



לעילוי נשמת
 יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

Teaching Hagbaha to a Son

Question: I can get permission from the *gabbai* to take out a *sefer Torah* to teach my teenage son how to do *hagbaha* properly. Is this permitted?

Answer: We start with the potential problems.

The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 135:14) disallows taking a *sefer Torah* from its place so that people who cannot come to *shul* can *lain*. The source is a Yerushalmi (Yoma 7:1), which says, before bringing exceptions, that proper respect is that people should be the ones to go to where the Torah is. Within the *shul*, we obviously do not expect people to climb into the *aron kodesh* to read from it, but Dirshu (135:60) cites a *machloket* about whether it can be taken from room to room

in one building.

A related problem that could be more difficult to solve is that it is prohibited to disgrace a holy object (see Shulchan Aruch, OC 154) and certainly a *sefer Torah* (see *ibid.* Yoreh Deah 282) by using it for a mundane purpose. What if the mundane use advances a religious value? The Taz (YD 282:13) forbids using one *sefer* to raise up another one to make it easier to read, as one must not use something holy for a use that is fitting for “wood or stone.” The Magen Avraham (154:14) disagrees and allows one to bring one *sefer* in order to prop up another.

We should now try to determine what we accomplish with *hagbaha* and whether learning/practicing doing it has value. The *gemara* (Megilla 32a) discusses the importance of *gelilla*, which is more like what we call *hagbaha*, as does the Ramban (to Devarim 27:26). While Sephardim do it before *laining* to show the people the holy text to be read (as appears in the original source, Nechemia 8:5), Ashkenazim changed to doing it after *kri'at haTorah*. The change focuses our attention on the element of allowing people to honor our beloved Torah scrolls (see development of this idea in Living the Halachic Process V, D-5).

Is the honor of *sifrei Torah* raised by your teaching/practicing with your son? *Hagbaha* will be done whether or not you teach your son its finer points. The major difference is probably whether he will have the confidence to accept the honor/task when asked, which is about him, not the *sefer Torah*. On the other hand, there may be a time that he will accept

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hagbaha, and the better the job, the better the Torah is honored. Arguably, it also lessens the albeit tiny chance that an untrained boy will drop a *sefer* (people are usually vigilant). If we assume that the lesson increases the honor of *sifrei Torah*, we can eliminate the problem.

Even if we focus on your son, there is a concept of making allowances regarding certain rules in order to educate children. It is permitted for a child to make *berachot* which are objectively *lvatala* to train him in making the *beracha*, and an adult may even feed him the “problematic” wording (Shulchan Aruch, OC 215:3; Mishna Berura 215:14). This applies even for post-bar mitzva men who need education (Igrot Moshe, OC II:56). However, if one views your training as more about “empowering” your son than necessary *mitzva* training, use of a formal *chinuch* allowance becomes questionable (see one application in LTHP VI, A-4).

But this case is probably not “forbidden” per se. Even the Taz (above) was bothered by the prospect of a *sefer* being used for something any object of that size could have been used for. Here, one would be hard pressed to

find a full replacement to learn the special techniques of *hagbaha*.

The only explicit source I found on this question is Chashukei Chemed (Megilla 26b) who quotes Rav Elyashiv as considering such training improper. I see this as a strict ruling, if it is a clear ruling. I suspect he is assuming an audience in which enfranchising a teenager in *shul* is not a recognized need. While my father just discussed strategy with me and did not practice in this way, which is what I did for my sons, if you think such training will be significant for your son, then do it. If you do so, it is preferable to first learn together from the Torah or review halachic qualities (see *ibid.*) and to stress the *sefer Torah*'s beauty and preciousness. ■

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