

א איז זאך פאר א מען מיט ציער צייט

Chinuch with the Times

Insights for an Inspired Educator



A Project of the Menachem Education Foundation

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Chinuch ^{with} the Times

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Dedicated in loving memory of my father

Shmuel Tzvi Ben Yosef

By Sholom and Rochel Meyer

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Introduction

“Just as wearing תפילין every day is a מצוה commanded by the תורה... so too it is an absolute duty for every person to spend a half hour every day thinking about the חינוך of children...” (היום יום, כ”ב טבת)

Teachers and principals, מחנכים and מחנכות, and those involved in חינוך in every capacity excel at this directive and spend their days and nights involved directly in advancing the חינוך of our children.

At the same time, even while fully immersed in this task, it can still be helpful to step back, reflect, and think about חינוך in a new light.

The thoughts presented in this compilation are short enough for even the busiest educator to incorporate, providing food for thought as well as חיוק and inspiration for the invaluable and unending שליחות of חינוך. Many of these ideas are culled from the teachings of the חב”ד רביים, others are reflections on how to elevate our practice of חינוך, some present practical tips for teachings and still more are focused on the value and importance of this special role.

The Menachem Education Foundation (MEF) has been sending a weekly חינוך thought to hundreds of educators for five years and counting, and for this current publication, we selected those that apply to special dates of the year. These include חינוך insights gleaned from ימים טובים as well as חסידישע dates and a special section for פרקי אבות. Additionally, חינוך thoughts on the פרשה and other themes were also shared, to be collected and published on another occasion, with ה’s help.

At MEF, we stand in awe and humility before the educators actively doing ה’s work by tending to the garden of חינוך. It is our hope that this collection helps you in your עבודת הקודש, and to find additional meaning and satisfaction in your efforts.

May ה’ bless you to see the fruits of your labor through true אידישע and חסידישע נחת from your students – every day of the year.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, we would like to thank הקב"ה for the ultimate privilege of being involved in חינוך, and all of the ברכות that accompany this holy work. We would like to thank the רבי for being the ultimate educator and giving us our direction, inspiration, and mission in חינוך.

Rabbi Zalman Shneur shares a high bar for what we can achieve in חינוך, and we also thank him for enabling and encouraging the publication of this work.

Sarah Pinson took on this project as her own, editing and publishing these messages each week, and adding many of her own thoughts to enhance this collection.

Sara Varon took responsibility for the production of this Kovetz, to ensure our creative dream could reach fruition.

We would also like to thank: Ety Teleshevsky for overseeing the myriad administrative details that make all of our work possible, Etti Krinsky for your attention to detail while editing this work, Leah Caras of Carasmatic Design for the magnificent cover, and Rechyl Korf for the beautiful layout.

Chanah Rose
Educational Director

מוצאי שבת קודש י"ב תמוז, חג הגאולה
שנת הקהל – ה'תשפ"ג



Tishrei

תשרי

The First Month of School: A Fresh Start

תשרי is a month filled with new beginnings. There's ראש השנה, when we start a brand-new year. There's יום כיפור, when we are each granted a clean slate. There's סוכות, when we recommit ourselves to אהבת ישראל. There's שמחת תורה, when we celebrate a new year of תורה, and שבת בראשית, when we start reading the תורה again.

תשרי, for most of us, is also the beginning of a brand new school year. Many of our students enter our classrooms not yet ready to start anew. They may view themselves in a certain way – the struggling student, the good student, the troublemaker, the class clown, the creative one, the wise one, and the list goes on. They may feel comfortable in their perceived roles in the classroom, and not yet open to the change the new school year brings.

As we start to teach and build a relationship with each student, let's show them that we see them as beautiful נשמות who are going to succeed beyond their own expectations. How do we do this? By giving opportunities that enable our students to grow. We give leadership roles to those who don't see themselves as leaders. We divide group projects in a way that brings together students who might not be friends yet. We try to harness the creative abilities of those students who claim they aren't and challenge each one of them to reach new heights.

☺ *What can I do to help my students see themselves in new ways this year?*

קבלת עול: ראש השנה

ראש השנה is a day of crowning ה' as King, and relates to the theme of אין עם מלך בלא עם – there is no king without a people." This means that only through us pondering ה' greatness and celebrating our relationship with Him, thereby actively choosing ה' as our King, can He truly rule over us in a revealed way.

At the start of the school year, many educators are concerned with establishing their authority in the classroom, to ensure a smooth and

orderly year to come. ראש השנה teaches us that this is not achieved through harsh discipline, which can bring about short-term “results” but fails at developing a long-term relationship and prevents true learning. Rather, we can show students a true example of respect, fairness, order, and consistency, and make the learning so engaging and relevant, that our students will automatically want to cooperate, trusting that our rules are in their best interest and wanting to please us in return. This is the true meaning of קבלת עול – *accepting* the yoke of authority, because we choose this complete package, and happily submit to all it involves.

☺ *How can we earn our students’ trust and respect in order to ensure a well-managed classroom?*

With Joy תשובה: יום כיפור

In *The Educator’s Handbook*, Rabbi Mordechai Isaac Hodakov ז”ל, writes about instilling a feeling of תשובה in young students during the month of תשרי. He reminds us that “one of the innovations of חסידות is the teaching that תשובה is possible even when in a state of joy.” He brings the quote from תהילים:

“עבדו את ה’ ביראה וגילו ברעדה – serve ה’ with fear, and rejoice when there is trembling” (פרק ב’, פסוק י”א), which means that the feelings of joy and trepidation could co-exist. תשובה is a joyful עבודה, that we could make into a joyful and practical experience for our students.

Here are a few tips for teaching about תשובה:

Share stories of חסידים, צדיקים and of people today, who did תשובה with שמחה.

- Have your students think about someone they may owe an apology to. Give out attractive stationary and spend a few minutes of class time writing the notes.
- Give out slips of paper with scenarios where someone did something wrong that requires תשובה. Have your students write a response to the person in the scenario, guiding them to move forward and reconnect to ה’.
- Use scratch-off cards in a תשרי activity, to illustrate how תשובה is just about removing an outer layer to reveal our true, beautiful selves within.

☺ *How can I make תשובה feel joyful for my students?*

סוכות With All of Our Senses אידישקייט: סוכות

While many מצוות involve our five senses, סוכות especially highlights the sweetness of אידישקייט in a way that is experienced fully.

The סוכה is a visceral embrace where we experience our joyful reliance on הקב"ה by changing our surroundings. The ארבעה מינים have an aroma and texture which draw us in. The music and dancing of שמחת בית השואבה further involve us, body and soul, in celebrating our connection to ה'. Children especially are thrilled to participate in all of these מצוות.

Educational theorists today argue for the efficacy of experiential learning. Every skilled Mechaneches knows that a multisensory approach enhances learning for all types of students, from the weakest to the most proficient. But Torah has taught us this way all along. It is only up to us as educators to add such sights, sounds, and experiences into the way that we teach every day.

☺ *How can we bring the joy of multisensory experiences into our classrooms?*

תורה: Let Every Student Rejoice in the תורה: שמחת תורה

There is a famous question asked in חסידות: When celebrating the תורה on מאנטעל, why do we dance with the תורה when it is closed in its שמחת תורה, and why don't we dance while holding ספרים משניות? Isn't the purpose of תורה to learn it and live with its teachings? The רבי explains that on שמחת תורה we are highlighting the oneness that every Jew has with תורה, on a level that is deeper than learning and understanding. When ספר תורה is open, the fact that each person has a different capacity for comprehending תורה concepts becomes apparent, and on שמחת תורה, we rejoice in the unity that each איד has with תורה's ה', no matter our level of understanding.

In our classrooms, we may have students for whom learning comes easily and is enjoyable, and others for whom it is a struggle. We need to ensure that תורה study is a beloved and joyful experience, where every child belongs, instead of an academic subject where only the intellectually gifted can succeed.

☺ *What can we do in our classrooms to foster a love for תורה, among students of all levels?*

Source: מאמר ד"ה להבין ענין שמחת תורה תשל"ח



Cheshvan

חֶשׂוֹן

ראש חודש חשון: The Hidden Sparks In Our Classrooms

The רבי רש"ב teaches us that אברהם אבינו's journey began the process of בירורים, elevating the divine sparks in the world. Every subsequent time that a Jew embarks on a journey, he is guided to the sparks that are his to elevate.

