

זכרון אריה

על פרשה ומועד



פְּרֻשֵׁת תּוֹלְדוֹת



“Educate the child...”



* תִּנְחֵן לְנֶעֱר עַל־פִּי דֹרְכּוֹ גַם בִּיַּלְדוּתוֹ לֹא־יִסְוֶה מִנְּחֵנּוֹ: [משלי כב:ו]
Train a child according to his way, then even when he grows old,
he will not turn away from it. [Proverbs 22:6]

חיים בן יצחק הלוי ריצ'רדס

Jeremy Richards



זכרון אריה
על פרשה ומועד

“Educate the child...”





IN MEMORY OF & IN TRIBUTE TO
RABBI DR. IRVING JACOBS זצ"ל

לעילוי נשמת הרב יצחק בן שלמה זצ"ל

Former Principal of Jews' College, London

TRUE GENTLEMAN
TOWERING TORAH SCHOLAR
MASTER TEACHER





~ In Memory of my Dear Parents ~

Ivor and Jacqueline Richards ע"ה

Yitzchok Ben Nachman Halevi ע"ה and Yenta Bas Yisroel ע"ה

לעילוי נשמות אבי מורי יצחק בן נחמן הלוי ע"ה ואמי מורתי יענטע בת ישראל ע"ה

A truly selfless couple, completely devoted to their family, friends and community;



In Memory of my Dear Brother, Jonathan ע"ה

לעילוי נשמת אחי אליה בן יצחק הלוי ע"ה

A person of integrity and kindness, who left us too soon;



In Memory of my Dear Friend and Chavrusa,

Dr. Leon Lewis ע"ה

Aryeh Ben Eliyohu ע"ה

לעילוי נשמת אריה בן אליהו ע"ה

זכרון אריה for whom this is named.

Leon was a deeply intelligent yet

sweet, self-effacing family man,

who personified "ללמוד וללמד..."

"to learn and to teach..."



טבת תשפ"ג ~ Tevet 5783



January 2023

~

⌘ Dedicated In Memory Of . . . ⌘

⌘ לעילוי נשמת ⌘
יענטע בת ישראל ע"ה

⌘ לעילוי נשמת ⌘
יצחק בן נחמן הלוי ע"ה



⌘ לעילוי נשמת ⌘
אליה בן יצחק הלוי ע"ה

⌘ לעילוי נשמת ⌘
ראובן בן נתן ע"ה



⌘ לעילוי נשמת ⌘
הרב יצחק בן שלמה זצ"ל

⌘ לעילוי נשמת ⌘
אריה בן אליהו ע"ה



א' דחנכה, כ"ה כסלו תשפ"ג
לונדון יצ"ו

18th December 2022

I am delighted to write a brief approbation to this deeply insightful and inspirational booklet produced by Jeremy Richards לאי"ט. As a highly distinguished educator himself with many dedicated years of experience in the field of Jewish education, Jeremy has crafted a balanced and illuminating work on the fundamental injunction of חנוך לנער על פי דרכו.

Building on the key insights of some of the greatest Jewish educators of the past two hundred years, Jeremy sets out a pathway which all those seeking success in the field of education will gain much from through close study.

To be involved in the chinuch of Jewish children is a tremendous privilege. I am sure that this work will inspire many in their holy work, helping ensure that each and every diamond of the next generation sparkles as brightly as it can.

בתפלה ובברכה שהרב המחבר לאי"ט יראה רק נחת מכל צאצאיו, עד ביאת גואל צדק בב"א.

בברכת התורה,

הרב יהונתן מרדכי בירנבאום

Rabbi Dr Yoni Birnbaum

Kehillas Toras Chaim

2 Capital House, Prestige Way (off Heriot Road), London NW4 2AX

w: www.toraschaim.org.uk e: info@toraschaim.org.uk

Name of Charity: New Shul Charitable Trust Charity Number: 1103481



Kislev 5783
December 2022

Rabbi Jeremy Richards is a well-known and highly respected educator. He is also a mensch of the highest order.

Drawing on his thirty years of experience in chinuch, Rabbi Richards has produced an important and insightful essay based on the works of luminaries such as Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, the Piaseczna Rebbe (Chovos Hatalmidim), Rav Soloveitchik, Rav Wolbe and the Slonimer Rebbe (Nesivas Sholom).

"Educate the Child" is as timely as it is important and will give chizuk and renewed focus to all those who have the privilege of transmitting Torah to the next generation.

Everyone who knows Rabbi Richards will testify to his ehrlichkeit and integrity. It is my hope that the words of the Gemara in Berachos (6b): כל אדם שיש בו יראת שמים, דבריו: נשמעין (any person who fears Heaven, his words will be heard) will be fulfilled with this essay.

May Hashem bless Rabbi Richards and his family with happiness and good health to be able to continue to educate and inspire not only his talmidim, but his fellow mechanchim too.

With Torah blessings,

Rabbi J Golker

Menahel
Hasmonean High School

Rabbi:
Yaakov Hamer
69 Kings Close NW4 2JU
07830 074 711
rabbi@blbh.org



יעקב נתנאל הלוי היימר
רב דק"ק ביהמ"ד ברידג' לין
לונדון

ה' טבת תשפ"ג

מכתב ברכה

One of the pillars of menschlichkeit in North-West London is Rabbi Jeremy Richards. His warm demeanour, sterling middos and good nature are well known to all. He has taken these traits, together with his rich and lengthy experience in Jewish education to present us with a much-needed essay on some of the fundamentals of chinuch.

Drawing on classical sources such as Rav Hirsch, the Piaseczna Rebbe, Rav Wolbe and other great luminaries, he presents the reader with timeless concepts which are relevant and practical to our generation. As a close neighbour, I can attest that Rabbi Richards is נאה דורש ונאה מקיים. With a broad smile and good humour, together with his wife, they have בע"ה raised a beautiful family committed to Torah values.

His essay will definitely provide the reader with inspiration and insight and בע"ה to grow and cultivate the potential of our students and children.

Wishing him ברכה והצלחה, שיפוצו מעינותיך חוצה ויזכה לרוב נחת דקדושה מכל יוצאי חלציו לאורך ימים טובים

יעקב נתנאל הלוי היימר

Rabbi Yaakov Hamer

DEDICATIONS

In addition to dedicating this essay in memory of my dear Parents ע"ה, Brother ע"ה and Chavrusa ע"ה, I am also dedicating it especially in memory of and in tribute to Rabbi Dr. Irving Jacobs, זצ"ל, former Principal of Jews' College, London.

Through ה' guidance, Rabbi Jacobs was our only contact in the Torah world when, 35 years ago, I decided to reject a place in art college in order to go and learn Torah instead. He took a big chance, putting his faith in a young man from Brighton (*Hove, actually*) with very little Jewish knowledge and no textual skills at all, and setting him on a path to a life of Torah and Mitzvot by arranging for him to learn in Yeshiva in Israel then do serious textual degree studies in Jews' College.

I have profound and ever-growing Hakarat Hatov to Rabbi Jacobs, not only for my learning and my long career in Chinuch - including the honour of serving for many years as Head of Kodesh across three schools - but also for facilitating my Torah-centered life and family. This essay is all about spotting and nurturing the uniqueness and potential in our children, and I therefore feel it is a very fitting tribute to Rabbi Jacobs, who, for some reason, believed in me and acted on that belief.

May Rabbi Jacobs' memory continue to be a blessing for his family and friends and all the students who loved him and felt honoured to have him as their teacher.

THANKS

Sincerest thanks to the Rabbanim who gave of their precious time to read the essay and write some kind words of approbation. In view of the weighty nature of the subject matter, I felt it was very important that readers know the contents have been read and approved by respected leaders in the world of Torah and Chinuch. I am very grateful to them for their efforts and support.

In as much as Rabbi Y. Birnbaum שליט"א is our community Rav, his support has special personal value and significance. We cherish his wisdom and leadership. Our own children have benefited from an inspirational high school Torah education overseen by Rabbi J. Golker שליט"א, and as a family we regularly benefit from his own local and global teaching activities. Rabbi Y. Hamer שליט"א is a well-known and respected communal Rabbi, as well as the esteemed Rav of Menorah Foundation Primary School. Our own children attended MFS (at the time of writing our youngest is in the top year) and I am also privileged to teach there. As Rabbi Hamer wrote himself, we are also blessed to have him, his Rebbetzen תחי and lovely family as close neighbours.

I am truly grateful to these Rabbanim for their letters of support and encouragement and wish them ברכה והצלחה in all their עבודת הקודש.



A big thank you to those who have given material support to this project, enabling it to become a reality. Wishing them every ברכה and הצלחה in all things.



