

Catering To One's Qualities



There are those who say that the development of a child or student is stunted when he is trained to follow a path just as everyone else rather than to develop his own individuality. One may even do this with his own children as he wants his children to be a certain way.

However, if we want a child or student to fulfil their maximum potential, we need to let them develop with their capabilities and the way Hashem made them. We need to follow Shlomo Hamelech's advice- **חנך לנער על פי דרכו**; train the youth according to his way. This follows the expression, "Kids are not meant to be moulded, they are meant to be unfolded." Many Gedolim are the outcome of such education. Indeed, Moshe davened that the leader that should be appointed is one who can tolerate each one **לפי דעתו**; according to his personality, as the personality of each individual doesn't resemble another.

This idea is hinted at in **ולמען תספר באזני בנך**; ...so that you may relate in the ears of your son, as the word **בנך** is singular indicating that we need to speak to each child as an individual, the way they are. In this light we

can understand **והגדת לבנך**; you shall tell your son, as it is also written in the singular. This can be compared to a puzzle of many pieces where no two pieces are alike and go in the same place.

In Shema we say **ושננתם לבניך**; you shall teach them to your children. **ושננתם** is rooted in the term **שינוי** since the way to educate a student or child is with his personal **שינוי**; uniqueness, as each one has that which makes them distinct. For this reason, Yosef says **העוד אבי חי**; is my father still alive? (and not **אבינו**; our father).

The Alter of Kelm never had more than 30 students in his Yeshiva as he would remark that he raises shepherds not sheep. Each of the Avos became who they were because they each expressed a different trait- Avraham with Chessed, Yitzchok with Din and Yaakov with Emes.

Where does this originate from? Each of us is a letter in the Sefer Torah, as there are 600,000 letters in the Torah and there were 600,000 people at Har Sinai. So, there are 600,000 root **נשמות**; souls. Just as each letter has its place in the Torah so too each person with his qualities, talents and capabilities. We therefore,

each have that which is unique to us and need to be educated accordingly.

What about those that have already veered from the path of Judaism? The Posuk states **רחל מבכה על בניה מאנה להנחם על בניה כי איננו**; Rachel cries for her children, she refuses to be consoled for they are gone. **איננו** can mean that they are gone in a spiritual sense as well as emotionally and so on. What should be done in such a case? When the brothers were talking to Yosef they said we are twelve brothers, the youngest (Binyomin) is now with our father and **והאחד איננו**; one (Yosef) is gone. The truth is that Yosef was right there although they weren't aware. The same is with children that may have veered from the path of Judaism. Although it seems **איננו**; they are lost spiritually and the like, they are right there waiting to be turned around. When these children do change, many times they become leaders- becoming great in Torah, authors of Seforim, principals in schools, developing special and unique programmes for the youth and so forth. So, turn the **והאחד איננו** around and they become **אחד יחיד ומיוחד**- unique, special individuals.

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