



## CHINUCH IS EVERYWHERE

Dear Parents,

A parent's obligation regarding the upbringing of his child requires planning that includes choice of Yeshiva, camp, how to conduct one's family matters and do's and don'ts when the child has free time. One who plans may feel that once the program is set in motion, they can step back and just make sure that the child's affairs are going according to the plan.

I believe we see a decidedly different approach alluded to in this week's Parsha. When Avraham Avinu springs into action to generously and lavishly take care of his three guests, the Torah interjects that when it came to preparing the meat, he gave that over to the "lad." (Bereishis 18:6). Rashi, quoting the Medrash, explains that the lad was in fact Avraham's son Yishmael, and his purpose in involving Yishmael, instead of the many servants available, was לחנכו במצוות "to train him in (the performance of) Mitzvos."

Let's analyze Avraham's approach. It is hard to imagine that Avraham's plan for the upbringing of his child was to leave things to chance, relying on random occasions when opportunities happen to come by that could leave a positive impression. If he used this occasion to impart a chinuch lesson it was not in place of a regular, consistent, comprehensive program of raising Yishmael with the values Avraham's life was based upon. It undoubtedly was in addition to whatever the superior chinuch it was that Avraham already provided.

Avraham was hyper focused on attending to his unexpected guests and was in great haste to accommodate what he perceived as their needs. He was undoubtedly making rapid-fire decisions in the realm of party planning and food preparation. He was exerting himself physically in his weakened state which undoubtedly took focus and effort. One would imagine that he would be considering which of his servants, if any, could assist at this pressured time. Nevertheless, what was on his mind at those moments? I have a growing child and this can be an opportunity to add another small step to his

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We are not Avraham and our children are not Yishmael. Nevertheless, there is a most valuable lesson here for all of us. Our children's chinuch is not to be relegated only to a certain time or place. We can neither delegate nor outsource our ongoing obligations. Engage partners, enlist support and involve others – most certainly. However, it cannot be to the exclusion of our own total focus on our children's development.

We should be on the lookout for expected and unexpected opportunities to enhance our children's chinuch, at all times in all places, and at every occasion. There are obvious situations to include them, such as the visit of a Gadol BaTorah to our community, a special Torah event such as an Hachnosas Sefer Torah, delivering Mishloach Manos, chesed opportunities such as visiting a sick person in the hospital or comforting a person in pain. In addition, there are innumerable other opportunities and we can create our own list. With a little thought and planning, there are things we can anticipate, look out for and capitalize on when they occur. A few examples are - making a point of greeting and wishing a Good Shabbos/Shabbat Shalom to your shul Rav or Rebbitzin, a friend's Zeidy or neighbor, waiting to sit at a kiddush or siyum until the adults are properly seated, or giving up their seat when there aren't enough. Situations come up to show care in following Halacha, asking shailos when uncertainty arises and postponing a treat or pleasure when unsure if it is really allowed.

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Opportunities abound to show and engage your children in the proper path – at home, in shul, on vacation or just walking down the street. What will turn a fleeting occurrence into a life-long lesson is our conscious awareness of the opportunities that life presents us to imbue our children with the eternal values we hold so dear. With our heart and mind committed to maximize the totality of our children's proper development and our eyes open to potential lessons everywhere, we will help ensure a world class chinuch for our children.

Have an engaged, chinuch-focused Shabbos,

  
Rabbi Kalman Baumann