

JEWISH PRESS

With reference to article
on Alienation

What Can't Be Forgiven

As a couple who have been alienated from two of our adult children for several years, we would like to thank The Jewish Press for bringing the issue of parental alienation to the fore. The constant pain of alienated parents is deep and ever-present.

A great man I once knew had a business dispute with his partner. Even though his partner was wrong, the partner was very sketchy and managed to win. The man lost his business and dignity, and his life was left in shambles. The ripple effects damaged his wife and children too.

A few years later, his business partner deeply regretted what he had done and asked for forgiveness. The man immediately responded, "I forgive you" three times, but then added, "While I forgive you, I cannot forgive the harm you did to my children because a person cannot forgive on behalf of another person."

Most loving parents would forgive their children for the pain they suffered during the years their children cut them off. But the years of pain cannot be erased. All the missed holidays, anniversaries, birthdays, and milestones cannot be relived.

Anyone who played even a small role in severing the parent-child relationship will have to answer to *Hakodosh Baruch Hu*.

In the meantime, we have decided to forgive our children, who are not sorry, and accept their apology, even though it has not been given. May we all merit to see the words of the *navi* fulfilled: "*v'heishiv lev avos al banim v'lev banim al avosom.*"

S.Y.A.

Is Psychology the Problem?

In her letter to the editor last week, Ruchama Bistrizky-Clapman of MASK commiserates with the plight of parents alienated from their children, writing that the number of such parents "has increased dramatically" in recent years.

Nowhere in her letter, though, does she look inwards and explore to what extent the profession she is associated with – psychology – is responsible for this sharp increase.

Years ago, adult children would keep any grievances they had against their parents to themselves; the rare exceptions would speak to a rabbi, who would undoubtedly remind them that they had a sacred obligation to honor their parents.

Today, thanks to psychology, every child feels it is within his rights to go to a therapist and vent – or "express his feelings" – about his parents. The therapist won't mention anything about moral duties since psychologists largely don't believe in traditional morality and don't believe it is their place to engage in "moral posturing."

Instead, they will tell them it's important for them to "be themselves" and "live their lives" without mental stress. If their parents are a source of such stress, they will "explore" options of helping them remove their parents from their lives. And of course, they constantly encourage the pernicious proposition

that problems in life are often the fault of one's parents and upbringing.

The Gemara lauds a rabbi who respectfully said nothing as his parent screamed and embarrassed him in public. A therapist would likely encourage this person to stand up for himself and refuse to be subject to such "abuse."

Bistrizky-Clapman ends her letter by promising alienated parents "to help them get the proper referrals to professionals." No, "professionals" are actually the problem. All professionals have done – besides take people's money – is contribute to the very alienation of children from their parents that Bistrizky-Clapman decries.

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