

BILVAVI

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR CHILDREN



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1- BUILDING A SOLID FOUNDATION FOR YOUR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION¹

AN APPROACH TO EDUCATION BASED PURELY ON THE WORDS OF OUR SAGES

A subject that is of great concern today is the education of our children. Except for a few isolated laws in the *Shulchan Aruch* (Code of Jewish Law), there is no complete chapter about educating children. Among the works of our Sages, although many topics are addressed, there has not been much written specifically about education. The dearth of clear sources has led to error and misunderstanding. Many people get involved in this field without first establishing a strong foundation in Torah sources.

As Jews, whenever we want to clarify an area, we don't rely solely on logic and the experience of experts. We try to understand our tradition from earlier generations and to find its roots in the Torah, starting with the *Chumash* (Five Books of Moses) and continuing to the words of our Sages and the later commentaries. We will try to clarify the ideas based on the words of our holy Sages. This is the only way to understand how we should conduct ourselves on a daily basis.

The Bridge between the Educator and the Student

The first and primary rule of education is that there are two sides – the teacher and the student. That means that there must also be a bridge between them so that the teacher can reach the student.

For example, when you want to pour a liquid from one bottle to another, if you try to pour directly, some liquid will inevitably spill. You need a funnel – a vessel

¹ Translated from chapter one of the author's Hebrew sefer *Da EsYaldecha*

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with a wide opening at one end and a narrow one at the other – in order to transfer the liquid successfully.

There is a large gap between the emotional and intellectual maturity level of parents and of children. To accommodate this differential, there must be a kind of funnel that will serve as a bridge between the two sides, so that the teacher's message can reach the student. (It is impossible for any quality, behavior, or positive attribute that is not present in the teacher to be transmitted to a student, so the first condition of education must be the personal development of the teacher. We are not dealing with that crucially important issue here. Our words are geared toward a teacher who has transcended that stage and already perfected himself in the area he is trying to convey, or at least is working towards it.)

THE BASIS FOR TRANSMISSION

What is the nature of this “funnel” we are referring to that enables us to educate our children since one cannot transmit ideas through thought alone? There appears to be only two ways to convey concepts to a student: (1) action, through personal example, and (2) words, by verbally explaining the concept to the student. Because of the gap between the broad understanding of the adult and the narrow understanding of the child, there must be a connecting bridge between the two. If the parents' mentality was geared more closely to the child's, there would be no problem, but to the extent that there is a difference between them – especially with older parents – there is a considerable chasm between the mature and childish ways of thinking. If parents communicate via their mature style of conversation, this would be like trying to pour a huge amount of water into a

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small cup. The child will not understand what they are talking about, and the parent will have no idea why he is not communicating effectively.

Since this is so important, it must be emphasized again. In general, when we think about education, the main focus is on the content which, while it is essential, doesn't diminish the vital importance of the medium through which the content is conveyed. If you try to transfer water through a leaky pipe, much of the water will be lost. If there is no pipe, the water will not get there at all. From this we see that a primary principle of education is the means of communication which is the bridge that it is given over with. Only when the medium is firmly established can we then consider the content. With that in mind, we will first describe the bridge and the way to build it, and only after that, the content of the education itself.

NATURAL AND CONDITIONAL LOVE FOR CHILDREN

The *Gemara*² says that one should teach his students using brevity. The Chazon Ish commented that we may apply here, also, the principle that a short path may really be a long one, and a long path might really be a short one. A person might choose to speak succinctly, but because the idea is conveyed in such a terse and cryptic way, it is difficult to understand. For this reason, it is best to employ a method that may take longer at first, but in the end will be quicker.

When a child is born, the newborn does not at first show any reaction toward his parents. But just because the child doesn't yet know how to respond, does that

² *Pesachim 3a*

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mean that his parents don't love him? Of course not! They certainly love him! Love starts as a hidden thing, unrelated to what is revealed – how sweet, or precious, or talented the child seems. On the other hand, when a person marries, the love for their spouse only begins after they get to know each other. As husband and wife get to know and appreciate the qualities and personality of the other, that's when they begin to form a bond.

The natural love between parents and children, unlike marriage, does not begin with becoming acquainted, but at a stage where we do not yet know anything about the child's qualities and personality. There is only inherent love, unrelated to any specific qualities.

What happens when the child gets older? The parents start to get to know him, and are able to see the good and bad qualities of the child, his talents, his inclinations, and so on.

There is a very common phenomenon that takes place in many homes: When there are a number of children in the family, a parent may feel closer to one particular child than to another. What is the reason for this? If the love had remained as it was from birth, this could never happen.

Our love for our children is divided into two parts. When the child is born, the parents have a natural love towards him, regardless of the child's qualities. Later on there is an additional phase of love, as they come to know the personality and qualities of the child. If the qualities are positive, the parents feel even closer to him, but if they are negative, it can create a distance between them. As we know,

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the qualities that emerge from our children are not always positive, and this can have an effect on our relationship with them.

As the child develops, the love that is dependent on his qualities takes a more important position than the initial, natural love, which gets pushed to the side. Parents seem to be relating to the child in accordance with their impression of him. The natural love remains as before, for it exists regardless of personality, but it gets pushed down to the depths of the soul.

LOVE THAT LEADS TO AN EMOTIONAL BOND

There is also a third kind of love toward a child. Of the relationship between Yaakov and Binyamin, it is written, “And his soul is bound with his soul”.³ Each one felt bound to the other. Their feelings were mutual. Does such a relationship exist within either the natural and conditional forms of love that we’ve discussed, or is this a completely different kind of love we haven’t encountered yet?

A mutual relationship with a newborn is obviously impossible, because the child is simply not yet aware of the existence of any relationship. But what about the second kind, when the love is dependent on his individual qualities? Let’s think about it, because the truth may surprise you. If you love a picture because of its beauty, or anything else in the world that finds favor in your eyes, does that mean there is a mutual emotional bond between you and the object? Certainly not! A mutual emotional bond can only exist when there are two parties working together to build the relationship. Loving a spectacular picture or a magnificent

³ Bereishis 44:30

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home is unilateral. This is also true of the love toward a newborn, or toward a cute and pleasant child.

We are not trying to negate the value of the natural love of parents for their children. On the contrary, this is essential and fundamental, for only by its existence can the parents properly care for their infants. However, when we want to properly educate our children, we need a third kind of love – the one that is based on reciprocity, as in “his soul is bound with his soul.” The parent must love the child, and the child must love the parent. This relationship is not always present, because sometimes the love is unilateral.

In summary, there is the one-sided love that parents feels toward a children in infancy. Even at a later stage when there is love based on an agreeable personality – the child is sweet, helpful, or cheerful – the love is still one-sided. But there is another kind of love – reciprocal “his soul is bound with his soul.” This is a mutual love, because the child reciprocates with love. It is possible to test if the love is reciprocated during certain special periods, such as when a parent has been away for a while, or when a mother gives birth and spends some time in the hospital. When she returns home, she may powerfully express her love toward her other children, but if they do not seem excited to see her, the love may still be unilateral.

In order for love to foster proper education, the aspect of, “As water reflects a face, so does the face of man [reflect] a man”⁴ must be present. When love

⁴ *Mishlei* 27:19

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comes from both sides it can serve as that essential funnel, and pave the way for effective education.

Many adults these days claim that their relationship with their parents is faulty. Children feel that their parents don't understand them, and sadly, this is often true. Why is this? One reason could be because the parents are living in a different world from their children. The child looks towards the parent and thinks, "He is from a different generation; he can't understand my needs." In such a situation, if a parent tries to educate and explain, it will be like pouring liquid into a small bottle without the aid of a funnel. The water spills all over, the bottle remains empty, and then the screaming starts!

According to the way Hashem made the world, a couple gets married first, and children come along later. Is the first relationship, the one between the parents, one-sided or two-sided? A healthy relationship must have mutual, reciprocal feelings of love. When children are born to parents who have this kind of healthy relationship, it is easier for the parents to develop a mutual relationship with the children as well. But if, G-d forbid, there is a one-sided relationship between a person and his spouse, the bond with their children will be similar. Just as we understand that a relationship between spouses must be mutual, so must the relationship with our children be based on that kind of reciprocity.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPOUSES & THE RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR CHILDREN

Why, then, is it so important for spouses to have a mutual relationship, while with our children, the relationship is often one-sided? The answer is based on what we said earlier. When a person gets married he chooses his spouse, and

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feels that the relationship must be based on an emotional bond. Even if there are problems in the relationship later, the couple has a foundation that was properly built, to some extent. (Certainly, daily occurrences can gradually weaken this bond, but with some effort, the bond can be fixed, since it has a proper foundation.)

On the other hand, we cannot expect the love we feel for a toddler to be reciprocal. The bond between parent and child is based solely on the parents' natural love. The child eventually grows up, but often, the parents are still immersed in that initial kind of love from the child's younger years. Indeed, when we consider a child's development, it is not easy to emerge from that natural love and develop a new kind of relationship.

In the first months of a child's life, the parents feel a natural love for the newborn, for no apparent reason. As the child grows a little, their love is based more on his personality and qualities. He starts making noises and doing various movements and this increases their love for him. When the child develops more and starts to do smart things – around the age of a year and a half – the parent is very moved. Thus, during the first few years, parents get used to loving their child without expecting any response. (A little smile, a hug, or a cute sentence are not enough of an emotional bond for effective education to begin.)

What happens when the children get older still? Generally, the love between parent and child is based on the two forms we've mentioned: the love that stems from the simple fact that this is their child, and the love that develops from an awareness of the child's personality. Many don't take the trouble to cultivate

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mutual love, and there are consequences to this neglect. At a certain age, many children may know that their parents love them, but they feel that their parents don't understand their needs. In worse cases, they feel unloved.

Beginning from around the age of twelve or thirteen (and sometimes even younger), even if the child is capable of understanding that his parents' relationship to him is based on love, he may say to himself, "Yes, they love me and provide for me, but they don't understand what I need." This is like the words of the Kuzari: "Your thoughts are acceptable, but your deeds are not."⁵

We are not talking here about parents who don't love their children. We are referring to a situation wherein parents love and invest a lot in their offspring but don't realize that this type of love is not a replacement for a mutual emotional bond.

There are people who buy gifts as an expression of love for the recipient (a practice also common among spouses), but soon realize that although a lot of thought was given to the choice of the gift, the recipient isn't happy. This occurs when the giver thinks only about what he feels the recipient needs, and not what the recipient actually needs. When you buy a gift out of love, must there be a two-way bond between the giver and the receiver? Certainly not! When buying a gift for a two-year old child, it does not reflect such a bond.

When one wants to start a relationship with a new friend, the first thing he does is try to get to know him. As they become better acquainted, their love begins to

⁵ *The Kuzari 1:1*

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grow. We can see from this that knowledge is the basis for love. The relationship with children works differently. At first, there is the natural love in the soul. (Although the parents' love is greater, the children also have natural love toward their parents.) After that, both sides need to work on truly understanding each other, as this will help a great deal in the development of a mutual emotional bond.

Of course, knowledge is not enough--only if it is mixed with love can it serve as a conduit for education. There are psychologists who spend hours and hours with their clients and get to know them quite well, but cannot seem to get them out of the troubles they are stuck in. Why? Because those psychologists are merely intellectuals. Even if they possess a lot of knowledge and understanding about the psyche, and can offer helpful suggestions, they have no emotional feelings towards their clients, and thus their knowledge cannot help them. On the other hand, there are many families where, although parents feel love and positive feelings towards their child, there is no real bond and no understanding of the child's needs. In this instance, while there is certainly a good, solid foundation, the foundation alone cannot build the child's personality.

Without a two-way bond, a parent will not understand his child's true needs, and will certainly err in educating him. A parent who relates to older children emotionally, with only love, causes the child to feel like he is being treated like a small child. This is inappropriate, and will hinder the development of a mutual relationship.

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When a parent has a good mutual relationship with his children, he communicates appropriately with them, **and it becomes easier to guide them in the proper path. Without a mutual relationship**, the parent ends up dispensing teachings from “above,” and thinks this is education.

BALANCING AUTHORITY AND FRIENDSHIP

In a biography about the Chofetz Chaim written by his son, he says that the Chofetz Chaim treated his children as friends. When a child feels that his parent is a friend (in addition to a teacher), then education can succeed.

There are those who object to this concept, claiming that if parents act like a friend to their children, they can lose control over the home, and the kids will do whatever they please. According to this oppositional viewpoint, parents must only take the role of educators.

How can we reconcile these two conflicting opinions? Indeed, we may not totally discount the need for the clear message that parents are the highest authorities in the home, but we must remember that the parents’ higher position in the house is only one side of the coin. The bond of friendship between parents and children is equally as important.

If, however, relationships in the home are built only on friendship between parents and children, it cannot be defined as a Jewish home. Obviously, education in the home is based on a clear sense of discipline. Without it, the children would do whatever they wanted and there would be no way for the parents to success-

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fully educate them. But again, it must be reiterated that this is but one side of the coin and there must also be a sense of closeness and friendship.

“LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF” – EVEN YOUR CHILDREN

When the Rambam⁶ defines the mitzvah of “Love your neighbor as yourself,” he writes, “Each Jew must love every other Jew.” Thus, when a parent relates to his child only from the position of being superior to him, he has not only lost his “funnel,” but he also neglects the mitzvah of “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Nowadays, we find diametrically opposed approaches to education. Some parents feel that they must hold themselves above with the children below them, and others take the non-Jewish approach – that everyone is equal.

We will first deal with the approach that parents and children are equal. A friend recently told me of a shocking incident that occurred in a certain family. The father had a room he used to learn in. One day, the son decided that the room was his. He soon acted upon this idea, so that when the father awoke, he saw that his things were moved out and the son’s things were brought in in their place. This distorted view comes from the idea that the child is equal to his parents; from there, he can easily come to the conclusion that his parents must listen to him!

This attitude comes from being taught that everyone is equal – boys and girls, parents and children, teachers and students. If anyone should think that this is

⁶ *Rambam Hilchos Daos 6:3*

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the correct approach, the story above illustrates how harmful it is and how it can lead to the opposite of a proper upbringing.

We cannot totally reject this approach, but we should learn to use it in the proper way. If it is used as one side of the coin, so that in addition to friendship with the children there is also a clear sense of the parents' authority, we have the proper recipe for a Jewish home.

In summary, the bond between parents and children must be based on two dimensions. There must be clear hierarchy in the home, with the children realizing that the parents are the ones who make the decisions. This is the only way that there will be any effective discipline. Alongside this, there must be friendship between the parents and children, and also among the children themselves. This will foster an atmosphere of "Love your neighbor as yourself"⁷ in the home – all family members will be close friends.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF BODY AND SOUL

In fact, it is difficult to apply this model on a daily basis, but if we delve deeper to understand the inner background of this dual perspective, it will become clearer.

As we know from the *sefarim hakedoshim*, this is not the first time that our souls have come into this world. Every soul has been here before, perhaps even a number of times. Do you think that we had the same children in each of our lives? Certainly not. It is said that at times, there is a switch. Someone who was a rabbi to a certain student in one life becomes his student in another. Likewise, a

⁷ Vayikra 19:18

father can later become a son. (This does not mean that a parent should be concerned about this and feel he must obey his child!)

We learn from this that there are two perspectives from which we must approach our children: a perspective of body, and another one of soul. From the physical point of view, we are the parents and they are the children. The house is ours, the income is ours, and everything is under our control. But looking at the inner dimension, each parent should think, "I have a soul and my child has a soul. Am I certain that my soul is higher than my child's?" The answer is no, for it is possible (and often, evidence proves this) that parents have lower souls than their children. Even if they are not lower, they may be only equal. Of course, it is also possible that the children have lower souls. All three possibilities exist. (We don't need to stress that with regard to all the laws governing the relationship with parents, we must use the physical perspective, whether it is about inheritance, other laws of relatives, or honoring one's parents.

When we get used to thinking that there is a clear distinction between the two perspectives of body and soul, we will learn to relate to our children both ways, bearing in mind that a child's soul may have greater potential for Torah scholarship and righteousness than his parent, and even though the parent's current responsibility is to educate children until they grow up, when they do grow up and their souls become manifest, they may well be on a higher level than their parents. This attitude can help any parent relate to his children as a friend, for by internalizing the knowledge that he and his children are holy souls that are part of the Jewish people, it is easier to fulfill the commandment to "Love your neighbor as yourself," and live with them in the house as with close friends.

Nonetheless, we must stress again that this proper friendship must be balanced with a strong sense of the parents' authority. Thus, using the physical perspective, we must work with the dimension of the parents' clear superiority over the child. This leads to trust and discipline in the house. Together with this perspective, we make use of the perspective of the soul – since our child's soul may be equal to ours or even higher, the proper approach is to keep in mind that we both have holy Jewish souls, and to apply, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

This is not a new principle. The Torah clearly orders us to "Love your neighbor as yourself" (and children are surely included in this category). Though many people are not accustomed to looking at children in this way, with a little thought it becomes clear that there is no reason to exclude them from this fundamental rule in the Torah. Just as you fulfill it with your acquaintances, so must you with your children.

FRIENDSHIP SIGNIFICANTLY EASES THE TRANSMISSION OF IDEAS

Now that we have clarified the importance of a two-way bond with our children, we will show how this will help us to give over ideas and teachings to them. When a person wants to hand a physical object to another, he gives it directly, but if he wants to give over an idea that will help in a certain area, for example if he is a teacher or employer, he will just give it as an order. But if he is a friend, the message will be delivered through friendship and conversation.

When parents see themselves only as being superior to their children, if they want to give something over to their children, it will come as an order from above. Even if given with love, the child will still feel inferior. Even when an em-

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ployer loves his worker and gives him gifts, the worker still feels that he is an employee who has a boss. In addition to his sense of authority, when a parent feels that he has many good friends in the house then, without a doubt, the education will be much different, and the children will receive it differently.

Obviously, we cannot give definite rules about when to relate to the children as a parent, and when as a friend. But the principle must be clear: a home cannot be built on just one side of the coin. If the only communication and education there is in the house is transmitted through orders, the education becomes stressful and unbearable. Sadly, we often see the results of this education when the children get older and abandon the home. Even if they don't have the audacity to do that, they will not listen to nor will they internalize that which is said to them, and the results are very sad.

But when there is a proper bond between parents and children, these things generally don't happen, and even if the children have to deal with various difficulties in life, their bond with their parents will help them to cope and prevail. This is not a magical formula that will succeed in all homes, and there will always be problems that require special treatment. But clearly, the initial basis of the relationship between parents and children must be based on these two dimensions – the parents' authority and a bond of friendship.

A PROPER BOND WITH OUR CHILDREN LEADS TO ENCOMPASSING AHAVAS YISRAEL

When we consider married life, we understand that first there is a bond between the two spouses, and then, when children are born, there is a natural love toward them. (We already explained that this will not necessarily lead to love on

the part of the children.) The ultimate goal of the bond between spouses and towards children is that it should ultimately be extended toward the entire Jewish people.

This is another reason that parents' love toward children must be mutual. If it never grows beyond the natural love parents have for their children, it cannot lead to encompassing *ahavas Yisrael* (love of fellow Jews); The only love that can extend to others is that which is based on the perspective of soul, in which the parents understand that their children's souls may be equal or even greater than theirs. This can lead to general *ahavas Yisrael*, as one comes to appreciate the value of everyone's soul.

Without a doubt, it is easier to love your own children in this way than strangers, because we already have the basis of natural love toward them. But remember that this is only the initial stage; if the parents nurture it into a strong bond of friendship with their children, it can certainly lead to a more encompassing and inclusive *ahavas Yisrael*.

In summary, this chapter has not dealt with education itself, but with the stage preceding it – the bridge between parents and children that is the basis of education. The bridge has two dimensions – the authority of parents, through which the children know clearly who makes the decisions in the house, and also the emotional bond that facilitates closeness. Only when these two approaches work together, so that sometimes, authority is used, sometimes friendship is used, and sometimes they are both used, can we expect positive results in education.

2- BUILDING THE WORLD OF FEELINGS ⁸

LOVE FOR OUR CHILDREN IS FOOD FOR THEIR SOULS

The importance of love for the healthy development of our children is well-known. Yet many look at this in a very superficial manner, so we will try to clarify it thoroughly.

Why must parents love their children? What is the purpose of this love? The bond between parents and children must be based on mutual love, but what is the goal of that love? The truest answer is that this love should lead to unity among all of creation. *Ahavah* (love) has the same numerical value as *echad* (one). Through loving our children, it will be easier to generate wide-reaching *ahavas Yisrael*. But we are not dealing with this deeper understanding at present; our goal here is to clarify why love is essential in the home for the children's healthy development.

We intuitively know that just as parents must give their children bread to eat, clothing to wear, water to drink, books and a knapsack for school, so must they give them love. But what we don't know is why. What purpose does it serve?

Every person exists on many different levels, both physical and spiritual. Just as it is clear to every father and mother that they must give their children food, clothing, and all their basic physical needs, it must be clear to them that it is just as essential (and really, even more so) for the child to be loved. As food sustains the body, love sustains the soul.

⁸ Translated from chapter two of the author's Hebrew sefer *Da EsYaldecha*

A child who does not receive love from his parents suffers like a child who is not given breakfast. If love goes missing for a few days, it is as if the child was denied lunch and dinner as well. If he goes without love for one day, the child may overcome the difficulty, but after a number of days, he is likely to become dangerously ill. Just like every parent knows that they need to supply food for the body, so they need to supply love for the soul on an ongoing basis.

THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF LOVE IN EDUCATION

There are two reasons parents must provide for their children. The first is that the children cannot take care of themselves, so the parents are responsible for providing all the children's material needs. The second reason is that the parents are obligated to develop the child's personality and to educate him which requires love.

It is written in *Mishlei*,⁹ "Hashem rebukes the one He loves." When one is certain that the person rebuking him loves him, he can generally accept the rebuke. But if he believes that the rebuke is motivated by spite, hatred, or jealousy, it is unlikely that he will accept it. Without healthy doses of parental love, it is difficult for the child to accept rebuke and guidance from the parent.

Rebuke is only one example. Love is required for any goal related to education. As we explained at length earlier, before education can be instilled, there must first be mutual love established between parents and children, which serves as a

⁹ Mishlei 3:12

bridge for them. Just as water from a lake needs a pipe so that it can reach a house and provide it with running water, so does education need love, which serves as a pipe for effective transmission of important lessons.

When Moshe *Rabbeinu* was preparing to build the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle), he initially planned to build the vessels first and then the *Mishkan* afterward. Betzalel (the chief engineer of the *Mishkan*) said to him, “If we make the vessels before the building, where will we store them before it is ready? First, we must build the *Mishkan* and then we should make the vessels.” Moshe *Rabbeinu* agreed with Betzalel’s logic, and even praised him for it.

So it is with education. We cannot form the content without first creating a container. The container is love, and it must be built and put in place first, like the *Mishkan*. Only afterwards can the content (the educational matter itself) be delivered. Without this container, it is as if we are pouring water from a bottle without a cup below to catch it, and instead of being neatly contained, the water spills out. Without love, education goes to waste.

Thus, love is needed for two reasons: (1) as food for the child’s soul, and (2) as a container for education. The first aspect is not related to the parents’ role as educators, but is part of their responsibility as parents, who must provide for their children’s needs. Since the soul hungers for love with the same intensity as the body hungers for regular meals, parents must regularly offer love to their children. The other aspect relates to the parents’ role as educators. In order to properly educate, a parent must first develop this love.

We can observe this truth in the natural development of the relationship between parents and children. Think about it: When a baby is born, do the parents first express love for it, or do they try to educate it? Obviously, a parent who tries to educate a newborn baby is wasting his time. But natural love for the child begins to flow starting from his first day on this earth. This is how Hashem designed the relationship between parents and children. First, the love is given, and as the child grows, the parents assume their role as educators.

The problem is that as children grow up, the parents neglect to mix love into the educational process. Parents love their children, but many think that love somehow contradicts education – or at least that their love should not be mixed in with it. This is a common error parents make.

PARENTS' LOVE FOR CHILDREN IS GENERALLY IMPERFECT

Hashem has implanted in each person a love for his children, so there cannot be a parent who does not love his children.

But is this love absolute? Often, there is a conflict between the child's needs and those of the parent, and the parent must decide between the two. At times, the parent will put his own needs first, and at other times, he will put the child's needs first. If a parent is unaware that he sometimes puts his own needs ahead of his child's, he is not in touch with himself.

There are many examples. Sometimes, there is one candy in the house. Do the parents always save it for their child? When a child needs something, do the parents always give it to him without delay? If you are honest with yourself, you will

realize that you do not always provide 100 percent of the child's needs, either because of laziness, or because your own needs come first. Is there a parent who can declare that he was always as patient with his child as the child needed him to be? Do parents always determine their budget based on their children's needs, or do they sometimes spend the money instead on a new cabinet, suit, or car?

Another example: When the mother is sleeping at night, and at 2:00 am, the baby awakens and cries, does she get up right away, or does she wait until the third time he cries out? Many mothers will claim that the baby will calm down by himself, or that there is value in training the baby not to cry every night. This may be true, but often the real reason is that it is very hard to leave the pillow at such an hour. The parent in such a case is putting his needs (albeit appropriately) first.

We must stress a basic concept here: Just as a child has physical and emotional needs, so does a parent. A parent cannot and should not sacrifice her own genuine needs for her child. Ignoring these needs can cause her physically or emotionally to collapse. On the other hand, a parent must overcome laziness and improper desires for the benefit of their children.

Is there a parent who can declare that he has never raised his voice even once in the house? Or, when he did raise his voice, can he honestly say that he only did so for educational reasons, and not as an expression of some inner anger?

The examples differ from person to person, but they apply in all areas of life. Any parent who searches himself will find that although he invests a lot in his children, at times his own desires and interests take precedence.

So on one hand, there is no parent who does not love his children, but on the other hand, no parent can claim that his love is perfect and totally free of any self-interest. This is completely normal, since this is how Hashem made man. It is common that one's self-interest affects his relationship with his community, spouse, and children. This differs from person to person, but on some level it applies to everyone.

One of our tasks as parents is to continue to grow from our current level, and to deepen the love we have for our children as much as possible. The natural love for the children should remain, but each parent must know that when there is a conflict between her interests and those of her children (such as an issue of laziness or personal desire), putting herself first reflects an imperfection in her love toward them. The stronger the love is, the more readily will laziness and personal desire disappear.

We must stress again that a parent has essential needs, and these should not be sacrificed for the children.

Understandably, it is difficult to pass this test perfectly. As with all of life's tests, sometimes we succeed more and sometimes less, but the first step is to identify that the task and test exist. If one believes that his love for his children is perfect, he is not capable of acknowledging this test. But if he realizes that he sometimes wrongly puts himself first, he can begin to deal with it. As he overcomes this tendency, his love for his children will naturally strengthen. He can expand his *ahavas Yisrael* and come to love each Jew like his own child.

We need to flame the fire of our love for our children so that it can be stronger than one's self-interests. Parents' love for children is like a piece of coal. There is a fire inside, but it has not yet emerged. When one blows on the coal and fans the flame, the fire bursts forth. So, too, the parental love is initially incomplete, and one of our major responsibilities is to continually flame the love so that it will burst forth.

DOES THE CHILD ALWAYS FEEL HIS PARENTS' LOVE?

It is very common for parents to feel great love for their children, while those same children feel that their parents don't love them. This is not so common at a young age, but as the children grow older, many will tell their therapists that their parents don't love them. (They are often incorrect, but this is how they feel.)

To address this problem, we must first see where it comes from. Fundamentally, the claim is false, because parents always love their children, but every falsehood must contain a spark of truth.

As we mentioned and emphasized many times, parents love their children and care about them; otherwise, they would not invest so much time, effort, and resources in them. Why are their children oblivious to this?

A partial explanation relates to what was said above. If the love were perfect, the children would naturally sense it. But no parent is perfect, so the children sense the areas in which their parents put themselves first, and decide, erroneously, that there is no love at all.

THE IMPORTANCE OF VERBAL EXPRESSION OF LOVE

To complicate matters further, the love is often not expressed. Parents do not take the trouble to express it openly and clearly toward their children, in the form of clear statements or actions. (These two factors are related. If the love would be perfect, it would automatically be expressed openly.)

In general, the reason this misunderstanding occurs is because parents are busy with the practical aspects of child raising, such as laundry, cooking, cleaning, buying clothes, and other tasks that can take up the whole day. Although all of these tasks are accompanied with love, the fact that we are, on a daily basis, much more focused on the practical realm than the emotional realm, conceals the love from being apparent to the children. Even when we help them with homework, there is minimal expression of feelings. When a child has difficulty with a math problem, we just tell him how to solve it, and the discussion ends there.

If we would ask any parent why she does so much for her children, she would say that she loves them. After all, she doesn't do these things for the neighbor's children. But if we would probe further, we would find that this love she claims to feel is hidden. Though the parents are usually aware of the love, the children often are not.

To illustrate, we will provide an example related to marriage: Is it enough for spouses to "know" that they are loved, or are words also important? Is it enough to say such words one time, or should they be said on a regular basis? Is it enough for a woman to feel loved since she knows that her husband supports the family and makes sure that the house is well-stocked? Most women would say that it is

not enough. She needs to hear verbal expressions of love. Practical aspects of the home are the technical requirements of married life, but the husband cannot only talk about those things. First and foremost he must build the relationship with his words.

But when we consider the relationship between parents and children, we find that the practical aspects of life take up most of the conversation, while the emotional bond, if present at all, is nearly invisible.

Every parent must make an accounting: Does the emotional element of their relationship with their children come out often enough in conversation? It often happens that only after the child displays signs of an emotional problem and a therapist advises conversing with the child in a way that will help his emotional state do the parents make an effort to express their love verbally. We shouldn't wait for such a problem – we should try to avoid it developing at all.

Sometimes the emotional bond is deficient to the point of absurdity. Parents devote themselves tirelessly to caring for their children's needs. Mothers prepare their children's clothing each night for the next day, and stay up until late at night washing and drying the children's clothing, but they don't devote even one percent of that effort into making a direct emotional connection with their children.

THREE WAYS OF SHOWING LOVE

To illustrate a proper bond, we must first describe the structure of the soul. We will see how the words of our Sages regarding the soul are the source of our comments here about child raising.

The soul has three layers (modes of expression): action, speech, and thought. The parents must channel their love in these three ways, so that all the garments of the soul will be properly developed. Most parents succeed with the actions of parenting. Most of their efforts go into the actions required for taking care of their children. But the aspect of speech generally needs improvement, and the aspect of thought in most homes does not even exist.

THINKING ABOUT THE LOVE OF OUR CHILDREN

We are not yet dealing with the aspect of thought, but we will touch on it briefly. Love, as mentioned, must be revealed on all three levels – action, speech, and thought.

When two people love each other, and there is a physical separation between them, does each take pleasure in remembering that the other loves him? Of course he does! The Rambam writes that people who love each other often think of this love. Thinking about love is not a new idea. It is written in the words of our rabbis, and the Rambam applies it to love of Hashem¹⁰. Just as this applies to love of Hashem, so should it apply to love between parents and children.

There is great benefit to parents who invest effort in loving thoughts. All parents are familiar with the tension and anger that their children's antics can arouse. Even though the parent tries to put the anger out of his mind, he isn't always successful, and in any case, the next mischievous act he does reawakens the anger toward the child. But when a parent gets used to thinking about the love she has

¹⁰ *Rambam, Hilchos Teshuvah 10:3*

for her child, that is the best recipe for calming the anger, as it says, “Love covers all offenses.”¹¹

With Hashem’s help, we will elaborate later on this idea, but we will now delve into the realm of emotions, and show how they should be verbally expressed in the parent-child relationship.

INTRODUCING EMOTIONS IN THE RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILDREN

Along with the natural love every parent has for her child, there is another kind of love, referred to as, “Love your neighbor as yourself,”¹² which doesn’t come naturally and must constantly be developed.

This second kind of love is not so easy to develop and express. Returning to the example of a married couple, the relationship there is easier to develop, because the two spouses relate to each other as equals and it is easier to build a bond of love. But when parents want to build a relationship with their children, and because, for the sake of discipline in the home, the parents must take a higher position, the relationship sometimes becomes more like that of a boss to his employee, and this can result in children developing a feeling of inferiority.

Each parent should consider this: Until what age do you say to your children, “I love you”? I think we will find that as the children get older, we say it less and less. At some point, the emotional bond weakens, which is the opposite of the proper way to raise a family.

¹¹ *Mishlei 10:12*

¹² *Vayikra 19:18*

Every person is comprised of a body and a soul, the main part being the soul. But when it comes to the nuts and bolts of child raising, we get everything backwards. We do so much for their bodies, making sure that the shirt they are wearing is clean and their shoes are polished, but few parents give sufficient attention to the more important part of their child: his soul.

As explained above, a person has three layers – action, speech (the medium through which emotions are expressed), and thought. By doing for the child, we develop the child's level of action; by speech and acts of love, we develop his emotions; and we must also work to develop his thought.

Often, there is a close connection between the active and emotional arenas. For example, if a child sees that his mother has not prepared the clothes that he needs, although it appears to be just an action, he can be emotionally hurt. He not only misses the shirt, but also the love that comes with it. But it doesn't always work both ways. When the mother does prepare the clothing daily, the child only senses the action, and not the inner emotional element.

Again, we are not claiming that parents are uncaring towards their children, because this is generally not the problem. Parents do want to provide the best for their children. Almost every parent puts a maximum degree of effort into actively caring for her children. But even though she knows she must develop her child emotionally, she does not express her emotions properly.

What is the root of this problem? In some cases, the parents themselves are emotionally blocked, and they cannot even express their emotions to each other properly. If so, the root of the problem far precedes their relationship with their

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children. They may have been raised that way themselves, or they may have gone through difficult experiences in their lives. Sometimes, it is simply that they are emotionally underdeveloped, just as some people are less mentally developed than others.

In such a case, the parent must first deal with his own emotions and try to develop and express them properly. This problem needs to be corrected not only for the sake of their children, but also for his relationship with his spouse and with his friends. Without healthy emotions, his friendships will be shallow. In fact, he will not even be able to have a proper relationship with the Creator. But since this problem does not relate specifically to children's education, we will not deal with it here.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING THE CHILD'S EMOTIONAL WORLD

We are referring now to parents who are basically emotionally healthy and have a good relationship with each other, who now want to build a strong emotional bond with their children in order to build their emotional world. How can they do it?

The first step is to ensure that the child's emotions are not blocked, and that he can express his emotions to the proper degree. After ascertaining that the child's emotions are properly developed, he can begin to express his emotions to us as parents.

In today's social reality, the emotional realm is not dealt with in school at all. It is completely ignored with boys, and girls are not given much encouragement to

express their emotions in a healthy way. As a result, they tend to experience unhealthy outbursts when they are very hurt or under pressure. As they get older, the absence of emotional maturity becomes more and more evident.

When we want to check if a child's emotions are adequately developed, there is a simple test: if the child knows how to feel and identify his emotions, then he will be able to express his feelings to others. How many children can properly express feelings? A very small percentage. And even those who are properly developed did not necessarily turn out that way as a result of good parenting. Just as there are many children who are intellectually mature and can understand things that are not explained to them, so many children are naturally emotionally mature. Most children, though, are somewhat blocked in this area, not to the extent that they need special therapy, but enough that they need our help. As parents, we need to develop their emotions.

We are not discussing merely removing negative emotions here, such as when a child is too shy to even go to the corner store and obviously needs more self-confidence, but rather the building of an emotional world that will be properly expressed, such as through joy or love.

There are parents who invest effort in teaching their children joy, but love is rarely taught, and so most people do not know how to love Hashem. Though emotions may be expressed from time to time, they are not systematically developed, so the emotional bond between parent and child, or between siblings, or among friends is deficient. Even our service of Hashem suffers.

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Besides the spiritual benefits, a child requires properly developed emotions for his well-being. When parents develop this realm successfully, his soul can be happy and loving.

Children often receive the impression from their parents that they will only consider them to be successful if they always score 100 on their tests and never come home with a note of complaint from the teacher. They also have to help in the house.

The truth is that a successful child is one who is emotionally healthy – happy, full of life, loving, and beloved. When the child has these qualities instilled in him, it becomes so much easier for him to be naturally successful.

Every parent must see emotional development as a goal no less important than caring for physical needs. Just as we do so much for our children and train them in what they have to do, we must also keep in mind that each child has a world of feelings, and it too requires an investment of effort and training.

You know you cannot put the same clothes and shoes on your child for three years in a row because he outgrows them. So too, at age two, you give certain emotions to the child, others at age three, and so on.

PROPERLY BUILDING THE EMOTIONS

Now that we see the importance of this effort, the next question we must ask is: how do we do it? Once parents have internalized the fact that developing the child's emotions is a central and important task, they have made great progress towards reaching their goal.

When children are young, parents have many opportunities to talk to them, because they are often home. When they get older and are home much less often, the conversation must of necessity be of higher quality.

Think of your normal topics of conversation at home. You might want to place a recording device in the house for a few hours, and then listen to what you spoke about with your children. Mostly, we will hear a lot of orders: "Do your homework! Pick up your knapsack! Clean up your room!" There might be a small amount of time in which the parents listen to what happened in school. If there is more time, the parent may tell some stories to the children which is a very positive ingredient. This is the way things are, more or less, in most homes.

How, then, do we introduce a method for building the child's world of emotions? As mentioned before, if the parent's own emotions are weak or poorly expressed, it will be very hard for him to talk about emotions with his children. He must first get the help he needs in order to break through his own blockage. We will assume that the parents here are properly emotionally developed, and they are seeking a way to help their children in this area.

In addition to the daily conversation which consists mostly of practical details and a little bit of education, there should be another kind of conversation, directly related to the emotions. This is not the same thing as an investigation of the emotions: "How are you feeling? Are you happy or sad?" The best way to initiate this type of conversation is for parents to describe and explain their own feelings to their children to the extent it is appropriate.

Each of us has had many experiences. Some of these are happy, and others less so. When parents relate their experiences, and describe their own feelings about them, the world of the child's emotions begins to take shape.

When parents relate their own experiences to their children, and express the feelings they had about them, the child will see that revealing feelings is natural. This is how his own emotional world develops. This is one way parents can include their children in their experiences. The point, of course, is not just to tell stories, but to describe the feelings that went along with the events. This is the most successful way to build a child's emotional world. We must stress, though, that when the child is young, he should not be privy to the major problems in the house. We should not discuss with him the overdraft at the bank, or his older brother's *shidduch*. Each parent should evaluate which matters are age appropriate and can be safely related to the child without causing him unnecessary worry. In the Western world, if a person speaks openly about feelings, he is considered weak. When you try to talk to someone and open him up a little about his feelings, it may seem to him like an invasion of privacy.

This is a distorted view. Parents must create an atmosphere in the house where feelings are openly expressed, and just as a child will feel comfortable to say that he needs a knapsack or new shoes, so will he be able to say that he loves or is afraid.

THE APPROPRIATE MEASURE OF EMOTIONAL OPENNESS

There are homes where the children have the feeling that they cannot know anything about what their father and mother does, and in other homes, the children know all about bank statements and medical issues.

Both approaches are extreme, and as with everything, there is a correct and balanced approach which should be followed. Each parent should decide, based on his knowledge of the child, which matters are appropriate for him to know about, and which are not. Once it is decided that a particular issue should be discussed with the child, it should be done in a way that will develop within him healthy emotions.

When a parent discusses his personal feelings about something that happened to him, he is sharing his own emotional world with his child. This is especially effective if this is done regularly and becomes part of the bond between them.

Again, we must emphasize that one must find the proper balance. Parents must not burden their children with all their troubles, but they must also avoid blocking off their own feelings from their children.

BUILDING EMOTIONS THROUGH THE SUBCONSCIOUS

Indirect messages affect children on the subconscious level and penetrate deep inside, as we know. When children see how their father helps their mother, and their mother prepares food for their father, these positive actions have a great effect on the children in an indirect way.

So too, on an emotional level, a healthy atmosphere can be created in a circumspect way. The parents can intentionally talk to each other about certain appropriate topics while the children are around, and discuss their experiences and feelings. In this way, the children will internalize the fact that their parents are discussing emotions.

A child will naturally acquire the behaviors he grows up with at home. If his parents only show emotion when something extreme happens, whether it is a very joyous occasion, or, G-d forbid, the opposite, he learns that emotions have no place in daily life, and should only be expressed when a sibling gets married or a relative passes away. Only then are his parents moved to tears; otherwise, he doesn't see any other emotional expression.

When a child sees that his father is sometimes very happy, or that he cries (yes, cries!) about things the child can understand, he sees that his parents also have a soul. This is how he learns that emotions are perfectly legitimate. (But he should not see his father crying about personal problems, because that indeed comes from weakness.)

Again, care must be taken so that the expression of emotions the child sees is moderate and balanced. If all they see is emotions, the results will be disastrous. The children can become so sensitive and so easily offended that it will be impossible to live with him. But if there is a proper measure, the soul develops as it should, and the benefits are tremendous.

There is no precise formula for the extent to which emotions should be exposed. Each household is different, and the emotional maturity of each individual child

must be taken into account. There are no exact instructions for how to act in each situation in other areas of life either. A parent must know himself and his children and act according to that awareness. Note that at this stage, we are not yet dealing with the child's own emotions. We are at a prior stage, where the parents express feelings either through talking to each other with feeling, or by sharing their feelings with their children. In this way, the child learns that the emotional realm is a part of normal life, and need not be hidden or shown only on rare occasions.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES OF DESCRIBING EMOTIONS

Since this is a new idea for many, here are some examples of how parents can properly describe their feelings. A parent reads a particular book and is moved by it. When he describes to his children what he read and what he found so moving, he is developing his children's feelings. He might also relate that when he sees children walking to class on the first day of school, he is very moved by it. He might also include them in painful experiences, such as, "I was walking in the street and saw someone (without mentioning names, of course) acting improperly, and it hurt me very much."

There is no need for long stories; brief and simple comments that express feelings are equally effective. There is a whole world around us, filled with so many experiences that can be shared with children to help them grow.

BUILDING THE WORLD OF EMOTIONS – A PRECONDITION TO EDUCATION

If a parent wants to properly educate her children, she needs to go through three stages. She must: (1) form an emotional bond with them, (2) build their

emotional world, and only after that, (3) actually educate. If she tries to start with the third stage, she is wasting her time on an effort that will surely fail.

Our children have a body and *nefesh*¹³ (we refer here to the *nefesh*; the spiritual element – the *neshamah* – will be covered later). Just as we must care for the body by providing food, clothing, and more, so must we (and perhaps even more so) provide for the *nefesh*. This must be a continual goal of ours.

When a child wakes up in the morning, his mother does not need to ask if he is hungry that day and wants a sandwich to take to school; so too, emotional needs should be provided not only when a problem has surfaced, but on a regular basis. A child needs to eat properly even if she does not seem ill or malnourished; so does her emotional world need to be nourished even if we do not observe a need in the form of an emotional problem. (Of course, if there is a real problem, we should deal with it, but it should not have to come to that.) If parents don't understand this, they end up ignoring their children's feelings unless they come home from school and seem especially sad. We should not wait to begin developing the child's emotions because of problems; there is a better, more consistent and proactive method.

If emotions have been ignored in the home until now, there will be a need for external reminders at first. After a while, the proper kind of conversation will become natural. As a mother does not need to be reminded to prepare breakfast, so will the need to develop the children's emotions be obvious. Once parents under-

¹³ [Editor's Note: As is known from the *sefarim hakedoshim*, the *nefesh* is the lowest level of "the soul" within man and is the "partner of the body". The *neshamah*, on the contrary, is located primarily in the mind.]

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stand its importance, they should try to make it as natural and as self-evident as the importance of caring for physical needs.

Just as there are ways to tell if the child's body is healthy, so is there a way to tell if the child's soul is healthy: a healthy soul is happy! This does not require a new baby, bar-mitzvah, or wedding in the family; the joy of life should always be present.

As we explained, the emotional world must be a concern in the home, no less vital than three square meals. Just as a mother prepares dinner and sees to it that it will be properly seasoned and neither over cooked nor undercooked, so must each parent see to it that the child's soul will receive the right amount of sustenance. Furthermore, just as we have become more conscious of the need for a balanced and nutritious diet, and for the need to nourish a child in accordance with his age and needs, so too, each child, according to his situation, needs a balanced emotional diet.

A PROPER BALANCE WHEN SHARING EXPERIENCES WITH OUR CHILDREN

To what extent should a child be aware of his parents' experiences and feelings?

A proper balance must be maintained. The children should be exposed to as much of the parents' positive experiences as possible, but to little of the difficulties of life. However, if parents only share positive experiences and no negative ones, depicting all of life as rosy, happy and successful, the children will be deluded into thinking that there are no problems in life. When they grow up and see that this is not the case, they can become overwhelmed. The proper way to raise

children who can be realistic is to share a lot of positive experiences, but to also share some of the problems – of course, to a degree that they can handle them.

A precondition of such discussions is that the parents must themselves know how to cope with these problems. When they can properly cope, their children can benefit from learning about these situations.

USING A NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE AS A MEANS FOR POSITIVE THINKING

Here is a common example: Often, a child will need to be hospitalized for a few days. (We are not talking about an extreme case, G-d forbid, like a chronic illness, but a normal situation due to a light injury or a minor illness that requires a few days of hospitalization.) A parent will need to be with him at night, and this will be hard on the other children. In most cases, it will be difficult for both parents.

How should we talk to our children about such situations? One might directly ask the child about his difficulty and suffering, and how he is dealing with it. But a better way is to start by talking about the difficulties facing the parent who is at home and how he or she is coping, and only after that speak about how the child himself is managing.

When we talk to the child directly about the problem and the ensuing challenges, we have not given him the tools for dealing with it, so we are not helping him. But when the parent shares his own feelings in an appropriate way, he opens a common channel between his feelings and those of the child, and thus helps him cope in a healthy way.

In the example above where the child is in the hospital and the parents take turns being with him, the parent remaining at home should describe to the children at home how hard it is without the other parent there, but should also mention the positive perspective. The conversation should not be full of complaints, but must express both the current lack as well as the positive element, as we will describe.

Before we describe how to transmit this to the children, we must first clarify how the parent should convince himself. Only then can the message be properly delivered to the children.

When a father or mother remains at home and feels the absence of the other spouse strongly, because he or she has to get up during the night for each of the children, and to get all of them out to school (with all that goes along with that), what kind of thoughts does this lead to? Is there sadness or depression? Such thoughts will not help the children develop their emotions, and in fact will do just the opposite. Therefore, the parent must first work through his own feelings. To think only of what is lacking is not called coping. How, then, should one cope?

He can think, "Yes, there are certain difficulties. But now I can learn to appreciate when things are going smoothly, when I do get help from my spouse in running the house." This kind of thinking can cause the current absence of the spouse to lead to some degree of inner happiness.

Of course, even positive thoughts will not make someone overjoyed and hope the situation will continue for as long as possible. The absence of their spouse is definitely troubling and distracting. But at the same time, there comes a level of

appreciation and respect for the spouse, and this will lead to gratitude and appreciation of the normal routine.

When the parent succeeds in attaining a primarily positive outlook, he can start talking to the children about how he feels bad that his spouse is not home. He can do this because he will share both perspectives – the difficulty as well as appreciation for his spouse’s usual presence. Thus, the message to the children is that the absence is not totally bad. In fact, the children can learn that it is possible to grow from a negative experience.

If the parent is really convinced of this and the words come from deep inside, the children will absorb the message and be able to successfully cope with the parent’s absence by thinking of the benefits of their regular routine. When we speak openly to them in this way, they will naturally begin to talk in a similar manner.

Here is another example of a situation that seems negative but can have a positive outlook. A couple is married for a number of years and has not yet been blessed with children. This certainly causes a feeling of emptiness, but are there no benefits at all? Many childless couples claim that the shared suffering brought them much closer to their spouses. Thus, even a very difficult situation has a positive side.

Of course, if we would ask a newly married couple if they would choose to be childless for a number of years in order to become closer to each other, they would say that they would not. But if they find themselves in such a situation, they should recognize the difficulties, but also dwell on the positive dimension.

DENYING PROBLEMS DOES NOT DEVELOP THE EMOTIONAL WORLD

There is another way some people handle difficulties in life – they push them out of the way to some distant place in the soul, and try to forget them. This method should only be employed if there is no other alternative. It is not a good way to deal with most difficulties, because a person who ignores their problems eventually loses all of his sensitivity.

A better way is to acknowledge the problem, and then form a kind of puzzle, with both positive and negative pieces to the picture. Then we should look at the big picture and see if we can have an overall positive outlook. If so, that is a great accomplishment. In addition, one should look at the negative parts themselves: are they totally negative, or can something positive come from them? Since there is no absolute negativity in Creation,¹⁴ we should be able to divert any difficulty toward a positive direction.

Thus, we cope with difficulties on two levels. First, we see if the experience has more positive elements than negative ones. Even if this is not the case, we must look for some points of light within the difficulty that can help us cope with what we are lacking. (Of course, faith in the Creator can help tremendously in dealing with difficulties, and the stronger one's faith is, the more easily he can cope with his problems. But here we are working with someone on a lower emotional level.)

WHEN TO DISCUSS PROBLEMS WITH THE CHILDREN

Now that we know how the parents should deal with difficulties and problems, the question is: which problems should be shared with the children?

¹⁴ Derech Hashem 1:5:8

In light of what we have discussed, there is a simple indicator: If our own attitude is that the negative outweighs the positive, then we should keep the children away from it. Otherwise, we will deliver a negative message, and give them negative emotions. Of course, if there is a chronic problem in the house, like a disabled or ill child, the other children must be involved and taught how to deal with the situation, as tough as it is. But if the children might never find out about the problem, it is often best to hide it from them. (This is not an absolute rule, though, because they must learn that life has challenges that must be confronted.)

When should the children be involved? When there is a problem and the parents feel that the positive outweighs the negative, the children should be shown the big picture, both the lack with its unpleasantness and also the positive side. We thus fashion their emotional world properly.

Let's apply this to the example mentioned above. When one parent needs to be away from the house for a number of days, the other spouse should examine his feelings: does he go to sleep sad, or is he able to cheer himself up? If he feels sad, there is no point in his waking up the next morning and transmitting this sadness to his children. But if he is convinced that there are positive elements to his current situation, which brings him appreciate the normal routine when both parents are together, and he becomes happy, he should transmit such feelings to his children. He should describe how much he misses his spouse, and at the same time, show that he is dealing with their absence by concentrating on the positive elements.

EVEN DURING GREAT DIFFICULTY, ONE CAN FIND A POSITIVE POINT

Here is a different example, which will apply to a case where there are older children in the house, and we cannot hide from them what is going on: A family is renting an apartment, and the landlord informs them that they must move out in thirty days. They need to find a new roof over their heads, and this generally causes a very unpleasant situation. The parents are under stress, and their minds are preoccupied with the problem. They need to be in touch with real estate agents, go to see apartments, check out which neighborhoods are appropriate, and so on.

We cannot hide this from older children. It is impractical to discuss all these things behind closed doors. How then can we train the children to cope in such a situation?

Here, too, the extent to which we include the children depends on how the parents themselves deal with this situation that was thrust upon them. Without a doubt, it is not easy to move to another house. Besides the move to a new area with new neighbors, there is the difficulty of packing up all the belongings, taking apart and reassembling the cabinets, setting up the furniture, and so on, which is all very difficult and exhausting. How does a person feel in this situation?

The initial feeling will be one of difficulty, negativity, and impatience. But does one need to only see the negative, or is there also something positive?

If one only looks at the negative aspects, he cannot go through this process properly. He will not be able to stop complaining and will not be able to find any

comfort. But if one looks for positive points, it will be easier and simpler to cope. What can be positive about being forced to move on such short notice?

Each of us knows that we are not here forever, but most of us do not think about this fact on a daily basis. The fast pace of life forces us to push this truth away to a distant corner of the mind. We suffice with observing the law that requires us to leave a space of four handbreadths without plaster in order to remember the destruction of the Temple,¹⁵ but we do not remember that our own house will also be destroyed one day.

When a person is told that he must leave his apartment, though it is very difficult, he can find a positive side in that he now has a reminder that we have no permanence in this world, and that true eternal life is in an entirely different world.

This is an example of a case where children are forcibly made aware of a difficulty, and we must help them deal with it properly. If the parent senses that he can only feel sadness about the situation, there is certainly no value in talking about it a lot with the children. But if he has found at least some point of joy from it, together with the difficulty that he will convey, he can help them find some positive point themselves.

If the children would not become aware of the situation, it would in fact be better not to discuss it with them at all, because all the parents have managed to do is to find one positive point, while they predominantly see the experience as neg-

¹⁵ *Shulchan Aruch, Hilchos Tisha B'Av 560:1*

ative. Ideally, children should only be exposed to situations where the parents can show them how the positive outweighs the negative. But since in this case, they already know about the problem, we can show them at least one positive aspect.

Any parent can easily think of negative situations that their children know of in the house. The rule is always the same: first look by yourself at the positive points, and then discuss with the children the problems as well as the hopes and positive elements.

DEVELOPING THEIR EMOTIONAL WORLD MAKES THEM STRONG

When we talk to our children about problems in the home, and we present both the positive and negative sides, there are many benefits: We strengthen our bond with the children, which is itself a valuable achievement. We train them to cope with problems that may surface in their own lives by talking about the positive and negative sides of a situation. And we give them a formula for remaining happy even when we are lacking things. This is the best way to develop the emotions, as it gives the child the strength to deal with the storms of life in the healthiest way.

We see youths nowadays between the ages of fourteen and seventeen who have come across small problems in their lives, and have no idea how to cope with them. Why? Because they have never had to deal with adversity. When they went to the store, the grocer just recorded the amount, and the parents paid at the end of the month which is common in Israel. When one of them needed to buy clothing, he took along a check from his father. If there was a problem in school, the parents straightened everything out for them. Now that they are be-

ginning to grow up, they suddenly find that life does not go all that smoothly and sometimes, difficulties arise.

What is the solution to this? Of course, we would not intentionally place difficulties before a young child just so he can deal with them. But at least we can give him the tools for dealing with troubles and navigating through the hazards of life in the best way possible.

When we have a generally good emotional bond with our children, and when there is a problem, we show them the negative aspect but emphasize the positive, we develop children who will be able to deal with life's challenges as a matter of instinct. This is not just information they learn; it is patterning emotional lessons that touch the inner soul of the child.

We cannot possibly foresee all the problems they will confront in their lives and offer specific guidance as to how to deal with each of them. But when we have succeeded in directly touching their emotions, we have given them a tool for dealing with all sorts of difficulties that may arise.

Here is an example: If a person goes out of a warm home in the winter to a very cold place without proper clothing, there is a good chance that he will get sick. All the more so is this true on the emotional level. On one hand, the house must be a warm place for the children, through constant love and care, but we cannot present the whole world as full of such warmth. We must teach them from their youth that there are challenges in life. The proper and balanced way is to develop their emotions so that when they grow up they will be able to navigate more easily through their challenges.

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRENGTHENS THE BOND WITH OUR CHILDREN

Here is another benefit: Most parents attest to the fact that often, when their children have grown up, they don't come to their parents to discuss the struggles and challenges confronting them. Sometimes this is because the grown child feels his parents are part of a different culture or generation and won't understand the problem, but often the lack of connection between them comes from the fact that the child never sensed that his parents had a listening ear toward his or her feelings.

The reason the child feels this way is usually because emotions were not discussed at home. When the child came back from school crying, he was calmed down with a candy. Sometimes, the child feels inside that his relationship with his parents exists only on the practical level, but that his parents have nothing to do with his emotional issues.

Even when there seems to be evidence of a strong relationship, it might not be strong in the emotional realm. At times, we see that children really miss their parents, like when they go away to yeshivah, or get married, or travel out of the country, and such. But though a child will generally miss his parents when he is away from them for a while, this does not mean that the emotions have been developed properly.

What, then, is a sign that the emotional world has been properly developed? The only proof is when we see that the child knows how to see the positive side of things. This is especially true when he is faced with challenges and knows how to deal with them correctly. Then we can be confident that his emotions are properly developed.

We must remember that the child must learn about this primarily from us, the parents. Math, grammar, and history can be learned within the walls of the school, but to deal with the challenges that will surface at home, or with friends, or at work, or in school, or anywhere else, he needs to learn by observing how his parents cope with problems. If they tend toward unbridled sadness and depression, she will often follow suit, but if they display proper reactions, she will reap the fruits daily.

DEVELOPING THE EMOTIONS HELPS AGAINST THE TENDENCY TOWARDS SADNESS

There is another reason for developing children's emotions: When we look at the world, we see that most people tend to be sad. The main reason for this is ordinary human nature, as is written, "You are earth, and to earth you will return."¹⁶ The element of earth in the soul is the source of sadness, as Rav Chaim Vital writes in *Sha'arei Kedushah*. But there is another factor that reinforces the sadness: most people's emotions are not properly developed.¹⁷

A person generally passes through childhood relatively happy. When he is a teenager, he begins to confront minor problems. As he gets older and bigger problems surface, he realizes that there is a soul to deal with that reacts to these problems. Most children don't think about their souls at all. Even teenagers are able to let life flow, and they try to push their difficulties into a distant corner of the mind.

¹⁶ Bereishis 3:19

¹⁷ See the authors sefer, Getting to Know Your Soul

The soul begins to concern a person when his problems become more frequent.

This is particularly true after one is married and suddenly discovers an incomprehensible inner emptiness that makes him feel he is lacking something. Since this discovery happens without any prior preparation, and one does not have the tools to deal with it, he tends toward sadness, and finds it hard to extricate himself.

To illustrate, if a pot is left in a storage room for twenty years without use, what will it look like? At best, there will be a lot of dust and worms, but normally, it will be rusty and unusable, and you will not be able to clean it even with boiling water. One who ignores his emotions when he is young, and does not know his emotional world, can only be at peace when things are going smoothly. As soon as life gets more difficult, he must confront his emotional reactions, and this becomes difficult and complex.

We see nowadays that there are many seminars available for the sake of “getting to know yourself”.¹⁸ In most of these seminars, there isn’t a single empty seat. Why? Since most people discover their emotional world after they start encountering all sorts of troubles in life, they sense the problem stems from their inner world and they don’t know how to deal with it.

When we begin to deal with life’s problems after they have already surfaced, they are doubly difficult to overcome, but if we have managed to prepare in advance, they will be much easier to confront.

18 *ibid.*

If our children are to properly deal with the problems in life, we must start building their emotional world from a very young age. Each age must be treated differently, but the effort must begin at a very young age. Just as we give them food appropriate for their age – at first, liquids, and we later transition to foods that are more and more solid – so too, we should give them the opportunity at older ages to deal with the emotions appropriate for those ages.

There is a view among some parents that if children are forced to confront life at a too young an age, they will eventually become depressed. Where do they get this idea from? It seems that the parents themselves get depressed whenever they are faced with some challenge, so they feel that if we force the child to contend with challenge, he too will get depressed! But if they would see each challenge as an opportunity for growth, they could train the children to deal with these challenges in a way that will strengthen them.

MIXING EMOTIONS INTO DAILY LIFE

Building the emotional world of a child must be an inseparable part of running the home. Just as we check the temperature in the house, so that it won't be too cold or too hot, we must regularly check the "emotional weather" of our children, make this a daily concern. When we see that more must be invested into a child's emotional needs, take care of.

When there is a baby in the house, we play with it and want it to laugh, smile, and be happy. In this way, we develop his emotions. But when the child gets older, we focus less on the soul and more on doing practical things for him. Therefore, the parents' mission statement must be: "In our home, we raise people with

souls – not robots!” Since joy is food for the soul, we must put effort into it, creating an atmosphere of happiness in the home that will sustain the children’s souls.

This value must be applied to our own personal lives first. Only then can it be a mission in the home. A sad person cannot be made responsible for making other people happy. Not only must the parent be happy, but she must look at life with a positive perspective. She must understand that what grants her joy is not bread or breakfast, but something from within, and then she can share her joy with a child.

If parents view life as full of the burdens of child raising, work, and other responsibilities, children will get the same message. But if we feel that life is about our emotional reactions, we can share that point of view with our children.

We must also emphasize that we cannot ignore the necessary actions, but we must join it with emotional development. We need to train the child with the knowledge that actions, even those related to religious obligations, should lead to a state of “Rejoice, O righteous, in Hashem.”¹⁹

A HEALTHY SOUL

When we engage in developing the soul, we have to first ask ourselves, What is a healthy soul? First of all, a healthy soul is not one that lacks nothing, because there is no such soul. What, then, is a healthy soul? When a child is fully aware of the difficulties in his life, and even feels them, but the joy that accompanies him far outweighs the pain, his soul is healthy.

¹⁹ *Tehillim 97:12*

To create this level of joy requires much effort, but if we see this as a daily mission, we will train our children to cope properly with challenges. Only in this way can we hope that at a certain stage they will feel an inner joy that will allow them to cope with all the troubles they encounter in life. If, however, emotions are ignored in the home, once the child faces a problem, he will fail; he was not taught what to do, and the need to confront the challenge makes him sad.

THE BENEFIT OF PROPER EMOTIONS IN CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Besides the importance of building the emotions for the sake of the child's soul, it can also help in education. Many parents who want to properly raise their children ask advice as to what to say and what not to say, what to do and what not to do, and so on. Although this too is an important part of education, let us think more deeply.

When there is no love between people, even if we try to educate and rebuke them in the best possible way, the message will not come from a pure place in the soul. At best it will come from a neutral place, and at worst, from a bad place. Thus, there is little hope for success. But if there is already a deep bond between parent and child, the child senses that the rebuke is given out of love and it is much more likely that it will be accepted and internalized. As it says,²⁰ "He whom Hashem loves, he rebukes."

²⁰ *Mishlei 3:12*

When a child does not feel emotionally attached to his parents, and a parent gives orders and punishes, he feels that the parent is against him. What can we hope from a child who grows up that way? He will never develop positive feelings for his parents, and on some level, we are building negative feelings.

Let us examine the nature of the bond between parents and children. What does each feel toward the other? We can say that parents will always have some feelings for their children, but their children don't normally feel for their parents, unless they go away for a while and they miss them. If so, all the child feels is that his parents take care of his basic needs on a daily basis and they punish him. (He is not correct about this, but he certainly might feel this way.) Clearly, we don't want to raise our children this way. But, when parents first develop a constant emotional bond with their child and they are forced to punish him, although he will have some negative feelings toward them, on the whole, the positive feelings will outweigh the negative. The negative feeling gets pushed to a corner and has almost no effect.

Reality proves that often, as the children get a little older, the only emotions they express toward their parents are negative. This is due to the fact that their emotions were not developed properly, and they only know how to express themselves when there are problems, and then, the emotions expressed will be negative.

EACH CHILD AND HIS EMOTIONAL NEEDS

Each child must be dealt with according to his personality. Some children are more sensitive than others, and we must deal with them differently. Just as some

children have different physical needs – one must sleep more than another, another must eat more, another feels colder and needs warmer clothing, and so on – and must be treated differently, so too in the emotional realm, we cannot complain about a child who has more emotional needs than his siblings. A mother would not criticize a child for needing to eat more than his siblings, because such are his bodily needs. Emotional needs are no different. If we see that a child's soul has greater needs, we must provide for them, such as by expressing ourselves to the child more.

