

## A Father's Lesson

*By Ariel Bar Tzadok*

I tried to discipline my son today. He is a young child and he acts so recklessly, without much care or regard for his personal safety.

At first, I told him to be careful. He asked me why he could not do that which I forbade him to do. I explained to him how it could be dangerous. Yet, he responded that he could do it in a different way and avoid the danger. I told him that this other way was also not safe. Yet, he was determined to prove me wrong.

Against my warnings and behind my back he did what I told him not to do. Indeed, he fell on his head, hurt himself and then came to me crying. I was both angry and concerned at the same time. I comforted him and patched him up. I again reminded him that this is what happens when one does not listen to words of warnings and directions from one's parents.

Did he learn his lesson? No, not at all. For as soon as he felt better, he went right back to doing what he did before, determined this time, not to fall on his head. I was both angry and concerned. I raised my voice and told him if I caught him endangering himself, doing this forbidden act again, I would punish him.

Did this faze him? No, not at all. Moments later, I caught him again, doing what I forbade him to do. This time I punished him. He resented being punished. I told him that this was for his own good and that I was trying to protect him from harm. Did he not remember just moments ago falling on his head? Apparently not, once he stopped hurting, he lost his fear of danger. I do not know what to do.

How long can I continue to punish him? He knows the danger but is unwilling to accept it. He wants to do what he wants, how he wants, when he wants. He does not care if he is punished, or if he gets hurt. How does one protect another when the other does not have any concern for oneself?

I paused to contemplate this matter. I realized that I am no different from any other father of today or yesterday. Indeed, tomorrow my son will face the same dilemma with his own son.

What then have any of us learned? I contemplated this and I wondered how many of us have actually grown up? Is the discipline problem I face with my son any different with an adult who continues to act like a child?

When I was a child, I too showed the same disregard for my safety, as does my son today. Like me, my father worried about me, warned me and punished me. Like my son, I refused to listen. Like my son, my father punished me.

I eventually grew up and recognized the error of my youthful ways. My father was much relieved. Now I face my son. I grew and learned. Yet, I see so many who also grow yet do not learn. Which will my son become?

I pray that I might teach him wisely. I pray that he will learn from my example and not just my words. Actions seem to be a better teacher than words alone.

We are all Heaven's children. When we need to be disciplined, how should our Heavenly Father treat us?