If this applies to any undertaking, how much more so does it apply to the holy work of חינוך. When we walk into our classrooms, we must remember that we are there בהשגחה פרטית. This is our שליחות, this is our mission, and these particular students are the ones with who we are meant to interact with this year.

Even when our students frustrate us, it is part of what we are meant to learn from them. Dovid Hamelech did not get angry at Shimi, since he saw that the curses were from ה', and intended for his growth. In our own classrooms, the students who frustrate us and challenge us are the ones ה' gave us to help us grow.

The match between a teacher and student is most certainly a match made in heaven – for everything that our students can learn only from us, and everything that we as teachers can only learn from them, is found in the hidden sparks that are uniquely ours to elevate.

🕒 *What is one area of my teaching that I could put more effort and energy into, to remind me that this is my שליחות?*

Source: היום יום א' חשון

ז' חשון: Packing Our Suitcases

On ז' חשון, many teachers focus on the theme of “packing our suitcases” with the treasures found in חודש תשרי. As teachers, we can also hone in on this metaphor for ourselves:

What can we put in our suitcases from the first month of the year to

hold on to, and what can we choose to leave out? Any teaching successes, budding relationships, and classroom routines being established can stay in. Any challenges faced, negative impressions of students, and inevitable hard days can stay out of the suitcase.

Returning to school after the **ימים טובים** of תשרי is like a second chance at starting the year – fresh and new. We can keep what's working, focus on the positive, and try again.

☺ *What would we like to change in our teaching after the טוב יום break?*

Me and תומכי תמימים: כ' השון

Born on כ' השון, the רבי רש"י is known for having established "תומכי תמימים" the first ישיבה with a rigorous curriculum that included both נגלה and חסידות. A חסידות educator can use this day to reflect: how is the חינוך I am providing different because I am ליובאוויטש? Whether my school goes by that name or not, in what way is my classroom a mini תומכי תמימים? Here are some examples:

- **חסידישע הנהגות:** The details of מצוות and חסידישע הנהגות are precious in the life of a חסיד, and therefore in the classroom, where his or her habits are formed.
- **תפילה תמידית:** תפילה always comes after הכנה, and every curriculum needs to include an emphasis on the פירוש המילות and how to connect to תפילה through ה'.
- **ניגונים:** Learning and singing them is a powerful way to connect students to the רביים and to חסידות. A weekly ניגון class or singing at a פארברענגען goes a long way.
- **למידה:** Even a teacher of נגלה subjects such as חומש or גמרא, can still teach חסידות as the הוראה or the deeper meaning of what is being taught.
- **ה' in the classroom:** Ultimately the purpose of חסידות is to bring a greater connection to ה'. Do we talk about how what we are learning is תורה ה'ה? Do we share our personal פרטיות stories? ה' should be a constant in our חינוך.

☺ *In which of these or other areas can I resolve to add in for כ' השון and beyond?*



Kislev

כסלו

חודש כסלו: Go Deeper

כסלו is a month where פנימיות התורה is the focus. As educators, we must strive to connect our students to התורה, פנימיות התורה, and enable them to reach their deepest selves through our teaching. Here are some tips for engaging our students in what they learn:

- Use open-ended questions to get them thinking.
- Employ “wait time” so they can have time to think before answering.
- Use creative writing and other projects to allow them to internalize what they learn (see היום יום י"ד אב).
- Find ways to illustrate how the material connects to their own lives.
- Stay positive and upbeat in the classroom.
- And of course, teach חסידות at every age, stage, and opportunity!

🕒 *How can we take our learning deeper this month?*

ט' כסלו: Hearing the Child's Cry

We're all familiar with the story of the מיטעלער רבי learning so deeply that he did not hear the cries of his child who fell out of the crib. The אלטער רבי explained that “even when we are steeped in תורה and תפילה, we still need to hear the cry of the child, to stop, and to comfort him.”

The רבי explained how this story teaches us about the importance of educating today's children: “Lately there is an awakening in the youth who are ‘crying’ and searching for אידישקייט, and we must know, that even if we are busy with loftier matters, priority is given to the need to help ישיבות that educate children in the true way of תורה and אידישקייט, so that they can enroll even more of these ‘crying’ children, and especially those who don't even know that they need to cry – and to give them an education such that they can then ‘stop crying...’ And in a broader sense, in recent times the behavior of the world at large is like a ‘child that

fell out of his crib,' having veered from the straight and proper track, and each one of us can and must do our part to improve the situation... specifically by strengthening education.”

☺ *What are the challenges of the current time and place that your students are living in, that can help you better understand how to “place the child back in the crib” of תורה and מצוות?*

י"ד כסלו: Creating Strong Connections with Our Students

On י"ד כסלו, the רבי said the famous words: האט פארבונדן וואס האט פארבונדן: “דאס איז דער טאג וואס האט פארבונדן מיר מיט אייך און אייך מיט מיר.”

The רבי valued his connection to us, and his every interaction showed us just how deeply he cared. The word רבי essentially means teacher, and although we aren't רביים, the keys the רבי gave us to התקשרות can also help us strengthen our connection to our students.

The power of thought: We know how our רביים would set aside time to think about each תלמיד, and vice versa, and the power that holds. Do you think about your students outside of class time, in a focused, proactive way? While filling in grades or marking homework, can you think of one good thing about each child?

Celebrating the connection: The רבי made a חסידישע יום טוב out of י"ד כסלו because of the connection that was cemented on that day. Do you tell your students how happy you are to be their teacher? Do you share with them about the times out of school when you missed them? Are there special occasions you can celebrate with the class – birthdays, milestones, and achievements – in an extra special way to show how connected you feel to them?

Connecting through learning: Don't underestimate the power of teaching itself as a means for connection. You can do this by devoting yourself to teaching, showing value for the subject matter, respecting their abilities and the class time you have together, and supporting each child's success in learning. With these actions, you are giving your students a part of yourself that will now be theirs forever.

☺ *What is one way I can connect with my students this month?*

חסידות הדין: The King of Teaching י"ט כסלו

There is a famous משל of the King's crown jewel being crushed into medicine, that the רבי אלטער used as a parable for revealing חסידות in our times. This includes the חידוש of teaching חסידות to children, which is something the רבי emphasized.

A חסידישע educator can...

- **Show the pervasiveness** of התורה, **פנימיית** הוראות, by including חסידישע הוראות and deeper meanings in חומש and other נגלה subjects.
- **Emphasize התפילה**, עבודת הכנה, by adding an age-appropriate הכנה that helps students think about the One they are speaking to.
- **Share חסידישע stories**, in a way that makes the lesson clear, relevant and compelling.
- **Occasionally share my own experiences**, of how I have changed and grown because of the חסידות I have learned. (obviously with appropriate boundaries)

☺ *On the חסידות, ראש השנה לחסידות, is there a החלטה that I can make with regard to sharing the precious light of חסידות with my students?*

חסידות: Our Students as Candles

When we sing "הנרות הללו" perhaps it is our children and our students, who are "these candles."

In that case:

- We are the שמע. Let us draw close to our children and stay there until they are ablaze on their own.
- Let us provide them with all the right materials to ignite their spark, and not skimp on the quality and purity of what we teach them.
- Let us appreciate how no two flames, and no two נשמות, are ever the same.
- Let us show them that it matters not how far they are, but that what matters is that they are growing, and adding more light each day.

- Let us teach them to never give up – even if they feel small in the face of their challenges. Just like the מַכְבִּים, they can prevail.
- Let us position them in a way that they have a chance to give so that they are empowered, and feel our faith in what they have to offer.
- Let us take the time to watch our students, to look and listen, and hear the stories they tell us about who they uniquely are.
- Let us celebrate them, and make known how much we cherish them, these shining miracles. After thousands of years of history that has paved the way, these children have arrived to change the world.

🕒 *How will I ignite the sparks of excitement for learning in my students?*

הַנוֹכָה: The חֵינוּךְ Miracle

There are many versions of the question that is asked, “What is the miracle of חַנוּכָה?”

Reading between the lines of its answers, perhaps we can say that חֵינוּךְ is the miracle of חַנוּכָה.

- The חֵינוּךְ that inspired אֵידן to remain steadfast to our מְסוּרָה despite outer and inner challenges.
- The חֵינוּךְ that taught children to play דְרִידֵל in caves, not as a fun recess pastime, but as a cover-up to allow them to go back to learning תּוֹרָה.
- The חֵינוּךְ that pushed the אֵידן to search for a pure jug of olive oil instead of compromising, and to hold on to the בְּטָחוֹן that they would find one.
- The חֵינוּךְ that passed the message of חַנוּכָה down through the generations, until today.

