

These are the words of my wise, eloquent, beloved, glorious teacher, Rabbi Avraham Ber HaCohen Gottlober, may his light long shine, who wrote them with his hand after reading this letter of mine, and I copied them word by word from his letter.

This letter on the subject of education deserves not only to be inscribed in a book with a pen of iron, but also to be translated into the language of the land, in order to reveal its beauty to the people and nobles. Perhaps from this will emerge an opportunity for its writer to raise his horn on behalf of the children of his people, because fortunate are children who have a teacher and guide who understands the true holiness of education—they will sing for joy of the majesty of the Lord because they will not lack for any good thing: they will be as trees planted by a stream of water. And as for me, your beloved teacher, my heart is happy too, because you have become wise, my son. May the Lord open for you the treasury of goodness and the treasury of wisdom, and endlessly shower you with the abundance of His blessing, and may you be like a well-irrigated garden whose waters will never fail and which will bring forth new fruit every month, and although your beginnings were humble, your future is very bright.

Avraham Ber Ben-Chaim HaKohen Gottlober

14 May 1857

Starokonstantinov

A Letter on the Subject of Education

By Sholem-Yankev Abramovitsh
(Mendele Moykher-Sforim)

TRANSLATED BY RI J. TURNER

I approach the following question unwillingly, as it stands at the zenith of inquiry into the nature of the human soul and its magnificent properties, which are beyond my ken, and it concerns other deep fields of knowledge which are as elevated as the Terebinth of Moreh, and which reveal, after serious consideration, the behaviors and fitting virtues which a teacher of children must cultivate in himself, and additionally, that not everyone who wishes to do so can haphazardly crown himself a teacher—but rather, one may do so only after significant labor and a thorough acquaintance with the character of a child’s soul and a sincere effort to examine its powers and its excitabilities. There are quite a few fields of knowledge that are essential, so much so that lack of familiarity with them renders teaching impossible, just as a tradesman cannot ply his trade without the appropriate equipment. A person such as myself, poor in knowledge, has little right to study or to interpret such arcane and inscrutable matters.

But it is your complaints which have brought me to undertake this daunting investigation. I have heard, O my brother, how you complain and fume about your students, and accuse them of various crimes and evil deeds. I have heard from you and from your townsfellows how troubled you are by their habits and actions, that you sometimes guide them by means of the reproofing rod; you become angry with them and rage at them until your throat burns from shouting and your heart aches with rancor and anguish. Thus I have heard you, my brother, pacing

and groaning in bitterness of spirit. Therefore, I respond to you today in the form of the following exposition, although I myself am insufficiently versed in the matter.

I merely wish to demonstrate to you that your complaint is in fact against yourself, as you and only you are guilty of the reckless deeds of which you accuse the children. Their corruption is your burden, my brother; you are answerable for their flaws—because your heart lacks the knowledge necessary to your esteemed and elevated profession. You do not know how to investigate its roots or the principles which would enable you to educate the children in accordance with their nature, and to engage with them wisely according to the will and temperament of each child. For what is the value of a teacher who believes that only by means of a cattle-prod can he make his students wise; a teacher who imagines that only with the rod of his anger, his rage, and his fury can he imbue them with a changed spirit, a spirit of knowledge and understanding that shall replace their juvenility and wildness? If you yourself are such a one, my brother, then it would be preferable for you to cease teaching, and rather go forth to follow at the heels of a flock, and range with your Stave of Union near the shepherds' tents.

