



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

RAV KEHILLA, OHEL EPHRAIM IN NOFEI HASHEMESH

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Transmitting Torah - True Measure of Commitment

The first paragraph of *Kriyat Shema* is deeply personal. It speaks directly to the individual. וְאַהֲבַת אֱת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ - *You shall love Hashem your God.* וְהַיּוֹדֵדִים הָאֵלֶּה... עַל לִבְּךָ - *These words... shall be upon your heart.*¹

The *parasha* focuses on a person's inner love and fear of God. Then, suddenly, in the middle of this intensely personal section, the Torah interrupts with the following imperative: וְשִׁנְנָתָם לְבְנֶיךָ - *You shall teach them diligently to your children.*² Hazal famously interpreted the term children broadly to include students as well.³

The placement is striking. The Torah first speaks about one's personal obligation: loving Hashem, placing Torah upon one's heart, accepting His sovereignty. Then, abruptly, it commands us to teach others, before returning immediately to the personal mitzvot of wearing tefillin. Why is the phrase of וְשִׁנְנָתָם לְבְנֶיךָ - *to teach children and students*, inserted specifically in the middle of these personal commandments?

THE LITMUS TEST OF AUTHENTICITY

The *Likkutei Yehoshua*⁴ explains that this placement is deliberate. The Torah is teaching that the truest indicator of genuine love for Hashem is whether one transmits it to the next generation. An individual may recite the Shema every day and outwardly appear committed, yet external behavior alone does not always reveal a person's deepest convictions. Sometimes people act against what they intellectually know to be true. A person may know that something is unhealthy



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or destructive, yet continue because of habit, temptation, or weakness.

The *Likkutei Yehoshua* offers a powerful analogy. One who smokes excessively, or drinks irresponsibly, may fully acknowledge the dangers of his behavior. Nevertheless, despite his own failings, he will warn his children never to adopt those negative habits. Similarly, someone negligent about his own health will encourage his children to eat properly and care for themselves. Why? Because what a person wants for his children reveals what he truly believes.

1. Devarim 6: 5-6

2. Devarim 6:7

3. Kiddushin 30a

4. Rav Yehoshua Shainfeld, *Likkutei Yehoshua*

A person's own behavior may sometimes be compromised by weakness. However, what he teaches his children reflects the deepest inclinations of his heart. Therefore, when the Torah juxtaposes the personal obligations with teaching one's children, it teaches that transmitting Torah is itself testimony that Torah truly resides in one's heart. One who genuinely loves Torah cannot keep it to himself.

SIGNIFICANCE OF TEACHING ONE'S CHILDREN

Rav Shimshon Pincus⁵ develops this idea even further. When one davens or learns, he feels he is directly serving Hashem. Yet, when a father spends half an hour learning Mishnah or Gemara with his child, he may subconsciously feel that he is sacrificing "his own" learning time for the sake of his child. Rav Pincus sharply rejects this mentality. Learning with one's child is not secondary. Teaching one's child appears in the very same paragraph as *vedibarta bam-* that one should engage in Torah study himself, because teaching one's children is itself part of speaking words of Torah. A father who sits and learns with his child is not interrupting his spiritual life. He is fulfilling one of its greatest expressions.

Rav Pincus compares this to physical health. Parents naturally understand that a child requires constant nourishment. A healthy meal today may not transform the child overnight, but years of proper nutrition build strength and vitality. So too spiritually. A father may wonder: "What difference will fifteen minutes of learning really make?" But every Mishnah, every pasuk, every brief moment of consistent Torah learning

shapes the soul of a child. Just as healthy food strengthens the body over time, regular Torah learning strengthens the soul. Therefore, the Torah commands not merely to teach, but sharpen (ושנתם). Torah must become alive, natural, and deeply engraved within the child.

The Torah does not view Judaism as a private religious experience. A person's level of religiosity is measured not only by what a person says, but by what he longs to pass on. A Jew can daven, learn and outwardly appear connected, but the deepest proof of one's commitment is whether one feels compelled to share Torah with others, especially with one's children. When Torah truly enters the heart, it naturally seeks continuity.

Every moment a parent learns with a child, answers a question, or models genuine love of Torah, he is building eternity. Sometimes those moments feel small and insignificant. Yet spiritual greatness is rarely created in dramatic flashes. It is formed quietly through consistency, warmth, repetition, and presence. A few minutes of learning. A conversation at the Shabbat table. A Mishnah reviewed on the way somewhere. A father or mother showing that Torah matters. These moments shape generations.

Perhaps that is why וישנתם לבניך stands in the very center of *Kriyat Shema*. It highlights that the ultimate expression of *Ahavat Hashem* is not merely to hold Torah within our hearts, but to ensure that its flame continues to burn in the hearts of others in future generations. ■

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