

*Chazal taught us with this that the teacher doesn't (merely) teach Torah to his students, rather he needs to be like an actual father to them.*⁴

Rav Michel Yehuda Lefkowitz similarly said:

*And it requires consideration why it doesn't say, "And you shall teach them to your students." Rather, (the answer is) that one who teaches another must love him and bring him close like a father brings close and loves his son.*⁵

On another occasion, Rabbi Lefkowitz said the following:

*The main principle and foundation one needs to know when dealing with students is to consider the students as sons in every aspect. And each one should feel like he is truly an only son to the teacher. It says in the parsha of Krias Shema, "And you shall teach them to your sons," and Chazal expounded, "these are the students," If so, why didn't the Torah write, "And you shall teach them to your students?" Rather, to teach us this fundamental principle, that one must consider students as sons.*⁶

Rabbi Moshe Shapiro combines this understanding in **ושננתם** לבניך with the answer given above by Rabbi Weintraub (that loving students is an integral part of the transmission of Torah). He writes:

Therefore comes the posuk (and tells us), "And you shall teach them to your sons" – these are the students, that students are called sons, because also the teacher has to transmit the Torah with love...

*...because the transmission of Torah from the rebbi to the student must be with love, like the love of a father to his son, and this is a condition in the transmission of the Torah.*⁷

According to these Achronim, the source for the Rambam's chiyuv to love students is the posuk **ושננתם לבניך**, which tells us that teachers must love their students like their children.

An Actual Father, and Its Consequences

Thus far, we saw several sources which compare a teacher to a father in the context of the obligation to teach students with love. There are those, however, who take this concept a step

further and say that it isn't merely a comparison. Rather, the teacher of Torah is truly the father of his students!

The Gemara in Sanhedrin (19b) tells us that someone who raises an orphan in his home, is considered "כאילו ילדו," as if he gave birth to him. The same expression is used again a little further on in the Gemara there:

אמר רבי שמואל בר נחמני א"ר יונתן כל המלמד בן חבירו תורה מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו ילדו שנאמר (במדבר ג, א) "ואלה תולדות אהרן ומשה" וכתוב "ואלה שמות בני אהרן" לומר לך אהרן ילד ומשה לימד לפיכך נקראו על שמו

Rabbi Shmuel Bar Nachmani said in the name of Rabbi Yonasan: whoever teaches his friend's son Torah, the Torah considers it for him as if he gave birth to him, as it says (Bamidbar 3:1): "And these are the generations of Aharon and Moshe," and it is written (immediately afterward): "And these are the names of the sons of Aharon," to tell you that Aharon gave birth and Moshe taught, therefore they are called by his name.

The expression **כאילו ילדו** in the Gemara is more than just a drasha; there are various discussions in the poskim which discuss practical halachic ramifications of these statements. Rav Shlomo Kluger goes as far as to say that based on this Gemara, it is possible that someone who raises orphans in his home has fulfilled the mitzvah of **פרו ורבו**, even if he has no biological children of his own!

The Shelah tells us the following:

*And don't say "as if he gave birth to him," but not that he actually gave birth to him, because on the contrary, he (truly) gave birth to him himself, because his father and his mother gave him the body, and the teacher instills in him a neshama, for the Torah is the neshama of Yisrael.*⁸

The Meiri goes another step further. He says there are three kinds of fathers. The first one is the biological father. The second is one who raises a child, even if it is not his biological child (as we saw above in the Gemara regarding someone who raises an orphan). And the third is one who teaches someone Torah. Says the Meiri:

ק"ש ושננתם לבניך ודרשו חז"ל אלו התלמידים א"כ למה לא כתבה התורה ושננתם לתלמידך אלא להורות לנו את היסוד הזה שתלמידים צריכים להחזיק כבנים.⁷ "לכך אתא קרא ושננתם לבניך אלו התלמידים דתלמידים קרוין בנים כי גם מלמד צריך למסור התורה ברחמים... שמסירת תורת הרב לתלמיד תהא באהבה כאהבת אב לבנו והוא דין במסירת התורה."⁸ "ולא תאמר כאילו ילדו ולא ילדו ממשי כי אדרבה הוא ילדו בעצמו כי אביו ואמו נתנו לו הגוף והרב משפיע בו נשמה כי התורה נשמותיהן של ישראל."

⁴ "אלא שלימדונו חז"ל בזה כי הרב אינו מלמד תורה לתלמידיו אלא הוא צריך להיות להם כאב ממש..."
⁵ "וצריך עיון מדוע לא נאמר ושננתם לתלמידך אלא שמי שמלמד את הזולת צריך לאהוב אותו ולקרבו אותו כפי שאביו מקרב ואוהב את בנו."
⁶ "הכלל והיסוד העיקרי שצריך לדעת כשעוסקים עם תלמידים, להחזיק את התלמידים כבנים לכל דבר. וכל אחד צריך שירגיש שהוא ממש בן יחיד אצל הרב. כתוב בפרשת

והמלמד הוא האב האמיתי

And the teacher is the true father.