I am also grateful to Mrs. Esther Colman, MA and Dr. Helena Miller for making this booklet available at the 2023 Primary Jewish Studies Teachers' Conference. It is an enormous honour to be able to share my thoughts on the great task of Chinuch with fellow Mechanchim from around the UK and beyond, and I hope the material herein will be of some interest, and perhaps even a little inspiration, to its readers. I wish Mrs. Colman and Dr. Miller continued ברכה and הצלחה in all their invaluable educational activities.



This is only a small publication, but I must nevertheless take the opportunity to thank my wonderful wife תחי and children נ"י for their constant support in all I do; they are ever my strength and inspiration.



And boundless thanks to ה' for all His help and ברכות along the way.

Preface

There is little need to introduce the essay, since it largely speaks for itself. But I will just say that I believe it is crucial that both educators and parents step back regularly to evaluate and re-evaluate our efforts in raising and educating the children, the young neshamot, whom ה' has given us the colossal responsibility to mold into confident individuals with fine middot who will grow to be proud of themselves and give nachat to their families and to ה'.

This essay takes a constant dual approach, speaking both to those in formal Chinuch environments and to parents. For the principles discussed here do apply to both audiences, albeit perhaps sometimes in different ways.

It has been said that the difference between 'Management' and 'Leadership,' as distinct though interrelated disciplines, is as follows: Management is about *doing things right*, while Leadership is about *doing the right things*. This will be equally true in Educational, Corporate and other contexts. And I believe this is true in 'simply' teaching and parenting as well.

We can become so busy in the daily, weekly, termly cycles of getting lots of things done, that we often run the risk of giving more attention to ensuring things are being done right than to whether the things we are doing are the things we should be doing at all! Ironically, it is due to the fact that we are always so busy that we too rarely step back and evaluate the things we are busy doing.

The purpose of this essay, or at least one of its goals, is to encourage a little reflection, indeed some deep reflection, upon what is one of the most important endeavours in adult life - namely, raising and educating children. Life simply moves too fast nowadays. How often do we pause for thought, even for less important things? All actions should be preceded by careful, wise thinking, yet this is often missing due to the frenetic lives we lead. As we have said, we are much of the time too busy doing things to stop for a moment in order to question those things' value or even necessity.

In particular, the busy lives of parents and teachers leave little time and space for reflection, yet their jobs are the most important of all. Just 'managing' Parenthood isn't good enough. Just 'managing' the teaching of young souls is far from adequate. Stepping back regularly and thinking about what we are doing and why we are doing it, however, may just enable us to exercise some leadership over our actions in these all-important roles, which means to perform them not mechanically but rather '*mechanechally*,' guided by sage Torah principles applied wisely to our own situations, to our own lives and the lives of our children and students.



I hope the ideas in this essay provide a little food for reflective thought, and a modicum of assistance in exercising due care in the great privilege of 'Chinuch Banim,' raising and educating children.

Thank you, and best wishes for ברכה and הצלחה in all you do,

J.R.

ט' טבת תשפ"ג

Educate the Child...

כֹּז וַיִּגְדְּלוּ הַנְּעָרִים וַיְהִי עֵשָׂו אִישׁ יָדַע צִיד אִישׁ שָׂדֵה וַיַּעֲקֹב אִישׁ תָּם יֹשֵׁב אֹהֲלִים: (בראשית כה:כז)

When the boys grew up, it came to pass that Eisav was a man who understood hunting, a man of the field, and Yaakov was a single-minded man, dwelling in tents. (Bereishit 25:27)
(Translation according to the Hirsch Chumash, Judaica Press)

רש"י:

ויגדלו הנערים ויהי עשו: כל זמן שהיו קטנים לא היו נכרים במעשיהם ואין אדם מדקדק בהם מה טיבם, כיון שנעשו בני שלש עשרה שנה זה פירש לבתי מדרשות וזה פירש לעבודה זרה:

Rashi:

And the youths grew up, and Esau was... : As long as they were small, they were not recognisable through their deeds, and no one scrutinised them to determine their characters. As soon as they became thirteen years old, this one parted to the houses of study, and that one parted to idol worship. — [From Ber. Rabbah 63:10; Tanchuma, Ki Tetze 4]

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✧ RABBI SHIMSHON RAPHAEL HIRSCH ✧

Commenting on the pasuk above, Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch explains, in the name of the Sages of the Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 63:10), that Yaakov and Eisav took such extremely different spiritual paths in adulthood because their parents, Yitzchak and Rivkah, had not raised and nurtured them when children with sensitivity to their unique natures. It requires very broad shoulders to put this case, yet Rav Hirsch does so vigorously and at length:

Our Sages, who never objected to draw attention to the small and great mistakes and weaknesses in the history of our great forefathers, and thereby make them just the more instructive for us, here, too, on ויגדלו make a remark which is indeed a "signpost" for all of us. They point out that the striking contrast in the grandchildren of Abraham may have been due, not so much to a difference in their temperaments as to mistakes in the way they were brought up. As long as they were little, no attention was paid to the slumbering differences in their natures, both had exactly the same teaching and educational treatment, and the great law of education 'חנוך לנער על פי דרכו וגו' "bring up each child in accordance with its own way" [Mishlei / Proverbs 22:6] was forgotten: - That each child must be treated differently, with an eye to the slumbering tendencies of his nature, and out of them, be educated to develop his special characteristics for the one pure human and Jewish life. The great Jewish task in life is basically simple, one and the same for all, but in its realisation is as complicated and varied as human natures and tendencies are varied, and the manifold varieties of life that result from them.

When Father Jacob visualised the tribes of our nation in the sons standing around his death-bed, he saw, not only future priests and teachers, he saw around him the tribe of Levites, the tribes of royalty, of merchants, of farmers, of soldiers, before his mental eye he saw the nation in all its most manifold characteristics and diverse paths of life, and he blessed all of them, and איש כברכתו ברכך אותם each according to his speciality, with and in his different path in life, did he bless them. For the covenant which G-d established with Abraham wants to win a whole national life, a whole fresh, complete life of a nation with its manifold classes and occupations, all for the one and same great task of life: לשמר דרך ה' לעשות: צדקה ומשפט. There, strength and courage, no less than brain and lofty thought and fine feelings are to have their representatives before G-d, and all, in the most varied ways of their callings are to achieve the one great common task of life.

But just because of that, must each one be brought up "על פי דרכו" according to the presumed path of life to which his tendencies lead, each one differently to the one great goal. To try to bring up a Jacob and an Esau in the same college, make them have the same habits and hobbies, want to teach and educate them

in the same way for some studious, sedate, meditative life is the surest way to court disaster. A Jacob will, with ever increasing zeal and zest, imbibe knowledge from the well of wisdom and truth, while an Esau can hardly wait for the time when he can throw the old books, but at the same time, a whole purpose in life, behind his back, a life of which he has only begun to know from one angle, and in a manner for which he can find no disposition in his whole nature.

Had Isaac and Rebecca studied Esau's nature and character early enough, and asked themselves how can even an Esau, how can all the strength and energy, agility and courage that lies slumbering in this child, be won over to be used in the service of G-d, and the future גבר be trained to become, not a ציד, but in truth a גבר לפני ה', then Jacob and Esau, with their totally different natures could still have remained twin brothers in spirit and life; quite early in life Esau's "sword" and Jacob's "spirit" could have worked hand in hand, and who can say what a different aspect the whole history of the ages might have presented. But, as it was, ויגדלו הנערים, only when the boys had grown into men, one was surprised to see that, out of one and the selfsame womb, having had exactly the same care, training and schooling, two such contrasting persons emerge... (The Pentateuch, Rav Hirsch, Judaica Press, Vol.I Bereishit: pp.425,426)

One can not help but be surprised by the unambiguous and direct language Rav Hirsch employs as he builds the case that Esau ultimately grew wildly apart from Yaakov as a result of his upbringing. Nevertheless, he does make his point clearly, and also drives it home emphatically elsewhere in his writings:

ויגדלו הנערים (The boys grew up) — Our Sages interpret these words as follows: Only after the lads had grown up did Esau become a hunter and a man of the field while Jacob became a man bent on spiritual development and inner perfection.

