

For I have loved him, because he commands his children and his household after him that they keep the way of Hashem. (18:19)

The literal translation of *yedaativ* (reference to knowledge) is, “I know him.” Understandably, when one loves and cares for someone, he seeks to bring him close and know him better. Hashem loved Avraham because he did not keep His teachings to himself. When one believes in something, he wants to shout it from the rooftops, to reach out to whomever he can, so that he can share these verities with him. Interestingly, Avraham *Avinu* performed many *mitzvos* for which he achieved singular distinction. In addition, he kept the entire Torah even prior to its being given to *Klal Yisrael*. Yet, the only time that we find the *lashon* of *chibah*, term of love (Hashem loved Avraham), is with regard to *chinuch ha’banim*, educating his descendants. Avraham was the first outreach expert; he wrote the book on *chesed*, but none of these wonderful *mitzvos* earned him the appellation of *yedaativ*, loved him. Each of the *Asarah Nisyonos*, Ten Trials, which Avraham successfully passed did not earn him the description, “loved by Hashem.” Only one *mitzvah*, *l’maan asher yetzaveh es banav*, “because he commands his children,” did. Why?

Acharav, “after him,” is a powerful word which connotes Avraham’s teaching method. He taught by example. He did not make demands; he showed the people that he, too, answered to a Higher Authority and that everything he was doing was in accordance with the *tzivui*, command, of Hashem. Avraham taught; he did not compel. He demonstrated his commitment by his actions which he welcomed and encouraged others to follow.

Perhaps we might take this idea a bit further. *L’maan asher yetzaveh es banav* is the criterion which serves as the barometer for our *mitzvah* observance. How stable/solid are our actions? Will they be sustained through the vicissitudes of time, ideologies, culture and societal changes? Can we say that our children observing our *mitzvah* performance today will be inspired and remain connected to these *mitzvos* a generation later? Will they transmit that which they saw to their own children? *Mitzvah* observance, if it is to be taught to our children, must be able to withstand the test of time.

Furthermore, *l’maan asher yetzaveh es banav*, should be the criterion by which we measure the value and authenticity of our religious observance – and everything that we do. How much of what we do, the way we act, where we go, etc. do we want our children to emulate? Perhaps we might think twice before acting. After all, our children are watching.

The *Sefer Tiferes Banim* writes that a person does not earn the title *yarei Hashem*, G-d-fearing, or *tzaddik*, righteous man, unless he carefully watches over his children. (This does not mean that something will not go wrong even in those homes where parents maintain a watchful eye over their children’s activities.) One can be a *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar, devoted and committed in every way, but if he does not educate/see to his children’s education, he should not be called a *yarei*

Hashem. We see that despite all of Avraham's attributes and *mitzvos*, the only time that Hashem expressed His love for him was with regard to Avraham's commitment to inculcating his family with his values. Any commitment that one does not sufficiently value enough to transmit to his children is not much of a commitment.

A father's traditions, the customs that were bequeathed to him by his own father, are (should be) sacrosanct. He must realize that his children derive incredible benefit from his adherence to these customs. In some situations, these customs are what keeps them attached to *Yiddishkeit*. *Horav Gamliel Rabinowitz, Shlita*, relates that he heard from a Holocaust survivor that throughout his years in the various Nazi concentration/labor camps, and despite being a teenager at the time, he never once ate non-kosher food. It was difficult for him, and, as a result, he endured much suffering, but he was unyielding in his tenacious commitment to keeping kosher. Indeed, he served as an inspiration to others, not only with regard to kosher food, but to *Yiddishkeit* as a whole.

The survivor explained that he was able to withstand all of the pain and suffering only because he was raised in a home in which commitment to *kashrus* was sacrosanct. He remembered that once his father was quite ill, and the family fed him food that was of questionable origin (the *kashrus* had not been confirmed). As a result, when his father's health returned, his father accepted upon himself (as penance) to fast on Mondays and Thursdays. It was such devotion that inspired his young son to keep kosher during the entire Holocaust.

A father should make sure never to belittle a *mitzvah*, custom, tradition, any Torah practice in general, especially when his children are watching. Children have a habit of outdoing their parents, by completely rejecting what their parents had only belittled.