A wise German thinker once said: "Any evil or corrupt quality which a teacher discovers in his student, he should first seek earnestly in himself." By this, he did not mean to say that the teacher actually possesses the flaw in question. Rather, he meant that he should attribute responsibility for the flaw to himself, to his own failure to comprehend the nature and temperament of children. I will briefly explain to you the intention behind this injunction. It is not in a child's nature to do good or evil consciously, in the way of a grown-up person. That is, "intention" can be attributed only to a person who has finished developing and has come to his senses. A child, on the other hand, is not yet mature, and his tender consciousness is still bound up in the mist of childhood, and like a sapphire buried in the sand, awaits a wise man, a capable artist, who shall uncover and unleash its radiant beauty. This is why all the acts of a child, the good and the evil, the pleasant and the offensive, are to be considered incidental or emotional behaviors. What I mean to say is that

the child performs them without intention or consideration, but rather in response to his feelings. That which gives him pleasure or happiness, he rushes to do; and, if the opposite—he is reluctant.

Thus, we cannot judge children according to their actions, saying, “This one is a sinner and this one is a saint, this one is good and this one is evil”—just as we cannot call animals wise or foolish, pious or malicious according to their natural behaviors; e.g., we would not say that an ox who eats grass and labors in the sweat of his brow, ploughing and tilling the earth, is pious; or that a wild donkey accustomed to the desert is a scoundrel. Therefore, each and every teacher who undertakes the holy task of edifying young children and guiding them down the path of wisdom and good character, must keep in mind that his charges are not grown men who are seasoned in knowledge, but rather animal creatures who are likely to acquire human good sense only if their mentor makes an effort so great as to demand his entire power of reasoning and insight.

And just as a shadow which is cast upon the earth must needs be commensurate in type and size to that which casts it, and neither its size nor its angle can be independent of its source—just so, all of the qualities and character-traits of children are according to the qualities and behaviors of their mentors and teachers. Thus, if some corrupt trait should be noticed in a child, then a good teacher who loves the truth ought to conduct a detailed investigation of his own deeds, and he ought to assume responsibility for the flaw.

Indeed, the teacher should come to understand that just as arrows are subject to the will of a mighty man, who may loose them far into the distance or only a very short ways, just so are children subject to the will of their teacher, who will lead them wherever he wishes, because their pure and innocent hearts, unblemished and free of all dross, are in his hands for him to mold according to his whim. And that which he cultivates within them will become their habit, and even as they grow older, they will not depart from it. And this was the true intention of our Sages, who said (Pirkei Avot 4:20) that when a child learns, it is as if ink is inscribed upon fresh parchment.¹ By this, they meant that a teacher’s words descend into the chambers of a child’s heart, and there

they act within him according to the teacher's intentions. Just so, letters written on fresh parchment are formed in size and measure according to the intention of their writer. This is in contrast to scraped parchment: the letters written upon such material come out quite dissimilar to the writer's original intention, because the ink flows every which way due to the scrapings, and the letters which the writer holds in his imagination and the letters which in fact emerge from his pen are entirely different one from the other. This is why the Sages said that when an elder learns, it is as if ink is inscribed upon scraped parchment.

After he has reached clarity on these matters, the teacher must prepare and sanctify himself for two great tasks, which are necessary for the sake of his work, and these are:

1. To cleave to honest virtues and correct behavior, and to acquire a wise and pure heart in order to merit to wear the teacher's crown; as our Sages said: "Purify yourself before you set out to purify others."
2. Once the teacher has fully developed his character and his virtues, he must then come to understand the hidden recesses of his students' nature, and investigate deeply in order to determine how and to what extent he will succeed in awakening the talents slumbering in the deepest chambers of his students' hearts, and how he will activate their hidden faculties of good sense. This must serve as the foundation for the educator who undertakes this divine work without guile.

It is, however, necessary to take into account the difference between the aforementioned two imperatives. In the case of the first, the matter is between the teacher and his own self, and the exhortation is a positive one, meaning, we may obligate the teacher to acquire all the necessary virtues. I will call these "positive commandments," meaning, it is possible to tell him, "Do such and such." There are quite a few such commandments. I will list only those which I consider to be general principles encompassing many sub-principles, and these are:

- A) A good heart, because a good heart leads to all human virtues, and this positive commandment encompasses several other commandments evident to anyone with insight.

