

For they are a generation of reversals, children whose upbringing is not in them. (32:20)

When we note that a generation has reversed Hashem's "mood" from benevolence to anger, we observe that Hashem has raised them to be good, but they have spurned His upbringing – something which is quite apparent in the manner in which they act. Moshe *Rabbeinu* rebukes the nation for rejecting the Torah, whose purpose it is to teach/educate them. From their actions, it is obvious that they are far from achieving this goal. This is difficult to understand, considering that the Torah is *chinuch*, educative, from beginning to end. How is it that the Torah did not achieve its mission?

In analyzing this question, *Horav Shlomo Wolbe, zl*, focuses on which type – or aspect – of *chinuch* Moshe is addressing. *Chinuch* is an abstract means to an end. Thus, it is not the *chinuch* itself that must be addressed, but rather, the focus of the *chinuch*. For example, one can be educated in communism, socialism, democracy or dictatorship. The educational process remains the same. Therefore, if Torah education has failed to change the Jews, we must wonder about the focus of the education.

The *Mashgiach* suggests that the answer lies in the word *imun*, as in *va'yehi omein es Hadassah*, "And he had reared Hadassah (Esther)" (*Megillas Esther 2:7*, a reference to Mordechai's raising Esther). The Torah is not a process in which one studies and, upon completion, from which one graduates. The Torah is not a course that one takes. The Torah is to be studied and studied, again and again. Its goal is to educate a person. Our problem is that we do not understand the term, "education."

A master educator defines the term "education." "Education" is often confused with "knowledge." One who is knowledgeable is not necessarily educated. One can go to school and receive an education in school, which means that he has amassed knowledge. Does this knowledge qualify him as an educated person? Not necessarily. Education is the willingness and ability to learn for the sake of learning. The truly educated person learns constantly, without supervision or external reward. In other words, as *Rav Wolbe* puts it: *Chinuch l'shem chinuch*; Torah is *mechanech Klal Yisrael*. We study Torah to become educated/refined by it, not just to amass its knowledge.

School is a medium for education, with higher education seen as the final goal for achieving the status of being educated. It is not necessarily true. One who learns for a goal – whether it is a degree, an external reward or a position – does not necessarily become an educated person. Learning should be done for its own sake, not for remuneration. An educated person is one who develops a habit of constant learning - without structure or reward. Someone who simply possesses broad knowledge in varied or specific areas is a knowledgeable person, but not an educated one. How one applies the knowledge that he has amassed validates his being considered an educated person. This is the meaning of a *mechunach*. A *mechanech* teaches; a

mechunach is educated – a *yodea sefer* is one who is knowledgeable. Having encyclopedic knowledge will not create an educated person – unless that person integrates that knowledge for the sake of gaining more knowledge. To paraphrase a master educator, “It takes both creativity and knowledge to make a truly educated person.” Any person can become educated, as long as he has the will to learn for the sake of learning and living.

The *Mashgiach* would lament that the concept of *hislamdus* and *hischanchus* – learning for the sake of learning, education for the sake of education – was a lost “art.” While it is true that a *ben Torah* should focus on bettering himself in certain areas, he tends to work on a specific area in which he excels by placing greater demands on himself – all the while ignoring the total education of self. Therefore, he might be a *masmid*, quite diligent in applying himself to his studying, while his *davening* will continue to be complacent and even perfunctory. He is knowledgeable, but not *mechunach*, educated, but lacking the spiritual refinement that is the byproduct of an educated *ben Torah*.

The small town of Kelm, Lithuania, was known as the cradle of the *mussar*, ethical character refinement, movement, because of the *yeshivah* (called *Talmud Torah*) that was located there. Under the direction of its saintly *Rosh Yeshivah*, *Horav Simchah Zissel Ziv/Braude, zl*, the *Alter m’Kelm*, it produced the preeminent *mashgichim*, ethical supervisors, of just about every pre-World War II European *yeshivah*. The *yeshivah*, its curriculum and approach to learning/education, was a reflection of the Torah personality of its founder, the *Alter*. *Rav Simchah Zissel* was aristocratic in bearing – deliberate, well-thought-out and precise. He never acted without a clear vision of his goal and, once that goal was in place, he did not deviate from its course. His self-control was nearly absolute, to the point that nothing could cause him to lose his composure. Regardless of the circumstances in which he found himself, his external demeanor, i.e. his facial expression, remained unchanged. His mental process was orderly and disciplined. He was able to cogitate with unparalleled clarity. He lived in abject poverty, but his clothing and manner of dress were the epitome of neatness (despite their age). He taught and demanded perfection. In order to achieve perfection, one must constantly work on himself to attain and maintain this extremely elevated level. This is why *Rav Simchah Zissel* was considered the *mechanech par excellence*. Education (especially educating oneself) is a lifelong experience. *Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl*, founder of the *Mussar Movement* and the *Alter’s rebbe*, once delineated the praises of his premier disciples: *Horav Yitzchak Blazer (Rav Itzele Petersberger) zl*, was the *lamdan*, analytic genius; *Horav Naftali Amsterdam, zl*, the *tzaddik*, righteous one; *Horav Simchah Zissel Braude*, the *chacham*, wise one. His *chochmah*, exceptional wisdom, was his genius as an educator.

