

Anash Chinuch

INSTILLING A LOVE FOR TORAH



SHNAS HAKHEL

We see that הקהל גוי למען ישמעו גוי' ושמרו את כל דברי התורה הזאת is emphasized more by children, and the reason is understood and simple: Children, by nature, are not concerned [with responsibilities], and therefore they have the ability to be entirely devoted to Torah. "*Torah tziva lanu Moshe, morasha kehilas Yaakov*"- Torah was given to each and every one of you, and to each and every person of the Jewish nation, as an inheritance.

From this is understood that children need to make use of this freedom from worries, in order to be fully engaged in Torah and *mitzvos*, לעשות את כל דברי התורה זאת.

(Sicha from the 3rd of Chol Hamoed Sukkos 5741)

A NEW CHANNEL

A new channel in *chinuch* has been revealed in our times. Through the proper *chinuch*, it is now possible to break through the boundaries of the nature of a Jewish child and accustom the child to yearn for *ruchniyus* (spirituality) to such an extent that the child's heart is deeply permeated with an intense desire for Hashem to reveal Himself to him.

When a Jewish child is not grieved over the lack of Hashem's revelation to him, this is not because he is unable to reach this level, but because his educators [parents and teachers] are not speaking to him about these matters sincerely, with words that emanate from the heart.

(*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 15, p. 133)

KISSING SEFER TORAH WITH AFFECTION



Even the littlest child, who has not yet begun to study Torah, knows the importance of Torah. The child is brought to shul to kiss the *Sefer Torah* lovingly, with the same affection that he kisses what is most precious to him, namely his father and mother. What's more, because his parents and teacher give him the proper *chinuch*, he may sense that he should kiss the *Sefer Torah* with even more affection than he kisses his parents.

(*Hisvaaduyos* 5749, vol. 1, p. 203)

UNDERSTANDING TORAH

[Before a child reaches the age of five] his mother, father, or older siblings teach him *pesukim* from Torah, whether in *lashon hakodesh* or another language. [The language doesn't matter,] as long as the child will understand better.

When a child learns and understands the words of Torah properly, because his parents chose good educators for him and made efforts for him to understand the words of Torah, then the Torah fills his entire existence. He is then able to understand that it gives him *chayus* (inspiration), as the verse states, "חיינו ואורך ימינו" ("[the words of Torah are] our life and the length of our days").

(*Hisvaaduyos* 5751, vol. 1, p. 156)

Explaining something to a little child in words that he can understand should not mean telling him something untrue, *chas ve'shalom*. After all, little children too need to be told explanations from *Toras Emes* ("the Torah of Truth"). Rather, the explanation should be vested in words that he can understand. ...

This is especially so according to the known statement told by my-father-in-law, the Rebbe, in a sicha he delivered about the virtue of receiving an *aliyah laTorah* (ascent to the Torah): When one learns a matter in Torah that the *nefesh* below does not understand, when he rises to the Torah, all the levels in his soul rise above: the *Ru'ach* of the *Neshamah* rises to the world of *Yetzirah*, and so forth, until the *Yechidah* rises to worlds that are infinite, and there the matters he learned are understood.

EXPLAINING TO A CHILD ON THEIR LEVEL



The same is true with children: even though they do not understand the *pnimiyus* of the matter, the matter exists to them all the same, and it leaves an impression on their soul.

Recently, the wisdom of the nations of the world has also reached this conclusion (and they speak about it as though it is their own revelation). They agree that things that happen to a child immediately after his birth leave a lasting impression and have an effect upon him when he matures as well.

(*Sichos Kodesh* 5736, Rosh Chodesh Iyar)



SPEAKING ONLY WORDS OF TORAH

Parents need to strive toward the goal that their children live up to the *pasuk* ולא בדברים אחרים - לדבר במ - ("You should speak words of Torah¹ – and not of other [mundane] things²).

Although sometimes there is talk of other things, it is *מלאכתך ארעי* (temporary)³ and only a preparation for having a better understanding of Torah or to be able to speak words of Torah with more vitality.

This applies to sons and daughters equally. Although with respect to *limmud haTorah* there is a major difference between sons and daughters, the Alter Rebbe writes at length and in detail that in all areas related to *Yiras Shamayim* there are no differences between a man and woman (see *Hilchos Talmud Torah*, end of Chapter 1).

(*Sichos Kodesh* 5728, vol. 2, p. 430)

GIVING CHILDREN SEFARIM AS GIFTS

It is fitting and correct to utilize the *minhag Yisrael* of giving *sifrei kodesh* as gifts; including to small children as well, on their joyous occasions or before a *Yom Tov* and so on.

