



QUESTION

How can we raise our children to live more with pnimiyus? We, ourselves, can try to become more connected to the internal world of pnimiyus – but our children are much more mingled with the world so it's not going to be as easy for them.

ANSWER

On one hand it is very hard to raise children today, because the nisayon of everything that exists today in our generation today is so difficult to deal with. On the other hand, it is easier to explain it all to them because we can see, in our great pain, so many people who have gone off the derech, not only young boys and girls but even entire families have become completely irreligious [because of using internet-devices]. When we see what happens to the sotah, “the wayward wife in her disgrace”, then it's easier to explain to the child how we must learn from this and become a nazir, “to abstain from wine”, to stay away from the things that lead to such repercussions.

We would need to know exactly what happened in each individual instance. But generally, throughout the world there have been between 10 and 15% percent of those who completely abandoned Yiddishkeit. They include entire families who have gone lost, and even those who didn't go lost certainly went down a lot in their level, in a very recognizable way. This is something that children today don't know. Every community, and almost every family, has people that have left Yiddishkeit. When we see that

this is the result of those who use internet-devices, it's much easier to explain to our children that unless they have the right attitude about internet-devices, they will slowly end up like all the rest. This is the reality. Even people who were Roshei Yeshivos, Roshei Kolelim, authors of well-known sefarim! They completely left Yiddishkeit [after falling in with these devices]! There are well-known stories of what happened. It shows us that the evil today [of internet-devices] is able to uproot even those who were firmly attached to the Beis Midrash. There used to be a discussion about hanging out in the wrong places and going off there. Today, everything has changed totally – even a person who is part of the Torah world and found all day in the Beis Midrash, even if he has hundreds of talmidim – there were already stories that happened – they left everything, they're gone. This is all saying to us that sitting in the Beis Midrash and learning in the same way that one learned yesterday, will not necessarily be enough to save him. It seems that Hashem wants a deeper kind of Torah learning and a more inner kind of mitzvah observance. He wants something from the generation that's more inner.

When a child sees the reality of those who went off, he understands what the ideal way to live life is. In the past, when one person would go off the derech, this was not because of a decline in his ruchniyus but because he wasn't emotionally well, but today in a Chareidi neighborhood on Friday nights we can see everything that goes on in the streets, it's obvious to anyone who sees it and even children see it, and sometimes the

children are even afraid to hang around in the streets from fear of meeting all those who are in this category. The children see the results with their own eyes.

QUESTION

At what age do we need to begin teaching our children about this? Can we explain it to a 5 or 6 year old?

ANSWER

You don't have to explain this deeply and intellectually, just speak about simple concepts to them. For example how do we explain to a 6 year old child that we need to learn Torah? Do we explain to him the depth of Torah such as how the Torah is part and parcel with Hashem, or do we tell him simple concepts such as how the Torah keeps all of Creation in existence, the Torah is the treaty between us and Hashem, etc. We can teach them fundamental, clear concepts without getting into the subtleties. If we make clear to them when they're young that we need to separate from all of these devices, this will become girsa d'yankusa (what they learned as children) to them, which is the most impressionable kind of learning. There is no need for deep explanations, just simple and clear concepts.

QUESTION

Do we need to speak [to our children] about how we must "stay away from bad" - staying away from these evil devices - or do we also need to speak about "do good" [what we can do proactively to be protected from them]?

ANSWER

We need to speak more about "doing good" than the amount we speak of "staying away from bad." But if we only speak about doing good and we don't speak about the need to stay

away from evil, then they won't know to stay away from it and then nothing we teach them will help them.

It's clear that we cannot be busy all day talking about the problems in the world. It's insensible for a person to even take upon himself a resolution that every day when he comes to the Beis Midrash during the first hour of his learning session that he will stay away from all the tumah in the world. Such a resolution can't last, because the Beis Midrash has to be a place of learning from day until night. It is just that we also need to mention to our children all the time that there are bad things in the world which we need to keep away from. We cannot be busy with this for most of the day or even for a large chunk of the day or even for just the beginning of the day. We need to instead be firmly and deeply immersed in the world of Torah learning, and it is just that we also need to remind our children, on the side, that there's something today that's threatening us.

QUESTION

When speaking to our children, do we need to tell them openly that there is a Hashem Whom we need to live with.

ANSWER

I don't even hear how you can think how there are two options here. The only question is if you need to explain it to them deeply or simply. Certainly the younger a child is, the simpler we explain it to him so that he can better absorb what we are telling him, and when the child gets older and matures, that is when he will usually want to understand things more. With a child we should begin by telling him simple concepts, such as Shema Yisrael and Torah Tziva Lanu Mosheh – two pesukim about emunah and Torah, which are elementary concepts. Since

we are found in a generation where evil is dominating everywhere, the simple concept we can teach our children is that there is something bad in the world and if one doesn't protect himself from it, he will fall into destruction. But again, this cannot become a topic to talk about several times a day with them. A child just has to hear about the true good, the purpose of life, which is d'veykus to Hashem and to His Torah, and how this is the main point of life. The topic of protecting ourselves from evil should also be spoken about with them, but it should not become the central topic that we are busy talking about all day.

