





# “He, Too, Is a Shliach”



The Rebbe’s Roadmap  
for Raising Young  
Shluchim Today

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The topic of raising children on shlichus is deeply personal to me. I grew up on shlichus in a relatively small community in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The reality of my childhood was very much the reality of a child on small-town shlichus.

Growing up, I had a small sense of jealousy toward a cousin of mine—just a year or two older than me—whose parents had gone out on shlichus after he was born. When they came by the Rebbe for Dollars to ask for the Rebbe’s brochures as they were about to

depart on shlichus, the Rebbe looked at the child and said, “*Er iz oich a shliach*”—he, too, is a shliach. JEM documented many such moments.

My cousin used to state it with pride, “The Rebbe said I’m a shliach!”

But what does it actually mean for a child to be a shliach? What does it look like in day-to-day life?

That question becomes sharper when you consider the reality.

THE PARADOX OF INTEGRATION

When a child lives

*b’merschakim*, far away, without friends or peers or the normal trappings of childhood, he knows that this is because he is a shliach. Hopefully, the child gains pride in being the Rebbe’s beacon of light to his community, and that sense of mission empowers and encourages him.

But then there’s the painful reality that after all those years of isolation and *mesiras nefesh* this same child shows up at camp and maybe gets teased—even bullied—simply because he doesn’t know the social currency of Chabad kids. The

child is being teased for being, essentially, most aligned with the Rebbe’s vision. No one means to do any harm, but the child comes home unsure of where they truly fit in.

And yet, paradoxically, when children are fully integrated into larger communities, the very thing that matters most can be lost—the sense of mission that gives shlichus its meaning.

I once visited a shliach whose children commuted a great distance on a daily basis to attend a mainstream Lubavitch *cheder*. Painfully, it seemed like they were experiencing shlichus mostly as a





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burden rather than a gift—the commute, the missed after-school programs, the weekends with no one from their world nearby—without the sense of mission and identity that should have come with it.

Which brings us to the core question:

How do we raise children who don't just grow up on shlichus—but who live it, proudly and confidently, and thrive in it?

The answer lies in something broader than specific instructions. It lies in the Rebbe's entire approach to children.

A LANGUAGE THAT BUILDS IDENTITY

If you look for direct *horaos* about raising shluchim's children, you will find relatively little. A few pages, scattered across various *yechidusen* and *maanos*.

But if you step back and look more broadly, you find something striking: over 1,100 printed pages of the *nasi hador* speaking directly to children on more than 135 occasions—addressing their inner world, teaching them, and demonstrating in a systematic way exactly what he believes a Jewish child needs to hear and how to say it.

What emerges is not just a collection of ideas.

It is a *shprach*—a language.

A way of speaking to a child that builds identity from within.

It is the Rebbe's educational legacy—and it is the roadmap for raising children on shlichus.

This reframes everything.

WHY THIS MATTERS EVEN MORE ON SHLICHUS

The Rebbe's educational language was delivered to all Jewish children. But there is something about a child on shlichus that makes it land with particular force.

The Rebbe said in 5736 that the time had come for children to be their own educators—and the educators of other children. You tell a child in *Oholei Torah* that he should be an influencer, that the Twelve *Pesukim* are tools for reaching other Jewish children, and the question is: who exactly? His classmates are all already learning the same *pesukim*. For a child on shlichus, this is not an abstract aspiration. It is a description of his actual life. The neighbor who has never heard of *Shabbos*. The classmate who doesn't know what a *mezuzah* is. The encounters

in ordinary daily life that a child in a Chabad community simply does not have.

What he needs are the tools that make it real—an identity solid enough to sustain him when no one from his community is around, a felt sense of who he is and why, and a language for the challenges he faces. That is precisely what these *sichos* provide.

When Tzeirei Hashluchim was first founded, it was initially called Bnei Hashluchim—the children of shluchim. It was quickly renamed Tzeirei Hashluchim—the young shluchim—because the Rebbe made clear: these children are not just along for the ride. They are part of the mission.

But identity cannot be imposed.

A child becomes a shliach when he feels “this is who I am.”

And that identity is built not through pressure, but through a sense of mission and ownership of that mission.

EVERY CHILD A SOLDIER

The Rebbe's model begins with a bold idea: every Jewish child is a soldier in Tzivos Hashem.

The term “soldier” is not

something you would naturally associate with a child. What does it mean that the Rebbe turned children into soldiers?

To understand this, we need to back up. The Rebbe founded Tzivos Hashem in 5741. Five years earlier, in 5736, the Rebbe established *Shnas HaChinuch*, the Year of Education. The Rebbe's message of *Shnas HaChinuch* was not only to bolster enrollment in Jewish schools. Specifically, the Rebbe targeted the children themselves. The Rebbe said to turn the children into *mechanchim*, educators. They should be able to teach themselves and teach other children. And with that, the Rebbe introduced the *Yud-Beis Pesukim*.

Looking at the *sichos* of that period, you see the Rebbe mentioning “Tzivos Hashem” several times, even before any formal organization existed. The Rebbe was laying the groundwork.

Because you cannot simply tell a child, “You are a soldier.”

You must first build the mindset that makes that identity real.

And what is that mindset?

You are not merely *called* a soldier—you actually have a real and personal mission from the Aibershter.

Your mission is not only to work on yourself but to influence others.

And this mission is to be done with joy.



My father wanted me—a fifteen-year-old—to walk up to the offices, get past the receptionist, find my way to the back office, and sit down with the head of the Jewish Foundation. He was building something in me. He wanted to give me a sense of shlichus, a sense of empowerment.



### 1. Building Identity

Practically speaking, how do we build that sense of identity?