- B) Faithfulness, meaning that his entire heart must be given over to his work, and he must turn away from anything which prevents him from occupying himself with his students to the extent required; teaching shall be his only trade, and all his musings shall be dedicated only to the thriving of his students. Of one who is tempted and led astray by other worldly matters it is written (Jeremiah 48:10): “Cursed is the one who does the Lord’s work treacherously.”
- C) Patience: He must bow in love and willingness under the weight of his suffering, and shoulder all the anguish and exhaustion involved in this profession; the desirability of this virtue is so great that it is superfluous to explain it.
- D) Circumspection: He must consider every step he takes, and not act out of fright or haste. His tutelage should be as dripping rain, and his words should flow like dew, restful and pleasant, in order to entice his students to follow him, that their spirits will find him soothing; this is a virtue of the wise, as it is written (Ecclesiastes 9:17): “The words of the wise ring out quietly.”
- E) Equanimity: This is the most praiseworthy virtue of the wise; as our Sages said (Pirkei Avot 5:11): “One who is slow to anger and easy to appease—he is devout.” This virtue is undoubtedly necessary. He who is quick to anger—let him not be a teacher! If he is foolish and pollutes his own spirit, how shall he venture to correct another? If he himself is not judicious, how shall he superintend others? If he is not compassionate toward himself, how much less will he be compassionate toward others! And this is a trait of a fool; as it is written (Ecclesiastes 7:9), “Anger rests in the bosom of fools.”
- F) He must be well-spoken. He must be an expert in proper language usage, and speak correctly when he teaches. And he must teach his students to do the same, for lo, they will choose the language of the crafty. Clear speech is also beneficial in implanting knowledge permanently within his students, because when he does not stumble over his words, his students are able to understand all that which he teaches; as it is written (Proverbs 16:23), “The heart of the wise

man teaches his mouth, and imparts a lesson to his lips,” meaning, a teacher with a wise heart strives to educate even his mouth so that it will speak correctly, because his lips are the instrument by which he provides wisdom, i.e., lessons, to his students, by means of which they will understand and absorb each word that is fitly spoken. And our Sages said (Eruvin 53a), “The Judeans who were exact with their language, their learning endured, but the Galileans who were not exact with their language, their learning did not endure.”

All in all, every teacher must take care to cleave to these upright character traits and to eschew their opposites.

The second matter, that of the relationship between the teacher and student, is different, because in this case it is impossible to establish rules or to define the particular methods which alone will allow the teacher to awaken the child’s soul from its juvenile slumber and to bring to fruition the talents hidden within it—because every child possesses a unique nature and composition. A single method can benefit one child and damage another. Just as children differ from one another materially, i.e. in their physical bodies, such that it is not possible to prepare a single shoe so that it will fit every child’s foot—just so, children differ from each other in their minds and in their characters, and therefore it is impossible to identify a single rule or method that will prove effective in shaping the virtues of every child’s spirit. Just as we do not find fault with a foot whose size is not in accordance with the measure of a shoe made for another person’s foot, similarly blameless is the child who fails to learn and improve as a result of means and methods which caused another child to improve. And because children differ from each other in character, the administration of educational methods rests wholly in the hands of the teacher, who must be wise and insightful, and this is what the wisest of all men intended when he said (Proverbs 22:6): “Educate a child according to his path, etc.,” meaning, become well-acquainted with your students, and develop a strategy to educate them according to their traits, each and every one according to his nature and his temperament.

However, there are matters pertaining to the relationship between the teacher and his students which can be examined, but only in a

negative sense. I will call these “negative commandments,” meaning that we can warn the teacher against them, and order him to abstain and desist from them. These are: Do not become enraged! Do not yell! Do not hit! Do not whip!—because not by way of anger and rage, not with slaps and punches will you pound the wildness out of a child’s heart and transform him into a new person. If you beat him, he will merely perform his many childish misdeeds in secret—not out of malice or treachery, because those are not in his nature, as we have said, but because he was born free, and because he has as yet but little knowledge of turning from evil to choose good, and it is the teacher’s very task to enlighten him. So a teacher ought to interact with students wisely, in a gentle, pleasant manner, and he ought to guide them cleverly, to understand of their own accord which path is good and right—Do not mistreat them!