You, the מַחְנִיכִים and מַחְנֻכּוֹת, who lovingly taught your students about חַנוּכָה explored the stories and the deeper meanings, put effort into crafts and special activities, and ignited their spark to love this יוֹם טוֹב and everything that it holds – you are the present-day miracle of חַנוּכָה!

🕒 *How can I maintain a חַיּוּת for my miraculous work in חֵינוּךְ?*



Teves

טבת

“מלא ספרים” Making Our Classrooms “ה’ טבת”

As educators, let’s actualize the הוראה of רבי’s by making books and ספרים a large part of our student’s lives. In addition, the Rabbeim emphasized that the way to achieve a deep connection is through learning their teachings.

While reading to younger children:

- Make sure to choose age-appropriate books, and show how they are connected to your students’ daily lives and activities. Alternatively, have them draw a picture about it, so they can relate to the book’s message.
- Ask the children to figure out who the main character is, and what they can learn from him/her. This will help them hone in on the lesson.
- Have students share which book that they read in class was their favorite, and have them share why.

For older children, who read on their own:

- Have them present a persuasive book report about their favorite book, where they convince their friends to read it or have them design a book jacket for the book they choose.
- Assign mini-reports as an optional incentive system. Every time they complete a book from a list you have given them, and write a mini report, they can earn raffle tickets or תורה dollars.
- Make an extra 5 minutes of reading time an incentive if everything else was completed.
- Put on a play after students have completed a book such as the פריערדיקער רבי’s memoirs.
- Have students write a children’s book based on the selected book or ספר, either as a summary or highlighting a key point or event. They can then read it to the younger grades.

- Have the students share something they learned from a ספר that resonated with them.

☺ *What is one idea I will take to make books and ספרים a focus in my classroom?*

עשרה בטבת: Building and Not Breaking

A small child came home from school on עשרה בטבת and cried to his mother: “I destroyed the המקדש!” As it turns out, his class had built a בית המקדש out of blocks, and to reenact what they were learning about, they then knocked it down.

This reminds us of the story of ר' עקיבא, who laughed at the sight of a fox on the הר הבית, because it indicated the fulfillment of the prophecy that the בית המקדש would yet be rebuilt. In אידישקייט, we don't whitewash our history and we tell children what actually took place, yet we have a choice on what to focus on.

The רבי taught us that for today's children, negativity should not be the focus. Especially when it comes to experiential learning, children are sensitive and malleable. Focusing on wrongdoing and destruction makes them feel guilty and unmotivated. Focusing on building instead makes them feel empowered to rectify anything that's lacking, and positive and optimistic about their role in bringing גאולה.

☺ *How can we teach about the sad events of עשרה בטבת in a way that empowers our students with the כח to rebuild?*

כי' טבת: Why Teachers Need to Rest

The אלטער רבי, and the רמב"ם, both emphasize the need for teachers to get a good night's sleep.

Let's think about what might be the inner intent of this directive. Research shows that sleep deprivation causes a dip in emotional intelligence. When we are sleep deprived, we are more likely to see circumstances and other people in a negative light, and it's harder to react to emotional triggers with calm and composure.

As teachers, we can give over a great lesson even if we're tired. But what suffers is our patience, empathy, and positive view of our students.

There are times in our lives when our ability to get adequate sleep is out of our control. And there are times when we may find ourselves irritable, not only because of sleep deprivation. But let's take this הלכה as an indication of how important it is to prioritize our social-emotional interactions with our students.

☺ So get a good night's rest whenever you can, and even if you can't, ask yourself: *what are ways that I could put positivity, patience, and empathy first when I enter the classroom?*

תפילה: כ"ד טבת

When the אלטער רבי needed to choose whether to continue his studies in Vilna, the famed seat of תורה scholarship at that time, or Mezeritch, the seat of חסידות, his brother, the מוהר"ל, advised him: "In Vilna, they teach you how to learn, but you already know how to learn. In Mezeritch, they teach you how to דאווען, and that you do not yet know how to do. Go to Mezeritch."

If the bottom line of חסידות, of choosing Mezeritch, is represented by תפילה, it deserves a fundamental place in our lives and in our חינוך. And when we do focus on תפילה, although the what is vitally important, remember to focus on the how. After all, the what of תפילה – its meticulous הלכות, its translation, and even its deeper meaning – is surely something the אלטער רבי already knew. It is the how of תפילה, which is the gateway to the entire path of עבודה and of חסידות, which he was looking for in Mezeritch.

We are the Mezeritch for our students and for our children. Let's give them one of the greatest gifts that חסידות gives us – the how of תפילה.

☺ *How can I teach my students how to connect to תפילה through ה?*

Excerpt from "Teaching Tefilla Part 1: Polishing Diamonds" by Chanah Rose. Read the full article on mymef.org/blog.

כ"ט טבת: חינוך: A Labor of Light

In כ"ט טבת of היום יום, we learned that "in addition to every individual's obligation... that his own spiritual state is as it ought to be, his entire Divine service should be focused on making himself worthy of raising

up students who will be solidly grounded, with their hearts and minds dedicated to ‘ה’s inner intent...”

There are a number of lessons we can learn from this in our work in חינוך:

- Our own עבודת ה' makes us better מחנכים and מחנכות. Investing in our own רוחניות is part of our investment in our students.
- חסידים is the all-important outcome of all of our strivings as חינוך. How lucky we are to be on the frontlines of this holy work!
- We should not be satisfied with the surface endeavors of חינוך, like “covering ground,” etc. Rather, our aim should be to align our students with the פנימיות הכוונה – to reach them in the most meaningful of ways.
- There is an important connection between חינוך and the beginning of the היום יום – that we are “day laborers... our work is a labor of light...” As the רבי stressed many times, our greatest success in חינוך comes through emphasis on the positive – by illuminating our students’ lives, by highlighting and reinforcing their good.

🌞 *Our work in חינוך can seem like a tall order. How can we reframe it to feel more like a “labor of light”?*



Shevat

שבת

באתי לגני Lessons from חינוך: 'שבת

Many lessons in חינוך can be derived from the מאמר באתי לגני delivered in 5711. Here are a few that Rabbi Nosson Gurary shared at a פארברענגען of 'שבת on מחנכות:

- This world is ה's favorite place. There are infinite spiritual worlds, but everything ה created is for this world. Therefore we need to be מוהנך ourselves and our students about how wonderful life is, and how every moment is so precious.
- By praising someone about a quality that they have but are not currently showing, the praise itself will bring out that quality. We have to speak to every child about how precious they are to ה, zero in on their good qualities, praise them for those qualities, and that will bring them out.
- We're not here for ourselves, we're not here for עדין גן, we're here for the Boss. We're hired by ה to make this world His dwelling place. We have to be מוהנך ourselves and our students that it's not about us; we're here for Him!

☺ *How can I show my students what a beautiful world ה created, and make it clear that it is our mission to reveal Him here?*

Excerpt from "What is Chassidische Chinuch: 10 Chinuch Messages in Basi Legani." Read the full article on mymef.org/blog.

Watch the פארברענגען with Rabbi Nosson Gurary on mymef.org/media/videos

'שבת: Helping Our Students Connect

The רבי wrote to teachers: "Happy is your lot that השגחה עליונה has placed you in the most fortunate position of one engaged in חינוך, which draws near the hearts of Jewish children to our Father in Heaven." (אגרות קודש, vol. 17, p. 313)

As מחנכות and חסידישע מוהנכים, we have the additional privilege of helping

draw near the hearts of our students to our רבי. In honor of שבט ' , here are practical suggestions for encouraging our students to connect to the רבי:

- Show your students your personal example of how you connect to the רבי and how special the רבי is to you.
- Students can take turns preparing a weekly “רבי time” for the class, where they teach the class their favorite ניגון, or share a personal story of the רבי.
- Younger students can bring in items that show their special connection to the רבי – a התקשרות “show and tell” with things such as their own חת”ת, etc.
- Play נגונים in the classroom during independent work or centers.
- Give opportunities to write to the רבי, or to draw pictures. Remind them that the רבי cares about everything that’s on their mind!
- Bring students’ פ”נים or even מצוה notes to the אהל, and let them know that you’ve done so.
- Make class פארברענגען’s and החלטות as much as possible.
- Have students keep a “חסידות journal” to choose one idea they learned from חסידות each week and write about how they make it personal.
- Share stories about the רבי involving children and teenagers.
- For students who have special interests or talents, share stories or שיחות of the רבי encouraging people in that area (for example JEM’s “My Encounter”).