By giving the child real experiences of shlichus—situations where he acts as a shliach in his own right, not merely as a bystander to his parents’ work.

Let me share something from my own childhood. Once, when I was 15 years old and home during a *mesivta* break, my father needed to deliver a

grant proposal to the head of the Jewish Foundation in our community. He could have emailed it. Instead, he printed all the papers, put them in an envelope, and told me to walk the five blocks to the JCC and deliver it personally.

The point, I believe, was not the delivery. The point was that my father wanted me—a fifteen-year-old—to walk up to the offices, get past the receptionist, find my way to the back office, and sit down with the

head of the Jewish Foundation. He was building something in me. He wanted to give me a sense of shlichus, a sense of empowerment. And there was something I could get from this executive that he himself couldn’t get: the executive was genuinely charmed by a kid showing up to talk. We ended up sitting together for forty-five minutes, I asked him to put on *tefillin*, and so on. My father was subtly building something. He was building my identity

as a shliach in my own right and empowering me to play an active role in the shlichus.

Now, when I go on *mitvzoim* with my kids, I try to put them in an active role. I pass the *tefillin* strap to my six-year-old to wrap the circlets on the arm and lead the fellow in *Shema*. Why? Because he isn’t my tag-along, he is a soldier on a mission and he deserves to feel it.





## 2. Generating Ownership

But identity alone is not enough. A child must *own* it.

This is one of the Rebbe's most powerful principles.

One of the first things I noticed when I started studying these *sichos* carefully is a consistent pattern in how the Rebbe structured the children's rallies. Every rally had Torah, *avodah*, and *gemilus chasadim*. The *avodah* was *Mincha*. The *gemilus chasadim* was the *tzedakah* distributed at the end. But what was the Torah?

The Rebbe himself consistently stated that the Torah component of the rally was the Twelve Pesukim that the children had said. Throughout the *sicha*, the Rebbe would tie back his messages to "the *pesukim* you recited earlier." The Rebbe's own teaching was framed as commentary on their Torah.

This was intentional and fundamental. The Rebbe was applying what he had set out in *Shnas HaChinuch*, that the child should genuinely own his Torah—not just absorb it passively, but feel it as his own.

The Rebbe said that getting a child to teach is actually very simple, because children

love showing off what they have. If a child has something that someone else doesn't have, the first thing he wants to do is share it. The only condition is that the child feels genuine ownership over it.

I saw this recently with my four-year-old. He and his brother were discussing the *Avos* and *Imahos*, and he asked, "What about Bilhah and Zilpah? Aren't they also *Imahos*?"

I had overheard the conversation, so I told him, "That's actually a very good question. We usually don't count Bilhah and Zilpah, but there is one place where they are counted. It says in the Medrash that on Moshe Rabbeinu's staff the names of the three *Avos* and six *Imahos*—including Bilhah and Zilpah—were written."

Do you know how many children my son told about Bilhah and Zilpah's names being on that stick? Because it was his question. I helped him own the answer. The minute it became his, he started parading it around. When I picked him up from school the next day, he was telling a classmate about it in the hallway.

Compare that to if I would have said at the supper table,

"Kinderlach, did you know that on Moshe Rabbeinu's staff, there were six *Imahos* listed?" They might have nodded politely—if they were even listening. It's not about the information, it's about the ownership.

And for a child on *shlichus*, who already lives among people who need what he has, that combination becomes something very powerful. The question is not whether he has an audience. He does. The question is whether he feels like he has something worth sharing.

## 3. Using the Right Language

So how do we build that identity and ownership?

Through language.

There is always a gap between an adult and a child. The Aibershter arranged it so that parents are always a generation older than their children—and often physically taller as well. One of the most powerful things you can do in a conversation with a child is get to their level: bend down, pick them up, look at them eye to eye. You will see remarkable results.

What happened when the Rebbe launched *Mivtza Chinuch*—when the Rebbe started the rallies and began speaking directly to children—is that the *nasi hador* went eye level. *B'gova einayim* the Rebbe spoke to children in their language. What the Rebbe

said to children is strikingly different from what the Rebbe said to adults. Because what empowers us as adults is often completely different from what empowers a child.

A child does not need long explanations. A child needs clarity, simplicity, and truth.

## THE POWER OF A CHILD'S PSHITUS

A child sees the world with a simplicity—a *pshitus*—that cuts through the rationalizations adults build up. A child doesn't understand why a fellow Yid wouldn't do something obvious. And sometimes that lack of understanding is more powerful than any adult argument.

I know a Lubavitcher yungerman who became a *baal teshuva* while in college. He once told me what started him on his journey to Yiddishkeit. It was the four-year-old young shliach on his campus who, week after week, kept on asking him where his *yarmulka* was. The parents were mortified, but the kid was genuinely confused. He was a Yiddishe soldier who wore a *yarmulka* and here was another Yid who didn't. It made no sense to him, so he kept on asking. This young man started asking himself why in fact he did not wear a *yarmulka*, and thus began his journey.

When we try to reach children, sometimes we miss. Not because the children are unworthy of our wisdom, but because we don't have the *pshitus* that resonates with them. The power of the *sichos*



the Rebbe gave to children is in the fact that the Rebbe is speaking on their level. Sometimes it's even challenging for adults to learn those *sichos* because they are not explained at length—they're presented as points, and the explanations are left out. Because that's what resonates with a child. A child doesn't need to process the "how" in order to connect to the heart and soul of a message.

Here are some examples of how the Rebbe's language to children differs from what we might naturally say—and what that does.

