



From the desk of
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Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

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TORAT

Parashat Vayelech

HAMELECH

Start Off Young

In this week's *parashah*, we read of the mitzvah of *hak-hel*. Once every seven years, all of the Jews are to assemble in the Beit Hamikdash and certain delineated passages of the Torah are read out loud by the ruling Jewish king.

Everyone must come: men, women and children.

Men come to learn, women to listen and children – to give reward to those who bring them.

What is the point of bringing children who are too small to understand?

The Taz (Rav Dovid Segal) says that once the parents have to come, the children will have to come as well because they cannot be left unattended. So Hashem made it into a mitzvah, although we would have done it anyways.

Kli Yakar explains that this mitzvah is done on Sukkot, which is on the heels of the *teshuva* season. We bring the young, innocent children so that in their merit we can achieve full atonement.

The Shach points out that sometimes babies and children die young. Some may wonder why they

came to this world, not even to reach Bar/Bat Mitzvah age. This is obviously a deep topic. One thing we can learn from this mitzvah of *hak-hel* is that the children are here so that the parents will earn reward. This could also apply to children who die young. The child himself did not reach mitzvah age, but his parents earned many merits tending to his needs.

Influential Encounters

And now... for the answer we've been waiting for... every iota of influence counts! The parents get reward for bringing them. Why? Because it makes an impact upon their tender soul!

What did Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai say about R' Yehoshua ben Chananya? Praiseworthy is his mother! Why? What did she do? Before he was born, she visited local shuls and studyhouses and begged the Talmidei Chachomim to daven that her son should be a Talmid Chocham. And after he was born, she put his cradle in the shul so that he should hear only words of Torah. This woman knew what psychologists only recently dis-



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covered: that a child is influenced greatly by all that he sees and hears even as an infant! That is why specifically Rabbi Yehoshua was so happy to hear this explanation of bringing babies to hak-hel (Chagiga 3a). It meant so much to him because it is what made him what he was. (See Rashi to Avot 2:8 and Bartenura ad loc. See Meshech Chochma to Devarim 31:12)

This is a source for bringing children to shul, as long as they will not disturb (Tosafot to Chagiga 3a, Shulchan Aruch O.C. 98 and 689). A child can gain greatly from the environment.

We also see this idea in Tosafot Bava Batra 21a who explains how the mitzvah of *maaser sheini* is meant to imbue us with *yirat shomayim*. The average farmer had far too much produce to consume his *maaser sheini* during *Yom Tov*. So he or a family member would have to stay around Yerushalayim until the *maaser sheini* produce would be used up. In the meantime, he would see the great sights in Yerushalayim: the Kohanim doing the Avoda, the Sanhedrin in Lishkat HaGazit, etc. All of this would make a big impact upon his soul.

Positive Environment

Rav Yosi ben Kisma did not want to live anywhere but in a *makom Torah* full of Chachomim and Sofrim (Avot 6:9).

Parents must be aware of the importance of positive influences. We also must be aware of the power of negative influences. Mishne Brura (560) warns against putting children to sleep to the sound of bad music with indecent lyrics. These days, there are all too many types of inappropriate influences in the form of forbidden entertainment, all at one's fingertips, with the push of a button. Woe upon families which allow such indecency into their home.

Also, any disagreements between spouses should be dealt with calmly, out of earshot of the children. Let the children see only friendly words spoken between their parents.

Let the children hear words of Torah and songs which are spiritually uplifting, both in their words and melodies. A house which provides a positive atmosphere will hopefully produce top quality children who will give their parents much nachat.

**Chatima Tova,
Shabbat Shalom,
Mordechai Malka**