

# Helping Your Talmidim Love Mitzvos

Every Jew's relationship to mitzvos exists somewhere on a spectrum of meaning. On one end is the view of mitzvos as a long list of rules, devoid of any profound significance. On the other end of the spectrum is the view of mitzvos as infinitely precious opportunities to connect to our Creator. Children's entire lives are circumscribed by rules. Without guidance, it is natural for children to relate to mitzvos as nothing more than rules, rather than as opportunities for growth. Children have little control over their lives and are conditioned to follow rules regardless of whether they appreciate or understand their function. There are four main keys to getting your talmidim to love and appreciate mitzvos: teaching the context of the mitzvos, explaining the benefits of mitzvos, showing that you love mitzvos, and making mitzvos pleasurable.

## Teach the Context to Mitzvos

One of the most critical ways to give your talmidim an appreciation for the mitzvos is to teach them the significance and context of their actions. Teach them - on whatever level they can understand - the meaning of the mitzvos they perform. Bring up mitzvos that are performed daily and try to give your talmidim a broader sense of the importance of their actions. They should understand that every mitzvah is meaningful, and is a vital part of a cosmic mission. Explore the reasons and benefits of each mitzvah in as much detail as they can understand. Once someone understands the reasons behind their actions, those actions are automatically imbued with far more significance than an act performed without comprehension.

## Show the Benefits of Mitzvos

One of the keys to making your talmidim appreciate mitzvos is to demonstrate their benefits. Talmidim must feel that performing mitzvos is advantageous to them in the "here and now." Yiddishkeit can feel like a burden to some talmidim, and a promise of reward far in the future is just not enough to motivate them to act. To address this present-oriented mindset, teachers should continuously point out to their talmidim the ability for each of them to develop a relationship with Hashem in this world. As this relationship develops, they will begin to realize all of the amazing acts of Hashgacha Pratis that occur during their daily lives. Continuously stress the chesed of Hashem and how it impacts our lives. Every week, ask your talmidim to relate events from their lives for which they are grateful to Hashem. We all want to experience happiness in this world, and if you want your talmidim to be

passionate about Yiddishkeit, you must inculcate them with the sense that Hashem loves them and is actively and positively involved in their lives.

## Show How You Love Mitzvos

Talmidim learn how to view the world by looking at their mentors. If you want your talmidim to develop a love for mitzvos, show them you're passionate about doing the ratzon Hashem. Even if you are passionate about Yiddishkeit, your talmidim will not necessarily pick up your feelings unless you make a conscious effort to express your excitement and happiness over shmiras ha'mitzvos and limud haTorah. Additionally, teachers must continuously work on cultivating their own passionate relationship with Hashem. Our job is to serve as role models, but the truth is that no one is perfect. At times mitzvos can be challenging, but remember, your talmidim are always watching you - both consciously and subconsciously - for cues on how to view the world. If you show that you are waiting for seder to be over, your talmidim will internalize that you do not appreciate learning. If you seem burdened by davening, your talmidim will pick up on it and lose their own respect for tefillah.

## Make Mitzvos Pleasurable

The body demands physical pleasure, while the soul yearns for spiritual connection and fulfillment. These two impulses are always tugging at us, and some of the most exceptional experiences that a human can feel is when the physical and the spiritual fuse together to create an act that combines both of these innate drives. Eating a good meal stimulates the body's senses while doing mitzvos ignites the spirit. When the two drives are fused, for example, by having a scrumptious Shabbos meal, one has the opportunity for a sublime experience. This understanding is critical when it comes to giving our talmidim a love for mitzvos. Mitzvos are a way to connect to Hashem, but a mitzvah that taps into core human desires has a stronger chinuch impact than mitzvos that are purely spiritual activities. From a practical standpoint as an educator, one should always try to incorporate as many levels of experiential interaction as possible. Mitzvos are not just rituals and learning is not just an intellectual exercise. Try to incorporate added enjoyable dimensions to your lessons as often as possible. When this is accomplished, students absorb the feel of the mitzvah far better than if it was presented in a dry, exclusively spiritual format.