### Shema Yisrael: Hashem is My Personal G-d

When we teach *Shema Yisrael* to children, the emphasis is almost always on

"*Hashem Echad*," the unity of G-d, the central declaration of Jewish faith. That is true and important. But in the Rebbe's *sichos* to children, what the Rebbe comes back to again and again is not "*Echad*" but "*Elokeinu*," our G-d. Hashem is your G-d. Personal, close, fully attentive to you as if you are the only person in the world.

This might seem like a minor difference in emphasis. It is not. It changes everything about how this *pasuk* speaks to a child and how we can bring it into conversation with him.

A few summers ago, one of my sons ran in from outside desperately thirsty but he couldn't manage to reach a cup. I was in the middle of something and couldn't get it for him right away. As I calmed him down, I told him, "You know, Tatty wishes he can

get you a cup right now, but Tatty can only do one thing at a time. Do you know who can do two things at once?"

"Hashem," he answered.

"And when Hashem does two things at once, is He only half paying attention—or does He give full attention to everything?"

My son paused for a moment and then said, "Full attention. Hashem can do everything."

"So when you hold this cup and make a *bracha*, will Hashem—who is running the entire world right now—pay attention to your *bracha*?"

"Yes."

My son made the *bracha*. I answered *Amen*.

"Who else answered *Amen*?" I asked.

"Hashem," he answered happily.

A few weeks later, nobody was in the room when he made a *bracha*. When my wife entered the room a moment later, my son said, "Mommy, you didn't answer *Amen*."

My wife apologized, explaining that she simply hadn't heard. My son then responded, "It's okay. Hashem heard me, and He answered *Amen*."

I did not teach my son a concept about Hashem's omnipresence. I gave him a felt experience—a real moment of connection, tied to something as simple and recurring as making a *bracha*. Because he had that experience, the idea lodged. A few weeks later, without any prompting, he was living from it.

This is one of the principles the Rebbe demonstrates over and over in these *sichos*: children do not need long explanations. In some ways they need less than adults, because their *emunah* is simpler and more direct. You are not arguing them into a position. You are giving language to something their *neshamah* already knows.

The Rebbe Rayatz tells of Reb Dovid Tzvi Chein, who, as a child, was called into the room of the Tzemach Tzedek. The Rebbe drew him close and told him that when he needed to make a *bracha* and say the words "*Baruch Atah*," he should pause and remember before Whom he was about to say them. Reb Dovid Tzvi carried that instruction his whole life—before every *bracha*, he would rest his hand on his forehead,

the way a person does when recalling something important.

That was guidance from the Tzemach Tzedek to one exceptional *chassid*. The Rebbe gave that same instruction to an entire generation of children.

### **Yogati and Ve'ahavta: Effort for Yourself and Others**

When the Rebbe introduced the second set of six *pesukim* on Lag Baomer 5736, the Rebbe taught the meaning of the *pesukim* of *Yogati* and *Ve'ahavta*. *Yogati*—I have toiled—means: if you failed, it is not because you cannot succeed. It is because you did not realize you needed to try harder. Exert more effort and you will be *matzliach*.

Then, the Rebbe did not present *Ve'ahavta* as a standalone message. The Rebbe presented it as a continuation of *Yogati*. Just as you exert effort for your own success, so,

too, must you exert effort for another Yid's success. What's striking is that the message of *Ve'ahavta*, as the Rebbe taught it, was not primarily about *ahavas Yisrael* in the classical sense. It was about this: all the truths of Yiddishkeit that I know should be shared, because another Yid is the same as me, is one with me. If it is true for me, it is true for *yenem*.

Children have this attitude naturally. We have all seen a child ask a family friend, "Where is your *yarmulka*? Why did you drive on Shabbos? Why aren't you covering your hair?" The questions that make adults squirm are, for children, simply the honest expression of "I don't understand why you're not doing what's obvious."

### **Yismach Yisrael: You Make Hashem Happy**

Of all twelve *pesukim*, which did the Rebbe speak about most frequently? *Yismach Yisrael*. By

far. In almost every rally. Why?

On the surface, *Yismach Yisrael* means be happy in your Yiddishkeit—do mitzvot with a smile. But there is something deeper. *Yismach Yisrael* is the awareness that you have just made Hashem happy. You might wonder: why teach *pnimiyus haTorah* to children? But the Rebbe drilled this in consistently.

Consider what happens on *mitvzeyim* when we try to get a Yid to do a mitzvah and he is reluctant. We explain why it's good for him. We explain the reward. He walks away. I remember standing at a *tefillin* stand in Tel Aviv. The same man passed by week after week, stopped to talk to me each

time, was clearly moved, but never actually put on *tefillin*. One time, with nothing better to say, I told him, "When you put on *tefillin*, you give the *Aibershter nachas ruach*. You cause the *Aibershter* to put on *tefillin*, to focus His *shibud hamoach vehalev* on His *Yiddishe kinderlach*."

The man put on *tefillin* immediately.

There is something in a Yid's psyche: Ask him to do something for himself, he's hesitant. Ask a Yid to do something for someone else—for the hostages, for Klal Yisrael, for Hashem Himself—and he is often more ready. Yidden are *am ehad*; we are more prepared to do for others than





for ourselves. The Rebbe once said that telling a Yid their next step in Yiddishkeit will bring *to'eles* to all of *Am Yisrael* can make it easier for him to take that leap. Why? Because he's doing it for someone else. The ultimate doing-it-for-someone-else is giving the *Aibershter nachas*.

The same principle applies to children—and even more naturally. When a child is told, “Do you know what just happened? You made a bracha, and the *Aibershter* is so happy right now!” the appreciation is immediate. A child does not need to be argued into doing a mitzvah for Hashem's sake. He is ready to make Hashem happy. That is *Yismach Yisrael* at a child's level—and the Rebbe returned to it at

almost every rally because it is the emotional engine that drives everything else.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

All of this leads to how *chinuch* actually plays out.

