

Subtleties In Depth

פרשת בחקתי

We often view the need for depth in learning as a component of higher scholarship. However, when educating our children in their basic obligations, we assume that a lack in depth does not play a role in the effectiveness of the lesson we wish to impart. In this week's Parsha, the Sefer Hachinuch shares with us an insight that is sure to dispel this mistaken assumption.

The Sefer Hachinuch states (360) regarding the Mitzvah of bringing Maaser from your animals every year; "It is from the root of the commandment, G-d chose the nation of Israel and wished for the sake of His righteousness that all of them be engaged with His Torah and be knowers of His Name..... Therefore in His understanding, He caused [it] and gave them a place wherein everyone will know the words of His Torah regardless - for there is no doubt that every man will be drawn to establish his residence in the place that his money is there. And as such, when each person brings up the tithe of all his cattle and his sheep each year to the place where involvement with wisdom and Torah is found - that is Jerusalem, where the Sanhedrin is of those who master knowledge and understand information - and we similarly bring up the tithe of our grain in four years of the sabbatical [cycle], as we know that the second tithe is eaten there, and so [too,] the fourth year planting is eaten there; the owner of [these things] will perforce either go there and study Torah

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himself, or send one of his sons to study there and to be sustained by that produce. And through this, each and every house in all of Israel will have someone who is wise and knowledgeable in the Torah who can [then] teach all of the household of his father with his wisdom. And with this, 'the land will be filled with knowledge of the Lord.' For if there was only one sage in each city - or even ten - there would be many men who would only come in front of them once a year, and all the more so the women and the children. And even if they heard their words once a week, they would [then] go to their home and throw out all the words of the sage behind their back. But when the teacher is in each and every house, dwelling there evening, morning and afternoon and constantly reminding them; then they will all - men, women and children - be careful and aware, and no matter of sin or iniquity will be found among them."

At first glance, this reason proposed by the Sefer Hachinuch is difficult to understand. If the goal is to ensure that each member of Klal Yisroel has a personal teacher in their household so that everyone knows Torah including women and children, there would seem to be a more obvious practical solution. Each city had a court of 23 judges that were great enough for even capital punishment cases. These judges were proficient in the entire Torah. Granted they were not on the caliber of the Sanhedrin, however, surely exposure to their knowledge and stature in Torah would suffice to educate someone to be able to teach their small children. It would seem unnecessary to require someone to make the long arduous trek to Yerushalayim, carrying all his produce and animals, when presented with a similar opportunity in his own city. Why not require us to bring our Maasar to the courts of 23 in our own city?

It is evident from the Sefer Hachinuch that the exposure to the Sanhedrin, who were of the highest level of scholarship and depth in Torah, is critical to be able to teach even small children who are just learning the basics. This importance of emphasizing the depth in learning cannot be overstated, as the Torah requires us to exert a great deal of effort to attain this depth and this level of appreciation. Whether one is parenting or teaching an 8 year old or 16 year old, it seems that penetrating to the depths of a sugya, and a deeper appreciation for Torah plays a pivotal role in being an effective parent or teacher.

BASED ON THE WEEKLY SHMUSS GIVEN BY HARAV SHAYA COHEN, ROSH HAYESHIVA ZICHRON ARYEH

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנוח
לעילוי נשמת הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר
לעילוי נשמת רפאל חיים דוב בן ריסא שושנה
לרפואה שלמה יהושע דוד בן אלטא יענטא