Do not humiliate a child who is perverse toward you! lest he begin to hide his behavior from you and thus learn to lie to you. The evil that comes of the latter is much worse; therefore our Sages said in their wisdom: “Let your student’s honor be as dear to you as your own” (Pirkei Avot 4:12).

Do not relate to him in the way of a lord ruling over his slave! lest he begin to hate you and to look upon you as a cruel taskmaster, and school become for him a place of weeping and misery.

Our sages included all these and similar admonitions in the single cautionary statement: “He who is irate cannot teach” (Pirkei Avot 2:5).

Do not weigh a child down with study that exceeds his capacities! and do not expect of him greatness that exceeds his intellect! else you will be likened to one who seeks fruit during the blooming season. I have already mentioned once that you should consider children to be nothing more than animals, who will acquire sense only after much time has passed. Just as it is impossible to compel a nursing infant by means of force to stand on its feet and walk before it has developed physical strength and health, just so is it impossible to demand words of wisdom, ethics, and erudition from a youth whose spiritual, intellectual, and intuitive powers have not yet developed to maturity.

Anyone who is wise will understand that these are the rules for

correct conduct. Anyone who is insightful will perceive them, because the paths of education are astounding! Intelligent teachers will follow these laws and will thus impart the same wisdom to their students—and fools will become ensnared in them and will ensnare many others in the process.

Now that we have completed our discussion of the knowledge, habits, and virtues demanded of any teacher who is to serve in the field of education in the proper manner, and who intends to shoulder the work with sincerity, let us return to consider the matter of education itself, its exaltation and exquisiteness which stand above all else in the world. Education is the foundation of happiness and success in human life on large and small scales; i.e., the welfare and accomplishment of both the individual and the community are thoroughly dependent upon it; and the fortunes of individual and nation turn on the superiority or inferiority of the educational system of the times. When a child emerges from its mother's womb as naked and bare as an animal of the forest, education takes him to its bosom and offers him a breast from which to suckle knowledge, virtues, wisdom, and ethics; and teaches him the ways of compassion, justice, and charity; until he grows up upon its knee and becomes a wise and contented adult. Later on, it is education that informs him that a person must concern himself not only with his own well-being and happiness, but also with the well-being and success of the community as a whole, and that his greatest desire and aspiration should be to do only good and to devote himself faithfully to society, and that he should deny himself pleasures and luxuries that are damaging or destructive toward the other members of his community; because men upon the earth are as building-stones, which are collected one by one and erected together into a strong and fortified wall. Fortunate is the society whose good and wise members choose the way of wisdom, morality, and knowledge! Fortunate is the community which finds itself thus situated. Like the everlasting mountains will it stand, generation after generation, forever, unshakeable.

Sh.Y. Ben-Chaim Moyshe Abramovitch.

¹ [Author's footnote:] It cannot be said that the intention of the Sages in this *mishna* was to teach us that a child's memory is stronger than that of an elder, just as fresh parchment is superior to scraped, i.e., that when a child learns, his learning is engraved in his memory as if written (i.e. as if it were ink written) on fresh parchment, whereas words are erased from the memory of an elder like the writing that is scraped off of parchment. If this were the case, then **the parchment** would be the central comparatum, and what would be the meaning of "scraped"? For is scraped parchment utterly incapable of being written upon? While it is true that an elder has a poor memory, who would say that he lacks the ability to understand matters as well as a child does? Thus the comparandum would not correspond to the comparatum. Additionally, the word "ink" would be superfluous, and they should have said instead, "When a child learns, it is as if one writes on fresh parchment and does not afterwards scrape it, and when an elder learns, it is as if one writes and then does afterwards scrape it." Thus, I am inclined to interpret that the central comparatum is the ink, and the intention of the Sages is as I have explained it, and one must look closely at the word "ink" as it is employed by the Sages in order to understand this.