**Give the Child Tools to Educate Himself**

There is a principle in the Rebbe's *sichos* to children that I find genuinely revolutionary, and that took me some time to fully absorb, because it runs against some

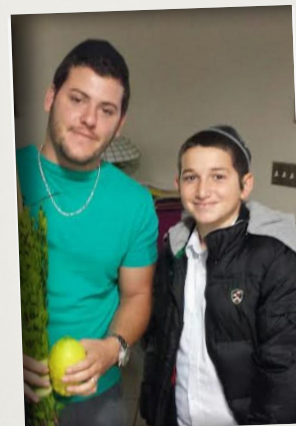
of how we are trained to think in Chabad Chassidus.

We are accustomed to speaking about the *nefesh ha'elohis* and the *nefesh habahamis*, and the *avodah* of one overcoming the other. That framework is foundational and true. But the Rebbe does not use it when he speaks to children. Instead, the Rebbe speaks about the *yetzer hara* as something external—a force from outside that tries to interfere, that is not the child themselves.

This is not a contradiction. The Alter Rebbe writes in his *Shulchan Aruch* that the pri-

mary completion and entry of the G-dly soul happens at bar and bas mitzvah. Before that point, the child cannot operate successfully from his underdeveloped, and *nefesh-habehamis*-dominated, psyche. Instead, it is the core of the Yid, the *etzem haneshamah*, that shines brightly regardless of the lack of integrated *kochos*. From this vantage point, the child is totally and inherently good. Therefore, the *yetzer hara* can in fact be seen as a foreign intruder rather than a part of the child himself.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Toras Menachem* 5744, vol. 3, pp. 1846–1848.





## The four-year-old at the sink didn't need me to remind him about *netilas yadayim*. He needed, months earlier, to have absorbed the framework. In the moment of challenge, it came together on its own.

In our home, we call the *yetzer hara* “Johnny.” The name comes from the *niggun* the Rebbe taught—“Ech Ti”—in which the *yetzer hara* is referred to as “Marco the Fool,” an external, somewhat ridiculous character who keeps getting in the way. The point of the name is to be concrete: when you do something you know is not right, that is not you. That is Johnny. You are a soldier in Tzivos Hashem. Johnny is a nuisance at the door.

One morning, I was learning in the living room, early, before anyone was up. I heard one of my kids wake up. I knew from the sound of his feet where he was going. The night before, he'd been playing with a particular toy and had a very hard time leaving it to go to sleep. Now, first thing in the morning, he was running back to it.

I decided not to say anything. I waited.

Mid-stride, my son stopped. He turned around. He went to the kitchen sink, washed his hands, made a *bracha*, and went back to play.

When I went over to him a few minutes later, he looked up and said, “I woke up and Johnny told me to run straight to the toy. But when

I got close, I threw Johnny into the *biur chametz* and went to wash my hands.”

I hadn't said a word to him. He had the language, he had the framework, and he had used it himself—on a child's level, in a child's situation, with complete clarity about who he was and what Johnny was. He had educated himself.

And that is exactly what the Rebbe was pointing to when he said in 5736 that the time had come for children to be their own educators—and the educators of other children. It is not an aspiration. It is a description of what becomes possible when a child has the right tools.

The Rebbe's approach is generally not reactive, but proactive. The Rebbe is not describing what to do when your child misbehaves. The Rebbe is describing how to build, over time, a structure within the child that allows him to navigate challenges on his own.

The difference matters a great deal. If my response to a child's behavior is always reactive—he does something wrong, I address it—then I am always chasing the problem. The child associates these conversations with conflict. The ideas come across in a context of tension, which is not

the most receptive context.

But if I have been building the structure—if over weeks and months of ordinary and months of ordinary moments I have been giving the child real felt experiences of Hashem's presence, real language for who they are and who Johnny is, real ownership of his *pesukim*—then when the difficult moment comes, I often don't need to say anything. The four-year-old at the sink didn't need me to remind him about *netilas yadayim*. He needed, months earlier, to have absorbed the framework. In the moment of challenge, it came together on its own.

This also means that the opportunities for chinuch are everywhere. The most powerful conversations I've had with my children have been in the car, at the table, while answering a *bracha*, at bedtime. Not a sit-down learning session. Just an ordinary moment where I decided this was worth exploring.

Once, I came into the room to find pen marks scribbled all over the wall. Silence in the house. Children hidden under the table. The instinct—and I'll be honest, I felt it—was to address the wall, address the behavior, find out who did it.

Instead, I pretended not to notice the wall. I called their

names. One of them emerged from under the table. I asked why he was hiding. He started explaining—he'd had a pen, there was no paper nearby—and I stopped him gently and asked, “Who else is in this room with us right now?”

The children answered, “Hashem.”

“What is Hashem waiting to feel proud about?”

One of them said, “If we tell the truth.”

I asked if there was more truth they could tell me. They told me about the wall.

I told them I was proud of them for telling the truth, and that Hashem was proud of them too. As for the wall, there was a cleaning solution that would take care of it, and when they'd get home from *cheder* we would fix it together. That afternoon, everyone cleaned the wall willingly. No drama. And that particular kind of incident did not happen again.

What made that work was not a clever technique in that moment. It was that my children already knew—already felt—that Hashem was in the room, that Hashem cared about whether they told the truth, that telling the truth was something that made Hashem proud. That had been built over time. The moment in front of the wall was just when it showed up.



