

## **Chinuch: School & Home** **Rabbi Maury Grebenau**

Recently, I saw the cover of a magazine which read, ‘chinuch: is it working?’ I excitedly opened the magazine and perused the article titles to see how such a broad concept was being evaluated. As a high school educator, and a father, chinuch is something I think about every day. I spend my days thinking about the future of young adults and then I return home to think about the future of my two daughters. I was disappointed to find that this magazine was filled with articles about curriculum. Curriculum is very important, but it is not Chinuch. Chinuch is much more than simply the manner in which our children learn Gemarah, Chumash and Hebrew.

In our parsha, we find that the pasuk promises to list the progeny of Moshe and Aharon and then only lists that of Aharon (Bemidbar 3:1-3). Rashi quotes the Gemara (Sanhedrin 19b) which states that we see from here that one who teaches another person’s children is considered as if they have given birth to them. Although Moshe was the teacher of the entire Jewish people, he must have had a special relationship as a teacher of his nephews. Moshe is recognized as someone who helped his nephews reach new levels of maturity and Torah learning and for this he is counted as a partner in their rearing.

Later in the same maseches (Sanhedrin 99b) Reish Lakish makes a very similar pronouncement. He tells us that anyone who teaches his friend’s son Torah, it is as if he has created him (*asahu*). How is this any different than the previous remark and why is there a change in the language? The Torah Temimah (Bamidbar Ch. 3 note 2) makes an insightful point which should resonate deeply with educators and parents alike. He says that there are times when a Jewish education does more than raise a student to the next level. There are times when a Torah education completely changes the person, to the point where the person has been recreated in their own image. It is this type of experience to which Reish Lakish is referring; a somewhat different model than the chinuch mentioned in the case of Moshe. Reish Lakish himself had such an experience. Before he delved into the Torah he was the leader of a band of thieves. His experiences learning Torah completely changed his goals, values and persona.

As different as these two models of chinuch seem to be, at their roots they have much in common. Both types of chinuch are holistic experiences which encompass the school, the shul and especially the home. Chinuch is the raising of a child as an educated and caring Jew who loves the Torah and Mitzvot. Chinuch is nurturing a child to become a Jew who is knowledgeable enough to perform Mitzvot and continue growing in Torah, and also committed enough to desire that path. Rav Shlomo Wolbe’s (zt”l) son recently told a story of a time when his father toured a facility in which over two hundred children were taught. He asked the principle how often he was able to sit with each child to ascertain what the student needed in order to succeed. The principle answered that the school was too large for him to be able to sit

individually with all the students. Rav Wolbe later remarked that there was no chinuch at that facility.

If the word chinuch brings to mind curriculums and specific *darchei haLimud* (ways of studying Torah) alone, then we are doing a grave disservice to our children. There is no question that schools play a significant role in chinuch, but we must be sure not to limit chinuch to our schools. Chinuch is the way we as parents perform Mitzvot and learn Torah as an example for our children. Chinuch is the atmosphere we create in the home and the atmosphere in our shuls. Chinuch takes place when we focus on our children at the Shabbos table and join with our children in an act of Chesed (kindness). Chinuch takes place when our children see us come to shul on time and daven and when they see us take the ethical road in business. Chinuch takes place when our children notice our priorities and how we apportion our time. When we evaluate chinuch we must look broadly at community, school and our home to discover how it is 'working' and what can be done to improve chinuch.