

'Chinuch'= Religious Education of Jewish Children and Youngsters



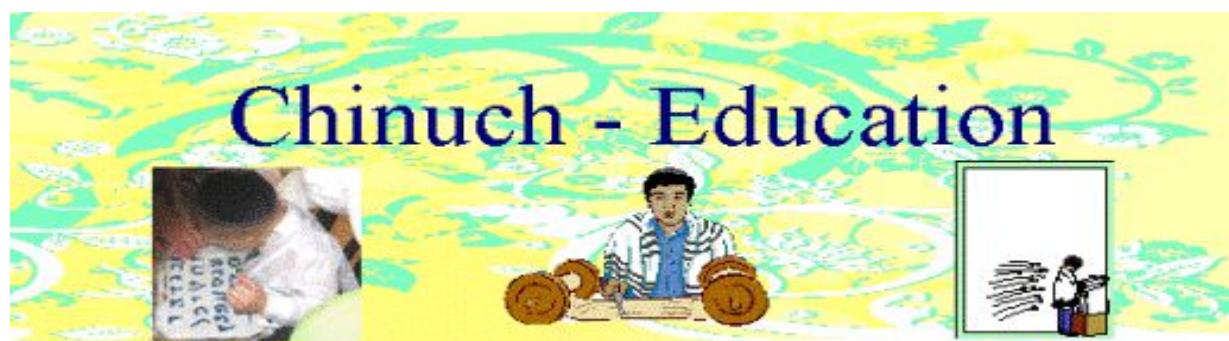
Prof. Rabbi Ahron Daum teaches his youngest daughter Hadassah Yemima to kindle the Chanukah-lights during a family vacation to Israel, 1997

'Chinuch' =Jewish Religious Education of Children

Including: Preparation Program for 'Giyur' of Children: Age 3 – 18

1. 'Chinuch' definition:

The Festival of Chanukah probably introduced the word "Chinuch" to Judaism. This means to introduce the child to Judaism and to dedicate and inaugurate him in the practice of 'Mitzvot'. The parents, both mother and father, are the most important persons in the Jewish religious education of the child. The duty of religious education already starts during the period of pregnancy. Then the child is shaped and we should influence this process by not speaking ugly words, shouting, listening to bad music etc, but shaping it in a quiet, peaceful and harmonious atmosphere. After being born, the child already starts its first steps with "kashrut" by being fed with mother's milk or with kosher baby formula.



The Midrash states that when the Jewish people stood at Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, they were asked by G-d for a guarantee that they would indeed observe the Torah in the future. The only security which God was willing to accept, concludes the Midrash, was the children of the Jewish people. This highlights the overwhelming **significance of ‘Chinuch’**.

The duty to train children in ‘Mitzvah’-observance is rabbinic in nature. Parents are rabbinic ally obligated to make sure that their children observe the Torah, so that they will be accustomed to doing this when they reach the age of adulthood.

There is no uniform time at which the duty of training a child to observe ‘Mitzvot’ begins.

On average, children who have reached the age of five or six are old enough to understand and perform “Mitzvot Ase” (positive commandments). The parent’s obligation however will always depend on the specific observance and intellectual ability of the child concerned.

In general, the requisite level concerning “Mitzvot lo Ta’asseh” (prohibitions=negative commandments) will be reached earlier. All that is required is that the child be able to understand that a certain act is wrong. In addition to ensuring that their children observe ‘Mitzvot’, parents are required to teach their children proper religious behaviour and good character traits. This training should begin at the earliest age possible.

The Talmud states that parents should never promise a child something and not fulfil it, as this will only encourage the child to lie in later life. Training for ethical living must begin in childhood.

Vows:

The Torah does not encourage the making of vows or oaths.

Normally children below the age of Bar- or Bat-Mitzvah are not personally bound to fulfil ‘Mitzvot’. Vows are an exception to this rule: within one year of adulthood, that is boys over twelve and girls over 11 are under certain conditions, personally required to fulfil vows which they have made, just as adults are. Parents should make their children understand the binding character of vows or oaths.



2. **Kashrut**: Children must know the different laws, like:

- The waiting time between consuming meat and milk; saying the correct ‘brachot’ before and also after ‘enjoyment’ (eating) (“Berachot Acharonot”, “Birkat Hamazon” and “Boree Nefashot”) and the basis of Kashrut:
- The separation between milk and meat:

Torah law prohibits the consumption of these two items only when they are cooked together. However, by rabbinic decree it is forbidden to eat meat and milk in any type of combination. Also they forbid the consumption of milk after eating meat, even when the two are eaten separately. There is a debate as to how much time must elapse between eating meat and milk: Rabbi Yosef Karo (1488–1575) decides in the codex ‘Shulchan Aruch’ that a waiting time of six hours is necessary. Ashkenasic practice in certain West European Jewish communities is to wait three hours (Germany, Belgium and some other European countries). The Dutch practice is the waiting time only one hour, which is unique in Torah-loyal Judaism and even in the Netherlands mostly not practised.

The best solution for parents is to wait at least one hour after meat before giving milk to their child. This is also the case for seriously ill adults. When it is for the benefit of the child and the child is very young (<one year old) parents may violate this rabbinic law and give the milk within one hour after the meat). From kindergarten-age onwards, parents are required to teach them to wait a full six hours respectively three hours.

What is kosher meat?

We have to teach a child the following stages of kosher meat.

- a. Kosher species of animals, mammals and birds
- b. The ‘Shechita’-process in big lines
- c. The taking out of ‘chelev’ (forbidden fats) (‘nikkur’)
- d. The ‘kashering’-process, the removing of the rest of the blood by salting or grilling.
- e. Kosher certification and identification ('seal' and paper-packaging with the logo and the Kashrut-certificate of the Rabbinate/Beth Din
 - The difference between soft and hard cheese

After eating soft cheese, like cottage-cheese, butter milk or yoghurt, it is not necessary to wait before eating meat, but- after “Birkat Hamazon” or “after-‘Bracha Achrona””, one must clean one’s mouth by rinsing with or drinking of water and by chewing a piece of bread and after a short pause and washing one’s hands, one is allowed to eat meat.



‘Chalav Akum’ is milk of a kosher animal, like cow, sheep or goat which is milked without rabbinic supervision. In old times there was a serious possibility that non-Jews were mixing milk of a kosher animal with milk of a non-kosher animal, like camel, horse or donkey. Therefore the Rabbis made it mandatory to drink milk with rabbinic supervision, known as ‘Chalav Yisrael’.

- Of “Chalav Yisrael” (when the milking is done under the rabbinic supervision of a “mashgiach” or when the milk is from a Jewish farmer) Rav Moshe Feinstein (1895–1986) says: in places where there is no possibility to obtain ‘Chalav Yisrael’ one may consume ‘Chalav Akum’ (except for Pesach because of ‘chametz’) for of the governmental control serves as a supervision under this extraordinary circumstances; but in the same response he writes that in places where

‘Chalav Yisrael’ is obtainable even if it is more expensive mothers who give ‘Chalav Yisrael’ to their child will be successful in the religious education of their children as proud and learned sons and daughters of Israel.

- What is ‘Parveh’?
- Why it is important in connection with drinking wine or grape juice (also champagne) only if it is produced under rabbinic supervision. This applies to drinking wine for gourmet or sacramental purposes. (Name two reasons!)
- What is the ‘Mitzva’ of separation of the ‘Challa’ (you have to know the reason, amount of dough, what we do with the separated piece and why don’t we give it to the Kohen?)
- Knowledge about “Eruv Tavshilin” is expected from children above the age of ten:

On Yom Tov one is not allowed to work, but concerning ‘food for the soul’ ('Ochel Nefesh') the Torah is less strict in comparison to Shabbat. On Yom Tov one is allowed to prepare food for Yom Tov itself, when this is done from an existing fire-source.



When the day after Yom Tov is a Shabbat (in the case if Yom Tov falls on a Thursday and Friday), one is allowed to also cook for the day after Yom Tov (Shabbat) under the condition of having made on ‘Erev Yom Tov’ (Wednesday) a “Eruv Tavshilin”: which means: *to make a connection between cooking before and the cooking on Yom Tov*. On ‘Erev Yom Tov’ one is lighting a candle that has 72 burning-hours and one takes a ‘Matze’ and a hardboiled egg (symbol of baking and cooking) about which one is saying a ‘bracha’ and declarations of the allowance of ‘Eruv Tavshilin’ and one is putting it aside for Shabbat to us it as ‘Lechem Mishne’ (double bread of Shabbat). So in fact: if one starts with the preparation of the food for Shabbat *before* ‘Yom Tov’ one may *continue* preparing it *on* Yom Tov.

