was doing.” I mean, what else was I going to say? I told him that I had come out of work late, just around the corner, and had not been paying attention.

Some three minutes (three extremely long minutes) later, the officer returned – with a warning. After receiving it, I had the chutzpah to ask why he had given me that rather than a well-deserved, \$85, four-point, insurance-raising ticket.

His answer? “You were polite, and you admitted you were wrong. The guys who argue with me will get a ticket every time.”

It's such an obvious lesson! The first thing we must do is: admit we were wrong! How can we correct our actions if we don't recognize first that... they aren't correct already? Now, admittedly, not every police officer works this way. But he was right – I **have** been more careful since. Maybe I learned my lesson without the punishment. And here in the perashah, G-d is telling us that He created the world this way, and made this part of human nature. Admit you are wrong, He tells us, and you are on the road to recovery.

Have you ever heard someone say, “I’m a good Jew?” This expression bothers me to no end. If one is ready to say publicly, “I’m good,” it means “I no longer need to improve.” It has been my pleasure to meet some extremely “good Jews,” models of kindness, consideration, charity, and prayer and learning as well. And I’ve never heard

one of them ever using this expression on him- or herself. “I’m trying” they say, and this sends an entirely different message.

Our very first obligation is to realize that sometimes we aren't so good, after all. This isn't negative, it's a huge step in the right direction. Because now that we realize something is broken... we know something needs to be fixed! (Rabbi Yaakov Menken)

### Personal Business Plan

”כִּי הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מֵצִוְךָ הַיּוֹם לֹא־נִפְלְאָת הוּא מִמּוֹךְ וְלֹא־רָחֹק הוּא...כִּי־קָרוֹב אֵלֶיךָ הַדָּבָר מְאֹד בְּפִיךָ וּבִלְבָבְךָ לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ”

“For this *misvah* (Divine commandment) that I command you today, it is not hidden from you and it is not distant...Rather, the matter is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, to perform it.” (*Debarim* 30:11-14)

*Ramban* explains that, “this *misvah*” is referring to the *misvah* of *Teshubah*, regretting one's misdeeds and resolving to return to G-d's path. On the Shabbat before Rosh Hashanah, our Day of Judgment, we remind ourselves that it is never too late to repent. “The matter is near to you to perform it”: everyone is capable.

Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz asked, “If the *misvah* is so easy, why don't most people do it?” Even among those who believe that they are being judged, many do not exert much effort to change their ways and improve. Rabbi Shmulevitz explains that people allow the force of habit and natural complacency to prevent them from changing. Many people are completely unaware of their flaws simply because they never stopped to take an objective “personal inventory” of actions and attitudes. Over time, even the bad of which we are aware finds justification, and we do not appreciate how much we have changed as a result of it. When we are unaware of or unconcerned about our wrongdoings, we cannot do *teshubah* for them.

In the business world, it is common to periodically reexamine progress, to analyze ones successes and failures. By doing so, successful businesses identify methods to improve and grow the company. A relatively small investment of time and effort in this way produces a bounty of substantive results. This is no less true for the business of G-d consciousness. When we set aside the time to think about our actions, we may find that we are being selfish, impatient, critical, short-tempered, or performing *misvot* by rote without the appropriate sincerity. Once we realize what the problems are, we can plan and consult to chart the path to improvement and change.

We can and must change. When we strive and expend the effort, we will emerge different people. Through the transformation we create and in the merit of our efforts, may we all be inscribed in the Book of Life. (Rabbi Shlomo Jarcaig)

### Photographs

Here's a great activity for a rainy day: pull out boxes of old photographs and take a walk down memory lane. Revisiting the places you have gone, the things you have done, and the friends and acquaintances you have known is a better trip than any travel agent could arrange.

You may find it surprising to see how much more difficult is sometimes to identify all the people in a picture than to recall the place or event at which the photo was snapped. Group shots taken in the park, or at a party or charity affair, generate excitement as the game of “Who's that?” intensifies. But this game is potentially embarrassing, especially when parents have trouble identifying their own son or daughter, still in diapers, playing happily on the carpet or lawn!