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Chinnuch in Chazal

Children's education is a fundamental and interesting idea that is raised throughout Jewish sources. In dealing with a child's education one must determine the circumstances under which children are permitted to transgress *Halacha*, until what age one allows them to transgress *Halacha* and what is the nature of the laws that they may transgress?

One of these issues is raised in the *Mishnah* in *Shabbat* (16:6) that states that a father must prevent his child from extinguishing a fire that is burning down a Jewish house on *Shabbat*. This law is brought in contrast to the gentile who we need not stop from putting out the fire, since unlike a Jewish minor the *shvita* (rest) of the non-Jew on *Shabbat* is not our obligation. (The *Halacha* however states that the fire may be extinguished in almost every instance due to the danger to life).

The *Tosfot Yom Tov* raises the question citing the *Gemara* from the end of the ninth chapter of *Shabbat* that rules that we are not concerned about a child eating non-kosher grasshoppers, and may leave him to play with them. It would seem from the *Gemara* that while we may not actively feed him something forbidden, the parent is not commanded to actively prevent the child from performing an *issur*.

The general consensus amongst the commentators is that there is a certain point where a child need not be prevented from incorrect actions. However if there is any doubt in the mind of the child or the parent that may cause us to think that either party would encourage the action, we must actively prevent it. There is some discussion though about the exact age where the parents should place these extra stringencies on the child.

This idea is also quoted by a number of modern *poskim* (as transmitted to me by Rav Neriyah of Yeshivat HaKotel) where they state that there is no need to impose the stringencies on the child with regards to kashrut.

The above ideas are seemingly opposed to the halachic concept of *Chinnuch* (the obligation to educate our children by having them do *mitzvot* so that when they grow up it will be natural for them). The obligation on the parents states that they have to be careful that the child is brought up in an environment where they are encouraged to perform the commandments, and definitely not allowed a free hand to do whatever they want.

The idea of education can be learned out from the *mitzvah* of telling the story of the Exodus on *Pesach*. In the *Sefer HaChinnuch* we find the essence of the obligation to tell the story, but in the details of the *mitzvah* we find that the author speaks primarily about the actions that are performed on that night. It appears clear from the statements of the *Chinnuch* that the most important part of the education of the child is the action that he is encouraged to do and the actions that are performed in the environment.

How can these two concepts coexist, where on the one hand there is the obligation not to give the child a free ride, but on the other hand allow them a certain leeway?

These examples here point to a particular direction in educating children that is being expressed by the rabbis of the *Mishnah*. At a certain point we need to be concerned with the education of the next generation prior to their Bar/Bat Mitzvah, since once they are already obligated it is too late. But on the other hand it is necessary to understand that children are still children, and it is not logical or helpful to demand of the average child to be a small adult. We have a need to let them 'play in the dirt' and explore the world in their own way even if we need to turn a blind eye to it, so as not to smother them. However the *Mishnah* here warns us that these rules are there for the child, and not to be abused by the parent to achieve their own goals.

Yaron Gottlieb

www.mishnahyomit.com

Revision Questions

שבת ט"ז: ד' – י"ח: א'

- How many items of clothing can one save from a burning house? (ט"ז: ד')
- What can one do to prevent the fire from spreading? (Provide two solutions.) (ט"ז: ה')
- Can one ask a non-Jew to put out the fire? (ט"ז: ו')
- If a non-Jew comes to put out the fire, must the owner stop him? (ט"ז: ו')
- What can one do if the flame from their candles is close to the ceiling? (ט"ז: ז')
- What can one do if there is a scorpion in their house? (ט"ז: ח')
- If a non-Jew turns on a light on *Shabbat*, when is an *Yisrael* allowed to benefit from that light? (ט"ז: ט')
- What *melacha* did a non-Jew perform, after which *Rabban Gamliel* and the *Zkeinim* benefited from? (ט"ז: י')
- What topic is discussed in the seventeenth *perek*?
- What is the difference between doors and doors of utensils? (ט"ז: י"א')
- One is allowed to use a hammer to crack open nuts on *Shabbat*: (ט"ז: י"ב')
 - What category of *heter* in the laws of *muktza* is this an example of?
 - Describe five other examples listed in the *Mishnah*.
- When is a reed used for olives susceptible to *tum'ah* and why? (ט"ז: י"ג')
- According to *R' Yosi* all utensils that are use for a forbidden activity may be used for a permissible activity aside from which two utensils? (ט"ז: י"ד')
- Explain the debate regarding when broken utensil can be used on *Shabbat*. (ט"ז: י"ה')
- If a stone is placed in a pumpkin shell (the purpose of which is to use the pumpkin shell draw water from a well) when can the shell be used on *Shabbat*? (ט"ז: י"ו')
- Explain the debate regarding "plugging" up a window on *Shabbat*. (ט"ז: י"ז')
- Which utensil covers are considered *muktzah*? (Include both opinions) (ט"ז: י"ח')
- What limitations are placed on clearing out food from a store room if the space is required for guests? (ט"ז: י"ט')
- Is one allowed to move *demai* produce on *Shabbat*? Why? (ט"ז: כ')
- Is one allowed to move *tevel* produce on *Shabbat*? Why? (ט"ז: כ"א')
- Explain the debate regarding when one can move *lof* on *Shabbat*? (ט"ז: כ"ב')

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
23 rd October י"ח תשרי	24 th October י"ט תשרי הושענה רבה	25 th October כ' תשרי שמיני עצרת	26 th October כ"א תשרי שמחת תורה	27 th October כ"ב תשרי	28 th October כ"ג תשרי	29 th October כ"ד תשרי
Shabbat 18:2-3	Shabbat 19:1-2	Shabbat 19:3-4	Shabbat 19:5-6	Shabbat 20:1-2	Shabbat 20:3-4	Shabbat 20:5 – 21:1

