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Go all out

When you hold a position of influence, as a parent or a teacher, or perhaps you have experience and background that others can benefit from, there is always the challenge of how much knowledge to impart before your child or student will become overwhelmed. Conventional teaching methods dictate that you shouldn't give them too much, lest they become inundated with information beyond their capacity to grasp and they will lose more than they gain.

Usually, less is more when teaching, and what you impart with your students must be tailored to their capabilities. As much as you want to give them everything you have, in order for them to properly receive what you are sharing, placing limitations on how much you impart will typically help the recipient properly absorb what you are offering. Under normal circumstances, this is a valid approach.

But not always do we face normal circumstances and not always is convention the appropriate approach. There are times when a teacher must give the students more than they can handle; he must dig deep into his own essence and share all the knowledge that he acquired in his own experience, so that the recipient can benefit from every last bit of information available.

A parallel is the Torah's directive that when servants conclude their period of employment, the employer is obligated to gift the departing worker with additional pay, a bonus. This bonus is not necessarily commensurate with the employee's expected wages; rather, as the Torah puts it, it is considered "tzedakah," charity, in the sense that it is unexpected and perhaps even unearned. As the employee begins the next stage of his or her life, the employer must give them of his own resources, beyond what the employee is owed for their time and efforts.

In the sense of teaching and sharing, when the student is prepared to set out on their own, the teacher must go all out; there can be no holds barred. Any rules and restrictions that previously dictated how much information should be imparted are no longer relevant. Teachers must dig deep into their own essence, imparting any and everything they have for the benefit of the student. That's because once the student is on their own, there will no longer be opportunities for the teacher to influence them.

Some will view this as a last ditch effort on the teacher's part to influence the student's direction in life; but really what it is, is the teacher providing the most sublime elements of his own knowledge to the student. When the student was just getting started, following convention made sense — only give them what they can handle. But at this phase, once you've reached the end of the student's formative years, it's time to give it all away. They're graduating, they're moving on, and there is nothing to hold you back from making that everlasting impact on their future.

The same applies when interacting with someone who is perhaps on a different level than you religiously. It may be tempting to only share a bit at a time, basing your generosity on the recipient's capabilities. But if your engagement with them starts and ends with that one interaction, the proper approach is one of tzedakah — whatever you have should be shared with them. Convention might expect you to go slow and only impart what you think they can handle, but Torah expects you to go all out.

Doing so is not only to make you feel good that you gave it your best shot, but it will in fact make that one interaction have an everlasting impact. When the students pick up on the teacher's essence, they become teachers themselves, keeping the flame of Torah and Judaism alive in the most optimal fashion for all generations to come.