

So she said to Avraham, “Drive out this slavewoman with her son, for the son of that slavewoman shall not inherit with my son, with Yitzchak!” (21:10)

The *Chazon Ish*, *zl*, teaches that distancing a boy from *yeshivah*, sending him away, is a *dinei nefashos*, life and death, issue. A *yeshivah* that sends a student away due to its inability to deal with him is similar to a hospital who refuses to treat a patient whose illness is advanced. A *maggid shiur* in Yeshivas Porat Yosef approached *Horav Yehudah Tzadaka, zl, Rosh Yeshivah*, with a request that a certain student be asked to leave the *yeshivah*. *Rav* Tzadaka asked the *rebbe*, “Did you pray for him? Did you fast for him? First pray and fast for him and, then, if he does not change, return to me, and I will address your request.”

In a similar incident, a *maggid shiur* asked his friend, who was also a *rebbe* in the same *yeshivah*, “How do I rid myself of this student? He is impossible. A day does not go by that he does not in some way ruin my *shiur*.” His friend countered, “If this boy would have been your son, would you act likewise?” “Absolutely not,” he replied. “I would do all that I could to turn him around. This does not mean that this boy does not deserve to be ejected from the *yeshivah*. It is just that, concerning my own son, I am prejudiced (and I will go the extra mile to save him). His friend suggested, “Come, let us ask a *Rav* concerning what is the correct and proper way of dealing with this situation.” The *Rav*’s response was to be expected (at least by anyone who understands the essence of the *rebbe*-student relationship): “Anything that you would do for your own son, you must for this boy as well.”

At times, in extreme situations, the *rebbe* might not be innocent with regard to the student’s challenging behavior and attentiveness to learning. A particular boy quite possibly needs a little extra attention from his *rebbe*. Love goes a long way in reaching a student. If, for some reason, the *rebbe* holds back in establishing a positive, caring relationship with his student, it is his fault that the student is failing, and, thus, it is his responsibility to right the wrong that he is allowing to occur. No student should become a victim of a *rebbe* who has too much on his mind, and the *rebbe* is certainly obligated to correct his mistake and repair the damage he has initiated.

Horav Levi HaKohen Rabinowitz, zl, was a *rebbe* for thirty-two years. He achieved distinction in the field of Torah *chinuch*, education, not only because of his expertise, but because of his abiding love of and devotion to each and every student. He became a resource for *rebbeim*, schools and parents throughout *Eretz Yisrael*. Many wondered: What was his secret? Discipline was never an issue in his class. His relationship with his students endured a lifetime. How did he do it?

Rather than focus on his unusual positive character traits and fear of Heaven, I cite from his son’s (*Rav Gamliel*) tribute to him as a *mechanech*, educator: “My father spent many hours *davening* for the success of his students, crying copious tears to Hashem, pleading that He enable this child to succeed in becoming a Torah scholar with fear of Heaven!

“This was obvious during recess, when most *rebbeim* would tend to various errands and school work or just rest a bit. He would sit in his classroom, take out his *Tehillim*, and pray to Hashem for the success of his students. This was his secret!”