

Children Benefit From a Mother Learning Daf Yomi

Sukkah, 2b discusses: Is a sukkah that is 20 *amos* valid? The text states:

אמר רבי יהודה: מעשה בהילגני המלכה בלוד שהיתה סוכתה גבוהה מעשרים אמה, והיו זקנים נכנסין ויוצאין לשם ולא
אמרו לה דבר

The Daf recounts Queen Helena who had a sukkah which was 20 *amos*. The *zekanim* (elders) entered and exited her sukkah and they did not say anything to her [about it being not valid]. This episode confirmed R' Yehuda's opinion that a sukkah greater than 20 *amos* is valid. How so? The commentaries note that she was teaching her sons *chinuch* (education) and showing them how to properly fulfill the mitzvah of sukkah such that when they become obligated in the mitzvah of sukkah they will have learned the proper way to do the mitzvah. Rashi as translated by Artscroll notes that the rabbis required parents to train their minor children in the performance of mitzvot so that the children become accustomed to and proficient in their practice.

Where else do we learn about *chinuch*?

During Chanukah, we celebrate the physical victory of the Maccabees and the miracle of the oil lasting for eight days. We also celebrate the spiritual victory of *chinuch*. *Chinuch* was previously banned and now children were allowed to be educated about mitzvot again. The words “הנוכה – *chanukah*” and “חינוך - *chinuch*” have the same *shoresh* (root) “ח-נ-כ – *chet-nun-chaf*.” Women are *chayav* (obligated) in lighting the *chanukiah* because they were part of the miracle and the spiritual victory. When a mother lights the *chanukiah* on Chanukah and her children see her perform this mitzvah, they are in fact getting *chinuch*.

The *Shema* recited twice daily in accordance with *Sefer HaChinuch* (Mitzvah 420) is followed by the *V'ahavta* prayer which states, “*v'shinnantam l'vanecha* - teach your children.” (Devarim 6:7) Let's take a closer look at the word *v'shinnantam* which has the same *shoresh* ש-נ-נ as the word *l'shanen* meaning to sharpen. (Note the similar word *shinaim*, teeth, which are also sharp.) What are we sharpening? Kiddushin, 30a explains:

תנו רבנן ושננתם שיהו דברי תורה מחודדים בפיוך שאם ישאל לך אדם דבר אל תגמגם ותאמר לו אלא אמור לו מיד

The Sages taught: The verse states: “And you shall teach them diligently [v'shinnantam]” (Devarim 6:7). The root “ש-נ-נ - shin-nun-nun”, of v'shinnantam should be understood as meaning sharp, i.e., that matters of Torah should be sharp and clear in your mouth, so that if a person asks you something, do not stutter in uncertainty and say an uncertain response to him. Rather, answer him immediately.

The words of the Torah should be reviewed and grasped such that you express them sharply and with certainty. Even if women are *patur* (exempt) from *kriyat shema* because it is a positive time bound mitzvah, first recognize that a mother sharpens a child's knowledge. Second, recognize that there is no set time for sharpening knowledge - learning is a timeless pursuit. This is the essence of a mother's nurturing. It is because a mother is busy nurturing her children that she is *patur* from positive time bound mitzvot. It is difficult to distinguish between nurturing and *chinuch*. Both occur simultaneously and are timeless.

From Queen Helena to women participating in the victory which led to Chanukah, *chinuch* is often attributed to the mother and the role a mother has in *chinuch*. These stories are found in Daf Yomi. Children benefit from hearing these stories.

Hakarat hatov to my parents for giving me the timeless and eternal gift of chinuch.

-Jacqueline