- Why do we “touwelen” (immersing) of new utensils produces by non-Jews in a Mikvah, before using them for preparing or eating/drinking food?
- What should one check when preparing salads?
- And how do we check salads or vegetables?



3. Prayers for children:

We recommend using ‘ArtScroll Children’s Siddur’

by Shmuel Blitz and illustrated by Tova Katz.

ISBN number 10:1-57819-564-0 or ISBN 13:978-1-57819-564-0.

This Siddur is ideal to teach children to read the prayers and it is definitely sufficient for children for any Torah-loyal Beth Din

The following prayers have to be mastered by the children:

‘Shacharit’ on weekdays and on Shabbat:

‘Birkot HaShachar’

‘Shema’ complete (preferably to know the first section by heart)

‘Shemone Esreh’ of weekdays and of Shabbat – complete

‘Aleinu’ – complete

‘Birkat HaMazon’ complete (preferably to know the first section by heart)

Blessing Before and After Food in the education of young children:

Both girls and boys must be educated to fulfil these requirements. Also when the adult is not going to eat, he/she is permitted to make blessings using the full name of G’d and His Kingship when they do so in order to teach the child

how to say the ‘berachot’ correctly.

The text of the ‘Birkat Hamazon’ should gradually be increased until they learn the full text.

There are different opinions about whether or not counting a minor boy towards the three or ten men needed for a ‘zimun’ (invitation to the ‘Birkat Hamazon’ to bless in public).

Prayer

The ‘Shulchan Aruch’ recommends that a boy from approximately the age of six or seven should be taught to say ‘Shema’. Women are advised to say the beginning of ‘Shema’ as a sign of personally accepting G’d’s sovereignty in their lives.

Boys would be obligated to say the ‘Shemoneh Esreh’ prayer three times a day from elementary schools onwards. Concerning girls there are different opinions. Maimonides (1135–1204) says that women are only obligated to recite a prayer of some sort once a day. The ‘Shulchan Aruch’ is in accordance with Maimonides (i.e.: lenient), Rabbi Avraham Gombiner (1635–1682) author of the Halachic work ‘Magen Avraham’ advises that girls should say at least the Shacharit and the Minchah’ Shemoneh Esreh’, from the age of elementary school.

Concerning ‘Pesukai De’Zimra’ (a selection of Psalms we say in the Shacharit-prayer) there are various opinions and the right attitude has to be in accordance with the age and mental abilities of the boy or girl.

About half a year before Bar Mitzvah the Sephardic custom is that a boy should be prepared for laying ‘Tefillin’ (see also: “Tefillin”).

Ashkenasic custom is that only a month before the ‘Bar Mitzvah’ the ‘Bar Mitzvah’ is taught to lay ‘Tefillin’.

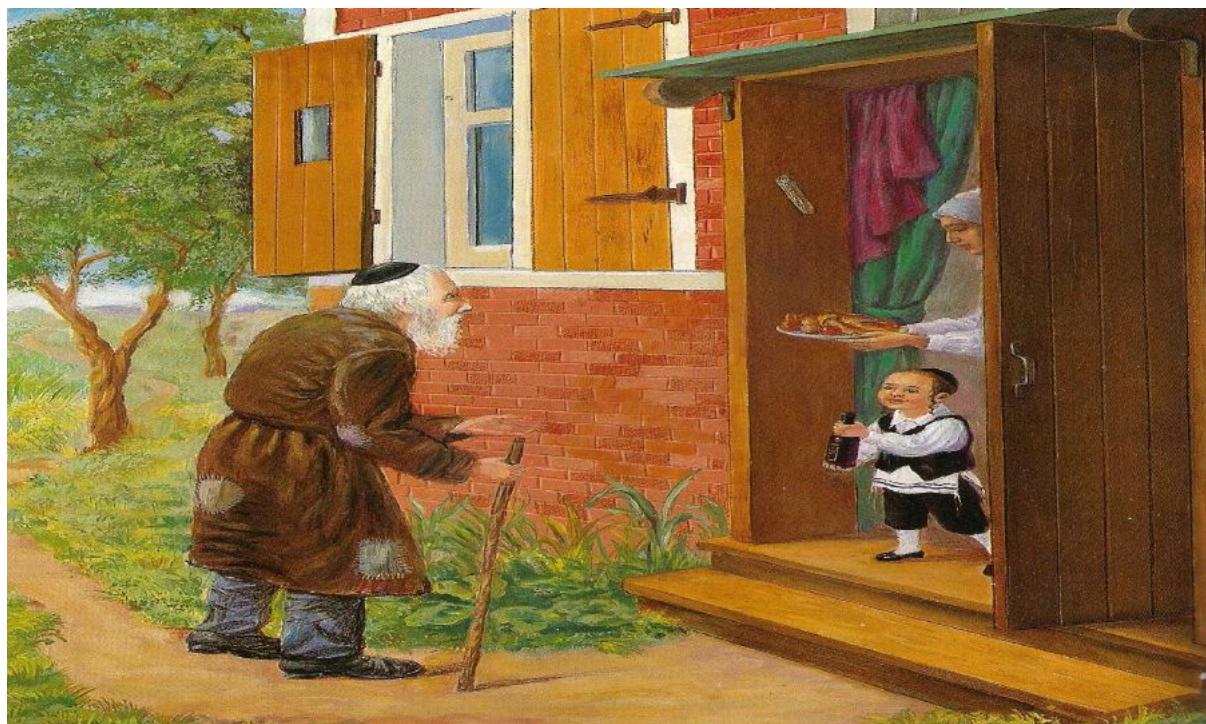
4. Shabbat:

Preparations for Shabbat are as important as Shabbat itself: cooking, cleaning the house before Shabbat, a child can clean his or her own room, preparing a beautiful table, taking a bath, changing weekday clothes to festive Shabbat clothes etc.

The Mitzvah of ‘Chinuch’ applies with special emphasis to the observance of Shabbat, since the Shabbat is a sign of the Covenant between G’d and the Jewish people. It is a Holy Day.

Preparations for Shabbat:

One should prepare for Shabbat as if for the arrival of an honoured guest, like a queen or a bride (Shabbat in Hebrew has a feminine gender).



כפתה פרשחת ליטני וזריהם שלמה לאכינו: פאם והולר גותרים ארקה לאכני רב

The 'Shulchan Aruch' states that it is a Mitzvah to wash one's body and hair and cut one's nails. Parents are obligated to prepare boys and girls in this manner on Friday, 'Erev Shabbat', at the age when the child can understand that Shabbat is a special day. Changing clothes too should be done on Friday before Shabbat begins, also when they don't accompany their father to the synagogue on Shabbat night.



Lighting of candles: (knowing by heart the ‘bracha’)



This rabbinic Mitzvah was instituted to promote peace and harmony in the home on Shabbat. It is not a personal obligation, but one for each Jewish home. Preference is given to women in lighting candles. When the lady of the house is absent, an adult daughter after Bat Mitzvah fulfils this Mitzvah and if there are only small children the husband fulfils this Mitzvah. Although there is no requirement for daughters before marriage as long as they stay home to light candles and bless them alongside their mother, it has quite often become the custom nowadays, specifically within the Chabad-movement, for minor daughters to light one or two candles alongside their mother. Others have also now partly joined this custom.

Also singing of “*Shalom Aleichem*” (welcome song for the Ministering angels of peace who accompanying us from the synagogue to the Shabbat-table) and the singing of “*Zemirot*” (religious songs in honour of Shabbat) specifically ‘*Eshet Chayil*’ (a praise song written by king Salomon in honour of the many contributions of the Jewish wife towards the celebration of Shabbat) belong to the positive Mitzvot (“Mitzvot Ta’asse”).

Kiddush (festive declaration that Shabbat is a special day, a Holy Day):



Reciting Kiddush on Shabbat night is a personal Torah obligation on every adult Jew (men and women). The prevailing custom is that each male in the family recites his individual Kiddush; women and children fulfil their personal obligation by listening. Parents are not required to accustom their minor boys or girls to recite their own Kiddush, since 'Chinuch' is rabbinic in itself. For widowed or divorced women: a boy below the age of religious adulthood (below thirteen years old) cannot free an adult of a Torah obligation. This ruling is the same in regard to reciting Havdalah (see below).

