



## CHINUCH IN CHESED

Dear Parents,

*Erev Shabbos Parashas Lech Lecha 5783*

With the Covid pandemic essentially behind us, B'H, we can refocus on our interactions with each other and put aside restraints we may have had on inviting guests and performing other acts of *Chesed* that require close contact. The lessons of Avraham Avinu's *chesed* that we read about in these weeks' *Parshiyos* provide a wonderful opportunity to gain new insights into how far reaching *Chesed* should be. Two important facets of Avraham's *chesed* guide us towards appropriate goals we should be striving to achieve.

***"This was true concern for others – it started with the here and now, but his care stretched to eternity."***

Avraham truly loved his fellow man. That love found expression in tending to his fellow's physical needs for food and shelter. Avraham understood that the essence of humanity is to emulate Hashem's traits of kindness and goodness, and he devoted himself to the wellbeing of every individual- This concern for the physical wellbeing of others was only half the picture. Avraham nurtured the soul of his fellow man as well. This was true concern for others – it started with the here and now, but his care stretched to eternity.

It is furthermore important to note, that Avraham's focus on the needs of others was not at the expense of his own family. The Torah makes several indirect references to the fact that he enlisted the help of his children in the care of others. Most famously, by the incident with the three angels in next week's Parsha – the Torah tells us (*Bereishis* 18:7 see *Rashi*) " *...הנער יתן אל הנער* Avraham gave his son Yishmael meat to prepare to serve the guests. Involving and working with his child is an everlasting lesson Avraham Avinu taught us as to the appropriate manner of being *mechanech* our children to do *chesed*.

At whatever level we involve ourselves in *Chesed*, we mustn't lose sight of our children. They are integral to our efforts in presenting the splendor of *Shabbos* to outsiders. When not-yet-religious guests enter our home, or join us in a communal *Seudah*, they are entering an environment that is bewildering; *Halachos*, *Minhagim*, *Tefilos*, *Zemiros*, *Bentching*, *Divrei Torah*, family traditions, just plain 'shtick' – what are they to make of it?

***"Our children are happy, lively, comfortable with Shabbos and Torah & Mitzvos..."***

No matter how spectacular the food and presentation are, reactions and judgments will be made primarily over two aspects of the experience; the level of warmth conveyed toward them and the impression the children will make on them. That is something almost anyone can relate to. Our children are happy, lively, comfortable with *Shabbos* and *Torah & Mitzvos*, knowledgeable and genuine.

They convey an aura that is completely unknown in the outside world. When they say over their *Divrei Torah* and their *Parsha* sheets, guests are simply amazed.

Lest you think that such children only reside in those picture-perfect families (who always exist somewhere else!), step back and envision your children through the eyes of an uninitiated Jew – you will realize what a treasure you have. Even if the *Zemiros* last only two minutes and the kids bicker a bit, (ok, a lot more than a bit!), even if your child can't remember some detail about the *Parsha*, they still represent a commodity that the nonobservant can only dream about.

Realize the tremendous opportunity that we have. If our children can make such a tremendous impact on others, it surely compels us to involve them as much as possible – before, during and after. Speak with them about the fact it is such a privilege to be a Torah Jew, how proud we are of it and we naturally want this goodness for others as well.

***"When it comes to Chesed, children want to participate and are excited to be involved."***

We mentioned in a previous letter the value of our children experiencing the joys of *Yiddishkeit*.

When it comes to *Chesed*, children want to participate and are excited to be involved. Enable them to be active participants. Let them help with food preparation, set up, decorating the room, making place cards, perhaps serving and certainly cleanup. Encourage them to plan their role during the meal and throughout *Shabbos*. This win-win will capture the hearts of your guests, and greatly enhance the *chinuch* of your children.

With best wishes for a unified, connected and child-oriented *Shabbos*,

Rabbi Kalman Baumann