

**A Stunning Family**

There was once a well-known and respected family. They were very rich. They had a beautiful house, a four-car garage, a swimming pool and a gorgeous garden.

The family was very blessed. They had twelve children. They were all handsome, smart and at the top of their class.

The parents loved the kids and spoiled them rotten. Their clothing was perfectly tailored, and they were always dressed immaculately. They got all the new toys, all the best gadgets, and they were always up on all of the latest fads.

The parents spared no expense for them. Piano lessons, violin, guitar lessons, tutors, camps, trips, and so on. Nothing was too much for these beloved children.

**Cracks in the foundation**

I don't know what happened. I don't know if it was an Ayin Hara, if they got bored, or just old-fashioned jealousy. But all of a sudden, things were not so rosy.

It all started with the bickering. Everything was always unfair. If someone had something, someone else always wanted it. There was enough for everyone, but it never worked.

The kids were always unhappy. All the toys, the gadgets and the fads were left untouched. They were always bored or fighting. They would get mad and throw and break things.

It started becoming personal. At the supper table, one kid could take the other's bowl and spill it out. Their clothing got ruined, they looked disheveled, and their grades suffered.

### **Punishment**

The parents were struggling to resolve the issue. They began taking them to therapists. They brought in mentors for the children. They took them to Rabbonim to teach them proper attitudes, but all to no avail.

With no other option, the parents began punishing the children. They began stripping them of their privileges. They started taking away toys. They lost opportunities to go on trips. But nothing helped.

The problem only got worse. The kids were not just bickering now. They were fighting physically. They were bruising and maiming each other. They were calling each other names and being nasty to each other.

The parents were at their wits end. They had to resort to corporal discipline. If a kid raised a hand to fight, they got hit with a stick. If he made fun of his sibling, he was lashed with a belt.

### **Destruction**

Even these drastic measures did not succeed for long. After a few months, the parents could no longer endure the hostility. They decided to give the children away. They looked for foster homes, but nobody wanted these difficult kids. They were angry, mad youngsters. Their appearance was battered and bedraggled. They had no interest in studying or in working. They had become worthless. Nobody was interested in taking them.

The parents sent a few kids out to manage on their own. Now, they tried to reason with the remaining children. Do you remember how good it was when you had everything? Do you recall how happy our family was? How we were the luckiest people on the block?

The family tried to change. It worked for a little bit, but by now they hated each other. One kid hated the other, and they all resented the parents.

Once again, punishment and discipline became the norm. The house had become a sad and gloomy place. The problem was getting worse, with no relief in sight.

**Kicked Out!**

The parents could not tolerate it any longer. They threw the kids out and moved away. "Let them fend for themselves! Let these spoiled rotten children learn to appreciate what they destroyed!"

The father became depressed and retreated to his office. He hardly spoke to anyone. The mother grew bitter and harsh. She cried all the time. The father cried too, alone when nobody could see.

The kids were alone, out on the streets by themselves. They were hurt, depressed and listless. Everyone took advantage of them, persecuted and abused them.

Unfortunately, they still couldn't stand each other. Each went their own way to get away from it all. The hurt in their hearts was too much to bear.

**New lives**

Some of the kids decided to better themselves. They worked hard, pushed themselves, and found themselves a place in society.

Some of the other ones became beggars. They were dejected and not willing to do anything. They subsisted on whatever they could get, by freeloading.

A few others turned criminal. They were used to getting everything they ever wanted for free, so crime was a natural alternative for them.

After a while, the siblings started to interact with each other. They realized that blood is thicker than water, and nobody else cared about them at all. At least their brothers and sisters feel something for them.

Some of the brothers started spending time together. Some sisters made a group between each other. Once in a while, they tried to get everyone together, but it never worked out.

### **Tragedy hits**

One day, one of the children was caught and jailed. The news reported that he was to be tried for capital punishment.

His siblings were shocked. The oldest one went to visit him. When they met, they both broke down. Crying and weeping, they made up.

“How I wish we would never have destroyed what we had! Do you think Dad can bail me out?”, the criminal asked.

“No!”, his brother answered. “He tried that in the past and it failed. He won’t try again.”

"What can we do?", he said.

"Keep strong. We still have a few months!"

**"How can we save him?"**

The kids gathered at the oldest brother's home. They were all horrified by the situation.

They had all come together to save their brother. They had put aside their hate and their acrimony, but they still had many differences of opinion.

Some said, "Let's go and ask Mom and Dad to help us". Others felt they should go all out and hire the best attorneys, even if it means selling and mortgaging their homes. Some gave money, while others said, "we have no money to contribute, but we can give our time and energy to be part of the effort to save him".

Two of the siblings, a brother and a sister, stood to the side. They disagreed with the rest of the group.

The boy said, "He deserves his punishment! Why should we save him?"

The girl agreed. "If he didn't deserve it, Dad would have saved him! Crime doesn't pay! Now he must suffer the consequences!"

"What?!", shouted another sibling. "How you dare talk this way!"

A third yelled, "Don't forget that I know crimes that you committed! I think I should give you up to the authorities!"

The oldest brother stood up. "Please!!", he cried. "Don't you see this is what caused the problem in the first place! Let's agree to help him, and we will discuss the rest of the issues later!"

Everyone calmed down and they began the war effort. They hired the best attorneys but the case against him was very bleak.

### **Reconciliation**

The mother barged into Dad's office, waving the newspaper. "Did you see this?"

Dad was silent. She took one look at his face, and exclaimed, "You've been crying! I see that it hurts you as much as me!"

"It does.", Dad said quietly. "It pierces me to the core. But what is the solution? We tried to save them in the past, and it just backfired. I am afraid we must let nature run its course."

"No!", Mom wailed. "You know the judge. You can influence him. Will you just let our child be killed?"

Dad sat quietly. His face was very serious. Mom was silent, pensively waiting. Finally, Dad made up his mind. He said, "If all of the children band together, we will be able to save him!"

The situation was dire. Finally, all of the siblings came to the court to testify as character witnesses. When their father heard this, he ran to the courthouse. He stood up, and took the blame. "I threw the child out, which caused his mental breakdown!", he exclaimed. The judge knew him well, and said, "I will grant him clemency, provided that you take responsibility for his rehabilitation!"

When they came home, Mom asked, "Can we now reconcile with our children? Can we finally bring our kids back home?"

Dad replied, "I wish! They have come a long way. They put aside their differences and supported their sibling! We're almost there!"

"So, what is still missing?", Mom asked.

"They still need to love each other, to respect each other, to appreciate each other's differences and love them!", Dad replied.

**Can we, as Klal Yisroel, make this last effort to return home and stay?**

על זה היתה דוֹחַ לַבָּנוֹ, עַל אֵלֶּה חָשְׁבוּ עֵינֵינוּ.

עַל הַר צִיּוֹן שְׁשָׁמָם, שׁוֹעָלִים הָלְכוּ בּוֹ.

אָתָּה ה' לְעוֹלָם תֵּשֵׁב, בְּסֶאֱדָה לְדֹר וָדֹר.

לָמָּה לְנֹצֵחַ תִּשְׁכַּחֲנוּ, תַּעֲזֹבֵנוּ לְאַרְצָה זָמִים.

**הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ ה' אֵלֶיךָ וְנִשׁוּבָה, חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ בְּקִדְּםָא.**