## The child is not the obstacle. The child is the ally. Your job is not to overcome his resistance, it is to speak past it to the part of him that already wants to do right.

### Empower the Child Who Wants to Do What's Right

There is a *sicha* from a children's rally on the second day of Rosh Chodesh Elul 5743 that I find myself thinking about often. The Rebbe describes a specific scenario: a child woke up in the morning, didn't yet wash his hands or say the morning *brachos*, saw food and ate it. Now an adult is asking whether he washed and made a *bracha*. The honest answer is no. And the child is thinking about whether to tell the truth.

Notice what the Rebbe is describing: this is not a child who had a perfect morning. He woke up and went straight for the food. He already didn't do what he should have. And the Rebbe's question is: now, in this moment, Hashem is here, Hashem is watching, Hashem wants to feel *nachas* from you—what is the mitzvah available right now? The answer is: tell the truth. Even though the adult might be upset. What makes Hashem proud in this moment is honesty.

What I find striking about

this *sicha* is what the Rebbe is not doing. The Rebbe is not focusing on the mistake. He is not talking about consequences. He is focused entirely on the good that is available right now—and he is asking the child to see Hashem as Someone who is on his side, rooting for him, genuinely delighted when he does something right. The child is not the obstacle. The child is the ally. Your job is not to overcome his resistance, it is to speak past it to the part of him that already wants to do right.

A lot of this is intentionality. We are already doing so much. We invest enormous energy in *chinuch*. But if we can implement even small shifts in language, the results, *b'ezras Hashem*, will be remarkable.

### FIFTY YEARS LATER

We are marking fifty years since 5736—*Shnas HaChinuch*—when the Rebbe gave the Twelve Pesukim to every Jewish child. Much has developed in Jewish education since then: a deeper awareness of children's

emotional needs, of the importance of relationship, of positive *chinuch*. All of that represents real progress.

And yet, there is something in the Rebbe's approach that I believe we have not fully drawn on. It is not another methodology to add to the list. It is the *nasi hador's* vision of what a child is—and how to speak to that child. Since Mordechai HaYehudi, there has been no leader who dedicated so many occasions specifically to speaking to Jewish children. That is a significant statement. It deserves to be taken seriously.

I recently got feedback from a winter camp for young shlichim in California where they had incorporated a Twelve Pesukim curriculum I had helped prepare. A nine-year-old boy came home and told his mother at bedtime, "Mommy, I am so excited to go on shlichus."

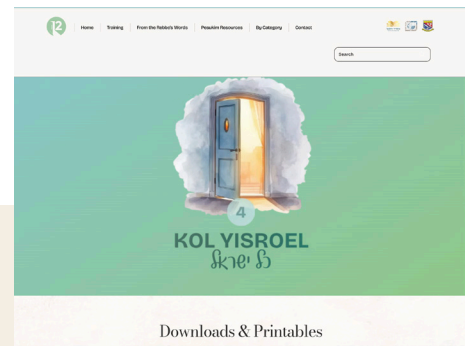
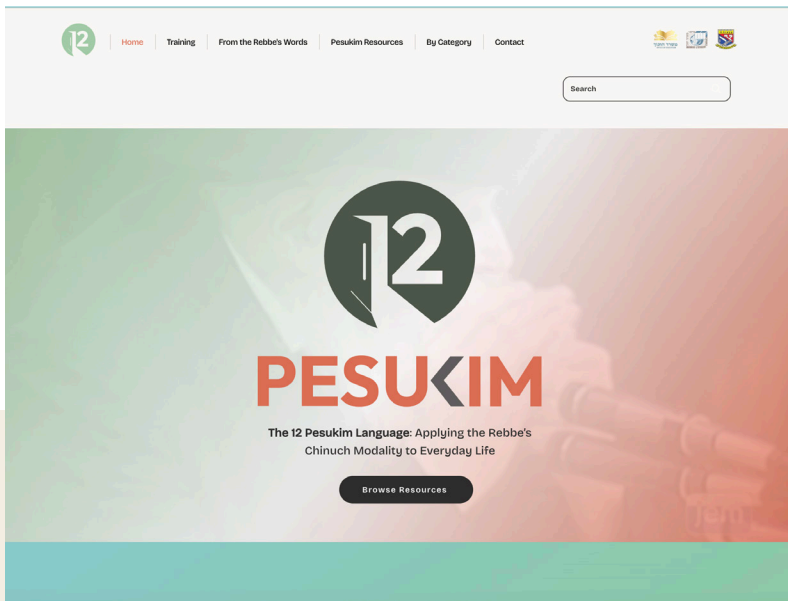
She answered, "Moishele, we are on shlichus."

He said, "No, no—I was in camp and we learned what the *pesukim* mean, and now I have things I want to teach to other kids. I want to go on shlichus."

That is the shift—from being present on shlichus to *being a shliach*.

Fifty years ago, the Rebbe showed us how to raise the next generation of shlichim. The Rebbe gave us the tools and the language to build their identity as soldiers in Hashem's army and to empower them to own their mission of teaching themselves and others. It is up to us to use them.

The next time your child makes a *bracha*, ask who else is listening. The next time you are walking with your kids to *shul* on Shabbos, ask them who owns the Torah that they will kiss. The next time Johnny shows up at your door, name him, and praise the child who shows him out. The next time your child feels the weight of being different—in his school, in his neighborhood, in the world your shlichus sits in—remind him: Hashem is here. He gives you his full attention. He is proud of you. And in one moment, you can walk out of Mitzrayim.