Shabbat meals:



Each of the three meals on Shabbat (“*Shalosh Seudot*”) begins with ‘*Lechem Mishneh*’ (covered), two whole loaves of challot on which the blessing of ‘*Hamotzi*’ is recited. This applies to both men and women. On Friday night the head of the household does this and everyone present says “Amen” or makes his own blessing on an individual piece of ‘challah’. Children should be accustomed to fulfil this obligation from the age they are mature enough to understand it.

The (different) Kiddush at the noontime meal of Shabbat is a rabbinic obligation. Parents should see to it that their children hear the recitation of this Kiddush. Children are not restricted, as adults are, from eating prior to this Kiddush, since they need food for their health and growing process, but they should not eat ‘challah’.



'Havdalah':

The obligation to hear or make ‘Havdalah’ applies to all Jewish males. Women are required to hear ‘Havdalah’. So parents should make sure that their children (boys and girls) hear ‘Havdalah’ at the end of Shabbat when they are mature enough to understand this.

Forbidden Labour and children: Forbidden labour on Shabbat concerns creative activities: everything that was necessary for the building and for the taking down of the “*Mishkan*” (Tabernacle) is forbidden on Shabbat. There are 39 categories of main forbidden activities on Shabbat: 39 “*Avot Melachot*” : e.g.: baking, selecting, ploughing, planting, harvesting, making fire, extinguishing fire, building, writing, grinding, carrying). All the main forbidden works on Shabbat are by definition characterised by the following three elements:

1. Creative work
2. Creative thinking work
3. Expertise

Second-degree category forbidden ‘melachot’ on Shabbat are called “*Toladot*” (related activities to the main ‘*Av melacha*’) are e.g.: brooming with a solid brush, watering flowers, gathering flowers, using electricity or tools with batteries, for instance computer; telephone, car etc. to open and close an umbrella.

'Muktzeh' (rabbinic prohibitions to make sure that Shabbat is not violated by

using forbidden items). The word ‘muktzeh’ means putting in the corner or putting aside.

Examples of “muktzeh” (being set aside in order not to violate Shabbat) are: flowers, candles, Shofar, Tefillin, Lulav, gsm, laptop, remote control, pen etc. Parents are forbidden to actively cause a child to violate Shabbat; this prohibition begins at a tender age. When a child acts for his own benefit it may be allowed, but should be discouraged.

Carrying on Shabbat of ‘multzeh’-items:

Although this is a rabbinic prohibition, the same is true for carrying from a private domain into the public domain or vice versa on Shabbat if there is no ‘Eruv’ around the Jewish neighbourhood. Many allow a child to carry a Siddur on Shabbat if there is no ‘Eruv’, but only when it is for the child’s own benefit.

Games and toys:

Things that are ‘muktzeh’ on Shabbat are not given to a child to play with, unless they are used permanently as toys before the beginning of Shabbat (like playing-stones or playing-sticks or an open sandbox with only fine sand and without water); in that case they may be moved by anyone, even an adult. To play with a ball inside the house or in an enclosed paved area is permitted, but no rolling or kicking outside since this can make holes.

Bicycles are ‘muktzeh’ (= carrying), tricycles in the house are allowed. Building blocks (Lego or Duplex) are allowed.

One may consider Monopoly permissible; board games also, unless the normal practice is to keep score by writing (even when they will not record their score). Scrabble is also allowed (when normally no score is kept) since the letters are not placed in a surrounding frame which fixes them together (this could maybe be considered writing). Puzzles with letters are forbidden (= assembling).

No climbing on or leaning against trees or ladders (again: children should only be stopped by their parents above the age of understanding); jumping and running is permitted, since that is pleasurable for children.

Children’s Body Care on Shabbat and Yom Tov:

In a case of necessity (when the child is uncomfortable) it is permissible to wash the child’s entire body with warm water which was boiled prior to Shabbat. On Yom Tov (when it is normally, like on Shabbat, also not permissible to wash one’s entire body), parents may bathe the child when they are accustomed to bathing a child every day.

Light oil, which does flow freely, may be rubbed into a child’s skin; for an adult this is only permitted when he is actually sick.

A child is always considered to be potentially sick if deprived of his legitimate needs.

Food Preparation on Shabbat and Yom Tov:

Cans with liquid formula should be opened prior to Shabbat or Yom Tov. Although measuring is normally not allowed on these days, the necessary measuring of formula-powder is allowed, since every infant is considered to be in the category of the sick.

On Shabbat the baby's bottle cannot be heated under the hot water faucet, it must be taken from the electric water heater plugged in before Shabbat. On Yom Tov hot water may be obtained from the faucet in the regular manner. Kneading ("lishah") is not permitted on Shabbat; nevertheless baby cereal may be made when this is done in a manner different from the one usually employed ('shinuy'). On Yom Tov there is no prohibition of kneading.

Transporting a Child:

A baby carriage may not be taken out of the private domain on Shabbat unless there is an 'Eruv' around the Jewish neighbourhood. On Yom Tov there is no such restriction. The hood of the carriage should not be opened on Shabbat or Yom Tov (= creating an "Ohel"/ tent, which is a violation on these days). If the hood was left open the width of a "tefach" (handbreadth=10 cm), prior to Shabbat or Yom Tov, it may be opened to its full length (since this is only adding; the "Ohel" exists already). It may also be closed as long as one "tefach" of its width is left open.

The general rule is that one may violate rabbinic prohibitions on Shabbat to provide for the acute needs of a child; the act (e.g. carrying a child to the doctor) then should be done, if possible, in a way which differs from the normal way ("shinuy").

Medical Care of Children:

The Halachic rules which govern the care of the sick on Shabbat and Yom Tov are more lenient in the case of children than they are for adults.

There are three groups of sick people on these days:

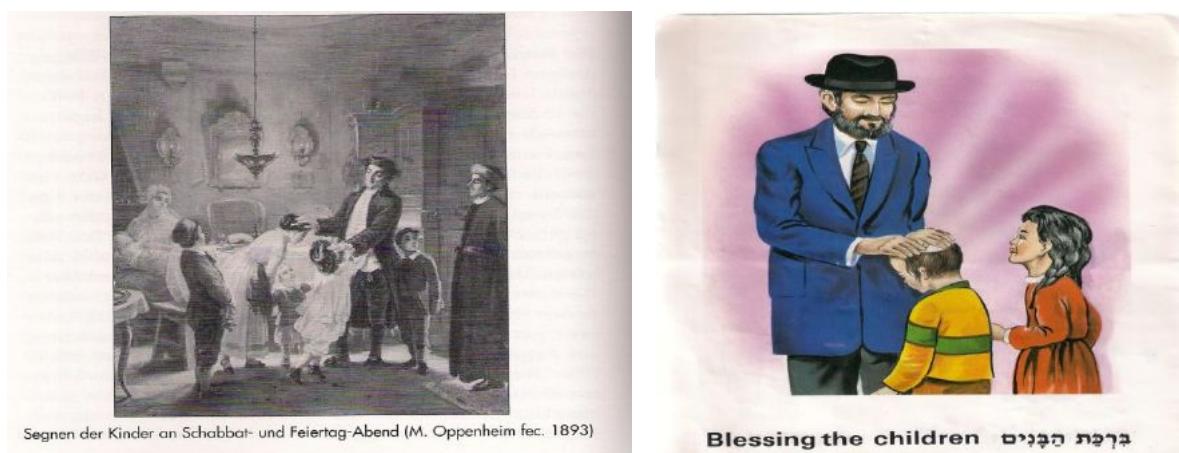
1. Those whose illness constitutes a possible threat to their lives. Shabbat or Yom Tov must be violated in any manner necessary to take care of them, whether they are adults or children, even if the danger to life is remote
2. Those who do not suffer from a sickness which can cause a danger to life, but are so ill that they are confined to bed and/or whose whole body is in pain. Non-Jews may be asked to do anything necessary. It is also permitted to violate rabbinic prohibitions ('muktze' or 'shvut') to care for them, as long as the action taken is performed in a way different than usually followed.
3. For those who suffer from ailments less severe than those described above, Shabbat or Yom Tov cannot be violated in any manner.

