



I am sorry and ask your pardon...

Hanoch's father told him that when he was young, every year, on *Erev Yom Kippur* he used to visit all his friends and acquaintances and ask them this question. "Please tell me, have I done you any wrong, or offended you in any way, or caused you unhappiness? If I have, then do believe me, I am sorry, really sorry, and ask your pardon..."

When Hanoch heard this he began to think about it quite a lot. He said to himself: "Why shouldn't I do the same thing?" Then off he ran to the kitchen where his mother was busy getting the dinner ready. A great to-do was going on, the pots and pans steaming away, and a nice mizzling noise.

He stood by the open door and waited for a moment to talk to her, so busy was she! Soon she saw him standing there and turned aside from her saucepans and said:

"What is it, dear? Are you hungry already?"

Hanoch did not answer. He felt rather ill at ease.

"But why are you so silent, darling?" asked his mother. "Are you not well? What is the matter? Do tell me."

"I'm not ill, Mummie".

"In that case, what brings you into the kitchen while I'm in the middle of my work? You'd better run along and go back to your toys."

Hanoch went over to his mother and whispered to her:

"Today is *Erev Yom Kippur*, and I have come to ask you to pardon me."

"Pardon you, my dear? Whatever for? What sin have you committed?"

"Maybe you've forgotten, Mummie, but it was when you had that dreadful headache, and you were lying down, you asked me to get in all the fowl, and lock them up in the hen-run for the night. I promised you I would, but then, when I went out I met the other children. They were playing on their bicycles and asked me to join them too. So I did... and, Mother... I forgot all about the chickens. That was the time five were found dead the next morning. I never told you anything then—I was too unhappy." Tears had already come into Hanoch's eyes as he spoke. "But now I simply must tell you—and ask you to forgive me."

Mother looked at him lovingly and kissed him. "Of course I forgive you, of course I do!"

So, with a light heart he hugged her again, and ran off to play.

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