## From Three Sichos to 135: How a Booklet Became a Movement

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This project began modestly. A supporter of Sichos in English, who had appreciated the *Basics of Chassidus* series, wanted a memento for his son's bar mitzvah—a clear, accessible presentation of how the Rebbe explained the Twelve Pesukim to children.

At the outset, I knew of

three *sichos* in which the Rebbe taught the Twelve Pesukim: Rosh Chodesh Iyar 5736, when the Rebbe first introduced them; Lag B'Omer 5736, when the Rebbe introduced the second six *pesukim* directly to the children; and Yud-Gimmel Tammuz 5736, when the Rebbe spoke about the power of the *pesukim* in the aftermath of Entebbe. Three *sichos*. Forty pages. A month's work.

Then the research began. What I discovered is that throughout the years of the Rebbe's *nesius*, the Rebbe spoke directly to Jewish children 135 times—and

that on each occasion, the Rebbe developed and applied the messages of the Twelve Pesukim. Rabbi Shmuel Avtzon, director of Sichos in English, immediately grasped the significance of a systematic compilation and committed the organization to the project. Rabbi Levi Raskin, who is deeply familiar with the Rebbe's *sichos* to children, joined the effort. The bar mitzvah boy received his forty-page booklet on *V'ohavta*. Three years later, the larger project is just getting started.

But what emerged along the way was larger than a book. Working through these *sichos* revealed that they contain not simply content about the Twelve Pesukim but a complete educational methodology—a coherent, consistent *shprach*, a language, in how the Rebbe speaks to children, what he chooses to emphasize, what he is building in them, and how.

The turning point came when this material was pre-

sented at the Merkos Chinuch Office's Kinus Hamechanchim this past summer. Educators from across the United States heard, many for the first time, that this body of work existed. The response was extraordinary. What had started as a bar mitzvah booklet had become, in the words of many who were there, a revolution in chinuch.

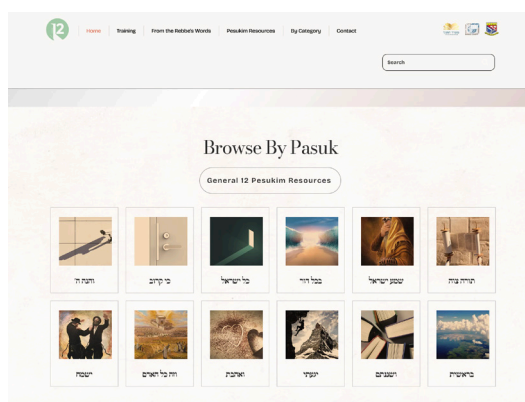
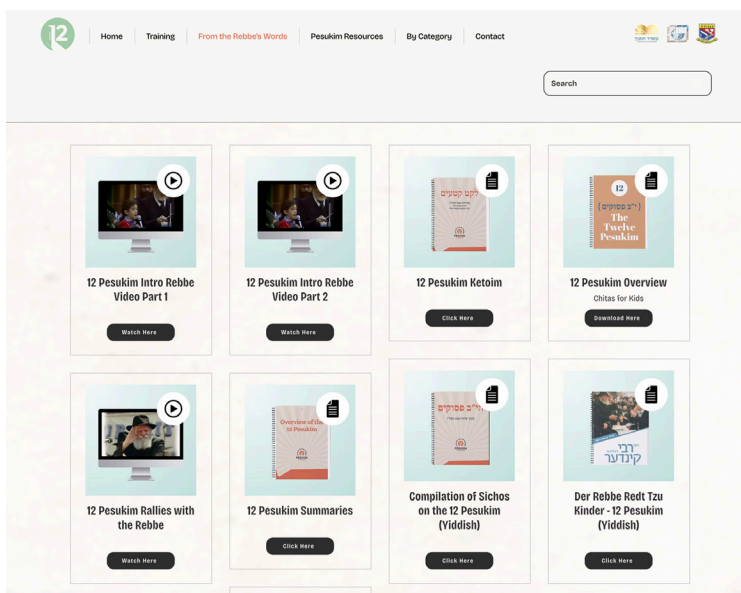
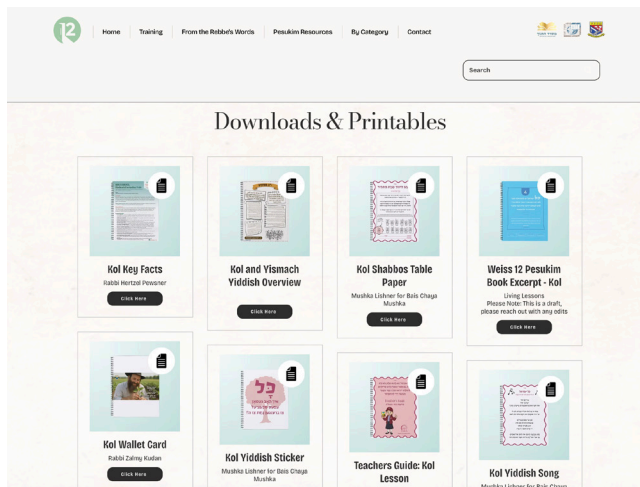
Since then, initiatives have been established by Tzivos Hashem and by educational institutions in Crown Heights, Eretz Yisrael, and communities worldwide to bring the Twelve Pesukim—taught through the Rebbe's own methodology—to children everywhere. The Chinuch Office has undertaken this project as an ongoing mission: every Jewish child should not only know the words of the *pesukim*, but internalize and be equipped with the foundational principles and tools the Rebbe gave to our generation.

# Bringing it Home

The Twelve Pesukim were introduced by the Rebbe during Shnas HaChinuch (5736/1976) and form the backbone of the Rebbe’s chinuch modality for Jewish children. As we mark 50 years since then, we step up our efforts to implement the Rebbe’s approach as we educate our children and students.