DEALING WITH CHILDREN WHO SENSE EMOTIONAL FAVORITISM

Often, an older sibling will feel that his parents show favoritism to a younger one. This is not as common in the practical realm, but it is common for one to feel this in the emotional realm. He will get angry and complain to the parents that they give the younger brother, in his opinion, too much attention, while their relationship to him, he claims, is very different.

How do we deal with such accusations? Of course, we must first check if there is any truth to them. If there is, we must immediately correct ourselves and start to give him what he needs. But if this is an error on his part, such as when an older brother feels that he should be treated exactly like the younger one, we must explain his error to him, by using practical examples.

For instance, we might point out that the older child might go to school without a knapsack, while the younger one has one. Because the older one is already in fourth grade, he doesn't need to take a lot of things to school, as opposed to the younger one, who is in first grade and needs a knapsack to bring all the things he

needs with him. Such an example highlights the practical difference between children of different ages. Once the older child understands the distinction in such an example, we can explain to him that the younger child has unique needs even in emotions, which is why the older one incorrectly assumes that there is some favoritism.

Often, parents will try to explain this to an older child, but he will only respond with, "If a young child gets more attention, I also want to be a young child." The reason for such a reaction is that the child is already angry during the discussion, so we cannot expect him to understand and absorb this concept.

Therefore, the proper method when the child is upset with us is to first calm him and allow him to express his inner rage (up to a certain point), and only after that, look for an opportune time for speaking with him when we can explain everything calmly, so he can absorb the idea while he is able to think clearly.

Likewise, we must make sure that the conversation will be relaxed. For example, look for an opportunity to take him with you when you go shopping, or take him for a short walk in the evening. This way, you can initiate a long conversation. You can then listen to what is really bothering him and let him know that you are always interested in hearing his concerns.

There are those who feel that they don't need to explain to their children why they do certain things. There is some truth to this, but we should only use this approach a small percentage of the time, in order to teach the child that we don't need to explain everything to him. But if this defines the entire relationship in the house, the child will respond to it by developing emotional blockages, and will of-

ten withdraw into himself. Even when the parents feel that the child is not fully correct in her negative feelings, the fact that she feels that way means that she needs proper care and support.

We do not need to agree with all his complaints. The very fact that he finds in us a listening ear gives him the message that we are not ignoring his problems. Afterwards, when we explain that some of his complaints are justified and some are not (and even with those that are not, we might be willing to make some kind of concession), he will accept what we say. There is no clear determining factor here; each parent must use his own good judgment to decide when it is appropriate to explain our behavior and when to explain that he does not need to understand everything.

This process is very fundamental to proper emotional development. At first, the child must become accustomed to hearing her parents expressing their personal feelings, in order to open a channel to the child's emotional world. After that, as the child learns to express her own feelings, the parents' job is to serve as a listening ear for those feelings (even if they are negative), and when necessary, to correct what must be corrected, in the proper way. When they follow this process, in most cases, the child will grow up emotionally healthy.

A SUMMARY OF THE STAGES OF DEVELOPING EMOTIONS

Because this is so important, we will sum up what we've said on the topic of developing emotions, so that it will be as clear as possible.

The soul must be an obvious element in the home. Just as it is clear that a house needs four walls, a floor and a ceiling, so does every home need a soul – feelings should be spoken about openly and clearly. It should be a topic that is perfectly normal to speak about.

How is this achieved? The parents must allow the children access to the parents own emotions. As described above at length, it should be done to the proper degree, as positively as possible, and as appropriate for the age and level of the children. As a result, the children will generally open up to us and share their feelings. Then our responsibility is to listen to them carefully, engage in conversation, and identify with them as much as possible.

If the child comes home feeling pressured and starts sharing his feelings, it is possible to calmly tell him, “Right now, I’m busy, but I’ll try to make time for you as soon as I can, so I can listen to you.” Of course, she must then make every effort to give the child the time she has promised him.

When the relationship works this way, there is meaning in the parents’ words to the child, “I love you.” But if there is no regular involvement with his feelings, these words won’t mean much.

We cannot expect that the house will run smoothly just because we throw out such a phrase before bedtime and add a kiss. Often, in fact, this is no more than a result of pangs of guilt due to all the commotion of the day and its arguments and negative events. The next day, everything will just repeat itself. The relationship between the parent and child will not improve this way. (It’s better than nothing, but it is not a real solution to a difficult relationship with a child.)

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When feelings are dealt with in the home, even if at times there is a tense atmosphere, the child believes and hopes that tomorrow or the day after, his parents will ask to speak to him, hear what he has to say, and try to deal with his complaints to the best of their understanding. In this way, there is an open channel of communication between parents and children.

If the channel is open and properly functioning, as the children grow, the emotional bond with their parents also grows, just as the body grows. But if we have ignored their emotional development when they were young, then as they age, the distance between parent and child becomes greater. (Often, as they grow up, they put effort into honoring the parents because of the mitzvah to honor them, but it doesn't come from a real emotional bond.)

If parents want to run their home properly, they must build a home where they not only take care of the children's material needs, but they also introduce the dimension of the soul. They strive towards open communication with their children. The conversation must be respectful but open. When a child knows that his parents truly listen to his feelings, it gives him hope, and with that, he can blossom to greatness.

3- MIXING EMOTIONS INTO DAILY LIFE ²¹

An essential part of educating our children is the proper integration of emotions in our daily activity. We already know that the soul has three garments: actions, feelings, and thoughts. Just as it is clear to any parent that he must train his children to act properly, he must also guide them to feel properly. Our feelings are as real as our hands and feet. Just as the body has its needs for food, drink, and sleep, the soul needs proper emotional nourishment and guidance. A successful child is not just one who listens to whatever his parents say like a robot, but whose emotional world has been developed properly.

TALKING ABOUT FOOD

Here is a simple example from daily life: A mother knows how to prepare many different kinds of food for her family. Each food tastes differently; we consider some more tasty, and there are other foods we don't like. Each household has its own way. Some parents feel that a child should only eat what he likes. Thus, a mother with five children may need to prepare seven kinds of foods for the seven family members.

Then there are homes with the opposite attitude. The mother prepares dinner as she sees fit, and each child without exception must eat everything served and not leave over a crumb! There is no consideration for individual preferences, and even if the child doesn't like a food, he must eat what the mother has decided to

²¹ Translated from chapter three of the author's Hebrew sefer Da EsYaldecha

cook. (Obviously, both extremes are wrong, but we have intentionally presented these extremes to serve as an example for our topic of emotional development.)

We should first consider: is it positive to discuss the tastes of different foods and what each child prefers to eat? Our initial response might be that it is better not to talk about this subject, which is all about physical pleasures. The child is liable to turn out spoiled as a result of focusing on such things. It would be better to train him to eat what there is, even if he thinks he doesn't like it.

But let us ask ourselves, as parents and as people: do we like all foods the same? Of course not! Only the snake was cursed with, "You shall eat dirt for your whole life,"²² meaning that everything he ate would taste like dirt, but we as human beings have a sense of taste, and we can appreciate the unique taste of each food.

The sense of taste is something personal. Though it is not as deep as our innermost feelings – feelings about food are very external – it is nonetheless a real feeling that we should be aware of.

If so, even though we should educate a child to get used to eating even what he doesn't like, we may not totally ignore his preferences for certain foods. How can we do this successfully and avoid spoiling him? The answer is two-fold: first, let him decide which foods he likes and which he doesn't. Let him explore the subject and talk about it openly. Once his feelings have been clearly established, we can then teach him that we need to also eat things that we don't like (to a certain de-

22 Bereishis 3:14

gree). This will get him used to eating foods other than those that he likes and prefers.

Some have the opinion that in order to educate a child to eat even what he doesn't like, we should crush his sense of taste and accustom him to eating whatever is put in front of him, with the hope that with time, he will get used to eating different foods.

But a parent who wants to develop his child's emotional world properly must know that this approach is wrong. Before any changes are made in his behavior, the child must first know how he feels, in this case by choosing which foods he likes and which he doesn't. Only after his preferences have been acknowledged should we train him to eat even what he doesn't particularly enjoy.

The taste of foods should not be a constant topic in the home, and a child should not become a glutton who eats a lot of what he enjoys. But when the topic arises, we should not silence the child, but let him express his feelings. Only afterward can we help him direct his eating habits properly.

At first, many people will consider this approach to be very unusual. Is it right to make such a big deal about food? We don't want this to become some form of idolatry in the house!

This is a good point and should be kept in mind. But the sense of taste comes from what our rabbis consider the deepest place in the soul. Even though they were referring specifically to the "tastes" of Torah and not of actual food, the world of spiritual taste is enclosed in the material realm of food.

Since the world of taste is very deep, if we try to deny the physical sense of taste of food, it will usually lead to confusion of the inner feelings in the soul. Self-awareness begins with the physical world.

Therefore, if we crush the sense of taste in a child, we may have succeeded in training him to eat whatever he is served but we will have lost more than we gained. It's true that wherever he goes he will get by with what is available, and when he gets married his wife will be happy that he eats whatever she prepares for him, but we will have taken something very deep from him that cannot be replaced: the awareness of his own feelings.

It is not a negative thing when we allow a child to be conscious of his feelings. It only becomes harmful if he starts to think that he should live only by what is most tasty, pleasant, and enjoyable for him.

THE ADVANTAGES OF THE AWARENESS OF TASTE

Awareness of one's feelings implies that one does not deny reality. Just as we would not want a child to deny that he has hands, even if he is not using them at the moment, so should we relate to the soul's feeling of taste. The feelings of the soul are no less real than the limbs of the body.

For example, there are parts of the body that are removed at times, like cutting fingernails and the hair as needed. Nevertheless, they are still integral parts of the body and we don't deny their existence.

Just as with the body, there are parts of us that we acknowledge but don't necessarily keep, so should we acknowledge the sense of taste because it is part of

the child. Afterwards, we can introduce the lofty act of transcending and removing physical taste, similar to the way we cut hair and nails. But this can only be accomplished once the initial true feelings have been identified and acknowledged.

We must strike a delicate balance. On one hand, we cannot turn food into an idol by talking about our favorite foods around the clock. This is clearly negative. But to ignore our sense of taste can weaken the spiritual awareness.

We must use our wisdom to ensure that while food is not too central in the home, it should also be given some minimal degree of importance. In this way, the child will not be forced to deny his feelings.

Although the main purpose in striking this important balance is creating an awareness of feelings, there are other indirect benefits. When a mother wants to prepare a festive meal for her child's birthday, if she knows what his favorite food is, she can show how she cares about him by making that food.

Also, when a person knows what he likes to eat, he can use this awareness to relax himself. When he is angry, for example, he should first try to calm himself without outside help. Since we are not angels, this doesn't always work, and we sometimes need material aids in order to relax. One who knows what he likes can place something good in his mouth and relax with ease. If he doesn't know what he likes, he can't use this knowledge to help himself.

Of course, these are external benefits, while we are dealing here with something much more fundamental. The entire topic of food that we are discussing here is just a single example.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN PREFERENCES AND THE EMOTIONAL WORLD

Another example from daily life: Each child studies many different subjects in school. Normally, a child will not like all the subjects equally. We see that there is always a favorite subject and one that the child least relates to.

Even in this case, we should first allow the child to decide which subjects he enjoys and which he does not, and let him express his feelings. Of course, he should know that we have no intention of sending a note to the principal to free him from the classes he dislikes. We must make it clear that he needs to study even what he doesn't like. A person cannot grow up uneducated; he must learn. But to educate a child properly, he can choose and be aware of his most and least favorite subjects.

When a child is allowed to choose freely in this way, he will understand the difference between studying because he genuinely likes the subject and studying because he needs a certain level of education.

There are other benefits that can result as well. A common phenomenon that occurs with children is that when they get older, they don't know how to direct their lives, and which areas they should pursue. (This is especially true with young women. Young men will often devote themselves to Torah study, but even men need to find their place in Torah, whether it is quick learning, in-depth analysis, practical *halachah*, and so on.)

Decisions are often made based on monetary concerns – which field will earn more money? There is some value in considering this element, but it must not be the primary deciding factor.

If these young adults had grown up with a healthy soul and self-awareness, when the time comes for choosing a field, their decision will be easier, since they will be naturally drawn toward the area that they have decided they like. Even when there are inhibiting factors (one might not be able to make a living doing his favorite thing), there is often a related field that can provide a livelihood.

Besides the future ease in selecting a means for a livelihood, there is an immediate benefit in knowing about the child's favorite subjects. For example, if a child is doing poorly in a particular subject, if we know that he does not like that subject, we can understand why he is not doing well. If he has no problem with the subject, there may be a different reason why he isn't doing well, such as the teacher, his seat in the classroom, or something else. But if we never allow the child to express himself in this matter, we may tend to point fingers outward and place blame, when the problem may be the result of a very simple cause: the child finds it hard to connect to this subject!

Again, we are not saying that a child need not eat or study what he dislikes. Not at all! Within limits, he must eat what he doesn't really like and study what he doesn't enjoy, but there is nothing wrong with his choosing and declaring his preferences.

A CLEAR WORLD

We will make this clear with another example. Many families go away for a vacation in the summer. The family goes on vacation for three or four days. Let us assume that the vacation was pleasant, without any special problems. Of course, it is nearly impossible for the entire family to be fully satisfied; there is always the

complainer who finds problems, but in general, we will assume that most of the family enjoyed it as they should.

When the family returns home, and the neighbor or grandmother asks the children how they enjoyed their vacation, the answers will usually be, "It was great!" "It was fun!" "It was nice." Parents are pleased that their children enjoyed the vacation, but they can gain something greater than this.

If the vacation lasted for four days, and each day you visited a different place, ask the child in a conversational way to identify which day was most enjoyable. The parents, for example, will come home and ask, "Children, did you enjoy the trip?" They will say, "Yes!" Ask one of the children, "What did you like the most?" If he says, "I don't know," you should try to help him gain more clarity. If his answer is more definite, this is a sign that he is on his way to attaining some clarity.

Remember that the reason for the trip was that the children should enjoy themselves. If we wanted them to suffer, we would have stayed home so that they could complain that the whole neighborhood went away except for them. After returning home, we can also derive benefit for their souls by enabling each child to identify what he most liked, and what he enjoyed about that experience most.

This does not mean that he should only be exposed in the future to those things that he likes most, and not to other things; that is not at all the point. Rather, we must see to it that the child is aware of what he enjoys, so he can learn to experience life.

Similarly, we find in *Chazal*,²³ “You have seen a clear world.” For our purposes, a clear world means that if something upsets me, I am well aware that it is unpleasant and I don’t deny the facts. It’s possible that my response to whatever is upsetting me is to either avoid or contend with it, but I remain aware at all times of the reality of the situation facing me.

DEALING WITH THE DIFFICULTY OF CONCENTRATING DURING TEFILLAH

Here is another example from daily life, where we can train our emotional world to reach greater depths. Every father will take his son to shul at some point, depending on his opinion as to the right age and amount of time and which *tefillah*.

Once we have made these important decisions, the child comes to shul and sits next to the father. When they return home, the mother asks the child, “Well, was it nice in shul?” Let’s say that the answer was positive. Is that a sufficient answer?

Of course, if he is too young to even read, we cannot ask him what he enjoyed, because his main pleasure comes from feeling big when his father brings him along.

Even if he is a little older and he can read the words of the *tefillah*, he hardly understands a word. Some of them are difficult to grasp, and even those which he might be able to understand cannot possibly be understood at such a quick pace. Even so, if we ask a boy who has begun to *daven* from a *siddur* if he enjoyed being in shul, he will usually say he did.

²³ *Pesachim 50a*

Why is this? Sometimes, it's because he feels special or grown up going with his father. Sometimes, he doesn't actually enjoy going anymore, but since his parents want him to go, and he is not rebellious, he listens to them. He may not enjoy the actual *davening*. He may grow up with this feeling for decades. If he is honest, even when he is in his twenties and thirties, and perhaps even in his forties and fifties (when he is bringing a grandson along) he will feel the same way. He may enjoy it no more than his grandson. In fact, the grandson may have more pleasure, since he at least feels grown up by being allowed to go to shul.

The older person never experienced enjoyment from *davening* since no one ever taught him when he was younger. If you ask him when he is in his twenties why he is still going to shul, he will say, "Because I have to." Indeed he has to, but there is no requirement to have no feeling for the prayer when you go. [We are required to have feeling for prayer!]

Many parents try to encourage their children to continue going to shul by means of compliments and encouragement. This usually works, and the children keep going. But what will happen when the child grows up? The compliments were only a means to get him used to going; they are not the goal. When he is fourteen and no one is praising him for going, since he never developed a feeling for prayer, he will not be able to experience the desired feeling that should come from being in a shul and *davening*.

Here is another example: Many parents complain that when their children were young, they said the *Birkas Hamazon* properly, slowly and accurately. When they

get older, they don't enjoy it as much, and they rush through it or try to avoid it saying it at all.

Honestly, it is difficult to understand the parents surprise. The reason he *bensched* well when he was young was because he was much more obedient then. Now that he has his own ideas, and since he doesn't enjoy a single word of the *bensching*, how is he supposed to say, a few times a day, long blessings for which he has no appreciation?

The sad fact is that most adults have no appreciation for *davening*, and they only go to shul because that has become part of their routine. The *tefillah* is totally lacking any feeling.

When will a person get involved in the *davening*? When he has, G-d forbid, a sick child, or financial problems, or he needs to marry off his children. Then he suddenly finds that he is able to concentrate on the prayers, he stays longer in the shul, and he discovers that the words mean something.

Adults don't enjoy *tefillah* because of the way they were educated about it when they were younger. They may have gone to shul because they were obedient or because they were complimented for going. But no one taught them to develop a feeling for prayer. How, then, can we expect that they will attain it all of a sudden?

If we think further, we will realize that we do so many things just because we've become accustomed to doing them from our youth. It's good to have good habits,

but this can lead to a big problem – doing things habitually without a living, vibrant connection to them.

I want to stress that even though one must do the right things even if he doesn't enjoy them, Hashem wants us to enjoy even those things that we are obligated to do. We learn the correct order from the verse "We shall do and we shall hear."²⁴ We must first act even without interest, but then we should search for meaning.

How can we awaken in a child the need to find meaning in *tefillah* and *bensching*, or in all those things that people do as "*mitzvos* done out of habit,"²⁵ without feeling?

The basic goal of developing the child's emotional world is to cause his feelings to become inseparable from him. When parents properly invest in developing this world, and succeed in filling his life with emotion, he will naturally try to experience everything he says or does. The direct result will be that he will invest the time necessary in order to understand the meaning of the words of the *brachos* and *tefillos*, as appropriate for his age, so that he will find meaning in them.

EMOTIONS HAVE A SMALL PART IN OUR ORDINARY LIFE

Based on what we've learned, we must clarify how we can make the emotional world an inseparable part of a child's life.

In order to show how far this is from our "normal" daily routine, let us consider what a regular day is like. We wake up, wash our hands, say the morning bless-

²⁴ *Shemos* 24:7

²⁵ *Yeshayahu* 29:13

ings, go to shul (or *daven* at home, as is usually done by women), and then we spend the rest of the day earning a livelihood or learning Torah. Each day proceeds more or less the same way, and this is why one must be careful to ask himself a simple but important question: What today enabled me to find some taste in life?

At times, the answer will be, “There was nothing was especially enjoyable about today.” Even when there was something joyous, it may have been nothing more than a child coming home from school with a good grade, or the news that a relative gave birth to a child. But when we review and think about the things that give us a good feeling throughout our day, can we honestly say that they became an inseparable part of our lives?

Let’s consider the example of a good feeling that came because a child got a good grade on a test. The child came home from school at 1:00 p.m. and showed us the grade, and that gave us happiness and satisfaction. But the grade did not make us happy in the morning, before the child came home. And after the child shows us the test with the grade that it boasts, how long can we think about it? The normal distractions of life will quickly cause us to forget it, and we will not be able to draw energy from it that will keep us going all day.

If we would see someone with two arms and two legs sitting on a chair all day without moving, we would assume that he is paralyzed. Can anyone accuse us of judging him unfairly? No, because in fact we are saying that the reason he is not accomplishing anything is that, through no fault of his own, he cannot move. If

you would be asked to sit in a chair all day without doing anything, could you do it?

Let's apply this idea to our own emotional world. The truth is that for most people, their emotional world is only active on rare occasions, like during a very joyous or sad event. (And some people only show some joy around Purim time.) Beyond this, an average person doesn't get emotional on a regular basis.

Since, as we showed above, a person's emotional world is no less real than the physical world, the emotions should ideally be functioning as often as the body does – all day. A body that doesn't move isn't functioning properly. Our inner world, our emotions, should likewise be active throughout the day.

THE POTENTIAL DIFFICULTIES WITH DEVELOPING EMOTIONS

Before we discuss practical ways to develop the emotions and connect them to practical life, we must first mention that along with the great advantages inherent in this process, there are also certain difficulties.

Each person has a different degree of sensitivity. Some people are so fragile that they are deeply offended by an inappropriate comment. Others have thicker skin and are not so easily offended.

People differ in this area and not everyone is sensitive. Not long ago, I met someone who told me that his *chavrusa* (study partner) made a *bris* for his son and didn't tell him about it. However, he listed a number of good reasons for the oversight. I asked him, "If not for these reasons, would you have been upset?" His surprising answer was, "Even so, there is no reason for me to be offended, be-

cause although we learn together, that does not obligate him to inform me of his son's *bris*."

Such a person is naturally less sensitive, and not because he worked on himself so much. Others are very sensitive, and any little thing can upset them.

Therefore, there is a certain danger in entering the emotional world, because for those who are more sensitive, their emotions will become complicated and they will always sense their inner feelings. Their sensitivity will also become more developed. One with some experience with emotionally disturbed people knows that their emotions are highly developed, but they are extremely disconnected from reality.

Developing our emotions can be extremely beneficial because emotions are the source of vitality. Even the group that is at risk of becoming oversensitive should still develop their emotions, while at the same time learning how to deal with insults.

The Kotzker Rebbe said on the *passuk*, "One with more *da'as* has more pain,"²⁶ that *da'as* is sensitivity, so one who is more sensitive suffers more.

There are people who will not leave their homes because they are afraid of getting into an accident. Obviously, one cannot live this way. But on the other hand, the reality of car accidents cannot be denied. So one must leave the house, and also be very careful to avoid an accident. So too, we must be aware of the hazards of emotional development, while learning to deal with them.

²⁶ *Koheles 1:18*

There are people who are too involved with their emotions and don't have the tools to deal with them. It may be better for them not to further develop their emotions. But for the vast majority of people, this is not a problem, and developing emotions can be very beneficial. We are addressing this majority.

THE JOY OF LIFE

How do we describe what an active emotional life is like?

When a person feels what is happening to him, his emotional world can be said to be active. Thus, the goal we must set for ourselves is to put the soul in a state where it feels and experiences whatever is occurring in our lives. The goal is not only to experience rare events that make us very happy, or the opposite, G-d forbid. Rather, we want to feel things on a daily basis, including simpler, less momentous events. How do we do this?

We all know of a concept called "the joy of life." Does this imply that we can only be happy when things are going well? Of course not! The joy of life applies to everything that happens in life. The way to attain it is through the ability to experience events. Once he has mastered this, one will be happy with anything he is doing.

Although this may sound strange, we should know that life itself is happy, in spite of the fact that its outer reality brings challenges. The proof is that most children are naturally happy and pleased. The joy of life only begins to diminish when we get older and start to encounter difficulties. At times, these difficulties wear us down so much that there are adults who hardly ever smile, because of

the difficulties they experienced. Life on its own, though, is naturally joyous. But there is another source of natural joy besides life itself—these are the various experiences we have, which can cause an outer feeling of joy. So there are two sources of joy: the natural joy we are born with, and experiences from the outside that can cause joy.

We already have explained that the difficulties of life tend to hide our natural feelings of joy. (In fact, this natural joy can be restored, but it is a complicated process, which is beyond the scope of this discussion.) If so, what we can do to restore the joy of life by means of outer experiences? We should first begin to fully experience the basic events that occur in our lives.

It doesn't matter if what we do is on a high or low level, or if it is spiritual or physical. Whatever we do, we have to try to experience it fully.

THE NEGATIVE EFFECT OF HABITUAL ACTS DONE BY ROTE

When we consider the process of child rearing, we find an interesting phenomenon. When a new baby is born everyone is happy and a lot of effort is put into raising him. In spite of any hardships we might experience, this investment generally comes with positive feelings of love and giving.

But after the child has grown a little, the excitement over these efforts begins to fade. In extreme cases, we find mothers who feel like they are no more than housekeepers who are forced to do this work. Furthermore, we sometimes see a dichotomy in the way we relate to our growing children. We may enjoy them, play with them, and enjoy their antics, but we feel that managing the house on a daily

basis, is a burden. When we don't get any joy or vitality out of doing housework, the next step is feeling that what she is doing is purposeless, and finally she is worn out from the whole enterprise.

When we perform our daily activities like empty habits, then even the best efforts we make on behalf of our children end up causing us to feel separate from them. Subconsciously, we will feel that they are the cause of this entire load on our lives. Because of them we need to wash dishes, because of them, we need to do the laundry, because of them, the floor is dirty again and we must clean it again, etc.

Of course, we would never articulate such sentiments. We won't even allow ourselves to think that way so clearly. But deep down, since we sense that the actions done because of the children are burdensome and exhausting, the result is that the children will not feel the generosity and investment on their behalf. What is more, acts done consistently without vitality are the opposite of the proper healthy life.

HOW TO GET CHILDREN TO APPRECIATE WHAT THEIR PARENTS DO FOR THEM

Parents often complain that they give so much of themselves for their children, yet the children don't sense and appreciate it. How does this happen?

This relates precisely to our topic. Without a doubt, parents give up a lot for their children. But they do so without vitality and joy. It is sometimes very obvious that many of the things we do for our children are laced with resentment, so the children cannot properly appreciate what their parents give them.

If parents could do things for their children with a little more “spice” of joy and vitality, without even doing anything extra, their children would relate to them completely differently. They would naturally come to value their parents’ investments and efforts on their behalf.

Think about it. There are so many things we habitually do for our children in any case. Instead of always thinking about how these acts disturb us and are so burdensome, let us try to direct those acts to a positive channel. How do we do this?

First of all, when you are in the middle of some routine task, think of the fact that you are doing it for your children. Think: “I am washing dishes because I am glad to give my children clean plates for eating.” The child will receive something valuable from the emotional realm along with a clean plate – he will get a heartfelt feeling, which cannot be bought or acquired anywhere else.

Here is another example: A mother gives lunch to her child. If there was no thought involved, and it was done out of routine and necessity, he has only received material food. But if there was also positive thought, such as, “I am preparing the food for this child whom I love so much,” he will seemingly receive the identical lunch, but with “heart” added to it, and he will sense the difference.

When we infuse our daily home activities with positive thoughts, we are developing our own emotional world and making it an inseparable part of our home life. When a mother performs her tasks feeling burdened and spends her entire morning before her children return from school in a state of unhappiness, then she cannot suddenly change herself and relate properly to the child when he arrives. If she has no feelings for what she is doing, she has no way of including her

child in her own experiences, which is the foundation for building his emotional world.

We need to change our attitude about all the simple things we do for our children and try to do each act with feeling. The goal is to add a new dimension to each act and enable the children to feel that our souls have done something for them.

When they come home to eat lunch, they will sense that in addition to the pots, plates, cutlery, and food, the mother is giving them her heart. In this way, a meal becomes a means for developing their emotions. Furthermore, in this manner, the emotions are developed through a direct connection with the mother, and this is the best method.

INTRODUCING EMOTIONS IS VITAL FOR ALL OF LIFE

It is important to stress that the emotional world must be introduced into every part of our lives, even in areas that do not directly relate to the home.

For example, a father or mother go out to work in order to support the family. It is not enough that when they get their paycheck at the end of the month, they recall that the purpose of the work was to support the family and take care of their needs. They must remember the real goal of their efforts while they are actually at work; in this way, they put heart into all their effort and exertion.

What is the point of doing this? Does it really make any difference? It does. First of all, just thinking about our goals will give us more vitality and joy during work, and this will help us pass the time more easily. We will also have taken the first step toward developing an emotional relationship with our children.

But what if we do not do this? What if we just continue our routine day in and day out without any special thought or intention? Let's think about it. Parents who leave the home for work will not have much time to directly activate their emotions toward their children. Because there is so little actual interaction, there will be few opportunities to directly experience feelings for their children on a daily basis. In some cases, there will only be a few moments of feelings, such as when the child comes home from school and is happy, and they feel good about that, or when he is sad and they feel badly for him. But most of the day will pass with no exchange of feelings. So it's important to keep in mind that just as most of the things we do all day are for the benefit of our children, directly or indirectly, whether we are at home or out working and shopping, our emotions should also be focused towards them during our activities. This way, the deeper dimension of the heart will be added on to everything we do, and our relationship with our children will be so much more vibrant.

CHANGING HOUSEWORK INTO A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

Having shown the importance of introducing the emotional world into daily life, we will give some practical examples in order to show how to experience events that seem simple and empty.

A housewife is washing the dishes. What can she possibly feel? The filth in the pots, or the spots on the plates? Or perhaps she is washing the floors. What can she feel then? If we consider our acts throughout most of the day, it may seem as though we engage in acts that are plain and necessary, with nothing unique to experience from them.

But to fully experience life, it is not enough that we are all moved when a very happy or sad event occurs. These events cannot enliven us for very long. But if we try to feel everything we are involved in – even the most common things – we will succeed in living with constant experiences.

How can we make this practical? We will start with a simple and common experience. A woman is about to wash the dishes after Shabbos, and the sink is filled to the top. (Even if they use disposable utensils, there is still plenty of work to do – washing pots, cleaning the floors, laundry, and so on, as any housewife knows). Does anyone consider not doing this work? No normal woman would try to evade these tasks. She understands that the house must be clean and organized.

If these tasks have to get done at any rate, before she is about to start working, she must ask herself a simple question: why am I about to organize this home?

Once the question has been asked, there are two possible ways of thinking: She can decide that she doesn't want to do it and that she is doing it because there is no choice (she can't stand a kitchen with a sink full of dishes). If so, not only will the dishes be washed resentfully, but so will the cooking that will be done in them later. The negative and bitter feelings that she is harboring will not remain her private property, but will leave an imprint in the food she prepares and in each corner of the home. This will lead to a negative effect on the children's souls.

But if her thoughts are positive (as is usually the case), she can easily add some "spice" to the housework. She can do this by asking herself some simple questions: "Who ate from these dishes? Some animals that are walking around the house, or my family members – my husband and children?" Then she should con-

sider, “Did anyone force me to get married and have children? Do I want these children? Am I interested in cooking for them? Do I want to wash the pots so that I can cook in them?” In general, the answer to these questions will be positive, and her conclusion will be, “I chose to wed, thank G-d, I have children, and want I them and I am happy with them.” This will make it easier for her to add the “spice” of love into the dishwashing and housework. (Those who are not happy with their spouse and children need special guidance.)

When there is a positive relationship to the simple acts like washing dishes, we have succeeded in introducing a measure of feeling into everyday life. Instead of relating to this as something forced and unwanted, we have added a positive approach that can grant much enjoyment during these tasks.

To illustrate, if we find potatoes and spices in the house and we decide to use them for lunch, it is obvious that we need to add the proper amount of spice to the pot so that the potatoes will absorb their flavor. If the spices remain in their containers, they will not enhance the taste of the potatoes.

The message is clear: Parents usually do the right things for their children, and they even have loving feelings for them. All we need to do is mix the two together. When the mother is about to wash the dishes, she should add one small and simple thought: “All of this effort in washing the dishes comes from my love for my family; I therefore see to it that they will have clean dishes.”

Here is another example. Before the mother begins to cook lunch for the family, she should have this brief thought: “Why am I cooking this food?” If her first thought is that she has no choice (so that they will not die of starvation, G-d for-

bid, or because if they are hungry, they will be anxious), the children will pick up this sentiment when eating the food, and it will have a negative effect on their personalities.

But if the thoughts are positive (as is the case with most mothers), and the mother reminds herself that she is cooking for children about whom she cares and whose well-being gladdens her, and that she derives pleasure and joy when they eat tasty food, her motherly heart will leave an impression on the food she serves her children, and they will sense this well, not only in their taste buds, but in the depths of their souls.

THE POWER OF MIXING EMOTIONS INTO DAILY LIFE

Our Sages have said, and this is corroborated by studies done about cooking, revealing this startling fact: If two women cook an identical meal, but one is obligated to do it, and the second does so with joy so that her children will enjoy tasty food, the meal prepared by the second woman will be tastier.

If we apply this to other areas of life, we can say that there is a great difference between dishes washed because one feels forced to and those washed with the simple thought that our beloved children will eat lunch out of these dishes. This can have a direct effect on the child, who will especially enjoy using a dish washed while his mother had positive thoughts.

It should be stressed that there usually is no need to do anything different in order to introduce emotions into our actions.

Every parent already loves his or her child, and the actions for the child are done in any case. The only thing to change is to combine our feelings with our actions. Here is an illustration, regarding prayer: Prayer with proper intent requires the involvement of the heart. If we see that someone is praying without intent, do we assume that he is heartless? Of course not! It is very possible that he has a most compassionate heart, and if he is told a moving story, he will even cry. Why, then, does he not pray properly? Probably because he doesn't see to it that his heart is attached to the words he says while praying. Likewise, when we relate this to the way we give to our children, the actions for the children generally are done properly, and every parent generally has a warm heart toward his children. All that remains is to join the two; in this way, we can influence and develop their souls.

The fundamental point is very clear: whenever we do an action (especially at home), we must invest a minimum of thought, for a moment before the action (and if we can do it during the action, it is that much better), so as to infuse our love for our children into the actions we do for them.

THE POWER OF THE WORLD OF THOUGHTS IN DEALING WITH THE BURDENS OF LIFE

As we know, child rearing is an undertaking that demands much effort on the part of the part of the parents, during both the easy and the less pleasant times. No parent can make the claim that running a house with children is simple and easy. How can we lighten, in some measure, the difficulty of raising children?

It seems that the formula for this is also contained in the world of emotions. The more we are concerned about including love and feelings in our actions, the easi-

er it will be for us to deal with child rearing. We and our children will be the winners. When parents are calm and act with inner wholeness and peace, the house is run from a much deeper level, and as a result, the children will attain an inner depth in their souls.

In addition, involving the world of emotions can even help with the simple tasks of the home. There is no mother who washes dishes as a hobby. This is always considered an unpleasant aspect of housekeeping. In fact, if we do it feeling there is no choice and we are forced to do it, in the end, we will feel worn out and exhausted. But if we remember that we are working on behalf of these precious *neshamahs*, then much of the burden contained in child rearing will be diminished.

DEALING WITH FATIGUE WITH THE AID OF THE WORLD OF EMOTIONS

At times, a housewife will be beset by feelings of fatigue and helplessness. How can she cope with these unpleasant feelings?

If we would do some research, we would find that each woman deals with this situation in her own way. One who is extreme will cry when this happens, another who is calmer will pick up the phone to relieve the tension, others will relax by eating something sweet, reading an interesting book, or taking a short rest. We would not negate the value of these acts and say that they are inappropriate. But in light of what we have been discussing, we can add another method to this list.

First we shall consider what the source of this exhaustion and fatigue is. The burden of managing a home extends throughout the entire day. This is particular-

ly difficult when a mother goes to work in the morning, and then, when she comes home, must work in a “second job.” She must maintain all aspects of the home – cooking, dishwashing, laundry, ironing, and primarily, she needs a lot of patience in raising the children. Naturally, the burden of this way of life gets to be too much for her, and she reaches a point where she is emotionally drained. This in turn affects the faculties of the body.

How can we cope with this by means of the world of emotions? We must stop for a moment, in a comfortable place, and think one simple thought: “This constant activity is not happening because I am forced into it, but because I want to provide for all these souls whom I love so much!” Of course, this will not be a magical solution for all of life’s problems, and life will not suddenly become easy. But without a doubt, this method can impart a special taste to all of our activity, by adding a sweet spice to the routine of life. In this way, a new dimension will be added to our actions, containing a special shot of vitality that will help us cope with the natural exhaustion caused by the burdens of life.

When you think about this, you will realize that even here, we are not creating a whole new thought. All we are doing is incorporating the thoughts we already know and feel into the daily routine. In this way, we give ourselves another way to cope with (and even prevent) the difficult feelings of fatigue and exhaustion.

PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR INCORPORATING THE WORLD OF EMOTIONS INTO OUR DAILY ACTS

The goal we must place before ourselves is to add the emotional dimension to the endless rush of our active life, in the ways we have described above.

What will be the result of all this? Thank G-d, we raise children in our homes. Externally, this implies caring for the body and all of its needs, but internally, it includes the soul. Thus, even if the true source of our actions is our parental love, which motivates us to give everything for our children, as long as we operate solely in the material realm, then that is all they will receive. But if we put our hearts into it, the children will not only benefit from our actions, but also from the emotions that accompanied them.

How did G-d create the bond between parents and children? Every parent understands that he must provide for his children's needs so that they can develop properly. Think about it: why did Hashem make the world in a way that children are born so helpless and their parents must take care of all their needs?

One may suggest that in this way, the parents have the mitzvah of doing kindness with their children. But this is not the only reason: the deeper reason for the lack with which children are born is that we need to give them our souls.

How do we do this? Is it enough to say constantly, "We love you"? Certainly, this is also necessary, but when we put these feelings into action, they will have a much greater effect. Since most of the daily routine revolves around action, we must try to make this emotional infusion an inseparable part of our lives. When giving lunch to the child, first think, "I am giving my child soup because I love him so much." In this way, we succeed in giving our heart along with the soup.

To illustrate, when you want to give a gift to a friend, and you put six cups in a package, even if you want to give ten cups, he can only receive six cups and not more. So it is with the emotional dimension. When we add "heart" to the pota-

toes that we cook, they will receive it in addition to the potatoes. Similarly, if you buy a shirt for a child that costs twenty dollars, without adding the emotional dimension when you buy it, that is all he will receive. But you can add heart to it. Think: “I went to buy a shirt for the child, and I encountered various difficulties. I ran around to many stores. One was closing just as I arrived. In another, those shirts were out of stock. I troubled myself on a very hot day, or on a rainy day, because I thought a little about my love for my child, and in this way, I am giving him not only the shirt but also my soul along with it.”

THIS WILL STRENGTHEN THE BOND BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN

When we make this approach an intrinsic part of our lives, and add love to all we do for the children, our relationship with them will become one of, “His soul is bound with his soul,”²⁷ because we give not only the food and clothing, but even the soul.

On the verse, “*Anochi* (I) am Hashem your G-d,” the *Gemara*²⁸ teaches that *Anochi* is an acronym for “*Ana nafshi kesivas yehavis*” (“I have written and given you My soul”). As it were, when G-d gave the Torah, He gave not only written words with wisdom, but even His soul within it. Likewise, we find in the *Gemara*²⁹ that when one gives a gift, he gives it generously. On a deeper level, this means that when a gift is given properly and sincerely, one gives his soul to the recipient.

²⁷ Bereishis 44:30

²⁸ Shabbos 105a

²⁹ Baba Basra 71a

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From all these sources we learn that when we give material things to our children, like food and clothing, we must add soul and vitality to them. When we live this way (the parents give over their souls at least in thought, and preferably also in words), when the child comes home and eats the meal prepared for him, he also receives the heart from the time invested in it. Though it may be a small portion of food that takes merely five or ten minutes to eat, his soul receives a tremendous amount, in accordance with his parents' efforts, and the results are wondrous.

When we add our soul into our actions, even without talking to our children about emotions, we have opened a direct channel into their souls. We are not raising robots, but children with developed emotions, who can sense the subtle messages that come their way. As long as we focus only on actions, and our love for them is hidden, they will sense that and only love us in a hidden way; it will only be expressed in times of difficulty or great joy. But if parents consciously put soul into their actions, and in this way, their love is apparent, the children will sense open love. This is true even if a child does not see or hear his mother talking about it. If she does, he will surely sense it in a deeper way.

SUMMARY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORLD OF EMOTIONS

When we began to speak of the world of emotions, we explained that a person is comprised of action, emotion, and thought. Accordingly, each parent must develop these three areas: (1) the child must know how to act properly; (2) he should be able to relate to the world with a full range of proper emotions; and (3) he should have a well-developed way of thinking.

Most parents correctly deal with the realm of actions. They try to train their children to act properly. Therefore, we will focus mostly on the emotional realm, which is less familiar to many parents.

The emotional realm is no less real than the physical sense with which we are so familiar. Just as the body needs food, drink, and sleep, so does the soul have its emotional needs. These are no less vital to it than the physical needs are to the body.

Just as parents must care for their children's food and bodily needs, so must they care for their emotional needs by properly developing their emotional world. First of all, they must set a goal to give the children a clear world of emotions. How does one deal with the child's soul, and what is the method for giving the child the right way to relate to the world?

Once the parents have learned to put their hearts into the actions they do for their children, they must expose their own emotions before their children in a measure appropriate for the child's age and level. In this way, we teach the child that feelings are as valid a concept in the home as actions are.

As with all education, emotional development begins with us, the parents. When parents strive to experience life on their own, they slowly and steadily confer that dimension to their children. Since most of our parenting revolves around the home, we must first introduce the experiential dimension into the framework of the home. The world of emotions must take a very important place there. After we have learned to share our feelings with our children throughout the day's activities, we can start talking to them about their feelings.

Since most people invest most of their lives in efforts for their children, and any healthy parent really loves his children, all we need to do is to join the actions with the love and to try to add our expressions of feeling to the actions. This will add soul and heart to our actions.

Emotions must be included in all areas of activity, even in the most mundane acts, such as taking care of the food and clothing, washing dishes, and so on. We do these things because we love our children. Our job now is to turn the hidden love into revealed love and to add that love to the eight or ten hours during which we are in any case working for our children.

In contrast, if a parent performs all his efforts without revealing any love, besides the problem that he is training himself to act without feeling, he is sending such a message to his children. His feelings for them become pushed to a far corner. As a result, when they grow up (if they don't learn to be original thinkers), they will emulate their parents, and their relationship with their parents will be very superficial.

Though inwardly, parents love their children, and they do for them because of this love, the children often don't feel it because it is not exposed. It is not nearly as apparent as the physical efforts.

If we wish to do things properly and soundly, once we have internalized the clear understanding that the emotional world is the basis of the home, and the world of action is an outer garment over it, we know that we must work differently. We need to put in some thought before acting, and then the actions will be accompanied with much feeling.

After we have begun to add feeling to our actions and routine, we can talk to the children about the world of feelings, as explained above. But you must realize that words alone can be empty. We can apply the words of the prophet, “With their words, they have honored me, but their hearts are far from me,”³⁰ because the heart is not participating. When a mother’s whole motive for telling her child, “I love you” comes from a speech she heard about how important it is to do so, although deep down it is true, but, the feeling is suppressed, the words have little benefit. This is like a flash of lightning that lights up the dark sky for a moment and then disappears. When a mother expresses her positive feelings in a momentary comment but then life goes on without any further investment in the emotional realm, her words cannot help. Even if the words are sincere, occasional comments are insufficient. You would not be satisfied with one who does nothing for you except for an occasional comment about his deep feelings for you. A child should not need to wait for a kind word in order to sense your love for him.

Therefore, we need both methods. Add love to all that you do, focusing on your love for your family when you work for them, and also send your feelings to them with kind words. Then what comes from the heart will enter the heart. This is especially so when our heart does so much for the children. It is sending loving feelings each day and every hour, and this will enter the heart of the child that already senses the physical benefits, such as food and clothing.

The more exposed the parent’s heart is, the more the feelings will naturally enter the heart of the child. When the father or mother tell the child, “We love

³⁰Yeshayahu 29:13

you,” the child will not relate to this as a baseless saying from a stranger, because it is a sentiment felt by the parents all day. The child will sense that when they say it, they mean each word they say, and they are saying the words with truth and sincerity.

Thus, proper development of our children’s emotional world requires action and speech. The actions are our physical efforts for them, to which we add our inner feelings, so that our giving will come as an expression of our natural love. In addition, we must put effort into saying words, by talking to them about feelings. First, we should be open about our own feelings in areas that do not relate directly to them. Then we communicate our feelings toward them. As a result, we can reach the final level, in which the children open up about their own feelings, whether toward the parents or about life in general.

If we have not developed the child’s emotions in a structured manner, he is not likely to share his feelings with his parents (unless there is some major crisis or some great cause for celebration). In some situations, the child can get into serious trouble as a result.

A child will come home from school very upset, and the parents suddenly discover that he or she has been confronting a problem for two years, and the parents knew nothing about it. The source of the problem is that his emotional world has not been open to us, and he has not seen fit to share his feelings with us. Only when the situation became desperate and he realized that only his parents can help does he begin to include them. Of course, by then, his spirit has already been

damaged, and even if it can be fixed, it is surely better to develop the emotions properly from the beginning so that the child will include us at the proper time.

If a machine remains unused for a long time, it will become rusty and not function properly. So too, if we do not make the child's emotional world function on a daily basis by putting effort into it on a regular basis, she will only express her feelings when there is an unusual problem or a time of extreme happiness.

Therefore, we must turn the world of emotions into a part of the routine of life and keep it constantly active. When children live in such an environment, they will naturally express their feelings on a regular basis. Then we can try to guide them in the right direction.

In conclusion, we must stress something that is important in any area, and especially in the area of education: Every parent must know that in spite of all the advice and insights that can help with educating our children, success is not guaranteed. Everything depends of the help of Heaven! We must always remember that though we should try to do what is incumbent upon us, this is not a guaranteed recipe for success. It is certainly possible that after all of our efforts, which can be considered no more than the necessary input, G-d's will may be that the children will turn out differently. Therefore, in addition to our necessary efforts, we must also *daven* and shed many tears for the sake of our children's development, and hope that our prayers will be accepted.

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PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S EMOTIONS

Once we have developed a child's emotions in the proper way, as detailed above, the next stage will generally occur when the child starts communicating freely about his feelings, either about his personal life – such as his classes in school, social circle, or anything that relates specifically to him – or about his relationship to us, his parents.

How should we respond when a child shares his feelings with us? First, of course, we must listen carefully. We should not mock or belittle his words, even if we are convinced that what he is saying is based on a delusion. To the contrary, if we listen well, even to delusions, we will come to understand what his state of mind is and what he is feeling.

In any case, it is important to relate to the feelings of the person in front of us without engaging in intellectual analysis.

For example, let's say the child comes home and tells his parents how he's feeling, whether he is expressing happiness or the opposite. Our natural instinct might be to analyze the words he is saying intellectually – to understand what he is saying and then judge whether there is some merit to the idea or if he is severely mistaken about what he is feeling. But we have to fight off this instinct, because when a child is standing before us and describing his experiences and feelings, there is something else that must precede all this analysis before anything.

Whether he is describing his pain or sharing his joy with us, we must first relate to his emotional state before we judge the merits or appropriateness of his thoughts. The fact that he is happy should compel us to connect to that which makes him happy. Even more importantly, if he is in pain or sad, we must set aside our intellect and judgment for the time being, and allow our heart to feel the heart of the person speaking to us, identifying with the pain expressed in his words.

As parents, the first reaction to our child's description of feelings should not be about helping, giving, guiding, or advising (as important as these things are at a later stage). Rather, first we must fulfill the verse, "Love your neighbor as yourself."³² When our child comes to us in order to include us in their experiences, we must feel their joy or their pain.

Sincere involvement in our child's feelings requires adequate time and concentration, which is not always available when we need it. Often, the child will come home from school and start pouring his heart out just when the mother is busy feeding three or four other children. Under such conditions, the mother cannot really listen, and certainly she cannot properly empathize with her child.

In such a case, she must say, "I really want to listen to you, and a little later, when I will have more time, I will be glad to sit and give you all of my attention." (In extreme cases, as when the child is very emotional, you must at least allow him to finish his sentence and then try to add a word of sympathy.) Listening to

³² *Vayikra 19:18*

the child from beginning to end and understanding him correctly requires a calm and peaceful state of mind so we can attempt to sense the child's feelings.

As parents, we must try to feel the child's pain in every situation. The first thing we must do is set aside all rational judgment. Even if we are sure that the child is not justified in being so upset, the very fact that he is in pain should indicate that he is expressing an inner feeling of hurt. It doesn't matter if it is justified, or if it is his fault, or if it can easily be resolved. These are all secondary issues. The first reaction must be the same every time: to activate our own world of feelings as parents and to identify and participate in the child's pain.

We find such an idea in the words of *Chazal*:³³ "Anyone who visits an ill person takes away a sixtieth of his pain". The very concern for the ill person and the interest taken in him diminishes the pain he feels as a result of the sickness. So even if a child is expressing some kind of pain, the fact that the parents participate in his feelings helps to mitigate the pain he is coping with.

(This approach is not only applicable between parents and children; it should also accompany us in all of our interpersonal relationships in life. It is worth adding that anytime a mental health professional deals with a patient, his first and foremost responsibility is to identify with the other's soul and to feel that there is someone there expressing deep pain. People who need advice should turn to righteous, modest individuals who know that before giving advice for an emotional problem they need to relate to the existence of the other person and identify with his pain.)

³³ *Nedarim 39b*

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After we have validated our child by feeling his pain, the next step is to provide guidance and direction. We can teach him how to cope with whatever he is facing, and how to avoid such a problem in the future, and when necessary, to point out that he is making a mistake – but this is all part of the second step.

This is not a lengthy process. The first step of listening only takes a few minutes. Once it seems clear that we understand and properly empathize with the one standing before us, we can express our opinion and help with advice.

THE BENEFIT OF EMOTIONAL IDENTIFICATION DURING YOUTH

This first and crucial stage of identifying and participating in the child's feelings is an essential element in forging a bond between the parents and children. In practice, this is where we reap the benefits of our investment in developing the child's emotions. How?

As described above at length, there are a number of stages in the process of helping children to open up emotionally to their parents: (1) infusing emotion and feeling into our ordinary actions, (2) conversing with the children about our own feelings (as deemed appropriate), whether or not this relates to the children, (3) and then the children will gradually start to open up until they can speak freely about their emotions.

Whereas at first, the words left our hearts and entered theirs, now the opposite needs to happen. We must see to it that what comes from their hearts will enter ours.

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When the child expresses something from his own emotional world, and he feels that it is truly entering the hearts of his parents, the short-term benefit is that he will be able to cope more easily with his normal challenges. But there is also a tremendous long-term benefit: the very fact that the child knows that he can always find a listening ear and open heart in his parents.

The advantages of this are tremendous. When a child understands that he can include his parents in all of his difficulties and struggles, this will save the parents from much aggravation later on (especially in the teenage years) when children can become very closed, leading to serious problems in a number of areas.

Therefore, when a parent gives a child a genuine feeling of trust that there is someone close to him who is prepared to listen to him deeply and feel along with him, there is no reason for his world of emotions to be closed. He will naturally feel free to talk to his parents about his problems and the challenges he is facing.

A lot depends on the age of the child. When the child is younger, he will open up to a greater degree. But when he is older, how much he opens up will depend on his way of thinking. In extreme cases, such as when he has different values than his parents, we cannot expect them to share everything with them; he sees himself as in a different camp. But in general, when a child feels that there is someone who listens to and identifies with him, he will surely feel close to them and be open with them.

EDUCATION ABOUT EMOTIONS

Now that we have clarified the importance of developing our child's emotional world, and the ways to help our children in this area, we will now discuss the final stage in this topic – directing the child's emotions to be used correctly. (We have just given a general outline; it is in reality much more detailed and complex.)

What does the term “emotional education” imply? Here is a common example: A child comes home and announces, “I hate ...” How does the mother immediately react? She'll reply, “How can you say that? We are not allowed to hate anybody!” Is such a reaction considered proper emotional education? Can we educate our children with such a brief and unconvincing statement? (It would be interesting to check if the mother herself could immediately stop a feeling of hatred that arises inside herself with such a brief statement.)

Even if we open up a longer conversation with the child and try to explain to him about positive and negative emotions, our efforts will be futile. Emotions are in the heart, so our approach to them must also be through the heart. Although simply informing the child what he may feel in his heart and what he may not feel in his heart is a much easier method, it is totally ineffective.

On the other hand, we do indeed need to train our children in proper feelings. There are some feelings which the Torah expressly forbids, such as, “You shall not hate your brother in your heart,”³⁴ and precisely because it is so important, we must teach it in a proper and effective manner, as we will describe.

³⁴ *Vayikra 19:17*

PUNISHING OUT OF LOVE

Every parent comes across a situation in which he needs to punish a child. The punishment will depend on the nature and severity of the incident. Why do we punish? Does it stem from an angry heart, or from real and sincere concern and deep love for the one we are educating?

The answer depends on the situation. When the parent punishes immediately and spontaneously, it is most likely the result of an outburst of anger. This is a negative feeling that cannot serve to educate the child correctly. (Every parent should strive to remove the trait of anger, learn patience, and limit any outbursts toward the children as much as possible.)

On the other hand, there are punishments that are meted out after the parents discuss the matter together, and when it is calm and quiet, they determine the right course of action. The father or mother approaches the child and tells him, "Because of that serious incident, we have decided to punish you in this way."

Once the parent is certain that he is punishing the child because of a rational determination that there is a need to educate, he should ask himself, "Am I doing this out of love?" Deep down, the answer will usually be "Yes," but we must also openly express this to the child.

Once a parent decides to punish a child, there are two stages to the process: first, to determine if punishment is needed and how it should be done; then (and no less important), once he is about to implement the punishment, he should consider, "Why am I about to punish? Is it because I love him and care about his future?"

Once the parent has ascertained that the punishment is being implemented out of love, the next step is to add a few words at the time, such as, “Do you know why I am punishing you? Why don’t I punish the neighbor’s child? I am punishing you because I really love you.”

So that such a statement can be credible, and the child will feel that it is so, the parent must bring himself to the point where he is conscious that the entire punishment stems from an inner love for the child and concern for his future. Only when his parent has genuinely achieved this level will the child be convinced. The punishment will not cause a separation between the parent and child, but bring them closer.

But if the punishment is the result of a spontaneous outburst, even if the parent says that it is for the child’s benefit, the value of the statement will be negligible. The child will intuitively understand that these are just words, and they will not enter his heart.

Besides the importance of self-preparation before a punishment, if the parent wants to let the child know that he really is punishing because of love and sincere concern, he should try to be clear and specific in his explanation. Instead of just saying, “I am doing this because I really love you,” he should elaborate a little and say something like, “I would be very happy if I didn’t need to do this.”

In addition, in certain cases, we can tell the child, “Since we are doing this because we love you, and our goal is that you should be educated, if you have another idea about how to achieve this result without punishment, I will be happy to hear it. If it seems like a good suggestion, I will do it.” When a child hears such

a statement from his parents, he will feel that the punishment is not an end in itself, and will internalize the fact that their real goal is his education.

There are those who find such ideas to be totally foreign. They feel that parents should decide on things in secret in a closed room, and the children should have no say in the parents' decisions. Nonetheless, a statement like the one we have illustrated outweighs the merits of this other point of view; we enable the child to feel that his parents care about the goal as well as the means, and we thereby neutralize any potential feelings of distance that could develop as a result of the punishment.

Of course, the parents must decide on how to carry this out. They cannot allow the child to make a joke of the whole issue and give ridiculous suggestions about the alternative to a punishment. If a child comes up with alternatives, they must be serious and constructive. We can tell him that we will try his suggestion for a defined period, and if we see that it is not practical, we have no choice other than to revert to the original planned punishment.

IS THERE ANY REAL BASIS FOR A CHILD FEELING THAT HIS PARENTS HATE HIM?

Besides the distancing that a child can naturally feel when punished, even parents who really love their child can awaken within themselves a bit of hatred toward the child when they are punishing him, as is shown in this story.

A student of Rav Dessler once had a frightening dream, in which he was going to take a knife and kill his son. The father woke up terrified, and instead of just telling himself it was just a silly dream, he started to think about what it might mean.

When he could not think of a satisfactory insight, he approached Rav Dessler and asked, "Since dreams at night come from the thoughts of the day, how could a father who loves his son so much have such a dream?"

The answer was very surprising. He said, "It is likely that once, late at night the baby cried. Your wife said, 'I already woke up three times tonight; now it's your turn.' Since you didn't have the strength to wake up then, you might have deep down had an awful thought: 'I wish he wouldn't be here; I just need to sleep peacefully.' Even though this thought lasted only a brief moment and then disappeared, it emerged at night in a dream. Although this is not your true will, G-d forbid, it still is present to a small degree in the soul."

When parents have an outburst, there is a risk that in spite of all our love for the child, there can also be a feeling of hatred (especially when the child is often irritating and annoying). The child will sense this at the time of the punishment.

What is the result of this? Anyone involved in education of older children knows that when they are able to talk freely, some will say, "My parents don't love me," and some will even say, "My parents hate me."

Upon hearing such a dramatic statement, one will immediately call for a meeting with the parents, to ascertain whether this feeling is justified. The father comes to the meeting, hears the words, and reacts, "How could he make such a terrible statement? I give my whole life for him!"

How can we explain this? Is the child justified in his feelings, or should we believe the father?

The true answer is based on what we said before. In fact, the father loves the child a great deal, but it is only 95%, and there might be a small percentage of hatred hidden inside (which even he is not aware of). When the child makes such a declaration, he is referring to that little bit of hatred that affected him and made him feel that way.

Thus, besides the short-term harm that can occur as a result of a parent's outburst, in some cases, there can be serious long-term damage to the relationship.

Even if the punishment is carried out calmly, the negative feeling that naturally comes from the punishment cannot be completely obliterated. The parents must first become inwardly conscious that the punishment comes from love, for the sake of the child's education, and only after, when they tell this to the child, and say that they would be happy if they didn't have to do this, he will accept it in a much better way and we will avoid the negative feelings that might have come as a result.

Hearing this kind of advice when we are relaxed and open makes it seem easy to apply. But when it comes to real life, we discover that life is much more complicated. We need to achieve a high degree of level-headedness and self-growth in order to apply this idea correctly and successfully. But even if we are not 100% successful, the more we can achieve a calm mind, the more we can calmly direct our behavior and limit the harm and the distancing that can result from punishments. To the contrary, through punishments, the emotional bond between parent and child will strengthen.

When we act in this way, the positive feelings in the child's soul will strengthen, and we will be able to discuss both positive and negative feelings, gradually teaching him how to eradicate negative emotions from his heart. This, of course, is the work of a lifetime. But once positive feelings have been developed in the soul, one will have "fertile ground" upon which to embark on this important spiritual work.

5- TEACHING CHILDREN TO THINK ON THEIR OWN 35

As mentioned in the previous chapters, every individual functions simultaneously in three different ways – through actions, feelings, and thoughts. Most parents try to educate their children properly and direct their actions correctly, but when it comes to teaching them about feelings and thoughts, even though this is no less important than actions it is an area that is often neglected. In previous chapters, we have learned how to develop the world of emotions. In this chapter, with Hashem's help, we will discuss the world of thought and the means for guiding our children to think properly.

OUTER AND INNER THINKING

We must first be aware that when it comes to the task of educating our children to think, there is an internal element and an external element, and each must be dealt with separately. The external element is clear and well-defined: to train the child in correct ideals and thoughts. Each parent educates his children according to his own beliefs and perspectives.

Of course, even more basic than all of this is educating the children that the world has a Creator, to Whom we turn in times of need; that the world survives in the merit of the Torah, those who study it, and those who uphold and guard it; and similar principles. We teach our children many ideas, from the most fundamental principles to all the details of a Torah outlook, which we need to impart to them.

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This is the external element of education. We have views and beliefs that we know and believe in, and we try to pass these on to future generations. This is important, valuable, and basic, but completely separate from the more intricate task of training our children in the internal element of thinking.

“Internal thinking” refers to *binah*, which occurs when a person contemplates the knowledge he has learned. “External thinking” refers to *chochmah*, the information one hears or reads and perceives externally.

Training our children to think does not stop at imparting our faith and values so that they can come to possess them (though this is very important and basic). Rather, the primary training in thought is to guide them to become thinking people. The general rule is that if one thinks, there is hope for his life; if not, there isn't.

Let us first ask ourselves – how there can be a person who does not think? It seems that the mind is always active, so therefore a person is always thinking. But most of these thoughts concern matters such as “what should I do, how should I act, what do I need,” etc. While these thoughts are important, they do not fall under the category of real thinking which is to contemplate, delve, and analyze. Nearly all measurable success occurs as a result of contemplating and “internal” thinking.

Chazal have already told us,³⁶ “Said Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, ‘Whoever evaluates his ways in this world will merit to see salvation from Hashem.’”. Although the simple meaning of this verse refers to considering the reward of a mitzvah

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and the difference between a sin and a mitzvah, it is also meant to include being accustomed to contemplating and thinking.

PRINCIPLES OF THOUGHT

One of the main faculties in every person is that of thought – the ability that each person has to contemplate. In general, this faculty is usually not sufficiently developed. This is surely the case in the general community and even more so among the nations of the world. Most people are not trained to think analytically. In contrast, one who is raised with the Torah, especially men who study it, are more accustomed to analytical thinking. But even this is not foolproof; often, one thinks and delves a lot into the *Gemara*, but doesn't think at all about life.

For example, does anyone think that life might not have a purpose? Obviously, it does! But if we ask a regular person, even in the Torah-observant community, what the purpose of life is, he will generally say, "It is written in ... that such and such is the purpose."

The answer is correct but it is incomplete. The purpose of life should concern a person much more than being able to read about it in a book and be satisfied with the one-dimensional, external explanation provided there.

Even if he has read about life's purpose, if one is not used to contemplating and analyzing, then he won't delve into it. He won't take it to heart, and he'll quickly forget about it. The purpose of life is a subject that should concern a person literally for years; we live for more than a year or two, and the search for meaning should have a commensurate length.

If so, why don't most people spend time thinking about the purpose of life? The answer is simple: Most people are too busy to spend time engaged in thought. We are all busy rushing around. There is much to do, almost everyone has many responsibilities, and we are distracted and don't have much free time. How, then, can we find time to think? Without consciously setting aside time, life can go on like this indefinitely, without any time to think, even briefly, about what the true purpose of life is.

Regrettably, there are those who believe that there is no need for such thought, because they already know everything clearly. But every thinking person should understand that avoiding contemplation about the purpose of life cannot be the true path. Just as we set aside time for actions, so we must devote time to thinking about the purpose and essence of life.

This is only one example of what we must think about. There are many other areas that demand our thought and contemplation.

IF THERE IS ONLY ACTIVITY, ONE WILL BE DISSATISFIED

If a person spends most of his days engaged in activities, he will more than likely come to feel an inner emptiness, or a lack of self-esteem, the common denominator of these feelings being a lack of satisfaction from life. This is because it is impossible to find satisfaction from action alone. (Action is also an ingredient of satisfaction, but we must realize that it is just one of the ingredients, and that it is not enough.)

Thus, when we want to raise a fully developed child, in addition to teaching proper ways to act, and creating a proper emotional world (as explained at length in prior chapters), we must also lead him to think, contemplate, analyze, and delve – not as a small aspect of life, but rather as a basic component.

Contemplation is the basis for future growth. If one just rushes along with life he will not stop and think – as long as there is no particular problem. Should a problem then develop, he will be forced to build everything from the foundation, because he never developed himself properly.