For children under the age of nine, even a minor pain or ailment is sufficient

for classifying in the second category, with the addition that when the “shinuy” is very difficult or impossible, the required action may be performed like usual.

Babysitting:

It is forbidden for a Jew to pay a fellow Jew for work on Shabbat and Yom Tov (even for a permissible act on these days), also if the payment will be given after Shabbat. Only if a babysitter is paid at one and the same time for babysitting on Shabbat and on weekdays, the prohibition is not violated. If only for Shabbat or Yom Tov a babysitter is needed, one can only hire a non-Jew.



Blessing Children:

Although there is no Halachic obligation for parents to bless their children, it is a well-established custom in many Jewish Ashkenasic and Sephardic communities to be done on special occasions, like on the evenings of Shabbat and Yom Tov prior to making “Kiddush” and immediately before going to “Kol Nidrei” on Yom Kippur. The blessing formula for boys is the one of patriarch Yaakov: “May Hashem bless you like Ephraim and Menasseh”. The blessing formula for girls is the one of the habitants of Beth Lechem who blessed Ruth with the following words: “May Hashem bless you like Sarah, Rivah, Rachel and Leah”.





Children should learn about what happens in synagogue on Shabbat: reading of the “Parashat Ha’Shavuah” and of the “Haftarah”. They should have an idea in great lines what the ‘Parashat Ha’Shavuah’ is about.

Parents also have to teach them about concepts and functioning of an’ Eruv’ like “Eruv Reshuyot” and “Eruv Hatzerot”.

- What should we be alert of when washing our hands before eating bread? (Of course ‘chatzitzah’, things which are not part of our hand, for instance rings stains of writing etc)
- The piece of “Hamotzi” which has to be eaten with salt, because the sacrifices were offered with salt and because HaShem promised Noach after the “Mabul” (flood) never to punish the world again with (salt) water. Another interpretation is that the salt is symbol for the everlasting Covenant between G’d and His people (since salt is being used as a preservative of old).

Very important in my opinion is to teach children from young age onwards not to speak between the ‘bracha’ of ‘Netillat Yadayim’ and ‘Hamotzi’, because this constitutes an interruption and a pause and as well a loss of concentration which will require again ‘Netillat Yadayim’, which would be considered a ‘Bracha in vain’. Similarly we should explain the children the prohibition to speak between ‘Tefillin shel yad’ and ‘Tefillin shel rosh’).



5. **Rosh Ha'Shana**: the first and second day of the 7th month (Tishri), The celebration of the “Yom Hoeledet” (birthday) of the world and mankind, which means that Rosh Ha’Shana has clearly a universal aspect! In Torah the day is called: “Yom Teruah”, the day of the blowing of the Shofar. The Shofar is blown in three different ways: “Tekiyah”, “Shevarim” and “Teru’ah” (we should explain the child the three different tones). Rosh Ha’Shana and Yom Kippur is also called “Yom Ha’Din” (day of judgement) and we should elaborate about this term and explain the Three famous Books (which are opened on Rosh Ha’Shana).

The obligation *to hear the sound of Shofar* is a positive Torah commandment dependent to time, women are therefore not obligated; but if they fulfil this Mitzvah voluntarily they are rewarded for doing so. The same ruling applies to Chinuch of young children. If children, who reached the age of understanding, missed the Shofar blowing in synagogue an adult should sound the Shofar for them a second time.

We are hearing a hundred Shofar tones on Rosh Ha’Shana, of which 30 before Mussaf are obligatory by Torah.

Also reasons for sounding the Shofar are important to know, like: the remembrance of the “Akedah” and the (horns of the) ram that was offered in place of Yitschak; the remembrance of the Revelation on Sinai where the sound of the Shofar was heard; and a third explanation of Maimonides: the blowing of the Shofar which is to do repentance and to better ourselves (Shofar has the root letters: ‘shin’, ‘pey’ and ‘resh’, which means to improve oneself).

A child should be told about the meaning of “*Tashlich*” which takes place on the first day of Rosh Ha’Shana after mincha, unless this is on a Shabbat (because of the issue of ‘Eruv’) in which case it is postponed to the second day of Rosh Ha’Shana after mincha.

On Rosh Ha’Shana we say the blessing on apple with honey; the apple as a symbol for the “sour” and hard moments which for sure we will have to experience in the coming year, but of which we hope that they will be sweetened like honey.

Part of the education is also to tell the story of *Rabbi Amnon of Mainz* (*ninth century C.E.*), who was a very important leader of the Jewish community of Mainz, South-Germany in the Middle Ages. The archbishop respected him very much, but wanted him to convert to christianity. Again and again he tried to persuade Rabbi Amnon to convert; after many times, Rabbi Amnon said to him: “Give me three days to think about it”, but on his way back home he immediately regretted what he had said and he cried and fasted for three days. When the archbishop sent his soldiers to take the Rabbi by force back to him, Rabbi Amnon told him: “I have sinned with my tongue before G’d, take my tongue out”.

But the archbishop answered that his feet should be cut off, because they refused to come to him and the Rabbi was tortured, but he remained faithful to G’d. All this happened shortly before Rosh Ha’Shana. On Rosh Ha’Shana he was brought on a stretcher to the synagogue and asked for a moment of silence; then he spoke about the three important things that could influence and change G’d’s judgement about us: Teshuvah (repentance), Tefillah (prayer) and Tsedakah (charity to the poor and righteousness). The description of the day of judgement in Heaven by Rabbi Amnon, which in all communities of ‘Ashkenaz’ is prayed in the “Musaf” (added prayer) of Rosh Ha’Shana and Yom Kippur is called “Une’tanne tokef” (let us tell the mightiness and holiness of this day).

The “Shemoneh Esreh” in “Musaf”, which consists on a regular Shabbat and Festivals of seven brachot, is longer on Rosh Ha’Shana and consists of nine ‘brachot’ (so an additional two ‘brachot’ are inserted): one Bracha is called “*Malchuyot*” (G’d being King over the world), the second one is called “*Zichronot*” (the day on which our deeds are being remembered) and the third one: “*Shofarot*” (the day of the blowing of the Shofar).

Rosh Ha’Shana is the only Festival which is celebrated in the land of Israel also two days. When the Jewish calendar was established, it was so decided and because the beginning of the New Year was considered so vital that we even in Israel added an additional day, so to avoid unforeseen difficulties with the declaration of the new moon (‘Rosh Chodesh’)

Special food is eaten on Rosh Ha'Shana as good omens for a good New Year. Except for the apple with honey we eat also: fish, pomegranate (both symbol of abundance and fruitfulness), "selek" (red beets; 'selek' means: to disappear, like our sins in the deep water ("tashlich") and honey cake.



6. Yom Kippur: (the 10th of Tishri)

The ten days between Rosh Ha'Shana up to and including Yom Kippur are called: "*Asseret Yemei Teshuvah*" (*the ten days of repentance*). Already from the beginning of the month Ellul we examine ourselves and pray for forgiveness ("Slichot" prayers). Even more so during the first ten days of the New Year; we really do "Cheshbon Ha'nefesh" (critical overview about our evil deeds during the year) in order to do 'Teshuvah' and we approach people of whom we know we have hurt them and ask for their forgiveness. Only after making up with our fellow men we may approach G'd on Yom Kippur and ask Him for forgiveness of our sins.

Between Rosh Ha'Shana and Yom Kippur we recite the prayer "Avinu Malkenu" during shacharit and mincha (no minyan is needed), except for Friday-afternoon and Shabbat. The origin of this well-known prayer is traced to Rabbi Akiva; the prayer has developed considerably through the past eighteen centuries. It deals with personal wishes, national wishes and also with the bloodshed of Jewish people during the long suffering History of our people e.g. the crusades (eleventh – thirteenth century), expulsion of the Jews in Spain and Portugal and the Catholic Inquisition

(fifteenth–seventeenth century), pogroms initiated by the Czar of Russia (nineteenth and twentieth century) and finally the ‘Shoah’ (the greatest bloodshed in Jewish History, twentieth century and carried out by the Nazis and their European collaborators). When Yom Kippur itself is on a Shabbat, it is not said.

