

“Kissing Children in Shul During Davening”

In the pasuk where Yosef and Yaakov are finally reunited [46:29], the Torah states “*Vayipol Al Tzavarav, VaYeifk*” He fell upon his neck and cried. Note the expression *He fell He cried*, is written in the singular form, meaning that only one of them cried. Rashi comments that only Yosef cried while Yaakov at that moment recited the Kriat Shema.

Rav Soloveitchik analyzed this event and asked: Why didn't Yaakov Avinu cry? Wasn't he as emotionally moved by this event as much as Yosef? Yaakov mourned for Yosef all these years, and to see him now alive, wouldn't that evoke emotional tears upon any human being?

The Rav explained that factually, and psychologically. The love of a parent towards a child is greater than the love of a child for a parent. This is based on a Tosafot in Sanhedrin [72b] that if a thief stealthily enters your home you have a right to take his life, even if his intention is only to burglarize and not to kill anyone. The rationale being that if a confrontation arises the burglar will not hesitate to take your life. However, if it is certain that the burglar will not resort to violence then you have no right to take his life. How can anyone be certain about the intention of the burglar? Tosafot there responds—that's only if a father is burglarizing the home of his son but not the other way around. It is known that every human emotion emanates from Adam HaRishon. Adam had the emotional feeling of a father towards a son but he never had the feeling of a son towards a father.

That being said, *Ahavat HaShem*, the love of HaShem must always exceed that of anything or anyone in this world. *Ve'avavta Et HaShem Elokecha Bechol levavecha*". The word *Bechol* means without reservation, and above anything else. Meaning, above our most precious possessions, namely, our children (Lesson we learn from Akeidat Yitzchak). Here, in our pasuk, Yaakov was so overwhelmed with love for his beloved long lost son, that he was afraid he would overstep this limit of emotional love for his son at the expense of his intellectual love for HaShem. Of course, Yosef loved Yaakov as much as any child could love a father, but that love is not as powerful as the love of a parent for a child. Therefore, Yaakov had to recite Kriat Shema at this very moment, expressing his love to HaShem. For Yosef, this was not as essential at this very moment, and he could afford the luxury of just crying emotionally, and recite Kriat Shema at a later moment.

According to Rav Soloveitchik, this is the source of the halacha in Shulchan Aruch about not to emotionally embrace and kiss our children or grandchildren in a Beit HaKnesset during time of Tefillah.

Shabbat Shalom from Deerfield Beach
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