

## The KING and the SCRATCHED DIAMOND

Once there was a king who had a beautiful, large pure diamond. There was no other diamond like it in the world. One day, it became deeply scratched. The king told his best diamond cutters, "I'll promise you a great reward if you can remove the imperfection from my jewel." But they could not. The king was very upset.

Many months later, a man came to the king. He promised to make the diamond even more beautiful than it ever had been. Impressed by the man's confidence, the king consented. He watched as the man engraved an exquisite rosebud around the blemish and used the scratch to make its stem.

--A parable of the Preacher of Dubno from Jewish folklore.

This story can easily be equated to birth defects. Even though a child with a birth defect may not appear to be perfect, he/she still has great abilities and opportunities to apply himself/herself in life. Rather than emphasizing the problem we must focus on the abilities of the person.

A birth defect is an abnormality that affects the structure or function of the body. Almost everyone is born with some type of imperfection,. Most, such as a birthmark, are relatively minor. Some babies are born with more serious problems. These are referred to as birth defects.

There are three basic factors that influence birth defects;

- 1) Heredity
- 2) Environment
- 3) A combination of heredity and the environment

The causes of birth defects differ greatly. Some are inherited from one or both parents. Some are caused by controllable factors in the environment.

Prenatal development occurs very rapidly. In only a few weeks the baby develops all of its body systems needed to survive and live normally. During this time, the fetus is totally dependent on the mother to provide nourishment and food.

Environmental factors include:

- 1) Diet
- 2) Diseases or infections of the mother
- 3) Harmful substances ingested by the mother
- 4) Exposure to outside hazards such as radiation