

## Mishlei 22-06

### Parenting – Training

#### Key Concepts

One of the first responsibilities of being an effective parent is to understand the unique characteristics of each child. If the parent treats all of his children in a uniform manner, there is a risk of pushing a child to act in ways that are inconsistent with its personality.

On the other hand, if the training given to each child reflects an awareness of that child's nature, the teaching methods can be adjusted to help the child fulfill its potential in the best possible way.

Although the goal of all child-rearing involves inculcating basic virtues such as truthfulness, fairness, and sensitivity, its fulfillment takes a different form with each person according to his individual characteristics. Some things that are difficult for one person may be easy for another. Some things that are attractive to one person may leave the next one indifferent. And so, each child needs to be guided and trained either to restrain himself or to urge himself on, according to his individual traits.

#### Exploring Mishlei

**(ו) חֲנֹךְ לְנֶעַר עַל פִּי דַרְכּוֹ גַם כִּי יִזְקֵן לֹא יִסּוֹר מִמֶּנָּה :**

**(6) *Train a child according to his nature;***

***even when he grows old, he will not depart from it.***

This proverb addresses the challenge of child-rearing with the key word חֲנֹךְ, which means “educate” or “train”. The concept underlying this word is to initiate or dedicate the child for its role in life. Some children will find this preparation easy and others will find it difficult. The parent needs to understand how the child can achieve a fulfilling role as a Torah Jew in the society he was born into.

The specific guidance the child will need reflects that child's nature or “way” (דַּרְכּוֹ). The training starts in early childhood and continues through-out the form-

ative years. If the training is successful, the positive results of that preparation will be evident even into old age.

## Learning Mishlei

(6) Train the child — חֲנֹךְ לְנֶעֶר  
according to his nature, — עַל פִּי דְרָכָו  
even when he grows old, — גַּם כִּי יִזְקֵן  
he will not depart from it. — לֹא יִסּוּר מִמֶּנָּה

## Additional Insights

[1] A parent should begin the process of training a child's character from an early age, when it still responsive to guidance and habits have not yet become ingrown.  
(רבינו יונה)

[2] Each person is drawn to specific interests and tendencies. To the extent possible the child should be encouraged to channel its inclinations in a positive manner. (הגר"א, מלבי"ם)