Be sure that you keep your own connection strong!

🕒 *How will I help my students connect to the רבי?*

המשה עשר בשבט: Celebrate the Potential

There is a beautiful saying (author unknown): “Anyone can count the seeds in an apple, but only ה' can count the number of apples in a seed.” In this sense, educators are partners with the ריבונו של עולם, since our work is all about cultivating seeds, with their potential as infinite as it is unknown.

This is both the greatest advantage of teaching, as well as its greatest challenge. It is much easier to engage in work where we can quantify the outcomes and see the results, but like a farmer planting an apple seed in the ground, not only does an educator not know exactly what the impact will be – most of the time, we don't even have the chance to see it.

To stay strong in our mission, we can look to the message of עשר חמשה בשבט: potential is worth celebrating.

The רבי explains that we mark the ראש השנה לאילנות when the sap starts to develop within the tree, which is the first step to generating a sweet and juicy fruit in the coming months. While we can't touch or taste the fruits of our labors just yet, we can imagine the impact, and not wait to celebrate.

☺ *How will I celebrate the infinite potential within my classrooms, with the certainty that the fruit will unfold?*

כ"ב שבט: How to Create An Atmosphere

The name Chaya Mushka gives us a powerful message on how we could continue the Rebbetzin's legacy in our very own classrooms. Chaya is from the root meaning "life," and "Mushka," is from the root meaning "musk," which is a fragrance often used in perfumes. Adding חיות into our classrooms, and letting our excitement permeate into our lessons, just as perfume seeps into the material it drips on, creates a warm and engaging atmosphere for our students.

Do we present מצוות, תורה, and חסידות in a way of וחי בהם, with warmth and encouragement? Does our חינוך have a pleasant "aroma," a sense of דרכיה דרכי נועם, that makes our students feel comfortable in our classroom? By creating this kind of atmosphere, students will identify with the messages that we give over, and want to be a part of it all.

The Rebbetzin impacted so many people, not only by what she said but by how she said it.

☺ *"והחי יתן אל לבו" – How can I learn from her life, and from her name, to make the חינוך I give go so much farther before we even begin to teach?*



Adaru

אדר

ראש חודש אדר: Teaching With Joy

To teach with שמחה is a tradition that was handed down all the way from רבא, the אמורא who opened each lesson with a joke – a מילתא דבדיחותא. Humor opens the heart and mind so that subsequent learning has a clear pathway to enter.

In *The Educator's Handbook*, Rabbi Hodakov emphasizes the importance of שמחה, creating a festive atmosphere in school on special occasions and infusing joy whenever possible. Educational studies reflect this truth that the emotional climate in the classroom is a primary factor in student success.

While infusing a sense of fun and lightheartedness in the classroom community is a valuable goal, a further challenge is bringing שמחה into the learning itself. The most effective way of doing this is by demonstrating how much the teacher him or herself enjoys teaching and learning this subject matter, sharing an authentic sense of “געשמאק” with their students.

☺ *How can I add more joy in one of these 3 ways: by sharing lighthearted moments, creating a festive and joyous atmosphere, and conveying my own delight in what I am teaching?*

אדר 'ז: A Teacher's Prayer

There are so many valuable lessons in education that we could glean from משה רבינו. Through dealing with the Yidden for forty years in the מדבר, משה gave us a lot of food for thought on how to be מחנך those in our charge.

One particular quality of משה was that there were multiple times when he beseeched ה' on behalf of the אידן, even when they were at fault for sinning. He begged ה' to show them mercy time and again. In our own classrooms, when we see a student going through a difficult time, having trouble meeting a goal, or in need of extra love and attention, one lesson we could take from משה רבינו is to daven for our students.

Many teachers have shared that they see the power of just saying the פרק

תהלים that corresponds to the age of their students, and others put in private prayers in their תפילות or while lighting שבת candles. Our students look up to us as a leader in their lives, and although we can't solve every issue that comes up, the least we could do is send a heartfelt prayer.

☺ *What is one תפילה that I will say on behalf of my students the next time I go to the אהל or light שבת candles?*

ט' אדר: The Battle We Face

ט' אדר marks the day that the פריערדיקער רבי arrived in America. The פריערדיקער רבי declared that “אמעריקע איז ניט אנדערש” – America is no different,” and started a revolution in חינוך.

Years later, some חב"ד educators and Shluchim are still fighting the same battle, of opening schools and keeping them open, and trying to persuade potential students to enter the world of Jewish education. Other מחנכים and מחנכות fight a different battle: In flourishing Lubavitch communities where חינוך is a given, we find that many of our students might be in our classrooms in spirit, but are focused on what they might find on the outside.

The פריערדיקער רבי's mandate applies equally to providing a תורה education to those who don't yet have one, to engaging the students who are already blessed with a אידישע חינוך in a way that will inspire them to remain in its embrace.

☺ *On ט' אדר, how can we rededicate ourselves to the שליחות of חינוך – both by bringing in students who are not yet in our classrooms and by inspiring the students who are, to want to stay?*

פורים: The Classroom's Cosmic Impact

In a letter of the רבי to students in honor of פורים in the year 5736, the רבי wrote about how they have the power to overcome the modern-day “Hamans” – those who try to stop us from following תורה's ways. In this letter, the רבי also writes:

“Dear Children: Learn more תורה and increase your efforts in doing מצוות, and ה' blessing will be with you and all your near and dear members of your family, may they prosper.

And in your זכות, all our people will benefit and will achieve, in the words of the מגילה: ‘For the Jews there was light, joy, gladness and honor’—so be it for us and for all Jews.”

We can take a lesson from this to constantly impart to our students the cosmic impact of their תורה and תפילה – how with every precious word of תפילה uttered, פסוק or משנה learned, or act of kindness done, they can move worlds.

☺ *How can I implant this message in the hearts and minds of my students, and explain the cosmic effect they create from learning תורה and doing מצוות in their own classroom?*

אסתר המלכה: A Lesson from פורים

At the heart of the פורים story, מרדכי gives אסתר המלכה an impassioned plea with his timeless words, “Who knows if you attained a position of rulership for a time like this?”

As educators, we are all leaders in our own classrooms, schools, and spheres of influence.

Sometimes, we face our role in חינוך with clarity and enthusiasm, a clear sense of purpose and deep satisfaction lighting up our way.

At other times, our path is more circuitous, like אסתר המלכה’s, and we may ask ourselves, “Why am I here, in this שליחות, with this challenge?”

Perhaps we, too, can ask ourselves, if it is not for such a moment that we attained this role. Of the myriad interactions we have with students each day – the many lessons, conversations, and opportunities for modeling – we never know which one will be the reason we were led here. We never know which word, idea, or moment will be transformative for which child.

☺ *How can I step into my role with courage, responsibility, and a תפילה in my heart, like אסתר המלכה did, remembering that I WILL make a difference?*



Nissan

ניסן

ב' ניסן: Show the Beauty in the Right Thing

ב' ניסן is the יארצייט of the רבי רש"ב. His son, the פריערדיקער רבי, relates the many educational moments he had with his father.

Here is one story:

In the summer of 5656, the רבי רש"ב and the פריערדיקער רבי, who was a young teenager at the time, took a walk in the forest. While deep in thought, the פריערדיקער רבי absentmindedly tore a leaf into small shreds. To raise his son's sensitivity to ה'’s creations, the רבי רש"ב decided to explain the true beauty of nature. He said, “Not only did ה' create each leaf with a specific Divine purpose, but each leaf has a spark of a soul within it that has descended to earth for its correction and fulfillment.”

☺ *Is there a scenario in my classroom where I could correct a student's behavior by pointing out the beauty in doing the right thing?*

Adapted from לקוטי דיבורים vol. 1, pp.168-170.

י"א ניסן: Education Day

”הינך חייב.” From the beginning of his leadership, the רבי made the Jewish education of children a top priority. It's no coincidence that the United States government officially recognizes the רבי's birthday, י"א ניסן, as Education and Sharing Day, U.S.A. each year.

A major educational theme that the רבי shared with the broader world is “A Moment of Silence.” But what about a Moment of Silence for our own? Educators share ways that they incorporate this educational imperative:

- Begin a school assembly with verbal gratitude to ה', followed by some silence for the students to say a silent personal “Thank You.”
- Allow time in class before תפילה for students to share what they are thankful to ה' for or praying for.