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Annotation of “A Letter on the Subject of Education”

by Sholem-Yankev Abramovitsh

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I. A partial list of Biblical and Talmudic allusions which are not cited in the text:

Gottlober introduction

1. “sing for joy of the majesty of the lord”—Isaiah 24:14
2. “lack for any good thing”—Psalms 34:11
3. “trees planted by a stream of water”—Psalms 1:3
4. “garden whose waters will never fail”—Isaiah 58:11
5. “bring forth new fruit every month”—Ezekiel 47:12
6. “although your beginnings were humble, your future is very bright”
—Job 8:7

Mendele’s Letter

1. “Terebinth of Moreh”—c.f. Genesis 12:6.
2. “the reproving rod”—c.f. Proverbs 22:15
3. “cattle-prod”—c.f. Judges 3:31
4. “rod of his anger”—c.f. Isaiah 10:5
5. “Stave of Union”—c.f. Zechariah 11:7.
6. “shepherds’ tents”—c.f. Song of Songs 1:8.
7. “a wild donkey accustomed to the desert”—Jeremiah 2:24.
8. “even as they grow older, they will not depart from it”
—c.f. Proverbs 22:6.
9. “the teacher’s crown”—Pirkei Avot 1:13.
10. “Purify yourself before you set out to purify others”—c.f. Sanhedrin 18a (“adorn yourself first, and then adorn others”).
11. “language of the crafty”—Job 15:5.
12. “fitly spoken”—c.f. Proverbs 25:11.
13. “Fortunate is the community which finds itself thus situated”
—c.f. Psalm 144:15.
14. “the everlasting mountains”—Habakkuk 3:6.
15. “unshakeable”—compare Proverbs 10:30 and elsewhere.

II. Partial comparison of the Hebrew and Yiddish texts of the letter with attention to translation issues:

Use of modern, technical or abstract terminology in the Yiddish translation in comparison with the more poetic, metonymous Hebrew original:

1. “inquiry into the nature of the human soul”: The Hebrew phrase here is *hahakirah betiv’ey nefesh ha’adam*,” literally meaning “the investigation into the natures of the soul of the person.” The Yiddish translator (Y. Rotenberg) renders it *psikhologishe forshungen fun der mentshns neshome*,” i.e. “psychological research into the human soul.” This is one example of the use in the Yiddish translation of more modern, technical terminology than that which appears in the Hebrew original.
2. “deep fields of knowledge”: In Hebrew, *yedi’ot amukot*—deep knowledges. In Yiddish, *tifere visnshaftn*—deeper sciences or branches of scholarship—again a more modern register. In some sense, the comparison of the two phrases in English is misleading, since the Yiddish word *visnshaft* can in fact be used to mean “knowledge” (and the root *visn*, to know, is immediately apparent in the word itself); however, in modern Yiddish *visnshaft* is more regularly used in a technical sense pertaining to an academic context, whereas *kentenishn* or even *khokhmes* would be more easily understood as meaning “branches of knowledge/wisdom” in a less technical sense.
3. “behaviors and fitting virtues”: In Hebrew, *hovat hahanhagot umidot na’otiot sheyavor lo*—the obligation to select appropriate behaviors and personal characteristics; in Yiddish, *metodn [er] darf oysklaybn*—methods he ought to choose. A more practical and modern, less elevated framing.
4. “your heart lacks the knowledge”: Another case in which the choice of words in the Yiddish text is more prosaic and less metonymous than the Hebrew text (Hebrew: *yehsar lekha lev mevin bekhoh hayediyot* [you lack a heart which is understanding of all the

knowledges] vs. Yiddish: *du farshteyst nisht un bazitst nisht ale yedies* [you don't understand or possess all the knowledges]).

