

Take Aharon and his sons with him. (8:2)

Rashi teaches us how Aharon *HaKohen* was taken/convinced to perform the *avodah*, service. *Mashcheihu bi'devanim*, "draw him with words." We are being taught an important principle. One should not be pulled to do something against his will. Compelling someone to perform a service which he either is not interested in executing or for which he feels completely incompetent will not produce fruits of success. Whatever inhibitions one has concerning a position must be assuaged via a positive manner if his work is to produce positive results. Aharon *HaKohen* had serious concerns regarding his own suitability to perform the sacrificial service. He felt that the role he was forced to play in the sin of the Golden Calf would inhibit his acceptability to serve as the nation's agent in the *Mishkan*. Moshe *Rabbeinu* convinced him with "words" that, specifically because he had these concerns, he was most suitable for this position.

In the world of *chinuch*, education, *kacheinu bidevarim*, "draw him (the student) with words," is a primary staple. A teacher who is unable to speak with the student for whatever reason has very little chance of establishing a trusting relationship with the student – which, in and of itself, is a recipe for disaster. *Horav Yitzchak Hershkowitz, Shlita*, writes about **Rav Alexander Zissel Chinsky, zl**, a preeminent educator, who, over the decades in which he served as a *mechanech* in Yerushalayim, merited to produce generations of *bnei Torah* who benefited from his Torah teachings, ethical behavior and by the unique example that he set for them to emulate. His students were not always perfect, and he did not have the good fortune of never having a discipline issue. He dealt with each and every student on an individual basis, and, after analyzing the problem, he set upon achieving an amicable resolution. He did not just react to a problem. He studied it, and after mulling over it in his mind, he planned out an approach that would satisfy *rebbe* and student. The following vignette is an example of his insightful brilliance as a *mechanech*.

Hershel was a gifted seventh grader with a serious discipline problem. If there was an avenue for trouble, he found it. It was not as if he did not like learning – he was simply too preoccupied with everything else. Now, if a student does not learn, but also does not disrupt the classroom environment, it is tolerable. The *rebbe* will seek different ways to turn the student on to learning. If his lack of desire takes its toll on the classroom decorum, this is a totally different problem. The *rebbe* may not ignore the student at the expense of the rest of the class. *Rav Alexander* had tried a variety of methods to encourage Hershel's involvement in a positive manner, all to no avail. Hershel was not buying it. He had no interest in learning. When Hershel was undermining the *rebbe's* control of the class, however, the *rebbe* lost patience. What was he to do? Hershel had such incredible potential.

The day on which it all came to a head began with Hershel prancing into the classroom and, in front of the *rebbe*, mouthing a loud *Boker tov*, "Good morning!" to everyone. The *rebbe* knew then and there that the day was going downhill from that moment. Hershel either refused to, or could not, stop. He kept going on, starting up with this one, calling that one a name, on and on, until the *rebbe* said, "Hershel, this must stop immediately, or I will have to send you out." It was as if

the *rebbe* was talking to a stone wall – no reaction.

Finally, the day ended, and the students went home. The *rebbe* thought to himself, “Perhaps tomorrow will be better.” No such luck. Hershel arrived on time, made a bow when he entered the classroom, greeting everyone with a resounding, “Good morning!” and proceeded to do what he pleased, regardless of the disturbance it caused everyone who was trying to learn. The *rebbe* warned Hershel one more time concerning the consequences if he did not calm down. It was a waste of time. For a few moments, Hershel seemed to calm down, and then he would return to his usual behavior.

This went on for a few days, until one day the situation became unbearable. *Rav* Alexander told him in a quiet, but stern voice, “Hershel, remove your glasses.” The boy removed his glasses and raised his hand to shield his face. The *rebbe* meant business. He was going to receive a *patch*, a good thrashing. The *rebbe* raised his hand as if to slap Hershel, but stopped in midair. “Hershel, what is going to be with you?” the *rebbe* asked. “Do you realize that you have finally gone too far? You deserve to be punished for each and every time you promised to be ‘good’ and broke your word. I want to punish you, but I cannot. Do you know why?”

Now, the *rebbe*’s voice became a soft whisper, “Because one day you will become a great *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar. With your mind, you will illuminate *Klal Yisrael* with your knowledge. What do you think people will say about me then? They will say that I was the *rebbe* who slapped a Torah leader, a *gadol b’Yisrael!* Can you imagine how humiliated I will be? I will not be able to leave my home because of the shame.”

At this point, Hershel broke into tears, “Oy, *rebbe*,” he cried. “You are so right. I want so much to do the right thing, to learn, to be a good student, but it is so difficult for me to maintain my attention span. Please, give me one more chance. I will not let the *rebbe* down.”

“Hershel,” the *rebbe* said, “put your glasses back on and take your seat. I will hold you to your word.”

So ends the story of Hershel – or rather, so begins the story of one of the most prolific *Roshei Yeshivah* in the Holy Land. Hershel could have gone the route of the many others who did not have the good fortune of having such an understanding, insightful *rebbe*, who knew exactly what the student needed. He cared.

Hershel related this story to a group of educators, closing with, “The slap that I did not receive turned me around. *Mashcheihu bidevarim*, ‘coax him with (the right) words.’” The *rebbe*’s words had a much more beneficial effect than any slap. The words reach the student’s heart; the slap only causes pain and hurt.