- Give students an age-appropriate prompt on which to reflect such as “ה is everywhere” or “אין עוד מלבדו.”
- Have students keep daily gratitude or reflection journals in which they can write before תפילה.

☺ *How can I incorporate a Moment of Silence into my daily routine of teaching?*

Source: 424

Adapted from “A Moment of Silence: Not Just for Public Schools,” by Rena Udkoff. Read the full article on mymef.org/blog

כ"ה ניסן: The Possibility In Each Day

In the famous שיחה of ניסן כ"ה, the רבי shows us how this day holds unmatched potential and power to bring משיח. Every day is special, an opportunity that has never come before, as the רבי describes on many occasions. ספירת העומר, a time when we count and treasure each and every day, similarly brings this message home. As teachers, it is in our power to help our students feel the possibility of a new day at school, through small surprises, infusing our teaching with extra enthusiasm, or conveying our excitement about spending another day in the classroom with our students.

☺ *What new routines, or changes of routine, can help me instill a feeling of newness and excitement in my classroom each day?*

פסח: Encourage Questions

The הגדה puts a lot of emphasis on questions. Most notably, the מה נשתנה מה questions are the famous centerpiece of the הגדה, and initiate the whole rest of the מגיד as their response.

We then go on to speak about the four kinds of children and the questions they will ask. The הגדה even expresses concern for the child who does not know how to ask, instructing us – “את פתח לו” – to gently point out what is going on and what begs for an explanation.

- As teachers, how do we regard the questions our students ask? Are

we afraid of thorny questions, worried that we will not be able to answer adequately? Or do we encourage inquiring minds, offering to do research, or directing them to people or sources that will give them answers we don't have.

- Do we worry about questions taking us off-topic, or do we set aside time or designate a question box to ensure that questions can be addressed at the right time and place?
- And when students are passive and unquestioning, are we relieved at the receptive audience, or do we train them in critical thinking skills to allow them to climb the ladder of understanding?

Many פירושים on the הגדה discuss the inner meaning and power of questions. This פסח, let's derive the כח and clarity from the פסח סדר on how to make questions a focus in our classrooms.

☺ *What can I do to encourage my students to use their inquisitive minds in my classroom?*

(For further resources, please see: פירושים על מה נשתנה, Kol Menachem Edition.

Purchase the “Unleashing the Power of Questions” webinar with Dr. Laya Salomon, available at mymef.org/store

פסח: Hands On, Hearts On, Minds On

At this time of year, many teachers utilize projects and artwork to give across the excitement of the upcoming יום טוב!

How can we ensure that when we are teaching in a way that's “hands-on,” it can also be “hearts-on” and “minds-on” at the same time? Here are some ideas:

- When using “fill in the blank,” up the level of engagement by choosing blanks that require students to think. Providing word banks or removing them is also a way to build in differentiation.
- When sending דברי תורה home with our students, encourage them to share what they learned orally, rather than reading from the paper.
- Incorporate diary entry activities to help our students feel the experience of יציאת מצרים.

- Further personalize the experience with creative activities such as comic strips, or thinking questions such as; “What would you have brought with you out of מצרים?”
- Older students can also be prompted to research their own questions and answers for part of their learning about the יום טוב.

הגדות, projects and more are all about finding that age-appropriate balance between structure and scaffolding on the one hand and personalizing the learning on the other hand.

🕒 *How can I incorporate hands-on learning into my classroom?*

פסח: How to Reach the Four Sons in Your Classroom

The passage of the ארבעה בנים reminds us each year to tailor our teaching to all of our students. Do you recognize any of these four in your classroom?

- **חכם:** A thinking mind needs to be utilized for לימוד התורה. The upper third of our class needs to be challenged with the intricacies of הלכה and the deeper meanings of our heritage, lest the חכם slip into the role of his neighbor, the רשע, who takes his questions and potential elsewhere.
- **רשע:** His fundamental error is “excluding himself from the כנלל;” he feels alienated and does not belong. As educators, we must channel his passions and questions to the services of ה'. By showing him how to find personal relevance and find his own place at the סדר table, this child can be transformed.
- **תם:** The middle third of our class benefits from engaging lessons, painted in dramatic color, about the “strong hand” ה' displayed and the miracles that He has done for us. Throughout our teaching, using stories, multiple learning styles, and engagement techniques will draw this child in and set them up on a path of lifelong learning and inspiration.
- **שאינו יודע לשאול:** The students who neither challenge nor participate, may seem beyond our reach. However, the הגדה obligates us to take the initiative, by creating a learning environment that piques even their interest, through a multisensory approach, and a variety of professional methods within our reach to get to the root cause of their apparent apathy.

- **The Fifth Son:** The רבי's message about the fifth son who doesn't even attend the פסח סדר reminds us about the necessity of expanding the doors of our הינוך even wider, and ensuring that every Jewish child receives the education that they deserve.

🕒 *How can I create a classroom where every child can learn and grow?*



Year

אִיר

ב' אייר: A Future Perspective

The רבי מהר"ש, whose birthday is ב' אייר, lived with the motto: "The world says that if you cannot crawl under an obstacle, try to leap over it. However, I say, leap over it in the first place!" The phrase "leap over it in the first place" is translated as לכתחילה אריבער, and has become a motto for us as חסידים as well.

The רבי מהר"ש spent a lot of time advocating for the Jewish communities in times of peril, protecting them from pogroms and forced expulsions, amongst top political officials, never settling before ensuring their safety. This required him to accomplish the seemingly impossible, by tapping into resources and speaking with people that seemed unreachable.

As educators, we face times when we need to use every ounce of our כח to advocate for our students, and to be there for them in whatever they may be going through. In those moments, let's look at the big picture the same way that the רבי מהר"ש did. He saw future generations of חסידים on the line, and therefore, he did what was needed. In addition, the Hayom Yom of Tes Zayin Elul, brings a teaching from the Alter Rebbe: "און אז מען טוט א אידען א טובה, טוט מען א טובה, אט די אלע נשמות עד סוף כל הדורות." "When one does a favor to an individual, it is a favor to all those souls until the end of all generations."

🕒 *Can we look beyond the children in front of us and see beautiful generations of אידן and חסידים that will come from the children sitting in our classrooms?*

פסח שני: Second Chances

The lesson of פסח שני is that "עם איז נישט קיין פארפאלן" – it is never too late to make things right. This can apply to both teachers and students:

- For your students, have them think about a goal they set for themselves this year, that may have fallen by the wayside, that they can recommit to. Or, make פסח שני real to them by giving your students a chance to retake a test, redo an assignment, or otherwise rectify something from the past, on this special day.

- Teachers are human too! We may have begun the year with lofty goals, or intended to do something with our students. We may have made an error in our teaching that we caught later, or even something as simple as owing our students a prize or reward. Do not be dejected! פסח שני is a day to try again and teach your students a powerful lesson while so doing.

☺ *In which area can I try again this פסח שני?*

י"ז אייר: Digging Up Diamonds

The י"ז אייר of היום יום we learn that the אידן are caled “a land of desire.” The היום יום reads: “Just as the greatest scientists will never discover the limits of the enormous natural resources which ה' has sunk into the land, neither will anyone ever find the limits of the great treasures which lie within Israel.”

About this, the בעל שם טוב said: “I want to make the אידן yield the kind of produce which ה'’s land of desire is capable of yielding.”

As educators, we can adopt this mission statement – to develop and reveal the boundless potential within the students in our care. But to do so, we first need to look at them through the בעל שם טוב’s eyes – as truly an “ארץ הפיץ”, containing incredible treasures for us to discover.

☺ *How can I cultivate the precious treasures within my students?*

The Crux of הינוך: Seeing Potential ל"ג בעומר

The ל"ג בעומר of היום יום describes the miracles that would take place on that day. The מיטעלער רבי would specifically go out to the fields with his חסידים to farbreng, and give blessings for children.

ל"ג בעומר is a day to look deeper, to find potential. As רבי שמעון בר יוחאי taught us, there is a deeper dimension that we need to look for. Is that not the crux of הינוך – to find potential? To believe in it so strongly that you do everything you can to gently dig, to plant seeds, to uncover?

☺ *Is there an area of הינוך I may have given up on, that ל"ג בעומר can inspire me to recommit to?*



Sivan

סיון

ראש חודש סיון: Giving שמחה and פנימיות to Our Students

The רבי פריערדיקער taught us to wish each other a קבלת התורה בשמחה “to accept the תורה with joy and inwardness.”

שמחה: When we are בשמחה, our minds are open to absorbing and accepting what we learn.

