



Rambam Hilchot Talmud Torah

Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom Part 6

6: From when is his father obligated to teach him Torah? When he begins to speak, he teaches him *Torah tziva lanu Moshe* (Moshe commanded us the Law, an inheritance of the congregation of Yaakov) and *Shma Yisrael* and then he teaches him a few verses until he is 6 or 7, all according to his ability. Then he brings him to a teacher.

Q1: Why does this obligation kick in only when he begins to speak - surely the child can listen to words of Torah - just as R. Yohanan's mother sent him, in his crib, to sit in the Beit Midrash and be exposed to the learning there?

KB: Intellectual maturity. Until a child can speak it seems unlikely that it really has the capability to seriously learn. We have similar things in math classes, prequiestes which really aren't related, but experience has shown that someone who can't do the first is in no position to generally benefit from the new material.

There may be exceptional counter examples, such as R. Yohanan, but the clall ought to be something achievable by most (many, majority?).

Q2: Why these two verses?

KB: There seem to be the most basic and fundamental.

YE: Rabbi Yisroel Miller (RYM), of our shul in Pittsburgh, responded: *Torah Tziva lanu Moshe* teaches two important lessons: obligation (*Tziva*) and the accessibility of learning from a person (*Moshe*) - in our discussion, we agreed that that is why the other verse is *Shma Yisrael* - to keep God in the picture from the beginning.

Q3: Why the demand for the father to teach him these first verses, and then to be brought to the teacher. As we asked earlier, what if the father is capable of teaching him more than this. Conversely, why can't the father assign someone else to teach him these verses before he is of school-age?

KB: These or so basic and fundamental that they ought to be taught directly by the parent. The teaching will probably have more impact that way. Also it is likely to happen earlier.



YE: Based on the comments of RYM above, once the father teaches that there is a learning relationship to be had with a teacher (Moshe) - it furthers the potential relationship with the teacher. The child needs to learn to love the teacher from the parent.

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