



# נעימות החיים

## Ne'imas HaChaim Project

In memory of Naama Markovits A"H  
לע"נ נעמה חנה ע"ה ב"ר יהודה איסר נ"י



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שבת פרשת לך לך ה' השון תשע"א

### Lesson #6: Be Mevater

(Prepared by Rabbi Eli Herzberg)

*When we exhaust the pedagogical methods needed to appease frustrated or unsatisfied children we tend to use the mussar laden method of imploring them to be mevater, to give up something that is important to them. The following article illustrates how important it is to use this midah in the chinuch of our children, as a prime example of the need to place on ourselves the same expectations that we place on children.*

The education of a child is a very simple yet difficult task. On the one hand, every child desires to emulate their father and mother, and we can assume that they naturally will follow instructions and example. Yet at the same time, every child is so unique and different, that no two children will respond exactly the same to specific situations or experiences. Each child is a world onto his own, with unique abilities, personality, and natural inclinations. It is therefore a challenge for all parents to have success in child-rearing. One's personal righteousness does not guarantee a similar outcome in the ensuing generation. Luckily, we are provided with a mesorah - a tradition, by the greatest of Jewish personalities, both historic and contemporary in nature, who can help us in our task, as we look to help our children become servants of Hashem, and functioning members of society.

Rav Shlomo Wolbe zt'l writes, "Chinuch is a process which demands a long term perspective. When a child is two or three years old, we must know and take into account that when he turns fourteen or fifteen he will be in a different stage. In order to pass through the fourteen year old stage peacefully, the child needs to have a warm bond with his parents. If parents are rough [with their young child] - if they discipline him harshly, hit him, and make demands beyond his ability - they destroy the warm relationship. Indeed, at such an early stage the problem in the relationship won't be obvious. The child still needs his parents; he loves his parents. But later, when the child is fourteen, the surprised parents come to me crying and exclaim, 'I don't understand what's happened to my child. He doesn't speak with me at all. He tells me nothing. I have no idea what's going on with him.' I respond to them, 'Now you are paying for the blows you gave back then.'"

A child requires personal care and special cultivating as he begins to grow up and develop both physically and emotionally. Too often it is a parent's unrelenting forcefulness that creates issues for the child. It is therefore imperative for fathers and mothers to **take a step back at times, relax, and assume a different perspective on their goals for their child**. We need to be *mi'vatter* - to relinquish, and abandon those **unrealistic ideals** that we may have placed in front of them. By retreating in the short term, we allow a child to achieve in the long term - as he matures and establishes himself in a mode of behavior and derech hachaim.

It takes courage to be *mi'vatter*, however the dividends are eternal. What greater pleasure can there be for a parent than to take pride in knowing that he helped Klal Yisrael flourish and grow, as his child matures and takes his place amongst the millions of unique souls that have descended to this world. Chazal tell us in Medrash Rabah the following truth, "Just as no two faces are the same, so no two personalities are the same." When we realize that our children are unique, then we will be able to analyze and nurture their special personality and needs for long term growth and success.

Granted, as parents we have a responsibility to our child. There are times that we are obligated and encouraged to correct a child's misbehavior. At these times we need to ensure that we are giving criticism and educating our child with the proper method. It is very helpful that the parent should not be in a state of anger when speaking to their child. If the parent feels that anger must be shown, then they should make sure to be in an external state of anger when speaking to the child. Real anger is strongly discouraged by Chazal and our greatest Sages. Reb Chaim Vital zt'l would often quote his rebbe the Arizal, who warned him not to get angry, even for *ruchniyus* reasons, for "anger always destroys".

Too often our children are at the receiving end of our reproof. We are quick to articulate our feelings, and we may at times be too harsh and judgmental. Rav Pam zt'l would often say, "The proper method of giving effective criticism is an art that can be learned. Harsh criticism rarely works, is often counterproductive, and at times, can leave life-long emotional scars."

When we take a calm and relaxed approach to chinuch habanim, we greatly increase our ability to raise healthy and stable children. While tefillah al habanim is an integral part to chinuch, we must never forget that our ability to be *mi'vatter*, and relinquish unrealistic ideals is a strong component as well in ensuring success.