Twelvepesukim.org—a collaborative initiative of the Merkos Chinuch Office, Merkos Suite 302, Tzivos Hashem, and Sichos in English—serves as a one-stop shop for a wide variety of Yud-Beis-Pesukim resources. Explore the site for easy access to the following and much more:

- **The Twelve Pesukim in the Rebbe’s Words:** Videos of the Rebbe introducing the Pesukim, text of the original *sichos*, and translations and adaptations for adults and children
- **Pasuk-Specific Resources for Adults and Children:** Freshly designed text materials, curated videos and shiurim, printable posters, poems, songs, Shabbos table papers, and more, in English and Yiddish
- **Curricula:** A wide variety of curricula and supporting materials to teach the Twelve Pesukim to children of all ages and backgrounds
- **Teacher and Parent Training:** Three tracks of monthly webinars exploring the Twelve Pesukim and how to incorporate the Rebbe’s chinuch language into the everyday





## י"ב פסוקים מאירים חייו של ילד

און דאס דארף זיין אין אן אופן אז די עוללים ויונקים זאלן פארשטיין דעם תוכן פון די ענינים, וויבאלד אז ס'רעדט זיך אויך וועגן תורה שבע"פ. און א טעם נוסף ועיקרי בזה: מ'וויל דאך אז זיי זאלן מחנך זיין נאך קינדער – ילדים צו נאך ילדים און ילדות צו נאך ילדות, דארף דאך דאס זיין ביי זיי מיט א געשמאק און מיט א הבנה.

וואס דערפאר דארף דאס זיין א פסוק און א מאמר חז"ל און א ענין פון תניא וואס מ'קען דאס אים מסביר זיין לפי שכלו והבנתו, און מסביר זיין אין אזא אופן אז דאס זאל ווערן א חלק מחייו, ער זאל דאס קענען נוצן בחייו היום יומיים – האבן דערפון א הוראה און א חיות און אן אור (א ליכטיקייט) וואס זאל אים באלייכטן זיינע מעשים.

משיחת י"ג תמוז תשל"ו (שיחות קודש תשל"ו ח"ב ע' 433 ואילך)

## Lighting Up the Life of a Child

When teaching children these *pesukim* and *maamarei Chazal*, explain them so the children understand what they mean. One reason you should do this is because some of the passages are Torah She'baal Peh, which requires understanding. But there is another, more fundamental reason: The goal is that the children should share these ideas with other children—boys with other boys and girls with other girls. For them to do that, they need to appreciate these passages and understand them.

This is why we chose *pesukim*, *maamarei Chazal*, and ideas from Tanya that can be explained to a child on his level. The child can understand them and make them part of his daily life—they teach him practical lessons, motivate him, and illuminate his behavior.

*Sichah* of 13 Tammuz, 5736 (*Sichos Kodesh* 5736, vol. 2, pp. 433–434)



# “ואהבת”: המשך ל“יגעת”

... וועט ער אויסחזרן דעם מאמר חז"ל וואס די גמרא זאגט אז "לא יגעת ומצאתי אל תאמין", וואס דערפון איז מובן אז אויב ער האט ניט געפונען ביי זיך די כחות (די שטארקייט) אויף פירן זיך ווי ס'דארף צו זיין לויט תורה און אידישקייט, איז דאס א זיכערע זאך אז ער האט זיך ניט אנגעשטרענגט ווי מ'דארף זיך אנשטרענגען (לא יגעת), ווארום ווי ער זאגט פריער אין דעם ערשטן האלבן מאמר חז"ל, אז "יגעת ולא מצאתי אל תאמין", אויב ער וועט זיך נאר אנשטרענגען, איז א זיכערע זאך אז ער וועט געפינען.

און ווי געזאגט פריער אז מ'דארף זיך ניט באגנוגענען מיט זיך אליין, נאר מ'דארף טאן די זעלבע זאך אויך מיט חברים און מיט חבר'טעס, מיט דער סביבה און מיטן גאנצן ארום, זאגט מען אז דארטן דארף ער אויך טאן מיט די גאנצע לעבעדיקייט, און מיט די זעלבע הארציקייט, און מיט דער זעלבער יגיעה, ווי ר"ע זאגט אין א צווייטן מאמר חז"ל – וואס מ'דארף אויסחזרן – אז "ואהבת לרעך כמוך זה כלל גדול בתורה", אז ער דארף ליב האבן דעם חבר, אדער א מיידעלע איר חבר'טע, און אזוי אלע ארום זיך, און דאס דארף זיין "כמוך", אזוי ווי מ'האט ליב זיך אליין, און אויף דעם זאגט ר"ע אז דאס איז א גרויסער כלל און אן עיקר דיקן כלל אין תורה (אין לערנונג), איז דאך דערפון פארשטאנדיק אז פונקט ווי ס'דארף זיין "יגעת" בהנוגע צו זיך, אזוי דארף אויך זיין "יגעת" בהנוגע צו דעם ארום זיך.

משיחת ל"ג בעומר תשל"ו (שיחות קודש תשל"ו ח"ב ע' 200)

## The Yagati-Ve'ahavta Connection

The next *maamar Chazal* a child should learn is, "Lo yagati u'matzasi al taamin—If someone says, 'I didn't try hard but I still found,' don't believe him." The message to a child is this: If he hasn't found in himself the inner strength to act as Torah and Yiddishkeit demands, there's no doubt it's because *lo yagati*, he didn't put in as much effort as he should have. Because, as the first half of that *maamar Chazal* states, "Yagati v'lo matzasi al taamin"—if he will try hard enough, he will surely find that inner strength.