INTRODUCING THOUGHT INTO PRACTICAL LIFE

Anyone who has some personal experience with great men can discern that what they all have in common is that they analyze and think deeply. (The style and manner differ from one to another, depending on the person's soul, but each one has his own inner world, and each one thinks and delves.)

From the following, we can see how much importance the *gedolim* – the greatest Torah scholars – ascribed to training of thought: Rav Chaim Brisker considered training for independent thinking to be of the utmost importance. He employed various methods for training his son, Rav Yitzchak Ze'ev (known as the Brisker Rav), to become a thinking person. One of the things he did was to ask his son a question that required thought, and then send him on some errands, such as to buy something from a store. He was expected to have the answer to the question upon his return from the errand.

Reb Chaim Brisker had a definite goal: to train his son to constantly keep his power of thought activated. It is possible to tell a child to think while he is given time in a quiet room, but Rav Chaim wanted to teach his son to think even when involved in other activities, so that his ordinary day should be imbued with thought. For this reason, he would present a question that demanded thought, while at the same time, giving him an active errand with the request to have an answer (or an approach toward an answer) when he would return. In this way, he trained him to be aware that although we are always doing things (which is important and essential for our existence), our thinking must also be alert and active. (We are not saying that a parent should train his child in exactly this manner; we are just showing that a child must be trained to think on his own, and we've given an example of one way to do this.)

SETTING THOUGHT AS A GOAL

In general, we see to it that our children are trained to function properly. As to the emotions, we have dealt with them at length previously. But when it comes to the realm of thought, we will at best guide our children with our beliefs by expressing them at home, either naturally (and if these beliefs are correct, this is very positive) or for the purpose of teaching. But, how particular are we in training our children to think and analyze? We must first set a clearly defined goal, and then decide how to reach it.

The goal is to raise children for whom thought will be inseparable from their regular lives, as the Ramchal says,³⁷ "The wise, while they are going around, are

³⁷ *Deretz Etz Chaim*

always thinking.” A wise man should be primarily thinking about Torah, *halachah*, *mussar*, and other similar topics. Women, who are less involved in Torah study, should always be thinking about the purpose of life and what she must do to fulfill her mission.

Our definite goal in education is to raise a child who will be thinking, contemplating, and analyzing, to the point where just as one feels hungry for food, so will his realm of thought be so developed that he will have a kind of hunger for thought.

Most people are not trained this way. There are many people who act properly and try not to sin, but they are hollow inside, like a robot³⁸ doing what he is ordered to do without any choice. Life passes them by without any examination or clear goals, and this is the root of their failure.

In contrast, those who have achieved what the Ramchal mentions above are always thinking. With this faculty, they can build their lives properly. One who is not constantly thinking and analyzing never creates a basis upon which to build his life.

On the other hand, thought is not a guarantee for success. Success and failure depend on Hashem. Everyone can stumble, even while they are thinking. But the difference is that if one is thinking, at least he tried and failed, whereas if one doesn't think, even though he doesn't fail, that is only because he never tried.

³⁸ See the chapter – *The Void*

This is like a building that was never built, about which a “wise man” would comment that the building was never destroyed.

We wish to emphasize again that we must first set this as a definite goal – that thought and contemplation are the foundations of a person, as we say several times a day, “Who has fashioned man with wisdom.”³⁹ Hashem has fashioned man in a way that there should be an active faculty of thinking, contemplating and analyzing that is constantly in use.

DEVELOPING THOUGHT BY MEANS OF A SIMPLE QUESTION

We will provide some simple, practical examples of how one can apply these principles and raise children to think properly.

A child comes to a parent and asks how a certain thing is possible, or what the reason is for a certain behavior that he or she has noticed. In general, the parent will provide an answer, and feel satisfied that he handled the interaction correctly. He did not ignore the child’s question, but answered properly. We cannot have a complaint against such a parent.

But there is a better method. The parents can use the question to develop the child’s thinking. How is this? First you must know that the fact that the child asked the question is very positive and can be used as a springboard for training. For example, on the night of the Pesach *seder*, there are certain things we do for the sole purpose that children will ask why. This is not just so that we can give an answer, because we could have told them about the Exodus without their ques-

³⁹ *bracha of Asher Yatzar*

tions. Rather, the very fact that the child asks is a stage in the development of his thinking.

Every parent of small children knows that when he enjoys certain questions that the little ones ask, his initial reaction is “What a smart child! What clever questions!” The question itself proves that the child has reached a certain level where he can pose a good question. He has left the category of the “child who does not know how to ask.”

Therefore, before the parents think about how to answer the question, they should first praise the child for the question itself by saying, “You have a good point. That is an excellent question.” In this way, we encourage the child to ask more questions later on.

Once we have encouraged the child and praised him for his question, parents are often able to immediately answer it and explain the idea fully. If the child is gifted, he will grasp what we are saying and understand the answer even before we have finished talking. But if we do this, we stop him from thinking on his own, and we have not taken advantage of an opportunity to develop this important area.

If in fact we wish to develop the child’s thought, the next important stage, after praising him for the question, is to avoid directly answering the question. We should use his question instead as a means for developing his thought.

For this purpose, we should direct the child to think about his own question. The way to do this is for the parent to ask the child, “And what do you think?”

What might be an answer to your question?” Even if he finds it difficult to come up with a complete answer on his own, we should direct him to at least present different possibilities, and then we should analyze each possibility together with the child. In this way, we will arrive together at the final answer.

(This does not imply that if the child could not come up with any answer on his own, we should not answer him or direct him toward the answer. The point is just that we should not spoon-feed an answer. The child must work with the parent in evaluating the possibilities, and not receive a complete answer from the parent right away.)

Of course, not every minor question can be used for developing thought. If the child asks, “What time is it?” we don’t ask him to think about it. Also, if the parents sense that the child is impatient at the time, it is not the right time for him to think deeply. But if the question can invite deep thought, and the parent assesses that the time is right for working on the question and evaluating the matter with the child, it can be used as a means for developing his thinking.

DEVELOPING THOUGHT THROUGH THE CLOCK

An acquaintance visited Rav Chaim Brisker⁴⁰ and noticed that the clock on the wall was five minutes slow. He asked permission to adjust it to the correct time. Rav Chaim refused, and said that he wished to leave the clock as it was. When asked why, he explained that he wanted to ensure that even when he looks at the clock, he will need to think.

40 This is the second time we mention Rav Chaim Brisker in this chapter. Development of thought was of paramount importance to him, so we can learn much from him in this area.

If one looks at a clock with the correct time, if he sees that it says 12:00, he knows that this is the correct time of day. But if it is five minutes slow, then when it says 12:00, he needs to think and realize that it is actually 11:55.

In this way, Rav Chaim ensured that even something as minor as a glance at the clock would require some thought. He thus forced his thought to work “over-time.”

This is a clear example of how a person should accustom himself to always think and contemplate. Certainly, when we deal with children, it is vital that we develop their thinking, as this is part of the structure of their souls.

DEVELOPING A CHILD’S THOUGHT IS A LONG-TERM INVESTMENT

At times, when we ask a child to think of an approach to answering his own question, he will say, “I don’t have the strength to think; I want you to tell me the answer!” (In fact, thinking does require exertion.) If we try to force him to think without having him understand why he is doing it, the benefit will be very limited.

Therefore, it is best to include the child in the process. Explain it to him simply and clearly. For example, say, “I can certainly give you a clear answer that will satisfy you, but if you don’t think at all and just hear all the answers from me, you will become nothing more than a walking encyclopedia. I want to guide you to becoming broader and deeper, by using your question as a means to show you how to think, and to make you a mature and independent person who can guide himself with his own understanding. You will then be able to figure out answers on your own to questions that will arise in the future. When you are older, you

won't need to come to me with all your difficulties. Of course, I will always be happy to guide you in certain areas, but you will not need my advice for every minor issue."

This approach can be compared to a poor person approaching a wealthy man complaining that he doesn't have anything to eat. The wealthy man has two options: he can give him food for two months, so that he will survive at least that long, or he can advise him how to start his own business and lend him a significant sum for that purpose. When the poor man becomes financially stable, he will then repay the loan.

Which method is better? Think about it: If he gives him money for two months, after that time, the situation will repeat itself; he will again be hungry and needy. But if he offers a long-term loan for the sake of starting a business, though the poor man will need to repay it, the problem will be solved at its root, and the man will be able to get by on his own and be part of society.

The lesson is clear: We can supply the child's needs whenever he asks for something. When a five-year-old drops a fork on the floor during a meal, we can pick it up. When a twelve-year-old asks for a sandwich, we can prepare one for him. We can be there to serve him for many things that he can do for himself. But will we then be considered good and dedicated parents?

In the short term, we would be making things easier and helping him, and he will feel loved because of all the attention he receives, but any thinking person knows that when the child grows up and no can longer "cling to his mother's apron

strings,” he will come across terrible difficulties, and life will be unbearable for him.

We all know of young women who get married and have no idea of how to wash dishes and cook basic meals. The mother always took care of things at home and didn't allow anyone else into the kitchen. Did that mother really care for her daughters? Surely, a mother who wants to raise her daughters properly must realize that one day her daughter will get married, and to be a good wife and mother, she will need to know how to cook, clean, and take care of other things in the house. To this end, she should get accustomed to doing these things in her parents' home; she should not be immediately spoon-fed all of her needs.

Along with these essential habits of action, we must develop the child's realm of thought. In general, the realm of thought is much more neglected than that of actions. Often, children are raised to take responsibility in the home because there is no other alternative. The kitchen is a mess after Shabbos, or there are piles of laundry to do after *Chol HaMoed*, and we have no choice other than to involve the children in the laundry and cleaning. But in the realm of thought, unless something unusual happens, we allow things to take their natural course, and the child feels no need to activate his mind and think independently.

Sometimes, a boy or girl will have a homework assignment that requires thought. They may have difficulty understanding a *passuk* in *Chumash* or *Navi*, or they may have trouble with a difficult exercise in algebra. If their parents are capable, or they have an older sibling or aunt, they may immediately go to them for help, so they won't need to “break their head” by thinking on their own.

What is the result of this? The parent thinks he is giving the child a broader knowledge of the subject and filling the child's storehouse of information. Yet we all know that information acquired this way is usually quickly forgotten. There is hardly a student who remembers all the *pesukim* he learned in school or all the math exercises he completed. But if we train them to think on their own, even if they forget the information, they will be in the habit of thinking that will accompany them for many years to come.

THE SHABBOS TABLE AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THINKING

Here is another example: The family is sitting around the Shabbos table. It is clear to all of us that this is a golden opportunity for spending time with the children, and it can be very productive. In many homes, the parents take advantage of the "captive audience," and use it the Shabbos meal as a time for giving over valuable lessons to the children. The father may relate a commentary on the weekly *parsha*, or tells a story with a strong moral lesson.

The benefit of this approach cannot and should not be discounted, but it is not the only approach. We would like to suggest something different. On one hand, we can use the time sitting together for transmitting valuable lessons, but we can also develop our children's thought at the same time.

The father can present a question on the *parsha* or another subject, and ask the children to think of an approach to answering it. (There is a general problem when the parents are blessed with many children of different ages and one question cannot match all levels, but this is also true with stories or commentaries that the father might relate. In general, the way to involve everyone is to ask a num-

ber of questions, so that there is something for each level. There will be simple questions [such as where a certain word appears in the weekly *parasha*] and also questions that require deeper thought, according to the age and level of each child.)

By inviting the children to think along with us, we utilize the precious time in which the family sits around the Shabbos table for a positive purpose, and at the same time, we are helping the children's thinking develop.

This approach is somewhat like fishing: you attach tasty bait to the hook in order to catch the fish. So too, we want to stimulate the children's thought in order that their minds will be active, thinking, and analytical. We do this by asking them various questions throughout life, which will accustom them to think. (There are various kinds of thought, and we cannot detail here the way to train for each kind of thinking.)

USING PRIZES TO ENCOURAGE THOUGHT

Parents should view the development of their child's thought as part of their obligation. Just as a mother might give a prize to a child if he makes his bed or goes to sleep at the right time, or if he speaks or acts properly, the same method should be used to encourage the child to activate his thinking.

When we want a boy to memorize Mishnayos, we often use a program – we will award him if he succeeds. But although this has positive points (he sits and learns and gets used to reviewing), often he doesn't remember the material later on. The child just repeats the words with hardly any thought involved (and some

people even make them recite *Mishnayos* that they don't understand). If so, the loss outweighs the benefit: the child gets used to reading with hardly any understanding.

Just as we look for ways to motivate children to act properly, learn well, etc., we should provide them with incentives to encourage their thinking. For example, present a question to the children that requires thought. Promise them that whoever gives an answer (that makes sense, whether or not it is correct) will get a prize. (We are not going to decide here if one should educate with prizes, but once parents have decided how to motivate their children's behavior, they should use the same method for motivating and guiding them to think properly.)

DEVELOPING THE POWER OF THOUGHT – A MEANS FOR STRENGTHENING THE BOND WITH OUR CHILDREN

Another benefit we can derive from developing our children's minds is that this will strengthen the connection between us and them, forming a bond that will last a long time.

How does this work? As we explained before, our relationship with our children is generally limited to the physical realm. Normally, this will deteriorate at a certain point. A young child feels dependent on his parents, but as he grows older and feels that he can take care of himself, the bond starts to weaken. In order for the bond to be solid and lasting, there must also be an emotional relationship, as was explained earlier.

But this is only one part of building a connection with your children, and it may not be enough, as it may break when the children get older. Thus, if parents want

a long-lasting connection, they must invest in another kind of relationship, one based on thought.

If we develop an intellectual relationship with our children, when they get older and become more mature, the bond with them will persist, because we saw to it when they were young that there would be a connection with the more mature part of them. It will carry through from their childhood into their adulthood. If the relationship is based only on actions, there is a concern that as they grow older, there will be a certain disconnection from us.

When parents form an intellectual bond with their child, and they are on the same wavelength, they connect to the adult part of the child, not just the practical and emotional realms.

Thus, there are two reasons for developing the child's thought and building his *da'as*: (1) The main reason is to train the child to think, analyze, and contemplate. (2) In addition, it will foster a deep and solid bond with the children that will, with the help of Hashem, last well into their adulthood.

THE BASIS FOR TRUE GROWTH IN THE SERVICE OF HASHEM

A person's true goal should be to improve himself and rise to continually higher levels. If we look around us, how many people can we point to that seem to be growing from year to year throughout their lives? (Of course, we are not discussing financial or material advancement, but advancement related to the soul.) Our conclusion will be that even if there are people like that, they are not in the majority.

The ordinary life with which we are familiar revolves around actions, but the inner dimension has much less importance among most people. We must ask ourselves a fundamental question: As parents, what do we want our children to become? Will we not be satisfied to have children who are only good and obedient, who don't desecrate the Shabbos or steal, G-d forbid. It would seem that our expectation is that when they grow up, their aspirations will be much more profound. Their view of life should make them always want to grow and rise to ever higher levels and not be satisfied with their current level, in the spirit of what *Chazal* said,⁴¹ "Torah scholars have no rest in this world or the next, as it says, 'They will go from strength to strength.' "

If we with just giving them food and love, they will like to eat and maybe they will even love us, but then we will not have the merit to see them grow up with true spiritual yearnings! How, then, can we raise a child who yearns to grow higher and higher and go from strength to strength?

The ability to reach this level is based on two elements in the soul: (1) the will and yearning for constant growth, and (2) *da'as*, profound thought.

When we want to develop within our children a yearning to grow from strength to strength, we cannot be satisfied with the first element: love of Torah, fear of Heaven, the will to attain high levels (though these are of course very important and vital). In the long run, this does not always happen. Even if we have positive results with the children as teenagers, when they get older, there is something that gets in the way and stymies further growth.

⁴¹ *Brochos 64a*

In order to understand how this obstacle that prevents them from achieving their full growth potential comes into being, we must first explain what true growth is.

To take an example from the material world, when you want to build a house, you place one brick on top of another so the house will be well-built and will not suddenly collapse. So too, when we wish to define a person who is improving and growing properly, we say that he is a “built person,” which shows that even in the soul, there is the concept of building; when one places one brick over the other in his soul, he is properly built.

To build the soul one “brick” at a time, it is not enough to simply act. Even if we see to it that we do an act of kindness each day or learn two laws about *Shemiras Halashon* (avoiding improper speech), in spite of the importance of these things, we cannot say that we are growing. It is only the outer that is being affected, whereas real growth comes from inner development.

But when a person thinks and contemplates, he will continually delve into the things that he learns and knows; this is how he builds one “brick” over the other in his soul.

For our purposes, of course, we can blame the obstacles and lack of advancement in the child’s service of Hashem on the material world with its allure, and on the distractions of life. Certainly, these are factors adequate to draw a person away from growth. But in light of what we have said, there is an additional obstacle: the child has not learned to think.

That is to say, the essential condition for growing and rising to higher levels must be based on one's thinking, analyzing, and contemplating. Without this, there is no way to enter a process of growth. (For many, this may be very novel, but to those who understand the inner life, this is very simple.)

Therefore, when parents want to raise children who will grow internally, they must not suffice with practical guidance or inspiring words, and it is not even enough if they instill in them positive emotions. These things can create a good and positive environment, which in fact is very valuable, but for a home to raise growing children, there must be thought, contemplation, and depth.

THE GOAL OF EDUCATION – YEARNING FOR GROWTH

Thus far, we have mostly dealt with training children to think in a general way. Now we will focus on thinking about spiritual matters.

Every parent must remember that education is not just about teaching children how to act. The real goal is to raise a generation who will continue in the ways of our holy Avos (patriarchs) and the Jewish people, as it says, “because he instructs his children and his household to follow the way of Hashem.”⁴² To this end, we must present to them a goal of ascension and growth. In this way, we will have the merit of seeing in every child a soul yearning to grow higher and higher.

When a child asks his father to pick up an object that fell on the ground, the father could of course just pick it up that one time, but he could also build for him a

⁴² Bereishis 18:19

little crane so that the child will press on a button and pick up from the ground whatever falls...

It is clear to all of us that we cannot carry our children in our hands throughout their lives, neither physically nor spiritually. We must bring them to a state where they can lift themselves up independently.

Likewise, we find in the *Gemara*⁴³ that according to one opinion, a father must teach his son a trade. It is not enough for the father to come after the wedding and give his son a certain amount of money, even if it is a large amount. At some point, the money will be spent. He must teach him a trade so that he will have the ability to support himself in the future.

This concept applies also in the spiritual realm. We must educate the child in a way that we give him the ability to keep growing forever and not be satisfied with merely doing what he has to do. He should always strive to improve.

STUDYING WORKS OF JEWISH THOUGHT WITH CHILDREN

In order to raise a child who will contemplate and delve regularly – which as we said, is the basic precondition for striving to grow – we must use additional means.

To properly develop a child's contemplation and deep thinking, we just don't encourage the child to sit all day and try to think deep thoughts. Rather, we already

⁴³ *Kiddushin 29a*

possess works of Jewish thought written by the great rabbis, upon whom we rely. From them, we can awaken proper thought.

Generally, parents provide their children with their physical needs – they feed them, clothe them well, etc., and in addition, they try to instill in them some proper ideas. Without question, a child cannot grow in a true, deep, and complete way with only these ideas, just as the parent knows that he himself cannot really grow based on just those ideas.

It is clear to all of us that parents who don't feed their children are neglectful. There is no need to elaborate on this. So too, parents must not raise children without giving them inner spiritual provisions that will enable them to thrive and grow.

As we said, our rabbis have written books of thought that are accepted by all groups and communities. In order to train a child to think deeply, we cannot suffice with a quick reading before bedtime; we must learn the books seriously with him, and remember that we can influence his entire outlook on life.

An example of a fundamental work that every parent must learn with his children is the *Derech Hashem* of the Ramchal. As is known, this work gives the reader the essential foundations about the purpose of life and a person's obligation in this world. It can be said that a father who does not teach his children the content of this work is neglectful – as harsh as that sounds! (Of course, one must find the age in which the child is capable of understanding the material. But even at a younger age, we can learn with a child books that are appropriate to his level.

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As we know, the Steipler advised to learn books like the *Orchos Tzaddikim* with children who are six years old.)

For example, let's say we have chosen to learn *Derech Hashem* with our child. This sefer deals with the purpose of man in this world. In order to gain the maximum benefit out of the time we spend learning, it is not enough to simply read and explain the material. A better way is to read a paragraph from the book together, and then discuss it. We can ask the child to think about what we've read. The next day, when we review it, we can ask him what he thought about it. We can continue the discussion until the ideas are clear in his mind.

Using this method, besides the information we will be giving to him (which he more than likely will not retain over time), we can accustom our child to think about what he is learning. As he matures, this skill will grow stronger and more deeply rooted. Keep in mind that when we are teaching foundations of belief to our children, there is no difference between genders.

It might be easier for boys to understand the subject matter since they are used to learning *Gemara*, but this does not exempt parents from teaching and explaining the material to their girls. The goal of the interaction is not merely to convey information, as with mathematics, but rather to get them into the habit of thinking about lofty ideas and delving into them as much as possible.

THE ADVANTAGES OF STUDYING THE PURPOSE OF EXISTENCE WHEN YOUNG

Learning and thinking about the purpose of life must be taught in the same way as other habits like making the bed and clearing off the table. In this way, we can

accustom our children to being interested in their inner world. Our approach will train them to think about and contemplate spiritual matters and the purpose of life.

It is an unfortunate fact that a child can go through his entire childhood with only the barest knowledge that there is a Creator who runs everything. Even when a child has reached the age of ten, twelve, and fourteen, they may still be operating with same level of understanding that they had as a young child. They have minimal knowledge of what *Yiddishkeit* really is. The fact that they are aware of G-d's existence is important – but we can't be satisfied with that. It won't be enough to help them cope with the trials they will confront throughout the course of their lives.

And what's the outcome of this extreme famine of knowledge? We need only look at today's generation to get an idea. The picture is worth a thousand words.

Ignorance in matters of faith leads to no good end. Teenagers are exposed to a tremendous amount of materialism via clothing, food, etc. The major influence of their environment pulls them toward an empty and materialistic life. Since they were never taught to think deeply about the purpose of their existence, they lack the tools to withstand these tests. Lowly ideas fill their heads instead of the more lofty ones they should have learned as children.

With Hashem's help, we can cure this malady. The first thing we must do is change our goals. Our central goal can and should be to instill in our children an inner strength that will help them deal with their challenges, by using the time we have with them wisely. Learning *sefarim* and discussing ideas with them will teach

them to think about the purpose of man in this world, and strengthen them to forego the lure of materialism for greater things.

LEARNING PRINCIPLES OF FAITH

What does an average day in the life of an average Jewish child look like? He wakes up in the morning, goes to school, comes home and does his homework. Perhaps he will spend time with his parents or friends until bedtime, or do some *chesed* (acts of kindness). This schedule repeats itself day in and day out.

If we were to record his daily life from the moment our child awakens until he goes to sleep, and then we played it back, the chances are good that we will hear very little that is related to real spiritual striving. Most of the words will revolve around material, empty things.

If we take a longer view – a week, a month, or a year – where does *emunah* fit into the picture? Can we be satisfied with an occasional word at home about the foundations of Jewish faith, or with just a few minutes at the Shabbos table?

There is no doubt that most parents are busy and distracted, especially in large families with so many needs to provide for, or when there is a difficult child in the family who requires more time and attention. But does this justify raising a child who, at the age of twelve or fourteen has no spiritual nourishment?

Most parents rely on the school, yeshiva, or seminary to do their work for them when it comes to instilling our children with this essential spiritual nourishment. Although most teachers do excellent jobs, our child may be only one of thirty or more students in the class. The amount of nourishment they receive is not

enough to sustain them. Principles of faith and other aspects of personal growth will not be absorbed in an optimal way in this setting. A small degree of this essential *pnimius* (inwardness) can definitely enter the child's heart through school, but it is not enough to provide only a small percentage of our child's needs. Just like we wouldn't want them to be malnourished physically, we also don't want them to be malnourished spiritually.

This doesn't mean that a child should have to study all day and never go out to play. It is simply a matter of incorporating another goal along with all the other things that we teach our children. We want to raise them in a way that they will become thinkers, used to dealing with the inner fundamentals of the Jewish people as a whole and with the purpose of their individual lives, along with the more practical aspects of life, and not excluding them.

Even though we all agree with the goal, and that teaching our children to think about faith is the obligation of every Jewish parent, in reality it has no place in ordinary life.

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE AS A TOPIC OF DISCUSSION IN THE HOME

It is essential to keep in mind that we are raising the next generation of Klal Yisrael. As such, we must ensure that our children have inner depth by encouraging them to think, and by introducing a deeper dimension into their lives. All of this will have an effect on our approach to education.

The simple approach is to encourage the child who asks us a question to think of an answer on his own. Even if the question is totally mundane, such as how a cer-

tain object functions, we should not spoon-feed the answer. Encourage him to think for himself. Afterwards, you can help him find the correct answer. Even if he cannot come up with an answer on his own, we can work with him to clarify the question as much as he can within his own sphere of knowledge until he can arrive at a clear answer.

The more complex approach is to provide basic knowledge of Jewish thought from our rabbis, and accustom him to think about these deeper ideas.

A Torah thought given over at the Shabbos table is certainly better than nothing at all. But the few moments of spiritual content presented at the table (provided the child is actually listening, and that he understands what you are saying) are negligible compared to the rest of the hours in the week.

Since our true goal is to raise children who want to grow, we must give them the tools to do so. These tools can be found in the works of our rabbis, which cannot just remain on the bookcase like stones. They should be taken down and learned with the children, and we must guide them to think, analyze, and delve into the ideas.

Once these important thoughts are imbedded in a person's mind they can naturally become an inseparable part of life as he thinks about them and constantly delves into them. (We are not just referring to amassing information, which is of little benefit.) Just as a parent and child can converse about food, clothing and friends, they can add a new topic to their conversation that is the true purpose of our lives.

On a higher level, we don't only want our children to know this information. We want them to really care about the purpose of life. Once we can get them to think about these vital topics, they will automatically be involved in lofty and significant matters. We will also be giving them tools that will help them grow and confront the various stages of life successfully. This will bring them to care about the meaning of their lives.

We are not talking about abnormal levels of abstinence from this world. Someone approached me recently and said, "We are not living in a ghetto now!" Yet, we have gone to the opposite extreme. If we strive to raise children with an inner spiritual world, with a desire to grow higher and higher, we must develop this in the framework of the home, and with Hashem's help, we can succeed.

CRITICISM AS A TOOL FOR INDEPENDENT THINKING

Now that we have covered how to educate a child to think in general and specifically to think about spiritual matters, we will cover a different aspect of thought. One of the common situations in the home is when the parents criticize a child's actions.

We will be discussing a situation where criticism is appropriate, as a response to the child's improper act.

Here is an example: A parent notices that one of his children is doing something wrong, like throwing a peel onto the floor instead of into a garbage can, or grabbing something that belongs to another child. Normally, a parent will react by responding right away, and demanding that the child fix the problem immediately.

Depending on the parent's ability to express himself, he may say, "Give the toy back to your brother!" or "Pick up the peel and throw it in the garbage!" and "We don't behave this way!"

In the spirit of our previous discussion, we would like to suggest an alternative method, and we will show how it can become a means for helping the child think independently.

Let's take one of the cases referred to above. The child throws a banana peel down in the living room, and the parent notices this. The parent will instinctively want to deal with it directly and tell the child to fix the problem immediately. But we will suggest a totally different approach.

The parent can say to the child, "Please think, does it seem right to throw down a banana peel in the middle of the living room?" We can then say, "I don't need an immediate answer; you can give me an answer tomorrow."

Imagine the benefits of this response as compared to instant rebuke. If we just follow our instincts and make him pick up the peel, we have dealt with the immediate concern and the room will be clean, but we are just ordering him what to do. Even if he will usually listen, we have not educated the child about cleanliness.

Although we don't want the peel on the floor now, our real goal should be much more profound: to get the child to understand on his own that it was wrong to throw the peel on the ground.

When we respond to the child's wrong action, we should think about how to react in a way that the child will reach the goal we want. We cannot suffice with an instant solution, such as, "Pick up the peel now and throw it in the garbage." We should make him put some thought into his action. Our reaction should be different from how our natural tendency would cause us to respond.

When, for example, we see a child throw down a banana peel and we want him to think about it, we could say to him, "When you become a father (or a mother), with Hashem's help, and you have children, if your child would do this, how would you react?" Here, too, we should explain that we don't expect an immediate answer, but rather, that we prefer that he thinks about it a little, and gives an answer later.

Besides the educational benefit inherent in this approach, since he will think twice before doing it again, we get him to actually think.

PROPER CRITICISM FORMS A CONNECTION THROUGH THOUGHT

If we accustom ourselves to reacting differently than our instincts dictate, we can bring the child towards an understanding of our perspective.

When we react instinctively by saying, "We don't do this," "Throw it in the garbage," etc., all the child will hear is a command. But if we respond as suggested above, we include him in our way of thinking, as parents. This creates a new kind of bond with the child that is based on common thinking.

Returning to our example, if we just tell him to throw out the peel, he won't be thinking about it at all; he just doesn't want to argue or get punished. In the short term, the problem is solved, but is he really thinking about his behavior?

In contrast, when our reaction is different, such as, "Think about if it is right to throw the peel there," or, "What would you do if your child would throw down a banana peel?" we include him in our way of thinking, and make him consider what the proper behavior is. As a result, he will evaluate for himself if his action is good or bad.

Furthermore, when we just give an order, there is a kind of struggle (though depending on the level of the child's intransigence, he might not feel this that strongly). But when we ask him to think about his act, the situation will be much calmer in the soul, for both parent and child.

However, if we employ this method in all situations, we may lose all our authority in the home. The children may come to lack the basic understanding needed in every healthy household – that children must listen to their parents.

For this reason, in a certain percentage of the cases, parents should give clear orders to their children, without giving the children the right to discuss the matter. (I can't give an exact number, as it depends on the time and conditions.) In these cases, they should not be privy to all the parents' thoughts and calculations. They should be informed that this is an order that cannot be challenged; the purpose of this is to create a basic sense of authority upon which the home is built.

On the other hand, a home should not be run like an army base or a police station. Parents should not be dictators. Even if we succeed in imposing our will in the house, and our orders are fully implemented, all we accomplish is raising obedient “robots” in the house, not well-developed children.

Therefore, once we have taken advantage of that percentage of the situations for establishing our authority, we should make sure that in the rest of the cases, there should be dialogue. The parents should include the children in their thinking; in this way, they open a new channel to their children based on a connection through thought.

Of course, the results will not be as immediate. With this method, patience will pay off over time, and we will see amazing results.

GUIDING THE CHILD TOWARD SELF-EVALUATION

Criticism is very common in every home where children are raised. It comes up every day (and sometimes, a number of times a day), whenever children don't behave in the ideal way and the parent wants to immediately react.

As we said, only in rare circumstances should we give direct orders (“Take this, do this, pick that up, etc”), and this is only in order to create a basic sense of the parents' authority in the home. But if parents are always giving orders, there is tension in the air, and the children will not be properly developed.

Therefore, besides those rare cases when one must give direct and forceful orders, we should mostly direct the child to evaluate himself by asking him to think about what he did. We must make it clear that we don't expect an immediate re-

sponse, but we want to hear an answer once he has thought deeply about the issue.

At times, we can develop the discussion further. We gave an example of asking him what he would do if his child would act that way. We can ask him to come up with two or three possible reactions. When we hear his response, we can discuss and analyze his thoughts.

When we do this, we get him to think about how to look at his own actions. When he will think about them, the chances that he will throw a peel on the floor, for example, are much less. (Of course, this approach will not completely solve the problem, but neither will yelling and commanding. It is best, then, to solve the problem through getting the child to grow up and think for himself.)

We will provide another example in order to clarify this issue: A child comes home from a birthday party with a bag full of candies. When he comes in the house, his siblings see the candy, and they want him to share. The mother says, "Can you please share with your brothers and sisters?" Sometimes, his reaction will be, "I don't want to; it's mine!"

Of course, we can just grab the bag right away, divide the contents into four or five parts (depending on the number of children in the house), and in this way, think we have solved the problem. But we all know that we have not taught him about sharing.

Let's try a different approach: The bag will stay in the child's hands for now, but in an hour or two, when we see that he is more calm, we will turn to him and say,

“Think, please; if one of your brothers would come home with a bagful of candies, and he wouldn’t want to share with you, how would you feel?”

We are not hinting to him about how to act, and we are not telling him to now share the rest of the bag. We just are giving him food for thought, and asking that tomorrow he will answer the question. (At times, it might be proper to tell him not to eat the candies until he gives an answer.)

This approach will require a lot of patience on the part of the parents. It is possible that even next time, he will not share the bag with his siblings. But if we are consistent in the way we respond, he will slowly learn to think about this and internalize the value of giving.

This approach is based on the assumption that the child is not doing this because of faulty character or cruelty. The reason he doesn’t share is that it is human nature to think only of oneself, without questioning one’s ways. Our job is to awaken him to think a little, and we hope that with time, he will realize that his behavior is wrong, and he will try to deal with it on his own.

There are unusual cases of difficult children born with extremely negative tendencies, who have no interest in changing and improving. (They need special treatment that is beyond this discussion.) With the average child, though, this is one of the issues he struggles with, and we should help him to deal with it by thinking and contemplating, which will lead to personal improvement.

Usually, even with an average child, there will be some trait that is very difficult to change. We should first deal with the smaller problems; once those are recti-

fied, with Hashem's help, it will be easier to confront and deal with the more difficult problem.

With this more measured approach, criticism becomes not a tool for getting the child to do what you want, but (when done properly) a tool for developing independent thought. The child will learn to evaluate himself, consider his actions, listen to what he himself says, and come to the right conclusions on his own. If he asks us for help, we should try to help him, but his focus should always be on self-evaluation, not on outside instruction.

PROPER CRITICISM IMPROVES THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE HOME

By following this method of educating your child, a much calmer atmosphere will naturally occur at home. All the struggles and arguments that stem from the feeling that they are being oppressed by "police" in the family will dissipate.

When the house is run by way of giving orders, and the parents get their way by issuing demands, the child can come to feel that he is in some kind of institution where authority is forced on him. As a result, even if he obeys, he will not relate to the parents' thinking. (Even the occasional hug he may receive will not really help to weaken this feeling.) We will not build or strengthen our connection with him in this manner.

On the other hand, when we include the child in our thinking, and we guide him to think on his own about what he did and how he should behave, we get him to identify with his parents. He slowly connects to our way of thinking. This opens a channel with our children, through thought, and this is vital in the home.

PUNISHMENT AS A MEANS FOR DEVELOPING THOUGHT

In some extreme cases, the child deserves a punishment – this is sometimes needed in order to establish authority in the home as long as it is carried out properly. Here, too, we can use thought to assist in the process.

Let us first give an example from the way punishment is generally meted out nowadays. When a child acts in an extreme way that his parents disapprove of, they might react by saying, “Today, you’re not going to camp,” or “You won’t get the candy on Shabbos,” depending on how each family decides to punish.

(Before we show how to include thought in the process, we want to stress again that our approach should be used in about 90% of the cases, while in the other 10%, we should punish the child without any consultation with him. We will then explain that he must accept it without any argument.)

Beyond those 10% of the cases, now that we are aware of the educational advantage of the encouraging the child to think for himself, we will suggest a very different method of punishment.

For example, the child did an improper act and we have decided that he should be punished. First of all, we will evaluate the act, as mentioned above: “Do you think it is right to throw a peel on the ground? Give me an answer tomorrow.” Or, “How would you react if your child would do that?” Once the child has come to the conclusion that he has not acted properly, we should state this simple fact: “Since you understand that this is not the way to act, and we know that you must be disciplined so it won’t happen again, we have decided to punish you. We

would like you to suggest three possible punishments, and we will evaluate if they are appropriate to your action.”

In general, the child will respond, “I will change my behavior without any punishment.” If so, we will make it clear that punishment is not our goal, and we will be very happy if we can get the desired result without resorting to punishment. We will give him another chance, in order to see if we can trust him about this. At this point, we won’t punish him at all, but we’ll explain that we’re giving him a chance to change his behavior on his own, without the punishment.

But if the child does not subsequently improve, and we come to the conclusion that the only way he will improve is if he receives a punishment, we should ask him to suggest three different possible punishments that will serve as deterrents, so that he will acquire the necessary self-discipline. If one of the suggestions seems sensible, we should implement it.

It may be that the punishments he suggests will be silly and inappropriate. In that case, we should ask him, “Do you think that will cause you to be disciplined and to improve your behavior?” If he realizes that it won’t, we ask him to come up with a better punishment, and in this way, we solve the problem. But if he doesn’t want to cooperate, since we need not agree on everything, we will have to exercise our authority as parents and punish him as we see fit.

PROPER CRITICISM AND PUNISHMENT PREVENT NEGATIVE FEELINGS

Our initial motive in suggesting this approach was so that the child will begin to think on his own. But there is another benefit to the approach of including the child in the decision of what will happen to him.

When parents criticize and punish a child without giving any explanations, the child will retreat into his shell for a time and not want to talk to anyone. One might think of him as a temporary orphan. In extreme cases, a child might lock himself in his room, go into his bed, and close himself off for a number of hours.

The result is that over time, an inner feeling may develop in the child that “I don’t get along with my parents.” When criticism or punishment is frequent, this inner feeling builds up, and it can cause a kind of separation from the parents that will be hard to mend later.

Therefore, the best way is that, other than in those cases needed for establishing authority where there is no explanation or discussion, the punishment should be carried out in a way that the child is involved and deeply understands what his parents want from him and what they ultimately want to accomplish.

We must understand that just as each of us wants to advance in life, a child also wants to improve his behavior. But when the communication with his parents is in the form of arguments and punishments, he does not deal with the real issue of the need to improve his behavior. His energy is focused on arguing with his parents.

In contrast, if we save him from arguments and the frustration he was experiencing, we begin to have a calm, real dialogue. We can focus on the educational goal: what is the best way to grow and improve?

INCLUDING THE CHILD IN THE DISCIPLINARY PROCESS WILL HELP US UNCOVER HIS MOTIVE

There are many examples we could give. Any parent who lives in a home and thinks a little will sense that we are always evaluating and disciplining. There must be a fundamental change in how we do these things, so that we will now include the child in the process. This will not only improve the child's behavior, but also his thinking.

Every parent is familiar with the feeling of guilt that often comes after needing to punish a child. (At times, this feeling is justified, especially if there was no need for a punishment, or it was done in the wrong way.) But if the child is involved in the process, there will be no need for guilt afterward, since it was done with mutual understanding.

Furthermore, if we succeed with this method, instead of the emotional separation that often ensues, there will be an opposite result: a stronger bond between them will emerge. A channel of communication will open, since each will understand the other. This process can reveal to us in full the inner personality of the child far more than we could learn from the specific incident at hand.

Let us return to the aforementioned incident. The child did something improper, and the parent has given him the opportunity to come up with three types of punishment. The child begins to think of an appropriate punishment. Let's say that

he suggests a very minor punishment, as often is the case. The parent will ask, “Do you really think this is enough?” In some cases, the child will respond with, “I came home from school very upset because of an incident with my friends, so that’s why I did that.”

We will not discuss here if this is an excuse, but we have benefited greatly from the conversation. We now know what happened to him that made him act that way.

But if we are not aware of what is going on inside the child, and we just give orders, even if the orders are correct, we have no idea why the child acted that way. We are dealing with a problem that we don’t properly understand. Just as it is irresponsible for a doctor to treat a patient without understanding his situation, a parent must know that part of raising children is to know, to the extent possible, what is going on inside of them. Only in this way can one work with them and guide them correctly.

Thus, as result of proper punishment and evaluation, when the parents involve the child in the process through his own thinking, there are two benefits: (1) we raise a person who will think, contemplate, and analyze, and this well help him to properly direct his entire life, and (2) along with this, we get to know our children better, by discovering what they are going through.

Sadly, we hear every day parents complaining about their older children, saying, “We have no connection with them,” “We have no common language,” and “We have nothing to talk about with them.”

You must know that this problem didn't start at age 17 or 15, and not even at age 13, but much before. In general, this situation comes because the connection with them was limited to giving food and clothing, sometimes buying gifts, giving a kiss before bed, and such. Those parents think that this will create a real bond with the children, but reality proves otherwise.

But if we follow the advice in these chapters and build the children emotionally and intellectually, we will create a bond with them at a young age. If we build them continually, and accurately address their innermost needs, the bond will be very strong. As a result, when they get older, they will sense that they can talk about ideas with their parents, and the bond will get deeper and firmer each day.

6- NURTURING A CHILD'S NESHAMAH⁴⁴

THE GOAL OF CHINUCH – HELPING OUR CHILD REVEAL HIS NESHAMAH

In the previous chapters, we dealt with the more practical issues of *chinuch* (child education), where we explained that *chinuch* requires us to be aware of three factors: the realm of action, the realm of emotion, and the realm of thought. Now we will try to explain, in brief lines, of the fundamental facet that lies behind all of the words here.⁴⁵

Every person is a soul, covered over by the body, which is the soul's "garment". The purpose of why we came onto this world is to remove our bodily perception of ourselves and reveal our existence as a *neshamah* (Divine soul).

Thus, if parents want to raise their children properly, and they are aware that each child contains a pure *neshamah* (as we say each morning in the blessing of *Elokai Neshamah*, "A pure soul You created me with"), it is now upon the parents to realize that the central goal of all the *chinuch* on our children is this: to guide our child to the purpose of why we are here on this world - which is, to reveal the *neshamah*.

TORAH-BASED CHINUCH VS. THE GENTILE APPROACHES OF RAISING CHILDREN

Today there are many parenting books that have appeared on the scene. There is also a countless array of parenting seminars and workshops available today that

44 006 דע אה ילדיך

45 This chapter is an adaptation of Chapter 6 of sefer "Da Es Yaldecha" ("Getting To Know Your Children"), which was not included in the section of "Getting To Know Your Children" in the book *Getting To Know Your Home*.

we can find. But there is one thing that is lacking amidst all of this. A large percentage of these ideas are borrowed from the approaches of the modern, gentile world. Perhaps we can raise a decent non-Jewish child from this, but it is not the way of *chinuch* that is fitting for a Jewish child.

Parents who are of the Jewish nation, who wish to give a proper *chinuch* to their children and raise them to live a true Jewish life, cannot remain at the level of practical action alone, in order to succeed at *chinuch*. It will not either be enough if we know how to develop our children's emotions and thoughts alone. A non-Jewish child will turn out very good if he is developed in these areas, but these areas alone will not be enough to inculcate proper values into a Jewish child, who comes from our holy forefathers. For the Jewish child, whose soul is not like the other nations of the world, we need an entirely different approach towards child education than the one which the modern world offers.

The basic element of a Jewish child's *chinuch* is the perspective that he is a *neshamah*. Meaning, we must help the child form an aspiration to reveal his existence as a *neshamah*, which at first is hidden and concealed from awareness.

The task that lies upon a Jewish parent, therefore, starts with the *neshamah* perspective. First we need to get the child to understand that he is a *neshamah*, and when the child is brought to that point, we can then further develop him in the areas of action, emotion, and thought. When the child reveals his existence as a *neshamah*, he will then do what he needs to do, he will feel that which he is supposed to feel, and he will know how to think properly.

(Understandably, a large part of this will be accomplished by the child, and not by the parents. But it is the parents who need to give the (tools) to the child for this, so that the child can take those tools and develop himself further.)

THE PARENTS MUST FIRST SEE THEMSELVES AS A NESHAMAH

The reason for which Hashem has given us children is explained clearly in the Torah: “So that he will command his sons and daughters to follow him, and guard the way of Hashem, and perform charity and justice.”⁴⁶ If we wish to reach the goal of *chinuch* on our children, which is to “guard the way of Hashem, and perform charity and justice”, it is upon us to reflect: How did Avraham Avinu get to this? It was Avraham Avinu who reached this understanding on his own. As we know, Avraham Avinu searched and pondered the Creator’s existence, until he recognized that Hashem exists and that He runs the world. When he reached that conclusion, he then realized that it is upon him to keep His laws and *mitzvos*.

In order to raise the next generation, our aspiration must be that our children reach the same conclusion that Avraham Avinu reached. We want them to realize that they have a *neshamah*, which is a “portion of G-d above”, and that this means that they are His servants. So when we nurture them in the realms of action, emotion, and thought, the common drive throughout all of this should be for one purpose alone: to help them understand that they exist as a *neshamah*, and that their *neshamah* can guide them in the areas of action, emotion, and thought.

But the child can realize he is a *neshamah* only if his parents see themselves as *neshamos*. Therefore, a parent first needs to internalize the knowledge that his

⁴⁶ *Beraishis* 18:19

existence is a *neshamah*, covered over by a physical body. Only after reaching this conclusion can the parent easily relate to his child as a *neshamah*, where he will see his child as being a *neshamah* that is covered by a body, and that it is upon the parent to help the child reveal his *neshamah*.

Where is the *neshamah* located in the person? Rav Chaim Volozhiner wrote in *Nefesh HaChaim*, in the name of earlier sources, that the soul is comprised of three parts: the *nefesh*, the *ruach*, and the *neshamah*. Part of the soul resides in the liver, and this is referred to as the “*nefesh*”. This area of the soul is responsible for the realm of action. Another part of the soul resides in the heart, and this is the “*ruach*”, which is responsible for the emotions. A higher part of the soul resides in the brain, and this is the “*neshamah*”, which is responsible for the thoughts.

Now we can understand that all which we spoke about in the previous chapters about *chinuch*, which included the areas of action, emotion, and thought in raising children – is entirely an aspiration to actualize the child’s *neshamah*. In other words, our goal in *chinuch* is to bring the child to a level where his actions will involve his *neshamah*, where his feelings will be flowing from his *neshamah*, and where his thoughts will be coming from the holy *neshamah*.

BEING CAREFUL WITH OUR CHILDREN’S SELF-IMAGE

In the first chapter of *Getting To Know Your Children*, we explained how the parent needs to love the child based on the Torah’s commandment of “*V’ohavta l’reiacha kamoicha*”, “Love your friend as you love yourself.” However, without viewing the child as a *neshamah*, parents will have a very hard time treating their

children with love and respect. The parents naturally see themselves as higher than the children, and it can feel demeaning for the parent to be careful with the child's honor and to love him as a "friend" like the Torah says.

However, although the parents are right for feeling that they are the higher authority over the children, when they realize that their child has a *neshamah* and they are aware of what this means, they will have a much easier time relating to their children with love and respect. Every person has a *neshamah*, which is called a "portion of G-d above." Every person is created with a *tzelem elokim*, "in G-d's image",⁴⁷ and the Sages teach that "Man is precious, for he was created in G-d's image."⁴⁸ The parents can learn to see their child in this way, and then it is much easier to act loving towards him and to be careful not to slight his honor.

If the parents simply focus on the fact that they are higher than the children and they feel that it's unfair to view the child as an equal to them, this perspective is a view that comes from the *guf* (the body), which ignores the *neshamah* dimension. But when the parents are aware that every person has a *neshamah* and that it is merely our body which covers it, and they internalize that we mainly exist as *neshamos*, they will have an easy time relating to their children in this way and seeing them as equal to them.

The *neshamah* dimension is what unites all of *Klal Yisrael* together, which gives us all the title of "brothers" to each other. From this deepened perspective, we can understand that our own *neshamos* have been appointed by Hashem as the

⁴⁷ *Beraishis* 1:26

⁴⁸ *Avos (Ethics of our Fathers)* 3:14

ones who will raise a part of some of the other *neshamos* in *Klal Yisrael* - who “happen” to be our own children.

Furthermore, when the parents begin *chinuch* on their children with this perspective, and the children are aware that the parents place emphasis on the *neshamah* as an important, central aspect in their lives, they will lead their entire lives differently. When they eventually get married, with help from Heaven, and when they have children of their own, they will treat their spouses with the awareness that the other is a *neshamah*, and they will relate to their children as well as *neshamos*. They will understand on their own that their children should be honored for who they are, for they will be aware that their children are also *neshamos* of the Creator.

THE PROPER VIEW ON REFRAINING FROM CRITICIZING CHILDREN

A popular topic amongst many educators today is the topic of refraining from criticizing children, and that the parents need to be very careful not to slight the honor of a child or insult him in any way. Many lectures and books have been compiled on this subject, because, from the view of modern psychology, criticizing a child is known to have long-term effects on the overall self-esteem of a person; therefore, there is much attention given to this subject.

I am not negating that conclusion, but we must know that there is an altogether different reason of why the parents should be careful with their child’s honor. It should be coming from a totally different perspective than the above view, as follows.

If the parents view the child as a *guf* – a physical body - then indeed, it would be logical to make the parents aware of the view of psychology that damaging the child's honor will impact on his entire self-esteem. In that way, the parent will think twice before he says something that may slight the child. But if the parent is aware as he has conversations with his child, that he is speaking with a *neshamah* contained inside a physical body – a *neshamah* that is a piece of the Divine – when that is his perspective, he will surely not slight his child's honor.

Any Jewish parent who wishes to raise his child properly must have the general attitude that “I am a *neshamah*, my spouse is a *neshamah*, and the children that were born to us are *neshamos*.” When a parent constantly remembers this, he will find no better reason to refrain from slighting the honor of his child. A parents that views his children as G-dly souls will have a totally different behavior towards them, on all levels. When he is about to raise his hand to hit the child when the child has done something wrong, he will think twice before hitting him, remembering that the child is a *neshamah*, a piece from Above.

(This does not contradict the necessity to sometimes hit the child, when the child has done something that requires this punishment. But we must remember that even when the child should get hit, he should only be hit when it is necessary, and never when it isn't).

There are people who work with fashioning earth, others work with copper, others with silver, and some individuals get to fashion gold. But when we raise our children, we must be aware of their priceless value. We must know that it is not enough to love them naturally with a parent's love - although that, too, is im-

portant and necessary. Rather, there is something deeper here, which is priceless: Every child contains a *neshamah*, which has a connection to the Creator of the world. Therefore, as parents, we need to honor them just for that very reason.

In that way, our entire approach towards educating our children will be with a totally different attitude, for we will be trying to add the *neshamah* dimension into all that we do.

WHY MANY CHILDREN TODAY LOOK EMPTY

To our great pain, the situation today is that there are many young children, and even adults, who look dead. We can see it in many children who come to *shul*, who leave it in the same way they came in. (Actually, maybe they are a bit more energetic after leaving *shul*, because they got to doze off and take a nap....) We see before us a person walking on two feet, and we know he is alive, but his entire demeanor is screaming out to us that he is lacking any real vitality. Where does this stem from?

Since there are parts of the child's *neshamah* that aren't revealed, this allows him to feel extinguished inside himself. Therefore, if parents wish to prevent their child from this feeling of emptiness, and they are interested in acquiring a completely different perspective, they should know that the entire goal of *chinuch* is to reveal the *neshamah* as much as possible, and to raise the child with the attitude that he is a *neshamah*. When that is the approach, we will then see before us a child with a healthy soul, who has grown up with a sense of inner vitality, who isn't suffering internally.

What we have to bear in mind as we educate our children is that our children are *neshamos* that have been given to us to take care of. They are covered with a physical body, and for this reason, we do not actually see their *neshamos*. Our task as parents is to help them reveal their *neshamos*, and to give them the tools they need so that when they grow up, they will continue on their own this task of revealing their *neshamah*.

Let us emphasize that revealing the *neshamah* is not a lofty matter that only rare individuals reach. It is necessary and basic for day-to-day life! It is necessary for a man when he learns Torah, and it necessary for anyone when doing the *mitzvos*. It is the personal task of each person, according to the level he is at. All that we need to change is our perspective. As parents, we need to understand that the goal of *chinuch*, and the goal of all the words we have learned here, is to reveal the *neshamah* of our child. That will enable a child to internalize that he is a *neshamah*, and then he can grow accordingly.

The basic attitude of raising a child with the awareness that he\she is a *neshamah* has been presented in the concepts of the previous chapters, but in this chapter, what have we have added on here is that our entire, general attitude towards *chinuch* of our children should be about revealing the child's *neshamah*.

NOT TO NEGLECT THE PHYSICAL NEEDS OF A CHILD

As you may have realized, this chapter really serves as an introduction to the previous chapters, and naturally, we should have placed this chapter at the beginning of this *sefer*. However, if we would have done so, many people would quickly dismiss the entire approach here towards *chinuch*, viewing it as being dis-

connected with reality. That is why we first placed the chapters that explain the practical applications (we could have said more, but the basis has been said), and only after you have seen that the approach here can be of practical use in *chinuch*, can you appreciate that this is not just another book about child education.

Baruch Hashem, there are many books available today on the topic of raising children. But the purpose of this *sefer* was to present a basic system for raising the Jewish child, whose entire goal in life should be: to reveal his *neshamah*. And, that it is upon us, the parents, to help them and guide them in this worthwhile direction.

However, we must remember a basic point which is very important: There are some people who take an extremely spiritual approach towards raising their children, and they need to hear a completely different approach than the one given in this chapter. Those kinds of parents act irresponsible when it comes to taking care of the basic physical needs of the children, because they are placing all of their focus on the spiritual development of their children. They are too focused on the *neshamah* aspect, and they forget that their children have physical bodies too, which the *neshamah* is currently clothed in.

When is focusing on the *neshamah* aspect proper, and when does it become extreme?

As we explained, every person is a combination of *guf* (body) and *neshamah* (soul); the *neshamah* wants the spiritual, and the body wants the physical. But if the parents try to instill a constant air of seriousness in the home, where only deep, spiritual thoughts are conveyed, any sensible person can understand that

this will not be a successful home. This is because we are not souls living in Gan Eden right now. In addition to the *neshamah* that is within us, we also have a physical body, which experiences various challenges and difficulties of the day-to-day-living that we have to endure on this world, as well as the material successes of daily living that it must be able to enjoy.

Therefore, we should be aware that as parents, we are given the gift of children in our hands, who are a combination of body and soul. On one hand, we must care for their physical needs, as much as we can. Along with this, we need to be concerned for the needs of their *neshamos*, and to help them reveal the *neshamah* that resides in their body.

CREATING A HUMOROUS ATMOSPHERE IN THE HOME

Close students of the Chazon Ish recall that when he would converse with others, he would start the conversation with something humorous, in order to create a jovial atmosphere between him and the students. Similarly, Rav Shlomo Wolbe zt"l would advise married men to humor their families with saying something funny, in order to create a light, relaxed atmosphere in the home.⁴⁹

The depth behind the above approach is because man is a combination of a body and soul, and while man's task is to have a serious attitude about life - in order to reveal his G-dly aspect, which is his soul - his physical body cannot handle a serious approach all the time. Therefore, in order to calm the body, one needs to pacify it, by having a dose of humor every so often. When a person relaxes from the humor, he has given his body its needs, and now he is free to pursue the spiritual.

⁴⁹ "Aleí Shur" Vol. II, p.242-243

Bringing humor into the home is a matter that is hinted to in Chazal: “It is forbidden for man to fill his mouth with laughter on this world”⁵⁰. From this teaching, we learn that man should have a serious attitude towards life, and to stay away from frivolousness. But we also learn from here that one should not fill his mouth with laughter”, meaning that too much laughter is not forbidden - but a little bit of laughter is permitted. Not only is it permitted, but it is advised. We find that the sages in the times of the Gemara would begin teaching their students with a *milsa d’bidichusa*, a humorous word.⁵¹

However, humor is only constructive when a person is balanced with a serious approach towards life. When he is cognizant that life has a purpose to it, he can then gain from humor, which calms the body and allows it to go free a little from the stresses of life. Therefore, only when a person is aware of the *neshamah* and he views himself as such, can he benefit from a little dose of humor.

So while we must be aware that *chinuch* on our children means to raise them in the areas of action, emotion, and thought, we also need to know that while there is a very serious side to life, namely that our life’s work is to reveal our *neshamah* - which requires us to have a deep approach towards *chinuch* and to be serious, to have deep emotions and analytical thinking – simultaneously, parents must also remember that every child also has a physical body, which has its various physical needs. Besides for certain rare individuals, a person cannot handle always being in a serious atmosphere that resembles Erev Yom Kippur. Besides for the

50 *Berachos 31a*

51 *Shabbos 30b*

body's need to eat, drink, and be clothed, it also needs to go free a little, from the seriousness of life.

Therefore, every so often, a parent must make sure to throw a joke into the atmosphere of the home, the kind that puts a smile on all the children's faces (understandably, this should not be done in a way that transgresses *halachah*; it should not be a kind of joke that is insulting, or which comes at the expense of another's feelings, etc.), in order to create a calm, pleasant atmosphere in the home.

Without creating a joyful atmosphere in the home, the children are bound to grow up without a *simchas hachaim* (a joy for life). Although true *simchas hachaim* can only come from the depths of the *neshamah*, the fact is that the physical body of every person has its needs [so any level of joy, even if it is not on a profound level, is necessary]. Therefore, only through integrating these two parts together – a serious attitude towards what life is about, and simultaneously, a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the home – can a parent have the ability to instill true *simchas hachaim* into the home.⁵²

Some people won't even have to be told about the need to bring some humor into the home; they are already good at that part. But if they are overdoing the humor in their home and they never speak about anything serious with their fami-

⁵² Editor's Note: For more derashos of the Rav on this concept of instilling *simchas hachaim* into the home, refer to *The Weekly Shmuess_002_Ki Seitzei – The Father-Son-Relationship and Getting To Know Your Family_09_Infusing Spirituality Into The Home – Part 2*

ly members, they may need to hear an opposite approach than the above one. They will need to work on creating a more serious atmosphere in the home.

Therefore, a parent must know himself well. If he knows he is the more serious type, or if he has gone through certain events in his life that shaped his personality to be his way, he needs to learn how to create some humor in his home, so that his home will be properly balanced. If he knows that he has more of a funny and humorous personality, he needs to learn how to inject some seriousness into the home, so that his home shouldn't become a place of total jest. In that way, the humorous atmosphere in his home will be balanced with some seriousness about life, in a way that is befitting for a Jewish home.

THE FOUNDATION OF JEWISH CHILD EDUCATION: TO HAVE A CONSTANT BOND WITH THE CREATOR

As explained before, the depth that lays in the entire path of *chinuch* outlined in these chapters is the understanding that every person has a *neshamah*. Educating a Jewish child is therefore primarily about raising him with the attitude that he is a *neshamah*.

The *neshamah*, by its very concept, is a longing for the Creator. To the Creator it turns to, in times of joy, in times of pain and predicament, in times of success, in times of trouble – and at all other times as well. The deepest understanding that must settle upon the inner being of every Jew is that in all situations - without exception – there is one single address to turn to: *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. That is how a Jew must lead his life. Whenever he has a challenge, he should turn to Hashem, in prayer. In times of joy, he should thank the Creator. And for all other times, he should understand that everything is simply from Hashem.

That being the case, if we want to use the *neshamah* perspective in *chinuch*, the basis for this attitude is that the parents themselves need to live a reality in which there is nothing other than Hashem and His Torah. Together, they should strive to cultivate this into the children. If their *chinuch* on their children doesn't reach this goal, the *chinuch* has been stopped in middle of the way, and such *chinuch* will not bring their children to the desired goal of *chinuch*.

There are parents who very much want to raise their children with the values of Torah and mitzvos, but they may have some false notions about child education, which are hampering the progress. Parents may train a child to keep the *mitzvos* and they will do anything to make sure that their children learn Torah, and they may even spend much energy trying to develop good *middos* in their children, but they must understand that the level of deed alone is not enough to fulfill the will of Hashem (though its importance is immeasurable). Rather, they must remind themselves that there is one common thread that must run through everything: A deep bond with the Creator, throughout the day.

In order for this knowledge to penetrate into the awareness of the children, it will not happen just through singing the *Yedid Nefesh* song by the *Shalosh Seudos* meal, or any other song about yearning and love for Hashem. Rather, this awareness must envelope the atmosphere inside the home, throughout the day – in a way that the children can sense it well.

The lesson that we need to internalize is, that the way to build our homes has been taught to us by Avraham Avinu: “*For I have loved him, because he commands his children and his household after him that they keep the way of Ha-*

*shem.*⁵³ After Avraham Avinu merited to recognize his Creator, the only matter that filled his being was to be close to Hashem, and therefore, that is what he desired to inherit and bestow to his children.

Bonding with Hashem should not be reserved only for when there are problems, such as illness or various other difficulties and challenges in life. Rather, bonding with Hashem must become a staple need in a person's life, like bread. One should understand well that this is the true purpose of life, and that is the way a Jew need to live.

To our great pain, in our times, there are young boys and girls who are roaming the world in order to "find themselves". We must know that the central cause for this is because they have never been raised to form a soul connection with the One who made this world, and as a result of this awful void, children become tangled inside themselves and they are not finding themselves. And when that is the case, the chances of them falling into an abysmal descent are closely within their reach.

But on a more subtle level, even when children are still found within the "system" and they look fine in their external appearance and in how they are behaving, that is still not proof that they have formed a deep and true connection to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

In contrast, when the parents strive for the goal of bringing their children, with *siyata d'shmaya*, to an understanding that life has great meaning and depth to it,

53 *Beraishis 18:19*

and that a bond with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* is necessary for one's existence - that is the surest path to success, which will greatly reduce the possibility of the negative outcome described above.

"IT IS GOOD FOR MAN TO BEAR A BURDEN IN HIS YOUTH"

Some people have the erroneous perception that it's better not to discuss with a child such deep and serious matters about life, such as being cognizant of the purpose of life, etc. According to their thinking, "children should be allowed to just be children", doing whatever makes them happy, with no sense of responsibility towards their future. These parents feel that the difficulties of life will eventually come, such as worrying about livelihood and running the home, but that children should not be unnecessarily pressured with any serious kind of thinking about life.

This attitude is mistaken from the very foundation. It stems from a false notion that the main difficulties of life are earning livelihood and running the home. The truth is known to anyone who searches for spiritual growth and closeness to Hashem: The true work of life for man to reflect on is in his personal service to the Creator.

If this truth is not instilled into the heart of a child from a young age, he will have a very difficult time dealing with this reality when he is older. It is written openly in the verse: "*It is good for man to bear a yoke in his youth.*"⁵⁴ The verse emphasizes that carrying the burden of life must already be worked upon in one's youth, and not to push it off until after one is married. Only then, after one internalizes

⁵⁴ *Eichah* 3:27

the truth about life in his youth, will he merit the end of the verse, *“Even when he becomes elderly, he will not forsake from it.”*

Every parent needs to internalize that educating the child of this awareness is not simply a commendable idea to spend time on acquiring, which is optional and which may be exchanged for some other goal. Rather, this awareness must be regarded as the fundamental of fundamentals, which every Jew needs to take with him, throughout life.

If parents raise their children naturally and simplistically, believing that the main thing is to give them what to eat and drink and maybe a little more than that, the next generation after them will not be able to develop on its own. That is why it is painful to the heart to see people who reach this conclusion only after going through several tragedies with several of their children. After failing with their third child, only then do they realize that their approach was mistaken. Only when they are down to the wire do they suddenly reach the conclusion that *chinuch* is supposed to be about bonding, daily, with the Creator.

Children must be able tell if their parents consider bonding with the Creator to be a main aspect of life which they can't live without. It shouldn't be regarded as some secret, a “hush-hush topic” that is only brushed upon every once in a while. Only when a child internalizes that the true burden he must bear upon his shoulders in life is to understand that that the purpose of his existence on this world is to recognize his Creator, and truly so – only then, can we say that we have tried to fulfill our duty towards our Creator and to educate our children in the best possible way.