כל זמן שהיו קטנים לא היו נכרים במעשיהם ואין אדם מדקדק בהם מה טיבם, כיון שנעשו בני שלש עשרה שנה זה פירש לבתי מדרשות וזה פירש לעבודה זרה (רש"י בראשית כה:כו)

While they were lads, the differences in their behaviour were not recognised. No one paid any attention to the differences in their tendencies. Then, when they reached the age of thirteen, the one devoted himself to the house of study and the other to idolatry. (Rashi, Bereishit 25:27)

מִשָּׁל לְהִדָּס וְעִצְבוּנֵיט שֶׁהָיוּ גְדֻלִים זֶה עַל גַּב זֶה, וְכִינֵן שֶׁהִגְדִּילוּ הִפְרִיחוּ זֶה רִיחוּ וְזֶה חוֹקֵיו, כִּף כָּל י"ג שָׁנָה שֶׁנִּיקָם הוֹלְכִים לְבֵית הַסֵּפֶר וְלֵאחֶר י"ג שָׁנָה זֶה הוֹלֵךְ לְבֵית מִדְרָשׁוֹת וְזֶה הוֹלֵךְ לְבֵית עֲבוֹדָה זָרָה. (בראשית רבה ט"ג:י')

They may be compared to a myrtle and a thistle that grew up intertwined. Only when they were fully grown did the one spread its fragrance while the other bared its thorns. So it was with Jacob and Esau. As long as they were children they went to the same school, but once they were grown the one moved into the house of study and the other into the house of idolatry." (Bereishis Rabbah 63:10)

We see, then, how our Sages interpret the implications of the Torah's words. They tell us that Jacob and Esau alike could have been preserved for their Divinely-ordained destiny as descendants of Abraham *if their parents would have noticed the difference between them at an early age. They could then have reared and educated both lads for the same goal by following a different approach in each case, taking into account the fact that these two brothers were basically different from one another.* Because, unfortunately, an identical approach was followed in the rearing and education of these two boys, even though they were two totally different personalities, Jacob and Esau in manhood developed attitudes toward life that were fundamentally opposed to one another. *Had a different approach been adopted, with due consideration for the differences between them, the two contrasting personalities could both have been trained to develop the same loyalty to one and the same goal.* But this is not what happened...

(Collected Writings of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Feldheim Volume VII Jewish Education, 1992: Lessons from Jacob and Esau, pp.322-323)

Later in the same essay, Rav Hirsch explains how, in modern times, even Torah scholars have fallen prey to the error of misjudging – or perhaps simply not considering at all – the particular educational needs of their own children:

Down to our present day we have been able to observe the disastrous consequences of a one-sided approach to the unique task of being a Jew. Many a son of a pious *talmid chacham* has been totally lost

to Judaism because his father insisted on training him to become a *talmid chacham* without considering whether his personality and inclinations truly lay in that direction. Thus he is exposed to Jewish life in only one context: that of a quiet existence of study and meditation for which he has neither talent nor desire. What attracts him instead is the busy, colourful life of the world outside. But as a result of the narrow view of life in which he has been trained, he gets the impression that in order to participate in the active, variegated life for which he yearns, he must give up his mission as a Jew. He consequently abandons his Judaism in order to fling himself into the maelstrom of excitement and temptations offered by the world outside.

The story of such an individual might end quite differently if only, instead of forcing him into the mold of a *talmid chacham*, his father would raise him from the very beginning to become a man of the world who, at the same time, is faithful to his duties as a Jew; if only that father would teach his son that the activities of the world outside, too, have their place in G-d's plan, that it is possible to preserve and to demonstrate one's complete loyalty to Judaism even as a sophisticated man of the world. He should make his son understand that, as a matter of fact, many, if not perhaps the most important, aspects of Jewish living are intended primarily to be practised amidst the conditions and aspirations of everyday life, in the midst of the world and not in isolation from it. He should make his son understand that the תרי"ג מצוות are not meant to be observed in the Klaus (Judeo-German equivalent for a small synagogue) or in the beth hamidrash but precisely in the practical life of the farmer or the public-spirited citizen. If only that father would make it clear to his son that the spirit and the happiness of Judaism are just as acceptable to a Zevulun "in the world outside" as they are to an Issachar "in the tents," - שמח זבולון בצאתך ויששכר באהלך - who knows whether that son might not stand by his father's deathbed and gently close his father's eyes as a loyal, pious Jew?

(Ibid. pp.326,327)

❧ RABBI SHLOMO WOLBE ❧

There is a section in Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe's "זריעה ובנין בחינוך" – "Planting and Building in Chinuch" which reads like a commentary on the excerpts from Rav Hirsch's writings we have studied above. However, before proceeding to that section it is important to understand something of the specific and profound philosophy of education that lies at the heart of Rav Wolbe's thinking on Chinuch.

In citing from Rav Wolbe's work we shall draw from the masterly translation by Rabbi Leib Kelemen, which was endorsed by Rav Wolbe, himself.

In setting the scene at the beginning of his sefer, Rabbi Wolbe writes:

Two complementary processes lie beneath all progress and development in the world, and the better we understand them, the better we will be at encouraging and shaping the development of our children and students.

We see references to these complimentary processes in the Shemoneh Esrei (the Eighteen Benedictions or Amidah prayer). There we find two blessings that relate to the geulah (final Redemption): "Blessed are You, Hashem, Who builds Yerushalayim" and "Blessed are You, Hashem, Who causes salvation to sprout." The first blessing refers to the *construction* of Yerushalayim, and the second refers to *growth* towards *Mashiach* (The Messiah).

Growth is a natural, organic process. Seeds placed into the soil will sprout on their own. So will trees and flowers. In contrast, *construction is a manual process*. A person lays the building's foundation, and then places brick upon brick until he finally completes the structure.

The Creator of the universe uses these same two processes to direct the world towards its ultimate perfection. On one hand, Hashem builds, intervening in human history. On the other hand, Hashem causes the coming of Mashiach to grow naturally...

In this same way we should understand the idea of sprouting and construction in childhood education (and the process of educating ourselves!)...

A child is a living creature. He grows, and as his body grows so too his soul grows – he grows spiritually. A child's growth needs attentive care, like the growth of a tree or grain. Special emphasis needs to be placed on organic processes. If we want something particular to sprout, we must be careful to plant precisely what we want, and afterward the seeds will sprout from themselves in a natural process.

On the other hand, there is construction. We must build a mensch. It is impossible to depend on sprouting alone...

If we allow a child to sprout and grow without building him, the result is a wild man. If we build a child without relating to his *koach ha-tzemichah* (innate growth potential), we turn him into a robot. Chinuch consists of both the *koach ha-tzemichah* and the action of building. That is, we must build a child while cultivating his spiritual potentials.

(Planting & Building - Raising a Jewish Child, Feldheim, Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe: 2000 pp.13,14,16,17,18)

It is interesting to think in these terms when considering the kind of individualised approach to educating Yaakov and Eisav that Rav Hirsch would have recommended. In this fascinating approach to laying the foundations of effective Chinuch, Rav Wolbe teaches us that, even before searching for the unique strengths and proclivities in a child, the educating adult must commit to following a two pronged tactic: allow the child to grow according to his *koach ha-tzemichah*, but simultaneously check, manage and regulate that growth with a form of building.

Both a Yaakov and an Eisav need to be nurtured and raised with this dual sensitivity. But then, in order to apply that great principle in practice, one needs very quickly to learn about each individual child in order to know quite what kind of sprouting and growing to expect, and to permit, and what manner of building will be best suited to that child's nature.

The need and commitment to combine growth and building, then, is a crucial starting point in any child's education; yet this lofty ambition must be coupled with a sympathy for the child's unique characteristics, temperament, skills. Only then will a parent be able to confidently and competently manage the complex job of synchronising and harmonising a twin process of growing and building.

Having laid out these initial essential principles, we are now ready to see how Rav Wolbe approaches the subject of individualised child-rearing, which we have already viewed through the prism of Rav Hirsch's thought.

Rav Wolbe writes:

Parents need to recognise their child's unique character. No two children are alike. If parents don't know this, and therefore they assume a child possesses potentials that he doesn't, the chinuch and efforts they invest in their child won't match the child.

"Educate a child according to *his way*, even when he grows old he will not depart from it." (Mishlei 22:6) If I want to educate a child, I must contemplate and examine what this particular child's way is.

It is obvious that a banana plant needs different care than an apple tree. If I raise a banana plant and an apple tree, and provide both of them with identical care, at least one of them won't grow well, and perhaps neither will! The same is true of children. I must discover the child's traits and take them into account. (Ibid.p.25)

Now, let us recall how Rav Hirsch described a possible regrettable outcome of administering chinuch that is insensitive to a child's unique needs; in particular, of "forcing him into the mold of a *talmid chacham*." We saw above:

Rav Hirsch explains how, in modern times, even Torah scholars have fallen prey to the error of misjudging – or perhaps simply not considering at all – the particular educational needs of their own children:

"Down to our present day we have been able to observe the disastrous consequences of a one-sided approach to the unique task of being a Jew. Many a son of a pious talmid chacham has been totally lost to Judaism because his father insisted on training him to become a talmid chacham without considering whether his personality and inclinations truly lay in that direction."