5. “engage with them wisely”: Again, a more modern, even “Daytshmerish” register is reflected in the Yiddish text here (*farnunft*, vs. *hokhmah* in the Hebrew text).
6. “you sometimes guide them by means of the reprovng rod”: the Yiddish text reads *du bashtrofst zey oft* [you punish them often], in keeping with the trend toward decreasing the use of metonymy in the text and increasing its level of abstraction.
7. “only by means of a cattle-prod...only with the rod of his anger”: similarly here, the Yiddish text reads merely “*bloyz mit kas un grimtsorn*” [only with anger and wrath].

Abbreviation and increased concision:

1. “which are beyond my ken”: This phrase is omitted in the Yiddish translation, ostensibly to reduce the complexity of the syntax and improve the flow of the Yiddish sentence. Indeed, Yiddish is a much less concise language than Hebrew and cannot tolerate the dense, heavily branched syntax that Mendele favors here. (English is also a much less concise language than Hebrew, for that matter—this phrase, which is expressed in a single word in the Hebrew original—*mimeni*—demands five words in the English.) In general, the translator of the Yiddish text seems to favor concision and omits several phrases and even entire sentences to that end (see also the discussion of removed parallelisms, below).
2. “how troubled you are by their habits and actions”: This phrase is missing in the Yiddish text (Hebrew: *da’agatkha ve’et kol yagonkha mihinagam uma’aseihem*).
3. “Thus I have heard you...”: This sentence is missing in the Yiddish text (Hebrew: *koh ahi shama’tikha mitnoded umit’ane’ah bemar nefesh*).
4. “according to the will and temperament of each child”: this phrase is missing in the Yiddish text (Hebrew: *keratson veteva’ na’ar vena’ar*).

Reduction of intertextual load of the text (omission of allusions):

1. “Terebinth of Moreh”: This allusion (Genesis 12:6) is absent in the Yiddish translation. This seems to reflect a (conscious or unconscious) desire to reduce the intertextual load of the text, or perhaps simply difficulty or lack of investment in preserving the allusions in Yiddish translation—thereby placing the emphasis on conveying the content of the Hebrew text rather than its style.
2. “the reprovng rod”: This allusion (Proverbs 22:15) is missing in the Yiddish text (Hebrew: *beshevet musar tifikedem lerega'im* [you visit upon them the reprovng rod at certain moments]; Yiddish: *du bashtrofst zey oft* [you punish them often]).
3. “only by means of a cattle-prod...only with the rod of his anger”: These two Biblical allusions (“cattle-prod,” Judges 3:31 and “rod of anger,” Isaiah 10:5) are missing in the Yiddish (“*bloyz mit kas un grimtsorn*” [only with anger and wrath]).
4. “Stave of Union... shepherds’ tents”: These two Biblical allusions (Zechariah 11:7, Song of Songs 1:8) are absent in the Yiddish text.

Cases of removed, abbreviated, or preserved parallelism:

1. “and a sincere effort to examine its powers and its excitabilities”: This phrase is omitted in the Yiddish translation, presumably because it is redundant: redundancy (also known, less pejoratively, as repetitive parallelism) is an important feature of Mendele’s style here, in imitation of Biblical Hebrew. The Yiddish translator does preserve many instances of parallelism, but far from all.
2. “renders teaching impossible”: Here is a case in which the parallelism is preserved in the Yiddish text (although not preserved here in the English translation): *tsu dertsien un tsu lernen* [to educate and to teach]—and in the Hebrew: *lehorot velelamed*.
3. “to study or to interpret”: Another case in which the parallelism is preserved in the Yiddish text (Hebrew: *lahkor velidrosk*; Yiddish: *araynklern un fartifn zikh*). However, later in the sentence another incidence (“arcane and inscrutable matters”) is omitted entirely

(Hebrew: *inyanim muflim umekhusim*; Yiddish: simply *inyonim* [matters]).