פנימיות: When what we learn is בפנימיות, integrated with every part of ourselves, we in turn express and embrace it with שמחה.

As educators, we have the power to invest in both sides of the coin: to find ways to put our students at ease and in a happy state of mind for learning, and to help our students internalize תורה fully and deeply.

☺ *What are the efforts that we could take to instill שמחה and פנימיות into our teaching, and help our students feel ready to accept the תורה in the best possible way?*

הינוך עשרת הדיברות: שבועות

What was the first חינוך experience that we faced as a nation? הר סיני. משה רבינו was actually compared to a חדר, and our first teacher was רבינו. For the most perfect methods in חינוך, we don't need to look further than our תורה, the foundation of the entire עשרת הדיברות.

- **אנכי ה':** The first lesson we need to teach children is that everything is 'ה', truly “אין עוד מלבדו.” Teaching אמונה is our primary goal. From the word אלוהים, which is in לשון יחיד, we see that the way to teach this and every lesson is to talk to each child as an individual and teach him at his own pace.
- **לא יהיה לך:** We have to be very careful not to allow outside influences to permeate our מסורה, even if it's simply as a compromise. We can't appease others by watering down our חינוך.

אמת and “compromise” are opposites. Once it is no longer pure truth, it is no longer truth. From here we see how careful we have to be with every area of חינוך.

🕒 *How will I teach the lesson of “אין עוד מלבדו” to my students?*

Adapted from “The Aseres Hadibros of Chinuch” by Leah Levine. Read the full article at mymef.org/blog

ב"ח סיון: Education All the Time

When the רבי and רביצין arrived in America on ב"ח סיון, in 5701, the רבי immediately began facilitating multiple חינוך projects. Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Fogelman, who was a young student then, shared, “When the רמ"ש arrived in New York, there was an upswing in activities, especially in the extra-curricular educational activities for kids.”

“Things were very different once the רבי came,” said Rabbi Yisroel Gordon, who was a young child at the time. “They published books of חב"ד teachings, books for children, and everything in between. At that time, there was nothing for children or even for adults.”

The רבי clearly saw the importance of every aspect of a child’s life being centered around אידישקייט, even their extracurricular activities and books for leisure. “Talks and Tales” is an example of one of the publications that the רבי was involved in creating at the time.

🕒 *How can I encourage my students to read wholesome Jewish books and be involved in meaningful activities even when they’re not in school?*



Tammuz

תמוז

ג' תמוז: The רבי As A True Teacher

When asked who their הינוך role model is, so many teachers share that it is the רבי who they look up to for guidance and inspiration in their teaching, even in the post-תמוז reality. The רבי taught the truth, and as a shepherd leads his flock, he taught it in a way that our generation would be able to live by and internalize. As a true teacher, the רבי didn't leave it at the teachings but gave personal guidance as well.

ג' תמוז is when we start breaking for the summer, and on these days when we aren't showing up in the classroom as part of our daily grind, let's think of lessons from the רבי that we could bring to our classrooms for the next school year.

Is it teaching תורה with relevant lessons, is it being there to provide guidance to our students in need, is it trying to smile and shine a positive perspective on every situation?

☺ *What lesson will I take from the רבי and bring into my teaching?*

ה' תמוז: Our Foremost Merit

Today's יום היום states that “ה'’s love for our father אברהם was mainly because... he will command his children and his household,” meaning that spreading awareness of ה' to others was more meaningful than all of his personal accomplishments and נסינות that he overcame.

Teaching is not easy, and we may long to spend more time on our personal עבודה, learning תורה, etc. However, let us be encouraged that the greatest merit we can be involved in is teaching תורה to others, and passing on our מסורה to the next generation.

☺ *How can I remind myself of the great privilege and merit of my role in הינוך when the going gets tough throughout the year?*

י"ב תמוז: Celebrate Today!

The פריערדיקער רבי explained that his release from prison wasn't just a private event. One year after his release, he wrote a letter to the חסידים about the celebration of these days. He writes: "It was not myself alone that ה' redeemed on י"ב תמוז", but also all those who love the תורה and fulfill its commandments, and all those who bear the name of ה'."

This day is a celebration for all of us, and as teachers, this message of the רבי שליחות פריערדיקער רבי highlights an important aspect of our חסידים: making each special day on our חסידים calendar feel like a present day celebration.

Although we may be in the middle of an important unit, or need to cover a certain amount of material, when a יום טוב חסידים falls out on the school day, let's acknowledge it in a significant way. Whether through a short story about the day, a quick game, or a short פארברענגען, each day holds tremendous importance, and memories from how the class celebrated it will stay with our students forever.

🕒 *Is there one special day on the calendar that I want to remember to celebrate with my students this year?*

י"ג תמוז: Relationship Is Primary

While education is a complex and nuanced task, we are fortunate that our רביים did not leave us in the dark as to how to approach our mission in חינוך. Amongst hundreds of writings and responses about חינוך, the most comprehensive is the פריערדיקער רבי's וההדרכה – the Principles of Education and Guidance.

The foundation of חינוך, as this text makes clear, is relationship. If a teacher seeks to do more than simply convey information, but to actually educate, guide, and shape individuals, he or she must invest in the relationship.

The פריערדיקער רבי calls for the educator to start with self-reflection to ready him or herself for this endeavor, and then proceed to reflect upon each individual student's background and nature. Only after increasing awareness of oneself as an educator, and gaining a nuanced understanding of each individual child's needs, can the educational journey then begin.

Ultimately, it is the relationship that is the heart of the חינוך we give to our students, which the רבי underscored during his 70 years of leadership.

The רבי wrote to one teacher:

“The primary foundation is that... a special connection and relationship [with your students] is the most appropriate means for imbuing children with love of ה', and love of תורה and מצוות.”

🕒 *Can I find a way to learn or review כללי חינוך וההדרכה before starting the new year, in order to ensure a successful relationship with my students?*

Source: (אגרות קודש), vol. 13, p. 424)

שבועה עשר בתמוז: Making גאולה Real

The רבי said that תמוז is a month of גאולה. The רבי פריערדיקער was released from Soviet imprisonment in the month of תמוז, but at the same time, there are sad or confusing events, such as ג' תמוז and mourning the three weeks. Really, these too are all leading us to משיח, and as educators, we are at the frontlines of this mission.

When we stand in front of our classrooms, as educators in דור השביעי, it is our job to make גאולה real for our students and to guide them as to how we will get there. Here are a few ways to make עניני גאולה ומשיח real to our students:

Younger students:

- Read picture books about משיח.
- Share stories about משיח times.
- Ask them to share what they are most looking forward to in משיח times.
- Explain understandable concepts about משיח and have them act it out.

Older students:

- Share a one-line lesson in עניני גאולה ומשיח before starting your lesson.
- Have a different student prepare a משיח thought each day.

- Encourage them to read books about the times of משיח.
- Have them do a משיח project, where they research and creatively present on a topic in גאולה ומשיח.
- If they seem to have a lot of questions, hold a “משיח Q&A” where you answer them, or bring in someone who can.
- Host a משיח Myth Buster session, where each student thinks of a myth about משיח times, and brings in sources to show what the truth is.

🕒 *What will I do to make גאולה feel real, no matter my students' age?*



Au

מנחם אב

גבורה and חסד: תשעה באב

חודש אב is a month of mixed emotions. Predominantly, it is associated with the sadness of תשעה באב and the destruction of the בית המקדש. However, תשעה באב is also pointed at as the birthday of משיח, and our רבי highlights the buildup of positivity from that day until חמשה עשר באב, which is a special יום טוב that gives us a chance to heal from the sadness of the three weeks.

Many teachers grapple with the mixed emotions and modalities of חסד and גבורה in the classroom. On the one hand, every educator loves and adores his or her students, and wants them to know that. On the other hand, firmness and discipline are necessary to help students grow, and even punishment is called for at times to show students a better way and unpack their potential. חסידות teaches us that it is possible that it is possible to hold two different emotions at once, and exercise two מדות simultaneously

Perhaps the answer to this dilemma is specifically in the mix. In a talk on this topic to educators at a MEF School Leadership Conference, Rabbi Shais Taub pointed to the idea of התכללות המדות, that every מדה must contain every other מדה within it to be complete. The application of this to teaching is that even discipline must be given over with love.

Rabbi Akiva Wagner ע"ה called a student in to talk about constant lateness. After the "shmooze," he asked the student: "Will you do me a favor and learn with these two בחורים who need some help?" The next time he saw him, he complimented him on what a good job he was doing with these two students. Rabbi Wagner knew that if he was going to discipline this child, he needed to find a way to build him up at the same time. Years later, this student reported that this interaction changed his life.