(Collected Writings of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Feldheim Volume VII Jewish Education, 1992: Lessons from Jacob and Esau, pp. 326)

Remarkably, Rav Wolbe presents an example of just such a case from his own experience, which he precedes with an insight from the Vilna Gaon:

... The Gaon concludes:

This is the meaning of the verse, "Educate a child according to his way" – according to his *mazal* and nature you should educate him to do mitzvos – then "even when he grows old he will not depart from it." However, if you force him against his *mazal*, now he will listen because he fears you; but later, when the time arrives for lifting your yoke from his neck, he will turn from what you have taught him, since it is impossible to break one's *mazal*.

If you force him into a different track, one inappropriate for his nature, he will indeed listen to you now, and you won't notice that any damage has been done. However, later, when he matures and no longer fears you, he will no longer listen to you. This is a fundamental educational principle.

There are parents who err in this, and this error has catastrophic consequences. I remember when a famous *tzaddik* brought his son to the yeshiva. When he presented his son, he told us that the boy was shy. Indeed, the boy didn't speak. When we asked him questions, he failed to respond. However, we later discovered that the boy's silence wasn't a product of shyness. The father, because of his great "righteousness," didn't allow his children to leave the house or play – since "they must learn!" Games are "a waste of time!" The boy was consumed with hatred for his father. I didn't succeed in removing this hatred from the boy's heart. When he grew up, he entirely rejected the Yoke of Heaven and married a secular woman; all this flowed from very well-intentioned chinuch – to make him into a *tzaddik*. The father didn't take into account the boy's personality. As we said, this sort of chinuch produces catastrophic results.

(Planting & Building - Raising a Jewish Child, Feldheim, Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe: 2000 pp.27,28)

A similar true anecdote is related in the book, 'Balanced Parenting.' This time, however, the story ends more happily. The father and son authors of the volume, Rabbi Raphael Pelcovitz and Dr. David Pelcovitz, characterise the issue in terms of family heroes and bumper stickers.

They write:

Family therapists often ask a very telling series of questions when they are assessing a family: "What does it take to be a hero in your family?" "If your family had a bumper sticker that described the family's

motto, what would it be?" For some families it might be, "Be a Torah scholar"; for others it might be, "Be kind." What if a child has a learning disability or an attention deficit that seriously hampers his ability to learn with diligence, and his family's bumper sticker reads, "Be a Torah scholar"? Even if he is a kind, considerate youngster, ever ready to do a favour and be of assistance to others, such a youngster is bound to feel that he is letting his family down – and this sense of failure permeates his childhood. If parents, however, can learn to value and nurture the positive inclinations of this child then he becomes transformed into a source of strength and pride to his parents.

A 15-year-old boy, the son of a prominent rabbi, was referred after he was asked to leave his yeshivah because of oppositional behaviour, such as questioning authority, and an aversion to learning. His parents were beside themselves with anger at their child, wondering why he couldn't be like his older brothers, who were widely admired for their ability to exemplify the family's bumper sticker, "Be a Torah scholar."

The boy bitterly described feeling rejected by his family and yeshivah, and how he was increasingly attracted to a group of friends who were on the fringe of the community. The only family member to whom the child felt connected was his grandfather – a wealthy businessman, universally respected as a major supporter of numerous yeshivas. In a family session with the boy, his parents and his grandfather, the grandfather shared with his family what he was like at 15. He was the youngest of seven siblings of a prominent family living in Kovno in the years leading up to the Holocaust. His older brothers were admired as exemplary students in the local yeshivah. However, similar to his grandson, the grandfather was not a particularly stellar student. He had a strong belief, as the pre World War II situation deteriorated, that the family should escape to the United States. With tears in his eyes, pointing to his grandson, he told his daughter and son-in-law: "I was exactly like him. My parents and brothers thought I was being an alarmist and they begged me to abandon my obsessive insistence that the family leave Kovno." After being convinced that his parents would not leave Europe, he escaped to America on his own. He is the only member of his family who survived. The grandfather turned to his daughter and said, "Your son reminds me of myself when I was his age – my questioning is the reason why your family exists. Find a way to nurture his strengths."

This insight proved to be a turning point for the family. They metaphorically expanded their family's bumper sticker to include an admiration for the value of a spirited, questioning child. The parents found their son a yeshivah that was more attuned to his strengths and, although he never achieved his brothers' prominence in learning, today he is happily married and a successful businessman who is a prominent supporter of numerous community charities.

(Balanced Parenting, Rabbi Raphael Pelcovitz & Dr. David Pelcovitz, The Shaar Press: pp.28-30)

Happily, this boy's parents listened to and acted upon the wisdom of the grandfather in time to refocus and redirect their efforts in the education and nurturing of their son such that he would ultimately proceed towards fulfilling his own life's mission rather than that of his brothers.

✧ THE PIASECZNA REBBE ✧

At the beginning of his famous work, "חובת התלמידים," "Chovat HaTalmidim – The Students' Obligation," the Rebbe of Piaseczna, Rabbi Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira very sharply defines "חנוך" – "Chinuch" – in terms of realising latent potential. In the following extract, the Piaseczna Rebbe clarifies the depth of meaning in the idea of "חנוך" and then demonstrates the necessity for parents and teachers to be very clear regarding their role in nurturing children in accordance with a correct conception of "Chinuch" and the right methods for doing so:

על ההכשרה אשר נמצאה בכח בקרב האדם למלאכה זו או זו, ועל הכשרת הבית והכלי לתשמיש זה או זה, נופל לשון חנוך. תבה לעצמה היא תבת "חנוך", ונאמרה על הוצאת ההכשרה אשר באדם או בכלי מן הכח אל הפעל, אם לא נוציאה תשאר בהעלם וצריכים אנו להוציאה

ולחנך את האיש הזה שיעשה לבעל מלאכה זו, והבית או הכלי לתשימשם, כל חדר לתשימשו אשר הוא מכשר, והכלי לתשימשו אשר הוא מכשר.

The term "*chinuch*" is appropriate when referring to an innate talent that a person has for a certain art, or when describing the preparation of a house or object for use. It is a special word with a specific definition, and it is used to describe the realisation of latent potential inherent in a person or object. If we fail to actualise that potential, it will remain concealed forever. Our mission is to be *mechanech*: to educate the person so that he will become an accomplished craftsman; to prepare the house so that each room fulfils its intended purpose; or to prepare the instrument so that it performs the function for which it was designed.

וכשנאמרה תבה זו על חנוך הבנים, אז הכונה היא לגדל ולפתח את טבעו והכשרתו של הילד שנמצאה בו במדה קטנה או בכח ובהעלם לבד, ולגלותה. וכיון שהאיש הישראלי עוד בילדותו רוח ד' נשמת שדי טמונה וגנוזה בו, צריכים לגדל ולחנך אותו להוציאה לגלותה ולהפריחה, והיה ליהודי נאמן עובד את ה', בתורתו מעצמו יחפץ, ומדרכו גם כי יזקין לא יסור, והמצוה אף המרגיל, אינו בטוח שהבן או התלמיד המצוה והמתרגל יעשה כמצותו גם כשיגדל ויהיה ברשות עצמו. ועל זה צוה שלמה המלך: "חנוך לנער" וכו', תחנכו, אל קרבו תחדר, ואת קדשת הישראל אשר בו בהעלם, תגלה, ורק אז "גם כי יזקין לא יסור ממנה".

When the word "*chinuch*" is used in the context of educating children, it means to nurture the inherent character and talents that lay dormant within the child or only partially realised, and to develop them. And since the spirit of Hashem lies concealed within the soul of every Jew from the time he is a child, it is our responsibility to raise and teach him to discover it, to extract it and cause it to flourish. Only then will he become a devoted servant of Hashem; he will develop a yearning for Torah that comes from within, and "even when he is old, he will not depart from it." On the other hand, one who uses commands, or even conditioning, can never be sure that the child or student who has been commanded or conditioned will continue to act accordingly even after he has grown and achieves independence. And that is why King Shlomo commanded us to "train the child according to his way"; prepare him, penetrate his very being, and discover that spirit of Jewish holiness that lies hidden within him. Then, and only then, "even when he is old, he will not depart from it."

אבל שלמה המלך לא את תכלית החנוך בלבד הודיענו, שתכליתו להביאו אל "גם כי יזקין לא יסור ממנה", רק גם את האופן והאמצעי איך לבא אליו, באר לנו במלים: "חנוך לנער על פי דרכו" - שזה הוא העקר. כי המצוה והמרגיל בלבד, אינו צריך לתן לב אל הבן והתלמיד, לדעת את טבעם ושכלם וכו', עליו רק לצוות עשה כך וכך ודי לו, גם אינו מרגיש חוב בעצמו לטפל בכל תלמיד ותלמיד בפני עצמו, יוכל הוא לצוות להרבה תלמידים בני גיל אחד צווי אחד: עשו כך וכך, כי לא בתלמיד ובבן, רק בו - במצוה בלבד - הדבר תלוי, הוא יצוה וזהו הוא הכל. אבל המחנך שרוצה לגלות את נשמת התלמיד הטמונה והגנוזה בו, לגדלה ולהבעירה שתבער באש של מעלה למרום וקדוש, וכלו אף כחי גופו בקדשה יתגדלו ולתורת ד' ישתוקקו, מכרח הוא להרכין את עצמו אל התלמיד המתחנך על ידו, ולחדר אל תוך קטנותו ונמיכותו, עד אשר יגיע אל ניצוץ נשמתו הגנוזה אף נעלמה, ולהוציאה ולהציחה ולהגדלה.

