

## **You shall teach them thoroughly to your children. (6:7)**

*Rashi* comments that “children” is not an exclusive category. It applies, likewise, to one’s students, since the Torah considers students to be like children. We have a responsibility to reach out and teach, or see to it that all children are taught. If one has limited time, and he must decide between teaching his own children or someone else’s children, however, his children take precedence. *Horav Yechezkel Sarna, zl, Rosh Yeshivas Chevron*, and premier expositor of the Slabodka approach to *gadlus ha’adam*, the greatness of man, was a prime example of a *Rosh Yeshivah/Rebbe* to whom his *talmidim*, students, were like children. Indeed, he wondered (concerning the above *Rashi*), if students are included in the injunction of teaching Torah, why did the Torah not simply write *V’sheenantam l’talmidecha*? He explains that the Torah is actually referring to the attitude that should prevail in the loving relationship between a *rebbe* and *talmid* – no different than a father to his son. If I may add that the student’s attitude must be reciprocal – like a son to his father. One does not go without the other; otherwise, something is not right.

An incident occurred in the *yeshivah* in which one of the *bachurim*, students, was stricken with a bout of mental illness. He became quite ill, to the point that the *Rosh Yeshivah* decided that he had no recourse but to have him admitted to a medical facility that specialized in treating mental illness. Two of the older students, who had distinguished themselves both in learning and in their relationship with the *Rosh Yeshivah* (thus feeling that they could talk freely and express their feelings), decided to ask *Rav Sarna* how he could do such a thing. [They probably felt that the student would not receive the proper care and that, by being sent away, he was being neglected.]

The two students decided to present their feelings to the *Rosh Yeshivah*. They knocked on his door, and, as soon as he opened it, they asked, “How does one send a *bachur* from the *yeshivah* away? If that *bachur* was the *Rosh Yeshivah*’s son, would our *Rebbe* have acted likewise? Would the *Rosh Yeshivah* have sent his own son to such a facility?” It was obvious that these two *bachurim* were infused more with temerity than with rationale. It was clear that the *Rosh Yeshivah* would be compelled to respond in a strong and decisive manner. *Horav Meir Chodosh, zl*, the *Mashgiach* of *Chevron*, who happened to be sitting with *Rav Sarna*, wisely decided that this would be a good time to leave.

*Rav Sarna* looked at the two *bachurim* and asked, “Did you eat breakfast?” The two young men looked at one another incredulously and then turned back to the *Rosh Yeshivah* and replied, “Yes.”

“Did you sleep well last night?” *Rav Sarna* asked. Once again, they replied affirmatively, not knowing where *Rav Sarna* was going with this line of questioning.

“I did not sleep last night, or the night before, or the night before. I also have been unable to eat for days. Do you want to know why? Do you want to know what is troubling me, what it is that is preventing me from eating or sleeping? It is the current situation of your *chaver*, colleague. He is

my son. After all, he is a student of the *yeshivah*. As such, he is my son. The anxiety and worry I harbor concerning his present condition permits me neither to eat nor sleep.

“On the contrary, since you came with the directive that I treat him as a son, then, by extension, he is your brother. How are you able to eat and sleep knowing that your brother is so ill? Furthermore, as brothers, are you prepared to step forward and assume responsibility for him? Will you take him into your *dirah*, apartment, care for him, feed him, see that he sleeps and receives the emotional help that he so badly needs?”

The *Rosh Yeshivah*'s stinging words broke through their smug exterior. He was right. They were as responsible as brothers as he was as a father. They assumed the responsibility and, within a few months, he emerged from his deep depression. The *Rosh HaYeshivah* had taught them that *eilu ha'talmidim*, “these are the children,” means that, just as a Torah student is the *rebbe*'s son, everyone in the class is his brother. What a powerful lesson!