QUESTION

What happens if a person has aspirations to be better and he really tries to grow, but practically speaking he meets up every day with the challenges of the street or with anything he's involved in, and it bothers him that he's not reaching his aspirations and he's not actually making progress even though he wants to.

ANSWER

Let's go back to what we said before and sharpen the point: If a person lives every day with the feeling that this might be his last day – as a simple example, before going to sleep, a person thinks that maybe today was my last day on the world – this should not cause him to be sad. To the contrary, if he is truly awaiting the period of Mashiach, then he should be happy, when he thinks that today might be his last day on This World [the world before the times of Mashiach]. One has to have a happy attitude towards life and this is how he has to view life - that maybe today is his last day - and therefore as a result of that awareness, every day he can feel that he's becoming more and more disconnected from the world. But again, this should not be mak-

ing him sad. A person does not grow when he is sad, especially in our generation. Rather, the attitude has to be that it's possible that today the Creation will reach its purpose and this will lead to the complete revelation of Hashem on the world, which will be followed by Techiyas Ha-Meisim (the revival of the dead) when Avraham, Yitzchok, Yaakov and all the tzaddikim will get up again, as well all of Klal Yisrael who have a portion in Olam HaBa. A person who lives all the time with that reality and he is clear about it, that the world is heading to its purpose and that he is certainly very close to it – though we don't know exactly when it will happen, but it's a very big possibility that it will happen today – a person is able to live clearly, and happily, with such a mindset.

So, along with carrying out our daily responsibilities – which Hashem wants us to fulfill – at the same time, we also have to think that today might be our last day on this world, and that mindset will help us disconnect every day from the pull of evil that exists today. This is the healthy and true way to live life. It's clear that this is how the Chofetz Chaim lived, without a doubt. Maybe he lived with an even deeper awareness than this, but certainly not less than this.

QUESTION

The Rav mentioned how there are so many people learning Torah today more than there ever were before, but why is there so much sadness today even though people are learning Torah?

ANSWER

Do you know anyone who is truly immersed in learning Gemara and understanding his learning, who is also sad and depressed? When someone is immersed deeply in his Torah learn-

ing and he is enjoying his learning, can he be depressed? There are those who are learning Torah for the sake of honor and there are also those who are not learning their proper share in Torah, so their learning doesn't make them happy. But when a person is truly attached to his portion in the Torah, when it his life's work and it's his whole existence and when he's enjoying his learning, it's not possible for him to be depressed. Sometimes he encounters difficulties in his life and this saddens him, but the average person who lives a life of exerting himself in learning his personal portion in Torah will not become easily saddened (unless he has deep emotional issues). The problems you are seeing in which people are learning Torah and still they are depressed, is because you are seeing people who learn Torah only by rote, or because they are currently learning a part of Torah that isn't part of their personal portion, or because they want to get a position or any other wishes they have which aren't happening. In any of these cases a person is not truly connected to his Torah learning. But when one is truly connected to the Torah, the "laws of Hashem are upright and gladden the heart", this is not only a fact stated in a possuk but something which we can plainly sense. When a person is learning Torah and he is enjoying his learning for a good chunk of the day (even if he is not enjoying his learning every second, because sometimes it gets difficult, like when he doesn't understand something, or if he's tired or if it's hard for him to learn for whatever reason) and he is clear in what he learns (whether he has chiddushim or not, just having clarity in his learning will be enough to make his learning enjoyable), when he consistently lives in this way, it cannot be that he's regularly enjoying his learning yet he's also regularly depressed.

QUESTION

Maybe people today are sad even though they learn Torah because our connection to our Torah learning is weaker than it was in previous generation?

ANSWER

The reason for it is because in previous generations, there were very few people learning Torah, and the few that were truly learning Torah therefore became very successful. But today a Beis Midrash is full of people learning Torah in it, and on one hand this is a plus over the previous generations where this wasn't common, but at the same time it also gives a disadvantage to our generation since not everyone found within the Beis Midrash today is absolutely choosing to be among those who are sitting and learning Torah all day.

Each person has his reasons for learning, so naturally there will be a certain percentage of people whose connection to their learning is weaker. But there aren't less people connected to Torah today than the previous generations. Though in general the level of the generation goes down and the Torah giants of the past far eclipsed our generation, still there aren't less people connected to Torah today than there were in the previous generation. Certainly we have external distractions today, such as all of the devices that exist today, which cause a person to become very connected to the world, and this certainly has a negative effect on him. But even in our generation, there are still individuals who are removed from all of this, and it's possible that they parallel those very same individuals who learned Torah in previous generations. May Hashem save us, may we be zocheh to the Geulah (Redemption) amidst kedushah and taharah (holiness and purity).