King Shlomo did not only inform us of the purpose of education, which is to bring the child to the point of "even when he is old he will not depart from it." With the words "train the child according to his way," he also explained the crux of the issue: the tools of the trade. An educator who merely uses commands and conditioning doesn't really have to pay attention to the child or student, nor does he have to acquaint himself with their character or intellect. All he has to do is say, "Do such-and-such," and that's all. He doesn't feel an obligation to care for each and every student on an individual basis, either. Since he is the central authority figure, he can give a single order to an entire class and be done with it. But if a teacher wants to discover his students' souls, their hidden, inner reality - to nurture and inspire them to transcend the mundane so that their entire beings will grow in sanctity and yearn for the Master of the World - then he must be willing to be flexible. He must be willing to bend emotionally towards his students. He has to penetrate and move beyond their childishness until he reaches the hidden spark of their souls. Then he can bring out that spark, nurture it and make it grow.

וכיון שכן, לא בכל הנערים שוה הוא החנוך, תלוי הוא בכל נער ונער כפי טבעו, דעתו, מדותיו וכו', ואותם על המחנך להכיר. ולא די לו למחנך אם רק את עצמו ודעתו לבד יכיר, כי גם במתחנך הדבר תלוי, לא בדעתו וכחי עצמו בלבד ישמש ויפעל, יצוה ויורה, רק גם בדעת וכחי התלמיד יאחז, ישמש ויפעל, ולא מה שיצוה ויחנך לזה, יצוה ויחנך לתלמיד אחר השונה ממנו בטבע, רצון, מדות וכו'. וזה רמז לנו שלמה המלך: "חנוך לנער על פי דרכו" על פי דרכו של כל אחד ואחד.

Since this is the case, it follows that the process of education will not be uniform for all children. Rather, it will depend on each child and his individual nature, mind, character, etc. It is the responsibility of the teacher to acquaint himself with them. It is not enough for the teacher to know his own self, because he will not only be utilising and activating his own mind and capabilities to instruct and teach, but those of his students as well. He won't use the same approach for two students who possess different natures, desires, characters, etc. And that is what King Shlomo was alluding to when he said, "Train the child according to his way" - according to the individual ways of each and every child.

לא את אומנות החנוך של ה"פדגוגיה", כוננתו בזה להורות, איך לשמש בשכל התלמיד ואמצעים איך להרחיב את בינתו בידיעת פשט התורה, כי לא את השכל של התלמיד בלבד אנו מחפשים עתה, רק את כל התלמיד, את הנפש, רוח ונשמה של הילד הישראלי אנו מחפשים, לקשרן באלהי ישראל, ויהיה יהודי חרד לדבר ד' וכל מאוייו, אליו יתברך יהיו.

We are not referring to the art of teaching known as "pedagogy" - the methods through which a teacher utilises the child's mind and broadens his knowledge of Torah - for it is not the student's mind alone that we are trying to reach. Our goal is to get in touch with the student's *entire being*. We want to take hold of the *nefesh, ruach* and *neshamah* of this Jewish child and connect them to Hashem, so that he will grow to "tremble at the word of G-d" and channel all his desires toward Him.

הנה, עד כמה שידוע כל אב וכל מלמד, שבניהם ותלמידיהם הקטנים אשר לפניהם, לא ישארו בקטנותם, רק יגדלו ויהיו לאנשים גדולים בשנים, אפשר גם גדולים בתורה ועבודה, מכל מקום, ישנם אשר תכליתם רק מה שנגד עיניהם, וכיון שרק נערים נגדם, לכן רק לחנך אותם

לנערים טובים מטרם, ותורה ויראה רק כערך ילדותם רצונם להכניס אל קרבם, ודי להם. אבל מלמד ואב כזה, חוטא הוא נגד ד' ועמו. המלמד והאב צריכים לדעת שאת בני ד' וגדולי ישראל עליהם לחנך ולגלות, ואת הנערים אשר לפנייהם יראו לנשמות גדולות אשר עודן באבן, ועליהם להצמיחן ולהפריחן.

Each and every parent and teacher knows that the small children and young students who stand before them today will not remain small and young forever. They will grow up to be adults, and they might even achieve greatness in Torah and *avodas Hashem*. Despite this obvious fact, there are those whose goals focus only on that which appears before them now, in the present. And since those who appear before them now are children, they focus on teaching them to be good children. As a result, the level of Torah and *Yir'as Shamayim* that these teachers strive to impart is commensurate with their students' level of maturity (or lack thereof). Such teachers consider this to be sufficient. But this type of parent or teacher is committing a grave sin against both Hashem and *Klal Yisrael*. Parents and teachers have to be aware that their mission is to discover and nurture children of Hashem and Gedolei Yisrael. They must view their children and students as great *neshamos* that are still immature – and themselves as responsible for helping them to flourish and grow.

גנן הוא בגן ד' לעבדה ולשמרה, ואף אם יראה בהם נערים אשר לפי הכרתו מרי נפש הם ומדות רעות להם, ידע שזה טבע של גרעיני הנשמות ובסר המלאכים, מרים הם בחניטתם ומלאים עסיס בגדלותם. אין מדה וטבע רע בהחלט בילד ישראל – הורונו קדושי ישראל מרן הבעל-שם-טוב ותלמידיו אחריו זכר צדיקים לברכה, רק שצריכים לדעת איך לשמש בהם ולגדלם.

Parents and teachers are gardeners who are charged with the task of cultivating and protecting Hashem's garden. They may come across disciples who – as far as they can tell – are disobedient and of poor character. Yet they must bear in mind that just as fruits are bitter as they grow, but sweet and succulent once they have ripened, so are *neshamos*. The Ba'al Shem Tov and his followers taught us that there is no such thing as a Jewish child whose very nature, or whose particular characteristics, are absolutely evil. The trick is to know how to utilise and nurture them.

(Chovas HaTalmidim: The Students' Obligation, HaGaon Rav Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira, Feldheim: pp.5-13)

Two points that emerge clearly from these words of the Piaseczna Rebbe are,

1. children's education and upbringing must be tailored to their unique characters and strengths:

"When the word "*chinuch*" is used in the context of educating children, it means to nurture the inherent character and talents that lay dormant within the child or only partially realised, and to develop them."

"...the process of education will not be uniform for all children. Rather, it will depend on each child and his individual nature, mind, character, etc. It is the responsibility of the teacher to acquaint himself with them."

2. in its fullest sense, Chinuch is a far broader and deeper task than filling a child's mind with knowledge, training him in life skills and drilling him in good manners, though these will undoubtedly be vital and worthy elements in the endeavour. The Rebbe wants parents and teachers not to focus solely on making the children in their charge into more knowledgeable and more refined children, but rather, "...to penetrate and move beyond their childishness until he reaches the hidden spark of their souls," with the object of determining the personal trajectory of a child's life and educating her towards fulfilling her innate potential and realising her unique greatness:

"Each and every parent and teacher knows that the small children and young students who stand before them today will not remain small and young forever. They will grow up to be adults, and they might even achieve greatness in Torah and *avodas Hashem*. ... Parents and teachers have to be aware that their mission is to discover and nurture children of Hashem and Gedolei Yisrael. They must view their children and students as great *neshamos* that are still immature – and themselves as responsible for helping them to flourish and grow."

And these two essential components were clearly present in the writings of Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch that we saw above:

"...strength and courage, no less than brain and lofty thought and fine feelings are to have their representatives before G-d, and all, in the most varied ways of their callings are to achieve the one great common task of life.

But just because of that, must each one be brought up "על פי דרכו" according to the presumed path of life to which his tendencies lead, each one differently to the one great goal."

(The Pentateuch, Rav Hirsch, Judaica Press, Vol.I Bereishit: pp.425)

"...Jacob and Esau alike could have been preserved for their Divinely-ordained destiny as descendants of Abraham if their parents would have noticed the difference between them at an early age. They could then have reared and educated both lads for the same goal by following a different approach in each case, taking into account the fact that these two brothers were basically different from one another."