The Shabbat between Rosh Ha’Shana and Yom Kippur is called: “Shabbat Shuvah”; the Haftara on that Shabbat is from the prophet Hosea 14 and starts with the remarkable sentence “Shuvah Israel” (return Israel to your G-d). The Halachic speech-presentation of the Rabbi on that Shabbat is about: ‘Teshuva’, Halachot of Yom Kippur (fasting) and “Zman Simchatenu” (Sukkot).

Five Torah-prohibitions for healthy adults are on Yom Kippur: (1) eating and drinking for 25 hours, (2) washing or taking a shower (only washing the fingertips in the morning and after visiting the toilet is allowed) (3) any beautification and make-up and using any sort of crèmes (4) wearing shoes or sandals which are made of leather, (5) sexual intercourse (also kissing, embracing and hugging). Children below the age of nine or ten should be allowed to refrain from eating on Yom Kippur for a short amount of time (three hours–half a day). A year before of Bar- and Bat-Mitzvah the boy or girl are required to fast the entire day in order to be used and trained in fasting.

Because Yom Kippur is a *festival* and *not* a day of mourning, parents are not required to have their children refrain from eating delicacies on Yom Kippur (which is different from the fasting days of 9th of Av and the 17th of Tammuz). If one is eating this applies to children but also to adults who have to eat, one should make Kiddush and say the ‘brachot’ before and after eating.

There are 5 services in synagogue on Yom Kippur: Kol Nidrei, Shacharit, Musaf, Mincha and Ne'ilah.

“Viduy”, the confession of sins (“al chet she’chatanu”) is a central part of the liturgy of Yom Kippur. Judaism strongly emphasizes (collective) responsibility and solidarity with our Jewish fellow men; the prayer is formulated in the plural; this means: even if you yourself did not commit a specific transgression mentioned in the ‘Viduy’, you are having co responsibility. The ‘Viduy’-prayer is alphabetical; for every letter of the Hebrew alphabet there are two sentences. This prayer is said ten times: five times in the silent ‘Shmone Esreh’ and five times in the repetition of the ‘Shmoneh Esreh’ by the Chazzan.

According to Maimonides there are four decisive steps in the process of “Teshuva”: 1. Recognizing the sin and stop doing it 2. Regretting the grief and

damage you caused yourself and others 3. admitting your sins aloud ('Viduy')
4. Resisting the sin when coming in similar circumstances.

After the Shacharit, with many "Slichot" prayers, the Torah reading is from "Vayikra" (about the service of the Highpriest on Yom Kippur) and the Haftara is from the prophet Yeshayahu about the meaning and the aim of fasting on Yom Kippur: reaching out to our fellow human beings and improving our behaviour by exercising charity and welfare.

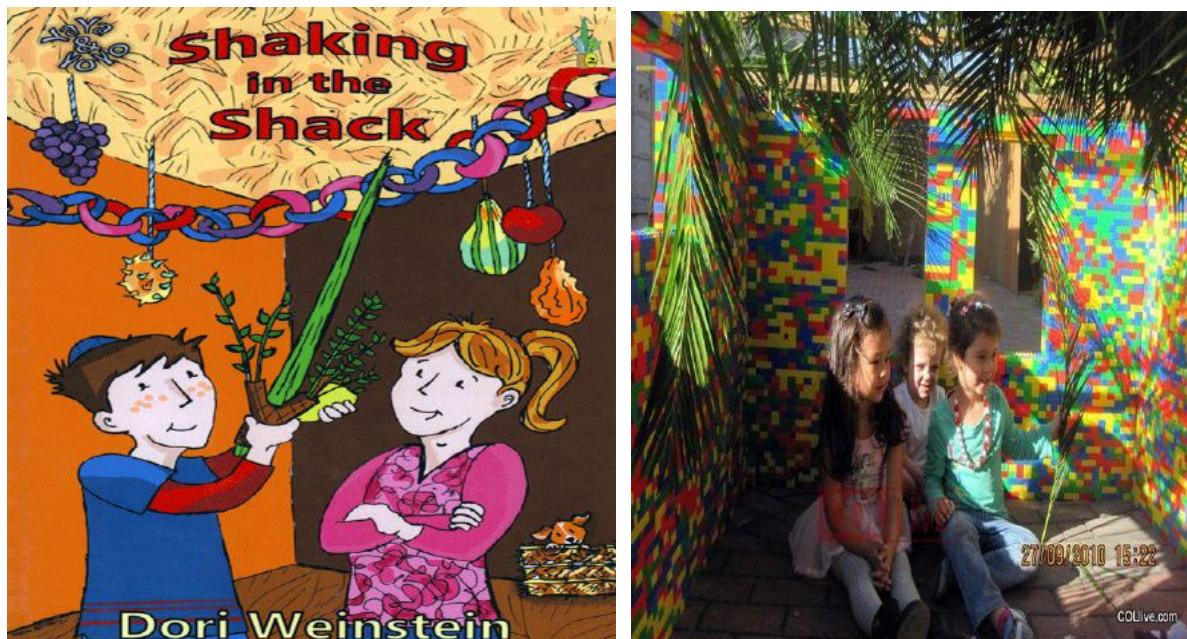
Part of 'Chinuch' is also to tell one's children about the beautiful story of the prophet *Jonah*. We learn from this Biblical **narrative** that Ha'Shem wants every human being to do 'teshuva' and to return to Him; even idolaters and certainly non-Jews and Jews are forgiven by G'd when they really do 'Teshuva'. The book of Jonah is the *Haftara-reading of the mincha-service of Yom Kippur*.



The "Kapparot"-ceremony which dates from the 8th century C.E. and is a remnant of the sacrifices which used to be brought to the Temple and is aimed at making atonement. The source may be Yeshayahu 1: 18 (when the prophet speaks that if the sinner is going to make 'Teshuvah' his sins are going to be whitened). According to Maimonides, sacrifices in nature are only transitory till we can serve Hashem without the medium of sacrifices, but if we want to offer sacrifices we should dedicate them to HaShem. According to Nachmanides (1094–1270) the sacrifice is a substitute for what should happen to us, the sinners. Sephardim practice "kapparot" with chickens (the chickens were not used as a sacrifice in the Temple; the chickens of the 'kapparot' are donated to the poor or the equivalent amounts of money), the Ashkenazim practice it with money ('tsedaka').

At the end of the Yom Kippur service, in the 'Ne'ilah'-prayer, the 'Chazan' and the community are saying the "Shemot" and are declaring thereby their steadfast belief in the Oneness and Uniqueness of G'd. With the "Shemot" we declare to be willing to sacrifice everything, even our lives, for this our

conviction. It is said in full concentration: men having their head covered by the ‘Tallit’ and women covering their eyes with their hands: the people of Israel are united with G’d on this very distinct moment in the Jewish year. After that the Shofar is blown one more time as a symbol for the withdrawal of the ‘Shechina’ (Divine Presence) similar to blowing the Shofar after the Revelation on Sinai indicating that Mount Sinai is no longer considered holy. The gates of “Teshuva” are officially closed, but ‘Teshuvah’ is every time possible and so we pray three times on weekdays in ‘Shmoneh Esreh’ for ‘Teshuva’ and forgiveness.



7. Sukkot (15th–21st Tishri) This Festival has many names: “Chag Ha’sukkot”, “Chag Ha’asif”, “Zman Simchatenu”, “Chag”.

Women and girls are not obligated to participate in the sukkah (time dependent mitzvah), but they may voluntarily do so. It is a Torah duty for the first two nights of Sukkot to eat in the sukkah; outside Israel one should eat the main meals in the sukkah (‘Netillat Yadayim and ‘Hamotzi’). Each synagogue should have its own sukkah, in order to make it possible also for those who do not have a sukkah to fulfil the Mitzvah of eating in the sukkah and one can bring his/her food to eat in the sukkah of the synagogue.

From the age of five or six boys (and if parents wish: also girls) can be trained in eating all the main meals in the sukkah.

Once a boy is able to properly wave the “arba minim” (lulav, etrog etc.) in the prescribed six directions, parents or grandparents who can afford it, should buy a separate set for him.

Throughout the year a minor boy (under the age of ‘Bar Mitzvah’) can never be called to Torah for any other ‘Aliyah’ than ‘Maftir’.

On Simchat Torah however it is customary to give ‘Aliyot’ to every Jewish adult present, so that all can share in the joy of completing the Reading of Torah, including all the boys who come up together for the next-to-last ‘Aliyah’, before ‘Chatan Torah’. After their Torah reading is over, they are blessed with the words of Genesis 48: 16 (“Ha’Malach Ha’Goel”) and are given sweets and presents.

