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Dvar Torah Parashat Naso Unconditional Love

The ultimate parenting guide is given to us in this week's Parsha. Parshat Naso has within it the ברכת כהנים, from which Rabbi David Fohrman teaches us some valuable parenting advice. It is therefore an appropriate ברכה for parents to give to their children on Friday night and/or Yom Kippur. He points out that there are three stages of the relationship between a parent and a child, corresponding to the three פסוקים that are included in ברכת כהנים. The first stage is that of nurturing and protecting. This is connoted in the verse 'וישמרך'. Every parent's primal instinct is to protect and nurture their child. It begins in the womb and continues throughout the parent's life. The next stage is unconditional love. This is the love that a parent has just by seeing the child. It is the 'יאר ה' פניו אליך ויחנך'; that you just look at them and they find favor in your eyes. The most difficult stage is the third. That is, when a child does something that is disappointing to a parent. In this case, even though it may be difficult, the relationship needs to stay, with שלום. We say, 'ישא ה'.

Sometimes (and I am being generous), a child won't do things exactly the way a parent would like. In these instances, it is important for a parent to step back and demonstrate that the relationship is still there, even though the child may have done something to disappoint them. This is a ברכה that the כהנים give us in our relationship with Hashem. We hope that he will protect and nurture us, love us unconditionally, and maintain His relationship with us, even if we do things to disappoint Him. However, it is also a guide for us in how to be the best parents we can be. We should all strive to nurture and protect our children to the best of our ability, love them for who they are, and maintain that relationship no matter what mistakes they make.

Shabbat Shalom!

Rabbi Adam Hertzberg