🕒 *When I create my rules and regulations for the coming school year, can I think of ways to combine חסד with the necessary גבורה?*

י"ד מנחם אב: Making It Real

Creativity is a powerful tool for חינוך, in many ways. חסידות highlights two of them:

- In today's היום, we learn that (פרקי אבות פרק א', משנה ו) 'וקנה לך חבר (קנה) is your friend.' Writing helps us experience what we learn emotionally, not just intellectually, enabling us to internalize what we learn in a lasting and personal way. Several of the רביים emphasized writing down stories and personal reflections, and the פריערדיקער רבי also instructed teachers to have their students write essays about חסידות. Putting ideas into our own words helps us truly own what we are learning.
- בח הדמיון, the power of imagination, is a major theme in חסידות. In לקוטי דיבורים, the פריערדיקער רבי writes: "Not only do thought and imagination have the power to place a person in the distant past, to the point that here, in his present situation, he is enabled to experience things long since seen with the same sensations as he then experienced, but moreover, now that he is older and more experienced, with a certain lifetime behind him, he is able to view the same events more perceptively." (לקוטי דיבורים, vol. 1, p. 237) By using stories, creative writing, and art in our teaching, we can hone students' power of imagination, and use these tools to make אידישע concepts come to life before their eyes.

🕒 *Where can I incorporate my students' creativity into my teaching plans for the coming year?*

For more on this topic, read "Matan Torah: Making it Real" on mymef.org/blog

המשה עשר באב: On the Rebound

Life is not perfect, and kids are a work in progress. Children can misbehave and tarnish our perception of them, and things can happen that throw a classroom or teacher-student connection off course.

המשה עשר באב teaches us that there is always a way back. Not even a whole week after the tragic day of תשעה באב, we have a יום טוב, which celebrates גאולה בני ישראל bouncing back and the possibility of

Developmental psychologists today talk about the power of repair, that

even after reacting to misbehavior in a way they are not proud of, a caretaker can undo the damage by creating a moment of connection to repair the relationship.

The best teachers don't have a perfect track record, clean of student misdemeanors and hard days. These educators have the same motley assortment of students and personal hard days as anyone else, but they bounce back.

They make it up to their students, forgive themselves for veering off course, and don't define themselves or their role in *חינוך* by the inevitable hard moments. These educators are on the rebound like we all are at this time of year.

☺ *Can I create a reflection ritual to help me bounce back from teaching challenges, and allow my students to do the same?*

כ' אב: Parent Engagement

The רבי gave a lot of weight to אב כ', the ר' לוי יצחק of יארצייט, the רבי's father, as well as אב ה', the רביצין חנה of יארצייט, the רבי's mother. The stories of the *כיבוד אב ואם* of the רבי are endless. As educators, we can model *כיבוד אב ואם* for our students by ourselves showing regard for their parents, and engaging them in our joint endeavor of *חינוך*. Here are some ideas:

- Before the school year, call each parent individually, to introduce yourself and ask about their child. A parent knows their child best; this is a great opportunity to hear any concerns and get a headstart on knowing your students.
- Create an email, text or WhatsApp broadcast to summarize the learning for parents each week. Parents enjoy knowing what their children are learning, and can then extend it by commenting on and reinforcing the learning in their own interactions at home.
- Create take home elements that allow parents to get involved in their children's learning: a game to play at the Shabbos table, questions or pointers for discussion, etc. You can also promote parent-child bonding by giving assignments such as: Ask your parents when they have been in a situation that _____, interview a parent about the time period in recent history when _____, or fill in a journal or reflection about _____ with your parent.

- Create a parent evening where parents not only enjoy the traditional performances and presentations by students, but can also interact with their children in a meaningful way such as by reading a story or learning a few פסוקים together.

A word of caution: be sure to find out before the school year whether children in your class live in a single-parent home or have a similar challenge. In such a case, modify the way you assign such things to the whole class, not just this child, in order to be sensitive to their needs. For example: If a child in the class doesn't have a father, instead of "Father Son Melave Malka", call it "Bring a Guest Melave Malka" and tell the students they can invite a Tatty, Zaide, Uncle or family friend.

🕒 *What is one thing I can do to step up parent engagement this year?*



Pirkei Avos

Bonus Section

פרקי אבות הינוך Pearls from

'פרק א: A Puzzle, Not a Problem

"וְהוּי דֵּן אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם לְכַף זְכוּת..."

Even at the best of times, our students need us to judge them favorably.

If a child misbehaves, we need to ask ourselves why. It can be an expression of some kind of pain, frustration at feeling like they are lacking a skill, or something going on in their life or home.

Now, more than ever, behavior and participation are affected by many factors – from the trite to the traumatic. Even accountability can take place with compassion. Assume the best of your students at this time.

"A child is not a problem but a puzzle." When looking at and treating our students with a good eye, we are modeling for them to treat others this way as well.

☺ *Is there a situation at school where I could change my perspective, and look at with a good eye, making a conscious effort to be כּוֹתֵם לְכַף זְכוּת?*

Based on פרקי אבות פרק א', משנה ו'.

'פרק ב: Keeping Up the Connection

"לֹא עֲלִידָה הַמְלֻאָכָה לְגִמְרָה, וְלֹא אֶתְהָ בֶן חוֹרִין לְבִטּוּל מִמְנָה."

Once your students leave your "classroom," you no longer have the responsibility, and in many ways the ability, to continue to educate them as before. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile to maintain the connection in whichever way is feasible for you.

Some teachers may set up a summer חֲבֻרָה program. Others may contact former students on their birthdays. Some may invite old students to a class פֶּאָרְבֵּרֶעֶנְגֶּן. Others may give students self addressed envelopes with questions to answer about how their summer is going.

There are many and varied ways to keep in touch. Never underestimate the value of any small gesture to build and maintain your connection. You may no longer be their teacher in title, but you will always be their teacher at heart. How you let them know that is in your hands.

🕒 *What can I do to keep up the connection?*

Based on פרקי אבות פרק ב', משנה ט"ז

פרק ג': The Importance of Action

"כל שמעשיו מרבין מחכמתו, למה הוא דומה? לאילן שענפיו מעטין ושרשיו מרבין, שאפלו כל הרוחות שבעולם באות ונושבות בו, אין מזיזין אותו ממקומו..."

The משנה compares someone whose wisdom exceeds his deeds to a tree with branches that exceed its roots, and the opposite, someone whose deeds exceed his wisdom to a tree with fewer branches but strong, immovable roots. The latter is preferred and is everlasting.

Thus, learning needs to be rooted in action. Include physical, concrete take-aways from the lessons you teach your students, and they will never forget those lessons. Here are some examples of ways to imbue the importance of positive מעשה in your classroom:

- Incorporate movement in every lesson, whether playing charades about what was learned, or associating a motion with a new vocabulary word.
- Take time in class to teach your students how to write thank you letters, and provide incentives for when they do an extra act of kindness.
- Make tambourines or other instruments in anticipation of גאולה.
- Help students make charts for תפילה etc. on days off, and self-reflect on how to help themselves fill them out successfully.
- Count up coins in students' צדקה boxes and donate the money to families who are currently in need.
- Have the צדקה organization send you a nice receipt. Then frame the receipt and hang it on the wall of your classroom as a reminder of their good deed.

🕒 *How can I incorporate action in my classroom?*

Based on פרק ג', משנה י'

פרק ד: Learning In Order to Teach

”הלומד תורה על מנת ללמד, מספיקין בידו ללמוד וללמד.”

Here we learn that one who studies תורה in order to teach it, “is given the opportunity to both learn and teach.” As educators, this is an incredible message to keep close to our hearts:

- המאירי: Since he is learning in order to be able to share it with others, ה' benches him with הצלחה in learning so that he can indeed fulfill his goal of teaching.
- מהר"ל: The Hatzlacha we are promised is on a higher level, because in order to teach, a person needs a higher level of mastery than to learn on his own. Therefore, ה' benches someone who wants to teach with this higher level of understanding that they will need in order to teach successfully.
- מדרש שמואל: Conversely, his efforts on behalf of teaching will not take away from his own Hatzlacha in learning.

Similarly, our רביים have assured us that all of the time that we give to helping and teaching others is repaid by a promise that our own learning and עבודת ה' will be a thousand times more successful.