Practically speaking, in order to attain perfection, one must first know what it is that he is missing, in what areas he is deficient. This idea is buttressed by a comment made by the grandson of the *Chafetz Chaim*, who had come to Kelm to learn. When queried concerning why he would come to Kelm when he had such an illustrious grandfather from whom to learn, he said, “From my grandfather, I learn what I have to become. In Kelm, I learn what I am now.” The perfection sought in Kelm was not specific to time or location. Perfection was demanded all of the time, under all

circumstances, regardless of where one found himself. Where the secular *Maskilim*, products of the reviled Enlightenment, taught, “Be a Jew at home and a man abroad,” the *Alter* taught, “Be a Jew and a man at home and a Jew and a man abroad.” Judaism and *menchlichkeit* have no boundaries. The *Alter* taught the importance of awareness of both Torah and the world outside of it. “The whole world is a house of *mussar*, and every human being is a book of *mussar*,” he taught. In his parlance, other-worldly was not a compliment, but rather, a shortcoming, limiting the stage upon which the Jew could fulfill the duties of the heart incumbent upon him. To achieve such perfection demands constant lifelong learning. Otherwise, one is considered uneducated.

In Kelm, on the day of a *bachur*'s, young man's, wedding, he (the *chassan*, groom) would spend the entire day learning in the *bais ha'medrash* until two hours before his wedding. He would then ask permission to leave and prepare himself for the wedding! Imagine that happening today!

The *Alter* explained Shlomo *Ha'Melech*'s dictum, *Chanoch ha'naar al pi darko, gam ki yazkin lo yasur mimenah*, “Educate a youth according to his way; when he matures, he shall not deviate from it” (*Mishlei* 22:6). Simply, this means that *chinuch*, (in this case) early education, is considered training for life. A child's early induction into the Jewish living experience, understanding what it is about, its values and ideals, the spiritual demands on a Jew, coupled with the requirements for ethical behavior, are imprinted on the child's psyche at a young age, so that they will accompany him throughout life. The *Alter* understood this *pasuk* as an exhortation towards the lifelong endeavor of *chinuch*. One who begins life in which *chinuch*, or rather, *hischanchus*, educating oneself, is a part of his lifelong development, will truly devote his life to constant learning, to seeking to better himself always. It is only through constant *chinuch* – even in one's later years – that one can be hopeful to attain spiritual success.

Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl, would relate that when he studied in the *kollel*, postgraduate program (reserved for married fellows) in Kelm, some members of the *kollel* had already, at their (young) age, achieved acclaim in the Torah world. Among them were individuals who would become the Torah world's premier *Roshei Yeshivah* and *Mashgichim*, such as: *Horav Naftali Tropp, zl*, *Rosh Yeshivas Radin*; and *Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl*, *Mashgiach Yeshivas Mir*. A rule in the *kollel* stated that (regardless of age or distinction) anyone who had to leave/walk out of the *bais hamedrash* where everyone was studying must go over to the *memuneh*, appointed person in charge, a member of the *kollel* who kept track of everyone's comings and goings, and only after “asking for permission to leave” and detailing the purpose of one's leaving, could the “student” leave. At the time, *Rav Elya* was the youngest member of the *kollel*, and *Rav Naftali Tropp* was among its elite. Yet, *Rav Naftali* came over and respectfully signed in during the week that *Rav Elya* served as *memuneh*. *Rav Elya* was ill at ease at having such an eminent member of the group come to ask him for permission. This, however, was Kelm, where a person was taught that one did nothing without permission. This was part of the life-long discipline that personified Kelm.