IN CONCLUSION

To conclude this chapter, let us review and emphasize, that although we have tried in these chapters to lay the foundations for successful child education, we must remember that there is no guaranteed success. The purpose of these chapters was to help us have some direction, of how to properly fulfill our obligation towards our Creator, in the matter of educating our children. But we must remember, and be aware, that success is in the hands of the Creator of the world alone, and that prayer and supplication to Him is the first condition that we need in order to see success and happiness in raising our children.

May Hashem accept our prayers before Him, and may we all merit to come forth from us a generation that is upright and blessed.

7- RAISING HAPPY CHILDREN⁵⁵

GIVING OVER THE MITZVOS WITH HAPPINESS

Since this month is Adar, the month of *simcha*/happiness, we will focus about one point that can bring us *simcha*.

When we do *mitzvos*, we have two commandments within every mitzvah: the mitzvah itself, and the commandment to perform it happily. There is the mitzvah itself, and then there is the way we do it. The way we do a mitzvah is to do it happily.

When something is given over joyously, people want to carry it out joyously. Most of the times when something is given over, it is not received with joy, because the person giving it over didn't give it with happiness.

By the *simchas beis hashoeivah*, there was a great happiness, because the happiness was drawn forth. Happiness has to be drawn forth, just like you draw water from a spring.

What is the purpose of giving over information to others? Is the purpose to give over the information, or is the purpose to give over joy in it? Simply speaking, one will say that in order to give over information, it has to be given over joyously; so the purpose is the information, just it needs to be done in a joyous way.

But on a deeper note, the purpose of giving over the information is really to give over a happiness. "Hashem rejoices in His creations." Happiness comes from

⁵⁵ דע את שמחתך 11

completion, while sadness comes from an absence of something. If we want to give over happiness, we need to bring the person to the source of the happiness and draw it out from there. There are people who want to be happy, but they don't know where to get it from; they don't where the source is.

THE SOURCE OF HAPPINESS

Where is the source of happiness?

“The righteous rejoice in Hashem.” What is the joy in Hashem? It is when a person lives the right kind of life, a life of connection with Hashem. If a person doesn't live with Hashem, he is just very self-absorbed. He won't be able to be happy completely.

We all want to give happiness to our children. But from where do we find the happiness to give over to them? The biggest wonder is that parents want their children to be happy and want to give them happiness, but they themselves don't have that joy to give over.

How can a person give over a *simchas hachaim*, a joy for life, if he himself doesn't have a joy for life? When we try to give our children happiness but we ourselves don't have it, the result we can see (from much trial and error) is that the children remain just like the parents, who aren't happy.

But when the parents live with the joy of living a life with Hashem, they have the ability to give over that joy to their children. They become like a wellspring that can give continuously.

When people only know of temporary happiness, such happiness falls apart in the end. Any joy which we get from the outside of us is just superficial; it is temporary and it goes away. But there is an inner kind of joy we can have – and it is real, and it lasts. This is a happiness that comes from a deep, inner point within us.

NON-JEWISH THERAPISTS CAN'T HELP A JEW

Every day we thank Hashem that we were not created as a non-Jew. If we say this every day from the depths of our soul, this will fill us with an inner happiness. How does it fill a person with joy?

If we desire to live the real Jewish kind of lifestyle, such a desire will give us that happiness.

There is a very disturbing thing taking place in our times. A Jew who has some problems in his life goes to a non-Jewish therapist for help. But a Jew cannot be helped by a non-Jew! A Jew who needs help is really looking for how he can find the “Jew” inside him. Can a non-Jew help him find that?!

Really, the problem is that he's not happy being a Jew. Since that is the problem, there is no non-Jew who can help him find the solution.

If a person would only desire how he can live more and more like a Jew, he would never fathom going to a non-Jewish therapist.

Why is a person ever not happy?? Can the Jew within you ever die? You are always a Jew, and this is the greatest happiness.

After Adam sinned, he was cursed with *etzev* (sadness). He was told, “Dirt you are, and to dirt you shall return.” This shows us that sadness only affects our aspect of dirt in us – our physical layer. But in us there is also a Jew, and the Jew within us doesn’t come from earth. When a person lives with the Jew inside himself, he will never be sad!

If a Jew is sad, it must be that it is because he doesn’t realize what it means to be a Jew. Non-Jewish therapy is never the solution for a Jew.

WANTING TO BE A JEW

What exactly is our joy in our life which we must convey? What happiness do we want to our children?

We want to show our children how happy it is to be a Jew. We want to show them that the more and more of a Jewish kind of lifestyle you live, the happier you will be.

We must know what our life is about. Why should we be happy? What is the difference between a Jew’s happiness and a non-Jew’s happiness? A Jew is happy when his soul is revealed. “We will revel and rejoice, in You.” When we reveal our souls – when we have *nagilah* – then we will have *v’nismicha boch*, “rejoice in You.”

We know that we are all Jewish, but how much time do we think about this? It is a superficial attitude to just know you are Jewish and not to search about the meaning of what it means that you are a Jew.

To be a Jew realizes to mean that you are separated from the non-Jews. “And I will separate them from among the nations.” Every day we make a *beracha*, “That you did not make me a non-Jew.” Before that we make the *beracha* that we were woken up – “Who gives the rooster understanding.” First, we have the understanding, and upon the real understanding, we can realize how thankful we are that we were not made a non-Jew.

When we make *havdalah*, we also mention how we are separated from the other nations. The depth of this is because in order to be able to separate between night and day, we must realize how we are different from the non-Jews.

THE JOY OF BEING JEWISH

What is the joy of being Jewish?

There is such a thing as idol worship, even today. It seems that India is where the most idol worship is taking place, but the truth is that there is more idol worship going on in America! In India, they might do actual idol worship, but they don't do it every second. But in America, the whole way of life of many people is like a constant idol worship.

What is idol worship, *avodah zarah*? *Zarah* means “strange.” When a person acts strange to another person, he is greeted by another person but he doesn't answer him. He acts toward him like a stranger. When a person does something but looks it strangely, it's like *avodah zarah*, because he considers what he does to be strange.

When a person does *mitzvos* but he isn't connected to Hashem, this resembles idol worship. *Mitzvos* to him are strange. When a person puts on *tefillin* and he thinks that it's strange, it's like idol worship.

When a Jew is connected to Hashem in everything he does, he lives like a Jew. When a Jew does everything he is supposed to do – he learns, *davens*, and does *chessed* – it can be that everything he does is like *avodah zarah*, because he isn't connected to Hashem. Even though he does everything he is supposed to do, he is still sad. Why is he sad? It is because he isn't really serving Hashem, even though he does everything. He is serving idols.

What does it mean to be a Jew? It means to be connected to Hashem in everything. This is the whole secret to happiness. From where can we draw happiness from? It is only when our inside is connected to what we do on our outside, when our heart is connected to our intellect. If you see any smart person who is sad, it must be that his heart isn't connected to his mind. If his heart would be in the right place, he would be happy.

A person can do all the *mitzvos*, but if he doesn't want it deep down and he'd rather live like a non-Jew deep down – he is sad, even though he does all the *mitzvos*.

CHINUCH WITH THE HEART

Happiness is found in our heart. (This has been proven medically as well, that the mood changes according to how the heart is).

If our heart is in one place and our mind is in another, can we ever be happy? If someone isn't happy, it's a sign that something is wrong with his heart.

A person might teach his child everything in the Torah and tell him it's all true, and the child grows up knowing that he has to learn and do all the *mitzvos*. But he can know all of it, yet his heart isn't there. We must realize that the main part in all our *chinuch* of our children is on their hearts.

Anything in our life is rooted in our heart. "For from it comes life." The *chinuch* we give to our children has more to do with the heart, not the knowledge we give over to them.

The Chofetz Chaim said that there are different levels in *Gan Eden* for those who are cold, lukewarm, warm or very warm about their *Yiddishkeit*. When we do *chinuch* on our children, we shouldn't be satisfied with giving them over lukewarm or even warm feelings about *Yiddishkeit*. We need to get them to feel very, very warm feelings toward *Yiddishkeit*.

When we give over values to our children, it must be given with happiness. It is not enough to train them to do all the *mitzvos*; they need to see it being given over with happiness. If we are ourselves aren't happy, we cannot give over the Torah to the next generation. You cannot give something you don't have, and if you aren't happy, you won't be able to give happiness to your children.

GOING "OFF THE DERECH"

Unfortunately, we see many children that suddenly go off the *derech* sometime after their bar mitzvah. Until they reached bar mitzvah age, they were learning

Torah and doing *mitzvos* just like every other good boy. Suddenly, the child can throw it all away – in the best situation he won't want to open a *Gemara*, and at worst, he doesn't want to be *frum* anymore.

How do we explain this terrible phenomenon? Until now, everything was fine. What happened?

But it's not that the child "went off" the *derech*. He never was "on the *derech*" to begin with! If he "went off the *derech*", all it means is that he was never on the *derech* to begin with. He felt like he was in a jail all along, and as soon as he felt like he could finally escape, he ran from the "jail".

Although he may have been learning, *davening* and doing *mitzvos* – it wasn't a part of him. He was never connected to it in the first place. He knew all about it in his mind, but his heart was never in it.

CHINUCH IS ON OURSELVES

Our job in *chinuch* is make sure that our children feel connected to Yiddishkeit, to make them feel that what they are doing is a part of them. We need to make sure that their hearts are in it.

Most people know a lot of Torah, but their hearts aren't in it. They have never developed their heart.

Just like when a person has a heart problem he needs to have heart surgery, so can it be said of this generation that many of us need to have "heart" surgery.

If we want our children to be happy with *Yiddishkeit*, if we want to see real *nachas* from them, we need to work on ourselves first.

This can only be done if we ourselves are connected to *pnimiyus*, and only then can we give over the *mesorah* to the next generation with happiness, and when the children see our happiness in *Yiddishkeit*, the *mitzvos* become a part of them when they do it.

Many people are sitting down and trying to analyze the many problems of this generation and what the solution is. Some say that we need to get them to learn more, and others say that we need to give our children more love. But there is really only one answer which defines the root of the problem: we need to fix our very heart.

“And purify our hearts to serve You in truth.” If we say this from our heart to Hashem, and we don’t just say the words, Hashem will answer us.

If a person needs heart surgery, how much money is he willing to pay? If it will cost him \$200,000 -- would he pay it? He would. He’s find a way to come up with the money somehow.

How much are we willing to pay for our real heart? How much are we willing to put into it?

May we all be *zoche* to connect to Hashem.

8- A GOOD HEART (IN CHILD EDUCATION)⁵⁶

"LEV TOV" - A GOOD HEART

One of the 48 qualities to acquire the Torah is *lev tov*, to have a "good heart."

Our Sages reveal that the *gematria* (numerical value) of *lev* is 32 and *tov* equals 17, which together adds up to 48. This hints to us that until *Lag B'Omer*, the 33rd day of the *Omer*, a person has a "*lev*" – he has the first "32" days of the *Omer*, but he doesn't necessarily have the *lev tov*, a good heart. After Day 33, for the rest of the 17 days until Shavuot, a person has the unique opportunity to turn his heart good – to gain a "*lev tov*".

What is a *lev tov* \good heart? Is there such a thing as a "bad" heart?

A friend in Hebrew is called "*reia*". A similar word to "*reia*" (friend) is "*ra*" (evil). In other words, if a person has an 'evil heart' towards his friends, he cannot be a friend to them; he is only "*ra*" (evil) toward them. He will be selfish, and his motivations to have friendships are always about himself. But if his heart is 'good' towards others, he will be able to have friends.

The 24 students of Rabbi Akiva stopped dying by *Lag B'Omer*, because after *Lag B'Omer*, their hearts became good; they reached their '*lev tov*'. This shows us that from *Lag B'Omer* onward, our *avodah* is to acquire for ourselves a '*lev tov*'.

⁵⁶התורה נקנית 022 - בלב טוב

HAVING A “LEV TOV” IN THE HOME

We have so far seen what an ‘evil heart’ is and what a ‘good heart’ is. Now we can understand the *avodah* before us now in these days – the *avodah* of acquiring a ‘*lev tov*’, a good heart.

Let’s say someone is the type to mistreat his friend; he does not have a ‘*lev tov*’ toward others. When he gets married and he has kids, he will act the same way with his spouse and children. He will mistreat them also, because he never developed a ‘*lev tov*’ toward others.

The children of such a person one day complain to him and say, “Daddy, you don’t love us!” The father replies in bewilderment, “What do you mean I don’t love you?! I do so much for you! I put so much money into you. I buy you so many things. Mommy and I both love you so much. Do you know how many times I got up for you in middle of the night and took care of you...?”

But the truth is that the father *doesn’t* really love them! If the children claim that their father doesn’t love them, it shows that he doesn’t have a ‘*lev tov*’ toward them all along!

It seems that the father loves his family, because he “does” so much for them and “gives” so much to them. But it can very well be that he doesn’t act with a *lev tov* toward his household, and therefore, the children will feel unloved, no matter how much he “does” for them.

Why? It is because when push comes to shove, he loves only himself, and he puts himself before his own household. When a very troubling day comes, he will be tested of how much he really loves his family – and he will fail the test, be-

cause he never really loved them to begin with. He had no *'lev tov'* toward his children to begin with – he was selfish all along.

There are even people today who run away from their families, leaving their wife and children behind. Sometimes this is because a man falls in love with a woman who seems more attractive than his own wife. He fantasizes over her and wishes he could leave his own wife, because life looks a lot better with this new woman; he wants to go live life with his other woman and have his own private life with her.

How is it possible that a person can be so cruel to run away from his wife and five kids so that he can enjoy his own private life?! Even though he imagines that maybe life would be better if he goes to live with another woman he falls in love with, still, how can he do such a thing and leave his family behind?? How can he be so selfish to break apart his family??

The answer to this is because he was selfish all along! He had children, but he had them all for his own selfish needs. As soon as it becomes unpleasant for him to deal with his children, he throws them away (he wouldn't even care to throw them into the ocean). He doesn't care anymore about his family. He only had children because he thought it would be pleasant, but as soon as they become a bother him, he abandons them to go on and fulfill his selfish desires.

THE MEANING OF A 'GOOD HEART'

We know that Moshe Rabbeinu was willing to put himself in danger when he saved a Jew from Dasan and Aviram. In this merit, he became the leader of the Jewish people. He had the special trait of truly caring for others.

But we aren't talking about Moshe Rabbeinu, who was on the highest level possible. Is there any Jew living in this year, 2014, who is willing to truly sacrifice for another person??

The fact that a person has a lot of friends doesn't mean that he loves his friends; often, it is the opposite – when a person is popular and he has tons of “friends”, often it can be that he really doesn't love any one of them!

There is a concept that a person has to be willing to even commit a sin and lose his share in the World To Come so that he can save his friend, if need be it. Of course, some people don't care to sin in the first place, because they have no *yiras Shomayim* (fear of Heaven). But in essence, a person has to be willing to sin for another person and forfeit his reward, if he must. The Chazon Ish said that a true friend is someone who is willing to go to *Gehinnom* for his friend if he has to. And if he sins for his friend, he will indeed go to *Gehinnom* – yet he still has to be willing to do something for his friend, even if he knows for sure that he will end up in *Gehinnom* for sinning.

What's a good friend, a true friend? Is it someone who has a nice smile to others? No, that doesn't mean he's a true friend. A true friend is someone who is willing to suffer on behalf of his friend. The *mitzvah* to love other Jews is to love them like yourself.

This is the true test of who a real friend is: someone who is willing to sacrifice for his friend.

The Mishnah in Avos says that the best quality to have is a “*lev tov*” – a ‘good heart’. The best way to succeed in *chinuch* (child education) as well is to have a “*lev tov*” towards our family.

ANALYZING THE MOTIVATIONS BEHIND REQUESTS TO OUR CHILDREN

Why do people have children? There are all kinds of self-serving motives that people have. Some people have children because they want a child to say *Kaddish* for them after they die. Others have a child so that they can be honored and served.

When a father asks his child to *bentch*, the child will listen only if he feels that his father has a *lev* toward him, that the request is coming for the well-being of his child. Otherwise, the child does it grudgingly – because he doesn’t feel a *lev tov* emanating in his father’s request.

When we make requests of our children, is it emanating from our desire that they do it for their own good – or are we asking them to do things for us for our own good...?

Once there was a child did something improper. He had a great father who said, “I can’t punish you now, because I’m angry at you. I don’t want the punishment to be coming out of anger. I want it to come for your own good.”

Parents often want their children to do what is good for “Me” [the parents]. A father often views his children as his slaves! Really, the father should train the child to do something because it’s good for the **child** to do. One should tell his child, “Do it for *yourself* – not for me.”

“EXPECTATIONS” FROM OUR CHILDREN

What do we want our children to be?

There are parents who want their child to attain prestigious positions in life: either to be a professor, or to become a lawyer, or to become a successful businessman in general. Others want their child to become a “Rosh Yeshiva”, so that he will be very honored in his life...

Is there any parent who wants their child to become who he really is? Let's say the parents know for sure that the child is supposed to be a shoemaker, and this is what their child is meant to become in life. Would any parent let their child become a shoemaker...? Most parents would not come to terms with this. They don't do what's good for the child – they want from the child to do what's good for *them*.

Even worse, there are many parents who want their child to continue their business that they started. Who says this is appropriate for the child to do? Just because the father started a certain business that means that the child has to continue it? Often, the child is dragged into the family business when it's not good for him at all. Yet parents continue to put pressure on their children that they must continue the family business, and they tell them: “You have to. If you don't, you will embarrass us in the community; it's not good for your *shidduchim*, etc.”

In the same way that a person loves himself and he wants to be who he really is – and not what he is forced to be – so should a person love his child. Love him and **let him be who he really is, not what you want him to be.** And being who you are

means to be who *you* really are; let the child be who he really is, not what you want him to be.

“Chinuch” – child education – means to let your child be who he really is, and not what you want him to be.

Sometimes I ask my child to do things in the house, like to clean up his room. I tell him, “Clean up the room because I want you to be organized.” Or I tell him, “Clean your room because it’s good for you to clean your room.” Either of these requests is a good way to make a request, because then the child hears the message that it’s for his own good that he has to do a certain chore.

When you make requests of your children, don’t ask him to do something because it’s good for **you** that he do it, but ask him to do it because you know that it’s good for him to do. And make that clear in your request to your child.

RAISING RESPONSIBLE CHILDREN

We are describing here a whole different kind of life we can live.

Parents must let their children be who they are supposed to be; this does not mean of course to just let the child live with no reproof whatsoever and that we should let him act like a wild monkey. What we mean here is that the child has to sense that his parents really want the best for him.

We do not mean that the parents are never allowed to tell their child about the difficulties of life and instead tell them that life is a utopia. Rather, it’s the opposite: let them know good and well that life contains difficulties – and for that rea-

son, they need to become responsible, so that they will be able to deal with the difficulties that life will bring one day.

Train your child to be responsible. Train your child that life is about being responsible for others. But first, teach your child to be responsible for *himself*. That is what it means to let the child be “himself”.

When someone works at a job that’s not “himself”, he can’t be happy. A person is only happy when he does things that are himself, not when he forces himself into a role he has to play. Be the same with your children.

I hope that these words here have affected your soul. After understanding the words here, decide what kind of life you want to live – what kind of home you want to have. I hope that all of us here merit to have true and holy *nachas*.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH THE RAV

Q: *Since the Rov says that we have to find “ourselves” first, how do we be our true self, in spite of society, which does not allow us to act like our true self?*

A: Good question. You can still be yourself to a certain degree, even if society doesn't allow you to.

Q: *If a person doesn't know himself well and what's good for himself, how can he know what is good for his child??*

A: Very good question. It depends on if he is working on himself or not. If a person is in the process of searching to find his true self, he's in a lot better of a situation than someone who isn't searching to find himself. It is not possible for us to know ourselves 100% but we need to try as much as we can to get to know our true self.

Q: *Can the Rov give examples of how we can apply the concept said here.*

A: Is this question being asked regarding your child or regarding yourself? (**Regarding myself**). Regarding yourself, you can work on this as follows. Let's say you go to Daf Yomi, and your friends are there; you decide that you will learn for an hour a day. But next door there is a shiur going on which you will find more suitable for you to do, but you don't know anyone there. What should you do? Naturally, you want to go to the shiur which you will enjoy more, where you won't have to deal with anyone and you will just be able to learn. (Many times a person knows convinces himself in his subconscious that he needs to do something which really isn't good for him...) What you should really do is go the Daf Yomi in which you will be able to have a lev tov toward others, even though it's not as enjoyable

for you, because you'd rather to go the higher level shiur in the other beis midrash.

Q: If let's say the child wants to go to shul wearing blue shirt, when everyone wears white shirts. Should we let the child be himself? Or should we oppose his behavior? Or should the father encourage the child by going himself to shul as well in a blue shirt...?

A: It is impossible to give an answer to every possible issue that exists. But one rule that always applies is: Do you want the child to do something because it's good for him to do, or because it's for your honor? Even if you get your child to wear a white shirt, he has to understand that he's doing it for his own good, and for his parents' honor.

9- PREVENTING OTD ⁵⁷

One of the most painful issues that exist in our times is that of children who “leave the fold”. To our great sorrow, it is not uncommon. Although we cannot cover every possible situation in this chapter, we will try, with the help of Heaven, to reflect into the root of this issue.

Many children grow up with a certain social setting where there are general rules of behavior taught, and sometimes they even get individualized guidance, but when they encounter the tests of life – whether it is of the material world, or of the spiritual world – that is where they begin to fall, and sometimes, it is also where they end.

The root of the problem, in these cases, is that we have not succeeded in building the individual soul of this child. In order to develop the soul of the child, the parent must have a bond with the child’s soul, and to be attuned to subtle, fine aspects of the child’s soul. The first thing a parent must know [to prevent losing the child from Yiddishkeit] is to learn about the child’s soul, and to do so continually. Understandably, this can only be done after the parent learns about his own soul. Learning about the child’s soul takes several years.

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(Editor’s Note: In relation to this topic, in a segment from a later shiur, entitled 48 Ways_021_Less Talking, the following was asked to the Rav):

QUESTION: “What do you tell someone who’s not interested in growing and improving?”

ANSWER: “This is the question of all questions. I assume that you are not asking about yourself, but about someone in your own household. The only thing you can do is daven and cry to Hashem for that person”.

After learning about it – as well as in the midst of learning about it - the parents must learn how to connect to the soul of the child. This is not only done through giving him gifts which express love (which is also very important), but in addition, through recognizing and feeling the subtle threads that run through the child's soul – to know about his particular nature in general, as well as his more individual aspects.

Besides for intellectually recognizing the child's nature and attitudes, the parent needs to form a soul connection to the child. Sometimes, the parent must also know how to disconnect from the child, because if there is too much closeness between parent and child and there is never any disconnection, the results are damaging. A parent must feel his child, sense him, and breathe him. If the parent isn't constantly feeling the child's soul, he can lose him easily, as the years go on.

In most cases where a young boy or girl has left the fold of Yiddishkeit, it was because the parent and child did not have a deep, soul connection with each other. Many parents do not know how to develop such a bond with their children, and the truth is that it requires much individualized guidance. But one thing everyone must know is that if the child does not have this soul connection with his parents, or with at least one of them, he is like an orphan in his parents' lifetime.

A soul connection with the child means that the parent can have heart-to-heart conversations with the child, speaking from his own soul to the child's. This does not mean that they have to talk about problems with each other. Instead, they should mainly be having deep reflections about life together, and of how to deal with life. If a child does not have such a relationship with his parent, he will usual-

ly not have the inner strength or the mental energy to deal with life and its many difficulties. There is no need to wait until the problems come in order to deal with the issues. In the approach here, we are not trying to heal the problems – instead, we are laying forth the ideal path to begin with, to enable our child to have a healthy soul, to have the emotional and mental stamina to stay firm and be like a strongly built ship that can ride through the waves of life.

Understandably, this path will not mean guaranteed success. But we must do our part, and in addition, we must pray and cry to G-d about our children, that they should be healthy in their souls, that they be able to rise on the spiritual ladder of growth that ascends to G-d.

Many parents are busy. The father may be studying Torah all day, and the mother is busy with work and with shopping, making sure that the house has all its needs. But they must know, clearly, that it is impossible to raise a child in the right way unless we have constant soul conversations with him; sometimes the conversations can be shorter, and sometimes they are longer, but there must be heart-to-heart conversations.

Each day, a parent must try to sense and feel the child's soul, like when he comes home after his Torah learning session, and to again sense what's going on inside the child as he observes his child in the home. Obviously, this should not be done in a pressurized manner. The point is to create and nurture a soul connection with the child. For this reason, a parent must constantly have conversations with the child throughout the day – conversations that are *meaningful* - and the point is to feel what's going on at the moment in the child's soul.

This does not mean that you should become disturbed by his negative emotions, such as when he is sad or when he's going through a difficulty. Rather, just be attentive to his situation. Sometimes, you should let him deal with the problem on his own, and observe him from the sidelines. You may offer him a small piece of advice, and at other times, you may speak with him quickly about the issue he's going through, without making too much of it. Other times, you can let the problem dissolve with time, and in other instances, you may have a long conversation with him about it. It is impossible to give exact, clear guidelines for this. Each situation should be weighed with wisdom. But the common denominator between all situations is that the parent must have an awareness of most of the child's progress and how the child is handling issues.

If a child feels that his parent does not understand him, if he feels that his parent does not know anything about his soul and his general attitudes, he will not want to include his parents in his life. It is up to the wisdom of the parents to get down to the soul of their child, and to understand the subtleties, of his soul; and to learn how to connect to the child's soul "in the child's language", so that the child will feel that his parent truly understands him and wants the very best for him.

A child who grows up receiving fatherly warmth, and motherly warmth, and who also has a deep, soul connection with his parents, who are there with him throughout his life, and who direct him in how to deal with the various challenges of life – slowly, his soul will become developed, throughout the years. At a certain point, he will be able to reach a level of maturity where he will feel like he has the abilities and energies to deal with most of the challenges of life. He may also reach a deeper level where he feels like Hashem is escorting him throughout life,

and he will not be as dependent on his parents that much, consulting them only every so often.

It is upon us to understand that it is our responsibility to raise a child by building his soul already from a younger age. We need to bring a child to the point where not only is he doing what needs to be done, but that he can also deal with the difficulties of life, and that he can use his power to choose.

Most children who went off the *derech* were usually like their peers when it came to external action, but their souls were not built. When a difficulty came their way, they couldn't handle it, so they threw away their external behavior, and they are left emptied, both on an external level as well as on an internal level.

Parents must train a child already from a young age to be able to deal with small issues, and to teach them to decide on their own. Never should a parent decide for them. Teaching a child to make decisions enables a child to become responsible and to accept his own decisions, and slowly as time goes on, with assistance from Heaven, the child's soul becomes well-built. Initially, the parent needs to help the child decide, but the decision itself should still be allowed to come from the child.

These words are written from within the blood of a pained soul that feels the pain of the souls of Yisrael. May Hashem help that these words should only be of benefit to you. May Hashem merit all of you, without exception, to see a generation come from you that is upright and blessed, to bear children who are people of truth, whose souls have been built within them – along with an external layer to them that is truthful.

10- THE ONLY LASTING CONNECTION⁵⁸

CONNECTING TO THE ETERNAL

ובנה אותה בנין עולם – “And rebuild it (Jerusalem) as an eternal edifice.”

We don't just ask that Yerushalayim be rebuilt - we ask that it be rebuilt to last forever. If we reflect deeply, we discover that there is really nothing in this world that is forever. This world is temporary, and only Hashem is forever, for Hashem “was, is, and will be.” Only Hashem is forever, while His Creations are limited. However, all creations can connect with Him, although we are limited and temporary; our soul has a yearning to connect itself with the eternal, and only the Creator is eternal.

But if the soul of a person is concealed from a person – and this is the situation of most people – one loses this yearning for eternity. He might yearn for things that are eternal, but he uses it for the wrong things. Without revealing the soul, a person misuses the yearning for the eternal, and it will manifest in other areas.

WHEN PEOPLE FEEL TOO CONNECTED TO THIS WORLD

There are many, many things that people feel deeply connected to on this world, and people would never want to part from those things. It can be one's car, his house, or a certain items he owns which are very dear to him.

Reb Chatzkel would often quote the words of the Zohar that “A person dwells on this world and thinks it is his.” Man has a nature to think that his life on this world

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is permanent. Any sensible person will admit that he is not eternal, because we all know that people die. Ever since the curse of Adam [when mankind was cursed with death] people who are on this world have been leaving this world.

Our brain can be aware very well that death is inevitable to all people (unless Moshiach comes during one's lifetime), but our heart often does not feel this reality. The heart can be blocked from the truth that our brain is aware of intellectually. Simply, this is a *ruach shtus*, a foolish spirit, that sways a person from realizing the truth.

But the deeper reason is because our soul really wants to feel eternal. It doesn't want a connection that is temporary – it wants some kind of connection that is eternal. This is a very deep need of our soul and when it isn't understood, it is misused by a person to seek an eternal connection with This World.

When the soul is concealed from man – in other words, when a person doesn't have a simple feeling of sensing Hashem in his life – his need for the eternal will be awakened, and it will seek eternal connections with This World. If a person can't find it in something truthful on This World, he will seek it in places that are not truthful. He might be aware in his mind of course that this is foolish, but he doesn't actually feel that way. He feels his possessions, his money, and that all worldly matters are forever.⁵⁹

THE FEELING OF CONNECTION TO OUR CHILDREN

⁵⁹ See *Bilvavi Part 4 Chapter 5 – Calmly Giving Up This World*.

Until now we were addressing someone who lives a very superficial kind of life. But there is a more subtle manifestation of this problem which exists by almost all people. Even if someone doesn't have that much of a materialistic life, and he doesn't feel that attached to his house and possessions, he will still feel that the most eternal connection he knows of on this world is: with his family.

Each person has relationships in his life, and people tend to feel that these relationships are absolutely eternal.

With parents, some people are very attached to them, and some have weaker relationships with the parents. When a person gets married, some people are very deeply connected with their spouse, and some are not. But when it comes to our children – we love them more powerfully than anyone else. The feeling of connection that a parent has for a child is very, very intense.

The Gemara⁶⁰ says that normally, if someone digs a tunnel into one's house to rob him, one is allowed to kill the intruder, because the intruder is deemed a *rodef*, a pursuer. But if the robber is one's father, the intruder is not considered a *rodef*, because the father would not kill the son, since he loves him.

The words of Reb Yisrael Salanter are well-known: That even if a father consciously loves another person more than his own son, such as a beloved student of his, if a time would come where he would have to choose between one of them to save, he would choose the son, because deep in his subconscious, he loves his child more, no matter how much grief the child has caused him.

⁶⁰ *Talmud Bavli: Tractate Sanhedrin, Chapter Eight.*

When a person doesn't have children yet, he feels a certain void in his life, because the soul has a deep desire that its existence be continued. Thus, there is a very deep desire in man for children.

The soul of a person is very attached to one's children. There are even children who cut off contact from their parents, yet the parents continue to strongly love them.

Most people are willing to work very hard at jobs and even get into huge debts just so that their family will have income, and it's all so that the children will be able to live comfortably. We see that a person is willing to undergo a lot of stress at work just so that he can bring home money and support his children. He does it all for the children. So there is a very, very deep love that a parent has for a child.

There are also people who revolve their entire life around the children – they make their children into the center of their life.

EXAMINING THE ROOT OF WHY WE FEEL DEEPLY CONNECTED WITH OUR CHILDREN

We need to examine deeply into ourselves where this comes from. There are a few people who truly love their children with a totally pure kind of love. But most people who feel very attached to their children are actually being motivated by a need for some kind of “permanence” on this world.

Of course, Hashem implanted a love in every father for his child; whether the father is a *tzaddik* or a wicked person. But the level of love differs with each person.

Most people, in their subconscious, do not view children as people who “happen” to be in their life, and they feel that their bond with their children is a major

part of their life, a part of their entire essence and being, and they are connected to their children with the depths of their soul.

Here we come to the root of the matter.

Those who are attached to materialistic aspects of this world use their power of deep connection for materialism, which is clearly the most negative way to misuse the soul's need for deeply lasting connection. But even those who are not that attached to materialism of this world are also misplacing their soul's need for deeply lasting connection: the bond that people feel towards their children can really be coming from a need for permanence of This World!

There are people who think that the ideal kind of life is when the children are everything. Let us examine the depth of this mentality that people have and see how to use it and what needs to be fixed with this mentality.

Man is made of soul and body. The Gemara states that a father gives five things to his child, and the mother gives five things to their child. These are physical mannerisms which a parent gives to the child. Even the *middos* which a child inherits from a parent are only the garments of the child's soul, not the essence of the child's soul. Thus, the entire bond that a parent can feel to his child can be entirely based on physicality, not the soul. Physically, relatives are always close; one may not marry close relatives and he may not testify for them in Beis Din, due to their physical closeness.

Thus, there is an intrinsic physical closeness with relatives and family members, which cannot be denied. What results from this, however, is that most of the

time, the relationship that a father feels towards his child is purely based on the physical factor.

The more a person lives a bodily kind of existence, the more “bodily” his connections are. If he is totally materialistic, he is entirely connected to desires of this world. If he is a bit more refined – or if he feels both connected to this world as well as feeling connected to his children – it is still his body which connects him to things. His soul really wants eternal connection, but because it is hidden, and the body dominates the person, the soul’s need ends up getting twisted around by the body, and it manifests in a yearning to feel eternally attached with one’s children.

THE SOUL’S PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS LOVE

But if a person begins to leave his bodily existence and enters a soul kind of existence – not just intellectually, but to live life through the prism of the soul – the perspective of a person changes. He will want a different kind of connection. This doesn’t mean that he will forget about his body. We don’t live in Gan Eden; we are not ethereal. We live on this world, with a body, and we have 613 mitzvos to keep. But we can still get our perspective to change and view life through our soul; we can change how we view our concept of connection.

To bring out the intensity of this discussion, let’s say there is a father who loves his child very much. It’s very possible that in a previous lifetime (*gilgul*) that the souls of the father and child really hated each other! They might be more different from each other in their soul roots as the distance between the sky and the earth. (Of course, there is unity between all of the Jewish people, but that’s usual-

ly not the reason why a person loves his child. A father usually loves his child because it's his child, and not because he feels a unity with the collective soul of the Jewish people!)

So the love that a father usually feels for his child, when experienced through the body - which dominates a person's existence unless he reveals his existence as being that of a soul - is based on the physical. If a person would reveal his soul, the love would come from his soul, and it would be stemming from the feeling of unity with the Jewish people. That is the real love. But when the body dominates in a person's life, a person feels connected to his child *not* because of this deep love of the soul for unity, but because his soul inside is demanding something eternal. The body takes that need and channels it towards loving one's child, which really translates into a wish for permanence on This World.

From the soul's perspective, although the *Halacha* states that one must support his children, the soul recognizes that the connection one feels to his child is purely physical. There is no denying that the child bears similarities to his father, but, it's all physical.

The soul's perspective can show a person that the connection he feels to his child needs to be defined and put in proper perspective, and that it should not be eternal.

LETTING GO

When a person gains this perspective – not just intellectually, but to absorb it in his soul and to live this perspective – he will have the proper view towards his family. He will realize that although he feels connected with his children, it should

have limits to it, and it should not be stemming from a need for eternal connection.

In order to slowly absorb this perspective, one can think about the following. One can realize that before this lifetime, there was no physical connection between father and child. Getting used to this perspective will weaken the physical nature of the relationship he feels towards his children [and make it more spiritual].

Of course, we know that children must honor their parents even after they die; that is the *Halacha*. But inevitable, the connection of children to their parents after death is a lot less, being that a large part of the connection was physical in its nature. After death, the body decomposes, and the physicality of the relationship withers away with this.

In fact, it's even possible that if the souls of parents and children meet in Heaven after they die, they won't even feel connection with each other any more than two strangers who meet each other in Heaven.

DEEPENING YOUR AHAVAS YISRAEL

On a side note, if a person absorbs this correctly, he will understand what it means to have *Ahavas Yisrael* (love for Jews). One of the deep reasons why people lack *Ahavas Yisrael* is actually because they are only connected with their own families, and not with others.

When a person feels like he only loves his family and he doesn't feel love for others, that essentially means that he is only connected in love with others

through his physical orientations; therefore all that he loves on this world is his own family, and no one else. He views family members as his own physical ‘flesh and blood’ – his physical blood relatives, and he feels like they are a part of his own ‘flesh’.

What happens when a person has this perspective? The physical body covers over the soul, and when the soul is covered over, it can't love other Jews.

When a person realizes that the love he feels for his children is coming from his physical connection with them, that itself allows the soul's perspective to become revealed, and the soul will then naturally love all others Jews - once it has been allowed to be revealed.

(There are also souls that feel closer to each other, even after the love of the soul is revealed. But this is a concept which most people do not relate to).

THE NATURE TO FEEL CONNECTED

Thus, a person has a nature to connect to the eternal, and the soul demands it. If a person merits to purify his level of existence (when he leaves the bodily kind of existence and lives life through the prism of the soul), he understands that the only absolute connection he can have is, with Hashem. (And this can extend to love for all Jews and for the Torah, for “Hashem, the Torah and Yisrael are one.”)

Whenever we feel connected to something, as long as it is not the connection with the Creator, it can never be a truly deep connection. It is only the branches of the root power of connection, which is to connect to the Creator.

This applies to all kinds of connection a person can feel: feeling connected to the materialism of this world, feeling a connection to one's children – either through love, giving, or compassion – it is not the depth of the power to connect. It is only the 'branches' of something deeper in us: an expression of our desire to feel attached to Hashem.

MITIGATING THE PAIN OF MOURNING A FAMILY MEMBER

Of course, if a person takes care of his family, he is doing the right thing, and he lives and dies in the right way. But although this is true, we find that most people, when they lose a family member, find this to be terribly difficult, and they feel like part of their essence has been taken away from them; they find it unbearable to go on living. Nothing is the same anymore for such people. This really happens because the deepest connection a person usually feels is with his family members. When the connection is severed, through death, the pain is tremendous and unbearable.

But if a person makes sure that the deepest connection he knows of is with Hashem, then even when he suffers the death of a close family member (or any end to a relationship), he will certainly feel pain, but it will not destroy him. The pain he will feel will only be limited, because his deepest connection he feels is not with anything on This World, not even his family; the deepest connection he knows of is with Hashem.

The words here do not mean to imply that a person shouldn't feel pain when he loses a relationship just because he feels so close to Hashem. If someone doesn't feel pain at a loss of a family member, he is simply cruel; or he's deep in his imag-

ination. What is meant here is that a person can gain a change in perspective. It is to understand what our need for deep connection is and to properly define the connections we have on this world.

Absorbing this perspective will not weaken your relationship with your children at all; it will not destroy your love for Jews, for Torah, and for Hashem. It will only serve to strengthen your love and reveal the true love, which comes from our soul, as opposed to the body's love for others, which is purely physical-based.

Woe to a person who doesn't love his family, and woe to the person who has no mercy on them - but a person who loves them too much is also incorrect. We have to be mainly directed towards the root of all roots, the Creator, whether we are in This World or even in the Next World. All other connections we have, even the connections are commanded to have, need to have their limits.

THE PROPER VIEW TOWARDS LOVING OUR FAMILY

These words, when understood properly, can shake a person to the core, because it will show a person think that the connection he feels with his family are only temporary, and only our connection with Hashem is eternal.

So these words are very subtle. If they are not understood properly, it will simply shake a person up and he will think that perhaps it means he's really **not** connected to his family. But that is not the point of these words. The point is rather to understand the nature of our connection with our families, so that we can have the proper understanding.

When the words here are understood properly, they will actually strengthen your relationships. The words here are meant for anyone who searches for a true kind of life, for a life of the soul.

The true kind of life to have is a life which centers around a tri-fold connection: to seek connection with Hashem, with the Torah, and with the collective soul of the Jewish people; and not just to have a life which *revolves* around connecting with Hashem, Torah, and the Jewish people – but to *deeply connect* with these three areas. There is a fourth kind of connection we feel in our souls: the connection we feel towards our family. But this should not become before our connection with Hashem, with Torah, and with the Jewish people.

Thus, the point is that if a person always places his family “first” before anything else in his life, this is not a true priority; it distances one from the inner kind of life.

IN CONCLUSION

When we ask in this blessing of Shemoneh Esrei that Yerushalayim be built to last forever, **ובנה אותה בנין עולם**, we are not just asking that it simply be forever, because nothing on This World is forever. We only ask for this in connection with the rest of the request, **ותשכון בתוכה** – that Hashem’s Presence return to Jerusalem.

In other words - when the *Shechinah* will be revealed, only then will Yerushalayim be forever. As long as *Shechinah* isn’t revealed – as long as the reality of Hashem isn’t revealed, when people think that This World is forever – that is the greatest *hester* (concealment).

When a person realizes and feels the truth, that only Hashem is forever, he will in turn understand that all other connections he feels are only temporary, and it will be realized that all of our connections need to be limited; that we should not feel that any connection we have is “eternal”, except for the one connection we have which is eternal (our connection with Hashem).

The more spiritual of a life a person lives, the greater his quality of love for his children will be. Why? Because a person then realizes that all love he experiences on this world is but a branch of a greater love. And then even the ‘branches’ of love we experience will take on new meaning.

The words here are not meant to weaken a person’s relationship with his family at all. Rather, the intention is the opposite: it can help us give greater meaning to our relationships. It is to be aware that our connection with our family is not eternal.

ובנה אותה בנין עולם - We ask for Yerushalayim to be built eternally – that this world, which is called “*olam*” from the word *he’elam*, concealment, be removed; and that the true *olam* \“world” should be revealed, a world of *l’olam*, eternity – as we declare in *Amen Yehai Shemai Rabbah*, that the Name of Hashem should fill all the realms, forever, when His Great Name will be fully revealed.

11- THE FATHER-SON RELATIONSHIP⁶¹

BEN SORER U'MOREH – THE WAYWARD CHILD

Parshas Ki Seitzei talks about *ben sorer u'moreh*, the wayward child, who rebels against the Torah, “who does not listen to the voice of his father and to the voice of his mother.” In this part of the Torah, we are taught that there are children who do not listen to their parents, who do not continue their parents’ ways, by forfeiting the path of the Torah that they are taught.

This is especially happening in our current generation, where there are many children who abandon the ways of their parents and they go their own separate ways, throwing away the yoke of Torah from upon them.

THE ‘WAYWARD CHILD’ THROUGHOUT HISTORY

Not every parent merits to have children who listen to them. The first child in history who did not continue in his father’s ways was Kayin, son of Adam. Later in history, Noach had a son Cham, who did not either go in his father’s ways. Avraham Avinu had a wayward son, Yishmael, and Yitzchok Avinu had Esav.

We see from this that a wayward child is not always due to the parents’ fault. It is simply because not every parent has the *zechus* (merit) to be saved from having a wayward child.

Avraham and Yitzchok were perfectly righteous, yet they bore children who completely rebelled against their teachings. And in fact, even Yaakov Avinu, who

⁶¹ שיחת השבוע 02 – כי תצא תשע"ו – בן סורר ומורה

is praised for having perfect progeny, also had to deal with some grief from his children, so they did not always go in his ways and emulate his teachings. Although the sons of Yaakov were all perfectly righteous, they caused plenty of pain to their father Yaakov Avinu, by refusing to talk to Yosef and by hating him, when they were upset with him.

Although this does not compare at all to the evils committed by Esav and Yishmael, who became wicked individuals that completely abandoned the ways of their fathers, still, the sons of Yaakov Avinu still caused a considerable amount of pain to their father, and this is also a degree of “not going in the ways” of the parents.

So there are two kinds of children who do not continue in the ways of their parents and who cause grief to the parents. One kind of child rebels totally against the Torah, like Esav and Yishmael. Another kind of child can be a good child, but he still can cause some grief to his parents, such as what we see with the 12 sons of Yaakov Avinu, who were all righteous, yet their father had pain from them, because they did not always emulate his ways.

In our generation especially, there are children who are not going in the ways of their parents, and their parents have considerable grief from them. This problem did not begin in today's times; it has already been rooted into our history, that there will be children who don't go in the ways of their fathers.

The sons of Yaakov were all perfectly righteous, and although their hatred towards Yosef did not take away their status of being *tzaddikim*, it eventually bore evil results later on, in their own descendants. Levi had an evil grandson, Korach,

who caused disparity amongst *Klal Yisrael* and he lost his share in the World To Come because of this; he is not counted amongst the progeny of Yaakov Avinu.

Our *Avos* and our *Imahos* had to deal with having evil children like Esav and Yishmael, and they also bore descendants such as Korach. They were as spiritual and as righteous as can be and they did their best, but they were not always spared from having troubles with their children.

CHINUCH: HOW PARENTS CAN DO THEIR BEST

The *avodah* of our *Avos* was to imbibe the principles of belief into the Jewish people. They perfected their own character, and that was how they could succeed in getting their children to emulate them and to continue in their ways.

Thus, *chinuch* (child education) is not simply about training the child to do certain deeds. Parents must work on themselves, on perfecting their own character, in order to imbibe a good *chinuch* on their children and to teach them what they want to teach them, just as the *Avos* did.

But if the parents themselves are weak in their own *emunah* and in their own observance of the Torah, and they live their lives by rote, they will not succeed to implant truth in their children. And when that is missing, there is usually rebelliousness amongst the children, and the child is not to blame for this. “*What should the child do, and not sin?*”⁶²

On a deeper note, when the parents themselves are not earnest in how they live and keep Judaism, there is no “voice” for the children to listen to and emulate.

⁶² From the prayers we recite in *Selichos*

The *ben sorer u'moreh* turns out the way he is because “he does not listen to the voice of his father and to the voice of his mother”, but if the father and mother themselves are not earnest about what they do, then the “voice” of the father and his mother are not a genuine voice for the child to listen to. If their voice would be a voice of truth, when their words to him are coming from their heart, there is a rule that “words that come from the heart, enter the heart”, and usually the child will be affected by their words, because he knows that his parents are earnest.

CHINUCH, PART 1: EXPRESSING LOVE AND CREATING ‘SIMCHAS HACHAIM’ IN THE HOME

In our generation, there is more of a need than ever, that the parents show their love to their children, and **express** it to them. It is not enough if the parents know deep down that they love their children; this remains as “hidden love”⁶³ and it will not be enough to nourish the children’s emotional needs. This was always the case, but nowadays, it is even more so.

The parent’s love for the child must be outwardly revealed and **expressed**. Such a home will be a home of *simchas hachaim* (joy of life), which is absolutely necessary for a child to thrive in and develop properly.

Without an atmosphere of *simchas hachaim* in the home, a home might look like it is functioning, and the children have clothing to wear and they have other things too, but there is no spirit of life there. This is such a basic part of the home,

⁶³ “*ahavah musteres*”, “hidden love”, a concept mentioned in *sefer Tanya*, who explains that although we all have a hidden love for Hashem in our hearts, it is not enough for us to develop feelings for Hashem, and we must reveal it outward.

which any home needs: there must be love **expressed** in the home. The parents must keep showering their love in the home upon their children, and this is what creates a *simchas hachaim* in the home that the children will need.⁶⁴

CHINUCH, PART 2: A HOME OF EMES\TRUTH

However, there is more than this that is needed in the home. A *simchas hachaim* in the home, created by the parents' outward expression of love, is all but the physical layer of the home. There is a deeper part to the home that is needed: the parents need to implant *emes* (truth) into the home. The children must see that their parents really mean what they do. Often the child does not turn out truthful because it was the parents who are not earnest in their own level of *Yiddishkeit*.⁶⁵

But if there is a combination of *simchas hachaim* in the home, together with an atmosphere of *emes* in the home, these two factors together are what creates the proper and successful Jewish home, enabling there to be far less of a chance of a "*ben sorer o'moreh*" from happening.

WHEN THE PARENTS DID EVERYTHING RIGHT

Yet, even if the parents did all of the above and they did everything right, there is still no guarantee that the parents will always have perfect children. Is any one of us more righteous than Avraham Avinu? Is anyone among us greater than Yitzchok Avinu? Our great *Avos* bore evil children, Yishmael and Esav, who totally

⁶⁴ For more on expressing love in the home and in bringing *simchas hachaim* into the home, see *Getting To Know Your Family_02_Expressing Love In The Home*, and *Getting To Know Your Family_09_Infusing Spirituality Into The Home*

⁶⁵ See *Getting To Know Your Simcha_011_Raising Happy Children*

rebelled against the ways of their parents. Some of our greatest *Gedolim* had children who did not follow in the way of the Torah.⁶⁶

Certainly as a first measure, the father and mother must do everything they can in order to implant **love** and **truth** in their home, as we said; and the son will usually reciprocate these feelings. This is usually the case, for the parent-child bond is such an integral part of life that forms the basis of how the child will act. But sometimes, the parents have done everything they can, and it is not their fault that their child has abandoned the way of Torah.

When that happens, we must be aware of the following. Although the parent-child relationship is integral to our development, and it is a very important part of life which shapes us, there is still a deeper aspect of life than this which we must access than our parent-child relationship.

Dovid HaMelech said, *“For my father and my mother have abandoned me, and Hashem will gather me.”*⁶⁷ Our father and mother represent our physical side of life, which must be certainly be healthy in order for us to survive, but there is also our *neshamah* (Divine soul). Our *neshamah* relates only to Hashem as its Father, for only Hashem is “our Father in Heaven”. We have a *mitzvah* to honor our physical parents, but the inner essence of life is: to honor our Father in heaven. Honoring parents is just a *moshol* (parable) that helps us reach the *nimshal* (lesson).

⁶⁶ Editor’s Note: Some examples are the sons of Eli HaKohen (Chofni and Pinchas), the son of King Chizkiyahu (the wicked king Menasheh), and the wicked sons of Dovid HaMelech – Avshalom and Amnon. In recent history as well, many righteous tzaddikim did not merit to always have good children.

⁶⁷ Tehillim 27:10

Therefore, we must know that the bond we have with our parents is only one side of life. It cannot be everything, for it all stems from our physical side of life. We come from our physical parents, therefore, we are connected to them in the physical sense, for they had a part in forming our physical existence.⁶⁸ But our physical layer is not all there is to us, for we have a soul in us, and our essence is our soul. Our soul needs a relationship with Hashem, and it is not satisfied with just the physical relationship we have with our parents.

Avraham had a rebellious son, Yishmael. How did he get over the grief he must have had from this? The Torah tells us that when Hashem told Avraham that Yishmael will not be his progeny, Avraham still prayed for Yishmael's life, hoping that Yishmael would live and continue. But although he prayed for Yishmael's survival, he still knew that Yishmael is no longer regarded as his son. How did he console himself over the pain of this?

It must be because there is a point in the soul which goes deeper than the father-son relationship. The father-child relationship is very powerful, but there is a point in the soul that is even stronger than this: our bond with our true, merciful Father in heaven. (In terms of the soul, the father-son relationship is called the point of "*av u'ben*" (father and child) in the soul, and the point above that is called *l'maalah m'av u'ben*, "above father-and-child".)

Therefore, if a child does not go in the ways of his father and he abandons the Torah, the father must certainly repent that perhaps it is his own fault - and hopefully, in this merit, the child will become inspired and return to his father's ways;

⁶⁸ See *Tefillah #0124 – The Only Lasting Connection*

but if the child does not return, the father must now let go of the father-child relationship, and instead turn to the deeper point in his soul, the relationship that goes beyond father and son: our bond with our Father in heaven.⁶⁹

“AVINU”

These days of Elul are days where we must penetrate into the depths of the soul and find our inner “Father”. The inner “Father” in our soul which we must reveal is, essentially, *to feel a palpable sense of our Father*.

Throughout the days of *Selichos*, Rosh HaShanah, the days of *teshuvah*, and Yom Kippur, we keep saying the words, “*Avinu Malkeinu, Avinu Malkeinu, Avinu Malkeinu!*” (“Our Father, our King”). But if we really mean it, we must really *feel* that Hashem is indeed *Avinu*, our Father.

How, indeed, can we get ourselves to realize that Hashem is “*Avinu*”? We know that when a child grows up with his parents, he turns to his parents for all his needs. Later he grows up and he becomes more independent of his parents, but at first, a child is totally dependent on his parents. He asks his parents for anything he needs. So, too, one must turn to Hashem for everything, for all his needs, just like a child in his parents’ home. He must ask Hashem for everything, big or small. When a person gets used to this, he will slowly begin to feel that Hashem is indeed his Father.

One who merits to fulfill the *mitzvah* of honoring parents properly has a good *moshol* to work with for this. But even if one did not merit to fulfill the *mitzvah* of

⁶⁹ Refer also to *Getting To Know Your Feelings, Chapter Seven: Developing Our Relationships*

honoring parents, he can still get used to asking Hashem for everything and thereby come to relate to Hashem as his Father.

During these days of mercy, we ask Hashem for many things. We ask for life, livelihood, health, Torah, *yiras shomayim*, and more. Although all of these requests are about things we need, the deeper part of life is to build for ourselves a bond with our Father.

We all have this power, but it has become concealed deep within and it is covered over by many layers that have accumulated from all the years. But we still all have this power in ourselves deep down, and we just need to reveal it outward, from its hidden state.

One can train himself to keep turning to Hashem, on a regular basis, for all things that he needs. This will slowly enable a person to have a bond with Hashem, more and more, as we get used to this. When one lives this way and he turns to Hashem hundreds of times throughout the day, and not just during the three *tefillos* we daven each day, he slowly develops his bond with Hashem and he begins to relate to him as the true “Father.”

YAMIM NDRAIM – DAYS OF LEARNING HOW TO TALK TO HASHEM

These days of mercy reveal to us this particular aspect of realizing that Hashem is our Father. These days are not just about *davening* more; these are days which show us how the rest of the year should look like – to constantly turn to Hashem for everything and relate to Him as our Father.

Of course, this does not mean *chas v'shalom* that we should *daven* the entire day and not learn Torah. The point we are saying is that the inner layer to the life that we live is, to always talk to Hashem, over all matters, big or small, and to turn to Him throughout the day whenever we need something.

Getting used to it helps us acquire the nature that is really deep in our soul to turn to Hashem. It enables a person to have true closeness with Hashem throughout the day. It transforms a person's Torah learning into truthful Torah learning, and it makes our prayers more earnest, and it causes our performance of the *mitzvos* and the act of doing Hashem's will to stem from a deeper place in ourselves, to be more genuine.

IN CONCLUSION

This is the perfection of our *avodah* we can reach on this world – to merit a relationship with Hashem in which we feel like He is our Father and that we are His child. And when we feel like a child of Hashem, we will be like the child who naturally listens to his parent – the child who hears the voice of Hashem.

But in order to truly feel like a child of Hashem, we need to relate to Him as our Father, as we explained above.⁷⁰

This is the true kind of life – to be constantly connected with Hashem, every day and throughout the entire day, always desiring a closeness with Him.

⁷⁰ Editor's Note: The sefer of Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh, Daled ("Bilvavi" Part 4) is devoted to how we can build a father-son relationship with Hashem.

12- WHAT EVERY MOTHER SHOULD KNOW

THE TOOL FOR CHINUCH

It is written, “You shall make known to your children and to your grandchildren the day which you stood by Har Sinai.”

How do we tell our children about the day we stood by Har Sinai? How do we give them a proper *chinuch* and instill good values in them, such as this?

What is the main vehicle in *chinuch* we need to give over to our children? What is the main tool we can use to instill proper values in our children?

Just to tell our children, “Do this,” and “Don’t do that”, isn’t enough. What is the special power we have in *chinuch*? From where does Hashem give us the power to give over a *chinuch* to our children?

The source for how we do *chinuch* is not our mouth or our actions, but our heart.

THE KEY IS LOVE

Why did Hashem make it that we automatically love our children? It is because the only way we can do *chinuch* is because we can love them. Just because sometimes we fail and make mistakes doesn’t mean we don’t love them; it is just that from our love for them we are able to do *chinuch*.

All parents love their children – but is every parent the same in this love? Is there a father who loves his child more than the mother does, and is there a mother who loves her child more than his father does? Our love is sometimes strong and sometimes weak; the same is true for a husband and wife. Sometimes

they feel a love for each other, and sometimes they don't. As parents we all know that sometimes our love for our children fluctuates. We don't love them as much when they make us very angry. So our love for them changes.

Chinuch doesn't start from *chinuch* – but from how much we love them. The father and the mother have to constantly develop their love for their children more and more in order to properly take care of their child. Of course, no parent thinks he doesn't love his child. A parent who hears our question we are posing might say, "What do you mean that I have to work on loving my child more? I love him already."

Yes, we all love our children, but first we must feel this love and then we need to express it to them. The final step after this is *chinuch*. But if a person jumps to "*chinuch*" without loving his child enough, it's like trying to build a third floor in a house before the second floor.

The amount we express our love should always be greater than how much we tell them to do. Although usually we tell them more what to do and what not to do more than telling them how much we love them, really it should be the other way around: We only really need to tell them what to do only once or twice a week, but we must express our love to them all the time, every day.

CHINUCH – CHEIN AND MENUCHAH

Chinuch comes from the word *chein* – finding favor. It also comes from the word *menuchah* – a calmness. This shows us what *chinuch* really is.

If our child has *chein* to us, than we can do *chinuch* on him. Only when the child feels our love for him can we train him to do anything. If the parent doesn't feel satisfied, how will our child feel satisfied? If a parent screams at a child and he/she isn't calm, how does the parent hope to instill a *chinuch* of *menuchas hanefesh* in the child? The calmness we want to still in them has to come from us.

BRING OUT THE GOOD IN YOUR CHILDREN

Usually when we tell a child what to do, it's usually what they shouldn't do! This is because we aren't calm in our demands when we scream at them.

What we really have to do in *chinuch* is to bring out the good in our children. This is a *chinuch* that brings *chein* and *menuchas hanefesh*.

We must find the good in our children and learn how we can bring it out. This is the true *chinuch*.

This comes when we see the good in them, when we love them and are happy with them and see them in a good light. Our *chinuch* has to come from our deepest love for them. The more we reveal our love for them, the more *chinuch* we will be able to do.

DEVELOP YOUR LOVE FOR THEM

We need to express our love for them more. There are many ways we can express love to them, but the point is not because we have to say "I love you" more often because we heard in a speech that we need to say this... The point is because we need to reveal from within ourselves our deep love for them.

The Maggid of Dubna says that the only way to influence other people is to “fill up your cup and let it spill over”. We need to fill ourselves up with so much love for our children that it overflows out of us onto our children.

The child has to feel that his parents definitely love him. This takes wisdom. It's not enough if a child is given a questionnaire, “Do your parents love you?” and he writes, “Yes, my parents love me.” It is something we have to internalize in ourselves: we need to really internalize our love for our children, and then they will feel loved by us.

Just like we can't raise a child without food or clothing, so must a child know that his parents love him. It's not enough to tell them once a year on *Erev Rosh Hashanah*, “I love you”; we have to let them know throughout the year that we love them.

REQUESTS TO OUR CHILDREN

When a child knows that his parents love him, it is then that the parents can start telling him what to do and raise him, because then the requests come from love. If a child doesn't feel his parents love him, he might listen to his parents, but we will miss the goal.

When we say “No” to our child, do they feel that we are refusing them out of our love for them? They must know the message behind the “No.” If a child doesn't feel his parents love him, the “No” to him sounds like “I don't love you.” When a child knows that his parents love him, he knows that his parents' refusal to his requests come because they care about him.

There are children who listen very dutifully to their parents, but inside they feel like they are slaves. There are indeed parents who have ten children and relate to them as if they are ten slaves! When the child hears his father “Bring me a cup of water,” although he might listen and run to get the cup, inside he feels as if he’s a slave being ruled by a taskmaster; (or it is because he thinks his father is simply lazy and can’t get up from his seat).

If you want to know what the proper attitude you should be having when you make requests from your children, let us bring a story from a great leader which illustrates it. When the Brisker Rav was about to be *niftar*, he told his son that he is requesting something from him for the last time so that his son will be able to fulfill the mitzvah of *kibud av* for the last time.

Does a child feel that his parents’ requests, such as “Do this,” “Don’t do this,” “Get me that”, come from their parents’ love, or does he feel more like he is being commanded by a policeman? We don’t mean that you shouldn’t ask your children anymore for anything, but we mean that your requests from them should be for their own good, that they should become more respectful – and not because you are focused on yourself.

Many times in our requests we forget the message we want to send them and we instead focus on ourselves. When a mother asks her daughter to please sweep up the room, and her daughter dutifully does it, does she feel that her mother asked her this for her own good, or for her mother’s good...

SEEING THEIR GOOD POINTS ONLY

We must express our love to our children every day. We must try to see their good points and not focus on what they do wrong.

How often should we criticize them when they do something wrong? For every hundred compliments we give them, a parent can drop a criticism. Even when we do criticize them, it should be done very calmly. We are all not perfect, and we will still make mistakes, but this is the general formula we need to have in the home.

When the children feel that their parents love them, it is then that our *chinuch* on them can help them.

Chinuch doesn't even begin if we don't develop our love for them. The root of *Chinuch* is our love for our children.

To summarize, we must think every day how much we love our children and express it to them; and we must try to focus only on their good points and bring out the best in them. We need to create a situation in the home in which the children feel very loved, and such a home has a basis for the parents to train them and give over values. It is impossible to be perfect, but this is the basic formula: *Chinuch* must be based on love.



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH THE RAV

QUESTION: How will we help them if we don't tell them what to do?

ANSWER: It's better for them to conclude on their own what to do rather than be told what to do. For example, on Erev Shabbos, if we want to get our children to help around in the house, instead of telling each child what his chores are, ask each child, "What do you think needs to be done in the house today?" The child then thinks about what needs to be done, and instead of grudgingly giving in to your requests, he does so out of concern, because he feels that you value his opinion.

QUESTION: How should criticism be done?

ANSWER: We shouldn't criticize the child while he is doing the wrong action. Instead, wait for a later time and mention it casually, but in a calm and loving way.

QUESTION: How can I get my child to learn? He doesn't like to learn with his father, so how can I push him to learn?

