



LOSING SUCCESSFULLY

Dear Parents,

Erev Shabbos Parashas Haazinu, Likras Sukkos 5782

A facet of *Sukkos* that is somewhat striking, is the categorization of an *Esrog* as a 'beautiful fruit.' The *Torah* itself describes the *Esrog* in this fashion, in fact it is intrinsic to its name- *Pri Eitz Hadar*. It seems a bit odd that a bumpy, somewhat misshapen fruit would be considered beautiful. I recall a time as a child that a beautiful fruit in my world view would more likely be a luscious looking red apple, a smoothly rounded multicolored peach, or a perfect bell-shaped pear. Now, we all relate to a 'beautiful' *Esrog*.

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This should serve as another reminder that so much of our internal makeup and worldview is formed at a young age. How a child perceives the world is based upon early experiences and encounters with people, places and events, and most significantly their interactions with parents and teachers. These all-important adults in a child's life not only impact the child based upon their behavior, but how they express their own reactions to what they experience form the basis of a child's future attitudes, *midos* and approach to life.

The following story, related by *Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, (Aleinu L'Shabeiach Devarim p. 462)* serves to illustrate an example of an all-important character trait that a parent can mold in their children, with the proper approach.

I once saw a certain *talmid chacham* playing outside with his children, and I was surprised to see someone of his stature playing games. When I asked him about this, he gave the following explanation. "Often," he said, "we find two *bachurim* learning as *chavrusas* and arguing over the meaning of a *Rashi*. One *bachur* thinks *Rashi* meant one thing and the other thinks *Rashi* meant something else. But only one of them is right, which means that one of the two has to admit that he was wrong.

It's not easy to admit that you're wrong and the other person is right. Every person has an innate desire to win, and conceding defeat is very difficult. The *bachur* who is wrong therefore finds it very difficult to admit his mistake.

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I tried to discover what the root of this *midah* is, and I discovered that it develops in children at a very young age, when they play together but don't learn how to be good losers. Recently I've seen this happening with my own children, and I decided to play games with them in order to teach them to lose graciously.

As I play games with them, I tell them stories about the humility of *Gedolei Yisrael*, who taught themselves and their children to know how to admit they were in the wrong. With these stories I instill within my children that it is okay to lose, and that a person has to know how to admit defeat respectfully.

I would add that it is not a good idea to try to teach the lesson to children during the actual game, or immediately afterward, when tensions are running high and the losers are too upset to listen. Instead, file the scene away in your memory (or actual video footage) and then think of how to present the incident to the child and teach him the proper way to behave when he loses.

This lesson will stay with the child for the rest of his or her life, and will teach them how to behave with friends, *chavrusas*, business associates and eventually with one's spouse. Learning at a young age to concede defeat with good grace will help the child acquire an invaluable *midah* that will help him in all of his relationships throughout life."

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Extended time with our children over the *Yom Tov* of *Sukkos* should give us ample opportunity to interact with them in this most meaningful and productive way. After our extended introspection during the past forty days, we are hopefully ripe for infusing ourselves and our children with a significant, positive improvement in our everyday life.

Best wishes for a wonderful *Shabbos*, a *Simcha*-filled *Sukkos* and much *Nachas* from your children.

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