

Elul WhatsApp / Telegram Messages

Day 12 – Friday 13th September

How do you get your children to live your values? How do you get them to grow? Well, I'll tell you a little story. My late father who had come to Britain as a refugee at the age of six, had to leave school at the age of fourteen to help support his family. He sold *schmutter* [fabrics] in London's East End. It's like the lower east side of New York. And he was never tremendously successful at business and he was one of those people who didn't get the opportunities that he might have done in another time, another place.

But one thing I remember, he used to take me to synagogue when I was five years old, and each Shabbat I would come back and on our walk together to home, I would ask him questions, "Why do we do this? What does that mean?" And he always gave me the same answer, which I never forgot. He used to say to me, "Jonathan, I never had a Jewish education. So I can't answer your questions. But one day you will have the education I didn't have. And when that happens, you will teach me the answers to those questions."

One of our great commentators, Rabbi Moshe Alshich, asked a very good question. It says in the Shema in Deuteronomy chapter six, "*veshinumtam levaneicha*", you shall teach these things carefully to your children. And he asked a very good question. He said, "How can we be sure that we really will teach things to our children? We can try, but it's not within our hands. It's within our children's hands. How do we act so that we know we will succeed?" And he said, "The Bible gives the answer. The Torah gives the answer." Just two verses earlier, it says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might."

It is what you love, that your children will learn to love and there is no other way to teach your children. It's not what you say to them. It's not even what you do to them. It is the way your life reflects your loves. Those are the things our children will absorb and eventually make their own. Or as the English poet, William Wordsworth wrote in his great poem, *The Prelude*, "What we love, others will love, and we will show them how."