ANSWER: Don't push him to learn – instead, get him to love learning. "Pushing" him to learn will make him want to do the opposite. You can't teach a child anything he doesn't have a love for. We must create a situation in which he loves learning, not just to get him to spend more time learning. It's not about increasing the amount of time he learns, but about increasing his connection to learning, which is only through getting him to loving to learn

ספרי מורינו הרב שליט"א

פירושים

מסילת ישירים (ביאור בלבבי משכן אבנה – סט ב' כרכים)
דרך ה' ח"א (ביאור בלבבי משכן אבנה) אָזל
נפש החיים שער ד' (ביאור בלבבי משכן אבנה)
בעל שם טוב עה"ת (בראשית) עם ספר להב אש
(ביאור בלבבי משכן אבנה)

ענינים

בלבבי משכן אבנה הכנה לשבת קודש אָזל
ספר שאל ליבי תשע"ח-תשע"ט (שו"ת)
קונטרס וחי לעולם – בעניני השעה אם שו"ת
תורת הרמז – פרשיות חומש אָזל
ספר התבודדות
עולם ברור (אוסף דרשות לבני עליו')

קבלה

פירוש בלבבי משכן אבנה על פתחי שערים אָזל
פירוש בלבבי משכן אבנה על עץ חיים אָזל
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תירגומים של ספרי מורינו הרב שליט"א (בלע"ז)

ספר בלבבי משכן אבנה חלק א – בתרגום אידיש אָזל
ספר בלבבי משכן אבנה חלק א – בתרגום צרפת אָזל
ספר בלבבי משכן אבנה חלק א – בתרגום ספרד אָזל
ספר בלבבי משכן אבנה א – בתרגום רוסית אָזל

סדרת בלבבי משכן אבנה

בלבבי משכן אבנה א, ב, ג, ד, ה, ו
(בענין צורת חיים של קרבת ה' חושית)
בלבבי משכן אבנה ז, ח, ט (גילוי התמימות)
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Building A Sanctuary In The Heart, Vol. 1-2

Getting To Know Your Self

Getting To Know Your Soul

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Getting Ready For Your Redemption

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Gateways To Hashem For Today's Jewish Woman

Uncovering Your Inner World (*to be printed soon*)

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1- BUILDING A SOLID FOUNDATION FOR YOUR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION¹

AN APPROACH TO EDUCATION BASED PURELY ON THE WORDS OF OUR SAGES

A subject that is of great concern today is the education of our children. Except for a few isolated laws in the *Shulchan Aruch* (Code of Jewish Law), there is no complete chapter about educating children. Among the works of our Sages, although many topics are addressed, there has not been much written specifically about education. The dearth of clear sources has led to error and misunderstanding. Many people get involved in this field without first establishing a strong foundation in Torah sources.

As Jews, whenever we want to clarify an area, we don't rely solely on logic and the experience of experts. We try to understand our tradition from earlier generations and to find its roots in the Torah, starting with the *Chumash* (Five Books of Moses) and continuing to the words of our Sages and the later commentaries. We will try to clarify the ideas based on the words of our holy Sages. This is the only way to understand how we should conduct ourselves on a daily basis.

The Bridge between the Educator and the Student

The first and primary rule of education is that there are two sides – the teacher and the student. That means that there must also be a bridge between them so that the teacher can reach the student.

For example, when you want to pour a liquid from one bottle to another, if you try to pour directly, some liquid will inevitably spill. You need a funnel – a vessel

¹ Translated from chapter one of the author's Hebrew sefer *Da EsYaldecha*

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with a wide opening at one end and a narrow one at the other – in order to transfer the liquid successfully.

There is a large gap between the emotional and intellectual maturity level of parents and of children. To accommodate this differential, there must be a kind of funnel that will serve as a bridge between the two sides, so that the teacher's message can reach the student. (It is impossible for any quality, behavior, or positive attribute that is not present in the teacher to be transmitted to a student, so the first condition of education must be the personal development of the teacher. We are not dealing with that crucially important issue here. Our words are geared toward a teacher who has transcended that stage and already perfected himself in the area he is trying to convey, or at least is working towards it.)

THE BASIS FOR TRANSMISSION

What is the nature of this “funnel” we are referring to that enables us to educate our children since one cannot transmit ideas through thought alone? There appears to be only two ways to convey concepts to a student: (1) action, through personal example, and (2) words, by verbally explaining the concept to the student. Because of the gap between the broad understanding of the adult and the narrow understanding of the child, there must be a connecting bridge between the two. If the parents' mentality was geared more closely to the child's, there would be no problem, but to the extent that there is a difference between them – especially with older parents – there is a considerable chasm between the mature and childish ways of thinking. If parents communicate via their mature style of conversation, this would be like trying to pour a huge amount of water into a

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small cup. The child will not understand what they are talking about, and the parent will have no idea why he is not communicating effectively.

Since this is so important, it must be emphasized again. In general, when we think about education, the main focus is on the content which, while it is essential, doesn't diminish the vital importance of the medium through which the content is conveyed. If you try to transfer water through a leaky pipe, much of the water will be lost. If there is no pipe, the water will not get there at all. From this we see that a primary principle of education is the means of communication which is the bridge that it is given over with. Only when the medium is firmly established can we then consider the content. With that in mind, we will first describe the bridge and the way to build it, and only after that, the content of the education itself.

NATURAL AND CONDITIONAL LOVE FOR CHILDREN

The *Gemara*² says that one should teach his students using brevity. The Chazon Ish commented that we may apply here, also, the principle that a short path may really be a long one, and a long path might really be a short one. A person might choose to speak succinctly, but because the idea is conveyed in such a terse and cryptic way, it is difficult to understand. For this reason, it is best to employ a method that may take longer at first, but in the end will be quicker.

When a child is born, the newborn does not at first show any reaction toward his parents. But just because the child doesn't yet know how to respond, does that

² *Pesachim 3a*

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mean that his parents don't love him? Of course not! They certainly love him! Love starts as a hidden thing, unrelated to what is revealed – how sweet, or precious, or talented the child seems. On the other hand, when a person marries, the love for their spouse only begins after they get to know each other. As husband and wife get to know and appreciate the qualities and personality of the other, that's when they begin to form a bond.

The natural love between parents and children, unlike marriage, does not begin with becoming acquainted, but at a stage where we do not yet know anything about the child's qualities and personality. There is only inherent love, unrelated to any specific qualities.

What happens when the child gets older? The parents start to get to know him, and are able to see the good and bad qualities of the child, his talents, his inclinations, and so on.

There is a very common phenomenon that takes place in many homes: When there are a number of children in the family, a parent may feel closer to one particular child than to another. What is the reason for this? If the love had remained as it was from birth, this could never happen.

Our love for our children is divided into two parts. When the child is born, the parents have a natural love towards him, regardless of the child's qualities. Later on there is an additional phase of love, as they come to know the personality and qualities of the child. If the qualities are positive, the parents feel even closer to him, but if they are negative, it can create a distance between them. As we know,

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the qualities that emerge from our children are not always positive, and this can have an effect on our relationship with them.

As the child develops, the love that is dependent on his qualities takes a more important position than the initial, natural love, which gets pushed to the side. Parents seem to be relating to the child in accordance with their impression of him. The natural love remains as before, for it exists regardless of personality, but it gets pushed down to the depths of the soul.

LOVE THAT LEADS TO AN EMOTIONAL BOND

There is also a third kind of love toward a child. Of the relationship between Yaakov and Binyamin, it is written, “And his soul is bound with his soul”.³ Each one felt bound to the other. Their feelings were mutual. Does such a relationship exist within either the natural and conditional forms of love that we’ve discussed, or is this a completely different kind of love we haven’t encountered yet?

A mutual relationship with a newborn is obviously impossible, because the child is simply not yet aware of the existence of any relationship. But what about the second kind, when the love is dependent on his individual qualities? Let’s think about it, because the truth may surprise you. If you love a picture because of its beauty, or anything else in the world that finds favor in your eyes, does that mean there is a mutual emotional bond between you and the object? Certainly not! A mutual emotional bond can only exist when there are two parties working together to build the relationship. Loving a spectacular picture or a magnificent

³ Bereishis 44:30

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home is unilateral. This is also true of the love toward a newborn, or toward a cute and pleasant child.

We are not trying to negate the value of the natural love of parents for their children. On the contrary, this is essential and fundamental, for only by its existence can the parents properly care for their infants. However, when we want to properly educate our children, we need a third kind of love – the one that is based on reciprocity, as in “his soul is bound with his soul.” The parent must love the child, and the child must love the parent. This relationship is not always present, because sometimes the love is unilateral.

In summary, there is the one-sided love that parents feels toward a children in infancy. Even at a later stage when there is love based on an agreeable personality – the child is sweet, helpful, or cheerful – the love is still one-sided. But there is another kind of love – reciprocal “his soul is bound with his soul.” This is a mutual love, because the child reciprocates with love. It is possible to test if the love is reciprocated during certain special periods, such as when a parent has been away for a while, or when a mother gives birth and spends some time in the hospital. When she returns home, she may powerfully express her love toward her other children, but if they do not seem excited to see her, the love may still be unilateral.

In order for love to foster proper education, the aspect of, “As water reflects a face, so does the face of man [reflect] a man”⁴ must be present. When love

⁴ *Mishlei* 27:19

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comes from both sides it can serve as that essential funnel, and pave the way for effective education.

Many adults these days claim that their relationship with their parents is faulty. Children feel that their parents don't understand them, and sadly, this is often true. Why is this? One reason could be because the parents are living in a different world from their children. The child looks towards the parent and thinks, "He is from a different generation; he can't understand my needs." In such a situation, if a parent tries to educate and explain, it will be like pouring liquid into a small bottle without the aid of a funnel. The water spills all over, the bottle remains empty, and then the screaming starts!

According to the way Hashem made the world, a couple gets married first, and children come along later. Is the first relationship, the one between the parents, one-sided or two-sided? A healthy relationship must have mutual, reciprocal feelings of love. When children are born to parents who have this kind of healthy relationship, it is easier for the parents to develop a mutual relationship with the children as well. But if, G-d forbid, there is a one-sided relationship between a person and his spouse, the bond with their children will be similar. Just as we understand that a relationship between spouses must be mutual, so must the relationship with our children be based on that kind of reciprocity.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPOUSES & THE RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR CHILDREN

Why, then, is it so important for spouses to have a mutual relationship, while with our children, the relationship is often one-sided? The answer is based on what we said earlier. When a person gets married he chooses his spouse, and

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feels that the relationship must be based on an emotional bond. Even if there are problems in the relationship later, the couple has a foundation that was properly built, to some extent. (Certainly, daily occurrences can gradually weaken this bond, but with some effort, the bond can be fixed, since it has a proper foundation.)

On the other hand, we cannot expect the love we feel for a toddler to be reciprocal. The bond between parent and child is based solely on the parents' natural love. The child eventually grows up, but often, the parents are still immersed in that initial kind of love from the child's younger years. Indeed, when we consider a child's development, it is not easy to emerge from that natural love and develop a new kind of relationship.

In the first months of a child's life, the parents feel a natural love for the newborn, for no apparent reason. As the child grows a little, their love is based more on his personality and qualities. He starts making noises and doing various movements and this increases their love for him. When the child develops more and starts to do smart things – around the age of a year and a half – the parent is very moved. Thus, during the first few years, parents get used to loving their child without expecting any response. (A little smile, a hug, or a cute sentence are not enough of an emotional bond for effective education to begin.)

What happens when the children get older still? Generally, the love between parent and child is based on the two forms we've mentioned: the love that stems from the simple fact that this is their child, and the love that develops from an awareness of the child's personality. Many don't take the trouble to cultivate

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mutual love, and there are consequences to this neglect. At a certain age, many children may know that their parents love them, but they feel that their parents don't understand their needs. In worse cases, they feel unloved.

Beginning from around the age of twelve or thirteen (and sometimes even younger), even if the child is capable of understanding that his parents' relationship to him is based on love, he may say to himself, "Yes, they love me and provide for me, but they don't understand what I need." This is like the words of the Kuzari: "Your thoughts are acceptable, but your deeds are not."⁵

We are not talking here about parents who don't love their children. We are referring to a situation wherein parents love and invest a lot in their offspring but don't realize that this type of love is not a replacement for a mutual emotional bond.

There are people who buy gifts as an expression of love for the recipient (a practice also common among spouses), but soon realize that although a lot of thought was given to the choice of the gift, the recipient isn't happy. This occurs when the giver thinks only about what he feels the recipient needs, and not what the recipient actually needs. When you buy a gift out of love, must there be a two-way bond between the giver and the receiver? Certainly not! When buying a gift for a two-year old child, it does not reflect such a bond.

When one wants to start a relationship with a new friend, the first thing he does is try to get to know him. As they become better acquainted, their love begins to

⁵ *The Kuzari 1:1*

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grow. We can see from this that knowledge is the basis for love. The relationship with children works differently. At first, there is the natural love in the soul. (Although the parents' love is greater, the children also have natural love toward their parents.) After that, both sides need to work on truly understanding each other, as this will help a great deal in the development of a mutual emotional bond.

Of course, knowledge is not enough--only if it is mixed with love can it serve as a conduit for education. There are psychologists who spend hours and hours with their clients and get to know them quite well, but cannot seem to get them out of the troubles they are stuck in. Why? Because those psychologists are merely intellectuals. Even if they possess a lot of knowledge and understanding about the psyche, and can offer helpful suggestions, they have no emotional feelings towards their clients, and thus their knowledge cannot help them. On the other hand, there are many families where, although parents feel love and positive feelings towards their child, there is no real bond and no understanding of the child's needs. In this instance, while there is certainly a good, solid foundation, the foundation alone cannot build the child's personality.

Without a two-way bond, a parent will not understand his child's true needs, and will certainly err in educating him. A parent who relates to older children emotionally, with only love, causes the child to feel like he is being treated like a small child. This is inappropriate, and will hinder the development of a mutual relationship.

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When a parent has a good mutual relationship with his children, he communicates appropriately with them, **and it becomes easier to guide them in the proper path. Without a mutual relationship**, the parent ends up dispensing teachings from “above,” and thinks this is education.

BALANCING AUTHORITY AND FRIENDSHIP

In a biography about the Chofetz Chaim written by his son, he says that the Chofetz Chaim treated his children as friends. When a child feels that his parent is a friend (in addition to a teacher), then education can succeed.

There are those who object to this concept, claiming that if parents act like a friend to their children, they can lose control over the home, and the kids will do whatever they please. According to this oppositional viewpoint, parents must only take the role of educators.

How can we reconcile these two conflicting opinions? Indeed, we may not totally discount the need for the clear message that parents are the highest authorities in the home, but we must remember that the parents’ higher position in the house is only one side of the coin. The bond of friendship between parents and children is equally as important.

If, however, relationships in the home are built only on friendship between parents and children, it cannot be defined as a Jewish home. Obviously, education in the home is based on a clear sense of discipline. Without it, the children would do whatever they wanted and there would be no way for the parents to success-

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fully educate them. But again, it must be reiterated that this is but one side of the coin and there must also be a sense of closeness and friendship.

“LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF” – EVEN YOUR CHILDREN

When the Rambam⁶ defines the mitzvah of “Love your neighbor as yourself,” he writes, “Each Jew must love every other Jew.” Thus, when a parent relates to his child only from the position of being superior to him, he has not only lost his “funnel,” but he also neglects the mitzvah of “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Nowadays, we find diametrically opposed approaches to education. Some parents feel that they must hold themselves above with the children below them, and others take the non-Jewish approach – that everyone is equal.

We will first deal with the approach that parents and children are equal. A friend recently told me of a shocking incident that occurred in a certain family. The father had a room he used to learn in. One day, the son decided that the room was his. He soon acted upon this idea, so that when the father awoke, he saw that his things were moved out and the son’s things were brought in in their place. This distorted view comes from the idea that the child is equal to his parents; from there, he can easily come to the conclusion that his parents must listen to him!

This attitude comes from being taught that everyone is equal – boys and girls, parents and children, teachers and students. If anyone should think that this is

⁶ *Rambam Hilchos Daos 6:3*

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the correct approach, the story above illustrates how harmful it is and how it can lead to the opposite of a proper upbringing.

We cannot totally reject this approach, but we should learn to use it in the proper way. If it is used as one side of the coin, so that in addition to friendship with the children there is also a clear sense of the parents' authority, we have the proper recipe for a Jewish home.

In summary, the bond between parents and children must be based on two dimensions. There must be clear hierarchy in the home, with the children realizing that the parents are the ones who make the decisions. This is the only way that there will be any effective discipline. Alongside this, there must be friendship between the parents and children, and also among the children themselves. This will foster an atmosphere of "Love your neighbor as yourself"⁷ in the home – all family members will be close friends.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF BODY AND SOUL

In fact, it is difficult to apply this model on a daily basis, but if we delve deeper to understand the inner background of this dual perspective, it will become clearer.

As we know from the *sefarim hakedoshim*, this is not the first time that our souls have come into this world. Every soul has been here before, perhaps even a number of times. Do you think that we had the same children in each of our lives? Certainly not. It is said that at times, there is a switch. Someone who was a rabbi to a certain student in one life becomes his student in another. Likewise, a

⁷ Vayikra 19:18

father can later become a son. (This does not mean that a parent should be concerned about this and feel he must obey his child!)

We learn from this that there are two perspectives from which we must approach our children: a perspective of body, and another one of soul. From the physical point of view, we are the parents and they are the children. The house is ours, the income is ours, and everything is under our control. But looking at the inner dimension, each parent should think, "I have a soul and my child has a soul. Am I certain that my soul is higher than my child's?" The answer is no, for it is possible (and often, evidence proves this) that parents have lower souls than their children. Even if they are not lower, they may be only equal. Of course, it is also possible that the children have lower souls. All three possibilities exist. (We don't need to stress that with regard to all the laws governing the relationship with parents, we must use the physical perspective, whether it is about inheritance, other laws of relatives, or honoring one's parents.

When we get used to thinking that there is a clear distinction between the two perspectives of body and soul, we will learn to relate to our children both ways, bearing in mind that a child's soul may have greater potential for Torah scholarship and righteousness than his parent, and even though the parent's current responsibility is to educate children until they grow up, when they do grow up and their souls become manifest, they may well be on a higher level than their parents. This attitude can help any parent relate to his children as a friend, for by internalizing the knowledge that he and his children are holy souls that are part of the Jewish people, it is easier to fulfill the commandment to "Love your neighbor as yourself," and live with them in the house as with close friends.

Nonetheless, we must stress again that this proper friendship must be balanced with a strong sense of the parents' authority. Thus, using the physical perspective, we must work with the dimension of the parents' clear superiority over the child. This leads to trust and discipline in the house. Together with this perspective, we make use of the perspective of the soul – since our child's soul may be equal to ours or even higher, the proper approach is to keep in mind that we both have holy Jewish souls, and to apply, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

This is not a new principle. The Torah clearly orders us to "Love your neighbor as yourself" (and children are surely included in this category). Though many people are not accustomed to looking at children in this way, with a little thought it becomes clear that there is no reason to exclude them from this fundamental rule in the Torah. Just as you fulfill it with your acquaintances, so must you with your children.

FRIENDSHIP SIGNIFICANTLY EASES THE TRANSMISSION OF IDEAS

Now that we have clarified the importance of a two-way bond with our children, we will show how this will help us to give over ideas and teachings to them. When a person wants to hand a physical object to another, he gives it directly, but if he wants to give over an idea that will help in a certain area, for example if he is a teacher or employer, he will just give it as an order. But if he is a friend, the message will be delivered through friendship and conversation.

When parents see themselves only as being superior to their children, if they want to give something over to their children, it will come as an order from above. Even if given with love, the child will still feel inferior. Even when an em-

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ployer loves his worker and gives him gifts, the worker still feels that he is an employee who has a boss. In addition to his sense of authority, when a parent feels that he has many good friends in the house then, without a doubt, the education will be much different, and the children will receive it differently.

Obviously, we cannot give definite rules about when to relate to the children as a parent, and when as a friend. But the principle must be clear: a home cannot be built on just one side of the coin. If the only communication and education there is in the house is transmitted through orders, the education becomes stressful and unbearable. Sadly, we often see the results of this education when the children get older and abandon the home. Even if they don't have the audacity to do that, they will not listen to nor will they internalize that which is said to them, and the results are very sad.

But when there is a proper bond between parents and children, these things generally don't happen, and even if the children have to deal with various difficulties in life, their bond with their parents will help them to cope and prevail. This is not a magical formula that will succeed in all homes, and there will always be problems that require special treatment. But clearly, the initial basis of the relationship between parents and children must be based on these two dimensions – the parents' authority and a bond of friendship.

A PROPER BOND WITH OUR CHILDREN LEADS TO ENCOMPASSING AHAVAS YISRAEL

When we consider married life, we understand that first there is a bond between the two spouses, and then, when children are born, there is a natural love toward them. (We already explained that this will not necessarily lead to love on

the part of the children.) The ultimate goal of the bond between spouses and towards children is that it should ultimately be extended toward the entire Jewish people.

This is another reason that parents' love toward children must be mutual. If it never grows beyond the natural love parents have for their children, it cannot lead to encompassing *ahavas Yisrael* (love of fellow Jews); The only love that can extend to others is that which is based on the perspective of soul, in which the parents understand that their children's souls may be equal or even greater than theirs. This can lead to general *ahavas Yisrael*, as one comes to appreciate the value of everyone's soul.

Without a doubt, it is easier to love your own children in this way than strangers, because we already have the basis of natural love toward them. But remember that this is only the initial stage; if the parents nurture it into a strong bond of friendship with their children, it can certainly lead to a more encompassing and inclusive *ahavas Yisrael*.

In summary, this chapter has not dealt with education itself, but with the stage preceding it – the bridge between parents and children that is the basis of education. The bridge has two dimensions – the authority of parents, through which the children know clearly who makes the decisions in the house, and also the emotional bond that facilitates closeness. Only when these two approaches work together, so that sometimes, authority is used, sometimes friendship is used, and sometimes they are both used, can we expect positive results in education.

2- BUILDING THE WORLD OF FEELINGS ⁸

LOVE FOR OUR CHILDREN IS FOOD FOR THEIR SOULS

The importance of love for the healthy development of our children is well-known. Yet many look at this in a very superficial manner, so we will try to clarify it thoroughly.

Why must parents love their children? What is the purpose of this love? The bond between parents and children must be based on mutual love, but what is the goal of that love? The truest answer is that this love should lead to unity among all of creation. *Ahavah* (love) has the same numerical value as *echad* (one). Through loving our children, it will be easier to generate wide-reaching *ahavas Yisrael*. But we are not dealing with this deeper understanding at present; our goal here is to clarify why love is essential in the home for the children's healthy development.

We intuitively know that just as parents must give their children bread to eat, clothing to wear, water to drink, books and a knapsack for school, so must they give them love. But what we don't know is why. What purpose does it serve?

Every person exists on many different levels, both physical and spiritual. Just as it is clear to every father and mother that they must give their children food, clothing, and all their basic physical needs, it must be clear to them that it is just as essential (and really, even more so) for the child to be loved. As food sustains the body, love sustains the soul.

⁸ Translated from chapter two of the author's Hebrew sefer *Da EsYaldecha*

A child who does not receive love from his parents suffers like a child who is not given breakfast. If love goes missing for a few days, it is as if the child was denied lunch and dinner as well. If he goes without love for one day, the child may overcome the difficulty, but after a number of days, he is likely to become dangerously ill. Just like every parent knows that they need to supply food for the body, so they need to supply love for the soul on an ongoing basis.

THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF LOVE IN EDUCATION

There are two reasons parents must provide for their children. The first is that the children cannot take care of themselves, so the parents are responsible for providing all the children's material needs. The second reason is that the parents are obligated to develop the child's personality and to educate him which requires love.

It is written in *Mishlei*,⁹ "Hashem rebukes the one He loves." When one is certain that the person rebuking him loves him, he can generally accept the rebuke. But if he believes that the rebuke is motivated by spite, hatred, or jealousy, it is unlikely that he will accept it. Without healthy doses of parental love, it is difficult for the child to accept rebuke and guidance from the parent.

Rebuke is only one example. Love is required for any goal related to education. As we explained at length earlier, before education can be instilled, there must first be mutual love established between parents and children, which serves as a

⁹ Mishlei 3:12

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bridge for them. Just as water from a lake needs a pipe so that it can reach a house and provide it with running water, so does education need love, which serves as a pipe for effective transmission of important lessons.

When Moshe *Rabbeinu* was preparing to build the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle), he initially planned to build the vessels first and then the *Mishkan* afterward. Betzalel (the chief engineer of the *Mishkan*) said to him, “If we make the vessels before the building, where will we store them before it is ready? First, we must build the *Mishkan* and then we should make the vessels.” Moshe *Rabbeinu* agreed with Betzalel’s logic, and even praised him for it.

So it is with education. We cannot form the content without first creating a container. The container is love, and it must be built and put in place first, like the *Mishkan*. Only afterwards can the content (the educational matter itself) be delivered. Without this container, it is as if we are pouring water from a bottle without a cup below to catch it, and instead of being neatly contained, the water spills out. Without love, education goes to waste.

Thus, love is needed for two reasons: (1) as food for the child’s soul, and (2) as a container for education. The first aspect is not related to the parents’ role as educators, but is part of their responsibility as parents, who must provide for their children’s needs. Since the soul hungers for love with the same intensity as the body hungers for regular meals, parents must regularly offer love to their children. The other aspect relates to the parents’ role as educators. In order to properly educate, a parent must first develop this love.

We can observe this truth in the natural development of the relationship between parents and children. Think about it: When a baby is born, do the parents first express love for it, or do they try to educate it? Obviously, a parent who tries to educate a newborn baby is wasting his time. But natural love for the child begins to flow starting from his first day on this earth. This is how Hashem designed the relationship between parents and children. First, the love is given, and as the child grows, the parents assume their role as educators.

The problem is that as children grow up, the parents neglect to mix love into the educational process. Parents love their children, but many think that love somehow contradicts education – or at least that their love should not be mixed in with it. This is a common error parents make.

PARENTS' LOVE FOR CHILDREN IS GENERALLY IMPERFECT

Hashem has implanted in each person a love for his children, so there cannot be a parent who does not love his children.

But is this love absolute? Often, there is a conflict between the child's needs and those of the parent, and the parent must decide between the two. At times, the parent will put his own needs first, and at other times, he will put the child's needs first. If a parent is unaware that he sometimes puts his own needs ahead of his child's, he is not in touch with himself.

There are many examples. Sometimes, there is one candy in the house. Do the parents always save it for their child? When a child needs something, do the parents always give it to him without delay? If you are honest with yourself, you will

realize that you do not always provide 100 percent of the child's needs, either because of laziness, or because your own needs come first. Is there a parent who can declare that he was always as patient with his child as the child needed him to be? Do parents always determine their budget based on their children's needs, or do they sometimes spend the money instead on a new cabinet, suit, or car?

Another example: When the mother is sleeping at night, and at 2:00 am, the baby awakens and cries, does she get up right away, or does she wait until the third time he cries out? Many mothers will claim that the baby will calm down by himself, or that there is value in training the baby not to cry every night. This may be true, but often the real reason is that it is very hard to leave the pillow at such an hour. The parent in such a case is putting his needs (albeit appropriately) first.

We must stress a basic concept here: Just as a child has physical and emotional needs, so does a parent. A parent cannot and should not sacrifice her own genuine needs for her child. Ignoring these needs can cause her physically or emotionally to collapse. On the other hand, a parent must overcome laziness and improper desires for the benefit of their children.

Is there a parent who can declare that he has never raised his voice even once in the house? Or, when he did raise his voice, can he honestly say that he only did so for educational reasons, and not as an expression of some inner anger?

The examples differ from person to person, but they apply in all areas of life. Any parent who searches himself will find that although he invests a lot in his children, at times his own desires and interests take precedence.

So on one hand, there is no parent who does not love his children, but on the other hand, no parent can claim that his love is perfect and totally free of any self-interest. This is completely normal, since this is how Hashem made man. It is common that one's self-interest affects his relationship with his community, spouse, and children. This differs from person to person, but on some level it applies to everyone.

One of our tasks as parents is to continue to grow from our current level, and to deepen the love we have for our children as much as possible. The natural love for the children should remain, but each parent must know that when there is a conflict between her interests and those of her children (such as an issue of laziness or personal desire), putting herself first reflects an imperfection in her love toward them. The stronger the love is, the more readily will laziness and personal desire disappear.

We must stress again that a parent has essential needs, and these should not be sacrificed for the children.

Understandably, it is difficult to pass this test perfectly. As with all of life's tests, sometimes we succeed more and sometimes less, but the first step is to identify that the task and test exist. If one believes that his love for his children is perfect, he is not capable of acknowledging this test. But if he realizes that he sometimes wrongly puts himself first, he can begin to deal with it. As he overcomes this tendency, his love for his children will naturally strengthen. He can expand his *ahavas Yisrael* and come to love each Jew like his own child.

We need to flame the fire of our love for our children so that it can be stronger than one's self-interests. Parents' love for children is like a piece of coal. There is a fire inside, but it has not yet emerged. When one blows on the coal and fans the flame, the fire bursts forth. So, too, the parental love is initially incomplete, and one of our major responsibilities is to continually flame the love so that it will burst forth.

DOES THE CHILD ALWAYS FEEL HIS PARENTS' LOVE?

It is very common for parents to feel great love for their children, while those same children feel that their parents don't love them. This is not so common at a young age, but as the children grow older, many will tell their therapists that their parents don't love them. (They are often incorrect, but this is how they feel.)

To address this problem, we must first see where it comes from. Fundamentally, the claim is false, because parents always love their children, but every falsehood must contain a spark of truth.

As we mentioned and emphasized many times, parents love their children and care about them; otherwise, they would not invest so much time, effort, and resources in them. Why are their children oblivious to this?

A partial explanation relates to what was said above. If the love were perfect, the children would naturally sense it. But no parent is perfect, so the children sense the areas in which their parents put themselves first, and decide, erroneously, that there is no love at all.

THE IMPORTANCE OF VERBAL EXPRESSION OF LOVE

To complicate matters further, the love is often not expressed. Parents do not take the trouble to express it openly and clearly toward their children, in the form of clear statements or actions. (These two factors are related. If the love would be perfect, it would automatically be expressed openly.)

In general, the reason this misunderstanding occurs is because parents are busy with the practical aspects of child raising, such as laundry, cooking, cleaning, buying clothes, and other tasks that can take up the whole day. Although all of these tasks are accompanied with love, the fact that we are, on a daily basis, much more focused on the practical realm than the emotional realm, conceals the love from being apparent to the children. Even when we help them with homework, there is minimal expression of feelings. When a child has difficulty with a math problem, we just tell him how to solve it, and the discussion ends there.

If we would ask any parent why she does so much for her children, she would say that she loves them. After all, she doesn't do these things for the neighbor's children. But if we would probe further, we would find that this love she claims to feel is hidden. Though the parents are usually aware of the love, the children often are not.

To illustrate, we will provide an example related to marriage: Is it enough for spouses to "know" that they are loved, or are words also important? Is it enough to say such words one time, or should they be said on a regular basis? Is it enough for a woman to feel loved since she knows that her husband supports the family and makes sure that the house is well-stocked? Most women would say that it is

not enough. She needs to hear verbal expressions of love. Practical aspects of the home are the technical requirements of married life, but the husband cannot only talk about those things. First and foremost he must build the relationship with his words.

But when we consider the relationship between parents and children, we find that the practical aspects of life take up most of the conversation, while the emotional bond, if present at all, is nearly invisible.

Every parent must make an accounting: Does the emotional element of their relationship with their children come out often enough in conversation? It often happens that only after the child displays signs of an emotional problem and a therapist advises conversing with the child in a way that will help his emotional state do the parents make an effort to express their love verbally. We shouldn't wait for such a problem – we should try to avoid it developing at all.

Sometimes the emotional bond is deficient to the point of absurdity. Parents devote themselves tirelessly to caring for their children's needs. Mothers prepare their children's clothing each night for the next day, and stay up until late at night washing and drying the children's clothing, but they don't devote even one percent of that effort into making a direct emotional connection with their children.

THREE WAYS OF SHOWING LOVE

To illustrate a proper bond, we must first describe the structure of the soul. We will see how the words of our Sages regarding the soul are the source of our comments here about child raising.

The soul has three layers (modes of expression): action, speech, and thought. The parents must channel their love in these three ways, so that all the garments of the soul will be properly developed. Most parents succeed with the actions of parenting. Most of their efforts go into the actions required for taking care of their children. But the aspect of speech generally needs improvement, and the aspect of thought in most homes does not even exist.

THINKING ABOUT THE LOVE OF OUR CHILDREN

We are not yet dealing with the aspect of thought, but we will touch on it briefly. Love, as mentioned, must be revealed on all three levels – action, speech, and thought.

When two people love each other, and there is a physical separation between them, does each take pleasure in remembering that the other loves him? Of course he does! The Rambam writes that people who love each other often think of this love. Thinking about love is not a new idea. It is written in the words of our rabbis, and the Rambam applies it to love of Hashem¹⁰. Just as this applies to love of Hashem, so should it apply to love between parents and children.

There is great benefit to parents who invest effort in loving thoughts. All parents are familiar with the tension and anger that their children's antics can arouse. Even though the parent tries to put the anger out of his mind, he isn't always successful, and in any case, the next mischievous act he does reawakens the anger toward the child. But when a parent gets used to thinking about the love she has

¹⁰ *Rambam, Hilchos Teshuvah 10:3*

for her child, that is the best recipe for calming the anger, as it says, “Love covers all offenses.”¹¹

With Hashem’s help, we will elaborate later on this idea, but we will now delve into the realm of emotions, and show how they should be verbally expressed in the parent-child relationship.

INTRODUCING EMOTIONS IN THE RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILDREN

Along with the natural love every parent has for her child, there is another kind of love, referred to as, “Love your neighbor as yourself,”¹² which doesn’t come naturally and must constantly be developed.

This second kind of love is not so easy to develop and express. Returning to the example of a married couple, the relationship there is easier to develop, because the two spouses relate to each other as equals and it is easier to build a bond of love. But when parents want to build a relationship with their children, and because, for the sake of discipline in the home, the parents must take a higher position, the relationship sometimes becomes more like that of a boss to his employee, and this can result in children developing a feeling of inferiority.

Each parent should consider this: Until what age do you say to your children, “I love you”? I think we will find that as the children get older, we say it less and less. At some point, the emotional bond weakens, which is the opposite of the proper way to raise a family.

¹¹ *Mishlei 10:12*

¹² *Vayikra 19:18*

Every person is comprised of a body and a soul, the main part being the soul. But when it comes to the nuts and bolts of child raising, we get everything backwards. We do so much for their bodies, making sure that the shirt they are wearing is clean and their shoes are polished, but few parents give sufficient attention to the more important part of their child: his soul.

As explained above, a person has three layers – action, speech (the medium through which emotions are expressed), and thought. By doing for the child, we develop the child's level of action; by speech and acts of love, we develop his emotions; and we must also work to develop his thought.

Often, there is a close connection between the active and emotional arenas. For example, if a child sees that his mother has not prepared the clothes that he needs, although it appears to be just an action, he can be emotionally hurt. He not only misses the shirt, but also the love that comes with it. But it doesn't always work both ways. When the mother does prepare the clothing daily, the child only senses the action, and not the inner emotional element.

Again, we are not claiming that parents are uncaring towards their children, because this is generally not the problem. Parents do want to provide the best for their children. Almost every parent puts a maximum degree of effort into actively caring for her children. But even though she knows she must develop her child emotionally, she does not express her emotions properly.

What is the root of this problem? In some cases, the parents themselves are emotionally blocked, and they cannot even express their emotions to each other properly. If so, the root of the problem far precedes their relationship with their

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children. They may have been raised that way themselves, or they may have gone through difficult experiences in their lives. Sometimes, it is simply that they are emotionally underdeveloped, just as some people are less mentally developed than others.

In such a case, the parent must first deal with his own emotions and try to develop and express them properly. This problem needs to be corrected not only for the sake of their children, but also for his relationship with his spouse and with his friends. Without healthy emotions, his friendships will be shallow. In fact, he will not even be able to have a proper relationship with the Creator. But since this problem does not relate specifically to children's education, we will not deal with it here.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING THE CHILD'S EMOTIONAL WORLD

We are referring now to parents who are basically emotionally healthy and have a good relationship with each other, who now want to build a strong emotional bond with their children in order to build their emotional world. How can they do it?

The first step is to ensure that the child's emotions are not blocked, and that he can express his emotions to the proper degree. After ascertaining that the child's emotions are properly developed, he can begin to express his emotions to us as parents.

In today's social reality, the emotional realm is not dealt with in school at all. It is completely ignored with boys, and girls are not given much encouragement to

express their emotions in a healthy way. As a result, they tend to experience unhealthy outbursts when they are very hurt or under pressure. As they get older, the absence of emotional maturity becomes more and more evident.

When we want to check if a child's emotions are adequately developed, there is a simple test: if the child knows how to feel and identify his emotions, then he will be able to express his feelings to others. How many children can properly express feelings? A very small percentage. And even those who are properly developed did not necessarily turn out that way as a result of good parenting. Just as there are many children who are intellectually mature and can understand things that are not explained to them, so many children are naturally emotionally mature. Most children, though, are somewhat blocked in this area, not to the extent that they need special therapy, but enough that they need our help. As parents, we need to develop their emotions.

We are not discussing merely removing negative emotions here, such as when a child is too shy to even go to the corner store and obviously needs more self-confidence, but rather the building of an emotional world that will be properly expressed, such as through joy or love.

There are parents who invest effort in teaching their children joy, but love is rarely taught, and so most people do not know how to love Hashem. Though emotions may be expressed from time to time, they are not systematically developed, so the emotional bond between parent and child, or between siblings, or among friends is deficient. Even our service of Hashem suffers.

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Besides the spiritual benefits, a child requires properly developed emotions for his well-being. When parents develop this realm successfully, his soul can be happy and loving.

Children often receive the impression from their parents that they will only consider them to be successful if they always score 100 on their tests and never come home with a note of complaint from the teacher. They also have to help in the house.

The truth is that a successful child is one who is emotionally healthy – happy, full of life, loving, and beloved. When the child has these qualities instilled in him, it becomes so much easier for him to be naturally successful.

Every parent must see emotional development as a goal no less important than caring for physical needs. Just as we do so much for our children and train them in what they have to do, we must also keep in mind that each child has a world of feelings, and it too requires an investment of effort and training.

You know you cannot put the same clothes and shoes on your child for three years in a row because he outgrows them. So too, at age two, you give certain emotions to the child, others at age three, and so on.

PROPERLY BUILDING THE EMOTIONS

Now that we see the importance of this effort, the next question we must ask is: how do we do it? Once parents have internalized the fact that developing the child's emotions is a central and important task, they have made great progress towards reaching their goal.

When children are young, parents have many opportunities to talk to them, because they are often home. When they get older and are home much less often, the conversation must of necessity be of higher quality.

Think of your normal topics of conversation at home. You might want to place a recording device in the house for a few hours, and then listen to what you spoke about with your children. Mostly, we will hear a lot of orders: "Do your homework! Pick up your knapsack! Clean up your room!" There might be a small amount of time in which the parents listen to what happened in school. If there is more time, the parent may tell some stories to the children which is a very positive ingredient. This is the way things are, more or less, in most homes.

How, then, do we introduce a method for building the child's world of emotions? As mentioned before, if the parent's own emotions are weak or poorly expressed, it will be very hard for him to talk about emotions with his children. He must first get the help he needs in order to break through his own blockage. We will assume that the parents here are properly emotionally developed, and they are seeking a way to help their children in this area.

In addition to the daily conversation which consists mostly of practical details and a little bit of education, there should be another kind of conversation, directly related to the emotions. This is not the same thing as an investigation of the emotions: "How are you feeling? Are you happy or sad?" The best way to initiate this type of conversation is for parents to describe and explain their own feelings to their children to the extent it is appropriate.

Each of us has had many experiences. Some of these are happy, and others less so. When parents relate their experiences, and describe their own feelings about them, the world of the child's emotions begins to take shape.

When parents relate their own experiences to their children, and express the feelings they had about them, the child will see that revealing feelings is natural. This is how his own emotional world develops. This is one way parents can include their children in their experiences. The point, of course, is not just to tell stories, but to describe the feelings that went along with the events. This is the most successful way to build a child's emotional world. We must stress, though, that when the child is young, he should not be privy to the major problems in the house. We should not discuss with him the overdraft at the bank, or his older brother's *shidduch*. Each parent should evaluate which matters are age appropriate and can be safely related to the child without causing him unnecessary worry. In the Western world, if a person speaks openly about feelings, he is considered weak. When you try to talk to someone and open him up a little about his feelings, it may seem to him like an invasion of privacy.

This is a distorted view. Parents must create an atmosphere in the house where feelings are openly expressed, and just as a child will feel comfortable to say that he needs a knapsack or new shoes, so will he be able to say that he loves or is afraid.

THE APPROPRIATE MEASURE OF EMOTIONAL OPENNESS

There are homes where the children have the feeling that they cannot know anything about what their father and mother does, and in other homes, the children know all about bank statements and medical issues.

Both approaches are extreme, and as with everything, there is a correct and balanced approach which should be followed. Each parent should decide, based on his knowledge of the child, which matters are appropriate for him to know about, and which are not. Once it is decided that a particular issue should be discussed with the child, it should be done in a way that will develop within him healthy emotions.

When a parent discusses his personal feelings about something that happened to him, he is sharing his own emotional world with his child. This is especially effective if this is done regularly and becomes part of the bond between them.

Again, we must emphasize that one must find the proper balance. Parents must not burden their children with all their troubles, but they must also avoid blocking off their own feelings from their children.

BUILDING EMOTIONS THROUGH THE SUBCONSCIOUS

Indirect messages affect children on the subconscious level and penetrate deep inside, as we know. When children see how their father helps their mother, and their mother prepares food for their father, these positive actions have a great effect on the children in an indirect way.

So too, on an emotional level, a healthy atmosphere can be created in a circumspect way. The parents can intentionally talk to each other about certain appropriate topics while the children are around, and discuss their experiences and feelings. In this way, the children will internalize the fact that their parents are discussing emotions.

A child will naturally acquire the behaviors he grows up with at home. If his parents only show emotion when something extreme happens, whether it is a very joyous occasion, or, G-d forbid, the opposite, he learns that emotions have no place in daily life, and should only be expressed when a sibling gets married or a relative passes away. Only then are his parents moved to tears; otherwise, he doesn't see any other emotional expression.

When a child sees that his father is sometimes very happy, or that he cries (yes, cries!) about things the child can understand, he sees that his parents also have a soul. This is how he learns that emotions are perfectly legitimate. (But he should not see his father crying about personal problems, because that indeed comes from weakness.)

Again, care must be taken so that the expression of emotions the child sees is moderate and balanced. If all they see is emotions, the results will be disastrous. The children can become so sensitive and so easily offended that it will be impossible to live with him. But if there is a proper measure, the soul develops as it should, and the benefits are tremendous.

There is no precise formula for the extent to which emotions should be exposed. Each household is different, and the emotional maturity of each individual child

must be taken into account. There are no exact instructions for how to act in each situation in other areas of life either. A parent must know himself and his children and act according to that awareness. Note that at this stage, we are not yet dealing with the child's own emotions. We are at a prior stage, where the parents express feelings either through talking to each other with feeling, or by sharing their feelings with their children. In this way, the child learns that the emotional realm is a part of normal life, and need not be hidden or shown only on rare occasions.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES OF DESCRIBING EMOTIONS

Since this is a new idea for many, here are some examples of how parents can properly describe their feelings. A parent reads a particular book and is moved by it. When he describes to his children what he read and what he found so moving, he is developing his children's feelings. He might also relate that when he sees children walking to class on the first day of school, he is very moved by it. He might also include them in painful experiences, such as, "I was walking in the street and saw someone (without mentioning names, of course) acting improperly, and it hurt me very much."

There is no need for long stories; brief and simple comments that express feelings are equally effective. There is a whole world around us, filled with so many experiences that can be shared with children to help them grow.

BUILDING THE WORLD OF EMOTIONS – A PRECONDITION TO EDUCATION

If a parent wants to properly educate her children, she needs to go through three stages. She must: (1) form an emotional bond with them, (2) build their

emotional world, and only after that, (3) actually educate. If she tries to start with the third stage, she is wasting her time on an effort that will surely fail.

Our children have a body and *nefesh*¹³ (we refer here to the *nefesh*; the spiritual element – the *neshamah* – will be covered later). Just as we must care for the body by providing food, clothing, and more, so must we (and perhaps even more so) provide for the *nefesh*. This must be a continual goal of ours.

When a child wakes up in the morning, his mother does not need to ask if he is hungry that day and wants a sandwich to take to school; so too, emotional needs should be provided not only when a problem has surfaced, but on a regular basis. A child needs to eat properly even if she does not seem ill or malnourished; so does her emotional world need to be nourished even if we do not observe a need in the form of an emotional problem. (Of course, if there is a real problem, we should deal with it, but it should not have to come to that.) If parents don't understand this, they end up ignoring their children's feelings unless they come home from school and seem especially sad. We should not wait to begin developing the child's emotions because of problems; there is a better, more consistent and proactive method.

If emotions have been ignored in the home until now, there will be a need for external reminders at first. After a while, the proper kind of conversation will become natural. As a mother does not need to be reminded to prepare breakfast, so will the need to develop the children's emotions be obvious. Once parents under-

¹³ [Editor's Note: As is known from the *sefarim hakedoshim*, the *nefesh* is the lowest level of "the soul" within man and is the "partner of the body". The *neshamah*, on the contrary, is located primarily in the mind.]

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stand its importance, they should try to make it as natural and as self-evident as the importance of caring for physical needs.

Just as there are ways to tell if the child's body is healthy, so is there a way to tell if the child's soul is healthy: a healthy soul is happy! This does not require a new baby, bar-mitzvah, or wedding in the family; the joy of life should always be present.

As we explained, the emotional world must be a concern in the home, no less vital than three square meals. Just as a mother prepares dinner and sees to it that it will be properly seasoned and neither over cooked nor undercooked, so must each parent see to it that the child's soul will receive the right amount of sustenance. Furthermore, just as we have become more conscious of the need for a balanced and nutritious diet, and for the need to nourish a child in accordance with his age and needs, so too, each child, according to his situation, needs a balanced emotional diet.

A PROPER BALANCE WHEN SHARING EXPERIENCES WITH OUR CHILDREN

To what extent should a child be aware of his parents' experiences and feelings?

A proper balance must be maintained. The children should be exposed to as much of the parents' positive experiences as possible, but to little of the difficulties of life. However, if parents only share positive experiences and no negative ones, depicting all of life as rosy, happy and successful, the children will be deluded into thinking that there are no problems in life. When they grow up and see that this is not the case, they can become overwhelmed. The proper way to raise

children who can be realistic is to share a lot of positive experiences, but to also share some of the problems – of course, to a degree that they can handle them.

A precondition of such discussions is that the parents must themselves know how to cope with these problems. When they can properly cope, their children can benefit from learning about these situations.

USING A NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE AS A MEANS FOR POSITIVE THINKING

Here is a common example: Often, a child will need to be hospitalized for a few days. (We are not talking about an extreme case, G-d forbid, like a chronic illness, but a normal situation due to a light injury or a minor illness that requires a few days of hospitalization.) A parent will need to be with him at night, and this will be hard on the other children. In most cases, it will be difficult for both parents.

How should we talk to our children about such situations? One might directly ask the child about his difficulty and suffering, and how he is dealing with it. But a better way is to start by talking about the difficulties facing the parent who is at home and how he or she is coping, and only after that speak about how the child himself is managing.

When we talk to the child directly about the problem and the ensuing challenges, we have not given him the tools for dealing with it, so we are not helping him. But when the parent shares his own feelings in an appropriate way, he opens a common channel between his feelings and those of the child, and thus helps him cope in a healthy way.

In the example above where the child is in the hospital and the parents take turns being with him, the parent remaining at home should describe to the children at home how hard it is without the other parent there, but should also mention the positive perspective. The conversation should not be full of complaints, but must express both the current lack as well as the positive element, as we will describe.

Before we describe how to transmit this to the children, we must first clarify how the parent should convince himself. Only then can the message be properly delivered to the children.

When a father or mother remains at home and feels the absence of the other spouse strongly, because he or she has to get up during the night for each of the children, and to get all of them out to school (with all that goes along with that), what kind of thoughts does this lead to? Is there sadness or depression? Such thoughts will not help the children develop their emotions, and in fact will do just the opposite. Therefore, the parent must first work through his own feelings. To think only of what is lacking is not called coping. How, then, should one cope?

He can think, "Yes, there are certain difficulties. But now I can learn to appreciate when things are going smoothly, when I do get help from my spouse in running the house." This kind of thinking can cause the current absence of the spouse to lead to some degree of inner happiness.

Of course, even positive thoughts will not make someone overjoyed and hope the situation will continue for as long as possible. The absence of their spouse is definitely troubling and distracting. But at the same time, there comes a level of

appreciation and respect for the spouse, and this will lead to gratitude and appreciation of the normal routine.

When the parent succeeds in attaining a primarily positive outlook, he can start talking to the children about how he feels bad that his spouse is not home. He can do this because he will share both perspectives – the difficulty as well as appreciation for his spouse’s usual presence. Thus, the message to the children is that the absence is not totally bad. In fact, the children can learn that it is possible to grow from a negative experience.

If the parent is really convinced of this and the words come from deep inside, the children will absorb the message and be able to successfully cope with the parent’s absence by thinking of the benefits of their regular routine. When we speak openly to them in this way, they will naturally begin to talk in a similar manner.

Here is another example of a situation that seems negative but can have a positive outlook. A couple is married for a number of years and has not yet been blessed with children. This certainly causes a feeling of emptiness, but are there no benefits at all? Many childless couples claim that the shared suffering brought them much closer to their spouses. Thus, even a very difficult situation has a positive side.

Of course, if we would ask a newly married couple if they would choose to be childless for a number of years in order to become closer to each other, they would say that they would not. But if they find themselves in such a situation, they should recognize the difficulties, but also dwell on the positive dimension.

DENYING PROBLEMS DOES NOT DEVELOP THE EMOTIONAL WORLD

There is another way some people handle difficulties in life – they push them out of the way to some distant place in the soul, and try to forget them. This method should only be employed if there is no other alternative. It is not a good way to deal with most difficulties, because a person who ignores their problems eventually loses all of his sensitivity.

A better way is to acknowledge the problem, and then form a kind of puzzle, with both positive and negative pieces to the picture. Then we should look at the big picture and see if we can have an overall positive outlook. If so, that is a great accomplishment. In addition, one should look at the negative parts themselves: are they totally negative, or can something positive come from them? Since there is no absolute negativity in Creation,¹⁴ we should be able to divert any difficulty toward a positive direction.

Thus, we cope with difficulties on two levels. First, we see if the experience has more positive elements than negative ones. Even if this is not the case, we must look for some points of light within the difficulty that can help us cope with what we are lacking. (Of course, faith in the Creator can help tremendously in dealing with difficulties, and the stronger one's faith is, the more easily he can cope with his problems. But here we are working with someone on a lower emotional level.)

WHEN TO DISCUSS PROBLEMS WITH THE CHILDREN

Now that we know how the parents should deal with difficulties and problems, the question is: which problems should be shared with the children?

¹⁴ Derech Hashem 1:5:8

In light of what we have discussed, there is a simple indicator: If our own attitude is that the negative outweighs the positive, then we should keep the children away from it. Otherwise, we will deliver a negative message, and give them negative emotions. Of course, if there is a chronic problem in the house, like a disabled or ill child, the other children must be involved and taught how to deal with the situation, as tough as it is. But if the children might never find out about the problem, it is often best to hide it from them. (This is not an absolute rule, though, because they must learn that life has challenges that must be confronted.)

When should the children be involved? When there is a problem and the parents feel that the positive outweighs the negative, the children should be shown the big picture, both the lack with its unpleasantness and also the positive side. We thus fashion their emotional world properly.

Let's apply this to the example mentioned above. When one parent needs to be away from the house for a number of days, the other spouse should examine his feelings: does he go to sleep sad, or is he able to cheer himself up? If he feels sad, there is no point in his waking up the next morning and transmitting this sadness to his children. But if he is convinced that there are positive elements to his current situation, which brings him appreciate the normal routine when both parents are together, and he becomes happy, he should transmit such feelings to his children. He should describe how much he misses his spouse, and at the same time, show that he is dealing with their absence by concentrating on the positive elements.

EVEN DURING GREAT DIFFICULTY, ONE CAN FIND A POSITIVE POINT

Here is a different example, which will apply to a case where there are older children in the house, and we cannot hide from them what is going on: A family is renting an apartment, and the landlord informs them that they must move out in thirty days. They need to find a new roof over their heads, and this generally causes a very unpleasant situation. The parents are under stress, and their minds are preoccupied with the problem. They need to be in touch with real estate agents, go to see apartments, check out which neighborhoods are appropriate, and so on.

We cannot hide this from older children. It is impractical to discuss all these things behind closed doors. How then can we train the children to cope in such a situation?

Here, too, the extent to which we include the children depends on how the parents themselves deal with this situation that was thrust upon them. Without a doubt, it is not easy to move to another house. Besides the move to a new area with new neighbors, there is the difficulty of packing up all the belongings, taking apart and reassembling the cabinets, setting up the furniture, and so on, which is all very difficult and exhausting. How does a person feel in this situation?

The initial feeling will be one of difficulty, negativity, and impatience. But does one need to only see the negative, or is there also something positive?

If one only looks at the negative aspects, he cannot go through this process properly. He will not be able to stop complaining and will not be able to find any

comfort. But if one looks for positive points, it will be easier and simpler to cope. What can be positive about being forced to move on such short notice?

Each of us knows that we are not here forever, but most of us do not think about this fact on a daily basis. The fast pace of life forces us to push this truth away to a distant corner of the mind. We suffice with observing the law that requires us to leave a space of four handbreadths without plaster in order to remember the destruction of the Temple,¹⁵ but we do not remember that our own house will also be destroyed one day.

When a person is told that he must leave his apartment, though it is very difficult, he can find a positive side in that he now has a reminder that we have no permanence in this world, and that true eternal life is in an entirely different world.

This is an example of a case where children are forcibly made aware of a difficulty, and we must help them deal with it properly. If the parent senses that he can only feel sadness about the situation, there is certainly no value in talking about it a lot with the children. But if he has found at least some point of joy from it, together with the difficulty that he will convey, he can help them find some positive point themselves.

If the children would not become aware of the situation, it would in fact be better not to discuss it with them at all, because all the parents have managed to do is to find one positive point, while they predominantly see the experience as neg-

¹⁵ *Shulchan Aruch, Hilchos Tisha B'Av 560:1*

ative. Ideally, children should only be exposed to situations where the parents can show them how the positive outweighs the negative. But since in this case, they already know about the problem, we can show them at least one positive aspect.

Any parent can easily think of negative situations that their children know of in the house. The rule is always the same: first look by yourself at the positive points, and then discuss with the children the problems as well as the hopes and positive elements.

DEVELOPING THEIR EMOTIONAL WORLD MAKES THEM STRONG

When we talk to our children about problems in the home, and we present both the positive and negative sides, there are many benefits: We strengthen our bond with the children, which is itself a valuable achievement. We train them to cope with problems that may surface in their own lives by talking about the positive and negative sides of a situation. And we give them a formula for remaining happy even when we are lacking things. This is the best way to develop the emotions, as it gives the child the strength to deal with the storms of life in the healthiest way.

We see youths nowadays between the ages of fourteen and seventeen who have come across small problems in their lives, and have no idea how to cope with them. Why? Because they have never had to deal with adversity. When they went to the store, the grocer just recorded the amount, and the parents paid at the end of the month which is common in Israel. When one of them needed to buy clothing, he took along a check from his father. If there was a problem in school, the parents straightened everything out for them. Now that they are be-

ginning to grow up, they suddenly find that life does not go all that smoothly and sometimes, difficulties arise.

What is the solution to this? Of course, we would not intentionally place difficulties before a young child just so he can deal with them. But at least we can give him the tools for dealing with troubles and navigating through the hazards of life in the best way possible.

When we have a generally good emotional bond with our children, and when there is a problem, we show them the negative aspect but emphasize the positive, we develop children who will be able to deal with life's challenges as a matter of instinct. This is not just information they learn; it is patterning emotional lessons that touch the inner soul of the child.

We cannot possibly foresee all the problems they will confront in their lives and offer specific guidance as to how to deal with each of them. But when we have succeeded in directly touching their emotions, we have given them a tool for dealing with all sorts of difficulties that may arise.

Here is an example: If a person goes out of a warm home in the winter to a very cold place without proper clothing, there is a good chance that he will get sick. All the more so is this true on the emotional level. On one hand, the house must be a warm place for the children, through constant love and care, but we cannot present the whole world as full of such warmth. We must teach them from their youth that there are challenges in life. The proper and balanced way is to develop their emotions so that when they grow up they will be able to navigate more easily through their challenges.

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRENGTHENS THE BOND WITH OUR CHILDREN

Here is another benefit: Most parents attest to the fact that often, when their children have grown up, they don't come to their parents to discuss the struggles and challenges confronting them. Sometimes this is because the grown child feels his parents are part of a different culture or generation and won't understand the problem, but often the lack of connection between them comes from the fact that the child never sensed that his parents had a listening ear toward his or her feelings.

The reason the child feels this way is usually because emotions were not discussed at home. When the child came back from school crying, he was calmed down with a candy. Sometimes, the child feels inside that his relationship with his parents exists only on the practical level, but that his parents have nothing to do with his emotional issues.

Even when there seems to be evidence of a strong relationship, it might not be strong in the emotional realm. At times, we see that children really miss their parents, like when they go away to yeshivah, or get married, or travel out of the country, and such. But though a child will generally miss his parents when he is away from them for a while, this does not mean that the emotions have been developed properly.

What, then, is a sign that the emotional world has been properly developed? The only proof is when we see that the child knows how to see the positive side of things. This is especially true when he is faced with challenges and knows how to deal with them correctly. Then we can be confident that his emotions are properly developed.

We must remember that the child must learn about this primarily from us, the parents. Math, grammar, and history can be learned within the walls of the school, but to deal with the challenges that will surface at home, or with friends, or at work, or in school, or anywhere else, he needs to learn by observing how his parents cope with problems. If they tend toward unbridled sadness and depression, she will often follow suit, but if they display proper reactions, she will reap the fruits daily.

DEVELOPING THE EMOTIONS HELPS AGAINST THE TENDENCY TOWARDS SADNESS

There is another reason for developing children's emotions: When we look at the world, we see that most people tend to be sad. The main reason for this is ordinary human nature, as is written, "You are earth, and to earth you will return."¹⁶ The element of earth in the soul is the source of sadness, as Rav Chaim Vital writes in *Sha'arei Kedushah*. But there is another factor that reinforces the sadness: most people's emotions are not properly developed.¹⁷

A person generally passes through childhood relatively happy. When he is a teenager, he begins to confront minor problems. As he gets older and bigger problems surface, he realizes that there is a soul to deal with that reacts to these problems. Most children don't think about their souls at all. Even teenagers are able to let life flow, and they try to push their difficulties into a distant corner of the mind.

¹⁶ Bereishis 3:19

¹⁷ See the authors sefer, Getting to Know Your Soul

The soul begins to concern a person when his problems become more frequent.

This is particularly true after one is married and suddenly discovers an incomprehensible inner emptiness that makes him feel he is lacking something. Since this discovery happens without any prior preparation, and one does not have the tools to deal with it, he tends toward sadness, and finds it hard to extricate himself.

To illustrate, if a pot is left in a storage room for twenty years without use, what will it look like? At best, there will be a lot of dust and worms, but normally, it will be rusty and unusable, and you will not be able to clean it even with boiling water. One who ignores his emotions when he is young, and does not know his emotional world, can only be at peace when things are going smoothly. As soon as life gets more difficult, he must confront his emotional reactions, and this becomes difficult and complex.

We see nowadays that there are many seminars available for the sake of “getting to know yourself”.¹⁸ In most of these seminars, there isn’t a single empty seat. Why? Since most people discover their emotional world after they start encountering all sorts of troubles in life, they sense the problem stems from their inner world and they don’t know how to deal with it.

When we begin to deal with life’s problems after they have already surfaced, they are doubly difficult to overcome, but if we have managed to prepare in advance, they will be much easier to confront.

18 *ibid.*

If our children are to properly deal with the problems in life, we must start building their emotional world from a very young age. Each age must be treated differently, but the effort must begin at a very young age. Just as we give them food appropriate for their age – at first, liquids, and we later transition to foods that are more and more solid – so too, we should give them the opportunity at older ages to deal with the emotions appropriate for those ages.

There is a view among some parents that if children are forced to confront life at a too young an age, they will eventually become depressed. Where do they get this idea from? It seems that the parents themselves get depressed whenever they are faced with some challenge, so they feel that if we force the child to contend with challenge, he too will get depressed! But if they would see each challenge as an opportunity for growth, they could train the children to deal with these challenges in a way that will strengthen them.

MIXING EMOTIONS INTO DAILY LIFE

Building the emotional world of a child must be an inseparable part of running the home. Just as we check the temperature in the house, so that it won't be too cold or too hot, we must regularly check the "emotional weather" of our children, make this a daily concern. When we see that more must be invested into a child's emotional needs, take care of.

When there is a baby in the house, we play with it and want it to laugh, smile, and be happy. In this way, we develop his emotions. But when the child gets older, we focus less on the soul and more on doing practical things for him. Therefore, the parents' mission statement must be: "In our home, we raise people with

souls – not robots!” Since joy is food for the soul, we must put effort into it, creating an atmosphere of happiness in the home that will sustain the children’s souls.

This value must be applied to our own personal lives first. Only then can it be a mission in the home. A sad person cannot be made responsible for making other people happy. Not only must the parent be happy, but she must look at life with a positive perspective. She must understand that what grants her joy is not bread or breakfast, but something from within, and then she can share her joy with a child.

If parents view life as full of the burdens of child raising, work, and other responsibilities, children will get the same message. But if we feel that life is about our emotional reactions, we can share that point of view with our children.

We must also emphasize that we cannot ignore the necessary actions, but we must join it with emotional development. We need to train the child with the knowledge that actions, even those related to religious obligations, should lead to a state of “Rejoice, O righteous, in Hashem.”¹⁹

A HEALTHY SOUL

When we engage in developing the soul, we have to first ask ourselves, What is a healthy soul? First of all, a healthy soul is not one that lacks nothing, because there is no such soul. What, then, is a healthy soul? When a child is fully aware of the difficulties in his life, and even feels them, but the joy that accompanies him far outweighs the pain, his soul is healthy.

¹⁹ *Tehillim 97:12*

To create this level of joy requires much effort, but if we see this as a daily mission, we will train our children to cope properly with challenges. Only in this way can we hope that at a certain stage they will feel an inner joy that will allow them to cope with all the troubles they encounter in life. If, however, emotions are ignored in the home, once the child faces a problem, he will fail; he was not taught what to do, and the need to confront the challenge makes him sad.

THE BENEFIT OF PROPER EMOTIONS IN CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Besides the importance of building the emotions for the sake of the child's soul, it can also help in education. Many parents who want to properly raise their children ask advice as to what to say and what not to say, what to do and what not to do, and so on. Although this too is an important part of education, let us think more deeply.

When there is no love between people, even if we try to educate and rebuke them in the best possible way, the message will not come from a pure place in the soul. At best it will come from a neutral place, and at worst, from a bad place. Thus, there is little hope for success. But if there is already a deep bond between parent and child, the child senses that the rebuke is given out of love and it is much more likely that it will be accepted and internalized. As it says,²⁰ "He whom Hashem loves, he rebukes."

²⁰ *Mishlei 3:12*

When a child does not feel emotionally attached to his parents, and a parent gives orders and punishes, he feels that the parent is against him. What can we hope from a child who grows up that way? He will never develop positive feelings for his parents, and on some level, we are building negative feelings.

Let us examine the nature of the bond between parents and children. What does each feel toward the other? We can say that parents will always have some feelings for their children, but their children don't normally feel for their parents, unless they go away for a while and they miss them. If so, all the child feels is that his parents take care of his basic needs on a daily basis and they punish him. (He is not correct about this, but he certainly might feel this way.) Clearly, we don't want to raise our children this way. But, when parents first develop a constant emotional bond with their child and they are forced to punish him, although he will have some negative feelings toward them, on the whole, the positive feelings will outweigh the negative. The negative feeling gets pushed to a corner and has almost no effect.