🕒 *Is there a subject I teach that I could deepen my understanding of?*

Based on פרק ד, משנה ה'.

פרק ה: The Sponge, Strainer, Funnel and Sieve

”ארבע מדות ביושבים לפני חכמים: ספוג, ומשפה, ומשפרת, ונפה.”

In פרק ה, we find people classified in many different ways. As educators it is helpful and important to analyze our students, and to tailor our instruction to their specific needs. Reading between the lines of this פרק yields insight into the right and wrong ways to do so:

- In משנה י"ב we see that being slow to forget, even if not so quick on the uptake, outweighs the more obvious aptitude of a fast learner who quickly forgets. This teaches us to patiently nurture students' hidden potential, and encourage those whose inner flame burns low and steady (ביאורים).
- In משנה ט"ו we find the preface, “There are four kinds that sit in front of the sages.” This teaches us that all four of them – even the “funnel,” who struggles with retention – can still apply effort

and succeed in being counted among those who have this privilege (ביאורים).

- Similarly, this משנה lists all four kinds – the sponge, funnel, strainer and sieve – before going into details about each, to teach us that each has its positive and negative aspects. None of these four is wholly good or bad; rather, each should understand their strengths and weaknesses in order to know what to work on (המאירי).

Thus, we learn that: classifying students is a delicate and subtle endeavor, no student should ever be labeled as unworthy, and categorizing should be done with the sole purpose of encouraging each child and identifying their unique path for growth.

🕒 *Can I identify the areas where I could help each of my students grow?*

‘פרק ו’ A Teacher’s “Acquisition of תורה”

“גדולה תורה יותר מן הבהונה ומן המלכות, שהמלכות נקנית בשלשים מעלות, והבהונה בפעשירים וארבע, והתורה נקנית בארבעים ושמונה דברים.”

ו' speaks about the greatness of תורה over כהונה and מלכות, since תורה is acquired with 48 qualities, more than the others are. Included are studying, verbalizing, humility, joy, and later, asking and illuminating, learning in order to teach and exactness in conveying a teaching.

Many of these are “acquisitions of תורה” that we as teachers of תורה have the opportunity to do on a daily basis. Perhaps this משנה is telling us that these are important elements we must include when teaching תורה. Here are a few ideas of elements to incorporate into our teaching based on this משנה:

- Verbalization: Do I encourage my students to study out loud, emphasizing that verbalizing תורה study is part of the מצוה of learning?
- Joy: Do I teach joyfully, with a smile on my lips? Do I highlight the positive in the different situations that come up during the year?
- Accuracy: Do I fact-check and ensure that I have the right sources for what I'm giving over, or let my students know if it is uncited? Do I ask someone to check my spelling, so that my students spell properly? This not only shows credibility as a teacher but exposes students to different תורה sources as well.

🕒 *What will I do to incorporate elements of this משנה in my own classroom?*



Elul

אלול

ראש חודש אלול: A Time To Add More

Did you know that אלול has a special connection to חינוך? In a שיחה from ראש חודש אלול in 5733, the רבי said:

“Since it is the custom in this country to begin the school year in the month of אלול, we need to take advantage of this time specifically to bring boys and girls to learn in schools that are proper (כשר), and even more so in schools that are pure (על טהרת הקודש), and even holy (חינוך קדוש). Then... when the start of the school year is with an education that is proper and pure, then the whole year will continue in a way that is straight and good...”

Therefore, we need to take particular advantage of the current time, in order to add and continue adding more and more girls and boys into schools and ישיבות that give them an education that is proper and pure.”

☺ *How can we use this time to both add to the children in our schools and classrooms and to add to the קדושה of the חינוך we are giving?*

Source: שיחת פרשת ראה, שבת מברכים חודש אלול, תשל"ג

חודש אלול: The Kids Approach the King

The Mashal of the מלך בשדה – “the King is in the field” – pertains especially to children, for two reasons:

1. An adult, if he is an officer or advisor, can gain access to the king even when he is in the royal palace. A child, however, can ONLY gain access to the king when he is in the field! Therefore, the special advantage of this time is much greater for children than for adults.
2. Even when the king is in the field, an adult may be held back by awe and trepidation from approaching him. However, a child is not held back by fear or inhibition from approaching something or someone he holds dear. Therefore, the only thing that needs to be done is to educate the child in a way that the king becomes dear and precious

to him! Then, when the king is in the field and accessible, there will be nothing to stop the child from drawing near.

☺ *How can we educate our students, during חודש אלול and throughout the year, in such a way that ה' is precious and beloved in their eyes?*

Source: שיחת פרשת ראה, שבת מברכים חודש אלול, תשל"ג

אלול: Our Students, Our Children

ה' is the birthday of both the בעל שם טוב and the אלטער רבי, which highlights the deep connection that they shared. Although they weren't biological relatives, the אלטער רבי called the בעל שם טוב his "זיידע." The basis for this was חז"ל's statement, "Whoever teaches תורה to the son of another person is considered as if he birthed him." Since the אלטער רבי was a student of the מויד, who was the בעל שם טוב's student, the אלטער רבי called the בעל שם טוב his "זיידע."

The connection between teacher and student isn't as deep as that of parent and child since it is based on intellect rather than essence. Yet, when the אלטער רבי called the בעל שם טוב his grandfather, he saw himself as the true grandson of the בעל שם טוב in a spiritual sense, deeper than that of a biological relationship. How is this so? צדיקים invest their essence into their teachings, more than they give over to their actual children. As a student of the בעל שם טוב's תורה, the אלטער רבי shared this deep bond with him.

– whoever teaches תורה to another's child, is considered as though he gave birth to him." As teachers, let us look at our students not only as the recipients of information we plan to teach them, but as our children who we will invest our hearts and souls into this year.

☺ *How will I show my students extra warmth, giving them the sense that I am always there for them this year?*

Based on a שיחה from 5717, לקוטי שיחות, vol. 4 and ט"ע"ב

חינוך and צמח צדק: כ"ט אלול

The last day of the year, ערב ראש השנה, is the birthday of the צמח צדק, who had מסירת נפש for חינוך. When the משכילים tried to introduce laws that would curtail the purity of Jewish education, the צמח צדק was unrelenting that no detail of true אידישע חינוך could be changed or tampered with.

As we embark upon a new year, this special date reminds us to ask:

- Do I remember that חינוך is not just a job – and a hard one at that, but a spiritual calling that warrants actual מסירת נפש?
- Are there any foreign opinions or influences antithetical to אידישקייט that I need to carefully keep away from the חינוך that I give?

🕒 *What can I do to bring my teaching one step closer to true* על חינוך
מטהרת הקודש?

About The Menachem Education Foundation

Founded in 2008, the Menachem Education works tirelessly to raise the bar for Chabad חינוך, by empowering and training educators to provide success in חינוך to their students. Their educational training and leadership programs, חינוך consulting services, programs and curricula to build social-emotional wellness and mental health awareness at Chabad schools, provide tools to Chabad educators across the globe to give a wholesome חינוך to their students, building a strong generation of proud חסידים in the present world.

To find out more about the Menachem Education Foundation, visit mymef.org

Thank You, Teachers

By Chanah Rose

You planted,
You watered,
You waited
And watched.

You struggled,
Persisted,
You questioned,
Conferred.

You planned and
You brainstormed,
Prepared and
Progressed,

You guided,
Ignited,
Neshamos
Unmatched,

Instructed,
Inspired,
Directed,
Stepped back.

Whose light now
Shines brighter
Than ever –
Forever –

You wondered,
You worried,
You davened and
Hoped.

Thanks to you,
Our dear teacher.
Thank you.

Chinuch with the Times is a collection of bite-sized insights from the Menachem Education Foundation. Written to provide encouragement to educators throughout their year of teaching, Chinuch with the Times includes insights from our רביים, reflections on חינוך, tips for teaching and food for thought. This collection will empower educators in their vital role, instilling a love for תורה and אידישקייט in their students.

Chinuch with the Times succeeds in culling the precious, Chinuch-centered, gems of Chassidus and delivering them to an educator in a way that is food for thought, heart, and action. I especially love the practical applications and classroom examples.

- Rabbi Levke Kaplan, Menabel, Cheder Chabad of Monsey

This is a treasure trove of insights and Chassidische Hanachos on Chinuch in easy to read tidbits that follow the calendar year. Read them as the school year progresses, or devour them all in one sitting...either way, every Chassidische educator has much to gain from the practical tips and questions posed at the end of each entry.

- Dena Gorkin, Principal, Bnos Chomesh Academy



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