(Collected Writings of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Feldheim Volume VII Jewish Education, 1992: Lessons from Jacob and Esau, pp.323)

When Rav Hirsch writes, "*to achieve the one great common task of life*" and "*for the same goal*" he does not mean Yaakov and Eisav would have lived identical lives but rather that they would equally have lived lives of service to Hashem, though following tracks that suited their natures. Also in Rav Hirsch, then, we have seen that Chinuch emerges as a dual enterprise: it must be individualised to the child's unique personality and talents, yes, but also focused and directed towards his projected growth and development, the adult he is to become, and to a future that will provide superior nourishment for his soul.

Seen in this light, in the work of Chinuch there is a very difficult task and weighty responsibility for parents and teachers. Rabbi Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira perhaps encapsulated the depth and extent of the mission in these words that we saw above:

"We are not referring to the art of teaching known as "pedagogy" – the methods through which a teacher utilises the child's mind and broadens his knowledge of Torah – for it is not the student's mind alone that we are trying to reach. Our goal is to get in touch with the student's entire being. We want to take hold of the nefesh, ruach and neshamah of this Jewish child and connect them to Hashem, so that he will grow to "tremble at the word of G-d" and channel all his desires toward Him."

Now, any teacher will tell you that teaching is a difficult enough job when the focus is on these children in front of us, and the intention is on developing them in the here and now; to be better at this subject or that one, more proficient in this or that skill, or more polished in certain middot (character traits). Yet the Chovat HaTalmidim is emphatic that,

"...there are those whose goals focus only on that which appears before them now, in the present. And since those who appear before them now are children, they focus on teaching them to be good children. As a result, the level of Torah and Yir'as Shamayim that these teachers strive to impart is commensurate with their students' level of maturity (or lack thereof). Such teachers consider this to be sufficient. But this type of parent or teacher is committing a grave sin against both Hashem and Klal Yisrael."

On a practical level, this approach is enormously challenging. Of course it is true that the education we deliver now is intended to benefit our students in the long term, but in general the primary focus is probably on developing the students in front of us in the hope that the knowledge and skills they are receiving right now will somehow be of benefit to them later on.

Their current learning will build and deepen over time and throughout the ensuing years they spend in the educational environment, and eventually the sum of all their studies will, we hope, contribute to productive personal and professional lives.

But that today's educational efforts should be more directly focused on nurturing our students towards the adults they will one day become is another level of Chinuch entirely, and yet that is what both Rav Hirsch and Rav Shapira are championing.

However, perhaps we can suggest that, while this may be particularly difficult for younger and less experienced teachers, it may be more conceivable for a veteran educator who has already encountered many former students as adults in later years. Those who have been in the job for a long time will sometimes meet adults they once taught and will be able to recall the children from whom these grew. Conversely, this may afford the more experienced teacher some ability to do the opposite – to look at current students and project into their future, on some level to envision their future selves. And even if not to prophesy, at least to know that today's children will be adults tomorrow and therefore to try at least a little to educate towards this child's tomorrow as well as his today.

Rabbis Hirsch and Shapira want parents and teachers alike to look into the souls of their children and students and already now begin to set them securely on their lives' paths; they are to teach, train, guide and nurture with the longer term in mind, shaping adults from these children who as yet see the world through youthful eyes and still enjoy childish games.

Yet some will fervently take issue with the idea that it is insufficient and “*a grave sin*” to impart “*Torah and Yir'as Shamayim*” which is (*only?*) “*commensurate with their students' level of maturity.*” - Surely, they will argue passionately, it is quite correct and responsible to target education towards a student's current level of maturity!

❧ RABBI ELIYAHU KI TOV ❧

However, there is a fascinating idea in the thought of Rabbi Eliyahu Ki Tov which seems to support the recommendations of Rav Hirsch and Rav Shapira.

In his פתיחה (opening) to ושננתם לבניך (in English, ‘The Jewish Home’: Feldheim) Rabbi Eliyahu Ki Tov discusses the four expressions of redemption which Hashem used to describe the progressive stages through which Bnei Yisrael would be passing

on their journey from slavery to redemption. He writes that, when the Jewish people were sunken in the deepest pit of servitude, Moshe came to them by Hashem's word to inform them of Hashem's great plan to free them from bondage in Egypt and take them to Him as a nation. Moshe explained each stage in turn: ... ולקחתי... , וגאלתי... , והצלתי... , והוצאתי... - "I will take you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will save you from their labour, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. And I will take you to Me as a people..." (Shemot 6:6-7)

Each of these stages were laden with depth and meaning.

Moshe told all this to the Jewish People, but received a less than enthusiastic response:

וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה כֵּן אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֵל מֹשֶׁה מִקְצָר רוּחַ וּמֵעֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה (שמות ו:ט)

"Moshe spoke thus to the Children of Israel, but they did not listen to Moshe because of their shortness of breath and because of their hard labour." (Shemot 6:9)

How are we to understand this reaction, or lack of one, from Bnei Yisrael? Did they not want to leave Egypt?

Of course they did, but in their low mental, emotional and spiritual state they were unable to relate to such lofty ideas and apply their minds and hearts to this complex plan for their redemption.

Rabbi Eliyahu Ki Tov compares this to the situation of a person who is trapped and being held captive in a pit, groaning under the weight of his troubles and afflictions. People come and tell him, "Tomorrow we are going to come and lift you out from there, give you thousands of pounds, and elevate you to a high position of greatness!" The person responds to this, "Just take me out of here right now and don't give me anything!" This is the reason, writes Rabbi Ki Tov, that four pesukim later the Torah says:

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל אַהֲרֹן וַיִּצְוֵם אֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֵל פַּרְעֹה מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם
לְהוֹצִיא אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם (שמות ו:יג)

So the L-rd spoke to Moses and to Aaron, and He commanded them concerning the children of Israel and concerning Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, to let the Children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. (Shemot 6:13)

Simply "להוציא ממצרים" - "...to take them out of Egypt" - these were words to which they were able to listen.

Rabbi Ki Tov asks: why, initially, did Hashem instruct Moshe to speak to the Jewish people in a style and with words to which they were unable to listen? Furthermore, he asks, why is it that even after Hashem gave the people a shorter, simpler wording did He then still go ahead and fulfil His original promise in every respect? Why did Moshe not simply outline the plan to the Jewish people from the outset in a manner to which they were able to listen?

This comes to teach us, explains Rabbi Eliyahu Ki Tov, that anyone who is destined for greatness must not turn his gaze down to small, less significant things, even for a short time. Even though this person might be stuck in a lowly place, unable to listen to elevated ideas, you should nevertheless force him to hear those things. Then, later, when he is finally able to turn his heart to listen, his hearing of these superior notions will actually have begun from now, and his whole path will have been one of constant, continuous greatness.

Rabbi Eliyahu Ki Tov summarizes this idea as follows:

הגדול אינו רשאי להיות קטן

"A person with (the potential for) greatness is not permitted 'to be small'."

His station and actions may right now be tiny, trifling; yet his heart and his thoughts should constantly be in the loftiest heights. Moreover, this person should have his plan for rising to greatness 'written and unrolled' before his eyes all the time; he should constantly be thinking about it. Then the time will quickly arrive when he will reach the exalted place to which he has aspired from the start.

Parents and teachers need to have the highest aspirations for their achievements in Chinuch – they must aspire towards great things, think big and strive without rest towards the highest goals – and they have to notice the potential greatness in every one of their children so that they can 'write' the plan in front of the children's eyes and work tirelessly together with them until they have helped each fulfil his or her unique potentials.

It emerges from these powerful thoughts of Rabbi Eliyahu Ki Tov that he also seems to recommend looking beyond the child in front of us to the adult he or she has the potential to become. "הגדול אינו רשאי להיות קטן" – "A [potentially] great person is not permitted to be small" appears to be a something of an endorsement for Rav Shapira's words, and a mandate for following them:

Each and every parent and teacher knows that the small children and young students who stand before them today will not remain small and young forever. They will grow up to be adults, and they might even achieve greatness in Torah and *avodas Hashem*...

...Parents and teachers have to be aware that their mission is to discover and nurture children of Hashem and Gedolei Yisrael. They must view their children and students as great *neshamos* that are still immature – and themselves as responsible for helping them to flourish and grow.

But here we encounter a considerable challenge. Assuming parents and teachers are ready, in principle, to engage in educating and nurturing their Jewish children in accordance with these noble ideas, how is such a heroic mission to be accomplished?

Let us recall the guidance provided in *Chovat HaTalmidim*:

"We are not referring to the art of teaching known as "pedagogy" – the methods through which a teacher utilises the child's mind and broadens his knowledge of Torah – for it is not the student's mind alone that we are trying to reach. Our goal is to get in touch with the student's entire being. We want to take hold of the nefesh, ruach and neshamah of this Jewish child and connect them to Hashem, so that he will grow to "tremble at the word of G-d" and channel all his desires toward Him."