Reality proves that often, as the children get a little older, the only emotions they express toward their parents are negative. This is due to the fact that their emotions were not developed properly, and they only know how to express themselves when there are problems, and then, the emotions expressed will be negative.

EACH CHILD AND HIS EMOTIONAL NEEDS

Each child must be dealt with according to his personality. Some children are more sensitive than others, and we must deal with them differently. Just as some

children have different physical needs – one must sleep more than another, another must eat more, another feels colder and needs warmer clothing, and so on – and must be treated differently, so too in the emotional realm, we cannot complain about a child who has more emotional needs than his siblings. A mother would not criticize a child for needing to eat more than his siblings, because such are his bodily needs. Emotional needs are no different. If we see that a child's soul has greater needs, we must provide for them, such as by expressing ourselves to the child more.

DEALING WITH CHILDREN WHO SENSE EMOTIONAL FAVORITISM

Often, an older sibling will feel that his parents show favoritism to a younger one. This is not as common in the practical realm, but it is common for one to feel this in the emotional realm. He will get angry and complain to the parents that they give the younger brother, in his opinion, too much attention, while their relationship to him, he claims, is very different.

How do we deal with such accusations? Of course, we must first check if there is any truth to them. If there is, we must immediately correct ourselves and start to give him what he needs. But if this is an error on his part, such as when an older brother feels that he should be treated exactly like the younger one, we must explain his error to him, by using practical examples.

For instance, we might point out that the older child might go to school without a knapsack, while the younger one has one. Because the older one is already in fourth grade, he doesn't need to take a lot of things to school, as opposed to the younger one, who is in first grade and needs a knapsack to bring all the things he

needs with him. Such an example highlights the practical difference between children of different ages. Once the older child understands the distinction in such an example, we can explain to him that the younger child has unique needs even in emotions, which is why the older one incorrectly assumes that there is some favoritism.

Often, parents will try to explain this to an older child, but he will only respond with, "If a young child gets more attention, I also want to be a young child." The reason for such a reaction is that the child is already angry during the discussion, so we cannot expect him to understand and absorb this concept.

Therefore, the proper method when the child is upset with us is to first calm him and allow him to express his inner rage (up to a certain point), and only after that, look for an opportune time for speaking with him when we can explain everything calmly, so he can absorb the idea while he is able to think clearly.

Likewise, we must make sure that the conversation will be relaxed. For example, look for an opportunity to take him with you when you go shopping, or take him for a short walk in the evening. This way, you can initiate a long conversation. You can then listen to what is really bothering him and let him know that you are always interested in hearing his concerns.

There are those who feel that they don't need to explain to their children why they do certain things. There is some truth to this, but we should only use this approach a small percentage of the time, in order to teach the child that we don't need to explain everything to him. But if this defines the entire relationship in the house, the child will respond to it by developing emotional blockages, and will of-

ten withdraw into himself. Even when the parents feel that the child is not fully correct in her negative feelings, the fact that she feels that way means that she needs proper care and support.

We do not need to agree with all his complaints. The very fact that he finds in us a listening ear gives him the message that we are not ignoring his problems. Afterwards, when we explain that some of his complaints are justified and some are not (and even with those that are not, we might be willing to make some kind of concession), he will accept what we say. There is no clear determining factor here; each parent must use his own good judgment to decide when it is appropriate to explain our behavior and when to explain that he does not need to understand everything.

This process is very fundamental to proper emotional development. At first, the child must become accustomed to hearing her parents expressing their personal feelings, in order to open a channel to the child's emotional world. After that, as the child learns to express her own feelings, the parents' job is to serve as a listening ear for those feelings (even if they are negative), and when necessary, to correct what must be corrected, in the proper way. When they follow this process, in most cases, the child will grow up emotionally healthy.

A SUMMARY OF THE STAGES OF DEVELOPING EMOTIONS

Because this is so important, we will sum up what we've said on the topic of developing emotions, so that it will be as clear as possible.

The soul must be an obvious element in the home. Just as it is clear that a house needs four walls, a floor and a ceiling, so does every home need a soul – feelings should be spoken about openly and clearly. It should be a topic that is perfectly normal to speak about.

How is this achieved? The parents must allow the children access to the parents own emotions. As described above at length, it should be done to the proper degree, as positively as possible, and as appropriate for the age and level of the children. As a result, the children will generally open up to us and share their feelings. Then our responsibility is to listen to them carefully, engage in conversation, and identify with them as much as possible.

If the child comes home feeling pressured and starts sharing his feelings, it is possible to calmly tell him, “Right now, I’m busy, but I’ll try to make time for you as soon as I can, so I can listen to you.” Of course, she must then make every effort to give the child the time she has promised him.

When the relationship works this way, there is meaning in the parents’ words to the child, “I love you.” But if there is no regular involvement with his feelings, these words won’t mean much.

We cannot expect that the house will run smoothly just because we throw out such a phrase before bedtime and add a kiss. Often, in fact, this is no more than a result of pangs of guilt due to all the commotion of the day and its arguments and negative events. The next day, everything will just repeat itself. The relationship between the parent and child will not improve this way. (It’s better than nothing, but it is not a real solution to a difficult relationship with a child.)

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When feelings are dealt with in the home, even if at times there is a tense atmosphere, the child believes and hopes that tomorrow or the day after, his parents will ask to speak to him, hear what he has to say, and try to deal with his complaints to the best of their understanding. In this way, there is an open channel of communication between parents and children.

If the channel is open and properly functioning, as the children grow, the emotional bond with their parents also grows, just as the body grows. But if we have ignored their emotional development when they were young, then as they age, the distance between parent and child becomes greater. (Often, as they grow up, they put effort into honoring the parents because of the mitzvah to honor them, but it doesn't come from a real emotional bond.)

If parents want to run their home properly, they must build a home where they not only take care of the children's material needs, but they also introduce the dimension of the soul. They strive towards open communication with their children. The conversation must be respectful but open. When a child knows that his parents truly listen to his feelings, it gives him hope, and with that, he can blossom to greatness.

3- MIXING EMOTIONS INTO DAILY LIFE ²¹

An essential part of educating our children is the proper integration of emotions in our daily activity. We already know that the soul has three garments: actions, feelings, and thoughts. Just as it is clear to any parent that he must train his children to act properly, he must also guide them to feel properly. Our feelings are as real as our hands and feet. Just as the body has its needs for food, drink, and sleep, the soul needs proper emotional nourishment and guidance. A successful child is not just one who listens to whatever his parents say like a robot, but whose emotional world has been developed properly.

TALKING ABOUT FOOD

Here is a simple example from daily life: A mother knows how to prepare many different kinds of food for her family. Each food tastes differently; we consider some more tasty, and there are other foods we don't like. Each household has its own way. Some parents feel that a child should only eat what he likes. Thus, a mother with five children may need to prepare seven kinds of foods for the seven family members.

Then there are homes with the opposite attitude. The mother prepares dinner as she sees fit, and each child without exception must eat everything served and not leave over a crumb! There is no consideration for individual preferences, and even if the child doesn't like a food, he must eat what the mother has decided to

²¹ Translated from chapter three of the author's Hebrew sefer Da EsYaldecha

cook. (Obviously, both extremes are wrong, but we have intentionally presented these extremes to serve as an example for our topic of emotional development.)

We should first consider: is it positive to discuss the tastes of different foods and what each child prefers to eat? Our initial response might be that it is better not to talk about this subject, which is all about physical pleasures. The child is liable to turn out spoiled as a result of focusing on such things. It would be better to train him to eat what there is, even if he thinks he doesn't like it.

But let us ask ourselves, as parents and as people: do we like all foods the same? Of course not! Only the snake was cursed with, "You shall eat dirt for your whole life,"²² meaning that everything he ate would taste like dirt, but we as human beings have a sense of taste, and we can appreciate the unique taste of each food.

The sense of taste is something personal. Though it is not as deep as our innermost feelings – feelings about food are very external – it is nonetheless a real feeling that we should be aware of.

If so, even though we should educate a child to get used to eating even what he doesn't like, we may not totally ignore his preferences for certain foods. How can we do this successfully and avoid spoiling him? The answer is two-fold: first, let him decide which foods he likes and which he doesn't. Let him explore the subject and talk about it openly. Once his feelings have been clearly established, we can then teach him that we need to also eat things that we don't like (to a certain de-

²² Bereishis 3:14

gree). This will get him used to eating foods other than those that he likes and prefers.

Some have the opinion that in order to educate a child to eat even what he doesn't like, we should crush his sense of taste and accustom him to eating whatever is put in front of him, with the hope that with time, he will get used to eating different foods.

But a parent who wants to develop his child's emotional world properly must know that this approach is wrong. Before any changes are made in his behavior, the child must first know how he feels, in this case by choosing which foods he likes and which he doesn't. Only after his preferences have been acknowledged should we train him to eat even what he doesn't particularly enjoy.

The taste of foods should not be a constant topic in the home, and a child should not become a glutton who eats a lot of what he enjoys. But when the topic arises, we should not silence the child, but let him express his feelings. Only afterward can we help him direct his eating habits properly.

At first, many people will consider this approach to be very unusual. Is it right to make such a big deal about food? We don't want this to become some form of idolatry in the house!

This is a good point and should be kept in mind. But the sense of taste comes from what our rabbis consider the deepest place in the soul. Even though they were referring specifically to the "tastes" of Torah and not of actual food, the world of spiritual taste is enclosed in the material realm of food.

Since the world of taste is very deep, if we try to deny the physical sense of taste of food, it will usually lead to confusion of the inner feelings in the soul. Self-awareness begins with the physical world.

Therefore, if we crush the sense of taste in a child, we may have succeeded in training him to eat whatever he is served but we will have lost more than we gained. It's true that wherever he goes he will get by with what is available, and when he gets married his wife will be happy that he eats whatever she prepares for him, but we will have taken something very deep from him that cannot be replaced: the awareness of his own feelings.

It is not a negative thing when we allow a child to be conscious of his feelings. It only becomes harmful if he starts to think that he should live only by what is most tasty, pleasant, and enjoyable for him.

THE ADVANTAGES OF THE AWARENESS OF TASTE

Awareness of one's feelings implies that one does not deny reality. Just as we would not want a child to deny that he has hands, even if he is not using them at the moment, so should we relate to the soul's feeling of taste. The feelings of the soul are no less real than the limbs of the body.

For example, there are parts of the body that are removed at times, like cutting fingernails and the hair as needed. Nevertheless, they are still integral parts of the body and we don't deny their existence.

Just as with the body, there are parts of us that we acknowledge but don't necessarily keep, so should we acknowledge the sense of taste because it is part of

the child. Afterwards, we can introduce the lofty act of transcending and removing physical taste, similar to the way we cut hair and nails. But this can only be accomplished once the initial true feelings have been identified and acknowledged.

We must strike a delicate balance. On one hand, we cannot turn food into an idol by talking about our favorite foods around the clock. This is clearly negative. But to ignore our sense of taste can weaken the spiritual awareness.

We must use our wisdom to ensure that while food is not too central in the home, it should also be given some minimal degree of importance. In this way, the child will not be forced to deny his feelings.

Although the main purpose in striking this important balance is creating an awareness of feelings, there are other indirect benefits. When a mother wants to prepare a festive meal for her child's birthday, if she knows what his favorite food is, she can show how she cares about him by making that food.

Also, when a person knows what he likes to eat, he can use this awareness to relax himself. When he is angry, for example, he should first try to calm himself without outside help. Since we are not angels, this doesn't always work, and we sometimes need material aids in order to relax. One who knows what he likes can place something good in his mouth and relax with ease. If he doesn't know what he likes, he can't use this knowledge to help himself.

Of course, these are external benefits, while we are dealing here with something much more fundamental. The entire topic of food that we are discussing here is just a single example.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN PREFERENCES AND THE EMOTIONAL WORLD

Another example from daily life: Each child studies many different subjects in school. Normally, a child will not like all the subjects equally. We see that there is always a favorite subject and one that the child least relates to.

Even in this case, we should first allow the child to decide which subjects he enjoys and which he does not, and let him express his feelings. Of course, he should know that we have no intention of sending a note to the principal to free him from the classes he dislikes. We must make it clear that he needs to study even what he doesn't like. A person cannot grow up uneducated; he must learn. But to educate a child properly, he can choose and be aware of his most and least favorite subjects.

When a child is allowed to choose freely in this way, he will understand the difference between studying because he genuinely likes the subject and studying because he needs a certain level of education.

There are other benefits that can result as well. A common phenomenon that occurs with children is that when they get older, they don't know how to direct their lives, and which areas they should pursue. (This is especially true with young women. Young men will often devote themselves to Torah study, but even men need to find their place in Torah, whether it is quick learning, in-depth analysis, practical *halachah*, and so on.)

Decisions are often made based on monetary concerns – which field will earn more money? There is some value in considering this element, but it must not be the primary deciding factor.

If these young adults had grown up with a healthy soul and self-awareness, when the time comes for choosing a field, their decision will be easier, since they will be naturally drawn toward the area that they have decided they like. Even when there are inhibiting factors (one might not be able to make a living doing his favorite thing), there is often a related field that can provide a livelihood.

Besides the future ease in selecting a means for a livelihood, there is an immediate benefit in knowing about the child's favorite subjects. For example, if a child is doing poorly in a particular subject, if we know that he does not like that subject, we can understand why he is not doing well. If he has no problem with the subject, there may be a different reason why he isn't doing well, such as the teacher, his seat in the classroom, or something else. But if we never allow the child to express himself in this matter, we may tend to point fingers outward and place blame, when the problem may be the result of a very simple cause: the child finds it hard to connect to this subject!

Again, we are not saying that a child need not eat or study what he dislikes. Not at all! Within limits, he must eat what he doesn't really like and study what he doesn't enjoy, but there is nothing wrong with his choosing and declaring his preferences.

A CLEAR WORLD

We will make this clear with another example. Many families go away for a vacation in the summer. The family goes on vacation for three or four days. Let us assume that the vacation was pleasant, without any special problems. Of course, it is nearly impossible for the entire family to be fully satisfied; there is always the

complainer who finds problems, but in general, we will assume that most of the family enjoyed it as they should.

When the family returns home, and the neighbor or grandmother asks the children how they enjoyed their vacation, the answers will usually be, "It was great!" "It was fun!" "It was nice." Parents are pleased that their children enjoyed the vacation, but they can gain something greater than this.

If the vacation lasted for four days, and each day you visited a different place, ask the child in a conversational way to identify which day was most enjoyable. The parents, for example, will come home and ask, "Children, did you enjoy the trip?" They will say, "Yes!" Ask one of the children, "What did you like the most?" If he says, "I don't know," you should try to help him gain more clarity. If his answer is more definite, this is a sign that he is on his way to attaining some clarity.

Remember that the reason for the trip was that the children should enjoy themselves. If we wanted them to suffer, we would have stayed home so that they could complain that the whole neighborhood went away except for them. After returning home, we can also derive benefit for their souls by enabling each child to identify what he most liked, and what he enjoyed about that experience most.

This does not mean that he should only be exposed in the future to those things that he likes most, and not to other things; that is not at all the point. Rather, we must see to it that the child is aware of what he enjoys, so he can learn to experience life.

Similarly, we find in *Chazal*,²³ “You have seen a clear world.” For our purposes, a clear world means that if something upsets me, I am well aware that it is unpleasant and I don’t deny the facts. It’s possible that my response to whatever is upsetting me is to either avoid or contend with it, but I remain aware at all times of the reality of the situation facing me.

DEALING WITH THE DIFFICULTY OF CONCENTRATING DURING TEFILLAH

Here is another example from daily life, where we can train our emotional world to reach greater depths. Every father will take his son to shul at some point, depending on his opinion as to the right age and amount of time and which *tefillah*.

Once we have made these important decisions, the child comes to shul and sits next to the father. When they return home, the mother asks the child, “Well, was it nice in shul?” Let’s say that the answer was positive. Is that a sufficient answer?

Of course, if he is too young to even read, we cannot ask him what he enjoyed, because his main pleasure comes from feeling big when his father brings him along.

Even if he is a little older and he can read the words of the *tefillah*, he hardly understands a word. Some of them are difficult to grasp, and even those which he might be able to understand cannot possibly be understood at such a quick pace. Even so, if we ask a boy who has begun to *daven* from a *siddur* if he enjoyed being in shul, he will usually say he did.

²³ *Pesachim 50a*

Why is this? Sometimes, it's because he feels special or grown up going with his father. Sometimes, he doesn't actually enjoy going anymore, but since his parents want him to go, and he is not rebellious, he listens to them. He may not enjoy the actual *davening*. He may grow up with this feeling for decades. If he is honest, even when he is in his twenties and thirties, and perhaps even in his forties and fifties (when he is bringing a grandson along) he will feel the same way. He may enjoy it no more than his grandson. In fact, the grandson may have more pleasure, since he at least feels grown up by being allowed to go to shul.

The older person never experienced enjoyment from *davening* since no one ever taught him when he was younger. If you ask him when he is in his twenties why he is still going to shul, he will say, "Because I have to." Indeed he has to, but there is no requirement to have no feeling for the prayer when you go. [We are required to have feeling for prayer!]

Many parents try to encourage their children to continue going to shul by means of compliments and encouragement. This usually works, and the children keep going. But what will happen when the child grows up? The compliments were only a means to get him used to going; they are not the goal. When he is fourteen and no one is praising him for going, since he never developed a feeling for prayer, he will not be able to experience the desired feeling that should come from being in a shul and *davening*.

Here is another example: Many parents complain that when their children were young, they said the *Birkas Hamazon* properly, slowly and accurately. When they

get older, they don't enjoy it as much, and they rush through it or try to avoid it saying it at all.

Honestly, it is difficult to understand the parents surprise. The reason he *bensch*ed well when he was young was because he was much more obedient then. Now that he has his own ideas, and since he doesn't enjoy a single word of the *bensching*, how is he supposed to say, a few times a day, long blessings for which he has no appreciation?

The sad fact is that most adults have no appreciation for *davening*, and they only go to shul because that has become part of their routine. The *tefillah* is totally lacking any feeling.

When will a person get involved in the *davening*? When he has, G-d forbid, a sick child, or financial problems, or he needs to marry off his children. Then he suddenly finds that he is able to concentrate on the prayers, he stays longer in the shul, and he discovers that the words mean something.

Adults don't enjoy *tefillah* because of the way they were educated about it when they were younger. They may have gone to shul because they were obedient or because they were complimented for going. But no one taught them to develop a feeling for prayer. How, then, can we expect that they will attain it all of a sudden?

If we think further, we will realize that we do so many things just because we've become accustomed to doing them from our youth. It's good to have good habits,

but this can lead to a big problem – doing things habitually without a living, vibrant connection to them.

I want to stress that even though one must do the right things even if he doesn't enjoy them, Hashem wants us to enjoy even those things that we are obligated to do. We learn the correct order from the verse "We shall do and we shall hear."²⁴ We must first act even without interest, but then we should search for meaning.

How can we awaken in a child the need to find meaning in *tefillah* and *bensching*, or in all those things that people do as "*mitzvos* done out of habit,"²⁵ without feeling?

The basic goal of developing the child's emotional world is to cause his feelings to become inseparable from him. When parents properly invest in developing this world, and succeed in filling his life with emotion, he will naturally try to experience everything he says or does. The direct result will be that he will invest the time necessary in order to understand the meaning of the words of the *brachos* and *tefillos*, as appropriate for his age, so that he will find meaning in them.

EMOTIONS HAVE A SMALL PART IN OUR ORDINARY LIFE

Based on what we've learned, we must clarify how we can make the emotional world an inseparable part of a child's life.

In order to show how far this is from our "normal" daily routine, let us consider what a regular day is like. We wake up, wash our hands, say the morning bless-

²⁴ *Shemos* 24:7

²⁵ *Yeshayahu* 29:13

ings, go to shul (or *daven* at home, as is usually done by women), and then we spend the rest of the day earning a livelihood or learning Torah. Each day proceeds more or less the same way, and this is why one must be careful to ask himself a simple but important question: What today enabled me to find some taste in life?

At times, the answer will be, “There was nothing was especially enjoyable about today.” Even when there was something joyous, it may have been nothing more than a child coming home from school with a good grade, or the news that a relative gave birth to a child. But when we review and think about the things that give us a good feeling throughout our day, can we honestly say that they became an inseparable part of our lives?

Let’s consider the example of a good feeling that came because a child got a good grade on a test. The child came home from school at 1:00 p.m. and showed us the grade, and that gave us happiness and satisfaction. But the grade did not make us happy in the morning, before the child came home. And after the child shows us the test with the grade that it boasts, how long can we think about it? The normal distractions of life will quickly cause us to forget it, and we will not be able to draw energy from it that will keep us going all day.

If we would see someone with two arms and two legs sitting on a chair all day without moving, we would assume that he is paralyzed. Can anyone accuse us of judging him unfairly? No, because in fact we are saying that the reason he is not accomplishing anything is that, through no fault of his own, he cannot move. If

you would be asked to sit in a chair all day without doing anything, could you do it?

Let's apply this idea to our own emotional world. The truth is that for most people, their emotional world is only active on rare occasions, like during a very joyous or sad event. (And some people only show some joy around Purim time.) Beyond this, an average person doesn't get emotional on a regular basis.

Since, as we showed above, a person's emotional world is no less real than the physical world, the emotions should ideally be functioning as often as the body does – all day. A body that doesn't move isn't functioning properly. Our inner world, our emotions, should likewise be active throughout the day.

THE POTENTIAL DIFFICULTIES WITH DEVELOPING EMOTIONS

Before we discuss practical ways to develop the emotions and connect them to practical life, we must first mention that along with the great advantages inherent in this process, there are also certain difficulties.

Each person has a different degree of sensitivity. Some people are so fragile that they are deeply offended by an inappropriate comment. Others have thicker skin and are not so easily offended.

People differ in this area and not everyone is sensitive. Not long ago, I met someone who told me that his *chavrusa* (study partner) made a *bris* for his son and didn't tell him about it. However, he listed a number of good reasons for the oversight. I asked him, "If not for these reasons, would you have been upset?" His surprising answer was, "Even so, there is no reason for me to be offended, be-

cause although we learn together, that does not obligate him to inform me of his son's *bris*."

Such a person is naturally less sensitive, and not because he worked on himself so much. Others are very sensitive, and any little thing can upset them.

Therefore, there is a certain danger in entering the emotional world, because for those who are more sensitive, their emotions will become complicated and they will always sense their inner feelings. Their sensitivity will also become more developed. One with some experience with emotionally disturbed people knows that their emotions are highly developed, but they are extremely disconnected from reality.

Developing our emotions can be extremely beneficial because emotions are the source of vitality. Even the group that is at risk of becoming oversensitive should still develop their emotions, while at the same time learning how to deal with insults.

The Kotzker Rebbe said on the *passuk*, "One with more *da'as* has more pain,"²⁶ that *da'as* is sensitivity, so one who is more sensitive suffers more.

There are people who will not leave their homes because they are afraid of getting into an accident. Obviously, one cannot live this way. But on the other hand, the reality of car accidents cannot be denied. So one must leave the house, and also be very careful to avoid an accident. So too, we must be aware of the hazards of emotional development, while learning to deal with them.

²⁶ *Koheles 1:18*

There are people who are too involved with their emotions and don't have the tools to deal with them. It may be better for them not to further develop their emotions. But for the vast majority of people, this is not a problem, and developing emotions can be very beneficial. We are addressing this majority.

THE JOY OF LIFE

How do we describe what an active emotional life is like?

When a person feels what is happening to him, his emotional world can be said to be active. Thus, the goal we must set for ourselves is to put the soul in a state where it feels and experiences whatever is occurring in our lives. The goal is not only to experience rare events that make us very happy, or the opposite, G-d forbid. Rather, we want to feel things on a daily basis, including simpler, less momentous events. How do we do this?

We all know of a concept called "the joy of life." Does this imply that we can only be happy when things are going well? Of course not! The joy of life applies to everything that happens in life. The way to attain it is through the ability to experience events. Once he has mastered this, one will be happy with anything he is doing.

Although this may sound strange, we should know that life itself is happy, in spite of the fact that its outer reality brings challenges. The proof is that most children are naturally happy and pleased. The joy of life only begins to diminish when we get older and start to encounter difficulties. At times, these difficulties wear us down so much that there are adults who hardly ever smile, because of

the difficulties they experienced. Life on its own, though, is naturally joyous. But there is another source of natural joy besides life itself—these are the various experiences we have, which can cause an outer feeling of joy. So there are two sources of joy: the natural joy we are born with, and experiences from the outside that can cause joy.

We already have explained that the difficulties of life tend to hide our natural feelings of joy. (In fact, this natural joy can be restored, but it is a complicated process, which is beyond the scope of this discussion.) If so, what we can do to restore the joy of life by means of outer experiences? We should first begin to fully experience the basic events that occur in our lives.

It doesn't matter if what we do is on a high or low level, or if it is spiritual or physical. Whatever we do, we have to try to experience it fully.

THE NEGATIVE EFFECT OF HABITUAL ACTS DONE BY ROTE

When we consider the process of child rearing, we find an interesting phenomenon. When a new baby is born everyone is happy and a lot of effort is put into raising him. In spite of any hardships we might experience, this investment generally comes with positive feelings of love and giving.

But after the child has grown a little, the excitement over these efforts begins to fade. In extreme cases, we find mothers who feel like they are no more than housekeepers who are forced to do this work. Furthermore, we sometimes see a dichotomy in the way we relate to our growing children. We may enjoy them, play with them, and enjoy their antics, but we feel that managing the house on a daily

basis, is a burden. When we don't get any joy or vitality out of doing housework, the next step is feeling that what she is doing is purposeless, and finally she is worn out from the whole enterprise.

When we perform our daily activities like empty habits, then even the best efforts we make on behalf of our children end up causing us to feel separate from them. Subconsciously, we will feel that they are the cause of this entire load on our lives. Because of them we need to wash dishes, because of them, we need to do the laundry, because of them, the floor is dirty again and we must clean it again, etc.

Of course, we would never articulate such sentiments. We won't even allow ourselves to think that way so clearly. But deep down, since we sense that the actions done because of the children are burdensome and exhausting, the result is that the children will not feel the generosity and investment on their behalf. What is more, acts done consistently without vitality are the opposite of the proper healthy life.

HOW TO GET CHILDREN TO APPRECIATE WHAT THEIR PARENTS DO FOR THEM

Parents often complain that they give so much of themselves for their children, yet the children don't sense and appreciate it. How does this happen?

This relates precisely to our topic. Without a doubt, parents give up a lot for their children. But they do so without vitality and joy. It is sometimes very obvious that many of the things we do for our children are laced with resentment, so the children cannot properly appreciate what their parents give them.

If parents could do things for their children with a little more “spice” of joy and vitality, without even doing anything extra, their children would relate to them completely differently. They would naturally come to value their parents’ investments and efforts on their behalf.

Think about it. There are so many things we habitually do for our children in any case. Instead of always thinking about how these acts disturb us and are so burdensome, let us try to direct those acts to a positive channel. How do we do this?

First of all, when you are in the middle of some routine task, think of the fact that you are doing it for your children. Think: “I am washing dishes because I am glad to give my children clean plates for eating.” The child will receive something valuable from the emotional realm along with a clean plate – he will get a heartfelt feeling, which cannot be bought or acquired anywhere else.

Here is another example: A mother gives lunch to her child. If there was no thought involved, and it was done out of routine and necessity, he has only received material food. But if there was also positive thought, such as, “I am preparing the food for this child whom I love so much,” he will seemingly receive the identical lunch, but with “heart” added to it, and he will sense the difference.

When we infuse our daily home activities with positive thoughts, we are developing our own emotional world and making it an inseparable part of our home life. When a mother performs her tasks feeling burdened and spends her entire morning before her children return from school in a state of unhappiness, then she cannot suddenly change herself and relate properly to the child when he arrives. If she has no feelings for what she is doing, she has no way of including her

child in her own experiences, which is the foundation for building his emotional world.

We need to change our attitude about all the simple things we do for our children and try to do each act with feeling. The goal is to add a new dimension to each act and enable the children to feel that our souls have done something for them.

When they come home to eat lunch, they will sense that in addition to the pots, plates, cutlery, and food, the mother is giving them her heart. In this way, a meal becomes a means for developing their emotions. Furthermore, in this manner, the emotions are developed through a direct connection with the mother, and this is the best method.

INTRODUCING EMOTIONS IS VITAL FOR ALL OF LIFE

It is important to stress that the emotional world must be introduced into every part of our lives, even in areas that do not directly relate to the home.

For example, a father or mother go out to work in order to support the family. It is not enough that when they get their paycheck at the end of the month, they recall that the purpose of the work was to support the family and take care of their needs. They must remember the real goal of their efforts while they are actually at work; in this way, they put heart into all their effort and exertion.

What is the point of doing this? Does it really make any difference? It does. First of all, just thinking about our goals will give us more vitality and joy during work, and this will help us pass the time more easily. We will also have taken the first step toward developing an emotional relationship with our children.

But what if we do not do this? What if we just continue our routine day in and day out without any special thought or intention? Let's think about it. Parents who leave the home for work will not have much time to directly activate their emotions toward their children. Because there is so little actual interaction, there will be few opportunities to directly experience feelings for their children on a daily basis. In some cases, there will only be a few moments of feelings, such as when the child comes home from school and is happy, and they feel good about that, or when he is sad and they feel badly for him. But most of the day will pass with no exchange of feelings. So it's important to keep in mind that just as most of the things we do all day are for the benefit of our children, directly or indirectly, whether we are at home or out working and shopping, our emotions should also be focused towards them during our activities. This way, the deeper dimension of the heart will be added on to everything we do, and our relationship with our children will be so much more vibrant.

CHANGING HOUSEWORK INTO A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

Having shown the importance of introducing the emotional world into daily life, we will give some practical examples in order to show how to experience events that seem simple and empty.

A housewife is washing the dishes. What can she possibly feel? The filth in the pots, or the spots on the plates? Or perhaps she is washing the floors. What can she feel then? If we consider our acts throughout most of the day, it may seem as though we engage in acts that are plain and necessary, with nothing unique to experience from them.

But to fully experience life, it is not enough that we are all moved when a very happy or sad event occurs. These events cannot enliven us for very long. But if we try to feel everything we are involved in – even the most common things – we will succeed in living with constant experiences.

How can we make this practical? We will start with a simple and common experience. A woman is about to wash the dishes after Shabbos, and the sink is filled to the top. (Even if they use disposable utensils, there is still plenty of work to do – washing pots, cleaning the floors, laundry, and so on, as any housewife knows). Does anyone consider not doing this work? No normal woman would try to evade these tasks. She understands that the house must be clean and organized.

If these tasks have to get done at any rate, before she is about to start working, she must ask herself a simple question: why am I about to organize this home?

Once the question has been asked, there are two possible ways of thinking: She can decide that she doesn't want to do it and that she is doing it because there is no choice (she can't stand a kitchen with a sink full of dishes). If so, not only will the dishes be washed resentfully, but so will the cooking that will be done in them later. The negative and bitter feelings that she is harboring will not remain her private property, but will leave an imprint in the food she prepares and in each corner of the home. This will lead to a negative effect on the children's souls.

But if her thoughts are positive (as is usually the case), she can easily add some "spice" to the housework. She can do this by asking herself some simple questions: "Who ate from these dishes? Some animals that are walking around the house, or my family members – my husband and children?" Then she should con-

sider, “Did anyone force me to get married and have children? Do I want these children? Am I interested in cooking for them? Do I want to wash the pots so that I can cook in them?” In general, the answer to these questions will be positive, and her conclusion will be, “I chose to wed, thank G-d, I have children, and want I them and I am happy with them.” This will make it easier for her to add the “spice” of love into the dishwashing and housework. (Those who are not happy with their spouse and children need special guidance.)

When there is a positive relationship to the simple acts like washing dishes, we have succeeded in introducing a measure of feeling into everyday life. Instead of relating to this as something forced and unwanted, we have added a positive approach that can grant much enjoyment during these tasks.

To illustrate, if we find potatoes and spices in the house and we decide to use them for lunch, it is obvious that we need to add the proper amount of spice to the pot so that the potatoes will absorb their flavor. If the spices remain in their containers, they will not enhance the taste of the potatoes.

The message is clear: Parents usually do the right things for their children, and they even have loving feelings for them. All we need to do is mix the two together. When the mother is about to wash the dishes, she should add one small and simple thought: “All of this effort in washing the dishes comes from my love for my family; I therefore see to it that they will have clean dishes.”

Here is another example. Before the mother begins to cook lunch for the family, she should have this brief thought: “Why am I cooking this food?” If her first thought is that she has no choice (so that they will not die of starvation, G-d for-

bid, or because if they are hungry, they will be anxious), the children will pick up this sentiment when eating the food, and it will have a negative effect on their personalities.

But if the thoughts are positive (as is the case with most mothers), and the mother reminds herself that she is cooking for children about whom she cares and whose well-being gladdens her, and that she derives pleasure and joy when they eat tasty food, her motherly heart will leave an impression on the food she serves her children, and they will sense this well, not only in their taste buds, but in the depths of their souls.

THE POWER OF MIXING EMOTIONS INTO DAILY LIFE

Our Sages have said, and this is corroborated by studies done about cooking, revealing this startling fact: If two women cook an identical meal, but one is obligated to do it, and the second does so with joy so that her children will enjoy tasty food, the meal prepared by the second woman will be tastier.

If we apply this to other areas of life, we can say that there is a great difference between dishes washed because one feels forced to and those washed with the simple thought that our beloved children will eat lunch out of these dishes. This can have a direct effect on the child, who will especially enjoy using a dish washed while his mother had positive thoughts.

It should be stressed that there usually is no need to do anything different in order to introduce emotions into our actions.

Every parent already loves his or her child, and the actions for the child are done in any case. The only thing to change is to combine our feelings with our actions. Here is an illustration, regarding prayer: Prayer with proper intent requires the involvement of the heart. If we see that someone is praying without intent, do we assume that he is heartless? Of course not! It is very possible that he has a most compassionate heart, and if he is told a moving story, he will even cry. Why, then, does he not pray properly? Probably because he doesn't see to it that his heart is attached to the words he says while praying. Likewise, when we relate this to the way we give to our children, the actions for the children generally are done properly, and every parent generally has a warm heart toward his children. All that remains is to join the two; in this way, we can influence and develop their souls.

The fundamental point is very clear: whenever we do an action (especially at home), we must invest a minimum of thought, for a moment before the action (and if we can do it during the action, it is that much better), so as to infuse our love for our children into the actions we do for them.

THE POWER OF THE WORLD OF THOUGHTS IN DEALING WITH THE BURDENS OF LIFE

As we know, child rearing is an undertaking that demands much effort on the part of the part of the parents, during both the easy and the less pleasant times. No parent can make the claim that running a house with children is simple and easy. How can we lighten, in some measure, the difficulty of raising children?

It seems that the formula for this is also contained in the world of emotions. The more we are concerned about including love and feelings in our actions, the easi-

er it will be for us to deal with child rearing. We and our children will be the winners. When parents are calm and act with inner wholeness and peace, the house is run from a much deeper level, and as a result, the children will attain an inner depth in their souls.

In addition, involving the world of emotions can even help with the simple tasks of the home. There is no mother who washes dishes as a hobby. This is always considered an unpleasant aspect of housekeeping. In fact, if we do it feeling there is no choice and we are forced to do it, in the end, we will feel worn out and exhausted. But if we remember that we are working on behalf of these precious *neshamahs*, then much of the burden contained in child rearing will be diminished.

DEALING WITH FATIGUE WITH THE AID OF THE WORLD OF EMOTIONS

At times, a housewife will be beset by feelings of fatigue and helplessness. How can she cope with these unpleasant feelings?

If we would do some research, we would find that each woman deals with this situation in her own way. One who is extreme will cry when this happens, another who is calmer will pick up the phone to relieve the tension, others will relax by eating something sweet, reading an interesting book, or taking a short rest. We would not negate the value of these acts and say that they are inappropriate. But in light of what we have been discussing, we can add another method to this list.

First we shall consider what the source of this exhaustion and fatigue is. The burden of managing a home extends throughout the entire day. This is particular-

ly difficult when a mother goes to work in the morning, and then, when she comes home, must work in a “second job.” She must maintain all aspects of the home – cooking, dishwashing, laundry, ironing, and primarily, she needs a lot of patience in raising the children. Naturally, the burden of this way of life gets to be too much for her, and she reaches a point where she is emotionally drained. This in turn affects the faculties of the body.

How can we cope with this by means of the world of emotions? We must stop for a moment, in a comfortable place, and think one simple thought: “This constant activity is not happening because I am forced into it, but because I want to provide for all these souls whom I love so much!” Of course, this will not be a magical solution for all of life’s problems, and life will not suddenly become easy. But without a doubt, this method can impart a special taste to all of our activity, by adding a sweet spice to the routine of life. In this way, a new dimension will be added to our actions, containing a special shot of vitality that will help us cope with the natural exhaustion caused by the burdens of life.

When you think about this, you will realize that even here, we are not creating a whole new thought. All we are doing is incorporating the thoughts we already know and feel into the daily routine. In this way, we give ourselves another way to cope with (and even prevent) the difficult feelings of fatigue and exhaustion.

PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR INCORPORATING THE WORLD OF EMOTIONS INTO OUR DAILY ACTS

The goal we must place before ourselves is to add the emotional dimension to the endless rush of our active life, in the ways we have described above.

What will be the result of all this? Thank G-d, we raise children in our homes. Externally, this implies caring for the body and all of its needs, but internally, it includes the soul. Thus, even if the true source of our actions is our parental love, which motivates us to give everything for our children, as long as we operate solely in the material realm, then that is all they will receive. But if we put our hearts into it, the children will not only benefit from our actions, but also from the emotions that accompanied them.

How did G-d create the bond between parents and children? Every parent understands that he must provide for his children's needs so that they can develop properly. Think about it: why did Hashem make the world in a way that children are born so helpless and their parents must take care of all their needs?

One may suggest that in this way, the parents have the mitzvah of doing kindness with their children. But this is not the only reason: the deeper reason for the lack with which children are born is that we need to give them our souls.

How do we do this? Is it enough to say constantly, "We love you"? Certainly, this is also necessary, but when we put these feelings into action, they will have a much greater effect. Since most of the daily routine revolves around action, we must try to make this emotional infusion an inseparable part of our lives. When giving lunch to the child, first think, "I am giving my child soup because I love him so much." In this way, we succeed in giving our heart along with the soup.

To illustrate, when you want to give a gift to a friend, and you put six cups in a package, even if you want to give ten cups, he can only receive six cups and not more. So it is with the emotional dimension. When we add "heart" to the pota-

toes that we cook, they will receive it in addition to the potatoes. Similarly, if you buy a shirt for a child that costs twenty dollars, without adding the emotional dimension when you buy it, that is all he will receive. But you can add heart to it. Think: “I went to buy a shirt for the child, and I encountered various difficulties. I ran around to many stores. One was closing just as I arrived. In another, those shirts were out of stock. I troubled myself on a very hot day, or on a rainy day, because I thought a little about my love for my child, and in this way, I am giving him not only the shirt but also my soul along with it.”

THIS WILL STRENGTHEN THE BOND BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN

When we make this approach an intrinsic part of our lives, and add love to all we do for the children, our relationship with them will become one of, “His soul is bound with his soul,”²⁷ because we give not only the food and clothing, but even the soul.

On the verse, “*Anochi* (I) am Hashem your G-d,” the *Gemara*²⁸ teaches that *Anochi* is an acronym for “*Ana nafshi kesivas yehavis*” (“I have written and given you My soul”). As it were, when G-d gave the Torah, He gave not only written words with wisdom, but even His soul within it. Likewise, we find in the *Gemara*²⁹ that when one gives a gift, he gives it generously. On a deeper level, this means that when a gift is given properly and sincerely, one gives his soul to the recipient.

²⁷ Bereishis 44:30

²⁸ Shabbos 105a

²⁹ Baba Basra 71a

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From all these sources we learn that when we give material things to our children, like food and clothing, we must add soul and vitality to them. When we live this way (the parents give over their souls at least in thought, and preferably also in words), when the child comes home and eats the meal prepared for him, he also receives the heart from the time invested in it. Though it may be a small portion of food that takes merely five or ten minutes to eat, his soul receives a tremendous amount, in accordance with his parents' efforts, and the results are wondrous.

When we add our soul into our actions, even without talking to our children about emotions, we have opened a direct channel into their souls. We are not raising robots, but children with developed emotions, who can sense the subtle messages that come their way. As long as we focus only on actions, and our love for them is hidden, they will sense that and only love us in a hidden way; it will only be expressed in times of difficulty or great joy. But if parents consciously put soul into their actions, and in this way, their love is apparent, the children will sense open love. This is true even if a child does not see or hear his mother talking about it. If she does, he will surely sense it in a deeper way.

SUMMARY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORLD OF EMOTIONS

When we began to speak of the world of emotions, we explained that a person is comprised of action, emotion, and thought. Accordingly, each parent must develop these three areas: (1) the child must know how to act properly; (2) he should be able to relate to the world with a full range of proper emotions; and (3) he should have a well-developed way of thinking.

Most parents correctly deal with the realm of actions. They try to train their children to act properly. Therefore, we will focus mostly on the emotional realm, which is less familiar to many parents.

The emotional realm is no less real than the physical sense with which we are so familiar. Just as the body needs food, drink, and sleep, so does the soul have its emotional needs. These are no less vital to it than the physical needs are to the body.

Just as parents must care for their children's food and bodily needs, so must they care for their emotional needs by properly developing their emotional world. First of all, they must set a goal to give the children a clear world of emotions. How does one deal with the child's soul, and what is the method for giving the child the right way to relate to the world?

Once the parents have learned to put their hearts into the actions they do for their children, they must expose their own emotions before their children in a measure appropriate for the child's age and level. In this way, we teach the child that feelings are as valid a concept in the home as actions are.

As with all education, emotional development begins with us, the parents. When parents strive to experience life on their own, they slowly and steadily confer that dimension to their children. Since most of our parenting revolves around the home, we must first introduce the experiential dimension into the framework of the home. The world of emotions must take a very important place there. After we have learned to share our feelings with our children throughout the day's activities, we can start talking to them about their feelings.

Since most people invest most of their lives in efforts for their children, and any healthy parent really loves his children, all we need to do is to join the actions with the love and to try to add our expressions of feeling to the actions. This will add soul and heart to our actions.

Emotions must be included in all areas of activity, even in the most mundane acts, such as taking care of the food and clothing, washing dishes, and so on. We do these things because we love our children. Our job now is to turn the hidden love into revealed love and to add that love to the eight or ten hours during which we are in any case working for our children.

In contrast, if a parent performs all his efforts without revealing any love, besides the problem that he is training himself to act without feeling, he is sending such a message to his children. His feelings for them become pushed to a far corner. As a result, when they grow up (if they don't learn to be original thinkers), they will emulate their parents, and their relationship with their parents will be very superficial.

Though inwardly, parents love their children, and they do for them because of this love, the children often don't feel it because it is not exposed. It is not nearly as apparent as the physical efforts.

If we wish to do things properly and soundly, once we have internalized the clear understanding that the emotional world is the basis of the home, and the world of action is an outer garment over it, we know that we must work differently. We need to put in some thought before acting, and then the actions will be accompanied with much feeling.

After we have begun to add feeling to our actions and routine, we can talk to the children about the world of feelings, as explained above. But you must realize that words alone can be empty. We can apply the words of the prophet, “With their words, they have honored me, but their hearts are far from me,”³⁰ because the heart is not participating. When a mother’s whole motive for telling her child, “I love you” comes from a speech she heard about how important it is to do so, although deep down it is true, but, the feeling is suppressed, the words have little benefit. This is like a flash of lightning that lights up the dark sky for a moment and then disappears. When a mother expresses her positive feelings in a momentary comment but then life goes on without any further investment in the emotional realm, her words cannot help. Even if the words are sincere, occasional comments are insufficient. You would not be satisfied with one who does nothing for you except for an occasional comment about his deep feelings for you. A child should not need to wait for a kind word in order to sense your love for him.

Therefore, we need both methods. Add love to all that you do, focusing on your love for your family when you work for them, and also send your feelings to them with kind words. Then what comes from the heart will enter the heart. This is especially so when our heart does so much for the children. It is sending loving feelings each day and every hour, and this will enter the heart of the child that already senses the physical benefits, such as food and clothing.

The more exposed the parent’s heart is, the more the feelings will naturally enter the heart of the child. When the father or mother tell the child, “We love

³⁰Yeshayahu 29:13

you,” the child will not relate to this as a baseless saying from a stranger, because it is a sentiment felt by the parents all day. The child will sense that when they say it, they mean each word they say, and they are saying the words with truth and sincerity.

Thus, proper development of our children’s emotional world requires action and speech. The actions are our physical efforts for them, to which we add our inner feelings, so that our giving will come as an expression of our natural love. In addition, we must put effort into saying words, by talking to them about feelings. First, we should be open about our own feelings in areas that do not relate directly to them. Then we communicate our feelings toward them. As a result, we can reach the final level, in which the children open up about their own feelings, whether toward the parents or about life in general.

If we have not developed the child’s emotions in a structured manner, he is not likely to share his feelings with his parents (unless there is some major crisis or some great cause for celebration). In some situations, the child can get into serious trouble as a result.

A child will come home from school very upset, and the parents suddenly discover that he or she has been confronting a problem for two years, and the parents knew nothing about it. The source of the problem is that his emotional world has not been open to us, and he has not seen fit to share his feelings with us. Only when the situation became desperate and he realized that only his parents can help does he begin to include them. Of course, by then, his spirit has already been

damaged, and even if it can be fixed, it is surely better to develop the emotions properly from the beginning so that the child will include us at the proper time.

If a machine remains unused for a long time, it will become rusty and not function properly. So too, if we do not make the child's emotional world function on a daily basis by putting effort into it on a regular basis, she will only express her feelings when there is an unusual problem or a time of extreme happiness.

Therefore, we must turn the world of emotions into a part of the routine of life and keep it constantly active. When children live in such an environment, they will naturally express their feelings on a regular basis. Then we can try to guide them in the right direction.

In conclusion, we must stress something that is important in any area, and especially in the area of education: Every parent must know that in spite of all the advice and insights that can help with educating our children, success is not guaranteed. Everything depends of the help of Heaven! We must always remember that though we should try to do what is incumbent upon us, this is not a guaranteed recipe for success. It is certainly possible that after all of our efforts, which can be considered no more than the necessary input, G-d's will may be that the children will turn out differently. Therefore, in addition to our necessary efforts, we must also *daven* and shed many tears for the sake of our children's development, and hope that our prayers will be accepted.

4- GUIDING THE CHILD'S EMOTIONS IN A POSITIVE DIRECTION 31

PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S EMOTIONS

Once we have developed a child's emotions in the proper way, as detailed above, the next stage will generally occur when the child starts communicating freely about his feelings, either about his personal life – such as his classes in school, social circle, or anything that relates specifically to him – or about his relationship to us, his parents.

How should we respond when a child shares his feelings with us? First, of course, we must listen carefully. We should not mock or belittle his words, even if we are convinced that what he is saying is based on a delusion. To the contrary, if we listen well, even to delusions, we will come to understand what his state of mind is and what he is feeling.

In any case, it is important to relate to the feelings of the person in front of us without engaging in intellectual analysis.

For example, let's say the child comes home and tells his parents how he's feeling, whether he is expressing happiness or the opposite. Our natural instinct might be to analyze the words he is saying intellectually – to understand what he is saying and then judge whether there is some merit to the idea or if he is severely mistaken about what he is feeling. But we have to fight off this instinct, because when a child is standing before us and describing his experiences and feelings, there is something else that must precede all this analysis before anything.

Whether he is describing his pain or sharing his joy with us, we must first relate to his emotional state before we judge the merits or appropriateness of his thoughts. The fact that he is happy should compel us to connect to that which makes him happy. Even more importantly, if he is in pain or sad, we must set aside our intellect and judgment for the time being, and allow our heart to feel the heart of the person speaking to us, identifying with the pain expressed in his words.

As parents, the first reaction to our child's description of feelings should not be about helping, giving, guiding, or advising (as important as these things are at a later stage). Rather, first we must fulfill the verse, "Love your neighbor as yourself."³² When our child comes to us in order to include us in their experiences, we must feel their joy or their pain.

Sincere involvement in our child's feelings requires adequate time and concentration, which is not always available when we need it. Often, the child will come home from school and start pouring his heart out just when the mother is busy feeding three or four other children. Under such conditions, the mother cannot really listen, and certainly she cannot properly empathize with her child.

In such a case, she must say, "I really want to listen to you, and a little later, when I will have more time, I will be glad to sit and give you all of my attention." (In extreme cases, as when the child is very emotional, you must at least allow him to finish his sentence and then try to add a word of sympathy.) Listening to

³² *Vayikra 19:18*

the child from beginning to end and understanding him correctly requires a calm and peaceful state of mind so we can attempt to sense the child's feelings.

As parents, we must try to feel the child's pain in every situation. The first thing we must do is set aside all rational judgment. Even if we are sure that the child is not justified in being so upset, the very fact that he is in pain should indicate that he is expressing an inner feeling of hurt. It doesn't matter if it is justified, or if it is his fault, or if it can easily be resolved. These are all secondary issues. The first reaction must be the same every time: to activate our own world of feelings as parents and to identify and participate in the child's pain.

We find such an idea in the words of *Chazal*:³³ "Anyone who visits an ill person takes away a sixtieth of his pain". The very concern for the ill person and the interest taken in him diminishes the pain he feels as a result of the sickness. So even if a child is expressing some kind of pain, the fact that the parents participate in his feelings helps to mitigate the pain he is coping with.

(This approach is not only applicable between parents and children; it should also accompany us in all of our interpersonal relationships in life. It is worth adding that anytime a mental health professional deals with a patient, his first and foremost responsibility is to identify with the other's soul and to feel that there is someone there expressing deep pain. People who need advice should turn to righteous, modest individuals who know that before giving advice for an emotional problem they need to relate to the existence of the other person and identify with his pain.)

³³ *Nedarim 39b*

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After we have validated our child by feeling his pain, the next step is to provide guidance and direction. We can teach him how to cope with whatever he is facing, and how to avoid such a problem in the future, and when necessary, to point out that he is making a mistake – but this is all part of the second step.

This is not a lengthy process. The first step of listening only takes a few minutes. Once it seems clear that we understand and properly empathize with the one standing before us, we can express our opinion and help with advice.

THE BENEFIT OF EMOTIONAL IDENTIFICATION DURING YOUTH

This first and crucial stage of identifying and participating in the child's feelings is an essential element in forging a bond between the parents and children. In practice, this is where we reap the benefits of our investment in developing the child's emotions. How?

As described above at length, there are a number of stages in the process of helping children to open up emotionally to their parents: (1) infusing emotion and feeling into our ordinary actions, (2) conversing with the children about our own feelings (as deemed appropriate), whether or not this relates to the children, (3) and then the children will gradually start to open up until they can speak freely about their emotions.

Whereas at first, the words left our hearts and entered theirs, now the opposite needs to happen. We must see to it that what comes from their hearts will enter ours.

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When the child expresses something from his own emotional world, and he feels that it is truly entering the hearts of his parents, the short-term benefit is that he will be able to cope more easily with his normal challenges. But there is also a tremendous long-term benefit: the very fact that the child knows that he can always find a listening ear and open heart in his parents.

The advantages of this are tremendous. When a child understands that he can include his parents in all of his difficulties and struggles, this will save the parents from much aggravation later on (especially in the teenage years) when children can become very closed, leading to serious problems in a number of areas.

Therefore, when a parent gives a child a genuine feeling of trust that there is someone close to him who is prepared to listen to him deeply and feel along with him, there is no reason for his world of emotions to be closed. He will naturally feel free to talk to his parents about his problems and the challenges he is facing.

A lot depends on the age of the child. When the child is younger, he will open up to a greater degree. But when he is older, how much he opens up will depend on his way of thinking. In extreme cases, such as when he has different values than his parents, we cannot expect them to share everything with them; he sees himself as in a different camp. But in general, when a child feels that there is someone who listens to and identifies with him, he will surely feel close to them and be open with them.

EDUCATION ABOUT EMOTIONS

Now that we have clarified the importance of developing our child's emotional world, and the ways to help our children in this area, we will now discuss the final stage in this topic – directing the child's emotions to be used correctly. (We have just given a general outline; it is in reality much more detailed and complex.)

What does the term “emotional education” imply? Here is a common example: A child comes home and announces, “I hate ...” How does the mother immediately react? She'll reply, “How can you say that? We are not allowed to hate anybody!” Is such a reaction considered proper emotional education? Can we educate our children with such a brief and unconvincing statement? (It would be interesting to check if the mother herself could immediately stop a feeling of hatred that arises inside herself with such a brief statement.)

Even if we open up a longer conversation with the child and try to explain to him about positive and negative emotions, our efforts will be futile. Emotions are in the heart, so our approach to them must also be through the heart. Although simply informing the child what he may feel in his heart and what he may not feel in his heart is a much easier method, it is totally ineffective.

On the other hand, we do indeed need to train our children in proper feelings. There are some feelings which the Torah expressly forbids, such as, “You shall not hate your brother in your heart,”³⁴ and precisely because it is so important, we must teach it in a proper and effective manner, as we will describe.

³⁴ *Vayikra 19:17*

PUNISHING OUT OF LOVE

Every parent comes across a situation in which he needs to punish a child. The punishment will depend on the nature and severity of the incident. Why do we punish? Does it stem from an angry heart, or from real and sincere concern and deep love for the one we are educating?

The answer depends on the situation. When the parent punishes immediately and spontaneously, it is most likely the result of an outburst of anger. This is a negative feeling that cannot serve to educate the child correctly. (Every parent should strive to remove the trait of anger, learn patience, and limit any outbursts toward the children as much as possible.)

On the other hand, there are punishments that are meted out after the parents discuss the matter together, and when it is calm and quiet, they determine the right course of action. The father or mother approaches the child and tells him, "Because of that serious incident, we have decided to punish you in this way."

Once the parent is certain that he is punishing the child because of a rational determination that there is a need to educate, he should ask himself, "Am I doing this out of love?" Deep down, the answer will usually be "Yes," but we must also openly express this to the child.

Once a parent decides to punish a child, there are two stages to the process: first, to determine if punishment is needed and how it should be done; then (and no less important), once he is about to implement the punishment, he should consider, "Why am I about to punish? Is it because I love him and care about his future?"

Once the parent has ascertained that the punishment is being implemented out of love, the next step is to add a few words at the time, such as, “Do you know why I am punishing you? Why don’t I punish the neighbor’s child? I am punishing you because I really love you.”

So that such a statement can be credible, and the child will feel that it is so, the parent must bring himself to the point where he is conscious that the entire punishment stems from an inner love for the child and concern for his future. Only when his parent has genuinely achieved this level will the child be convinced. The punishment will not cause a separation between the parent and child, but bring them closer.

But if the punishment is the result of a spontaneous outburst, even if the parent says that it is for the child’s benefit, the value of the statement will be negligible. The child will intuitively understand that these are just words, and they will not enter his heart.

Besides the importance of self-preparation before a punishment, if the parent wants to let the child know that he really is punishing because of love and sincere concern, he should try to be clear and specific in his explanation. Instead of just saying, “I am doing this because I really love you,” he should elaborate a little and say something like, “I would be very happy if I didn’t need to do this.”

In addition, in certain cases, we can tell the child, “Since we are doing this because we love you, and our goal is that you should be educated, if you have another idea about how to achieve this result without punishment, I will be happy to hear it. If it seems like a good suggestion, I will do it.” When a child hears such

a statement from his parents, he will feel that the punishment is not an end in itself, and will internalize the fact that their real goal is his education.

There are those who find such ideas to be totally foreign. They feel that parents should decide on things in secret in a closed room, and the children should have no say in the parents' decisions. Nonetheless, a statement like the one we have illustrated outweighs the merits of this other point of view; we enable the child to feel that his parents care about the goal as well as the means, and we thereby neutralize any potential feelings of distance that could develop as a result of the punishment.

Of course, the parents must decide on how to carry this out. They cannot allow the child to make a joke of the whole issue and give ridiculous suggestions about the alternative to a punishment. If a child comes up with alternatives, they must be serious and constructive. We can tell him that we will try his suggestion for a defined period, and if we see that it is not practical, we have no choice other than to revert to the original planned punishment.

IS THERE ANY REAL BASIS FOR A CHILD FEELING THAT HIS PARENTS HATE HIM?

Besides the distancing that a child can naturally feel when punished, even parents who really love their child can awaken within themselves a bit of hatred toward the child when they are punishing him, as is shown in this story.

A student of Rav Dessler once had a frightening dream, in which he was going to take a knife and kill his son. The father woke up terrified, and instead of just telling himself it was just a silly dream, he started to think about what it might mean.

When he could not think of a satisfactory insight, he approached Rav Dessler and asked, "Since dreams at night come from the thoughts of the day, how could a father who loves his son so much have such a dream?"

The answer was very surprising. He said, "It is likely that once, late at night the baby cried. Your wife said, 'I already woke up three times tonight; now it's your turn.' Since you didn't have the strength to wake up then, you might have deep down had an awful thought: 'I wish he wouldn't be here; I just need to sleep peacefully.' Even though this thought lasted only a brief moment and then disappeared, it emerged at night in a dream. Although this is not your true will, G-d forbid, it still is present to a small degree in the soul."

When parents have an outburst, there is a risk that in spite of all our love for the child, there can also be a feeling of hatred (especially when the child is often irritating and annoying). The child will sense this at the time of the punishment.

What is the result of this? Anyone involved in education of older children knows that when they are able to talk freely, some will say, "My parents don't love me," and some will even say, "My parents hate me."

Upon hearing such a dramatic statement, one will immediately call for a meeting with the parents, to ascertain whether this feeling is justified. The father comes to the meeting, hears the words, and reacts, "How could he make such a terrible statement? I give my whole life for him!"

How can we explain this? Is the child justified in his feelings, or should we believe the father?

The true answer is based on what we said before. In fact, the father loves the child a great deal, but it is only 95%, and there might be a small percentage of hatred hidden inside (which even he is not aware of). When the child makes such a declaration, he is referring to that little bit of hatred that affected him and made him feel that way.

Thus, besides the short-term harm that can occur as a result of a parent's outburst, in some cases, there can be serious long-term damage to the relationship.

Even if the punishment is carried out calmly, the negative feeling that naturally comes from the punishment cannot be completely obliterated. The parents must first become inwardly conscious that the punishment comes from love, for the sake of the child's education, and only after, when they tell this to the child, and say that they would be happy if they didn't have to do this, he will accept it in a much better way and we will avoid the negative feelings that might have come as a result.

Hearing this kind of advice when we are relaxed and open makes it seem easy to apply. But when it comes to real life, we discover that life is much more complicated. We need to achieve a high degree of level-headedness and self-growth in order to apply this idea correctly and successfully. But even if we are not 100% successful, the more we can achieve a calm mind, the more we can calmly direct our behavior and limit the harm and the distancing that can result from punishments. To the contrary, through punishments, the emotional bond between parent and child will strengthen.

When we act in this way, the positive feelings in the child's soul will strengthen, and we will be able to discuss both positive and negative feelings, gradually teaching him how to eradicate negative emotions from his heart. This, of course, is the work of a lifetime. But once positive feelings have been developed in the soul, one will have "fertile ground" upon which to embark on this important spiritual work.

5- TEACHING CHILDREN TO THINK ON THEIR OWN 35

As mentioned in the previous chapters, every individual functions simultaneously in three different ways – through actions, feelings, and thoughts. Most parents try to educate their children properly and direct their actions correctly, but when it comes to teaching them about feelings and thoughts, even though this is no less important than actions it is an area that is often neglected. In previous chapters, we have learned how to develop the world of emotions. In this chapter, with Hashem's help, we will discuss the world of thought and the means for guiding our children to think properly.

OUTER AND INNER THINKING

We must first be aware that when it comes to the task of educating our children to think, there is an internal element and an external element, and each must be dealt with separately. The external element is clear and well-defined: to train the child in correct ideals and thoughts. Each parent educates his children according to his own beliefs and perspectives.

Of course, even more basic than all of this is educating the children that the world has a Creator, to Whom we turn in times of need; that the world survives in the merit of the Torah, those who study it, and those who uphold and guard it; and similar principles. We teach our children many ideas, from the most fundamental principles to all the details of a Torah outlook, which we need to impart to them.

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This is the external element of education. We have views and beliefs that we know and believe in, and we try to pass these on to future generations. This is important, valuable, and basic, but completely separate from the more intricate task of training our children in the internal element of thinking.

“Internal thinking” refers to *binah*, which occurs when a person contemplates the knowledge he has learned. “External thinking” refers to *chochmah*, the information one hears or reads and perceives externally.

Training our children to think does not stop at imparting our faith and values so that they can come to possess them (though this is very important and basic). Rather, the primary training in thought is to guide them to become thinking people. The general rule is that if one thinks, there is hope for his life; if not, there isn’t.

Let us first ask ourselves – how there can be a person who does not think? It seems that the mind is always active, so therefore a person is always thinking. But most of these thoughts concern matters such as “what should I do, how should I act, what do I need,” etc. While these thoughts are important, they do not fall under the category of real thinking which is to contemplate, delve, and analyze. Nearly all measurable success occurs as a result of contemplating and “internal” thinking.

Chazal have already told us,³⁶ “Said Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, ‘Whoever evaluates his ways in this world will merit to see salvation from Hashem.’”. Although the simple meaning of this verse refers to considering the reward of a mitzvah

36 Sotah 5b

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and the difference between a sin and a mitzvah, it is also meant to include being accustomed to contemplating and thinking.

PRINCIPLES OF THOUGHT

One of the main faculties in every person is that of thought – the ability that each person has to contemplate. In general, this faculty is usually not sufficiently developed. This is surely the case in the general community and even more so among the nations of the world. Most people are not trained to think analytically. In contrast, one who is raised with the Torah, especially men who study it, are more accustomed to analytical thinking. But even this is not foolproof; often, one thinks and delves a lot into the *Gemara*, but doesn't think at all about life.

For example, does anyone think that life might not have a purpose? Obviously, it does! But if we ask a regular person, even in the Torah-observant community, what the purpose of life is, he will generally say, "It is written in ... that such and such is the purpose."

The answer is correct but it is incomplete. The purpose of life should concern a person much more than being able to read about it in a book and be satisfied with the one-dimensional, external explanation provided there.

Even if he has read about life's purpose, if one is not used to contemplating and analyzing, then he won't delve into it. He won't take it to heart, and he'll quickly forget about it. The purpose of life is a subject that should concern a person literally for years; we live for more than a year or two, and the search for meaning should have a commensurate length.

If so, why don't most people spend time thinking about the purpose of life? The answer is simple: Most people are too busy to spend time engaged in thought. We are all busy rushing around. There is much to do, almost everyone has many responsibilities, and we are distracted and don't have much free time. How, then, can we find time to think? Without consciously setting aside time, life can go on like this indefinitely, without any time to think, even briefly, about what the true purpose of life is.

Regrettably, there are those who believe that there is no need for such thought, because they already know everything clearly. But every thinking person should understand that avoiding contemplation about the purpose of life cannot be the true path. Just as we set aside time for actions, so we must devote time to thinking about the purpose and essence of life.

This is only one example of what we must think about. There are many other areas that demand our thought and contemplation.