(*Hisvaaduyos* 5752, vol. 2, p. 76)

WHEN CHILDREN MEET, THEY SHOULD LEARN TORAH

...It is worthwhile to strengthen the custom that when two children meet, it be *שנים שיושבים ועוסקים בתורה* ("two who sit and are involved in Torah")⁴ [i.e., they should discuss Torah]. All the more so when there are more than two children, and more than three. Through this, Torah is further ingrained into the lives of the children, and it gives them life.

(*Hisvaaduyos* 5751, vol. 1, p. 156)

LEARNING WITH A CHAVRUSA

The instruction of our sages that one should make a point to study [Torah] with a companion is well-known.⁵ Surely he can find a *chavrusa* (study partner) in the place where he lives. It is possible that [in the past] the circumstances did not suit his needs in this regard – that is, either he had no *chavrusa*, or the individual was not a fitting *chavrusa*. This detracts from the success of one's learning. It is obvious that even if one has no *chavrusa*, it is still necessary to learn Torah.

¹ Devarim 6:7.

(*Igros Kodesh*, vol. 14, p. 41)

² Yoma 19b.

³ Cf. *ibid.*

⁴ Avos 3:6.

⁵ Taanis 7b.

MAKE LEARNING TANGIBLE

In this connection it is well to bear in mind the general rule, especially in regard to children, that any idea or knowledge, if it is to be truly absorbed and be of lasting benefit, it must not remain in the realm of thought or pure knowledge but must be immediately related to and connected with actual experience in some tangible expression in the active life. In this way it can be expected that the knowledge plus experience which the child attains in school will be lasting and effective also outside the walls of the school...

(Letter from 15th of Elul 5733, written to Shaliach in Madrid)

BEING A DUGMAH CHAYAH

It is obvious that the parents' conduct should not contradict what they teach their child, for otherwise the child will ask, "Why do my parents demand that Torah matters should be 'like new'⁷ (exciting) for me, while they suffice with the minimum to fulfill their obligations?" On the contrary, parents need to set a *dugmah chayah* (a living example).

This doesn't only apply when a child reaches the age of *chinuch*; it begins even before the child has any understanding. Even a newborn infant is influenced by his parents' behavior, and this affects his future conduct.

(*Hisvaaduyos* 5744, vol. 3, p.

MOTHER INSTILLS IN CHILDREN A PASSION FOR TORAH STUDY



Just as women are not obligated in the *mitzvah* of Torah study, so are women not commanded to teach Torah to their children. However, when a woman helps her sons or husband to be involved in Torah, she shares in their reward...

By a mother's taking an interest in the learning of her sons, asking them to review their learning with her when they return from *cheder*, *Talmud Torah*, or

yeshiva, then – in addition to the advantage that they are reviewing their learning – there is a particular advantage in their learning with their mother. The mother has a special warmth and passion in her learning (compared to the father, whose learning with his children is more to test them, as is the custom that fathers test their sons on Shabbos and so forth). In this way, the mother increases the *chayus* (liveliness) and passion in the learning of her children, as we can see from experience.

⁶ *Hisvaaduyos* 5744, vol. 3, p. 1534.

⁷ Rashi on Shemos, 19:1, 11:13, Devarim, 26:16.

⁸ *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Talmud Torah* 1:1. *Hilchos Talmud Torah l'Admur HaZaken*, 1:14.

⁹ *Sotah* 21a.

(*Hisvaaduyos* 5750, vol. 3, pp. 171-172)

ENCOURAGING HER HUSBAND, BROTHERS, AND CHILDREN TO LEARN

As we have discussed at length in the past, one of the roles of *n'shei u'bnos* Chabad is to encourage and strengthen their husbands, brothers, and children to study Torah. [Torah study] is an obligation for every single man, young and old, rich and poor, and the like. The learning should take place every day in the greatest measure possible and, as with all matters of *Yiddishkeit*, with *simcha* and passion.

The special connection between women and ensuring that Torah study occurs is:

- 1 Very often, the reason for the lack of Torah study in the proper measure is the husband's worries about *parnassa* matters, and how he will support the home, family, and all their needs. Often this is nothing but a false perception that this work is necessary.

Therefore it is especially necessary and important for the woman, the *akeres habayis*, to encourage her husband and even demand from him to study Torah day after day, and to study as much as possible, even if this means certain material sacrifices in the way her home and family is run. [Ultimately,] the learning is the sure way to bring wealth to the entire family.

2 Even if the wife's encouragement and demands of the husband to continue learning properly are expressed in words only from time to time, her daily presence is a constant reminder to her husband.

3 By encouraging and demanding her husband to study Torah – and by sending the children to kosher *chadorim* and *yeshivos* – a woman has a portion in their Torah study, i.e., in their mitzvah of Torah study.

Therefore they also share in the reward for this mitzvah,¹⁰ which is greater than the reward for other mitzvos.