4. “complain and fume”: Here the parallelism is preserved and even extended in the Yiddish by means of the addition of adverbs (Hebrew: *mitlonen umitkatsef* [complain and rage]; Yiddish: *baklogst zikh zeyer un beyzerst zikh keseyder* [complain bitterly and rage constantly]).
5. “crimes and evil deeds”: Here the parallelism is removed in the Yiddish (Hebrew: *alilot vefesha'im* [exploits and crimes]; Yiddish: *farsheydene shlekhte maysim* [various evil deeds]).
6. “you become angry ... and rage...your throat burns ... and your heart aches”: These two cases of parallelism are absent in the Yiddish text (Hebrew: *te'énaf vetig'ar* [rage and reprimand] vs. Yiddish: *du shrayst af zey* [you shout at them]; and Hebrew: *nihar g'ronkha ... velibkha davay* [your throat burns ... and your heart aches] vs. Yiddish *dos harts tut dir vey* [your heart aches]). However, later in the sentence one incidence of parallelism is preserved (“rancor and anguish”: Hebrew: *ka'as veyagon* [anger and anguish]; Yiddish: *kas un farbiterung* [anger and bitterness]).
7. “your complaint is in fact against yourself”: This clause is missing in the Yiddish text. Arguably, though less obviously, another case of removed parallelism (as paired with the following clause: “you and only you are guilty”).
8. “...you are answerable for their flaws”: The parallelism here is abbreviated in the Yiddish, and a chiasmus which appears in the Hebrew is thereby omitted (Hebrew: *mish'hatam akh bakh ahi, akh bakh mumam* [their disfiguration is only in you, my brother, only in you is their deformity] vs. Yiddish: *du bist shuldik in zeyer ibergefirtkeyt un felern* [you are guilty of their corruption and flaws]).
9. “esteemed and elevated”: This parallelism is missing in the Yiddish text (Hebrew: *hanikhbedah vehana'alah* [esteemed and elevated]; Yiddish: *vikhtiker* [important]).
10. “roots or ... principles”: This parallelism is present in the Yiddish text

(Hebrew: *shorsheiah ve'ikareiah* [its roots and principles] and Yiddish: *ire soydes un ikrim* [its secrets and principles]).

11. “to educate... and to engage”: The parallelism is preserved here in the Yiddish (Hebrew: *leḥanekh...ul’hitnaheg* and Yiddish: *dertsien... un bageyn zikh*).
12. “who believes that only by means...”: This parallelism is abbreviated in the Yiddish text (Hebrew: *bemalmed bakar levad yaḥshov lehaḥkim ... rak beshevet apo... yedameh latet lahem ruav aḥeret* [only by means of a cattle-prod thinks he to bring them wisdom... only with the rod of his anger... does he imagine providing them with a different spirit] vs. Yiddish: *velkher meynt, az bloyz mit kas un grimtsorn vet er konen klug makhn ... un arayngebn in zey a hekhern gayst* [who thinks that only with anger and wrath will he be able to make [them] wise... and provide them with a higher spirit]).
13. “knowledge and understanding... juvenility and wildness”: Two instances of parallelism are preserved here (Hebrew: *da’at vebinah and holeilut veyaldut* [grievous madness and childishness] and Yiddish: *visn un farshtand and vildkeyt un shtiferayen* [wildness and mischief]).

Modernization of punctuation:

1. “...its powers and its excitabilities.”: The Yiddish translation breaks this sentence, and many other sentences in the letter, into two or more shorter sentences. In fact, the Hebrew letter is not fully punctuated in a contemporary sense, but rather contains long run-on passages whose flow is paced by parallelism rather than punctuation, in imitation of a Biblical style—and indeed, many of the paragraphs end with a colon rather than a period, again like some printings of Biblical texts. Aside from the colons and some stray exclamation points, the original Hebrew text is mostly marked with short vertical lines that function both as commas and as periods. There are a few lone periods as well, which, in keeping with an older tradition in Hebrew printing, actually function as commas.