The Piaseczna Rebbe is handing us a task that seems to far transcend our usual concept of education. Is this an attainable notion of Chinuch? Or is it an unrealistic ideal?

One answer to this is that Rav Shapira did not intend his guidance to be esoteric and unachievable, his vision of good Chinuch to be an unreachable pipedream. *Chovat HaTalmidim* was intended as a practical guidebook to help its readers purify their souls and achieve new heights in serving their Creator:

"In the Rebbe's own golden words, the purpose of Chovas HaTalmidim is "to penetrate the insides of every student, to uncover his soul, and to guide it in Torah and avodah in the Chassidic manner." He had need for neither modern psychology nor any new pedagogical methods; he simply remained faithful to the teachings of the Ba'al Shem Tov. He firmly believed that within every Jewish soul was hidden a treasure of holiness and G-dliness, yearning to cleave to the Rock Who fashioned him. All that was needed was to kindle the flame and fan it until the flame would one day rise on its own. The Rebbe believed that every Jewish soul was a pearl which had become stained and simply needed to be picked up and washed and cleansed. This was the cornerstone of the Rebbe's philosophy of education."

(Chovas HaTalmidim: The Students' Obligation, HaGaon Rav Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira, Feldheim: p.609)

The fact is, we are very much mistaken if we see education in general and Torah-focused Chinuch in particular as anything less than a most profound, demanding and spiritual endeavour. Pedagogy and a wide range of related skills are of course vital ingredients in the practical delivery of learning experiences. But we need to say something about the deep roles and significance of communication and connection between parents and children, teachers and students, that make true Chinuch happen.

The former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks used to enjoy relating an insight from the great Dayan Yechezkel Abramsky. Dayan Abramsky asked why it was that of all the utensils and equipment used in the Mishkan, the holy Sanctuary, only the Chatzotzrot - the silver trumpets - had to be remade in each generation, while everything else was kept and reused. Rabbi

Sacks would be animated as he related the answer: the trumpets were tools of communication, and each new generation needs new and relevant modes of communication, leadership and education, as well as the relationships which all of those imply and which they will come to depend on to function well. Our great Masorah, faithful intergenerational transmission of Torah knowledge and values, is effectively passed on from parents to children and from teachers to students with the invaluable tools of communication and relationship, and those tools must remain ever-equipped for the task.

✻ RABBI AKIVA TATZ ✻

The various patterns of blasts played on the Chatzotzrot were, in a sense, a form of language. Language comes in many forms, but the most sophisticated and powerful is human speech. Rabbi Akiva Tatz explains the depth and power of speech:

“The function of speech parallels the function of reproduction – in the lower world of the body, the output is offspring, the physical being of a child. In the higher world of the head, the output is words. Just as children are an outward expression of the body of the parent, so too words are the outward expression of the mind of the speaker.

Words are seminal; when correctly used they are a deep revelation of their source in the consciousness of the one who speaks them, and their energy is powerful enough to build a deep connection between the speaker and the one who listens. With the body one forms children; with the power of communication one creates *talmidim* – students, spiritual offspring. “*Ha’nefesh asher asu b’Charan* – the souls which they made in Charan,” states the verse; in fact, this reference is not to children whom Avraham and Sarah brought into the world, as it may seem at first glance, but to the people whom they taught and influenced.

“Making souls” in the spiritual sense is a more significant creative act than its physical counterpart of bringing children into the physical world; in some ways the connection between Torah teacher and *talmid* is closer than between father and son, as the *halacha* states; the father brings the son into this world, but the Rebbe (teacher) brings him into the next world...

Speech is the world of connection. Understood simply, speech connects the speaker and the listener. A relationship can develop, can flourish, because deep communication is possible by means of speech...

At a deeper level, speech represents the connection between higher and lower worlds. Speech is the mechanism by which an abstract idea which exists only in the higher dimension of thought can be brought down into the material world: when I speak, I transform ideas into the physical medium of sound, which is tangible enough for you to hear with the physical tools of hearing. Of course, you immediately transform my words back into their abstract state of ideas in your own mind. We have used the physical medium of speech to transmit non-physical ideas; we have connected the abstract with the material.”

(Worldmask, Rabbi Akiva Tatz, Targum/Feldheim: pp.127-129)

Rabbi Tatz’s portrayal of speech as a tool of connection, communication, creation and transformation is beautiful and profound. And through his own powerful words we build a picture in our minds of Torah teachers and their *talmidim* connecting deeply as they discuss, debate and deliberate, sharing the pleasure of ideas flowing between them, their abstract thoughts constantly evaporating and condensing, evaporating and condensing, words to thoughts and then back to words.

✻ RABBI JOSEPH B. SOLOVEITCHIK ✻

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, describing the notion of the 'teaching community,' characterises the teacher-learner relationship in terms that surpass and transcend the medium of physical language – though, clearly, speech remains the main tool employed in the process. Rabbi Soloveitchik speaks of the Rebbe-student encounter in terms of merging experiences, of closeness, even unity, and of shared visions, overflowing personalities and the transmission of personal essence:

"... according to the Rav, the highest form of interpersonal communion is attained through the teaching community. The true teacher must merge his total experience with that of the student, and they thereby attain a closeness which exceeds the sympathy and mutual aid of the prayer/charity community. A teacher not only trains the mind, but fashions the personality of the student. He shares not only information, but experiences, visions, dreams – in short his very essence. As the Rav explains in *U-Vikkashtem mi-Sham (141-42)*, the personality of the master teacher, like that of the prophet, spontaneously overflows toward the student in an act of self-revelation. This leaves an indelible impression upon the student's soul and binds the two together intimately.

In fact, the entire enterprise of the *masorah* (passing on the tradition) is based on the unity of teacher and disciple:

Within this fundamental principle [i.e., unity of teacher and student] is hidden the secret of the Oral Torah, a Torah which by its nature and application can never be objectified, even after it has been written down. "Oral Torah" means a Torah that blends with the individual's personal uniqueness and becomes an inseparable part of man. When the person then transmits it to someone else, his personal essence is transmitted along with it (*U-Vikkashtem mi-Sham, 142*).

... Unlike the Written Torah, which is crystallized in a clearly defined text, the Oral Torah is by its very nature amorphous. It is borne not by parchment, but by the human being, who both shapes it with his own unique contribution and understanding, and who in turn is shaped by it...

The parchment of *Talmud Torah* is the human mind, the human heart and personality... The old halakhic equation that every Jew is a *sefer Torah* (Torah scroll) is, in this light, fully understandable. The living Jew is the *sefer Torah* of the *Torah she-be-al peh*."

(Majesty and Humility, Rabbi Reuven Ziegler, Maimonides School / OU Press / Urim: pp.47,48)

Rabbi Soloveitchik believed strongly in these ideas, and he included them consistently in his writing and teaching. The following passages are extracted from manuscripts of a course in *Pirkei Avot* he taught at Yeshiva University in the early 1950s:

"...the idea of discipleship within the *masorah* community is not based exclusively upon technical teaching and the assimilation of knowledge reaching the student from the outside... Torah knowledge is, of course, imparted by one individual to another, but there is more involved in the relationship of master and disciple than the passing on of knowledge. Besides Torah knowledge, there is also Torah education. While knowledge exhausts itself in the sum total of cognitive units of classified information and hierarchically organised concepts, Torah education (as education in general) is concerned with a creative act that aims not so much at giving this particular individual something which he did not own before, but rather drawing out of him his own finite solitary self and bringing it in contact with the infinite solitary Self.

In short, the task of the rebbe, the *masorah* teacher, consists of developing, fashioning and creating a Torah personality...

This assertion is based upon a premise that *Torah she-be'al peh*, the Oral Law, is not only a system of thought, a method, but a great living experience that is inseparable from the stream of personal existence. Every member of the *hakhmei ha-mesorah*, the sages of our tradition, is a living *sefer Torah*. The story of this book is written not with ink on a parchment scroll, but with live emotions, thoughts and volitions on sensitive, tender and loved-starved souls...

The rebbe within the *masorah* community has superseded the prophet. He is not only an instructor but also a messenger of G-d who draws out dormant feelings, latent capacities and secret – almost unconscious – yearnings by his mere presence... The teacher captivates the genuine self in the pupil and brings it into relation with the word of G-d... To teach Torah is not only a skill but a performance, a dramatic artistic act. The great artist does not convey the message in a professional manner but lives it through, and his experience is so powerful that it transcends the boundaries of the stage and catches the imagination of the audience. A great artist draws the audience into the play. The crowd ceases to be a mere passive onlooker and begins to act with the cast, experiencing and living through the same. In a word, teaching Torah is not only a skill but an art of the highest calibre. The great artist may reach into everybody's soul."