Parents should teach their children the ‘*brachot*’ over the *Lulav* and the names of the 4 plants: *Lulav, Etrog Hadasim and Aravot*, and what they do symbolize. The *Lulav* only has a taste, the *Hadas* only good smell, the *Etrog* has both taste and smell and the *Aravot* have neither one of them. They are symbolically representing four types of the Jewish people: those who study Torah (taste), those who do the Mitzvot (smell), those who are doing both (*Etrog*) and those who don’t do either one of them (*Aravot*).

“*Lulav bensjen*” is a sign of gratitude and trust towards G’d, for all that is His and what we have gotten from Him (food, a house, heating and all the beautiful things in life). With the *Lulav* a hope for water in the coming winter season is said. The *Lulav* is shaken in all directions as a sign that HaShem is everywhere. We are using the bundle of the ‘*Arba Minim*’ before and during *Hallel* and during the procession of ‘*Ho Shana*’.

Other themes for ‘*Chinuch*’ on *Sukkot* are:

- The idea of the “*ushpezin*”: the 7 heavenly guests who are invited in the *sukkah* as a gesture of hospitality, which should not remain only symbolic, but should be put into practice during *Sukkot*; for that reason a synagogue should always have a *sukkah*. The 7 ‘*ushpezin*’ are: Avraham, Yitschak, Ya’akov, Moshe, Aharon, Yosef and David.
- A *sukkah* can be built uncovered by roof or a tree in the garden, on the balcony or on a plat roof.
- The places where a *sukkah* may not be built and in what case the *Mitzvah* of building a *sukkah* may not be carried out is discussed in length in ‘*Shulchan Aruch*’ and ‘*Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*’.
- The roof of the *sukkah* must be made from “*sechach*” that means: leaves, something growing that has been detached from the tree or bush.
- A *sukkah* has at least 3 walls and the minimum size is such that one can place a table and sit in it.
- At the end of the synagogue service a ‘*Sefer Torah*’ is taken out from the Holy Arc and brought to the “*bimah*”, the congregants walk around it with their *Lulav* and *Etrog*; this is called a “**Hakafah**” (a round the synagogue and ‘*bimah*’). The procession of this special prayers start with the word: “*Hoshanah*” (please save us!). On the 7th day of *Sukkot* 7

“Hakafot” are made with a bundle of ‘Aravot’, during “shacharit”; this day is called **“Hoshana Rabba”** (a minor Yom Kippur). This is in fact the day of departing from the sukkah; HaShem asks us to stay another day with Him (‘Shemini Atzeret’); after Sukkot, ‘Shemini Atzeret’ and ‘Simchat Torah’ it takes about half a year for the next Festival: Pesach.



8. Shemini Atzeret /Simchat Torah:

After the 7th day of Sukkot another 2 Festivals follow: the first one is **“Shemini Atzeret”** (the 8th day, but it is a new independent Festival from Sukkot), on which we pray for rain in Eretz Israel. In the afternoon we are saying a prayer of farewell to the sukkah.

- The 9th and last day is **“Simchat Torah”**, on which we celebrate that we had the privilege during the year to read the whole Torah and may start again on the same day reading the Torah from the beginning. Every adult is given ‘Aliyah’; after that the “Chatan Torah” (the bridegroom of the Torah) is called up to read the last portion of the Torah; it is followed by the “Chatan Bereshit” (the bridegroom of ‘Bereshit’) who is called to read the first chapter of Creation including the passage about G-d finished up the creating work at the end of the sixth day (Shabbat). The bride or “Kalla” is of course the Torah. Children are getting sweets and candies and in some places even presents to make it extra attractive for them; they should associate the sweet taste with Torah.
- On **‘Chol Hamo’ed Sukko’t** we are not allowed to get married (we are not allowed to mix private joy with public joy), to shave and to go to the hairdresser or to do the laundry (reason is that Rabbis wanted people come neatly and have enough laundry for Yom Tov and not postpone it to ‘Chol Hamo’ed’).

- The main difference between Shavuot (“Matan Torah”, the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai and ‘Simchat Torah’ is being able to study and being engaged with Torah the whole year). At ‘Simchat Torah’ everyone in synagogue is dancing with the Torah scrolls, also the children are joining but should not be given to carry a Torah-scroll lest it may G-d forbid fall and destroy the joy of the Festival).



חנוכה חיה יפה עז, מיאת יוסף בודקו.

9. Chanukah: 25 Kislev – 2 Tevet

Like Purim this is a rabbinical Festival. The word “Chanukah” is also in the word “Chinuch” and in the word ”la’nu’ach” (to rest).

About 167 before the CE the Hellenistic Syrians ruled over Eretz Yisrael. This was a spiritual threat for the Jewish People; many of them (the aristocracy and the priesthood) became Hellenistic. Physical beauty and aesthetics was the only important thing and much value was given to the external look, whereas Judaism is much more concerned about spiritual values and about the inside (thinking and learning).

The Greek Syrians did not allow the Jews to study Torah, to keep Shabbat, to practice the “brit” etc. In Modi'in, a small town where priests were living, Mattityahu, a Highpriest from the family of the “Chash'mona'im”, resisted this threat and he and his followers went underground. His sons, headed by Juda HaMakabi, started an underground war, which lasted 3 years (167–164 B.C.E.); a small group of ‘Makkabim’ against a Hellenistic superpower and they won, with many victims though.

The Temple II which had been desecrated for three years was purified and consecrated: “Chanukat Ha’mizbeach” (the consecration of the altar). In order to use the Menorah again, there was only a jar of kosher olive oil sealed by the Highpriest which would last only for one day and it would take 8 days to get new kosher olive oil from the Galilea. The miracle of Chanukah was that the Menorah was burning for 8 days with this small amount of olive oil.

Part of the story is also to tell children about:

- The reason of playing with the “dreidl” (‘sevivion’) and explaining the meaning of the letters written on the ‘dreidl’
- Why we are eating latkes and sufganiyot?
- When the ‘Chanukiah’ has to be lit: on working days after sunset, on Shabbat before lighting the Shabbat candles, on ‘Motsa’ei Shabbat’ after Havdalah. The candles have to burn at least for $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour on weekdays and on Shabbat at least till the end of the meal (three hours).
- How do we celebrate Chanukah?:next to the kindling of the Chanukah-lights every evening we are reading the complete Hallel at Shacharit, after “Shemonah Esree”; the reading of “Al Ha’nissim” in’ Birkat Hamazon’ and in the ‘Shemoneh Esree’; the fact is that it is possible to celebrate Chanukah every night with a different family and it is the only Festival that it is possible to celebrate with Jewish children in the classroom; the fact that we have a special Mitzvah on Chanukah to make it known to the outside world to make public the miracle of Chanukah, because it is our duty to make known the victory of light over darkness.

The head of the household is supposed to kindle every evening one flame of the Menora; the custom is to light one additional flame for each new night. Ashkenasic custom is therefore to have minors, from the age of ‘Chinuch’, each light an individual Menorah. As long as the children are small ‘Chinuch’ on lighting the candles is advisable. Candles with olive oil are preferable to any kinds of candles.

Sephardic parents are not required to teach minors to light the Menorah, because in Sephardic practice the Mitzvah is not meant for each individual, but only for the head of the household.



פָּדָר מַיִּיר בְּשִׁבְט



זֶכְרֶת בְּאֹהֶל הַעֲמָן וְגַתְּבָתָם כִּי-כִי פָּאָלָל



1. **Tu biShvat**: 'Rosh Ha'Shana la'Ilanot' (15th of Shvat): 'New Year of the Trees'.