IF THERE IS ONLY ACTIVITY, ONE WILL BE DISSATISFIED

If a person spends most of his days engaged in activities, he will more than likely come to feel an inner emptiness, or a lack of self-esteem, the common denominator of these feelings being a lack of satisfaction from life. This is because it is impossible to find satisfaction from action alone. (Action is also an ingredient of satisfaction, but we must realize that it is just one of the ingredients, and that it is not enough.)

Thus, when we want to raise a fully developed child, in addition to teaching proper ways to act, and creating a proper emotional world (as explained at length in prior chapters), we must also lead him to think, contemplate, analyze, and delve – not as a small aspect of life, but rather as a basic component.

Contemplation is the basis for future growth. If one just rushes along with life he will not stop and think – as long as there is no particular problem. Should a problem then develop, he will be forced to build everything from the foundation, because he never developed himself properly.

INTRODUCING THOUGHT INTO PRACTICAL LIFE

Anyone who has some personal experience with great men can discern that what they all have in common is that they analyze and think deeply. (The style and manner differ from one to another, depending on the person's soul, but each one has his own inner world, and each one thinks and delves.)

From the following, we can see how much importance the *gedolim* – the greatest Torah scholars – ascribed to training of thought: Rav Chaim Brisker considered training for independent thinking to be of the utmost importance. He employed various methods for training his son, Rav Yitzchak Ze'ev (known as the Brisker Rav), to become a thinking person. One of the things he did was to ask his son a question that required thought, and then send him on some errands, such as to buy something from a store. He was expected to have the answer to the question upon his return from the errand.

Reb Chaim Brisker had a definite goal: to train his son to constantly keep his power of thought activated. It is possible to tell a child to think while he is given time in a quiet room, but Rav Chaim wanted to teach his son to think even when involved in other activities, so that his ordinary day should be imbued with thought. For this reason, he would present a question that demanded thought, while at the same time, giving him an active errand with the request to have an answer (or an approach toward an answer) when he would return. In this way, he trained him to be aware that although we are always doing things (which is important and essential for our existence), our thinking must also be alert and active. (We are not saying that a parent should train his child in exactly this manner; we are just showing that a child must be trained to think on his own, and we've given an example of one way to do this.)

SETTING THOUGHT AS A GOAL

In general, we see to it that our children are trained to function properly. As to the emotions, we have dealt with them at length previously. But when it comes to the realm of thought, we will at best guide our children with our beliefs by expressing them at home, either naturally (and if these beliefs are correct, this is very positive) or for the purpose of teaching. But, how particular are we in training our children to think and analyze? We must first set a clearly defined goal, and then decide how to reach it.

The goal is to raise children for whom thought will be inseparable from their regular lives, as the Ramchal says,³⁷ "The wise, while they are going around, are

³⁷ *Deretz Etz Chaim*

always thinking.” A wise man should be primarily thinking about Torah, *halachah*, *mussar*, and other similar topics. Women, who are less involved in Torah study, should always be thinking about the purpose of life and what she must do to fulfill her mission.

Our definite goal in education is to raise a child who will be thinking, contemplating, and analyzing, to the point where just as one feels hungry for food, so will his realm of thought be so developed that he will have a kind of hunger for thought.

Most people are not trained this way. There are many people who act properly and try not to sin, but they are hollow inside, like a robot³⁸ doing what he is ordered to do without any choice. Life passes them by without any examination or clear goals, and this is the root of their failure.

In contrast, those who have achieved what the Ramchal mentions above are always thinking. With this faculty, they can build their lives properly. One who is not constantly thinking and analyzing never creates a basis upon which to build his life.

On the other hand, thought is not a guarantee for success. Success and failure depend on Hashem. Everyone can stumble, even while they are thinking. But the difference is that if one is thinking, at least he tried and failed, whereas if one doesn't think, even though he doesn't fail, that is only because he never tried.

³⁸ See the chapter – *The Void*

This is like a building that was never built, about which a “wise man” would comment that the building was never destroyed.

We wish to emphasize again that we must first set this as a definite goal – that thought and contemplation are the foundations of a person, as we say several times a day, “Who has fashioned man with wisdom.”³⁹ Hashem has fashioned man in a way that there should be an active faculty of thinking, contemplating and analyzing that is constantly in use.

DEVELOPING THOUGHT BY MEANS OF A SIMPLE QUESTION

We will provide some simple, practical examples of how one can apply these principles and raise children to think properly.

A child comes to a parent and asks how a certain thing is possible, or what the reason is for a certain behavior that he or she has noticed. In general, the parent will provide an answer, and feel satisfied that he handled the interaction correctly. He did not ignore the child’s question, but answered properly. We cannot have a complaint against such a parent.

But there is a better method. The parents can use the question to develop the child’s thinking. How is this? First you must know that the fact that the child asked the question is very positive and can be used as a springboard for training. For example, on the night of the Pesach *seder*, there are certain things we do for the sole purpose that children will ask why. This is not just so that we can give an answer, because we could have told them about the Exodus without their ques-

³⁹ *bracha of Asher Yatzar*

tions. Rather, the very fact that the child asks is a stage in the development of his thinking.

Every parent of small children knows that when he enjoys certain questions that the little ones ask, his initial reaction is “What a smart child! What clever questions!” The question itself proves that the child has reached a certain level where he can pose a good question. He has left the category of the “child who does not know how to ask.”

Therefore, before the parents think about how to answer the question, they should first praise the child for the question itself by saying, “You have a good point. That is an excellent question.” In this way, we encourage the child to ask more questions later on.

Once we have encouraged the child and praised him for his question, parents are often able to immediately answer it and explain the idea fully. If the child is gifted, he will grasp what we are saying and understand the answer even before we have finished talking. But if we do this, we stop him from thinking on his own, and we have not taken advantage of an opportunity to develop this important area.

If in fact we wish to develop the child’s thought, the next important stage, after praising him for the question, is to avoid directly answering the question. We should use his question instead as a means for developing his thought.

For this purpose, we should direct the child to think about his own question. The way to do this is for the parent to ask the child, “And what do you think?”

What might be an answer to your question?” Even if he finds it difficult to come up with a complete answer on his own, we should direct him to at least present different possibilities, and then we should analyze each possibility together with the child. In this way, we will arrive together at the final answer.

(This does not imply that if the child could not come up with any answer on his own, we should not answer him or direct him toward the answer. The point is just that we should not spoon-feed an answer. The child must work with the parent in evaluating the possibilities, and not receive a complete answer from the parent right away.)

Of course, not every minor question can be used for developing thought. If the child asks, “What time is it?” we don’t ask him to think about it. Also, if the parents sense that the child is impatient at the time, it is not the right time for him to think deeply. But if the question can invite deep thought, and the parent assesses that the time is right for working on the question and evaluating the matter with the child, it can be used as a means for developing his thinking.

DEVELOPING THOUGHT THROUGH THE CLOCK

An acquaintance visited Rav Chaim Brisker⁴⁰ and noticed that the clock on the wall was five minutes slow. He asked permission to adjust it to the correct time. Rav Chaim refused, and said that he wished to leave the clock as it was. When asked why, he explained that he wanted to ensure that even when he looks at the clock, he will need to think.

40 This is the second time we mention Rav Chaim Brisker in this chapter. Development of thought was of paramount importance to him, so we can learn much from him in this area.

If one looks at a clock with the correct time, if he sees that it says 12:00, he knows that this is the correct time of day. But if it is five minutes slow, then when it says 12:00, he needs to think and realize that it is actually 11:55.

In this way, Rav Chaim ensured that even something as minor as a glance at the clock would require some thought. He thus forced his thought to work “over-time.”

This is a clear example of how a person should accustom himself to always think and contemplate. Certainly, when we deal with children, it is vital that we develop their thinking, as this is part of the structure of their souls.

DEVELOPING A CHILD’S THOUGHT IS A LONG-TERM INVESTMENT

At times, when we ask a child to think of an approach to answering his own question, he will say, “I don’t have the strength to think; I want you to tell me the answer!” (In fact, thinking does require exertion.) If we try to force him to think without having him understand why he is doing it, the benefit will be very limited.

Therefore, it is best to include the child in the process. Explain it to him simply and clearly. For example, say, “I can certainly give you a clear answer that will satisfy you, but if you don’t think at all and just hear all the answers from me, you will become nothing more than a walking encyclopedia. I want to guide you to becoming broader and deeper, by using your question as a means to show you how to think, and to make you a mature and independent person who can guide himself with his own understanding. You will then be able to figure out answers on your own to questions that will arise in the future. When you are older, you

won't need to come to me with all your difficulties. Of course, I will always be happy to guide you in certain areas, but you will not need my advice for every minor issue."

This approach can be compared to a poor person approaching a wealthy man complaining that he doesn't have anything to eat. The wealthy man has two options: he can give him food for two months, so that he will survive at least that long, or he can advise him how to start his own business and lend him a significant sum for that purpose. When the poor man becomes financially stable, he will then repay the loan.

Which method is better? Think about it: If he gives him money for two months, after that time, the situation will repeat itself; he will again be hungry and needy. But if he offers a long-term loan for the sake of starting a business, though the poor man will need to repay it, the problem will be solved at its root, and the man will be able to get by on his own and be part of society.

The lesson is clear: We can supply the child's needs whenever he asks for something. When a five-year-old drops a fork on the floor during a meal, we can pick it up. When a twelve-year-old asks for a sandwich, we can prepare one for him. We can be there to serve him for many things that he can do for himself. But will we then be considered good and dedicated parents?

In the short term, we would be making things easier and helping him, and he will feel loved because of all the attention he receives, but any thinking person knows that when the child grows up and no can longer "cling to his mother's apron

strings,” he will come across terrible difficulties, and life will be unbearable for him.

We all know of young women who get married and have no idea of how to wash dishes and cook basic meals. The mother always took care of things at home and didn't allow anyone else into the kitchen. Did that mother really care for her daughters? Surely, a mother who wants to raise her daughters properly must realize that one day her daughter will get married, and to be a good wife and mother, she will need to know how to cook, clean, and take care of other things in the house. To this end, she should get accustomed to doing these things in her parents' home; she should not be immediately spoon-fed all of her needs.

Along with these essential habits of action, we must develop the child's realm of thought. In general, the realm of thought is much more neglected than that of actions. Often, children are raised to take responsibility in the home because there is no other alternative. The kitchen is a mess after Shabbos, or there are piles of laundry to do after *Chol HaMoed*, and we have no choice other than to involve the children in the laundry and cleaning. But in the realm of thought, unless something unusual happens, we allow things to take their natural course, and the child feels no need to activate his mind and think independently.

Sometimes, a boy or girl will have a homework assignment that requires thought. They may have difficulty understanding a *passuk* in *Chumash* or *Navi*, or they may have trouble with a difficult exercise in algebra. If their parents are capable, or they have an older sibling or aunt, they may immediately go to them for help, so they won't need to “break their head” by thinking on their own.

What is the result of this? The parent thinks he is giving the child a broader knowledge of the subject and filling the child's storehouse of information. Yet we all know that information acquired this way is usually quickly forgotten. There is hardly a student who remembers all the *pesukim* he learned in school or all the math exercises he completed. But if we train them to think on their own, even if they forget the information, they will be in the habit of thinking that will accompany them for many years to come.

THE SHABBOS TABLE AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THINKING

Here is another example: The family is sitting around the Shabbos table. It is clear to all of us that this is a golden opportunity for spending time with the children, and it can be very productive. In many homes, the parents take advantage of the "captive audience," and use it the Shabbos meal as a time for giving over valuable lessons to the children. The father may relate a commentary on the weekly *parsha*, or tells a story with a strong moral lesson.

The benefit of this approach cannot and should not be discounted, but it is not the only approach. We would like to suggest something different. On one hand, we can use the time sitting together for transmitting valuable lessons, but we can also develop our children's thought at the same time.

The father can present a question on the *parsha* or another subject, and ask the children to think of an approach to answering it. (There is a general problem when the parents are blessed with many children of different ages and one question cannot match all levels, but this is also true with stories or commentaries that the father might relate. In general, the way to involve everyone is to ask a num-

ber of questions, so that there is something for each level. There will be simple questions [such as where a certain word appears in the weekly *parasha*] and also questions that require deeper thought, according to the age and level of each child.)

By inviting the children to think along with us, we utilize the precious time in which the family sits around the Shabbos table for a positive purpose, and at the same time, we are helping the children's thinking develop.

This approach is somewhat like fishing: you attach tasty bait to the hook in order to catch the fish. So too, we want to stimulate the children's thought in order that their minds will be active, thinking, and analytical. We do this by asking them various questions throughout life, which will accustom them to think. (There are various kinds of thought, and we cannot detail here the way to train for each kind of thinking.)

USING PRIZES TO ENCOURAGE THOUGHT

Parents should view the development of their child's thought as part of their obligation. Just as a mother might give a prize to a child if he makes his bed or goes to sleep at the right time, or if he speaks or acts properly, the same method should be used to encourage the child to activate his thinking.

When we want a boy to memorize Mishnayos, we often use a program – we will award him if he succeeds. But although this has positive points (he sits and learns and gets used to reviewing), often he doesn't remember the material later on. The child just repeats the words with hardly any thought involved (and some

people even make them recite *Mishnayos* that they don't understand). If so, the loss outweighs the benefit: the child gets used to reading with hardly any understanding.

Just as we look for ways to motivate children to act properly, learn well, etc., we should provide them with incentives to encourage their thinking. For example, present a question to the children that requires thought. Promise them that whoever gives an answer (that makes sense, whether or not it is correct) will get a prize. (We are not going to decide here if one should educate with prizes, but once parents have decided how to motivate their children's behavior, they should use the same method for motivating and guiding them to think properly.)

DEVELOPING THE POWER OF THOUGHT – A MEANS FOR STRENGTHENING THE BOND WITH OUR CHILDREN

Another benefit we can derive from developing our children's minds is that this will strengthen the connection between us and them, forming a bond that will last a long time.

How does this work? As we explained before, our relationship with our children is generally limited to the physical realm. Normally, this will deteriorate at a certain point. A young child feels dependent on his parents, but as he grows older and feels that he can take care of himself, the bond starts to weaken. In order for the bond to be solid and lasting, there must also be an emotional relationship, as was explained earlier.

But this is only one part of building a connection with your children, and it may not be enough, as it may break when the children get older. Thus, if parents want

a long-lasting connection, they must invest in another kind of relationship, one based on thought.

If we develop an intellectual relationship with our children, when they get older and become more mature, the bond with them will persist, because we saw to it when they were young that there would be a connection with the more mature part of them. It will carry through from their childhood into their adulthood. If the relationship is based only on actions, there is a concern that as they grow older, there will be a certain disconnection from us.

When parents form an intellectual bond with their child, and they are on the same wavelength, they connect to the adult part of the child, not just the practical and emotional realms.

Thus, there are two reasons for developing the child's thought and building his *da'as*: (1) The main reason is to train the child to think, analyze, and contemplate. (2) In addition, it will foster a deep and solid bond with the children that will, with the help of Hashem, last well into their adulthood.

THE BASIS FOR TRUE GROWTH IN THE SERVICE OF HASHEM

A person's true goal should be to improve himself and rise to continually higher levels. If we look around us, how many people can we point to that seem to be growing from year to year throughout their lives? (Of course, we are not discussing financial or material advancement, but advancement related to the soul.) Our conclusion will be that even if there are people like that, they are not in the majority.

The ordinary life with which we are familiar revolves around actions, but the inner dimension has much less importance among most people. We must ask ourselves a fundamental question: As parents, what do we want our children to become? Will we not be satisfied to have children who are only good and obedient, who don't desecrate the Shabbos or steal, G-d forbid. It would seem that our expectation is that when they grow up, their aspirations will be much more profound. Their view of life should make them always want to grow and rise to ever higher levels and not be satisfied with their current level, in the spirit of what *Chazal* said,⁴¹ "Torah scholars have no rest in this world or the next, as it says, 'They will go from strength to strength.' "

If we with just giving them food and love, they will like to eat and maybe they will even love us, but then we will not have the merit to see them grow up with true spiritual yearnings! How, then, can we raise a child who yearns to grow higher and higher and go from strength to strength?

The ability to reach this level is based on two elements in the soul: (1) the will and yearning for constant growth, and (2) *da'as*, profound thought.

When we want to develop within our children a yearning to grow from strength to strength, we cannot be satisfied with the first element: love of Torah, fear of Heaven, the will to attain high levels (though these are of course very important and vital). In the long run, this does not always happen. Even if we have positive results with the children as teenagers, when they get older, there is something that gets in the way and stymies further growth.

⁴¹ *Brochos 64a*

In order to understand how this obstacle that prevents them from achieving their full growth potential comes into being, we must first explain what true growth is.

To take an example from the material world, when you want to build a house, you place one brick on top of another so the house will be well-built and will not suddenly collapse. So too, when we wish to define a person who is improving and growing properly, we say that he is a “built person,” which shows that even in the soul, there is the concept of building; when one places one brick over the other in his soul, he is properly built.

To build the soul one “brick” at a time, it is not enough to simply act. Even if we see to it that we do an act of kindness each day or learn two laws about *Shemiras Halashon* (avoiding improper speech), in spite of the importance of these things, we cannot say that we are growing. It is only the outer that is being affected, whereas real growth comes from inner development.

But when a person thinks and contemplates, he will continually delve into the things that he learns and knows; this is how he builds one “brick” over the other in his soul.

For our purposes, of course, we can blame the obstacles and lack of advancement in the child’s service of Hashem on the material world with its allure, and on the distractions of life. Certainly, these are factors adequate to draw a person away from growth. But in light of what we have said, there is an additional obstacle: the child has not learned to think.

That is to say, the essential condition for growing and rising to higher levels must be based on one's thinking, analyzing, and contemplating. Without this, there is no way to enter a process of growth. (For many, this may be very novel, but to those who understand the inner life, this is very simple.)

Therefore, when parents want to raise children who will grow internally, they must not suffice with practical guidance or inspiring words, and it is not even enough if they instill in them positive emotions. These things can create a good and positive environment, which in fact is very valuable, but for a home to raise growing children, there must be thought, contemplation, and depth.

THE GOAL OF EDUCATION – YEARNING FOR GROWTH

Thus far, we have mostly dealt with training children to think in a general way. Now we will focus on thinking about spiritual matters.

Every parent must remember that education is not just about teaching children how to act. The real goal is to raise a generation who will continue in the ways of our holy Avos (patriarchs) and the Jewish people, as it says, “because he instructs his children and his household to follow the way of Hashem.”⁴² To this end, we must present to them a goal of ascension and growth. In this way, we will have the merit of seeing in every child a soul yearning to grow higher and higher.

When a child asks his father to pick up an object that fell on the ground, the father could of course just pick it up that one time, but he could also build for him a

⁴² Bereishis 18:19

little crane so that the child will press on a button and pick up from the ground whatever falls...

It is clear to all of us that we cannot carry our children in our hands throughout their lives, neither physically nor spiritually. We must bring them to a state where they can lift themselves up independently.

Likewise, we find in the *Gemara*⁴³ that according to one opinion, a father must teach his son a trade. It is not enough for the father to come after the wedding and give his son a certain amount of money, even if it is a large amount. At some point, the money will be spent. He must teach him a trade so that he will have the ability to support himself in the future.

This concept applies also in the spiritual realm. We must educate the child in a way that we give him the ability to keep growing forever and not be satisfied with merely doing what he has to do. He should always strive to improve.

STUDYING WORKS OF JEWISH THOUGHT WITH CHILDREN

In order to raise a child who will contemplate and delve regularly – which as we said, is the basic precondition for striving to grow – we must use additional means.

To properly develop a child's contemplation and deep thinking, we just don't encourage the child to sit all day and try to think deep thoughts. Rather, we already

⁴³ *Kiddushin 29a*

possess works of Jewish thought written by the great rabbis, upon whom we rely. From them, we can awaken proper thought.

Generally, parents provide their children with their physical needs – they feed them, clothe them well, etc., and in addition, they try to instill in them some proper ideas. Without question, a child cannot grow in a true, deep, and complete way with only these ideas, just as the parent knows that he himself cannot really grow based on just those ideas.

It is clear to all of us that parents who don't feed their children are neglectful. There is no need to elaborate on this. So too, parents must not raise children without giving them inner spiritual provisions that will enable them to thrive and grow.

As we said, our rabbis have written books of thought that are accepted by all groups and communities. In order to train a child to think deeply, we cannot suffice with a quick reading before bedtime; we must learn the books seriously with him, and remember that we can influence his entire outlook on life.

An example of a fundamental work that every parent must learn with his children is the *Derech Hashem* of the Ramchal. As is known, this work gives the reader the essential foundations about the purpose of life and a person's obligation in this world. It can be said that a father who does not teach his children the content of this work is neglectful – as harsh as that sounds! (Of course, one must find the age in which the child is capable of understanding the material. But even at a younger age, we can learn with a child books that are appropriate to his level.

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As we know, the Steipler advised to learn books like the *Orchos Tzaddikim* with children who are six years old.)

For example, let's say we have chosen to learn *Derech Hashem* with our child. This sefer deals with the purpose of man in this world. In order to gain the maximum benefit out of the time we spend learning, it is not enough to simply read and explain the material. A better way is to read a paragraph from the book together, and then discuss it. We can ask the child to think about what we've read. The next day, when we review it, we can ask him what he thought about it. We can continue the discussion until the ideas are clear in his mind.

Using this method, besides the information we will be giving to him (which he more than likely will not retain over time), we can accustom our child to think about what he is learning. As he matures, this skill will grow stronger and more deeply rooted. Keep in mind that when we are teaching foundations of belief to our children, there is no difference between genders.

It might be easier for boys to understand the subject matter since they are used to learning *Gemara*, but this does not exempt parents from teaching and explaining the material to their girls. The goal of the interaction is not merely to convey information, as with mathematics, but rather to get them into the habit of thinking about lofty ideas and delving into them as much as possible.

THE ADVANTAGES OF STUDYING THE PURPOSE OF EXISTENCE WHEN YOUNG

Learning and thinking about the purpose of life must be taught in the same way as other habits like making the bed and clearing off the table. In this way, we can

accustom our children to being interested in their inner world. Our approach will train them to think about and contemplate spiritual matters and the purpose of life.

It is an unfortunate fact that a child can go through his entire childhood with only the barest knowledge that there is a Creator who runs everything. Even when a child has reached the age of ten, twelve, and fourteen, they may still be operating with same level of understanding that they had as a young child. They have minimal knowledge of what *Yiddishkeit* really is. The fact that they are aware of G-d's existence is important – but we can't be satisfied with that. It won't be enough to help them cope with the trials they will confront throughout the course of their lives.

And what's the outcome of this extreme famine of knowledge? We need only look at today's generation to get an idea. The picture is worth a thousand words.

Ignorance in matters of faith leads to no good end. Teenagers are exposed to a tremendous amount of materialism via clothing, food, etc. The major influence of their environment pulls them toward an empty and materialistic life. Since they were never taught to think deeply about the purpose of their existence, they lack the tools to withstand these tests. Lowly ideas fill their heads instead of the more lofty ones they should have learned as children.

With Hashem's help, we can cure this malady. The first thing we must do is change our goals. Our central goal can and should be to instill in our children an inner strength that will help them deal with their challenges, by using the time we have with them wisely. Learning *sefarim* and discussing ideas with them will teach

them to think about the purpose of man in this world, and strengthen them to forego the lure of materialism for greater things.

LEARNING PRINCIPLES OF FAITH

What does an average day in the life of an average Jewish child look like? He wakes up in the morning, goes to school, comes home and does his homework. Perhaps he will spend time with his parents or friends until bedtime, or do some *chesed* (acts of kindness). This schedule repeats itself day in and day out.

If we were to record his daily life from the moment our child awakens until he goes to sleep, and then we played it back, the chances are good that we will hear very little that is related to real spiritual striving. Most of the words will revolve around material, empty things.

If we take a longer view – a week, a month, or a year – where does *emunah* fit into the picture? Can we be satisfied with an occasional word at home about the foundations of Jewish faith, or with just a few minutes at the Shabbos table?

There is no doubt that most parents are busy and distracted, especially in large families with so many needs to provide for, or when there is a difficult child in the family who requires more time and attention. But does this justify raising a child who, at the age of twelve or fourteen has no spiritual nourishment?

Most parents rely on the school, yeshiva, or seminary to do their work for them when it comes to instilling our children with this essential spiritual nourishment. Although most teachers do excellent jobs, our child may be only one of thirty or more students in the class. The amount of nourishment they receive is not

enough to sustain them. Principles of faith and other aspects of personal growth will not be absorbed in an optimal way in this setting. A small degree of this essential *pnimius* (inwardness) can definitely enter the child's heart through school, but it is not enough to provide only a small percentage of our child's needs. Just like we wouldn't want them to be malnourished physically, we also don't want them to be malnourished spiritually.

This doesn't mean that a child should have to study all day and never go out to play. It is simply a matter of incorporating another goal along with all the other things that we teach our children. We want to raise them in a way that they will become thinkers, used to dealing with the inner fundamentals of the Jewish people as a whole and with the purpose of their individual lives, along with the more practical aspects of life, and not excluding them.

Even though we all agree with the goal, and that teaching our children to think about faith is the obligation of every Jewish parent, in reality it has no place in ordinary life.

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE AS A TOPIC OF DISCUSSION IN THE HOME

It is essential to keep in mind that we are raising the next generation of Klal Yisrael. As such, we must ensure that our children have inner depth by encouraging them to think, and by introducing a deeper dimension into their lives. All of this will have an effect on our approach to education.

The simple approach is to encourage the child who asks us a question to think of an answer on his own. Even if the question is totally mundane, such as how a cer-

tain object functions, we should not spoon-feed the answer. Encourage him to think for himself. Afterwards, you can help him find the correct answer. Even if he cannot come up with an answer on his own, we can work with him to clarify the question as much as he can within his own sphere of knowledge until he can arrive at a clear answer.

The more complex approach is to provide basic knowledge of Jewish thought from our rabbis, and accustom him to think about these deeper ideas.

A Torah thought given over at the Shabbos table is certainly better than nothing at all. But the few moments of spiritual content presented at the table (provided the child is actually listening, and that he understands what you are saying) are negligible compared to the rest of the hours in the week.

Since our true goal is to raise children who want to grow, we must give them the tools to do so. These tools can be found in the works of our rabbis, which cannot just remain on the bookcase like stones. They should be taken down and learned with the children, and we must guide them to think, analyze, and delve into the ideas.

Once these important thoughts are imbedded in a person's mind they can naturally become an inseparable part of life as he thinks about them and constantly delves into them. (We are not just referring to amassing information, which is of little benefit.) Just as a parent and child can converse about food, clothing and friends, they can add a new topic to their conversation that is the true purpose of our lives.

On a higher level, we don't only want our children to know this information. We want them to really care about the purpose of life. Once we can get them to think about these vital topics, they will automatically be involved in lofty and significant matters. We will also be giving them tools that will help them grow and confront the various stages of life successfully. This will bring them to care about the meaning of their lives.

We are not talking about abnormal levels of abstinence from this world. Someone approached me recently and said, "We are not living in a ghetto now!" Yet, we have gone to the opposite extreme. If we strive to raise children with an inner spiritual world, with a desire to grow higher and higher, we must develop this in the framework of the home, and with Hashem's help, we can succeed.

CRITICISM AS A TOOL FOR INDEPENDENT THINKING

Now that we have covered how to educate a child to think in general and specifically to think about spiritual matters, we will cover a different aspect of thought. One of the common situations in the home is when the parents criticize a child's actions.

We will be discussing a situation where criticism is appropriate, as a response to the child's improper act.

Here is an example: A parent notices that one of his children is doing something wrong, like throwing a peel onto the floor instead of into a garbage can, or grabbing something that belongs to another child. Normally, a parent will react by responding right away, and demanding that the child fix the problem immediately.

Depending on the parent's ability to express himself, he may say, "Give the toy back to your brother!" or "Pick up the peel and throw it in the garbage!" and "We don't behave this way!"

In the spirit of our previous discussion, we would like to suggest an alternative method, and we will show how it can become a means for helping the child think independently.

Let's take one of the cases referred to above. The child throws a banana peel down in the living room, and the parent notices this. The parent will instinctively want to deal with it directly and tell the child to fix the problem immediately. But we will suggest a totally different approach.

The parent can say to the child, "Please think, does it seem right to throw down a banana peel in the middle of the living room?" We can then say, "I don't need an immediate answer; you can give me an answer tomorrow."

Imagine the benefits of this response as compared to instant rebuke. If we just follow our instincts and make him pick up the peel, we have dealt with the immediate concern and the room will be clean, but we are just ordering him what to do. Even if he will usually listen, we have not educated the child about cleanliness.

Although we don't want the peel on the floor now, our real goal should be much more profound: to get the child to understand on his own that it was wrong to throw the peel on the ground.

When we respond to the child's wrong action, we should think about how to react in a way that the child will reach the goal we want. We cannot suffice with an instant solution, such as, "Pick up the peel now and throw it in the garbage." We should make him put some thought into his action. Our reaction should be different from how our natural tendency would cause us to respond.

When, for example, we see a child throw down a banana peel and we want him to think about it, we could say to him, "When you become a father (or a mother), with Hashem's help, and you have children, if your child would do this, how would you react?" Here, too, we should explain that we don't expect an immediate answer, but rather, that we prefer that he thinks about it a little, and gives an answer later.

Besides the educational benefit inherent in this approach, since he will think twice before doing it again, we get him to actually think.

PROPER CRITICISM FORMS A CONNECTION THROUGH THOUGHT

If we accustom ourselves to reacting differently than our instincts dictate, we can bring the child towards an understanding of our perspective.

When we react instinctively by saying, "We don't do this," "Throw it in the garbage," etc., all the child will hear is a command. But if we respond as suggested above, we include him in our way of thinking, as parents. This creates a new kind of bond with the child that is based on common thinking.

Returning to our example, if we just tell him to throw out the peel, he won't be thinking about it at all; he just doesn't want to argue or get punished. In the short term, the problem is solved, but is he really thinking about his behavior?

In contrast, when our reaction is different, such as, "Think about if it is right to throw the peel there," or, "What would you do if your child would throw down a banana peel?" we include him in our way of thinking, and make him consider what the proper behavior is. As a result, he will evaluate for himself if his action is good or bad.

Furthermore, when we just give an order, there is a kind of struggle (though depending on the level of the child's intransigence, he might not feel this that strongly). But when we ask him to think about his act, the situation will be much calmer in the soul, for both parent and child.

However, if we employ this method in all situations, we may lose all our authority in the home. The children may come to lack the basic understanding needed in every healthy household – that children must listen to their parents.

For this reason, in a certain percentage of the cases, parents should give clear orders to their children, without giving the children the right to discuss the matter. (I can't give an exact number, as it depends on the time and conditions.) In these cases, they should not be privy to all the parents' thoughts and calculations. They should be informed that this is an order that cannot be challenged; the purpose of this is to create a basic sense of authority upon which the home is built.

On the other hand, a home should not be run like an army base or a police station. Parents should not be dictators. Even if we succeed in imposing our will in the house, and our orders are fully implemented, all we accomplish is raising obedient “robots” in the house, not well-developed children.

Therefore, once we have taken advantage of that percentage of the situations for establishing our authority, we should make sure that in the rest of the cases, there should be dialogue. The parents should include the children in their thinking; in this way, they open a new channel to their children based on a connection through thought.

Of course, the results will not be as immediate. With this method, patience will pay off over time, and we will see amazing results.

GUIDING THE CHILD TOWARD SELF-EVALUATION

Criticism is very common in every home where children are raised. It comes up every day (and sometimes, a number of times a day), whenever children don't behave in the ideal way and the parent wants to immediately react.

As we said, only in rare circumstances should we give direct orders (“Take this, do this, pick that up, etc”), and this is only in order to create a basic sense of the parents' authority in the home. But if parents are always giving orders, there is tension in the air, and the children will not be properly developed.

Therefore, besides those rare cases when one must give direct and forceful orders, we should mostly direct the child to evaluate himself by asking him to think about what he did. We must make it clear that we don't expect an immediate re-

sponse, but we want to hear an answer once he has thought deeply about the issue.

At times, we can develop the discussion further. We gave an example of asking him what he would do if his child would act that way. We can ask him to come up with two or three possible reactions. When we hear his response, we can discuss and analyze his thoughts.

When we do this, we get him to think about how to look at his own actions. When he will think about them, the chances that he will throw a peel on the floor, for example, are much less. (Of course, this approach will not completely solve the problem, but neither will yelling and commanding. It is best, then, to solve the problem through getting the child to grow up and think for himself.)

We will provide another example in order to clarify this issue: A child comes home from a birthday party with a bag full of candies. When he comes in the house, his siblings see the candy, and they want him to share. The mother says, "Can you please share with your brothers and sisters?" Sometimes, his reaction will be, "I don't want to; it's mine!"

Of course, we can just grab the bag right away, divide the contents into four or five parts (depending on the number of children in the house), and in this way, think we have solved the problem. But we all know that we have not taught him about sharing.

Let's try a different approach: The bag will stay in the child's hands for now, but in an hour or two, when we see that he is more calm, we will turn to him and say,

“Think, please; if one of your brothers would come home with a bagful of candies, and he wouldn’t want to share with you, how would you feel?”

We are not hinting to him about how to act, and we are not telling him to now share the rest of the bag. We just are giving him food for thought, and asking that tomorrow he will answer the question. (At times, it might be proper to tell him not to eat the candies until he gives an answer.)

This approach will require a lot of patience on the part of the parents. It is possible that even next time, he will not share the bag with his siblings. But if we are consistent in the way we respond, he will slowly learn to think about this and internalize the value of giving.

This approach is based on the assumption that the child is not doing this because of faulty character or cruelty. The reason he doesn’t share is that it is human nature to think only of oneself, without questioning one’s ways. Our job is to awaken him to think a little, and we hope that with time, he will realize that his behavior is wrong, and he will try to deal with it on his own.

There are unusual cases of difficult children born with extremely negative tendencies, who have no interest in changing and improving. (They need special treatment that is beyond this discussion.) With the average child, though, this is one of the issues he struggles with, and we should help him to deal with it by thinking and contemplating, which will lead to personal improvement.

Usually, even with an average child, there will be some trait that is very difficult to change. We should first deal with the smaller problems; once those are recti-

fied, with Hashem's help, it will be easier to confront and deal with the more difficult problem.

With this more measured approach, criticism becomes not a tool for getting the child to do what you want, but (when done properly) a tool for developing independent thought. The child will learn to evaluate himself, consider his actions, listen to what he himself says, and come to the right conclusions on his own. If he asks us for help, we should try to help him, but his focus should always be on self-evaluation, not on outside instruction.

PROPER CRITICISM IMPROVES THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE HOME

By following this method of educating your child, a much calmer atmosphere will naturally occur at home. All the struggles and arguments that stem from the feeling that they are being oppressed by "police" in the family will dissipate.

When the house is run by way of giving orders, and the parents get their way by issuing demands, the child can come to feel that he is in some kind of institution where authority is forced on him. As a result, even if he obeys, he will not relate to the parents' thinking. (Even the occasional hug he may receive will not really help to weaken this feeling.) We will not build or strengthen our connection with him in this manner.

On the other hand, when we include the child in our thinking, and we guide him to think on his own about what he did and how he should behave, we get him to identify with his parents. He slowly connects to our way of thinking. This opens a channel with our children, through thought, and this is vital in the home.

PUNISHMENT AS A MEANS FOR DEVELOPING THOUGHT

In some extreme cases, the child deserves a punishment – this is sometimes needed in order to establish authority in the home as long as it is carried out properly. Here, too, we can use thought to assist in the process.

Let us first give an example from the way punishment is generally meted out nowadays. When a child acts in an extreme way that his parents disapprove of, they might react by saying, “Today, you’re not going to camp,” or “You won’t get the candy on Shabbos,” depending on how each family decides to punish.

(Before we show how to include thought in the process, we want to stress again that our approach should be used in about 90% of the cases, while in the other 10%, we should punish the child without any consultation with him. We will then explain that he must accept it without any argument.)

Beyond those 10% of the cases, now that we are aware of the educational advantage of the encouraging the child to think for himself, we will suggest a very different method of punishment.

For example, the child did an improper act and we have decided that he should be punished. First of all, we will evaluate the act, as mentioned above: “Do you think it is right to throw a peel on the ground? Give me an answer tomorrow.” Or, “How would you react if your child would do that?” Once the child has come to the conclusion that he has not acted properly, we should state this simple fact: “Since you understand that this is not the way to act, and we know that you must be disciplined so it won’t happen again, we have decided to punish you. We

would like you to suggest three possible punishments, and we will evaluate if they are appropriate to your action.”

In general, the child will respond, “I will change my behavior without any punishment.” If so, we will make it clear that punishment is not our goal, and we will be very happy if we can get the desired result without resorting to punishment. We will give him another chance, in order to see if we can trust him about this. At this point, we won’t punish him at all, but we’ll explain that we’re giving him a chance to change his behavior on his own, without the punishment.

But if the child does not subsequently improve, and we come to the conclusion that the only way he will improve is if he receives a punishment, we should ask him to suggest three different possible punishments that will serve as deterrents, so that he will acquire the necessary self-discipline. If one of the suggestions seems sensible, we should implement it.

It may be that the punishments he suggests will be silly and inappropriate. In that case, we should ask him, “Do you think that will cause you to be disciplined and to improve your behavior?” If he realizes that it won’t, we ask him to come up with a better punishment, and in this way, we solve the problem. But if he doesn’t want to cooperate, since we need not agree on everything, we will have to exercise our authority as parents and punish him as we see fit.

PROPER CRITICISM AND PUNISHMENT PREVENT NEGATIVE FEELINGS

Our initial motive in suggesting this approach was so that the child will begin to think on his own. But there is another benefit to the approach of including the child in the decision of what will happen to him.

When parents criticize and punish a child without giving any explanations, the child will retreat into his shell for a time and not want to talk to anyone. One might think of him as a temporary orphan. In extreme cases, a child might lock himself in his room, go into his bed, and close himself off for a number of hours.

The result is that over time, an inner feeling may develop in the child that “I don’t get along with my parents.” When criticism or punishment is frequent, this inner feeling builds up, and it can cause a kind of separation from the parents that will be hard to mend later.

Therefore, the best way is that, other than in those cases needed for establishing authority where there is no explanation or discussion, the punishment should be carried out in a way that the child is involved and deeply understands what his parents want from him and what they ultimately want to accomplish.

We must understand that just as each of us wants to advance in life, a child also wants to improve his behavior. But when the communication with his parents is in the form of arguments and punishments, he does not deal with the real issue of the need to improve his behavior. His energy is focused on arguing with his parents.

In contrast, if we save him from arguments and the frustration he was experiencing, we begin to have a calm, real dialogue. We can focus on the educational goal: what is the best way to grow and improve?

INCLUDING THE CHILD IN THE DISCIPLINARY PROCESS WILL HELP US UNCOVER HIS MOTIVE

There are many examples we could give. Any parent who lives in a home and thinks a little will sense that we are always evaluating and disciplining. There must be a fundamental change in how we do these things, so that we will now include the child in the process. This will not only improve the child's behavior, but also his thinking.

Every parent is familiar with the feeling of guilt that often comes after needing to punish a child. (At times, this feeling is justified, especially if there was no need for a punishment, or it was done in the wrong way.) But if the child is involved in the process, there will be no need for guilt afterward, since it was done with mutual understanding.

Furthermore, if we succeed with this method, instead of the emotional separation that often ensues, there will be an opposite result: a stronger bond between them will emerge. A channel of communication will open, since each will understand the other. This process can reveal to us in full the inner personality of the child far more than we could learn from the specific incident at hand.

Let us return to the aforementioned incident. The child did something improper, and the parent has given him the opportunity to come up with three types of punishment. The child begins to think of an appropriate punishment. Let's say that

he suggests a very minor punishment, as often is the case. The parent will ask, “Do you really think this is enough?” In some cases, the child will respond with, “I came home from school very upset because of an incident with my friends, so that’s why I did that.”

We will not discuss here if this is an excuse, but we have benefited greatly from the conversation. We now know what happened to him that made him act that way.

But if we are not aware of what is going on inside the child, and we just give orders, even if the orders are correct, we have no idea why the child acted that way. We are dealing with a problem that we don’t properly understand. Just as it is irresponsible for a doctor to treat a patient without understanding his situation, a parent must know that part of raising children is to know, to the extent possible, what is going on inside of them. Only in this way can one work with them and guide them correctly.

Thus, as result of proper punishment and evaluation, when the parents involve the child in the process through his own thinking, there are two benefits: (1) we raise a person who will think, contemplate, and analyze, and this well help him to properly direct his entire life, and (2) along with this, we get to know our children better, by discovering what they are going through.

Sadly, we hear every day parents complaining about their older children, saying, “We have no connection with them,” “We have no common language,” and “We have nothing to talk about with them.”

You must know that this problem didn't start at age 17 or 15, and not even at age 13, but much before. In general, this situation comes because the connection with them was limited to giving food and clothing, sometimes buying gifts, giving a kiss before bed, and such. Those parents think that this will create a real bond with the children, but reality proves otherwise.

But if we follow the advice in these chapters and build the children emotionally and intellectually, we will create a bond with them at a young age. If we build them continually, and accurately address their innermost needs, the bond will be very strong. As a result, when they get older, they will sense that they can talk about ideas with their parents, and the bond will get deeper and firmer each day.

6- NURTURING A CHILD'S NESHAMAH⁴⁴

THE GOAL OF CHINUCH – HELPING OUR CHILD REVEAL HIS NESHAMAH

In the previous chapters, we dealt with the more practical issues of *chinuch* (child education), where we explained that *chinuch* requires us to be aware of three factors: the realm of action, the realm of emotion, and the realm of thought. Now we will try to explain, in brief lines, of the fundamental facet that lies behind all of the words here.⁴⁵

Every person is a soul, covered over by the body, which is the soul's "garment". The purpose of why we came onto this world is to remove our bodily perception of ourselves and reveal our existence as a *neshamah* (Divine soul).

Thus, if parents want to raise their children properly, and they are aware that each child contains a pure *neshamah* (as we say each morning in the blessing of *Elokai Neshamah*, "A pure soul You created me with"), it is now upon the parents to realize that the central goal of all the *chinuch* on our children is this: to guide our child to the purpose of why we are here on this world - which is, to reveal the *neshamah*.

TORAH-BASED CHINUCH VS. THE GENTILE APPROACHES OF RAISING CHILDREN

Today there are many parenting books that have appeared on the scene. There is also a countless array of parenting seminars and workshops available today that

44 006 דע אה ילדיך

45 This chapter is an adaptation of Chapter 6 of sefer "Da Es Yaldecha" ("Getting To Know Your Children"), which was not included in the section of "Getting To Know Your Children" in the book *Getting To Know Your Home*.

we can find. But there is one thing that is lacking amidst all of this. A large percentage of these ideas are borrowed from the approaches of the modern, gentile world. Perhaps we can raise a decent non-Jewish child from this, but it is not the way of *chinuch* that is fitting for a Jewish child.

Parents who are of the Jewish nation, who wish to give a proper *chinuch* to their children and raise them to live a true Jewish life, cannot remain at the level of practical action alone, in order to succeed at *chinuch*. It will not either be enough if we know how to develop our children's emotions and thoughts alone. A non-Jewish child will turn out very good if he is developed in these areas, but these areas alone will not be enough to inculcate proper values into a Jewish child, who comes from our holy forefathers. For the Jewish child, whose soul is not like the other nations of the world, we need an entirely different approach towards child education than the one which the modern world offers.

The basic element of a Jewish child's *chinuch* is the perspective that he is a *neshamah*. Meaning, we must help the child form an aspiration to reveal his existence as a *neshamah*, which at first is hidden and concealed from awareness.

The task that lies upon a Jewish parent, therefore, starts with the *neshamah* perspective. First we need to get the child to understand that he is a *neshamah*, and when the child is brought to that point, we can then further develop him in the areas of action, emotion, and thought. When the child reveals his existence as a *neshamah*, he will then do what he needs to do, he will feel that which he is supposed to feel, and he will know how to think properly.

(Understandably, a large part of this will be accomplished by the child, and not by the parents. But it is the parents who need to give the (tools) to the child for this, so that the child can take those tools and develop himself further.)

THE PARENTS MUST FIRST SEE THEMSELVES AS A NESHAMAH

The reason for which Hashem has given us children is explained clearly in the Torah: “So that he will command his sons and daughters to follow him, and guard the way of Hashem, and perform charity and justice.”⁴⁶ If we wish to reach the goal of *chinuch* on our children, which is to “guard the way of Hashem, and perform charity and justice”, it is upon us to reflect: How did Avraham Avinu get to this? It was Avraham Avinu who reached this understanding on his own. As we know, Avraham Avinu searched and pondered the Creator’s existence, until he recognized that Hashem exists and that He runs the world. When he reached that conclusion, he then realized that it is upon him to keep His laws and *mitzvos*.

In order to raise the next generation, our aspiration must be that our children reach the same conclusion that Avraham Avinu reached. We want them to realize that they have a *neshamah*, which is a “portion of G-d above”, and that this means that they are His servants. So when we nurture them in the realms of action, emotion, and thought, the common drive throughout all of this should be for one purpose alone: to help them understand that they exist as a *neshamah*, and that their *neshamah* can guide them in the areas of action, emotion, and thought.

But the child can realize he is a *neshamah* only if his parents see themselves as *neshamos*. Therefore, a parent first needs to internalize the knowledge that his

⁴⁶ *Beraishis* 18:19

existence is a *neshamah*, covered over by a physical body. Only after reaching this conclusion can the parent easily relate to his child as a *neshamah*, where he will see his child as being a *neshamah* that is covered by a body, and that it is upon the parent to help the child reveal his *neshamah*.

Where is the *neshamah* located in the person? Rav Chaim Volozhiner wrote in *Nefesh HaChaim*, in the name of earlier sources, that the soul is comprised of three parts: the *nefesh*, the *ruach*, and the *neshamah*. Part of the soul resides in the liver, and this is referred to as the “*nefesh*”. This area of the soul is responsible for the realm of action. Another part of the soul resides in the heart, and this is the “*ruach*”, which is responsible for the emotions. A higher part of the soul resides in the brain, and this is the “*neshamah*”, which is responsible for the thoughts.

Now we can understand that all which we spoke about in the previous chapters about *chinuch*, which included the areas of action, emotion, and thought in raising children – is entirely an aspiration to actualize the child’s *neshamah*. In other words, our goal in *chinuch* is to bring the child to a level where his actions will involve his *neshamah*, where his feelings will be flowing from his *neshamah*, and where his thoughts will be coming from the holy *neshamah*.

BEING CAREFUL WITH OUR CHILDREN’S SELF-IMAGE

In the first chapter of *Getting To Know Your Children*, we explained how the parent needs to love the child based on the Torah’s commandment of “*V’ohavta l’reiacha kamoicha*”, “Love your friend as you love yourself.” However, without viewing the child as a *neshamah*, parents will have a very hard time treating their

children with love and respect. The parents naturally see themselves as higher than the children, and it can feel demeaning for the parent to be careful with the child's honor and to love him as a "friend" like the Torah says.

However, although the parents are right for feeling that they are the higher authority over the children, when they realize that their child has a *neshamah* and they are aware of what this means, they will have a much easier time relating to their children with love and respect. Every person has a *neshamah*, which is called a "portion of G-d above." Every person is created with a *tzelem elokim*, "in G-d's image",⁴⁷ and the Sages teach that "Man is precious, for he was created in G-d's image."⁴⁸ The parents can learn to see their child in this way, and then it is much easier to act loving towards him and to be careful not to slight his honor.

If the parents simply focus on the fact that they are higher than the children and they feel that it's unfair to view the child as an equal to them, this perspective is a view that comes from the *guf* (the body), which ignores the *neshamah* dimension. But when the parents are aware that every person has a *neshamah* and that it is merely our body which covers it, and they internalize that we mainly exist as *neshamos*, they will have an easy time relating to their children in this way and seeing them as equal to them.

The *neshamah* dimension is what unites all of *Klal Yisrael* together, which gives us all the title of "brothers" to each other. From this deepened perspective, we can understand that our own *neshamos* have been appointed by Hashem as the

⁴⁷ *Beraishis* 1:26

⁴⁸ *Avos (Ethics of our Fathers)* 3:14

ones who will raise a part of some of the other *neshamos* in *Klal Yisrael* - who “happen” to be our own children.

Furthermore, when the parents begin *chinuch* on their children with this perspective, and the children are aware that the parents place emphasis on the *neshamah* as an important, central aspect in their lives, they will lead their entire lives differently. When they eventually get married, with help from Heaven, and when they have children of their own, they will treat their spouses with the awareness that the other is a *neshamah*, and they will relate to their children as well as *neshamos*. They will understand on their own that their children should be honored for who they are, for they will be aware that their children are also *neshamos* of the Creator.

THE PROPER VIEW ON REFRAINING FROM CRITICIZING CHILDREN

A popular topic amongst many educators today is the topic of refraining from criticizing children, and that the parents need to be very careful not to slight the honor of a child or insult him in any way. Many lectures and books have been compiled on this subject, because, from the view of modern psychology, criticizing a child is known to have long-term effects on the overall self-esteem of a person; therefore, there is much attention given to this subject.

I am not negating that conclusion, but we must know that there is an altogether different reason of why the parents should be careful with their child’s honor. It should be coming from a totally different perspective than the above view, as follows.

If the parents view the child as a *guf* – a physical body - then indeed, it would be logical to make the parents aware of the view of psychology that damaging the child's honor will impact on his entire self-esteem. In that way, the parent will think twice before he says something that may slight the child. But if the parent is aware as he has conversations with his child, that he is speaking with a *neshamah* contained inside a physical body – a *neshamah* that is a piece of the Divine – when that is his perspective, he will surely not slight his child's honor.

Any Jewish parent who wishes to raise his child properly must have the general attitude that “I am a *neshamah*, my spouse is a *neshamah*, and the children that were born to us are *neshamos*.” When a parent constantly remembers this, he will find no better reason to refrain from slighting the honor of his child. A parents that views his children as G-dly souls will have a totally different behavior towards them, on all levels. When he is about to raise his hand to hit the child when the child has done something wrong, he will think twice before hitting him, remembering that the child is a *neshamah*, a piece from Above.

(This does not contradict the necessity to sometimes hit the child, when the child has done something that requires this punishment. But we must remember that even when the child should get hit, he should only be hit when it is necessary, and never when it isn't).

There are people who work with fashioning earth, others work with copper, others with silver, and some individuals get to fashion gold. But when we raise our children, we must be aware of their priceless value. We must know that it is not enough to love them naturally with a parent's love - although that, too, is im-

portant and necessary. Rather, there is something deeper here, which is priceless: Every child contains a *neshamah*, which has a connection to the Creator of the world. Therefore, as parents, we need to honor them just for that very reason.

In that way, our entire approach towards educating our children will be with a totally different attitude, for we will be trying to add the *neshamah* dimension into all that we do.

WHY MANY CHILDREN TODAY LOOK EMPTY

To our great pain, the situation today is that there are many young children, and even adults, who look dead. We can see it in many children who come to *shul*, who leave it in the same way they came in. (Actually, maybe they are a bit more energetic after leaving *shul*, because they got to doze off and take a nap....) We see before us a person walking on two feet, and we know he is alive, but his entire demeanor is screaming out to us that he is lacking any real vitality. Where does this stem from?

Since there are parts of the child's *neshamah* that aren't revealed, this allows him to feel extinguished inside himself. Therefore, if parents wish to prevent their child from this feeling of emptiness, and they are interested in acquiring a completely different perspective, they should know that the entire goal of *chinuch* is to reveal the *neshamah* as much as possible, and to raise the child with the attitude that he is a *neshamah*. When that is the approach, we will then see before us a child with a healthy soul, who has grown up with a sense of inner vitality, who isn't suffering internally.

What we have to bear in mind as we educate our children is that our children are *neshamos* that have been given to us to take care of. They are covered with a physical body, and for this reason, we do not actually see their *neshamos*. Our task as parents is to help them reveal their *neshamos*, and to give them the tools they need so that when they grow up, they will continue on their own this task of revealing their *neshamah*.

Let us emphasize that revealing the *neshamah* is not a lofty matter that only rare individuals reach. It is necessary and basic for day-to-day life! It is necessary for a man when he learns Torah, and it necessary for anyone when doing the *mitzvos*. It is the personal task of each person, according to the level he is at. All that we need to change is our perspective. As parents, we need to understand that the goal of *chinuch*, and the goal of all the words we have learned here, is to reveal the *neshamah* of our child. That will enable a child to internalize that he is a *neshamah*, and then he can grow accordingly.

The basic attitude of raising a child with the awareness that he\she is a *neshamah* has been presented in the concepts of the previous chapters, but in this chapter, what have we have added on here is that our entire, general attitude towards *chinuch* of our children should be about revealing the child's *neshamah*.

NOT TO NEGLECT THE PHYSICAL NEEDS OF A CHILD

As you may have realized, this chapter really serves as an introduction to the previous chapters, and naturally, we should have placed this chapter at the beginning of this *sefer*. However, if we would have done so, many people would quickly dismiss the entire approach here towards *chinuch*, viewing it as being dis-

connected with reality. That is why we first placed the chapters that explain the practical applications (we could have said more, but the basis has been said), and only after you have seen that the approach here can be of practical use in *chinuch*, can you appreciate that this is not just another book about child education.

Baruch Hashem, there are many books available today on the topic of raising children. But the purpose of this *sefer* was to present a basic system for raising the Jewish child, whose entire goal in life should be: to reveal his *neshamah*. And, that it is upon us, the parents, to help them and guide them in this worthwhile direction.

However, we must remember a basic point which is very important: There are some people who take an extremely spiritual approach towards raising their children, and they need to hear a completely different approach than the one given in this chapter. Those kinds of parents act irresponsible when it comes to taking care of the basic physical needs of the children, because they are placing all of their focus on the spiritual development of their children. They are too focused on the *neshamah* aspect, and they forget that their children have physical bodies too, which the *neshamah* is currently clothed in.

When is focusing on the *neshamah* aspect proper, and when does it become extreme?

As we explained, every person is a combination of *guf* (body) and *neshamah* (soul); the *neshamah* wants the spiritual, and the body wants the physical. But if the parents try to instill a constant air of seriousness in the home, where only deep, spiritual thoughts are conveyed, any sensible person can understand that

this will not be a successful home. This is because we are not souls living in Gan Eden right now. In addition to the *neshamah* that is within us, we also have a physical body, which experiences various challenges and difficulties of the day-to-day-living that we have to endure on this world, as well as the material successes of daily living that it must be able to enjoy.

Therefore, we should be aware that as parents, we are given the gift of children in our hands, who are a combination of body and soul. On one hand, we must care for their physical needs, as much as we can. Along with this, we need to be concerned for the needs of their *neshamos*, and to help them reveal the *neshamah* that resides in their body.

CREATING A HUMOROUS ATMOSPHERE IN THE HOME

Close students of the Chazon Ish recall that when he would converse with others, he would start the conversation with something humorous, in order to create a jovial atmosphere between him and the students. Similarly, Rav Shlomo Wolbezt⁴⁹ would advise married men to humor their families with saying something funny, in order to create a light, relaxed atmosphere in the home.⁴⁹

The depth behind the above approach is because man is a combination of a body and soul, and while man's task is to have a serious attitude about life - in order to reveal his G-dly aspect, which is his soul - his physical body cannot handle a serious approach all the time. Therefore, in order to calm the body, one needs to pacify it, by having a dose of humor every so often. When a person relaxes from the humor, he has given his body its needs, and now he is free to pursue the spiritual.

⁴⁹ "Aleí Shur" Vol. II, p.242-243

Bringing humor into the home is a matter that is hinted to in Chazal: “It is forbidden for man to fill his mouth with laughter on this world”⁵⁰. From this teaching, we learn that man should have a serious attitude towards life, and to stay away from frivolousness. But we also learn from here that one should not fill his mouth with laughter”, meaning that too much laughter is not forbidden - but a little bit of laughter is permitted. Not only is it permitted, but it is advised. We find that the sages in the times of the Gemara would begin teaching their students with a *milsa d’bidichusa*, a humorous word.⁵¹

However, humor is only constructive when a person is balanced with a serious approach towards life. When he is cognizant that life has a purpose to it, he can then gain from humor, which calms the body and allows it to go free a little from the stresses of life. Therefore, only when a person is aware of the *neshamah* and he views himself as such, can he benefit from a little dose of humor.

So while we must be aware that *chinuch* on our children means to raise them in the areas of action, emotion, and thought, we also need to know that while there is a very serious side to life, namely that our life’s work is to reveal our *neshamah* - which requires us to have a deep approach towards *chinuch* and to be serious, to have deep emotions and analytical thinking – simultaneously, parents must also remember that every child also has a physical body, which has its various physical needs. Besides for certain rare individuals, a person cannot handle always being in a serious atmosphere that resembles Erev Yom Kippur. Besides for the

⁵⁰ *Berachos 31a*

⁵¹ *Shabbos 30b*

body's need to eat, drink, and be clothed, it also needs to go free a little, from the seriousness of life.

Therefore, every so often, a parent must make sure to throw a joke into the atmosphere of the home, the kind that puts a smile on all the children's faces (understandably, this should not be done in a way that transgresses *halachah*; it should not be a kind of joke that is insulting, or which comes at the expense of another's feelings, etc.), in order to create a calm, pleasant atmosphere in the home.

Without creating a joyful atmosphere in the home, the children are bound to grow up without a *simchas hachaim* (a joy for life). Although true *simchas hachaim* can only come from the depths of the *neshamah*, the fact is that the physical body of every person has its needs [so any level of joy, even if it is not on a profound level, is necessary]. Therefore, only through integrating these two parts together – a serious attitude towards what life is about, and simultaneously, a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the home – can a parent have the ability to instill true *simchas hachaim* into the home.⁵²

Some people won't even have to be told about the need to bring some humor into the home; they are already good at that part. But if they are overdoing the humor in their home and they never speak about anything serious with their fami-

⁵² Editor's Note: For more derashos of the Rav on this concept of instilling *simchas hachaim* into the home, refer to *The Weekly Shmuess_002_Ki Seitzei – The Father-Son-Relationship and Getting To Know Your Family_09_Infusing Spirituality Into The Home – Part 2*

ly members, they may need to hear an opposite approach than the above one. They will need to work on creating a more serious atmosphere in the home.

Therefore, a parent must know himself well. If he knows he is the more serious type, or if he has gone through certain events in his life that shaped his personality to be his way, he needs to learn how to create some humor in his home, so that his home will be properly balanced. If he knows that he has more of a funny and humorous personality, he needs to learn how to inject some seriousness into the home, so that his home shouldn't become a place of total jest. In that way, the humorous atmosphere in his home will be balanced with some seriousness about life, in a way that is befitting for a Jewish home.

THE FOUNDATION OF JEWISH CHILD EDUCATION: TO HAVE A CONSTANT BOND WITH THE CREATOR

As explained before, the depth that lays in the entire path of *chinuch* outlined in these chapters is the understanding that every person has a *neshamah*. Educating a Jewish child is therefore primarily about raising him with the attitude that he is a *neshamah*.

The *neshamah*, by its very concept, is a longing for the Creator. To the Creator it turns to, in times of joy, in times of pain and predicament, in times of success, in times of trouble – and at all other times as well. The deepest understanding that must settle upon the inner being of every Jew is that in all situations - without exception – there is one single address to turn to: *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. That is how a Jew must lead his life. Whenever he has a challenge, he should turn to Hashem, in prayer. In times of joy, he should thank the Creator. And for all other times, he should understand that everything is simply from Hashem.

That being the case, if we want to use the *neshamah* perspective in *chinuch*, the basis for this attitude is that the parents themselves need to live a reality in which there is nothing other than Hashem and His Torah. Together, they should strive to cultivate this into the children. If their *chinuch* on their children doesn't reach this goal, the *chinuch* has been stopped in middle of the way, and such *chinuch* will not bring their children to the desired goal of *chinuch*.

There are parents who very much want to raise their children with the values of Torah and mitzvos, but they may have some false notions about child education, which are hampering the progress. Parents may train a child to keep the *mitzvos* and they will do anything to make sure that their children learn Torah, and they may even spend much energy trying to develop good *middos* in their children, but they must understand that the level of deed alone is not enough to fulfill the will of Hashem (though its importance is immeasurable). Rather, they must remind themselves that there is one common thread that must run through everything: A deep bond with the Creator, throughout the day.

In order for this knowledge to penetrate into the awareness of the children, it will not happen just through singing the *Yedid Nefesh* song by the *Shalosh Seudos* meal, or any other song about yearning and love for Hashem. Rather, this awareness must envelope the atmosphere inside the home, throughout the day – in a way that the children can sense it well.

The lesson that we need to internalize is, that the way to build our homes has been taught to us by Avraham Avinu: “*For I have loved him, because he commands his children and his household after him that they keep the way of Ha-*

*shem.*⁵³ After Avraham Avinu merited to recognize his Creator, the only matter that filled his being was to be close to Hashem, and therefore, that is what he desired to inherit and bestow to his children.

Bonding with Hashem should not be reserved only for when there are problems, such as illness or various other difficulties and challenges in life. Rather, bonding with Hashem must become a staple need in a person's life, like bread. One should understand well that this is the true purpose of life, and that is the way a Jew need to live.

To our great pain, in our times, there are young boys and girls who are roaming the world in order to "find themselves". We must know that the central cause for this is because they have never been raised to form a soul connection with the One who made this world, and as a result of this awful void, children become tangled inside themselves and they are not finding themselves. And when that is the case, the chances of them falling into an abysmal descent are closely within their reach.

But on a more subtle level, even when children are still found within the "system" and they look fine in their external appearance and in how they are behaving, that is still not proof that they have formed a deep and true connection to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

In contrast, when the parents strive for the goal of bringing their children, with *siyata d'shmaya*, to an understanding that life has great meaning and depth to it,

53 *Beraishis 18:19*

and that a bond with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* is necessary for one's existence - that is the surest path to success, which will greatly reduce the possibility of the negative outcome described above.

"IT IS GOOD FOR MAN TO BEAR A BURDEN IN HIS YOUTH"

Some people have the erroneous perception that it's better not to discuss with a child such deep and serious matters about life, such as being cognizant of the purpose of life, etc. According to their thinking, "children should be allowed to just be children", doing whatever makes them happy, with no sense of responsibility towards their future. These parents feel that the difficulties of life will eventually come, such as worrying about livelihood and running the home, but that children should not be unnecessarily pressured with any serious kind of thinking about life.

This attitude is mistaken from the very foundation. It stems from a false notion that the main difficulties of life are earning livelihood and running the home. The truth is known to anyone who searches for spiritual growth and closeness to Hashem: The true work of life for man to reflect on is in his personal service to the Creator.

If this truth is not instilled into the heart of a child from a young age, he will have a very difficult time dealing with this reality when he is older. It is written openly in the verse: "*It is good for man to bear a yoke in his youth.*"⁵⁴ The verse emphasizes that carrying the burden of life must already be worked upon in one's youth, and not to push it off until after one is married. Only then, after one internalizes

⁵⁴ *Eichah* 3:27

the truth about life in his youth, will he merit the end of the verse, *“Even when he becomes elderly, he will not forsake from it.”*

Every parent needs to internalize that educating the child of this awareness is not simply a commendable idea to spend time on acquiring, which is optional and which may be exchanged for some other goal. Rather, this awareness must be regarded as the fundamental of fundamentals, which every Jew needs to take with him, throughout life.

