

What Goes Around Comes Around

We should be cognizant of the fact that "what comes around goes around," and, therefore, we never know when we will be in need. Let me share with the reader the following analogy:

A frail old man went to live with his son, daughter-in-law and four year old grandson. The elderly man's hands trembled, his eyesight was blurred, and his step faltered. Regrettably, this is not uncommon as people age. It was a loving family, and they made every effort to include grandpa in all of their family functions. First and foremost was dinner when they would all sit down together at the table.

Unfortunately, grandpa's shaky hands and failing eyesight made eating quite difficult. Peas rolled off his spoon onto the floor. When he would grasp a glass, the milk, or whatever liquid was therein, spilled onto the tablecloth. The son and daughter-in-law slowly became irritated with the mess. "We must do something about Father," the son said. We have been patient long enough. I have had enough of his spilled milk, noisy eating, and food on the floor." So grandpa was given his own small table in the corner of the room where he could eat and make noise, drop food on the floor and spill milk on the table. There he sat by himself, while the rest of the family enjoyed dinner.

Since grandpa had already broken a number of dishes, his food was served in a wooden bowl. Every once in a while when the family glanced in grandpa's direction, they would notice a tear in his eye as he sat alone. Nonetheless, the only words the self-righteous couple had for him were sharp admonitions whenever he dropped a utensil or spilled some food. During this whole scenario, the four-year-old just sat there absorbing everything in silence.

One evening, before dinner, the father noticed his young son playing on the floor with some scraps of wood. Curiously, he asked his young son sweetly, "What are you making?"

The child looked up at his father, and, in all innocence, said, "Oh, I am making a little bowl for you and Mama to eat your food in when I grow up." The young lad just smiled and returned to his masterpiece. The words struck a chord. In fact, it struck so hard that the parents stood there speechless. Suddenly, tears formed in their eyes, and they began to cry. They said nothing, because nothing needed to be said. They knew what had to be done.

That evening the son gently took his father's hand in his and led him back to his place at the family table. For the remainder of his days, grandpa ate his meals at the table with the family. Yes, he continued to drop his fork and spill his food. He even continued to make noise when he ate, but for some reason, neither the father nor the mother had any complaint. "What comes around goes around." At times, empathy is a subtle reminder that if not for the grace of G-d, we would be in a similarly unfortunate situation. Moreover, as evidenced in the above story, if we live long enough, the possibility of it occurring "at home" becomes exceedingly less remote.