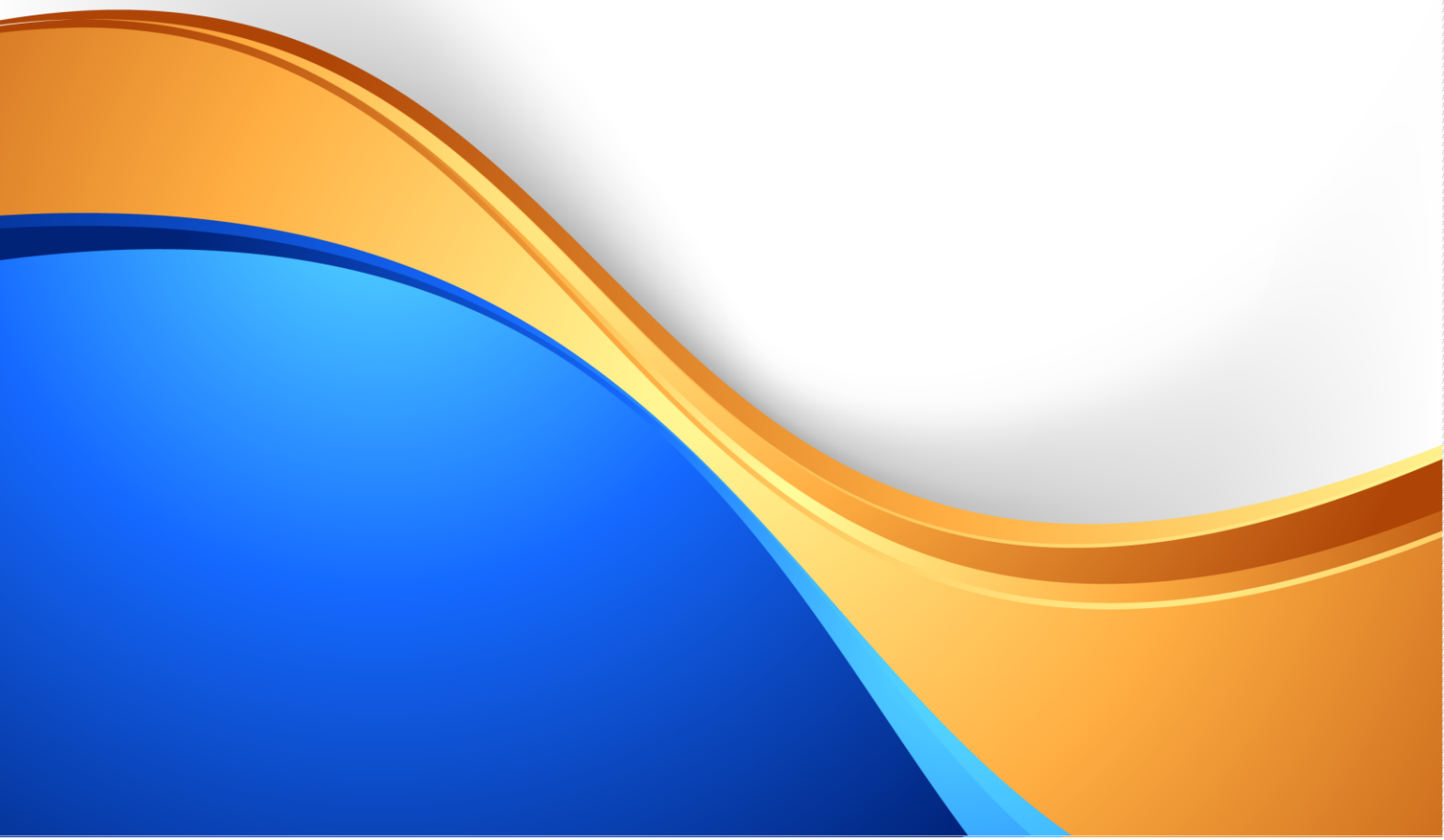




# Principles of Behaviour & Character Development



חִנּוּךְ לַנַּעַר עַל פִּי דַרְכוֹ  
גַם כִּי יִזְקֵן לֹא יִסּוּר מִמֶּנָּה

‘**Educate** a youth according to **his way**;  
he will not swerve from it in his old age’

*(Mishlei<sup>1</sup> 22:6)*

Revision	Date	Description	Produced by
A	29 June 2022   30 Sivan 5782	Draft – first iteration, for review	Rabbi Levi Milecki
0	5 July 2022   6 Tammuz 5782	Final – for distribution	

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<sup>1</sup> Proverbs

### Introduction

In Devarim<sup>2</sup>, Moshe Rabbeinu<sup>3</sup> states, 'בְּנִים אַתֶּם לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם – You are children to Hashem<sup>4</sup> your G-d'. Every child is considered a child of Hashem and is invested with a G-dly soul, a part of Hashem Himself. Hashem, in turn, grants parents and educators with the privilege of caring for and educating 'His' children.