If parents raise their children naturally and simplistically, believing that the main thing is to give them what to eat and drink and maybe a little more than that, the next generation after them will not be able to develop on its own. That is why it is painful to the heart to see people who reach this conclusion only after going through several tragedies with several of their children. After failing with their third child, only then do they realize that their approach was mistaken. Only when they are down to the wire do they suddenly reach the conclusion that *chinuch* is supposed to be about bonding, daily, with the Creator.

Children must be able tell if their parents consider bonding with the Creator to be a main aspect of life which they can't live without. It shouldn't be regarded as some secret, a “hush-hush topic” that is only brushed upon every once in a while. Only when a child internalizes that the true burden he must bear upon his shoulders in life is to understand that that the purpose of his existence on this world is to recognize his Creator, and truly so – only then, can we say that we have tried to fulfill our duty towards our Creator and to educate our children in the best possible way.

IN CONCLUSION

To conclude this chapter, let us review and emphasize, that although we have tried in these chapters to lay the foundations for successful child education, we must remember that there is no guaranteed success. The purpose of these chapters was to help us have some direction, of how to properly fulfill our obligation towards our Creator, in the matter of educating our children. But we must remember, and be aware, that success is in the hands of the Creator of the world alone, and that prayer and supplication to Him is the first condition that we need in order to see success and happiness in raising our children.

May Hashem accept our prayers before Him, and may we all merit to come forth from us a generation that is upright and blessed.

7- RAISING HAPPY CHILDREN⁵⁵

GIVING OVER THE MITZVOS WITH HAPPINESS

Since this month is Adar, the month of *simcha*/happiness, we will focus about one point that can bring us *simcha*.

When we do *mitzvos*, we have two commandments within every mitzvah: the mitzvah itself, and the commandment to perform it happily. There is the mitzvah itself, and then there is the way we do it. The way we do a mitzvah is to do it happily.

When something is given over joyously, people want to carry it out joyously. Most of the times when something is given over, it is not received with joy, because the person giving it over didn't give it with happiness.

By the *simchas beis hashoeivah*, there was a great happiness, because the happiness was drawn forth. Happiness has to be drawn forth, just like you draw water from a spring.

What is the purpose of giving over information to others? Is the purpose to give over the information, or is the purpose to give over joy in it? Simply speaking, one will say that in order to give over information, it has to be given over joyously; so the purpose is the information, just it needs to be done in a joyous way.

But on a deeper note, the purpose of giving over the information is really to give over a happiness. "Hashem rejoices in His creations." Happiness comes from

⁵⁵ דע את שמחתך 11

completion, while sadness comes from an absence of something. If we want to give over happiness, we need to bring the person to the source of the happiness and draw it out from there. There are people who want to be happy, but they don't know where to get it from; they don't where the source is.

THE SOURCE OF HAPPINESS

Where is the source of happiness?

“The righteous rejoice in Hashem.” What is the joy in Hashem? It is when a person lives the right kind of life, a life of connection with Hashem. If a person doesn't live with Hashem, he is just very self-absorbed. He won't be able to be happy completely.

We all want to give happiness to our children. But from where do we find the happiness to give over to them? The biggest wonder is that parents want their children to be happy and want to give them happiness, but they themselves don't have that joy to give over.

How can a person give over a *simchas hachaim*, a joy for life, if he himself doesn't have a joy for life? When we try to give our children happiness but we ourselves don't have it, the result we can see (from much trial and error) is that the children remain just like the parents, who aren't happy.

But when the parents live with the joy of living a life with Hashem, they have the ability to give over that joy to their children. They become like a wellspring that can give continuously.

When people only know of temporary happiness, such happiness falls apart in the end. Any joy which we get from the outside of us is just superficial; it is temporary and it goes away. But there is an inner kind of joy we can have – and it is real, and it lasts. This is a happiness that comes from a deep, inner point within us.

NON-JEWISH THERAPISTS CAN'T HELP A JEW

Every day we thank Hashem that we were not created as a non-Jew. If we say this every day from the depths of our soul, this will fill us with an inner happiness. How does it fill a person with joy?

If we desire to live the real Jewish kind of lifestyle, such a desire will give us that happiness.

There is a very disturbing thing taking place in our times. A Jew who has some problems in his life goes to a non-Jewish therapist for help. But a Jew cannot be helped by a non-Jew! A Jew who needs help is really looking for how he can find the “Jew” inside him. Can a non-Jew help him find that?!

Really, the problem is that he's not happy being a Jew. Since that is the problem, there is no non-Jew who can help him find the solution.

If a person would only desire how he can live more and more like a Jew, he would never fathom going to a non-Jewish therapist.

Why is a person ever not happy?? Can the Jew within you ever die? You are always a Jew, and this is the greatest happiness.

After Adam sinned, he was cursed with *etzev* (sadness). He was told, “Dirt you are, and to dirt you shall return.” This shows us that sadness only affects our aspect of dirt in us – our physical layer. But in us there is also a Jew, and the Jew within us doesn’t come from earth. When a person lives with the Jew inside himself, he will never be sad!

If a Jew is sad, it must be that it is because he doesn’t realize what it means to be a Jew. Non-Jewish therapy is never the solution for a Jew.

WANTING TO BE A JEW

What exactly is our joy in our life which we must convey? What happiness do we want to our children?

We want to show our children how happy it is to be a Jew. We want to show them that the more and more of a Jewish kind of lifestyle you live, the happier you will be.

We must know what our life is about. Why should we be happy? What is the difference between a Jew’s happiness and a non-Jew’s happiness? A Jew is happy when his soul is revealed. “We will revel and rejoice, in You.” When we reveal our souls – when we have *nagilah* – then we will have *v’nismicha boch*, “rejoice in You.”

We know that we are all Jewish, but how much time do we think about this? It is a superficial attitude to just know you are Jewish and not to search about the meaning of what it means that you are a Jew.

To be a Jew realizes to mean that you are separated from the non-Jews. “And I will separate them from among the nations.” Every day we make a *beracha*, “That you did not make me a non-Jew.” Before that we make the *beracha* that we were woken up – “Who gives the rooster understanding.” First, we have the understanding, and upon the real understanding, we can realize how thankful we are that we were not made a non-Jew.

When we make *havdalah*, we also mention how we are separated from the other nations. The depth of this is because in order to be able to separate between night and day, we must realize how we are different from the non-Jews.

THE JOY OF BEING JEWISH

What is the joy of being Jewish?

There is such a thing as idol worship, even today. It seems that India is where the most idol worship is taking place, but the truth is that there is more idol worship going on in America! In India, they might do actual idol worship, but they don't do it every second. But in America, the whole way of life of many people is like a constant idol worship.

What is idol worship, *avodah zarah*? *Zarah* means “strange.” When a person acts strange to another person, he is greeted by another person but he doesn't answer him. He acts toward him like a stranger. When a person does something but looks it strangely, it's like *avodah zarah*, because he considers what he does to be strange.

When a person does *mitzvos* but he isn't connected to Hashem, this resembles idol worship. *Mitzvos* to him are strange. When a person puts on *tefillin* and he thinks that it's strange, it's like idol worship.

When a Jew is connected to Hashem in everything he does, he lives like a Jew. When a Jew does everything he is supposed to do – he learns, *davens*, and does *chessed* – it can be that everything he does is like *avodah zarah*, because he isn't connected to Hashem. Even though he does everything he is supposed to do, he is still sad. Why is he sad? It is because he isn't really serving Hashem, even though he does everything. He is serving idols.

What does it mean to be a Jew? It means to be connected to Hashem in everything. This is the whole secret to happiness. From where can we draw happiness from? It is only when our inside is connected to what we do on our outside, when our heart is connected to our intellect. If you see any smart person who is sad, it must be that his heart isn't connected to his mind. If his heart would be in the right place, he would be happy.

A person can do all the *mitzvos*, but if he doesn't want it deep down and he'd rather live like a non-Jew deep down – he is sad, even though he does all the *mitzvos*.

CHINUCH WITH THE HEART

Happiness is found in our heart. (This has been proven medically as well, that the mood changes according to how the heart is).

If our heart is in one place and our mind is in another, can we ever be happy? If someone isn't happy, it's a sign that something is wrong with his heart.

A person might teach his child everything in the Torah and tell him it's all true, and the child grows up knowing that he has to learn and do all the *mitzvos*. But he can know all of it, yet his heart isn't there. We must realize that the main part in all our *chinuch* of our children is on their hearts.

Anything in our life is rooted in our heart. "For from it comes life." The *chinuch* we give to our children has more to do with the heart, not the knowledge we give over to them.

The Chofetz Chaim said that there are different levels in *Gan Eden* for those who are cold, lukewarm, warm or very warm about their *Yiddishkeit*. When we do *chinuch* on our children, we shouldn't be satisfied with giving them over lukewarm or even warm feelings about *Yiddishkeit*. We need to get them to feel very, very warm feelings toward *Yiddishkeit*.

When we give over values to our children, it must be given with happiness. It is not enough to train them to do all the *mitzvos*; they need to see it being given over with happiness. If we are ourselves aren't happy, we cannot give over the Torah to the next generation. You cannot give something you don't have, and if you aren't happy, you won't be able to give happiness to your children.

GOING "OFF THE DERECH"

Unfortunately, we see many children that suddenly go off the *derech* sometime after their bar mitzvah. Until they reached bar mitzvah age, they were learning

Torah and doing *mitzvos* just like every other good boy. Suddenly, the child can throw it all away – in the best situation he won't want to open a *Gemara*, and at worst, he doesn't want to be *frum* anymore.

How do we explain this terrible phenomenon? Until now, everything was fine. What happened?

But it's not that the child "went off" the *derech*. He never was "on the *derech*" to begin with! If he "went off the *derech*", all it means is that he was never on the *derech* to begin with. He felt like he was in a jail all along, and as soon as he felt like he could finally escape, he ran from the "jail".

Although he may have been learning, *davening* and doing *mitzvos* – it wasn't a part of him. He was never connected to it in the first place. He knew all about it in his mind, but his heart was never in it.

CHINUCH IS ON OURSELVES

Our job in *chinuch* is make sure that our children feel connected to Yiddishkeit, to make them feel that what they are doing is a part of them. We need to make sure that their hearts are in it.

Most people know a lot of Torah, but their hearts aren't in it. They have never developed their heart.

Just like when a person has a heart problem he needs to have heart surgery, so can it be said of this generation that many of us need to have "heart" surgery.

If we want our children to be happy with *Yiddishkeit*, if we want to see real *nachas* from them, we need to work on ourselves first.

This can only be done if we ourselves are connected to *pnimiyus*, and only then can we give over the *mesorah* to the next generation with happiness, and when the children see our happiness in *Yiddishkeit*, the *mitzvos* become a part of them when they do it.

Many people are sitting down and trying to analyze the many problems of this generation and what the solution is. Some say that we need to get them to learn more, and others say that we need to give our children more love. But there is really only one answer which defines the root of the problem: we need to fix our very heart.

“And purify our hearts to serve You in truth.” If we say this from our heart to Hashem, and we don’t just say the words, Hashem will answer us.

If a person needs heart surgery, how much money is he willing to pay? If it will cost him \$200,000 -- would he pay it? He would. He’s find a way to come up with the money somehow.

How much are we willing to pay for our real heart? How much are we willing to put into it?

May we all be *zoche* to connect to Hashem.

8- A GOOD HEART (IN CHILD EDUCATION)⁵⁶

"LEV TOV" - A GOOD HEART

One of the 48 qualities to acquire the Torah is *lev tov*, to have a "good heart."

Our Sages reveal that the *gematria* (numerical value) of *lev* is 32 and *tov* equals 17, which together adds up to 48. This hints to us that until *Lag B'Omer*, the 33rd day of the *Omer*, a person has a "*lev*" – he has the first "32" days of the *Omer*, but he doesn't necessarily have the *lev tov*, a good heart. After Day 33, for the rest of the 17 days until Shavuot, a person has the unique opportunity to turn his heart good – to gain a "*lev tov*".

What is a *lev tov* \good heart? Is there such a thing as a "bad" heart?

A friend in Hebrew is called "*reia*". A similar word to "*reia*" (friend) is "*ra*" (evil). In other words, if a person has an 'evil heart' towards his friends, he cannot be a friend to them; he is only "*ra*" (evil) toward them. He will be selfish, and his motivations to have friendships are always about himself. But if his heart is 'good' towards others, he will be able to have friends.

The 24 students of Rabbi Akiva stopped dying by *Lag B'Omer*, because after *Lag B'Omer*, their hearts became good; they reached their '*lev tov*'. This shows us that from *Lag B'Omer* onward, our *avodah* is to acquire for ourselves a '*lev tov*'.

⁵⁶התורה נקנית 022 - בלב טוב

HAVING A “LEV TOV” IN THE HOME

We have so far seen what an ‘evil heart’ is and what a ‘good heart’ is. Now we can understand the *avodah* before us now in these days – the *avodah* of acquiring a ‘*lev tov*’, a good heart.

Let’s say someone is the type to mistreat his friend; he does not have a ‘*lev tov*’ toward others. When he gets married and he has kids, he will act the same way with his spouse and children. He will mistreat them also, because he never developed a ‘*lev tov*’ toward others.

The children of such a person one day complain to him and say, “Daddy, you don’t love us!” The father replies in bewilderment, “What do you mean I don’t love you?! I do so much for you! I put so much money into you. I buy you so many things. Mommy and I both love you so much. Do you know how many times I got up for you in middle of the night and took care of you...?”

But the truth is that the father *doesn’t* really love them! If the children claim that their father doesn’t love them, it shows that he doesn’t have a ‘*lev tov*’ toward them all along!

It seems that the father loves his family, because he “does” so much for them and “gives” so much to them. But it can very well be that he doesn’t act with a *lev tov* toward his household, and therefore, the children will feel unloved, no matter how much he “does” for them.

Why? It is because when push comes to shove, he loves only himself, and he puts himself before his own household. When a very troubling day comes, he will be tested of how much he really loves his family – and he will fail the test, be-

cause he never really loved them to begin with. He had no *'lev tov'* toward his children to begin with – he was selfish all along.

There are even people today who run away from their families, leaving their wife and children behind. Sometimes this is because a man falls in love with a woman who seems more attractive than his own wife. He fantasizes over her and wishes he could leave his own wife, because life looks a lot better with this new woman; he wants to go live life with his other woman and have his own private life with her.

How is it possible that a person can be so cruel to run away from his wife and five kids so that he can enjoy his own private life?! Even though he imagines that maybe life would be better if he goes to live with another woman he falls in love with, still, how can he do such a thing and leave his family behind?? How can he be so selfish to break apart his family??

The answer to this is because he was selfish all along! He had children, but he had them all for his own selfish needs. As soon as it becomes unpleasant for him to deal with his children, he throws them away (he wouldn't even care to throw them into the ocean). He doesn't care anymore about his family. He only had children because he thought it would be pleasant, but as soon as they become a bother him, he abandons them to go on and fulfill his selfish desires.

THE MEANING OF A 'GOOD HEART'

We know that Moshe Rabbeinu was willing to put himself in danger when he saved a Jew from Dasan and Aviram. In this merit, he became the leader of the Jewish people. He had the special trait of truly caring for others.

But we aren't talking about Moshe Rabbeinu, who was on the highest level possible. Is there any Jew living in this year, 2014, who is willing to truly sacrifice for another person??

The fact that a person has a lot of friends doesn't mean that he loves his friends; often, it is the opposite – when a person is popular and he has tons of “friends”, often it can be that he really doesn't love any one of them!

There is a concept that a person has to be willing to even commit a sin and lose his share in the World To Come so that he can save his friend, if need be it. Of course, some people don't care to sin in the first place, because they have no *yiras Shomayim* (fear of Heaven). But in essence, a person has to be willing to sin for another person and forfeit his reward, if he must. The Chazon Ish said that a true friend is someone who is willing to go to *Gehinnom* for his friend if he has to. And if he sins for his friend, he will indeed go to *Gehinnom* – yet he still has to be willing to do something for his friend, even if he knows for sure that he will end up in *Gehinnom* for sinning.

What's a good friend, a true friend? Is it someone who has a nice smile to others? No, that doesn't mean he's a true friend. A true friend is someone who is willing to suffer on behalf of his friend. The *mitzvah* to love other Jews is to love them like yourself.

This is the true test of who a real friend is: someone who is willing to sacrifice for his friend.

The Mishnah in Avos says that the best quality to have is a “*lev tov*” – a ‘good heart’. The best way to succeed in *chinuch* (child education) as well is to have a “*lev tov*” towards our family.

ANALYZING THE MOTIVATIONS BEHIND REQUESTS TO OUR CHILDREN

Why do people have children? There are all kinds of self-serving motives that people have. Some people have children because they want a child to say *Kaddish* for them after they die. Others have a child so that they can be honored and served.

When a father asks his child to *bentch*, the child will listen only if he feels that his father has a *lev* toward him, that the request is coming for the well-being of his child. Otherwise, the child does it grudgingly – because he doesn’t feel a *lev tov* emanating in his father’s request.

When we make requests of our children, is it emanating from our desire that they do it for their own good – or are we asking them to do things for us for our own good...?

Once there was a child did something improper. He had a great father who said, “I can’t punish you now, because I’m angry at you. I don’t want the punishment to be coming out of anger. I want it to come for your own good.”

Parents often want their children to do what is good for “Me” [the parents]. A father often views his children as his slaves! Really, the father should train the child to do something because it’s good for the **child** to do. One should tell his child, “Do it for *yourself* – not for me.”

“EXPECTATIONS” FROM OUR CHILDREN

What do we want our children to be?

There are parents who want their child to attain prestigious positions in life: either to be a professor, or to become a lawyer, or to become a successful businessman in general. Others want their child to become a “Rosh Yeshiva”, so that he will be very honored in his life...

Is there any parent who wants their child to become who he really is? Let's say the parents know for sure that the child is supposed to be a shoemaker, and this is what their child is meant to become in life. Would any parent let their child become a shoemaker...? Most parents would not come to terms with this. They don't do what's good for the child – they want from the child to do what's good for *them*.

Even worse, there are many parents who want their child to continue their business that they started. Who says this is appropriate for the child to do? Just because the father started a certain business that means that the child has to continue it? Often, the child is dragged into the family business when it's not good for him at all. Yet parents continue to put pressure on their children that they must continue the family business, and they tell them: “You have to. If you don't, you will embarrass us in the community; it's not good for your *shidduchim*, etc.”

In the same way that a person loves himself and he wants to be who he really is – and not what he is forced to be – so should a person love his child. Love him and **let him be who he really is, not what you want him to be.** And being who you are

means to be who *you* really are; let the child be who he really is, not what you want him to be.

“Chinuch” – child education – means to let your child be who he really is, and not what you want him to be.

Sometimes I ask my child to do things in the house, like to clean up his room. I tell him, “Clean up the room because I want you to be organized.” Or I tell him, “Clean your room because it’s good for you to clean your room.” Either of these requests is a good way to make a request, because then the child hears the message that it’s for his own good that he has to do a certain chore.

When you make requests of your children, don’t ask him to do something because it’s good for **you** that he do it, but ask him to do it because you know that it’s good for him to do. And make that clear in your request to your child.

RAISING RESPONSIBLE CHILDREN

We are describing here a whole different kind of life we can live.

Parents must let their children be who they are supposed to be; this does not mean of course to just let the child live with no reproof whatsoever and that we should let him act like a wild monkey. What we mean here is that the child has to sense that his parents really want the best for him.

We do not mean that the parents are never allowed to tell their child about the difficulties of life and instead tell them that life is a utopia. Rather, it’s the opposite: let them know good and well that life contains difficulties – and for that rea-

son, they need to become responsible, so that they will be able to deal with the difficulties that life will bring one day.

Train your child to be responsible. Train your child that life is about being responsible for others. But first, teach your child to be responsible for *himself*. That is what it means to let the child be “himself”.

When someone works at a job that’s not “himself”, he can’t be happy. A person is only happy when he does things that are himself, not when he forces himself into a role he has to play. Be the same with your children.

I hope that these words here have affected your soul. After understanding the words here, decide what kind of life you want to live – what kind of home you want to have. I hope that all of us here merit to have true and holy *nachas*.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH THE RAV

Q: *Since the Rov says that we have to find “ourselves” first, how do we be our true self, in spite of society, which does not allow us to act like our true self?*

A: Good question. You can still be yourself to a certain degree, even if society doesn't allow you to.

Q: *If a person doesn't know himself well and what's good for himself, how can he know what is good for his child??*

A: Very good question. It depends on if he is working on himself or not. If a person is in the process of searching to find his true self, he's in a lot better of a situation than someone who isn't searching to find himself. It is not possible for us to know ourselves 100% but we need to try as much as we can to get to know our true self.

Q: *Can the Rov give examples of how we can apply the concept said here.*

A: Is this question being asked regarding your child or regarding yourself? (**Regarding myself**). Regarding yourself, you can work on this as follows. Let's say you go to Daf Yomi, and your friends are there; you decide that you will learn for an hour a day. But next door there is a shiur going on which you will find more suitable for you to do, but you don't know anyone there. What should you do? Naturally, you want to go to the shiur which you will enjoy more, where you won't have to deal with anyone and you will just be able to learn. (Many times a person knows convinces himself in his subconscious that he needs to do something which really isn't good for him...) What you should really do is go the Daf Yomi in which you will be able to have a lev tov toward others, even though it's not as enjoyable

for you, because you'd rather to go the higher level shiur in the other beis midrash.

Q: If let's say the child wants to go to shul wearing blue shirt, when everyone wears white shirts. Should we let the child be himself? Or should we oppose his behavior? Or should the father encourage the child by going himself to shul as well in a blue shirt...?

A: It is impossible to give an answer to every possible issue that exists. But one rule that always applies is: Do you want the child to do something because it's good for him to do, or because it's for your honor? Even if you get your child to wear a white shirt, he has to understand that he's doing it for his own good, and for his parents' honor.

9- PREVENTING OTD ⁵⁷

One of the most painful issues that exist in our times is that of children who “leave the fold”. To our great sorrow, it is not uncommon. Although we cannot cover every possible situation in this chapter, we will try, with the help of Heaven, to reflect into the root of this issue.

Many children grow up with a certain social setting where there are general rules of behavior taught, and sometimes they even get individualized guidance, but when they encounter the tests of life – whether it is of the material world, or of the spiritual world – that is where they begin to fall, and sometimes, it is also where they end.

The root of the problem, in these cases, is that we have not succeeded in building the individual soul of this child. In order to develop the soul of the child, the parent must have a bond with the child’s soul, and to be attuned to subtle, fine aspects of the child’s soul. The first thing a parent must know [to prevent losing the child from Yiddishkeit] is to learn about the child’s soul, and to do so continually. Understandably, this can only be done after the parent learns about his own soul. Learning about the child’s soul takes several years.

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(Editor’s Note: In relation to this topic, in a segment from a later shiur, entitled 48 Ways_021_Less Talking, the following was asked to the Rav):

QUESTION: “What do you tell someone who’s not interested in growing and improving?”

ANSWER: “This is the question of all questions. I assume that you are not asking about yourself, but about someone in your own household. The only thing you can do is daven and cry to Hashem for that person”.

After learning about it – as well as in the midst of learning about it - the parents must learn how to connect to the soul of the child. This is not only done through giving him gifts which express love (which is also very important), but in addition, through recognizing and feeling the subtle threads that run through the child's soul – to know about his particular nature in general, as well as his more individual aspects.

Besides for intellectually recognizing the child's nature and attitudes, the parent needs to form a soul connection to the child. Sometimes, the parent must also know how to disconnect from the child, because if there is too much closeness between parent and child and there is never any disconnection, the results are damaging. A parent must feel his child, sense him, and breathe him. If the parent isn't constantly feeling the child's soul, he can lose him easily, as the years go on.

In most cases where a young boy or girl has left the fold of Yiddishkeit, it was because the parent and child did not have a deep, soul connection with each other. Many parents do not know how to develop such a bond with their children, and the truth is that it requires much individualized guidance. But one thing everyone must know is that if the child does not have this soul connection with his parents, or with at least one of them, he is like an orphan in his parents' lifetime.

A soul connection with the child means that the parent can have heart-to-heart conversations with the child, speaking from his own soul to the child's. This does not mean that they have to talk about problems with each other. Instead, they should mainly be having deep reflections about life together, and of how to deal with life. If a child does not have such a relationship with his parent, he will usual-

ly not have the inner strength or the mental energy to deal with life and its many difficulties. There is no need to wait until the problems come in order to deal with the issues. In the approach here, we are not trying to heal the problems – instead, we are laying forth the ideal path to begin with, to enable our child to have a healthy soul, to have the emotional and mental stamina to stay firm and be like a strongly built ship that can ride through the waves of life.

Understandably, this path will not mean guaranteed success. But we must do our part, and in addition, we must pray and cry to G-d about our children, that they should be healthy in their souls, that they be able to rise on the spiritual ladder of growth that ascends to G-d.

Many parents are busy. The father may be studying Torah all day, and the mother is busy with work and with shopping, making sure that the house has all its needs. But they must know, clearly, that it is impossible to raise a child in the right way unless we have constant soul conversations with him; sometimes the conversations can be shorter, and sometimes they are longer, but there must be heart-to-heart conversations.

Each day, a parent must try to sense and feel the child's soul, like when he comes home after his Torah learning session, and to again sense what's going on inside the child as he observes his child in the home. Obviously, this should not be done in a pressurized manner. The point is to create and nurture a soul connection with the child. For this reason, a parent must constantly have conversations with the child throughout the day – conversations that are *meaningful* - and the point is to feel what's going on at the moment in the child's soul.

This does not mean that you should become disturbed by his negative emotions, such as when he is sad or when he's going through a difficulty. Rather, just be attentive to his situation. Sometimes, you should let him deal with the problem on his own, and observe him from the sidelines. You may offer him a small piece of advice, and at other times, you may speak with him quickly about the issue he's going through, without making too much of it. Other times, you can let the problem dissolve with time, and in other instances, you may have a long conversation with him about it. It is impossible to give exact, clear guidelines for this. Each situation should be weighed with wisdom. But the common denominator between all situations is that the parent must have an awareness of most of the child's progress and how the child is handling issues.

If a child feels that his parent does not understand him, if he feels that his parent does not know anything about his soul and his general attitudes, he will not want to include his parents in his life. It is up to the wisdom of the parents to get down to the soul of their child, and to understand the subtleties, of his soul; and to learn how to connect to the child's soul "in the child's language", so that the child will feel that his parent truly understands him and wants the very best for him.

A child who grows up receiving fatherly warmth, and motherly warmth, and who also has a deep, soul connection with his parents, who are there with him throughout his life, and who direct him in how to deal with the various challenges of life – slowly, his soul will become developed, throughout the years. At a certain point, he will be able to reach a level of maturity where he will feel like he has the abilities and energies to deal with most of the challenges of life. He may also reach a deeper level where he feels like Hashem is escorting him throughout life,

and he will not be as dependent on his parents that much, consulting them only every so often.

It is upon us to understand that it is our responsibility to raise a child by building his soul already from a younger age. We need to bring a child to the point where not only is he doing what needs to be done, but that he can also deal with the difficulties of life, and that he can use his power to choose.

Most children who went off the *derech* were usually like their peers when it came to external action, but their souls were not built. When a difficulty came their way, they couldn't handle it, so they threw away their external behavior, and they are left emptied, both on an external level as well as on an internal level.

Parents must train a child already from a young age to be able to deal with small issues, and to teach them to decide on their own. Never should a parent decide for them. Teaching a child to make decisions enables a child to become responsible and to accept his own decisions, and slowly as time goes on, with assistance from Heaven, the child's soul becomes well-built. Initially, the parent needs to help the child decide, but the decision itself should still be allowed to come from the child.

These words are written from within the blood of a pained soul that feels the pain of the souls of Yisrael. May Hashem help that these words should only be of benefit to you. May Hashem merit all of you, without exception, to see a generation come from you that is upright and blessed, to bear children who are people of truth, whose souls have been built within them – along with an external layer to them that is truthful.

10- THE ONLY LASTING CONNECTION⁵⁸

CONNECTING TO THE ETERNAL

ובנה אותה בנין עולם – “And rebuild it (Jerusalem) as an eternal edifice.”

We don't just ask that Yerushalayim be rebuilt - we ask that it be rebuilt to last forever. If we reflect deeply, we discover that there is really nothing in this world that is forever. This world is temporary, and only Hashem is forever, for Hashem “was, is, and will be.” Only Hashem is forever, while His Creations are limited. However, all creations can connect with Him, although we are limited and temporary; our soul has a yearning to connect itself with the eternal, and only the Creator is eternal.

But if the soul of a person is concealed from a person – and this is the situation of most people – one loses this yearning for eternity. He might yearn for things that are eternal, but he uses it for the wrong things. Without revealing the soul, a person misuses the yearning for the eternal, and it will manifest in other areas.

WHEN PEOPLE FEEL TOO CONNECTED TO THIS WORLD

There are many, many things that people feel deeply connected to on this world, and people would never want to part from those things. It can be one's car, his house, or a certain items he owns which are very dear to him.

Reb Chatzkel would often quote the words of the Zohar that “A person dwells on this world and thinks it is his.” Man has a nature to think that his life on this world

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is permanent. Any sensible person will admit that he is not eternal, because we all know that people die. Ever since the curse of Adam [when mankind was cursed with death] people who are on this world have been leaving this world.

Our brain can be aware very well that death is inevitable to all people (unless Moshiach comes during one's lifetime), but our heart often does not feel this reality. The heart can be blocked from the truth that our brain is aware of intellectually. Simply, this is a *ruach shtus*, a foolish spirit, that sways a person from realizing the truth.

But the deeper reason is because our soul really wants to feel eternal. It doesn't want a connection that is temporary – it wants some kind of connection that is eternal. This is a very deep need of our soul and when it isn't understood, it is misused by a person to seek an eternal connection with This World.

When the soul is concealed from man – in other words, when a person doesn't have a simple feeling of sensing Hashem in his life – his need for the eternal will be awakened, and it will seek eternal connections with This World. If a person can't find it in something truthful on This World, he will seek it in places that are not truthful. He might be aware in his mind of course that this is foolish, but he doesn't actually feel that way. He feels his possessions, his money, and that all worldly matters are forever.⁵⁹

THE FEELING OF CONNECTION TO OUR CHILDREN

⁵⁹ See *Bilvavi Part 4 Chapter 5 – Calmly Giving Up This World*.

Until now we were addressing someone who lives a very superficial kind of life. But there is a more subtle manifestation of this problem which exists by almost all people. Even if someone doesn't have that much of a materialistic life, and he doesn't feel that attached to his house and possessions, he will still feel that the most eternal connection he knows of on this world is: with his family.

Each person has relationships in his life, and people tend to feel that these relationships are absolutely eternal.

With parents, some people are very attached to them, and some have weaker relationships with the parents. When a person gets married, some people are very deeply connected with their spouse, and some are not. But when it comes to our children – we love them more powerfully than anyone else. The feeling of connection that a parent has for a child is very, very intense.

The Gemara⁶⁰ says that normally, if someone digs a tunnel into one's house to rob him, one is allowed to kill the intruder, because the intruder is deemed a *rodef*, a pursuer. But if the robber is one's father, the intruder is not considered a *rodef*, because the father would not kill the son, since he loves him.

The words of Reb Yisrael Salanter are well-known: That even if a father consciously loves another person more than his own son, such as a beloved student of his, if a time would come where he would have to choose between one of them to save, he would choose the son, because deep in his subconscious, he loves his child more, no matter how much grief the child has caused him.

⁶⁰ *Talmud Bavli: Tractate Sanhedrin, Chapter Eight.*

When a person doesn't have children yet, he feels a certain void in his life, because the soul has a deep desire that its existence be continued. Thus, there is a very deep desire in man for children.

The soul of a person is very attached to one's children. There are even children who cut off contact from their parents, yet the parents continue to strongly love them.

Most people are willing to work very hard at jobs and even get into huge debts just so that their family will have income, and it's all so that the children will be able to live comfortably. We see that a person is willing to undergo a lot of stress at work just so that he can bring home money and support his children. He does it all for the children. So there is a very, very deep love that a parent has for a child.

There are also people who revolve their entire life around the children – they make their children into the center of their life.

EXAMINING THE ROOT OF WHY WE FEEL DEEPLY CONNECTED WITH OUR CHILDREN

We need to examine deeply into ourselves where this comes from. There are a few people who truly love their children with a totally pure kind of love. But most people who feel very attached to their children are actually being motivated by a need for some kind of “permanence” on this world.

Of course, Hashem implanted a love in every father for his child; whether the father is a *tzaddik* or a wicked person. But the level of love differs with each person.

Most people, in their subconscious, do not view children as people who “happen” to be in their life, and they feel that their bond with their children is a major

part of their life, a part of their entire essence and being, and they are connected to their children with the depths of their soul.

Here we come to the root of the matter.

Those who are attached to materialistic aspects of this world use their power of deep connection for materialism, which is clearly the most negative way to misuse the soul's need for deeply lasting connection. But even those who are not that attached to materialism of this world are also misplacing their soul's need for deeply lasting connection: the bond that people feel towards their children can really be coming from a need for permanence of This World!

There are people who think that the ideal kind of life is when the children are everything. Let us examine the depth of this mentality that people have and see how to use it and what needs to be fixed with this mentality.

Man is made of soul and body. The Gemara states that a father gives five things to his child, and the mother gives five things to their child. These are physical mannerisms which a parent gives to the child. Even the *middos* which a child inherits from a parent are only the garments of the child's soul, not the essence of the child's soul. Thus, the entire bond that a parent can feel to his child can be entirely based on physicality, not the soul. Physically, relatives are always close; one may not marry close relatives and he may not testify for them in Beis Din, due to their physical closeness.

Thus, there is an intrinsic physical closeness with relatives and family members, which cannot be denied. What results from this, however, is that most of the

time, the relationship that a father feels towards his child is purely based on the physical factor.

The more a person lives a bodily kind of existence, the more “bodily” his connections are. If he is totally materialistic, he is entirely connected to desires of this world. If he is a bit more refined – or if he feels both connected to this world as well as feeling connected to his children – it is still his body which connects him to things. His soul really wants eternal connection, but because it is hidden, and the body dominates the person, the soul’s need ends up getting twisted around by the body, and it manifests in a yearning to feel eternally attached with one’s children.

THE SOUL’S PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS LOVE

But if a person begins to leave his bodily existence and enters a soul kind of existence – not just intellectually, but to live life through the prism of the soul – the perspective of a person changes. He will want a different kind of connection. This doesn’t mean that he will forget about his body. We don’t live in Gan Eden; we are not ethereal. We live on this world, with a body, and we have 613 mitzvos to keep. But we can still get our perspective to change and view life through our soul; we can change how we view our concept of connection.

To bring out the intensity of this discussion, let’s say there is a father who loves his child very much. It’s very possible that in a previous lifetime (*gilgul*) that the souls of the father and child really hated each other! They might be more different from each other in their soul roots as the distance between the sky and the earth. (Of course, there is unity between all of the Jewish people, but that’s usual-

ly not the reason why a person loves his child. A father usually loves his child because it's his child, and not because he feels a unity with the collective soul of the Jewish people!)

So the love that a father usually feels for his child, when experienced through the body - which dominates a person's existence unless he reveals his existence as being that of a soul - is based on the physical. If a person would reveal his soul, the love would come from his soul, and it would be stemming from the feeling of unity with the Jewish people. That is the real love. But when the body dominates in a person's life, a person feels connected to his child **not** because of this deep love of the soul for unity, but because his soul inside is demanding something eternal. The body takes that need and channels it towards loving one's child, which really translates into a wish for permanence on This World.

From the soul's perspective, although the *Halacha* states that one must support his children, the soul recognizes that the connection one feels to his child is purely physical. There is no denying that the child bears similarities to his father, but, it's all physical.

The soul's perspective can show a person that the connection he feels to his child needs to be defined and put in proper perspective, and that it should not be eternal.

LETTING GO

When a person gains this perspective – not just intellectually, but to absorb it in his soul and to live this perspective – he will have the proper view towards his family. He will realize that although he feels connected with his children, it should

have limits to it, and it should not be stemming from a need for eternal connection.

In order to slowly absorb this perspective, one can think about the following. One can realize that before this lifetime, there was no physical connection between father and child. Getting used to this perspective will weaken the physical nature of the relationship he feels towards his children [and make it more spiritual].

Of course, we know that children must honor their parents even after they die; that is the *Halacha*. But inevitable, the connection of children to their parents after death is a lot less, being that a large part of the connection was physical in its nature. After death, the body decomposes, and the physicality of the relationship withers away with this.

In fact, it's even possible that if the souls of parents and children meet in Heaven after they die, they won't even feel connection with each other any more than two strangers who meet each other in Heaven.

DEEPENING YOUR AHAVAS YISRAEL

On a side note, if a person absorbs this correctly, he will understand what it means to have *Ahavas Yisrael* (love for Jews). One of the deep reasons why people lack *Ahavas Yisrael* is actually because they are only connected with their own families, and not with others.

When a person feels like he only loves his family and he doesn't feel love for others, that essentially means that he is only connected in love with others

through his physical orientations; therefore all that he loves on this world is his own family, and no one else. He views family members as his own physical ‘flesh and blood’ – his physical blood relatives, and he feels like they are a part of his own ‘flesh’.

What happens when a person has this perspective? The physical body covers over the soul, and when the soul is covered over, it can't love other Jews.

When a person realizes that the love he feels for his children is coming from his physical connection with them, that itself allows the soul's perspective to become revealed, and the soul will then naturally love all others Jews - once it has been allowed to be revealed.

(There are also souls that feel closer to each other, even after the love of the soul is revealed. But this is a concept which most people do not relate to).

THE NATURE TO FEEL CONNECTED

Thus, a person has a nature to connect to the eternal, and the soul demands it. If a person merits to purify his level of existence (when he leaves the bodily kind of existence and lives life through the prism of the soul), he understands that the only absolute connection he can have is, with Hashem. (And this can extend to love for all Jews and for the Torah, for “Hashem, the Torah and Yisrael are one.”)

Whenever we feel connected to something, as long as it is not the connection with the Creator, it can never be a truly deep connection. It is only the branches of the root power of connection, which is to connect to the Creator.

This applies to all kinds of connection a person can feel: feeling connected to the materialism of this world, feeling a connection to one's children – either through love, giving, or compassion – it is not the depth of the power to connect. It is only the 'branches' of something deeper in us: an expression of our desire to feel attached to Hashem.

MITIGATING THE PAIN OF MOURNING A FAMILY MEMBER

Of course, if a person takes care of his family, he is doing the right thing, and he lives and dies in the right way. But although this is true, we find that most people, when they lose a family member, find this to be terribly difficult, and they feel like part of their essence has been taken away from them; they find it unbearable to go on living. Nothing is the same anymore for such people. This really happens because the deepest connection a person usually feels is with his family members. When the connection is severed, through death, the pain is tremendous and unbearable.

But if a person makes sure that the deepest connection he knows of is with Hashem, then even when he suffers the death of a close family member (or any end to a relationship), he will certainly feel pain, but it will not destroy him. The pain he will feel will only be limited, because his deepest connection he feels is not with anything on This World, not even his family; the deepest connection he knows of is with Hashem.

The words here do not mean to imply that a person shouldn't feel pain when he loses a relationship just because he feels so close to Hashem. If someone doesn't feel pain at a loss of a family member, he is simply cruel; or he's deep in his imag-

ination. What is meant here is that a person can gain a change in perspective. It is to understand what our need for deep connection is and to properly define the connections we have on this world.

Absorbing this perspective will not weaken your relationship with your children at all; it will not destroy your love for Jews, for Torah, and for Hashem. It will only serve to strengthen your love and reveal the true love, which comes from our soul, as opposed to the body's love for others, which is purely physical-based.

Woe to a person who doesn't love his family, and woe to the person who has no mercy on them - but a person who loves them too much is also incorrect. We have to be mainly directed towards the root of all roots, the Creator, whether we are in This World or even in the Next World. All other connections we have, even the connections are commanded to have, need to have their limits.

THE PROPER VIEW TOWARDS LOVING OUR FAMILY

These words, when understood properly, can shake a person to the core, because it will show a person think that the connection he feels with his family are only temporary, and only our connection with Hashem is eternal.

So these words are very subtle. If they are not understood properly, it will simply shake a person up and he will think that perhaps it means he's really **not** connected to his family. But that is not the point of these words. The point is rather to understand the nature of our connection with our families, so that we can have the proper understanding.

When the words here are understood properly, they will actually strengthen your relationships. The words here are meant for anyone who searches for a true kind of life, for a life of the soul.

The true kind of life to have is a life which centers around a tri-fold connection: to seek connection with Hashem, with the Torah, and with the collective soul of the Jewish people; and not just to have a life which *revolves* around connecting with Hashem, Torah, and the Jewish people – but to *deeply connect* with these three areas. There is a fourth kind of connection we feel in our souls: the connection we feel towards our family. But this should not become before our connection with Hashem, with Torah, and with the Jewish people.

Thus, the point is that if a person always places his family “first” before anything else in his life, this is not a true priority; it distances one from the inner kind of life.

IN CONCLUSION

When we ask in this blessing of Shemoneh Esrei that Yerushalayim be built to last forever, **ובנה אותה בנין עולם**, we are not just asking that it simply be forever, because nothing on This World is forever. We only ask for this in connection with the rest of the request, **ותשכון בתוכה** – that Hashem’s Presence return to Jerusalem.

In other words - when the *Shechinah* will be revealed, only then will Yerushalayim be forever. As long as *Shechinah* isn’t revealed – as long as the reality of Hashem isn’t revealed, when people think that This World is forever – that is the greatest *hester* (concealment).

When a person realizes and feels the truth, that only Hashem is forever, he will in turn understand that all other connections he feels are only temporary, and it will be realized that all of our connections need to be limited; that we should not feel that any connection we have is “eternal”, except for the one connection we have which is eternal (our connection with Hashem).

The more spiritual of a life a person lives, the greater his quality of love for his children will be. Why? Because a person then realizes that all love he experiences on this world is but a branch of a greater love. And then even the ‘branches’ of love we experience will take on new meaning.

The words here are not meant to weaken a person’s relationship with his family at all. Rather, the intention is the opposite: it can help us give greater meaning to our relationships. It is to be aware that our connection with our family is not eternal.

ובנה אותה בנין עולם - We ask for Yerushalayim to be built eternally – that this world, which is called “*olam*” from the word *he’elam*, concealment, be removed; and that the true *olam* “world” should be revealed, a world of *l’olam*, eternity – as we declare in *Amen Yehai Shemai Rabbah*, that the Name of Hashem should fill all the realms, forever, when His Great Name will be fully revealed.

11- THE FATHER-SON RELATIONSHIP⁶¹

BEN SORER U'MOREH – THE WAYWARD CHILD

Parshas Ki Seitzei talks about *ben sorer u'moreh*, the wayward child, who rebels against the Torah, “who does not listen to the voice of his father and to the voice of his mother.” In this part of the Torah, we are taught that there are children who do not listen to their parents, who do not continue their parents’ ways, by forfeiting the path of the Torah that they are taught.

This is especially happening in our current generation, where there are many children who abandon the ways of their parents and they go their own separate ways, throwing away the yoke of Torah from upon them.

THE ‘WAYWARD CHILD’ THROUGHOUT HISTORY

Not every parent merits to have children who listen to them. The first child in history who did not continue in his father’s ways was Kayin, son of Adam. Later in history, Noach had a son Cham, who did not either go in his father’s ways. Avraham Avinu had a wayward son, Yishmael, and Yitzchok Avinu had Esav.

We see from this that a wayward child is not always due to the parents’ fault. It is simply because not every parent has the *zechus* (merit) to be saved from having a wayward child.

Avraham and Yitzchok were perfectly righteous, yet they bore children who completely rebelled against their teachings. And in fact, even Yaakov Avinu, who

⁶¹ שיחת השבוע 02 – כי תצא תשע"ו – בן סורר ומורה

is praised for having perfect progeny, also had to deal with some grief from his children, so they did not always go in his ways and emulate his teachings. Although the sons of Yaakov were all perfectly righteous, they caused plenty of pain to their father Yaakov Avinu, by refusing to talk to Yosef and by hating him, when they were upset with him.

Although this does not compare at all to the evils committed by Esav and Yishmael, who became wicked individuals that completely abandoned the ways of their fathers, still, the sons of Yaakov Avinu still caused a considerable amount of pain to their father, and this is also a degree of “not going in the ways” of the parents.

So there are two kinds of children who do not continue in the ways of their parents and who cause grief to the parents. One kind of child rebels totally against the Torah, like Esav and Yishmael. Another kind of child can be a good child, but he still can cause some grief to his parents, such as what we see with the 12 sons of Yaakov Avinu, who were all righteous, yet their father had pain from them, because they did not always emulate his ways.

In our generation especially, there are children who are not going in the ways of their parents, and their parents have considerable grief from them. This problem did not begin in today's times; it has already been rooted into our history, that there will be children who don't go in the ways of their fathers.

The sons of Yaakov were all perfectly righteous, and although their hatred towards Yosef did not take away their status of being *tzaddikim*, it eventually bore evil results later on, in their own descendants. Levi had an evil grandson, Korach,

who caused disparity amongst *Klal Yisrael* and he lost his share in the World To Come because of this; he is not counted amongst the progeny of Yaakov Avinu.

Our *Avos* and our *Imahos* had to deal with having evil children like Esav and Yishmael, and they also bore descendants such as Korach. They were as spiritual and as righteous as can be and they did their best, but they were not always spared from having troubles with their children.

CHINUCH: HOW PARENTS CAN DO THEIR BEST

The *avodah* of our *Avos* was to imbibe the principles of belief into the Jewish people. They perfected their own character, and that was how they could succeed in getting their children to emulate them and to continue in their ways.

Thus, *chinuch* (child education) is not simply about training the child to do certain deeds. Parents must work on themselves, on perfecting their own character, in order to imbibe a good *chinuch* on their children and to teach them what they want to teach them, just as the *Avos* did.

But if the parents themselves are weak in their own *emunah* and in their own observance of the Torah, and they live their lives by rote, they will not succeed to implant truth in their children. And when that is missing, there is usually rebelliousness amongst the children, and the child is not to blame for this. “*What should the child do, and not sin?*”⁶²

On a deeper note, when the parents themselves are not earnest in how they live and keep Judaism, there is no “voice” for the children to listen to and emulate.

⁶² From the prayers we recite in *Selichos*

The *ben sorer u'moreh* turns out the way he is because “he does not listen to the voice of his father and to the voice of his mother”, but if the father and mother themselves are not earnest about what they do, then the “voice” of the father and his mother are not a genuine voice for the child to listen to. If their voice would be a voice of truth, when their words to him are coming from their heart, there is a rule that “words that come from the heart, enter the heart”, and usually the child will be affected by their words, because he knows that his parents are earnest.

CHINUCH, PART 1: EXPRESSING LOVE AND CREATING ‘SIMCHAS HACHAIM’ IN THE HOME

In our generation, there is more of a need than ever, that the parents show their love to their children, and **express** it to them. It is not enough if the parents know deep down that they love their children; this remains as “hidden love”⁶³ and it will not be enough to nourish the children’s emotional needs. This was always the case, but nowadays, it is even more so.

The parent’s love for the child must be outwardly revealed and **expressed**. Such a home will be a home of *simchas hachaim* (joy of life), which is absolutely necessary for a child to thrive in and develop properly.

Without an atmosphere of *simchas hachaim* in the home, a home might look like it is functioning, and the children have clothing to wear and they have other things too, but there is no spirit of life there. This is such a basic part of the home,

⁶³ “*ahavah musteres*”, “hidden love”, a concept mentioned in *sefer Tanya*, who explains that although we all have a hidden love for Hashem in our hearts, it is not enough for us to develop feelings for Hashem, and we must reveal it outward.

which any home needs: there must be love **expressed** in the home. The parents must keep showering their love in the home upon their children, and this is what creates a *simchas hachaim* in the home that the children will need.⁶⁴

CHINUCH, PART 2: A HOME OF EMES\TRUTH

However, there is more than this that is needed in the home. A *simchas hachaim* in the home, created by the parents' outward expression of love, is all but the physical layer of the home. There is a deeper part to the home that is needed: the parents need to implant *emes* (truth) into the home. The children must see that their parents really mean what they do. Often the child does not turn out truthful because it was the parents who are not earnest in their own level of *Yiddishkeit*.⁶⁵

But if there is a combination of *simchas hachaim* in the home, together with an atmosphere of *emes* in the home, these two factors together are what creates the proper and successful Jewish home, enabling there to be far less of a chance of a "*ben sorer o'moreh*" from happening.

WHEN THE PARENTS DID EVERYTHING RIGHT

Yet, even if the parents did all of the above and they did everything right, there is still no guarantee that the parents will always have perfect children. Is any one of us more righteous than Avraham Avinu? Is anyone among us greater than Yitzchok Avinu? Our great *Avos* bore evil children, Yishmael and Esav, who totally

⁶⁴ For more on expressing love in the home and in bringing *simchas hachaim* into the home, see *Getting To Know Your Family_02_Expressing Love In The Home*, and *Getting To Know Your Family_09_Infusing Spirituality Into The Home*

⁶⁵ See *Getting To Know Your Simcha_011_Raising Happy Children*

rebelled against the ways of their parents. Some of our greatest *Gedolim* had children who did not follow in the way of the Torah.⁶⁶

Certainly as a first measure, the father and mother must do everything they can in order to implant **love** and **truth** in their home, as we said; and the son will usually reciprocate these feelings. This is usually the case, for the parent-child bond is such an integral part of life that forms the basis of how the child will act. But sometimes, the parents have done everything they can, and it is not their fault that their child has abandoned the way of Torah.

When that happens, we must be aware of the following. Although the parent-child relationship is integral to our development, and it is a very important part of life which shapes us, there is still a deeper aspect of life than this which we must access than our parent-child relationship.

Dovid HaMelech said, *“For my father and my mother have abandoned me, and Hashem will gather me.”*⁶⁷ Our father and mother represent our physical side of life, which must be certainly be healthy in order for us to survive, but there is also our *neshamah* (Divine soul). Our *neshamah* relates only to Hashem as its Father, for only Hashem is “our Father in Heaven”. We have a *mitzvah* to honor our physical parents, but the inner essence of life is: to honor our Father in heaven. Honoring parents is just a *moshol* (parable) that helps us reach the *nimshal* (lesson).

⁶⁶ Editor's Note: Some examples are the sons of Eli HaKohen (Chofni and Pinchas), the son of King Chizkiyahu (the wicked king Menasheh), and the wicked sons of Dovid HaMelech – Avshalom and Amnon. In recent history as well, many righteous tzaddikim did not merit to always have good children.

⁶⁷ Tehillim 27:10

Therefore, we must know that the bond we have with our parents is only one side of life. It cannot be everything, for it all stems from our physical side of life. We come from our physical parents, therefore, we are connected to them in the physical sense, for they had a part in forming our physical existence.⁶⁸ But our physical layer is not all there is to us, for we have a soul in us, and our essence is our soul. Our soul needs a relationship with Hashem, and it is not satisfied with just the physical relationship we have with our parents.

Avraham had a rebellious son, Yishmael. How did he get over the grief he must have had from this? The Torah tells us that when Hashem told Avraham that Yishmael will not be his progeny, Avraham still prayed for Yishmael's life, hoping that Yishmael would live and continue. But although he prayed for Yishmael's survival, he still knew that Yishmael is no longer regarded as his son. How did he console himself over the pain of this?

It must be because there is a point in the soul which goes deeper than the father-son relationship. The father-child relationship is very powerful, but there is a point in the soul that is even stronger than this: our bond with our true, merciful Father in heaven. (In terms of the soul, the father-son relationship is called the point of "*av u'ben*" (father and child) in the soul, and the point above that is called *l'maalah m'av u'ben*, "above father-and-child".)

Therefore, if a child does not go in the ways of his father and he abandons the Torah, the father must certainly repent that perhaps it is his own fault - and hopefully, in this merit, the child will become inspired and return to his father's ways;

⁶⁸ See *Tefillah #0124 – The Only Lasting Connection*

but if the child does not return, the father must now let go of the father-child relationship, and instead turn to the deeper point in his soul, the relationship that goes beyond father and son: our bond with our Father in heaven.⁶⁹

“AVINU”

These days of Elul are days where we must penetrate into the depths of the soul and find our inner “Father”. The inner “Father” in our soul which we must reveal is, essentially, *to feel a palpable sense of our Father*.

Throughout the days of *Selichos*, Rosh HaShanah, the days of *teshuvah*, and Yom Kippur, we keep saying the words, “*Avinu Malkeinu, Avinu Malkeinu, Avinu Malkeinu!*” (“Our Father, our King”). But if we really mean it, we must really *feel* that Hashem is indeed *Avinu*, our Father.

How, indeed, can we get ourselves to realize that Hashem is “*Avinu*”? We know that when a child grows up with his parents, he turns to his parents for all his needs. Later he grows up and he becomes more independent of his parents, but at first, a child is totally dependent on his parents. He asks his parents for anything he needs. So, too, one must turn to Hashem for everything, for all his needs, just like a child in his parents’ home. He must ask Hashem for everything, big or small. When a person gets used to this, he will slowly begin to feel that Hashem is indeed his Father.

One who merits to fulfill the *mitzvah* of honoring parents properly has a good *moshol* to work with for this. But even if one did not merit to fulfill the *mitzvah* of

⁶⁹ Refer also to *Getting To Know Your Feelings, Chapter Seven: Developing Our Relationships*

honoring parents, he can still get used to asking Hashem for everything and thereby come to relate to Hashem as his Father.

During these days of mercy, we ask Hashem for many things. We ask for life, livelihood, health, Torah, *yiras shomayim*, and more. Although all of these requests are about things we need, the deeper part of life is to build for ourselves a bond with our Father.

We all have this power, but it has become concealed deep within and it is covered over by many layers that have accumulated from all the years. But we still all have this power in ourselves deep down, and we just need to reveal it outward, from its hidden state.

One can train himself to keep turning to Hashem, on a regular basis, for all things that he needs. This will slowly enable a person to have a bond with Hashem, more and more, as we get used to this. When one lives this way and he turns to Hashem hundreds of times throughout the day, and not just during the three *tefillos* we daven each day, he slowly develops his bond with Hashem and he begins to relate to him as the true “Father.”

YAMIM NDRAIM – DAYS OF LEARNING HOW TO TALK TO HASHEM

These days of mercy reveal to us this particular aspect of realizing that Hashem is our Father. These days are not just about *davening* more; these are days which show us how the rest of the year should look like – to constantly turn to Hashem for everything and relate to Him as our Father.

Of course, this does not mean *chas v'shalom* that we should *daven* the entire day and not learn Torah. The point we are saying is that the inner layer to the life that we live is, to always talk to Hashem, over all matters, big or small, and to turn to Him throughout the day whenever we need something.

Getting used to it helps us acquire the nature that is really deep in our soul to turn to Hashem. It enables a person to have true closeness with Hashem throughout the day. It transforms a person's Torah learning into truthful Torah learning, and it makes our prayers more earnest, and it causes our performance of the *mitzvos* and the act of doing Hashem's will to stem from a deeper place in ourselves, to be more genuine.

IN CONCLUSION

This is the perfection of our *avodah* we can reach on this world – to merit a relationship with Hashem in which we feel like He is our Father and that we are His child. And when we feel like a child of Hashem, we will be like the child who naturally listens to his parent – the child who hears the voice of Hashem.

But in order to truly feel like a child of Hashem, we need to relate to Him as our Father, as we explained above.⁷⁰

This is the true kind of life – to be constantly connected with Hashem, every day and throughout the entire day, always desiring a closeness with Him.

⁷⁰ Editor's Note: The sefer of Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh, Daled ("Bilvavi" Part 4) is devoted to how we can build a father-son relationship with Hashem.

12- WHAT EVERY MOTHER SHOULD KNOW

THE TOOL FOR CHINUCH

It is written, “You shall make known to your children and to your grandchildren the day which you stood by Har Sinai.”

How do we tell our children about the day we stood by Har Sinai? How do we give them a proper *chinuch* and instill good values in them, such as this?

What is the main vehicle in *chinuch* we need to give over to our children? What is the main tool we can use to instill proper values in our children?

Just to tell our children, “Do this,” and “Don’t do that”, isn’t enough. What is the special power we have in *chinuch*? From where does Hashem give us the power to give over a *chinuch* to our children?

The source for how we do *chinuch* is not our mouth or our actions, but our heart.

THE KEY IS LOVE

Why did Hashem make it that we automatically love our children? It is because the only way we can do *chinuch* is because we can love them. Just because sometimes we fail and make mistakes doesn’t mean we don’t love them; it is just that from our love for them we are able to do *chinuch*.

All parents love their children – but is every parent the same in this love? Is there a father who loves his child more than the mother does, and is there a mother who loves her child more than his father does? Our love is sometimes strong and sometimes weak; the same is true for a husband and wife. Sometimes

they feel a love for each other, and sometimes they don't. As parents we all know that sometimes our love for our children fluctuates. We don't love them as much when they make us very angry. So our love for them changes.

Chinuch doesn't start from *chinuch* – but from how much we love them. The father and the mother have to constantly develop their love for their children more and more in order to properly take care of their child. Of course, no parent thinks he doesn't love his child. A parent who hears our question we are posing might say, "What do you mean that I have to work on loving my child more? I love him already."

Yes, we all love our children, but first we must feel this love and then we need to express it to them. The final step after this is *chinuch*. But if a person jumps to "*chinuch*" without loving his child enough, it's like trying to build a third floor in a house before the second floor.

The amount we express our love should always be greater than how much we tell them to do. Although usually we tell them more what to do and what not to do more than telling them how much we love them, really it should be the other way around: We only really need to tell them what to do only once or twice a week, but we must express our love to them all the time, every day.

CHINUCH – CHEIN AND MENUCHAH

Chinuch comes from the word *chein* – finding favor. It also comes from the word *menuchah* – a calmness. This shows us what *chinuch* really is.

If our child has *chein* to us, than we can do *chinuch* on him. Only when the child feels our love for him can we train him to do anything. If the parent doesn't feel satisfied, how will our child feel satisfied? If a parent screams at a child and he/she isn't calm, how does the parent hope to instill a *chinuch* of *menuchas hanefesh* in the child? The calmness we want to still in them has to come from us.

BRING OUT THE GOOD IN YOUR CHILDREN

Usually when we tell a child what to do, it's usually what they shouldn't do! This is because we aren't calm in our demands when we scream at them.

What we really have to do in *chinuch* is to bring out the good in our children. This is a *chinuch* that brings *chein* and *menuchas hanefesh*.

We must find the good in our children and learn how we can bring it out. This is the true *chinuch*.

This comes when we see the good in them, when we love them and are happy with them and see them in a good light. Our *chinuch* has to come from our deepest love for them. The more we reveal our love for them, the more *chinuch* we will be able to do.

DEVELOP YOUR LOVE FOR THEM

We need to express our love for them more. There are many ways we can express love to them, but the point is not because we have to say "I love you" more often because we heard in a speech that we need to say this... The point is because we need to reveal from within ourselves our deep love for them.

The Maggid of Dubna says that the only way to influence other people is to “fill up your cup and let it spill over”. We need to fill ourselves up with so much love for our children that it overflows out of us onto our children.

The child has to feel that his parents definitely love him. This takes wisdom. It's not enough if a child is given a questionnaire, “Do your parents love you?” and he writes, “Yes, my parents love me.” It is something we have to internalize in ourselves: we need to really internalize our love for our children, and then they will feel loved by us.

Just like we can't raise a child without food or clothing, so must a child know that his parents love him. It's not enough to tell them once a year on *Erev Rosh Hashanah*, “I love you”; we have to let them know throughout the year that we love them.

REQUESTS TO OUR CHILDREN

When a child knows that his parents love him, it is then that the parents can start telling him what to do and raise him, because then the requests come from love. If a child doesn't feel his parents love him, he might listen to his parents, but we will miss the goal.

When we say “No” to our child, do they feel that we are refusing them out of our love for them? They must know the message behind the “No.” If a child doesn't feel his parents love him, the “No” to him sounds like “I don't love you.” When a child knows that his parents love him, he knows that his parents' refusal to his requests come because they care about him.

There are children who listen very dutifully to their parents, but inside they feel like they are slaves. There are indeed parents who have ten children and relate to them as if they are ten slaves! When the child hears his father “Bring me a cup of water,” although he might listen and run to get the cup, inside he feels as if he’s a slave being ruled by a taskmaster; (or it is because he thinks his father is simply lazy and can’t get up from his seat).

If you want to know what the proper attitude you should be having when you make requests from your children, let us bring a story from a great leader which illustrates it. When the Brisker Rav was about to be *niftar*, he told his son that he is requesting something from him for the last time so that his son will be able to fulfill the mitzvah of *kibud av* for the last time.

Does a child feel that his parents’ requests, such as “Do this,” “Don’t do this,” “Get me that”, come from their parents’ love, or does he feel more like he is being commanded by a policeman? We don’t mean that you shouldn’t ask your children anymore for anything, but we mean that your requests from them should be for their own good, that they should become more respectful – and not because you are focused on yourself.

Many times in our requests we forget the message we want to send them and we instead focus on ourselves. When a mother asks her daughter to please sweep up the room, and her daughter dutifully does it, does she feel that her mother asked her this for her own good, or for her mother’s good...

SEEING THEIR GOOD POINTS ONLY

We must express our love to our children every day. We must try to see their good points and not focus on what they do wrong.

How often should we criticize them when they do something wrong? For every hundred compliments we give them, a parent can drop a criticism. Even when we do criticize them, it should be done very calmly. We are all not perfect, and we will still make mistakes, but this is the general formula we need to have in the home.

When the children feel that their parents love them, it is then that our *chinuch* on them can help them.

Chinuch doesn't even begin if we don't develop our love for them. The root of *Chinuch* is our love for our children.

To summarize, we must think every day how much we love our children and express it to them; and we must try to focus only on their good points and bring out the best in them. We need to create a situation in the home in which the children feel very loved, and such a home has a basis for the parents to train them and give over values. It is impossible to be perfect, but this is the basic formula: *Chinuch* must be based on love.



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH THE RAV

QUESTION: How will we help them if we don't tell them what to do?

ANSWER: It's better for them to conclude on their own what to do rather than be told what to do. For example, on Erev Shabbos, if we want to get our children to help around in the house, instead of telling each child what his chores are, ask each child, "What do you think needs to be done in the house today?" The child then thinks about what needs to be done, and instead of grudgingly giving in to your requests, he does so out of concern, because he feels that you value his opinion.

QUESTION: How should criticism be done?

ANSWER: We shouldn't criticize the child while he is doing the wrong action. Instead, wait for a later time and mention it casually, but in a calm and loving way.

QUESTION: How can I get my child to learn? He doesn't like to learn with his father, so how can I push him to learn?

ANSWER: Don't push him to learn – instead, get him to love learning. "Pushing" him to learn will make him want to do the opposite. You can't teach a child anything he doesn't have a love for. We must create a situation in which he loves learning, not just to get him to spend more time learning. It's not about increasing the amount of time he learns, but about increasing his connection to learning, which is only through getting him to loving to learn