

## Jewish Parenting – Class #5 – Visions of Your Child As the Adult He Will Become:

1. **Code of Jewish Law, Yoreh De'ah Ch. 245:14:** If a teacher leaves the children unattended, or is doing other work while teaching them, or is lazy in his teaching; he is included in the verse: 'Cursed I the one who does **the work of G-d [Melech Hashem]** deceitfully.' ....**Rama:** A teacher should not stay up too late at night, so that he will not be lazy when teaching in the day. Similarly, he should not fast or excessively hold himself back from eating; because all these things cause him to not teach well. Anyone who violates these rules should be relieved from his duties.
2. **Talmud Baba Basra 8b:** "And they that turn the many to righteousness as the stars forever (Daniel 12:3) – this refers to those who teach children.
3. **A Student's Obligation pp. 30-31:** Do not become depressed, do not let your heart sink, at the thought of your great responsibility....Be concerned, but not depressed. The difference is as follows: Someone who had a great fortune and then lost it might fall into despair and depression. Someone who knows where a great fortune is buried, deep in the ground, will worry and be concerned about the enormous amount of labor necessary to reach the treasure. The more concerned and worried he is about the task, the more resolved and determined he becomes to succeed and to work with great joy until he does succeed....Be strong and joyous in your holy task, and each day allow your concern and worry about accomplishing it to diminish...Just be sure to continually remember your purpose and your aim...Remember in the same way that a traveler must continuously remember his destination in order not to lose his way and must often remind himself of the purpose of the journey in order to hurry himself along and not get distracted.
4. **Talmud Tamid 32a:** Who is a wise person? He who can see what will develop in the future.
5. **A Student's Obligation pp.4-5 :** When referring to the education of children, therefore, *chinuch* means stimulating the growth and development of what each child is suited for by his very nature. This quality or potential may be found in him only in very small measure, in total hiddenness, the task of the educator is to uncover it. **Since a Jewish child has the spirit of G-d, the breath of the Lord, hidden and concealed within him from the very moment of his birth, it is necessary to raise him and educate him to bring out and reveal this godliness and allow it to flourish.** If this is done, the child will grow into a faithful Jew, a servant of G-d. He will have an independent desire for Torah and will not stray as he gets older. A person whose educational strategy is one of commands and even habituation cannot be so sure that the child will continue to practice as he becomes independent. This, then, is the command of King Solomon: "Educate the child" - penetrate to his inner being and reveal the holiness of Israel that is hidden there. Only then will the child not stray from the path when he grows older.
6. **A Student's obligation pp. 6-8:** Every father and every teacher knows that their children and students will not remain children forever, but will eventually grow in years and possibly in Torah knowledge and spiritual devotion. **Yet there exist fathers and teachers who are concerned only with what they see right now. Since all they see right now are children, the goal of their efforts is to educate their charges to become good children.** They wish to infuse them with only a child's measure of Torah and awe of G-d. This they consider sufficient. But **a teacher or parent who does this is sinning against G-d and against His people.** Fathers and teachers must know that their task is to educate and uncover children of the Lord and giants of Israel. They must see the children sitting in front of them as great souls still immature; their task is to get them to grow and flourish. **A teacher is a gardener in the garden of G-d, assigned to cultivate it and guard it from harm.** Even if some of the children seem rebellious, or flawed in their character, the teacher must know that the nature of soul-seeds, of unripe angels, is to taste bitter as they are ripening and

to be filled with nectar in their maturity. **Neither the nature, nor any particular quality of a Jewish child, is absolutely evil.** This is what the holy Baal Shem Tov and his disciples have taught us. What is necessary is just to know how to use these qualities and how to help them develop and grow. For example, a particular child may be very stubborn - which is a character flaw. His teacher may suffer greatly because of the child's stubbornness. Yet, if the teacher were to reflect, he would realize that when this child matures and receives as his own the yoke of Torah and of service to G-d, he will perform all his service of G-d with great stubbornness and self-sacrifice. He will not be frivolous or inclined to vacillate but will be the kind of Jew the *Midrash* described: In all matters of devotion, he will be as strong as the wall of a fortress.

Take another example - a child whose personality has an angry quality. True, the way that the child is expressing his anger at this point in time is extremely bad. But are we able to therefore decide that he is from a corrupt source, that he is inferior and base by nature? **If an idiot heard the praises of the etrog fruit, grabbed a seed or an unripe etrog fruit, bit into it, and then shrieked and howled at how bitter and poisonous-tasting a fruit the etrog is, would we not laugh at him and consider him a great fool?**

It is impossible to predict ahead of time how great a benefit may emerge, through the efforts of the principal or teacher from the very anger of the angry child. One must penetrate into his inner life, bring him close, ignite his heart and his soul until they are dedicated to G-d. Then his anger will be transformed into a fire from above. All of his acts of devotion will burn like fiery coals and all the words that he will speak to G-d in prayer and in Torah will thunder from a voice of fire. See the commentary of the Rav on the *Siddur* if you wish to confirm this. There he explains as follows: "The heat that is in anger stems from the heat of the heart. Any person that is hot-tempered by nature has a heart that is inclined to burn with fiery flames of desire (for G-d)". And certainly, if such a person finds within himself any stain or defect, he will be filled with tremendous rage and wrath. His good inclination will immediately rouse him to anger and indignation, and he will cast away and even destroy his evil inclination from out of his very midst. If he finds it necessary to chastise a friend for spiritual failing, he will not insult or degrade him, but will speak simply, with words as hot as a boiling furnace that will rush from him like a stormy sea. In this way, he will succeed in melting and uprooting all stains and soul-sicknesses of his friends as well.

7. **A Student's Obligation pp. 27-28:** The prophet Isaiah proclaimed: "The house of Israel is the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts, and every person of Judah is one of His delightful plantings". The House of Israel as a whole is G-d's vineyard, and each individual Jew is a precious tree in whom G-d especially delights, if he walks in the path of G-d, the path of Torah. You, as a Jewish child, are like a young vine in this vineyard. We have no idea yet to whom we are speaking when we address you, what you may become, and you too have no conception yet of how far you may reach as you grow in Torah learning and in service G-d. You may become a great *tzaddik* and genius whose fame will extend from one end of the world to the other. You may become a wealthy man, dedicated to serving G-d, outstanding in Torah knowledge, a generous benefactor to the needy, good to both G-d and all of His creations - the kind of person whom every parent blesses his child to become. **Many of the greatest sages and tzadikim of Israel were not recognized as being in any way different or better than their companions during their childhood years.** Only after they began to dedicate themselves to serving G-d did they begin to succeed until they became so great that they became etched forever into the annals of our history. **These kind of people, many of whom remained completely unrecognized as children, remain our inspiration, protection and light until Moshiach comes.**

We are not saying that all children are equal in their potential and in their abilities. What we are claiming is that it is impossible to predict what a child will be like when he grows up, what potential may be hidden within him. ***There have been children whose abilities remained so deeply closed and concealed - even from themselves - that no one would have believed that they would rise to greatness. To the amazement of all who knew them as children, they became so great that everyone stood in awe of them and their accomplishments. And the opposite has also unfortunately occurred. There have been great souls who were gifted with the potential and ability to be a light for all of Israel, but because they neglected to develop their potential in their youth, their light was lost.***

And here we have to say the same thing to you, precious child. If you neglect the abilities that are locked up inside you, hidden so well that even you are unaware of them, it is not only you, yourself that you hurt. You may be injuring the Jewish people as a whole - and the Holy One of Israel - by depriving them and Him of a great sage, a *tzaddik* of a high spiritual level.