



## Clanking Chains: “Paideuo”: Education in the Old Testament; Responsibilities of Parents in Teaching Culture, Prov 1:8

### B. Education in the Old Testament.

Keeping the moral commandment became an obligation for members of the covenant. God gives man the commandments, punishes infringements, rewards obedience. God leads His people to the goal appointed by Him.

In everyday life the father is the guardian of the Law. He is the responsible agent of tradition. He must instruct the younger generation. See Deuteronomy 6:4-7. Thus the Law survives.

For God's chosen people the Law is the revealed standard of growth in discipline and order, in faith and confidence.

The Hebrew Old Testament has a whole series of words for teaching and direction, for chastisement and correction, but only the one word מוֹסֵר *musar* can denote “to educate.” This word can denote “rearing” in the moral sphere as “correction,” but it can also take on a more intellectual sense and stand for “culture” in the sense of possession of wisdom, knowledge, and discernment. Different meanings have to be differentiated in its application: (1) the education of children which is training and which uses chastisement; (2) learning which includes intellectual culture; (3) the moral and religious shaping of the righteous which embraces instruction in wisdom but finds its fulfillment in correction by suffering; and finally (4) the training of the people, which has its basis and content in hearing, learning and obeying the divine commandments, but which must often be enforced by severe chastisements. Censure, admonition and warning play a great role in education.

Many young people participate in sports. When they do they place themselves under the authority of the coach and the rules of the sport in which they wish to participate.

The coach will demand certain asceticism from his prospects: proper diet, sleep, and exercise. Dependent on age there might be restrictions against alcohol and tobacco. These amount to the moral standards that are required to excel up to one's potential in the sport.

Then there are training rules established. This involves a regimen of physical conditioning that is designed to maximize one performance in the sport. This concerns health standards related to the sport.

There are certain requirements regarding technique that stress the finer points of execution that are designed to maximize the proper execution of the position one plays. These address the professional demands of the position one plays within the sport.

There are performance standards that are expected, often described positively as hustle, attitude, and intestinal fortitude. Negatively this is described as loafing, head problems, and choking. These emphasize the integrity of the performer or his lack of it.

There are rules of the game that establish boundaries for fair competition and provide guidelines for maximizing one's assets and advantages within these boundaries. If a competitor violates these rules it results in penalties and even banishment from the game thus hurting the team's chances for success. Rules relate to the establishment code of the sport. They maintain order and insure a fair competition and honorable result.

When athletes fail or rebel in any of these areas he must be disciplined. This punishment can involve additional training, physical exercise, suspension, fine, or banishment.



Athletes understand these concepts and requirements. Fans of the sport observe the top performers and rag those who do not give their best. Those who put in the time and work, learn their position, concentrate under pressure, execute their assignments, maintain the attitude of a winner, and consistently put forth their best effort will win more games than they will lose.

Such athletes would resent the coaches if they allowed the slackers, complainers, and head cases to get by without the administration of appropriate discipline during the course of a season.

Consequently, no believer ought to expect the God of this universe, Who has established standards of conduct and execution for members of His family, to ignore violations of divine rules and regulations regarding thought, word, and deed. Good conduct will be blessed by God but bad conduct will be punished.

The principle is that in the athletic arena, winners become winners because they submit to a system and when necessary they respond to discipline. No one is successful in sports unless he are able to orient and adjust to the standards required of the winner: (1) moral, (2) training, (3), professional, (4) attitude, and (5) conduct.

Failures in these areas will ultimately become known and result not only in the player becoming a loser but also the team becoming a loser.

Such is true for the child. Such is true for the believer individually. Such is true for a local church which does not approach the Word, its inculcation, and its application professionally. This will ultimately be reflected in the downtrends of a client nation.

Frankfurt philosophy produces downtrends while Bible doctrine insures uptrends.

According to the wisdom teaching preserved, for example, in Proverbs, education cannot dispense with corporal punishment:

**Proverbs 13:24** - He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines [ מוֹסֵר *musar* ] him diligently.

**Proverbs 29:15** - The rod and reproof gives wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.

But discipline must be in love, not anger. It drives out folly:

**Proverbs 22:15** - Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline [ מוֹסֵר *musar* ] will remove it far from him.

These sayings bear witness to the responsibility of the father and mother for their children. Thus Scripture admonishes at the outset in:

**Proverbs 1:8** - Hear, my son, your father's instruction [ מוֹסֵר *musar* ], and do not forsake your mother's teaching [ תּוֹרָה *torah* ].

Please observe that the duties of the father and mother coordinate in the education, instruction, and discipline of the child. The word used to define the father's involvement is מוֹסֵר *musar*. It implies not only academic instruction but also principles that instill the values of the Israelites' culture, and instruction in wisdom and discernment that has application in public life and in spiritual worship.

On the other hand, the word used to define the mother's involvement is תּוֹרָה *torah*. This is the word for the Law, the first five books of the Bible also called the Pentateuch.



However, the word literally means “teaching” and “instruction” regarding the divine order of things. The mother teaches the children with regard to sin and how to deal with it through rebound. She instructs with regard to moral values and thus communicates the norms and standards found in Scripture that lead to that desired objective in the child. As she learns doctrinal principles from her husband she conveys these to her children. When the children reject, violate, or ignore her instruction then she informs her husband of the transgressions and he deals with them through discipline which includes certain levels of chastisement from loss of privilege to corporal punishment.

Mothers teach policy that is developed by the father. His policies find their source in the culture developed by his ancestors. This culture recognizes traditional values that have crystallized into community standards. These policies have to do with the maintenance of civil order through the observance of moral standards. Culture also recognizes spiritual standards which reflect the desires and mandates found in Scripture. These establish standards for thought, decision and action that reflect divine viewpoint and the development of reciprocal love that motivates honorable service to and worship for God.

Thus both the father and mother instruct. The father establishes policy and the mother teaches that policy. Mothers observe violations of these policies and report them to the father who enforces penalty clauses. Corporal punishment is reserved for those occasions when the father is convinced that his child is consciously and knowingly in rebellion against his policies. The basic rules that maintain order into the home are: (1) do not disobey your mother; (2) do not disrespect your mother, (3) do not talk back to your mother, (4) do not dispute your mother; (5) do not contradict you mother; (6) do not correct your mother; (7) do not argue with your mother; (8) do not deceive your mother, (9) do not lie to your mother, and (10) do not strike your mother. All of these are worthy of corporal punishment.