Astounding! The Meiri considers one who teaches another Torah more as his real father than the biological father! It is clear that far beyond just being an Aggadic comparison, a teacher of Torah is a true father in a real, deep, spiritual sense, and perhaps even in a halacha lemaaseh sense. This brings the Vilna Gaon to a frightening conclusion, one which deeply affects every rebbi and every morah: in Nedarim 20b, the Gemara discusses the *בני ט'* מידות, which refers to nine different flaws in the relationship between a husband and wife that can lead to corresponding flaws in their children. As a result, many of these children end up rebelling and transgressing against Hashem. Some examples of these flaws are:

- Bnei Eimah: if a husband imposes his will on his wife through fear.
- Bnei Anusah: if he does so through physical force.
- Bnei Snuah: if he hates her.
- Bnei Merivah: even if there is no hate between them, but they are in a fight.

Says the Vilna Gaon (quoted by R' Eliyah Weintraub):

*And the Gra wrote that it is exactly the same with one who teaches one's friend's son Torah, who is considered as having given birth to him, that he is required to teach with love and affection. Because otherwise, for example if he will teach through coercion and force, there will then be the flaw of Bnei Anusah in the student. Likewise if he teaches him with hatred, then it creates the flaw of Bnei Snuah...*⁹

Continues Rabbi Weintraub:

Now, it is often the case that in a classroom there is a disruptive or disturbing student, and then the words of Torah are transmitted to him out of anger and a lack of love. One needs to know that in a situation like this rachmana litzlan Bnei Anusah and Bnei Snuah may be created from this, establishing in the student's soul a tendency and feeling of hatred towards

Torah r"l. And this does not require extremes, rather every little bit of hatred is also hatred (in this context). These are the piercing words of the Gra z"l which every teacher is obligated to know.

*And from here is the explanation of a widespread phenomenon in our generation that young ones leave the fold, whether in seventh or eighth grade or in Yeshiva Ketana, because they find no enjoyment in learning or similar reasons, of which a large part stems from the fact that the manner of his formation by the teacher was in the flawed manner of *בני ט' מידות*, and as a result, feelings of hatred and distance from the Torah were inserted into the student's heart. And naturally, these are the results, that he doesn't feel satisfaction in learning and searches outside for the feeling of being a free person...*

*Therefore, it is incumbent on every teacher to be very, very careful in this regard, with the most extreme caution. And indeed in such a situation one needs to devise a strategy, to make sure not to transmit the words of Torah out of anger and a feeling of distance, rather to first calm the anger and only then deliver the words of Torah out of love, and then the building will truly be built without flaw.*¹⁰

Obviously, it would be hard to exaggerate the pivotal importance of teachers loving their students, as well as making sure that the teaching is all done out of love. It is clear that this is not optional, rather an obligation to us as teachers of Torah.

In further articles we discuss how to acquire this required level of Ahavas Talmidim. May we all be זוכה to be of those who are עושין מלאכתן באמונה!

⁹ "וכ' הגר"א ז"ל דכן הוא ממש בהמלמד את בן חבירו תורה שהוא בגדר מולידו, שצריך שילמד מתוך אהבה וחובה, שאל"כ אלא ילמד מתוך כפייה ואונס למשל הרי שאז יהיה פגם של בני אנוסה בהתלמיד, וכן אם מלמדו מתוך שנאה חלילה אז ייווצר פגם של בני שנאה..."

¹⁰ "והנה מצוי הרבה פעמים שיש בכיתה תלמיד טרדן או מפריע ואז מוסרים לו את הדברי תורה מתוך כעס וחוסר אהבה. צריך לדעת שבמצב כזה רח"ל יכול להיווצר מזה בני אנוסה או בני שנאה, שקובע בכוחות הנפש של התלמיד נטיה ורגש של שנאה לתורה רח"ל. ואין זה מחייב קיצוניות, אלא כל משהו של שנאה לתורה זה ג"כ שנאה. אלו הם דבריו הנקבים של הגר"א ז"ל אשר כל מלמד מחוייב לדעת אותם.

ומכאן הוא פשר דבר של תופעה רווחת בדורינו שצעירים נושרים החוצה, אם בכיתה ז' או ח' ואם בישיבה קטנה, מחמת שאינם מוצאים טעם בלימוד וכיוצ"ב, אשר חלק גדול נובע מהעובדה שאופן היצירה שלו ע"י המלמד היתה באופן פגום של בני ט' מידות, וע"ז הוכנס בליבו של התלמיד שנאה וריחוק לתורה, וממילא אלו הם התוצאות אינו מרגיש סיפוק בלימוד ומחפש בחוץ את הרגשת הבן חורין...
על כן מוטל על כל מלמד להיזהר בזה מאוד מאוד בתכלית הזהירות. ואכן במצב כזה יש לטכס עצה שעכ"פ לא למסור את הד"ת מתוך כעס ורגש של ריחוק, אלא קודם כל לשכך את הכעס ורק אח"כ למסור את הדברי תורה מתוך אהבה ואז באמת יבנה הבנין בלי פגם."