

And you shall teach them to your children (so that they will) discuss them. (11:19)

The above *pasuk*, which is included in the second *parsha* (paragraph) of *Shema*, appears to reiterate what was stated earlier (first paragraph): *V'sheenantam l'vanecha v'dibarta bam*, "And you shall instruct your children about them and you shall discuss them" (*Devarim* 6:7). On the surface, the second *pasuk* does not seem to contain any supplement. *Ramban* explains that in the first *pasuk* (*V'sheenantam l'vanecha*), the focus is on *v'dibarta*; you shall speak. Your speech at home, in the presence of family, should be in Torah. In the second *pasuk*, the emphasis is on *l'dabeir bam*, they, the children shall speak to our children until they, too, will speak in Torah. The first *pasuk* centers on the father's learning. The second *pasuk* enjoins in the manner in which we should teach our children, so that they, too, will discuss Torah at all times. The father must learn; the father must instruct his son to learn. As *Horav Shlomo Wolbe, zl*, notes, our objective is to create a situation in which our children will discuss Torah on their own. This is achieved when the father conveys Torah to his children with clarity and proper explanation. The father has the extraordinary opportunity and ability to assist his children in forging an enduring relationship with Hashem.

To a great extent, the degree of family harmony affects and determines a child's learning – especially if he/she is to learn from his/her parents. Creating a proper environment for learning is a staple of any home. The relationship between parents promotes this healthy growth. Children cannot learn or grow in a home shattered by quarreling and abuse. No bad children exist – only incompetent parents and discordant families.

A *chasid* once came to *Horav Yehoshua, zl, m'Belz*, with the complaint that his sons have no *cheishek*, desire, to learn, even though he hired a *melamed*, special teacher/tutor, to learn with them. The *Rebbe* replied that if the Torah exhorted a father to learn with his sons, using the *pasuk*, *V'sheenantam l'vanecha*, it is an indication that it is within a father's ability to teach his sons (or see to it that his sons learn). Hashem does not expect us to do what is beyond our ability. "Let me ask you," the *Rebbe* countered. "Do you learn? Do you set aside time every day for Torah study?" The man began to hem and haw, offering any of a number of excuses for not learning. The *Rebbe* responded emphatically, "If your sons would see you learning every day, if they would see that you value Torah study, they, too, would learn. Since you do not learn, however, how can you expect them to have a desire to learn Torah?"

The *Kotzker Rebbe, zl*, was asked by a *chasid* whose son had just been *bar mitzvah*, what he should do to educate his son in the *derech haTorah*, in the Torah way, to grow up ethically, morally and spiritually correct. He responded "If you will act appropriately and follow in the ways of the *tzadikim*, righteous, your son will emulate you and grow up to be a source of *nachas*."