¹⁰Sotah 21a.

This is in addition to the women's learning the *halachos* needed for their everyday lives, as is explained in the *halachos* of Talmud Torah (end of the first chapter).

My request is that during these days women should start a special movement and initiative to encourage their husbands, brothers, and children to strengthen and increase in their daily study of both the revealed parts of Torah and of *Toras haChassidus*, and do so with passion and *simcha*.

(*Igros Kodesh*, vol. 20, pp.

FATHER'S DEDICATION TO TORAH LEARNING

When a child is taught to recite morning *brachos* and he recites the *Mishnah*, תלמוד כולם תורה כנגד כולם ("Torah study is equivalent to them all"),¹¹ it is crucial that his father's conduct be in harmony with this statement. Otherwise, the child will wonder "My father is involved in many things throughout his workday, activities that are positive and constructive. But how is it that his Torah study is not in a manner of תלמוד כולם כנגד כולם – given attention in a manner equivalent to all those other activities?"

He should still have set times for Torah study. ... This impacts the chinuch of his children, for they see that their father studies Torah. If they have room to doubt [whether he is devoted to Torah study], one cannot invent baseless excuses, for the children will immediately detect that the excuse is nothing but an attempt to slip out of it.

This also affects the child's fulfillment of the mitzvah of *kibbud av* (honoring one's father). When a child sees that his father adds to the *kavod* of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* by learning Torah, this increases the *kavod* of the child toward the father, and so, too, in the reverse...

(*Hisvaaduyos* 5747, vol. 2, pp. 674-675)

KNOW HOW TO ANSWER QUESTIONS FROM A SECULAR PERSPECTIVE

[Regarding a son who is living the same life as his father, a life of Torah and mitzvos]: One must make efforts to respond to his questions, in order that he will be able to serve Hashem with *simcha* (joy) and liveliness. ...

However, there is another son who has no connection to the lifestyle of his father, from "a new period," a generation אשר לא ידע את יוסף ("that did not know Yosef").¹² It is clear that his questions do not come from a lack of knowledge alone. Rather, a way of life according to Torah and mitzvos is something new and foreign to him, and not according to his spirit.

Yet the Torah instructs that even this kind of son, since he is "your son," it is your responsibility and privilege to respond to his questions and to bring him under the wings of the *Shechina*.

By being involved with all kinds of Jewish sons, we establish *Tzivos Hashem* (the army of Hashem), and we will merit the true and complete redemption with *Moshiach Tzidkeinu* very soon

(*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 31, pp. 67-68.)

¹¹ Pe'ah 1:1. ¹² Shemos 1:6.

CHILD PREFERS TO PLAY THAN LEARN

[In response to a woman's question about her son who preferred to play rather than to learn, especially regarding *limudei chol*]

It is quite common and normal that children prefer games over learning, even when they are older. There is no need to be alarmed by this, although certainly there is a need to influence him *bedarchei noam* (in a pleasant manner). The main thing is to utilize competition and comparison with friends his age who are more studious. It is also worthwhile to minimize the hours that he learns *limudei chol*, if it is not possible to eliminate this learning entirely. This is because it is possible that this is a hint that he doesn't want to pursue *limudei chol*, even if at the moment he doesn't understand the deeper reason behind this, and eliminating the *limudei chol* will automatically have a positive effect on his diligence in *limudei kodesh*.

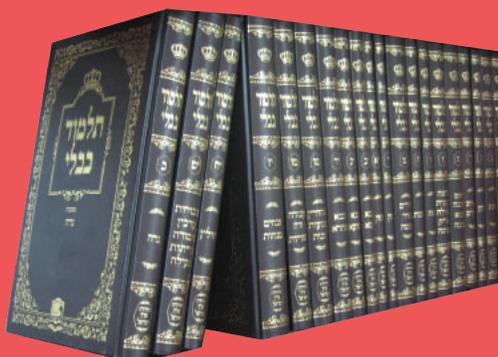
(*Igros Kodesh*, vol. 10, p. 371)



CHILDREN SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO USE SEFARIM

Surely it should be explained to the children that they should not worry that in using their *sefarim* so much, the *sefarim* may become worn out and ripped, for they are promised that [in such a case], new *sefarim* that are even nicer will be bought for them.

In regard to infants, the fear of ruining and ripping *sefarim* is greater, as our sages say¹⁴ on the pasuk ודגלו עלי אהבה ("He skips over Me with love");¹⁵ אפילו התינוק מדגל על האזכרה... ודילוגו עלי אהבה



("Even when a Jewish infant [unknowingly] jumps (*daleg*) on the written Name of Hashem ... His jumping upon Me is love!"). The reason for this is that Torah (referring to *sefarim*) exists for the sake of the *Bnei Yisrael* – "צו את בני, דבר אל בני" ("Command the *Bnei Yisrael*," "Speak to the *Bnei Yisrael*").¹⁶

(*Hisvaaduyos* 5748, vol. 2, pp. 172-173, fn. 89)

¹³ Cf. *ibid.* 12:41.