(Halakhic Morality: Essays on Ethics and Masorah, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Maggid: pp.53-55)

The idea that Torah education is not merely a technical act of imparting units of knowledge through skilled instruction but a dramatic and creative shared experience is also conveyed powerfully in an essay of Rav Soloveitchik on 'Covenantal Marriage' and, in particular, its aspect of '*educational community*.' He begins by explaining that,

The household is a school where a child receives his most important training to face the challenges with which life presents him in his adulthood. In education, the distinction of man manifests itself. Man must refashion and recreate himself through education. The latter is the mold in which his natural and innate powers are recast and actualised. G-d provided man with a great potential, with whose actualisation he was charged. By planned and wise exercise of his capacities he can make them useful to himself and to the world...

(Family Redeemed, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Ktav: 55,56)

And then we learn of the parents' role in the child's education, and that this parental role by far outstrips in significance even the physical bringing of the child into the world:

The parent enters a new realm, that of education. He is not only a natural father or mother of the child (at a biological level) but he is also the teacher and guide of the child. He helps the child to free himself from a primitive state of biological existence and to take possession of himself. Every father and mother is the educator of the child, and as such they are engaged in a very creative mission – by far more important than the natural act of bringing forth the child, since the former is a spiritual and intentional act, while the latter is accomplished in a mechanical manner and because of a primordial irresistible drive...

... Procreation is not creation. The latter is realised not in the fertilisation of an ovum but in the formation of the child's spiritual personality, in fostering his or her good qualities and trying to sublimate the child's primitive desires and smooth out his rough edges...

Judaism has advanced a new doctrine of teaching. Education is not just a technical activity. It is a soul-performance, an existential involvement of two strangers, an imparting not only of formal knowledge but of a total self-experience, of an ontic awareness. It expresses itself in the emergence of a new fellowship, within which master and disciple share one great adventure, that of creation. Therefore, the union of teacher and disciple does not terminate with the end of actual instruction. The community outlasts the physical nearness of these two individuals; it contains something of the covenantal community. The idea of the scholar is shining in the Jewish firmament. It outranks every other image, that of king, priest and prophet...

(Ibid.57-59)

Rav Soloveitchik then takes this lofty, sophisticated notion of educational parenthood a step further, couching it in terms of Avraham's covenantal fatherhood towards Yitzchak; this was a transcendental-metaphysical form of fatherhood, in contrast to the natural-physical type:

... when I speak of the Abrahamic fatherhood which is attained through education, I understand the latter not only in terms of technical training of the child, of the development of his aptitudes and talents, of actualising the child's full natural potential, of exercising his or her innate physical and intellectual capabilities. However important and essential this type of education is to the full realisation of the child, the idea of Abrahamic fatherhood implies a new dimension, one which is to be found beside the realm of education as it is understood by philosophers and

pedagogues. The service Abraham rendered to Isaac did not consist in educating him in skills and aptitudes in the Platonic sense, in bringing out what already was endowed in him, but in introducing him to a new existence, a covenantal, redeemed one...

... Not only does the father prepare his children for life, not only does he adapt them to an existing reality, as the naturalistic theory interprets the educational activity, but he also commits them to a higher transcendental reality. The fatherhood of Abraham is covenantal...

(Ibid.122,123)

All of this is important to know, yet, ultimately, both the teacher – armed with his or her creative dramatic talents and ready to *catch the imagination of the audience and fashion the personality of the student, sharing not only information, but experiences, visions, dreams – in short his very essence* – as well as the parent – who is keen to *form the child's spiritual personality and introduce him into the covenantal existence* – need to know the template, the paradigm that is the goal of their efforts in educating the child. What are we intending will be the end products of our educational efforts? What are the fruits we envisage will bud and bloom from these delicate saplings – our students and children – as their roots spread and take nourishment in the soft soil of Chinuch?

∞ THE SLONIMER REBBE ∞

The Slonimer Rebbe – Rabbi Sholom Noach Berezovsky – taught,

והנה יסוד היסודות של החינוך הוא לעשותו יהודי בפנימיותו בנפשו רוחו ונשמתו...

“the foundation of foundations in Chinuch is to ensure that the child is a Jew deep inside, in all parts of his soul – his ‘Nefesh,’ ‘Ruach’ and ‘Neshamah’... and just as the father is obligated to ensure he has a Brit Milah, and through that ensure he is a Jew in body, so is it an obligation on the father and the teacher to make him a Jew in his essence.

זה תכליתו של החינוך להעמיד יהודים שלמים, יהודים בכל מהותם...

This is the object of Chinuch, to raise whole Jews, who are Jewish throughout their very being. ... and as the Gaon, the Tzaddik, the Chafetz Chaim wrote: When a Jew makes the brachah in the morning, “Who did not make me a gentile,” he should reflect well and consider whether he is truly a Jew throughout his essence, for if even one limb were gentile then his brachah would have been wasted.

ומטרה זו צריכה לעמוד לנגד עיניו של המחנך, לחנך את חניכיו להיות יהודים מושלמים...

... and this is the goal that every Torah teacher should have written up before his eyes: to educate his students to become complete Jews, not partial Jews ... but Jews around whom Judaism envelops their whole being from foot to head, who are able to make the brachah with complete sincerity, ‘Who did not make me a gentile’”

(מ.ד. – קונטרס נתיבי חינוך – Kuntras Netivei Chinuch, The Slonimer Rebbe, Machon Emunah veDaat: p. 27)

And finally, let us highlight two things that will help us to enjoy success in Chinuch:

love them and daven for them.

The Slonimer Rebbe emphasises the importance of loving our talmidim:

... רק כאשר המחנך אוהב את חניכיו אהבת נפש יכול להצליח. ורגיל אני לשאול מחנכים אם אוהבים הם את תלמידיהם ועי"ז יודע אני מדת הצלחתם.

... only when the educator loves his students deeply will he be able to be successful. And I regularly ask teachers if they love their students, and through [what I find out from] this I know how successful they will be.

(כה. p. – Kuntras Netivei Chinuch, The Slonimer Rebbe, Machon Emunah veDaat: קונטרס נתיבי חינוך)

But after all we have said, there is one more important factor in Chinuch which is the foundation upon which everything else stands: Tefillah. Teachers must daven for their students and parents for their children. However competent and expert we may consider ourselves in the Chinuch endeavour, however experienced, knowledgeable and skilled, and however well we may feel we have tailored our modes and styles of instruction to the current and future needs of our children, we must always continue to beseech the Almighty through our prayers to help us be successful in all our Chinuch activities. It is told that, even once he was already one of the greatest rabbis of the generation, Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky's mother would still pray for him.

Rabbi Berezovsky writes on this:

ואחרי כל העצות אין עצה כהמבקש ומתחנן להקב"ה שישלח עזרו מקודש וכמו שמסופר על אחד מראשי הישיבות שאם אחד מתלמידיו לא היה רואה סימן ברכה בלימודו או במדותיו, היה צם ומבקש רחמים בעדו, ככה צריך להיות גם אצל מורה בת"ת.

... and after all other advice, there is no better advice than to plead and to supplicate before 'ה', that He should send His holy assistance; and as it is told regarding one of the Roshei HaYeshivot, that if one of his students was not seeing any sign of blessing [and success] in his learning or in [his work on] his character traits, he would fast and ask for mercy for him, and this is also how it should be regarding a teacher in a Talmud Torah (school).

(צב. p. – Kuntras Netivei Chinuch, The Slonimer Rebbe, Machon Emunah veDaat: קונטרס נתיבי חינוך)

❧ RABBI MOSHE FEINSTEIN ❧

After outlining a number of principles for effective Chinuch, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein similarly recommends Tefillah on behalf of our children and for the success of our efforts to educate them:

... ואחר כל אלה צריך להתפלל אל השי"ת שיצליחהו בחינוכם וכשעושינן לשם שמים ודאי יעזרהו השי"ת ...

... and after all of this, it is necessary to pray to 'ה', may He be blessed, that He will help him to see success in the chinuch of his children; and when the endeavour of chinuch is carried out 'Leshem Shamayim' (with holy intentions) then 'ה', may He be blessed, will certainly help him.

(Igerot Moshe Yoreh Deah vol.3 letter 76 – אגרות משה יורה דעה ח"ג סימן ע"ו)

If we are honest with ourselves, we will readily admit that only with Hashem's help can we hope to navigate the complex challenges of Chinuch Banim – educating our children in the deepest and fullest senses, as we have discussed.

May Hashem indeed help us in our Chinuch efforts, so that our students and our own children may grow up as true B'nei Torah, later ready to take over where we left off with them and in turn pass on the baton to their own children, and then they to theirs.



Wishing everyone much הצלחה and ברכה,

חיים
Jeremy





זכרון אריה

על פרשה ומועד

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טבת תשפ"ג ~ Tevet 5783

January 2023

~

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