Points for 'Chinuch' on the subject of 'Tu biShvat' are:

- Knowing the names by heart of the '7 special fruits' of Eretz Yisrael: grape ('anav'), olive ('zait'), date ('tamar'), pomegranate ('rimon'), fig ('te'enah'), wheat ('chitah') and barley ('se'orah').
- The agricultural Mitzvot relating to Eretz Yisrael:
The agricultural products (fruits and vegetables) of the Land of Yisrael are subject to Mitzvot nowadays obligatory by the Rabbis: a small part has to be separated or taken off which is known as 1. "Trumah" (originally given the Kohanim) and 2. "Ma'asser Rishon" (a 10th part of the produce, originally in the time of the Temple given to the Levites); 3. "Trumat Ma'asser" (a 10th of the 'Ma'asser Rishon', this part was originally given by the Levite to the Kohen) and 4. 'Ma'aser Sheni' or 5.'Ma'asser Ani' (a 10th of what is left after the 'Trumah' and 'Ma'aser Rishon' has been taken off. In the 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 5th year of the cycle of seven years, 'Ma'asser Sheni' was taken off; this was originally eaten by the owner in Jerusalem. From the products that had been growing during the 3rd and the 6th year of the seventh years-cycle, originally a 10th was given to the poor. 'Trumah' and 'Ma'asser' are being nowadays composted and no one should have any profit of it (like the separation of "challah" which has to be burnt); 'Ma'asser Sheni' has to be bought off with a special coin ("perutah") (reason that we cannot give the 'Trumah' and 'Ma'asser' to Kohanim: a. they are from a religious point of view not anymore 'pure' ('tahor'), because they surely got in touch with dead persons or graves etc. and b. they cannot prove their genealogy going back to Aharon the Highpriest).

Today we use the formula of 'Chazon Ish' printed in all Siddurim

to separate ‘Trumah’ and ‘Ma’asser’ either as an obligatory Mitzva or out of doubt if ‘Trumah’ or ‘Ma’asser’ was separated and so we do it without ‘bracha’, just reading the formula and separating one percent and discarding it in a dignitary manner. Outside of Israel where we are not bound to fulfil agricultural Mitzvot of the products which grow here, we have the obligation of ‘Ma’asser Kesafim’, thus 10 percent of our net income to donate to ‘tzedakkah’ (charity) or if necessary to use part of it to buy items of religious nature, like Tefillin or Mezuzot or religious books. Also in Israel because most people are not anymore engaged in agriculture the Mitzva of ‘Ma’asser Kesafim’ is also applicable to all Israelites.

In Israel we have a cycle of seven years whereby the seventh year is called ‘Shemitah’, we are not allowed to cultivate the land, but let it rest and only do the most vital works in order to keep the vegetation alive. Theoretically there is no ownership of the fields and every person can serve himself for his necessary needs.

Because of misuse and maybe profit-merchants who do commerce with the fruits of ‘Shemitah’, the fields subject to ‘Shemitah’ are placed under the Authority of the Beth Din (‘Otzar Beth Din’) and it is the task of the Beth Din to look after trustworthy people to collect and sell it for a non-profit price.

- Which ‘brachot’ do we say on “Tu biShvat”? (At least 4!)

When the Temple was in existence the “taxes” of agriculture products were brought to the Temple and were given to the Kohanim and Levites. It was calculated around ‘Tu biShvat’.

Nowadays in modern Israel new young trees are planted at by young school pupils on ‘Tu bi Shvat’. And ‘Tu biShvat’ became Israel’s Day of Environment.

There is no prohibition to work on Tu bi Shvat.





2. **Purim:** the 14th of Adar (Shushan Purim: the 15th). In case of a leap year Purim will fall on the 14th of Adar II and Shushan Purim on the 15th of Adar II.

The “Megillat Esther” is read twice on Purim: the first time when Purim starts at night and the second time in the morning.

The main Mitzvah of Purim is the Reading of ‘Megillat Esther’ from a kosher Megillah. Both men and women (and children) have the obligation to hear the Megillah on Purim night and again during Purim day.

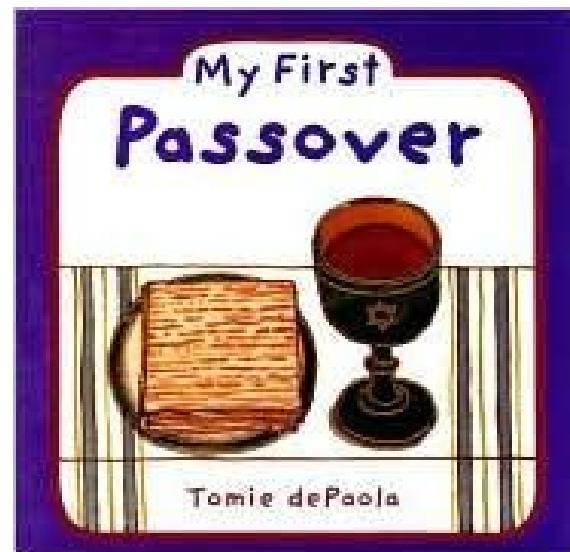
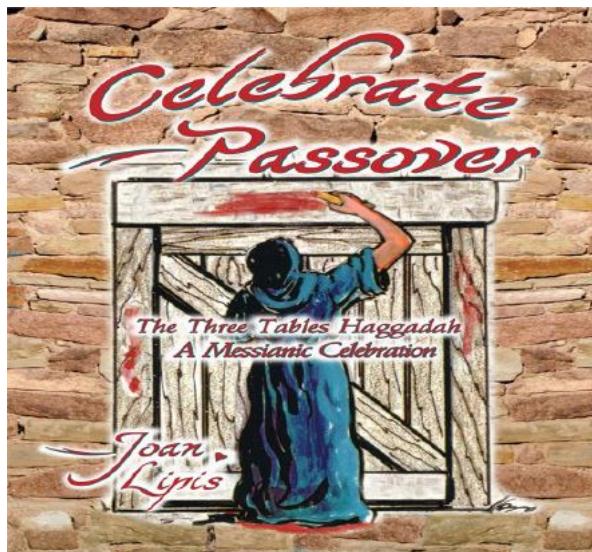
Parents are encouraged to take the children to the synagogue but only when they are old enough to hear partly the Megillah and to make noise at the mentioning of the name of Haman. This is part of ‘Chinuch’ and is brought to Halacha in ‘Shulchan Aruch’.

Other Mitzvot for men and women and therefore part of ‘Chinuch’ also applicable to children are “*matanot la’evyonim*” (gifts to the poor, 2 donations minimum that the poor men can buy a simple meal) and “*mishloach manot*” (sending portions of food to friends, at least to 1 friend, containing at least 2 articles of food which can be directly eaten). A widespread ‘minhag’ (custom) exists of giving “Machtzit Hashekkel” (3 halves of the current coin of the time and place) for boys in the synagogue, mostly from the age of ‘Bar Mitzvah’.

- Before the end of Purim, Halachically before ‘shkiyah’ (sunset), a ‘Se’udat Purim’ takes place: the eating and enjoying of a festive meal.
- The 5 central figures in the story of Purim: King Achasverosh, Queen Vashti, Queen Esther, Vice-King Mordechai and Prime-Minister Haman to be known by heart.
- The main lines of the story (5th century before the C.E.: the

commemoration of the deliverance of the Jewish People in Persia an all provinces out of the hands of Haman, the Prime-Minister of the king Achashverosh. Mordechai (from the tribe of Benjamin, being a descendant of Sha'ul who did not exterminate the Amalekites, I Samuel chapter 15) did not bow for Haman; Haman wanted to punish the whole Jewish People for that and he fixed the date to annihilate the Jewish People by "purim" (lottery) one "pur" for the month Adar and one "pur" for a day, the 13th of the month Adar on which he wanted the Jews of Persia and all provinces to be exterminated. Esther, the queen, niece of Mordechai, prevented this. Before she is going to speak to King Achasverosh about the evil plans of Haman, she is calling for the Jews of Shushan to fast for 3 days. After pleading with King Achasverosh the king made a new law, which allowed the Jews to defend themselves on the day of 13th of Adar. Mordechai, who earlier had saved the life of the King against a plot of poisoning him, was elevated by the king to be his vice-king. On the 14th of Adar the Jews of Persia and the provinces rested from their struggle for existence against their enemies; in the old capital of Persia, Shushan (today the city of Hamadan), the Jews could defend themselves one day longer, so they rested on the 15th of Adar. For this reason in Jerusalem, a city which is of course not lesser of importance than the city of Shushan, and above that a city with walls going back to the time of Joshua ben Nun, the conqueror of Eretz Yisrael, Purim is celebrated on the 15th of Adar (Shushan Purim).

