

## Just as a father will chastise his son, so Hashem, Your G-d, chastises you. (8:5)

Hashem's discipline is likened to that of a loving father who is compelled to impose order in the life of his child. Discipline is a form of instruction which is vital and critical to a child's development. The following are excerpts from a series of lectures given by the venerable *Mashgiach* of Beth Medrash Gavohah, **Horav Matisyahu Solomon, Shlita**. The Torah unequivocally forbids berating or embarrassing anyone, regardless of his wrongdoing. *Chavalah*, hitting, and *onaah*, persecution, are specifically prohibited. Just because someone is guilty of committing a sin does not give us license to humiliate or hit him.

Concerning *chinuch*, education, we find that these prohibitions are lifted. The *Talmud Makkos 8a* teaches that not only does a father have the right to strike his son, but he actually has an obligation to inflict corporeal punishment. How this obligation is executed is a very controversial question. Children are entitled to the same protections in the Torah as are applied to other people. Nonetheless, the father who is carrying out the *mitzvah* of *chinuch* is exempt from the prohibitions of *chavalah* and *onaah*. This certainly does not entitle any insecure (and, quite possibly, deranged) father to strike or humiliate his child. Only in the pursuit of the *mitzvah* of *chinuch* may a parent do those otherwise prohibited acts of *chavalah* or *onaah*, with *halachic* dispensation.

Here, the *Mashgiach* is very firm. Before a parent thinks he is permitted to strike or humiliate his child, he must be absolutely sure, with complete objectivity, that he is carrying out the *mitzvah* of *chinuch*. If he is uncertain, and he acts out of anger or frustration (perhaps with a little guilt added in), he has no right whatsoever to take out the resentment he harbors in his heart for anything or anyone – on his child. To harm a child in any way, for any other reason than the fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of *chinuch*, is pure abuse! To cause any form of pain to a child, he must know without question that he has no other motivation than *chinuch*. (If he is in any way unsure of his motives, he must refrain – as if this were a questionable piece of meat.)

Furthermore, besides the prohibitions involved, harming a child without justification only causes the child to hate the parents and everything for which they stand. The child will feel abused and resentful, often blemished for life.

The *Mashgiach* concludes with two questions that a parent must ask himself before subjecting his child to harsh measures: One, is this completely for the benefit of the child? Two, is there a gentler way that this can be achieved, thereby causing the child less stress and less pain?