

**Choose Life**  
**Rabbi Maury Grebenau**

Imagine an older man standing on a street corner. He is alone until a young boy appears walking towards him. The boy is 7 or 8 and the man smiles in recognition when he sees the boy. "Young man", he says, "I would like to give you a ten dollar bill." The older man holds out the bill but gives the boy one simple instruction. He asks the boy not to use the entire sum to buy candy. The boy can use the money for anything he wishes just not candy. The boy accepts the money, turns around, takes three steps down the street, turns into a candy shop and spends the entire sum on candy. All this, in full view of the older man.

A few days later the same man is waiting on the street corner once again. The same boy appears and the same offer is made. The older gentleman again is willing to give the money to the boy with the simple caveat that he not use the money to buy candy. The boy once again takes the money turns into the candy store and spends the entire sum on candy.

If we saw the older man on the street corner a few days later we might be tempted to race over and tell him not to give the boy the money this time. Can't he see that the boy is going to do the same thing once again? Doesn't he realize that the boy will take the money and then disobey him once again? The scene is ludicrous. And yet this scene plays itself out every single day in each of our lives. What do I mean?

Hashem gives us many gifts on a daily basis we are given eyes to see, feet to walk, a mouth to speak, money to spend and much more. Hashem has one simple request of us. He asks that we use these gifts to do good, to follow the Mitzvot, to move forward on our spiritual journey. He gives us sight and asks that we don't look at what we aren't supposed to. He gives us a mouth and asks that we use it to say Brachot, to daven, to learn Torah; but not to speak sander about others, or to say hurtful or spiteful things to our fellow Jews. And we turn around and use the gifts Hashem has given us for exactly that which He asked us not to. And all this in full view of His watchful stare. But in the case of Hashem it is even more amazing. The elderly man doesn't know for certain what the child will do when he gives him the money, but Hashem knows that as he is giving us the gift we will misuse it. He even continues to give us the gift at the instant that we are misusing it!

How can we understand what Hashem does? The answer is clear. If we return to our elderly gentleman and understand that he is the boy's grandfather then his actions are much more understandable. The tremendous love that the grandfather has for the child allows him the exhibit unparalleled patience and understanding. So too with our Father in Heaven. Hashem loves us with an infinite love and so He still gives us the gifts that we need even though He knows full well that we will not use them properly.

Shabbos is a time when we experience the relationship with Hashem in a more intense manner than we get to during the week. Shabbos recalls the initial creation and the fact that

everything that we have in the world comes from Hashem and His infinite love for us. We also recall the Exodus; we remember that Hashem's involvement in our lives is constant and consistent.

As the Yamim Noraim approach let us remember that Hashem's infinite love for us is clear and present every day. The Mitzvot that he asks us to perform are simply another expression of His love. They are truly 'life', and as we are exhorted in this week's parsha, we must 'choose life.' Let us also remember when we evaluate ourselves and our behavior from the past year, not just what we would say about the older gentleman from our story but what we would say about such a child!