¹⁴ *Shir HaShirim Rabbah*.

¹⁵ *Shir HaShirim* 2:4.

¹⁶ Cf. *Tana Devei Eliyahu Rabbah* 14, 31. *Beresheet Rabbah* 1:4.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

For small children who do not read, encourage them to find the *heiliche oisiyos* of the *aleph beis* in the *sefarim* in their בית חדר rooms. This can be the way they use their *sefarim*.

When saying *Shema* (even with small babies) open to the *Shema* page of the *siddur*, sing them the *Aleph Bais* from chart in *siddur*, when saying their *kapital* of *Tehillim* open their *Tehillim*, when singing to them or with them Tanya, open Tanya and so forth. In this way, children learn what is found in what *sefer* and even on what page and feel very connected to their *seforim* even before they know how to read.

Teach children *kavod* for Torah: kissing *seforim* when they fall, always making sure the *sefer* is placed the right way (not upside down or backwards) closing them and putting them away when not in use.

Read books to children often and making it an enjoyable, bonding experience.

If *sefarim* are given as birthday gifts and given with enthusiasm, children learn that *sefarim* are valuable.

When children see parents learning regularly and with passion they grow to value Torah.

Make learning a fun, enjoyable experience. Focus on what the child does well and expand from there. If a child feels they cannot succeed they want to give up.

Even when a child needs to be corrected this can be done in a positive way. When a child is first learning *aleph beis*, or how to read, every letter a child says correctly can be stamped (or praised!). If the child doesn't immediately recognize the letter, or make a mistake, they don't receive a stamp on that letter. The child is rewarded with instant gratification. Eventually when the child improves you can stamp once per line, then once per page.

It is very important to greet students with warmth. If a student feels that his rebbe loves him, he will love to go to school. If a student loves his teacher, he will love Hashem.

SETTING THE FOUNDATION FOR A LOVE OF LEARNING

RABBI LEVI KAPLAN

Parents need to make learning an enjoyable experience from the earliest ages, read and learn with their children when they are very young, and model independent learning for older children. Parents should teach children organizational skills, i.e. breaking a project down into bite-size components, compliment and reward achievements, and set as a priority learning skills as well as develop the interest to learn independently from the earliest ages. Having skills for independent learning will allow pre-teens whose learning is mostly from within to continue; this is especially important in grades 7-8 for boys when many facets of the personality start revealing themselves. Parents should be careful not to insist that their children accomplish more than they reasonably can; otherwise it can make children feel guilty, depressed, anxious, and resentful towards learning, their parents, teachers, and *Yiddishkeit* in general.

When parents learn with their children, it is important that they do not use that time to criticize the child, but on the contrary, make it a positive experience. This is not the time to talk about difficult issues. Even constructive criticism should be left for another time, as learning should be a time of positivity, parental closeness, and enjoyment.

Chassidus Chabad, and most notably the Rebbe, introduced a uniquely positive view of the world and of people that we need to strive to emulate. Unfortunately, many people do not view the world in this way, and often Yeshiva/school systems are not aligned with the Rebbe's view. If a teacher views each student as the Rebbe does, the energy that is felt when he or she walks into a classroom on the first day of the school year is such that they will see each student as a gem. They have the responsibility and privilege to develop to their full potential with love, and try to find how to connect the student to Hashem and the Rebbe through *ahava*. In other words, if the teacher sees a *talmid* that looks capable and intelligent, he will think, "Wow! Here is someone with the potential to be *boki b'shas*". When he has a student who displays a certain warmth, he will get so excited, "Wow! This student will be able to daven with *kavanah*." If he sees someone who has sensitivity, he will see a person who could one day be an amazing *mashpia*.

A teacher should love their students even more than parents do, because teachers experience the beautiful depth of their students, their minds and hearts, in a way that parents do not. Teachers should appreciate each child's uniqueness and contributions to the classroom, as well as their challenges.

INSPIRATION FROM ANASH

I felt bad that I didn't have anything special planned for my son's first birthday. Then I realized a few hours before the end of the day that we could make a little *farbrengen* at home! B"H it was so sweet: It was just my husband, son, and me, but we said *lechaim*, a *posuk* from the 12 *pesukim*, the first *posuk* of his new *perek Tehillim*, ate a

new fruit to say *shehecheyanu*, made a *hachlata* (which is more for us to do than him but still good), we wrote a *p"n* (gave him a pen and paper), presents, and a letter and brochos from mommy and tatty.

- Shana Balkin