

Quotes of The Educator's Handbook: Principles, Reflections,
Directives of a Master Pedagogue by Rabbi Mordechai I. Hodakov
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It is the duty of the educator to concern himself with the welfare of every student as if he or she were his own flesh and blood; just as he turns to his own child—out of love and devotion showing fatherly concern and tenderness—so should his feelings be vis-a-vis his own students.¹

The teacher who is unpunctual becomes responsible for wasting the time of every student in the class—and this increases exponentially, according to the number of students present! And as if this were not enough, halachically he is regarded as one “who does G-d’s work in a fraudulent manner,” as explained in the *Shulchan Aruch* (Kitzur, 165:12).²

How can a teacher, who presumably believes in what he is doing, be late for class? Where is his sense of responsibility for the Torah study neglected by his students, for their precious time that he has squandered? Surely this qualifies as “doing G-d’s work in a fraudulent manner!” And where is his fear of Heaven, if he is able brazenly to disregard an explicit *halacha* in the *Shulchan Aruch*?³

The students must be left in no doubt as to what makes for modesty in dress. Similarly, very great care must be taken to avoid situations of *yichud*, (seclusion with a member of the opposite sex not of one’s close family), in accordance with the *halacha*.

When a student behaves immodestly—she becomes a provocation to the onlooker, and there is no telling where things may lead. Whatever the cause, with her remains the responsibility for what ensues, even if nothing could have been further from her mind. When discussing modesty, this concept—“causing the multitude to stray”—should be thoroughly explored.⁴

In an earlier generation, it was not unknown for a teacher to give a student a *patsch*—a light smack. Nowadays, however, (unless the teacher who does so is certain that he is doing it for the good of the student, and not just to vent his own anger-) this is forbidden, absolutely forbidden,

¹ 21

² 31

³ 32

⁴ 45-46

since we are not allowed to strike a fellow Jew. Experience has taught that laying one's hands on a student has only negative effects. We should therefore renounce the practice completely.⁵

We must take every opportunity to make the students aware of just how important a concept is contained in the words, "Cleave to His ways," (Rashi R'eh, 13:5). The Amidah prayer is a "resource" for this purpose, as these examples show: You are a warrior—the child must emulate the Creator and strive to be a warrior, to prevail over its "yetzer hara," (evil impulse). Who revives the dead—he must strive to revive the person who is spiritually dead—specifically, the wicked, who even in his lifetime is considered to be dead, (Berachot, 18b). But this has to be done with the purest of motives, and when this is the case, the fact will be borne in upon the other so strongly that he will be helped to change his ways.⁶

If we are informed that a Jewish child is in mortal danger, we are duty-bound to try and save it—failure to do so, G-d forbid, is a transgression of the commandment: "Do not stand idly by when your neighbor is in mortal danger," (Kedoshim, 19:16). Now if the Torah makes salvation of the body such a sacred obligation, can salvation of the soul be of a lower order! Are we not taught that one who leads another to sin is guilty of a greater wrong than one who takes his life? (Bamidbar Rabba, 21:5). If this is the case, even more than what threatens flesh and blood, must we fear what threatens the soul. The saving of a Jewish soul brings with it infinite responsibilities—and a level of merit and reward commensurate with such a deed. On the other hand, one should never think one's efforts are wasted, G-d forbid, for to save even one Jewish soul is to save an entire world.⁷

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⁵ 50

⁶ 137

⁷ 187