

A NEW CHINUCH SERIES:

THE REBBE'S APPROACH TO EDUCATION ABOUT MOSHIACH IS MOSHIACH A SUBJECT FOR CHILDREN?

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FOR KIDS
AND ADULTS
ALIKE

Q Is it important to educate children about Moshiach from an early age, or is it a subject that we should wait to tell them about until we see that they are ready to appreciate it in a deep and mature way? Do kids really benefit from hearing about this subject at such a young age?

A The Rebbe clearly explained his approach to these questions during the farbrengen of Shabbos Parshas Terumah 5741. To quote the Rebbe's words, as recorded by Sichos in English:¹

In a similar vein,² there are some who wonder at the propriety of discussing Moshiach with children. Moshiach is one of the loftiest of concepts, he is the choicest of all men — and yet we discuss his coming with children, encouraging them with prizes and candy, etc.?!³

Again, every Jew, including the merest babe is a full heir to the entire Torah; and we must educate our children in all its parts, especially in the thirteen principles of our faith enumerated by the Rambam, one of which is, "I wait for him (Moshiach) every day that he shall come." This principle is as important as any other, and our children must be thoroughly educated about it.

It is not enough to merely tell a child about Moshiach as a remote theoretical matter, thinking that as he matures he will learn more. For Moshiach is one of the thirteen principles of faith; and we must educate a child to yearn for him, to cry out that he wants him, to sing songs, (even in English) about him — even if only for the reward of a candy! For the Rambam writes that the education of a child must be on his level, meaning that since a child appreciates such things as prizes and candy etc., that should be the inducement offered him. In short, "out of [doing good for] an ulterior motive, comes [the good deed] for its own sake." And even though one should learn Torah for its own sake, because a child is not yet at that level, one must educate him by giving him appropriate inducements — candy etc. And one should do this even to the extent of telling him that when Moshiach comes, he will have sweets in abundance.

[At this point, the Rebbe uses various sources to further establish the appropriateness of teaching children to want Moshiach even for the sake of physical reward. We have omitted this piece of the sicha here due to its length, but the reader is encouraged to learn it. After that, the Rebbe concludes the discussion as follows:]

The lesson is clear: When someone questions the propriety of "lowering" such a lofty thing as Moshiach to the level of children, the person who is

asked must know that first and foremost such conduct is utterly correct! For since this is a mission from the leader of *our* generation, it is certainly applicable to children of *this* generation! With such a firm foundation in mind, a few moment's reflection will tell him that so has the Rambam rendered the Halachic decision, as did Shlomo when he said, "Train a child according to *his* way." Then he will realize that he must explain the concept of Moshiach to *all* children — American, French, English, etc. — to each in their particular way. And if he does not do so — he is negligent in his mission of education!

May it be Gd's will that everything possible should be done to further Tzivos Hashem — the Army of Hashem. They should be taught of the great love Gd has for children, as seen from the cherubim on the ark, made specifically in the form of children — boy and girl; and that it is upon them that the protection of the Torah depends. It is through talking to children about Moshiach, and their yearning for him, that brings Moshiach, when we will have the third and eternal Bais Hamikdosh.

In these words, we see clearly that the Rebbe considers teaching about Moshiach to be a fundamental aspect of chinuch, especially in our generation. If we pay close attention, we find that the Rebbe also briefly alludes to several perspectives on the importance and the power of teaching children about Moshiach. Going back through the sicha quoted above with our focus on just that question of *why* we should teach children about Moshiach, we find that the Rebbe mentions the following points:

- Moshiach is a part of Torah, and every Jewish child is an heir to the entire Torah.
- Believing in and longing for the coming of Moshiach is one of the Thirteen Principles of Faith.
- By wanting Moshiach even for a less-than-ideal reason (שלא לשמה), children will ultimately come to want Moshiach for the right reasons.
- Talking to children about Moshiach has the power to actually bring Moshiach.
- Children's yearning for Moshiach also has the power to bring Moshiach.

Interestingly, none of these five approaches are really so unique to children. They can just as easily be used to explain why we need to educate adults (including ourselves) about Moshiach. Adults are also heirs to the whole Torah. Adults also must truly internalize the Thirteen Principles of Faith. We also can find שלא לשמה motivation to help us develop a more לשמה longing for Moshiach, and obviously we know that our talking about³ (or learning about) Moshiach and our longing for him have the power to bring him. If so, this lesson from the Rebbe about why we must teach children about Moshiach can also teach us why we all must educate ourselves about Moshiach.

¹ The full Sichos in English version of the farbrengen is available online at: http://www.sie.org/templates/sie/article_cdo/aid/2553918/jewish/Shabbos-Parshas-Terumah-3rd-Day-of-Adar-I-5741-1981.htm

² In the previous section of the sicha, the Rebbe addressed the fact that there are those who question the appropriateness of teaching Chassidus to children, hence the transition, "In a similar vein."

³ See Sefer HaSichos 5699, pg. 373-374.

