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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

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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

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