

EARLY TRAINING II

by Rabbi Daniel Travis

And these are the descendants of Yitzchak the son of Avraham...and Esav was a cunning hunter, a man of the field... (Bereshith 25:19, 27)

One can never assume that his illustrious deeds and ancestry will be enough to insure that his children will develop into upright individuals. Who was greater than Yitzchak? Nevertheless, he fathered a son as underhanded as Esav. Only Divine assistance combined with prayer and constant vigilance regarding their growth and development can protect one's children from being corrupted.¹

As part of his education, a parent is required to instruct his son regarding the financial obligations involved in running an honest household. Someone who ignores this responsibility is viewed as if he has taught his son to be a thief.² Although this may appear somewhat harsh, one must remember that a child is highly influenced both by what his father taught him and that which he did not teach him. A parent who does not instill within his offspring the proper attitude about monetary matters has in effect caused his child to consider them trivial. This attitude, combined with negative environmental influences and a child's own unbridled inclinations, will continue to grow until it may lead him to adopt a life of crime.

It is therefore incumbent upon both parents and teachers to instill within children of all ages a profound understanding of the importance of integrity in all aspects of life.³ One should never promise a child a present and then back down, for that will convey to him that one need not stand behind one's words.⁴ Furthermore, although under certain circumstances it is permitted to deviate from the facts in order to fulfill a mitzvah, one should never do so to children, even for a noble cause, for their training supersedes other considerations.⁵ The rule is that in his early years it is crucial for a child to experience only truthfulness on the part of the adults in his life.

1. D'rash Moshe on Bereshith 25:19.

2. Kiddushin 30b.

3. Rambam, Laws of Oaths 12:8; Chofetz Chaim, Sefath Tamim.

4. Sukkah 46b; Taz, Choshen Mishpat 249:1. 5. Maharsha, Yevamoth 63a. See also article entitled "Early Training I" on Bereshith 2:3.

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