

You shall teach them to your children to discuss them. (11:19)

The Torah provides a unique criterion for teaching Torah to one's children. They should be able to discuss Torah; or, alternatively, when they speak, Torah should emerge from their mouths. Speech is the communication or expression of thoughts. An individual who speaks Torah thinks Torah. One's cognitive dynamic should be shaped by Torah, so that when he expresses an opinion, a comment, it is Torah-based, the expression of a Torah mind. Thus, *Rashi* explains, as soon as a child is able to speak, his father should teach him Torah, so that it will be his "language" of communication. Therefore, everything which the child will eventually learn: *halachah*, *mussar*/ethics, *hashkafah*, philosophy/outlook/perspective, will all be the tools of his manner of expression. The Torah's language is eternal. It speaks the language of the past, present and future. We just have to listen.

What does one do in a situation in which the parents have exhausted every method, every avenue, of educating their child, all to no success. The child either simply refuses, or he is unable to grasp/retain the material, resulting in frustration, depression, friction. The following vignette is illuminating as well as inspiring. An eighth grade student in a prominent Torah institution was doing poorly. Regardless of the motivator, he remained unmotivated. Nothing turned him on to learning. He had no desire to learn, and, as a result, he was lazy and uncaring. His parents were outstanding people and incredible parents. They would stop at nothing, spare no expense, to somehow light a fire under their son, to arouse him to the beauty of Torah. They knew fully well that if one does not learn, he will soon fall into a bind and eventually dislike learning and everything associated with it. Religious observance often suffers as a consequence of the negativity that ensues. This was eighth grade. Which *yeshivah* would accept him as a student?

Time passed, and one day the *rebbe* who had made some serious attempts at inspiring the boy to learn, noticed a *yeshivah* boy *davening Shemoneh Esrai* in the corner of the *shul*. The *kavanah*, concentration, and devotion on this *bachur's* face was evident and moving. It was obvious that he was really into the *davening*, expressing himself with unusual feeling. The *rebbe* asked someone who this *bachur* was. The response floored him, "Oh, he is that boy that everyone had given up on. Something occurred, a sudden transformation; he was accepted into an excellent *yeshivah* where he has been learning nonstop and growing into an exceptional *ben Torah*."

The *rebbe* was flabbergasted. How could this be the very same boy who was essentially just taking up a seat in his classroom? He had tried everything to motivate him to learn, all to no avail. What happened? He decided to speak to the parents. He went to their house and conveyed his surprise. "First of all, *mazel tov* on your son's *aliyah*, advancement, in Torah. I am so happy for you and for him. How did you do it? When we finished the school year, I was certain that public school was his next place. What happened?" the *rebbe* asked.

The father slowly began to speak, "Truthfully, when school closed for the semester we were in a quandary. We knew that our son must go to *yeshivah*, but, with his dismal record of achievement and dispirited attitude toward learning, no mainstream institution would consider him for enrollment. We felt that we had exhausted every avenue of endeavor. We had tried everything and spoken to everyone. Then it dawned on me: We had a 'third' partner in our son. We should not have to shoulder all of the responsibility. *Hashem Yisborach* is a one-third *shutaf*, partner. We decided that very night we would open a *Sefer Tehillim* and pour out our hearts to our other Partner. We had done our share in caring for our son; now, we would turn to Him to do His share!

"Within a very short period of time, we began to notice a change in our son's habits, his attitude. He began to *daven* with fervor and concentration. Learning occupied every free moment. This was a new child, not the boy that we had known, but the boy for whom we had prayed. He was accepted into a *yeshivah* based solely on merit, not on mercy. We realized that while we had *davened* to Hashem often, we never spoke to Him as a *shutaf* in 'our' son's development."

How true this is. What would be so strange if we were to express our feelings to our Father in Heaven in such a manner; talking to Him as our partner in our child? "*Avinu, Av HaRachaman*, Our Father, our compassionate Father; this child with which You have blessed us is actually less ours than Yours. You are truly our Partner in his life. You created his *neshamah*, soul. You formed him and breathed into him the breath of life. You raised him, strengthened him and maintained his health. Please do Your share and help him along spiritually, so that we will all share in his *nachas*. Thank You, Hashem!"