Each child is created with his/her own unique purpose and mission, to make this world a more positive and holy place, a home for Hashem. Therefore, the purpose of education is not only to provide children with knowledge and skills. Rather, it is also to teach and guide children in the development of their personal character and behaviour, providing them with the capacity to live a meaningful life to their fullest potential - morally, religiously, and ethically.

It is therefore imperative that there is a clear understanding of the underlying Torah philosophy that guides character development and our management of behaviour at Kesser Torah College (KTC). The purpose of this document is to provide an outline of these essential principles based on Jewish Law and values and Chabad teachings.

### The Foundation of Education

When Hashem gave the Torah to the Jewish People on Har Sinai<sup>5</sup>, they stated 'נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע - We will do and (then) we will understand'. This laid the foundation for the Jewish People's relationship with Hashem. In all of Judaism, including behaviour, 'obedience' is required first, and only then, 'understanding'.

One's individuality, including one's thoughts, feelings and perspective, are essential for a meaningful and productive life, and must be encouraged and nurtured. However, they must be founded on Jewish Law, morals, and values.

Similarly, following authority and having structure and a sense of order are considered key foundations that lay the groundwork for successful learning and good behaviour. Within this context, procedures, routines and rules are the cornerstone of a proper education.

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<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy

<sup>3</sup> Moses

<sup>4</sup> Hashem, literally 'The Name', is one of the names of G-d

<sup>5</sup> Mount Sinai

### What is meant by Behaviour?

In Tehillim<sup>6</sup> it states 'סוּר מִרָע וַעֲשֵׂה-טוֹב – Turn from evil and do good'. This verse highlights the two distinct aspects of behaviour.

One is focused on self-regulation, teaching students to 'turn away' from undesirable behaviours so that they demonstrate respect to themselves, their peers, adults, and their environment.

The second aspect of behaviour is teaching students good habits, helping them to develop and refine their character traits so that they can flourish as kind, compassionate and contributing members of the community and society.

### Behaviour Must Be Taught

At the most basic level, Jewish education starts with training. Shlomo Hamelech<sup>7</sup> in Mishlei<sup>1</sup> states 'חֲנֹךְ לְנֶעַר עַל פִּי דַרְכּוֹ - Educate a youth according to his way'. The word חֲנֹךְ, literally 'to educate', means to guide and train. Students cannot be expected to know how to behave. Rather, appropriate behaviour needs to be modelled, taught, and practised until it becomes second nature to the student.

In Iyov<sup>8</sup> it states 'וַעֲבַר פָּרָא אָדָם יוֹלֵד - Man is created as a wild donkey'. Although every person is born with their own unique potential and an innate goodness, they need to be guided and educated in how to behave and act as 'one created in the image of G-d' so that they can use their talents and abilities to do good.

### Connection and Safety

Education begins with connection. This is a duty of all school staff, who must collectively create a nurturing environment and a sense of social and emotional safety through all of their interactions with students. In addition to supporting students to develop a healthy sense of confidence and their ability to self-regulate, 'connection' creates the platform for students to be open to learning and to improve on their behaviour.

This idea is illustrated by the teaching of the Talmud 'לְעוֹלָם תִּהְיֶה שְׂמָאל דּוֹחָה וְיָמִין מְקַרְבֵּת – One should discipline with the left hand but bring one close with the right hand'. As the dominant hand of most people, the right hand signifies where a person places their primary efforts.

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<sup>6</sup> Psalms

<sup>7</sup> King Solomon

<sup>8</sup> Job

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Each student arrives at school with his/her unique temperament and abilities, and at times, the pressures of their home and personal life. Teachers have the responsibility to 'draw their students close'; to make a concerted effort to understand the personal situation of each student, and to develop appropriate relationships and 'connections' with care and warmth.

