

Off The Pulpit

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The Child You Once Were

Not long ago, I was sent a picture of myself at a very young age. As it was just before Yom Kippur I began to wonder about the person in that picture — what would he think of the adult he had become?



When we are young we have aspirations and assumptions about life. Some are confirmed, some denied and still others hang uncertainly just before us in the path of life. But it worthwhile to think back on what we believed about ourselves when we began.

The child, wrote Wordsworth, is father to the man. We grow out of what we have been and the buds are still visible in the branches. The Torah provides many examples: Moses is saved in a basket — "tevah" — the same word used for Noah's ark, and he ends up saving his people, just as the word foreshadows. We first encounter David as a young shepherd, leading the flock as later he will lead Israel.

We examine our childhood psychologically, but we should also think of it spiritually. What sort of people did we admire? Did we become that sort of person? If not, there is still time to make the child we were happy with the adult we have become.