



Parshas Vayeitzei 5771

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Halachos for children cont.

We were discussing the issue of preventing a child from performing an issur.

What is the halacha with regards to other people's children?

The *Mechaber*¹ holds that only a child's father (and perhaps the mother) need educate his child but one is not obligated to educate another person's child. The *Rama* cites an opinion who holds that everyone is obligated to educate everybody's children. The *Mishna Berura*² sets the middle path with the *Chayei Adam* who says that one must prevent other people's children from violating an *issur d'oraisso* but not an *issur d'rabanan*. Although it is advisable to teach other children as well that it is *Shabbos* today. Accordingly, if one sees children in the street pulling leaves off a tree³ one should tell them that it is *ossur* on Shabbos. If one sees children carrying sticks and stones to play with, since *muktzeh* is only an *issur d'rabanan* one is not obligated to 'educate' them.

Does it make a difference whether the child is about to do an issur for my benefit or for his?

We find a very interesting *halacha*. The *Shulchan Aruch*⁴ teaches us that if *chas v'sholom* a fire is raging in a Jew's property, and a gentile, on his own accord offers to extinguish the fire, one may permit him to extinguish the fire and he need

not be prevented. The reason is because the gentile has remuneration in mind and it is therefore considered as if the gentile is doing it for his own benefit.⁵

In contrast, a child is not of an age to realize that extinguishing a fire will bring him personal benefit, rather his sole intent and purpose is to make his senior happy and therefore it is considered as if he is doing it for the parent's or adult's sake.⁶

Does that mean that I must actually prevent him from extinguishing the fire?

Yes it does, because it is as if you told him to extinguish the fire, which is obviously forbidden to do.

Are we talking about ages of chinuch (education) or all ages?

The *Mishna Berura*⁷ says that this is not a matter of *chinuch*, rather it is a problem that a child is doing something for an adult and he realizes that this will please the adult.

Does this apply to other cases as well?

It certainly does. Whenever a child is about to do an *issur* in order to benefit an adult, that adult must prevent him from doing so. This is true with regards to turning on a light, turning on the air conditioner etc.

¹ The onset of *siman* 343.

² *Siman* 343:7.

³ Which might be a *d'oraisso* because they enjoy pulling off the leaves and are doing it for that purpose.

⁴ *Siman* 334:25.

⁵ *M"B simon* 334:61.

⁶ *M"B simon* 334:65, in the name of the *M"A* who cites the *poskim*.

⁷ *M"B simon* 334:64 in the name of *Tosefos*.

Is there not a case in the gemora where someone dropped keys in the street in order for children to carry them?

Indeed the *gemora* in *Yevamos* 114a⁸ talks about a case where someone found the keys to the shul in the street on *Shabbos*, and he was told to tell children to play in the vicinity of the keys and hopefully they would spot the keys and take them home. However, the *Mishna Berura*⁹ explicitly explains that the children must not think that the keys are someone's they know and one may only permit them (i.e. not interfere) when they take them home thinking that they found keys to play with etc. but if they intend bringing to the person who lost them they must be prevented from carrying them home. The father, adds the *Mishna Berura*, must prevent him whatever happens because of the obligation to educate one's child not to violate the *Shabbos* even with an *issur d'rabanan*. The bottom line is that one may not allow a child to violate an *issur* for an adult. If the child is doing it for his own benefit, and it is an *issur d'rabanan*, and you are not the parent, there is much more leeway.

Does the obligation to educate only apply to Hilchos Shabbos?

Not at all. The obligation to educate one's child applies to all types of laws. The *Mishna Berura* says¹⁰ that if a parent hears his child speaking *lashon hara*, unclean language etc. he must prevent and educate him from an early age that it is wrong and forbidden. He adds that if the child is permitted to speak whatever he wants at a young age it is very difficult to train him to guard his tongue at a later stage. This applies to eating non-kosher foods, as mentioned in the last shiur, seeing things he is not supposed to, and everything else that a Jew must adhere to. The younger one starts to educate one's child the more inbred it is. On the whole, one should teach other children as well, yet the main role of education is up to the parents.

⁸ Top of the *amud*.

⁹ *Simon* 362:44. See inside the *M"B*.

¹⁰ *Simon* 343:3.

Am I obligated to make sure that my child hears havdalah?

Chinuch – education is a serious matter and parents are obligated to educate their children from a young age in the ways of the Torah. The *Mishna Berura* writes¹¹ that there is no set age for *chinuch* because each child must be educated according to his individual comprehension. If a child is aware of the *Shabbos* he must listen to *kiddush* and *havdalah*. This probably means that the child realizes that *Hashem* created the world and rested on the 7th day and hence *Shabbos* is different from other days.¹² It does not suffice that the child knows how to say *gut Shabbos*, because a two year old can also say *gut Shabbos* but it is meaningless to him. Accordingly, before commencing with the *Shabbos* meal, the parents must make sure that children of the appropriate age are present to listen to the *kiddush*.

Orchos Chaim LaRosh

ופיך אל ימהר להוציא דבר רע עד אשר תשקלנו במאזני שכלך – do not hurry to say something before weighing the words on the scale of your mind.

A student of mine was scarred for many years by words of a teacher, where instead of giving her praise and hopes to grow; he basically told her that she'll never make it in life. The ill-effects of such words are devastating, and it took tremendous effort on her teachers' part and herself to outweigh that poison and make her believe in herself. "Silence is golden" and we must use our tongue to build, not to destroy.

¹¹ *M"B simon* 343:3.

¹² I say this for two reasons. A) the *M"B* says that the child knows about the ענין of *Shabbos*, not merely that today is *Shabbos*. B) The *M"B* continues with the issue of Torah prohibitions and says that when a child understands that something is forbidden one must educate him and tell him that it is *ossur*. This implies that for positive *mitzvos* it is a much deeper comprehension.

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Note: The purpose of this series is intended solely for the clarification of the topics discussed and not to render halachic decisions. It is intended to heighten everyone's awareness of important practical questions which do arise on this topic. One must consult with a proper halachic authority in order to receive p'sak.