In terms of teaching behaviour, this also clarifies that although obedience is expected, it is not through authoritarian methods, but rather through habituating the students in the expected behaviours, coupled with concern for their wellbeing.

### Good Choices

In Chassidic teachings we are taught 'כִּי הַמוֹחַ שְׁלִיט עַל הַלֵּב – The mind rules over the heart'. Being human, by definition, means that one has the ability to make choices, whether positive or negative. Together with training and habituating appropriate behaviours, students need to be taught that Hashem has given them the unique ability to use their mind to overcome the temptation to do wrong and instead make good choices.

The capacity to do so is through the student's Yetzer Tov<sup>9</sup>. Although children are emotional thinkers and the Yetzer Tov is not fully matured within a child until the age of Bar or Bas Mitzvah, it is a process that students need to be encouraged and supported to develop from a young age.

At the same time, it is important to recognise that the ability to have self-control and to make good choices are skills that are continuously developed throughout one's life.

Similarly, one has the ability to work through one's emotions and feelings, allowing one to take positive action in line with Judaism, their values and the behaviours expected of them. At times, it may be appropriate to engage in psychological methods employed in cognitive behavioural therapies such as CBT or ACT, pursuant with Torah philosophy and values.

### Incentives

The Talmud teaches that one should do the commandments of the Torah even for ulterior motives as 'שְׁלֵא לְשַׂמְהָ בְּאֵל לְשַׂמְהָ – Through doing it for the wrong motives, a person will come to doing it for the right motives'.

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<sup>9</sup> Good Inclination

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Although the ultimate goal in educating students is that they behave appropriately as it is the right thing to do, the Rambam<sup>10</sup> states clearly that incentives and rewards play a significant role in the education of children.

As the purpose of the incentive is to help students to develop positive behaviours and character traits, it is essential that the incentive or reward given is commensurate to the behaviour and that it will encourage further positive behaviour.

As students mature and grow older, incentives and rewards are decreased as the expected behaviours become second nature to them.

### Discipline & Consequences

In Mishlei<sup>1</sup> it states ‘כִּי שֶׁבַע יִפֹּל צַדִּיק וְקָם – The righteous fall seven times and rise each time’. This pasuk<sup>11</sup> highlights the idea that it is human nature to make mistakes and poor choices.

Before disciplining a student, one needs to discern the reason for the misbehaviour. Educators need to consider questions such as, ‘Was the act intentional?’, ‘Does the student understand what was expected of him/her?’, and ‘Is there something challenging going on for this student that we are not aware of?’. The purpose of any act of discipline is to guide the student to make better choices in the future. Therefore, only once an educator can answer these questions can he/she know if discipline is warranted and the appropriate method of discipline.

At times, it is necessary for a student to receive a consequence as a result of his or her actions. This is especially so if redirection and warnings have been given, but the student continues to misbehave. However, as stated earlier, discipline must be done through using the ‘left hand’.

One must ensure that the dignity of the student is guarded at all times. A teacher needs to consider the welfare of the student and must check him/herself to ensure he/she is coming from a place of care and concern for the student being disciplined.

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<sup>10</sup> Maimonides

<sup>11</sup> The word pasuk refers to a verse in the Torah

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Furthermore, one must be careful to not evoke a sense of helplessness and despondency within the student, giving the impression that he or she is a bad or 'naughty' student. Rather, students need to be given both verbal and subliminal messaging that the educator believes in him/her, encouraging a feeling within that he/she has the capacity to overcome his/her challenges, and that it is only a matter of will and determination.

### Teshuva - Restoration

An essential component of behaviour management is providing students with the opportunity and support to make amends for the wrong they did. This includes recognising the wrong committed, making it up to any persons wronged and committing to not doing the deed again.

As part of this process, students must be given a voice where they have an opportunity to explore and understand what they have done wrong. It is only through this that they can truly reflect on their behaviour and choices and therefore make meaningful change for the better.

*When a tree is young, every good care given to it in that early stage, however insignificant it may seem, is an investment that amplifies itself many times, with the full effects evident in the mature, fruit-bearing tree.*

*Likewise in the education of children and adolescents, a small change for the good can cause the greatest and most significant results throughout the lifetime of the student.*

*Therefore, every effort is justified in the field of Education, for what is at stake is the whole future of the student and his life-long benefit.*

- Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe



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