

# NOT JUST A TOOL

*by Rabbi Yochanan Zweig*

*"And he mobilized his disciples..." (14:14)*

After discovering that his nephew Lot had been taken captive, Avram mobilizes his disciples in an attempt to free his relative. The word the Torah uses for disciples is "chanichav<sup>[1]</sup>". Rashi comments that "chinuch" - "education" stems from the word "lechanech" - "to inaugurate<sup>[2]</sup>"; education establishes patterns of behavior which follow a person throughout his life.

In Parshas Tetzaveh, Rashi offers a fundamental insight into the role of education in an individual's life. The Torah uses the expression "milui yadayim" - "filling of the hands" to describe the inaugural process of the Kohanim<sup>[3]</sup>. Rashi comments that whenever the Torah uses the term "milui yadayim" it refers to "chinuch", and mentions the medieval custom of placing a gauntlet in the hand of a person being appointed to a new position<sup>[4]</sup>. Hence the expression "filling of the hands" is appropriate.

The psychological insight into this custom is predicated upon the knowledge that most people view their jobs as a means by which to support themselves and their family; their only reason for working is that they require the financial compensation. Very few individuals actually receive fulfillment from the work itself. By placing an object in the hands of the appointee, we are relaying to him the message that we are certain that this position will not only be a means to an end, but the very source of his fulfillment; it will fill his hands.

By comparing "filling of the hands" to "chinuch", Rashi reveals a crucial responsibility for parents and educators. We are not only required to relay information to our students so that they may go on to become successful in their life pursuits; we must instill in them the notion that the actual pursuit of knowledge should be, in and of itself, the source of their fulfillment. Education is not merely the facilitator of greater accomplishments, but a life-long endeavor which is, itself, rewarding and fulfilling.

1.14:14

2.Ibid

3.28:41

4.Ibid

## A Pitch For Mom

*"...and he pitched his tent..." (12:8)*

The verse records that Avraham pitched his tent using the pronominal suffix "hay" instead of "vav" in the Hebrew word "ohalo" - "his tent<sup>[1]</sup>". This allows the word to be read as "ohalah" - "her tent". The Midrash notes that this teaches us that Avraham honored his wife by pitching her tent first<sup>[2]</sup>. Why is Avraham's honor of his wife being taught at this particular juncture? Furthermore, why is this message pointed out specifically in reference to pitching her tent? Finally, why does the Torah teach this message in a veiled manner rather than clearly stating "He pitched her tent"?

One of the greatest causes for the proliferation of dysfunctional families in modern times is the neglect of roles within the family unit that are crucial to its well-being. In particular, downplaying the woman's role as a mother has led to devastating consequences for the raising of children. Succumbing to societal pressures, women earn respect in accordance with their business acumen and bread-winning capacity. A woman's ability to achieve success in the outside world has become the only outlet for her sense of self-expression.

The Torah is teaching us the antidote for this insidious malady that has crept into our lives. The verse prior to Avraham pitching Sarah's tent records that Avraham built an altar to Hashem who appeared to him. Rashi comments that this altar was a display of gratitude for being notified by Hashem that he was to become a father. When he left for Eretz Yisroel, Avraham was promised that a great nation would stem from him. The reiteration of this notion implies that fatherhood was imminent<sup>[3]</sup>. Since Sarah was Avraham's only wife at the time, he understood that she would be the mother of his children, the source of his continuity. Until that point Avraham and Sarah had equal roles; Avraham proselytized the men and Sarah the women. With the knowledge that she was to become the mother of his children, Avraham's entire focus regarding her changed. Her tent became his tent. The Torah reflects this change by spelling the word which refers to his tent as if it were her tent. Avraham showed Sarah that the most important role she plays and therefore the role for which she deserves the ultimate respect is that of motherhood.

If men want their wives to assume the mantle of motherhood with all of its responsibilities, they must deliver a clear message regarding the degree to which they respect and appreciate the importance and difficulty of that role. Conversely, if a man emphasizes aspects which accentuate his wife's role as a wife, such as looking her best at all times, rather than accentuating her adeptness in caring for the children, he becomes the source of the problem. Every woman is aware that the most strenuous role she will fulfill in life is that of a mother. If a woman does not receive encouragement and acknowledgement from her husband for this undertaking, she will look elsewhere for her self-expression.

This message is driven home by our Patriarch, Avraham. Realizing that Sarah will assume the mantle of motherhood, he shows her that there is nothing more meaningful to him than the role which she is

soon to fulfill.

*1.12:8*

*2.Rashi Ibid*

*3.12:7*