



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

RAV KEHILLA, NOFEI HASHEMESH
MAGGID SHIUR, DAF YOMI, OU.ORG
ROSH BAIS MEDRASH ENGLISH SPEAKING PROGRAM MACHON LEV

Setting a Personal Example

When the angels visit Avraham, he begs them not to pass by without accepting his hospitality. He then says:

יָקַח-נָא מַעַט מַיִם וְרָחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם

“Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet...” (Bereishit 18:4)

Notice the wording: *yukach na* — “let it **be brought**.” The Torah uses the **passive form**. Avraham himself did not fetch the water; instead, he requested that someone else bring it. Why would Avraham, who ran to serve the angels food himself, delegate this particular act to a messenger?

Rashi explains:

עַל יְדֵי שְׁלִיחַ, וְהַקְדֹּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא שֶׁלֵּם לְבָנָיו עַל יְדֵי שְׁלִיחַ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וַיֵּרָם מֹשֶׁה אֶת יְדוֹ וַיַּךְ אֶת הַסֶּלֶעַ

By means of a messenger. Therefore, Hashem repaid his descendants by giving them water through a messenger, as it says: “Moshe raised his hand and struck the rock” (Rashi ad loc.).

Rashi is building on a Gemara (Bava Metzria 86b):

אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר רַב: כָּל מִה שֶׁעָשָׂה אֲבִרָהָם לְמַלְאָכִים עֲצָמוֹ, עָשָׂה הַקְדֹּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְבָנָיו עֲצָמוֹ; וְכָל מִה שֶׁעָשָׂה אֲבִרָהָם עַל יְדֵי שְׁלִיחַ, עָשָׂה הַקְדֹּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְבָנָיו עַל יְדֵי שְׁלִיחַ.

Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav: Whatever Avraham did for the angels himself, God repaid to his children directly. Whatever Avraham did for the angels through a messenger, God repaid to his children through a messenger.

Indeed, the Gemara notes: Avraham personally served bread and meat — *“וַיֵּקַח חֶמְצָה”* *“He took butter... and Avraham ran to the cattle — Bereishit 18:7–8”*. Correspondingly, Hashem gave Israel the *manna* and the *tzav* (quail) directly. But since water was given *via a messenger*, Hashem provided water in the desert through Moshe striking the rock.

This seems to cast Avraham’s choice in a negative light. Yet Rashi earlier (18:7) says that Avraham had Yishmael prepare the meat *“לחנכו במצוות”* — to train him in mitzvot. If Avraham was involving Yishmael in hospitality to educate him, why would the Gemara view this as a shortcoming?

THE POWER OF PERSONAL EXAMPLE

The **Eish Tamid** explains: education is most effective when modeled through personal example. Of course, there is value in assigning tasks and training children hands-on, but the deepest impact comes when they see their parents *living* the values they preach. Words alone rarely inspire imitation — actions do.

Perhaps this is the meaning of the later

רפואה שלמה
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verse in our parashah:

כִּי יִדְעֹתִי לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא אֶת־בְּנֵי וְאֶת־בֵּיתוֹ
אַחֲרָיו וְשָׁמְרוּ דֶּרֶךְ ה'

For I have known him, that he will instruct his children and his household after him to keep the way of Hashem... (Bereishit 18:19).

This pasuk praises Avraham for instructing his children to follow in the path of Hashem. Yet, we do not find any reference in the Torah to Avraham explicitly *commanding* his children. The Eish Tamid suggests: by **living** the mitzvot, Avraham was instructing them more powerfully than words ever could. Hashem values him for transmitting Torah through example.

MANOACH AND SHIMSHON

A similar lesson emerges from Sefer Shoftim. An angel appears to the wife of Manoach, announcing that she will have a son — Shimshon — who must be a lifelong nazir. She is told not to drink wine during pregnancy. When she relays this, Manoach doubts her and asks to meet the angel. The angel repeats the instructions. But look closely at the wording:

מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר־יֵצֵא מִגֶּפֶן הַיַּיִן לֹא תֹאכַל וַיֵּין וְשִׁכָּר אַל־
תִּשְׁתֵּי וְכָל־טִמָּא אֶל־תֹּאכְלִי כֹל אֲשֶׁר־צִוִּיתִיָּה תִשְׁמָר:

She may not eat anything from the grapevine, nor drink wine or strong drink, nor eat anything unclean; all that I commanded her, she must observe. (Shoftim 13:14)

The verbs here — *tokhal*, *tesht*, *tishmor* — appear in the feminine, but can also be read in the **second person**. Rav Shimon Schwab (Maayan Beit HaShoeva) explains: the angel was addressing Manoach himself. *You* cannot expect your son to live as a nazir unless *you* set the example. Education without role modeling is ineffective.

CONCLUSION: LIVING TORAH

Avraham involved Yishmael in mitzvot, but

Chazal emphasize that education requires more than delegating — it demands **living the values** before our children's eyes. Manoach had to learn the same: it is not enough to wish for your child to be a nazir; you must embody that lifestyle yourself.

This is the essence of *chinuch*. Children, students, and communities are shaped far more by what they see than by what they hear. The greatest legacy we can give is not instructions but inspiration — showing with our own lives what it means to walk in the path of Hashem.

May we merit to live as role models of kindness, faith, and commitment, so that our children and all those who learn from us will naturally emulate our actions and engage wholeheartedly in the performance of mitzvot. ■

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