



TEMPLE
ISRAEL
CENTER



- **Va-eria for Tots: The Importance of Consequences**
VA-EIRA, EXODUS 6:2-9:35

BY:

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Questions and Ideas for Parents:

1. Are there any distinct situations of parent-applied consequences you remember from your childhood? What type of impact do you think these may have had on you?
2. How do you feel about applying consequences to your children's actions (when necessary?) Is it hard to do? Is it difficult to find appropriate consequences that seem to work? Do you and your parenting partner agree on what is appropriate?

Consequences

One thing every person learns on the journey from childhood to becoming an adult is the truth and reliability of consequences. In our work, in our words and in our relationships, every action in every aspect of life brings about a consequence. Although our understanding of the concept deepens with time, we begin to learn about consequences from the moment of our birth.

There is a certain inherent safety that children begin to understand and intuit when it comes to the power and reliability of consequences. Crying because of discomfort, certainly a motor reflex to ensure the basic survival needs of an infant, can also be seen as an action that brings about a desired consequence. In a sense, this initial brush with consequences gives them their first chance to influence people and events around them. Crying has the potential to bring attention, feeding, diaper changes, consequences!

In *Parashat Va-eira* consequences are front and center. The story recounts the attempts of Moses and Aaron to convince Pharaoh to free the Israelites from slavery. Each time Pharaoh denies their pleas, he and the Egyptians are faced with a consequence. Pharaoh, in his unyielding stance, suffers and ultimately brings the Egyptian people to the brink of destruction, even to the loss of the country's heirs. This is certainly one of the clearest examples of consequences, amongst many, in the Torah.

As adults, we know too well about consequences. One can easily chart the course that life has taken and how choices made at certain points resulted in both intentional and unintentional consequences. Sometimes consequences are natural, that is they just happen as a result of our actions—they are not implemented by others. Other times, consequences are implemented by someone in a position of authority, such as a parent or a teacher. Looking back, you can likely recall examples of both types of consequences and the influence they had upon your decisions.

On some level, our lifelong path is influenced by the consequences we face as a result of our actions. As a parent, you guide and influence the lessons that consequences will bring to your young child. You show the consistency and reliability of love, a consequence of your being a loving parent. You do the feeding, diaper changing, rocking, etc. In these early years when your children are young, you put in the time and effort that provides a framework that will help your child make wise, thoughtful and responsible choices.

And when you face situations that challenge your parenting skills (and you will!), your child might very well experience a rough and bumpy road strewn with consequences that are the direct result of his or her choices. How much do you let your children sink before you step in and rescue them? What sorts of consequences will you, as the parental authority, mete out when your sweet angel acts up and acts out?

Parenting has to be one of the toughest and most rewarding job known to humankind. There are times when we are just too tired and worn out to apply consequences to our children's actions, consequences that we know will just result in more work for us! What is important to remember, however, is that these actions (or inactions) on our part will have their own consequences down the road. The consequence of the attention you pay to helping your child understand and make good connections between actions, behaviors and consequences will be hugely positive for all parties involved.