But a child shouldn't be satisfied with working on himself—he should also work with his or her friends and with everyone around him. The message of the next *maamar Chazal* is that when interacting with others, a child should invest all of his energy and the same passion and effort.

This is the message of the next *maamar Chazal* that children should learn—Rabbi Akiva's statement that "Ve'ahavta l'reiacha kamocho, zeh klal gadol b'Torah." This means that a boy should love his friend and a girl should love her friend, as well as everyone else around them, just as they love themselves. Rabbi Akiva adds that this is a great and fundamental principle of the Torah. That being the case, it is clear that just as you need to put in effort for your own spiritual growth, you should put in effort to help others grow too.

*Sichah* of Lag B'omer, 5736 (*Sichos Kodesh* 5736, vol. 2, p. 200)





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# Taste the Power

**H**ere are some bite-sized one-liners I try to find the opportunity to share. These are ideas that every child deserves to have floating around in their head, illuminating their lives and impacting their choices. Distilled from the Rebbe's *sichos* to children, it allows me to speak to my children in a manner that resembles how the Rebbe would talk to them.

**תורה צוה** — To cherish the Torah as our personal treasure, *morashah*, is the foundation of *chinuch*. Because when I feel that I own it, I love it and I live it.<sup>2</sup>

**שמע ישראל** — Hashem is real and personal.<sup>3</sup> The fact that He is the only One in charge makes me feel safe, secure, and grateful.<sup>4</sup>

**בכל דור ודור** — A Yid is not a slave to Pharaoh, and neither are we slaves to the *yetzer hara*.<sup>5</sup> I can trust that Hashem will help me live *Geulah*.<sup>6</sup>

**כל ישראל** — Giving Hashem *nachas* is a real factor of my existence.<sup>7</sup> He cherishes every Yid for who they are and has even more pride each time we grow.<sup>8</sup>

**כי קרוב** — Because Hashem's presence is so tangible and real, Yiddishkeit is always the natural and easier choice. I know I can do it—it's who I am.<sup>9</sup>

**והנה ה'** — Hashem isn't just watching for surveillance; He is here because He chose me as His frontline soldier.<sup>10</sup> He stands beside every Yid to help, encourage,

and empower us to give it our very best.<sup>11</sup>

**בראשית** — Hashem made the whole world, and that means it's all His.<sup>12</sup> I am lucky enough to show the world how it's meant to be used.<sup>13</sup>

**ושננתם** — Torah all the time. It always applies and guides how and what we do.<sup>14</sup> Every opportunity will find me teaching it to others, too.<sup>15</sup>

**יגעתי** — Working hard isn't a weakness. It's how the Torah promised us we will always succeed.<sup>16</sup> Believe me when I say I can get it done.<sup>17</sup>

**ואהבת** — Ahavas Yisrael is a way of life. I can love and value every Yid and keep sharing with them the wealth of Yiddishkeit I was given.<sup>18</sup>

**וזה כל האדם** — This is what winning looks like: we make Hashem at home in the world.<sup>19</sup> I lead by example and know that others will follow me, too.<sup>20</sup>

**ישמח ישראל** — Hashem's *simchah* is my *simchah*.<sup>21</sup> No matter the situation, I can always remember Hashem's joy from my actions and overcome any trouble.<sup>22</sup>

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2 *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 20, p. 493; *Toras Menachem* 5749, vol. 1, p. 203; *Toras Menachem* 5752, vol. 1, pp. 133–134; *Toras Menachem* 5745, vol. 2, pp. 1369–1370.

3 *Toras Menachem*, vol. 84, p. 500. See also *Sichos Kodesh* 5741, vol. 1, p. 235; *Sefer Hasichos* 5752, pp. 88ff. and 126f.

4 *Toras Menachem* 5750, vol. 4, p. 214; *Sefer Hasichos* 5748, vol. 2, p. 431.

5 *Toras Menachem* 5748, vol. 3, p. 128; *Toras Menachem* 5745, vol. 3, pp. 1782–1784.

6 *Toras Menachem* 5742, vol. 3, p. 1596; *Toras Menachem* 5745, vol. 3, p. 1781.

7 *Toras Menachem*, vol. 84, p. 113; *ibid.*, pp. 501 and 509–510.

8 *Toras Menachem* 5742, vol. 2, p. 882.

9 *Toras Menachem* 5745, vol. 1, p. 96; *Toras Menachem* 5744, vol. 1, pp. 382 and 384.

10 See for example *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 27, p. 279.

11 *Toras Menachem*, vol. 84, p. 509; *Toras Menachem* 5743, vol. 4, pp. 2006ff.; *Toras Menachem* 5743, vol. 3, pp. 1294ff.

12 *Toras Menachem*, vol. 84, p. 499. See also *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 25, p. 398.

13 *Toras Menachem* 5742, vol. 3, p. 1524; *Toras Menachem* 5744, vol. 2, p. 719; *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 24, p. 307.

14 *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 27, pp. 286–288.

15 *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 14, pp. 190–191 and fn. 30.

16 *Toras Menachem* 5742, vol. 4, p. 2143; *Toras Menachem* 5743, vol. 1, p. 410.

17 *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 24, p. 293.

18 *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 37, p. 132; *Toras Menachem* 5751, vol. 1, pp. 153–162.

19 *Toras Menachem* 5742, vol. 3, pp. 1524f.; *Toras Menachem* 5744, vol. 4, p. 2583.

20 *Toras Menachem* 5745, vol. 1, p. 102.

21 *Toras Menachem*, vol. 84, p. 193.

22 *Toras Menachem* 5742, vol. 3, p. 1597.