- The name 'Esther' comes from "le'hastir" (to hide); the Name of G'd is not mentioned in the Book of Esther; the story of Esther is telling us about the acting of G'd behind the scenes. Since the threat of Purim was a physical and existential one, Purim is celebrated in a physical way. The dressing up and concealing the identity of the children has to do with the "hiding" both of a. the name of G-d in the Megilla and b. the true Jewish identity of Esther.
- In a leap-year Ta'anit Esther, Purim and Sushan Purim are kept and celebrated in the second month of Adar (for 2 reasons: 1. the first month of Adar is the month that is added and: 2. there should not be a pause between the two great miracles of Hashem in the case of Purim, the victory over Haman, and in the case of Pesach, the victory over Pharaoh).



3. **Pesach:** 15th (and 16th outside of Israel) till 21st (and 22nd Nisan outside of Israel)

In Israel Pesach is 7 days, outside of Israel it is 8 days. On the first 2 days of Pesach we are celebrating the Exodus out of Egypt (about 3300 years ago); on the last 2 days of Pesach we commemorate the splitting and the passage through the Red Sea (Pharao ‘regretting’ his decision to let the people of Israel go and is pursuing them). This very great miracle is in Talmud compared to 2 other “miracles” in human life: 1. finding the right matching mate in life for marriage 2. and to have a livelihood in order to be able to survive.

We are not allowed to eat “chametz” and ‘yeast’; the Hebrew People did not have time to let their bread as food supply rising (it becomes ‘chametz’). The 5 sorts of grain are: wheat, barley, oats, rye and spelt if those types of grain are coming in contact with water they begin to rise after 18 minutes (this is becoming ‘chametz’). If these kinds of grain

become ‘chametz’, we are not allowed to eat them. Only the Matzah which has been baked under Rabbinical supervision and we make sure that the total baking process did not last over 18 minutes, is allowed to be consumed. The Matzah can be besides of wheat also from the other four types of grain mentioned above. Pesach has the most strict laws of Kashrut since it is only a temporarily prohibition (in Israel 7, 5 days and outside of Israel 8, 5 days). People tend to take easily temporarily prohibition; hence the strictness of the Kashrut laws of Pesach.

“Chametz” is in the Kabbalah explained as a symbol for the ‘yetzer hara’ (the evil inclination), it is rising and is characterized as arrogance and haughtiness.

A Jewish person is absolutely forbidden to eat ‘Chametz’, benefit from ‘Chametz’, or own ‘Chametz’ from Erev Pesach noon-time throughout the Festival.

Since the above mentioned prohibitions (three) are Torah ordinances which apply to the whole Jewish People, there is a duty of ‘Chinuch’ for both boys and girls to respect those prohibitions, from the age at which a child can understand that eating or benefiting from ‘Chametz’ is wrong.

From birth onwards parents may not give ‘Chametz’ to a child, just as they may not cause a child to sin in any way.

When a sick child requires ‘Chametz’—medication other rules apply and a Halachic authority (best a member of a Beth Din) should be consulted.

Food for Babies on Pesach:

The ‘Chametz’ contained in baby formula is exclusively of the ‘kitniyot’ (beans) variety, which may be kept in one’s possession during Pesach.

According to Ashkenasic custom one may not eat ‘kitniyot’ (beans and rice), but there is no restriction on benefiting or owning them on Pesach.

Small children find ordinary Matzah often too dry and hard to digest. Also sick and elderly people have digesting problems with regular ‘Kosher le’Pesach Matzot’ and require egg matzah which is soft to digest and is allowed to serve for elderly people. In general the Halachic rule is: whatever may be done for the sick may be done for the small children; so this means that it is permitted to feed egg Matzah to toddlers. Also is ‘kitniyot’—baby food allowed to be served for babies under the restriction that we have special cutlery, exclusively used for the ‘kitniyot’—baby food.

‘Bedikat Chametz’:

Searching for ‘Chametz’ on the night of the fourteenth of Nisan in order to remove all ‘Chametz’ in one’s possession is a Rabbinical requirement, but not a personal one. The Halachic authorities recommend however that one should be personally involved in this Mitzvah. Parents are not obliged, but often wish to involve their children in the search for ‘Chametz’.

It is recommended that children should clean their school-bags, desks, shelves and books of ‘Chametz’. Also because many times children eat ‘Chametz’ while lying on bed, they should thoroughly search for ‘Chametz’ in the bed and under the bed. It is very advisable if possible to let the children clean the care thoroughly; since they often eat ‘Chametz’ in the car. It is absolutely recommendable that teachers should involve the students to clean the classroom of real ‘Chametz’ and, even if the school is ‘sold’ during the Pesach-period to non-Jews.

‘Erev Pesach’:

The day prior to Pesach it is customary for “Bechorim” (firstborn males) to fast in memory of the plague of the death of firstborn Egyptians on the ‘Seder night’ from which the Jewish firstborn males were spared. The prevailing practice today is for “Bechorim” to attend a ‘Siyum’ (finishing a Talmud-tractate, mostly by the Community Rabbi) and thereby participating in a ‘se’udat mitzvah meal’ on the occasion of performing a Mitzva: ‘Siyum’ and so being dismissed of the obligation to fast on Erev Pesach. Fathers of firstborn sons should attend such a ‘Siyum-meal’ on ‘Erev Pesach’ till the boys reach ‘Bar Mitzvah’. Afterwards it is the duty of the sons to attend the ‘Siyum’ and the ‘se’udat mitzvah’.

The prohibition of eating Matzah on ‘Erev Pesach’ counts once a child is capable of understanding the story of Pesach and the meaning of Matzah. Sephardim allow children till ‘Bar Mitzvah’-age to eat egg-Matzah or chocolate-Matzah on ‘Erev Pesach’.

The Seder (The Festive Meals on the night(s) of Pesach):

The obligation to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt is a Torah duty for every Jew including children. Optimum fulfilment of this Mitzvah is achieved when parents are themselves able to tell the story of Exodus to their children. How to tell the story of Exodus should be determined by the child’s intellectual level. Special efforts should be made by parents and Hebrew teachers that the children understand the Haggadah reading (such as translating into the mother-tongue). Preference should be given to Haggadah’s that have a lot of beautiful illustrations, so that the children’s minds could be focused and imaging the Exodus.

The Rabbis of the Mishna have formulated the ‘Ma Nishtanah’ (why this is night different from all other nights of the year?) in the form of four (4) questions, which a child who is old enough, should read, best to recite them by heart; teaching the children the ‘Ma Nishtanah’ is the task of the parents

and Hebrew teachers. Parents are required to encourage a framework in which children become curious and spontaneously ask questions. The ‘stealing’ of the ‘Afikoman’ belongs to this playful teaching pedagogic. To make sure that the children stay alert, the ‘Seder’ should start immediately after nightfall. Children should be kept up awake until the section of “Avadim Hayeenu” (the actual answer on the four questions of ‘Ma Nishtanah’, namely we were slaves to Pharao in Egypt.....
The eating of Matzah is the second major Torah Mitzvah on the ‘Seder’-night (at least a “kezayit” which is about 40 grams and roughly one machine-baked Matzah).

About *The four cups of wine* (or grape juice) there is a point of discussion in the Halacha for young children: each child is required to drink from his wine cup an amount appropriate to his age; grape juice may be substituted for wine.

The reclining position (‘Hassibah’) for Matzah and for wine/grape juice should be taught to boys.

Adults, both male and female, are rabbinically obligated to eat a “kezayit” of maror (composed of rasped horseradish with Roman salad-leaves along with ‘Charosset’); parents are required to have both boys and girls past the age of understanding fulfil this Mitzvah.

Matzot, which we have to eat on Pesach for historical reasons is also called “the bread of freedom” and “bread of the poor/slaves”. We are leaning at the left side when eating the first ‘kezayit’ of Matzah as a symbol of freedom.

The Hagaddah (a special book with the complete story of the Exodus composed by our Rabbis over the last 2000 years) has to be read on the Seder Night.

The 4 questions of the “Ma nishtanah”recited by the children and song by the participants are about: eating Matza, Maror, 2 times dipping our food (1) maror in charoset and (2) karpas in salt water) and about leaning on our left side.

Two kinds of ‘Maror’/‘Chazeret’ (horseradish and Roman salad leaves), which we have to eat on the Seder Night is to just experience a little bit of the bitterness of our forefathers in Egypt.

We drink 4 cups of wine/ grape juice during the Seder, because 4 expressions are used for the “redemption” (Shemot 6, 6–7): ‘vehotseti’ (and I will lead out), ‘vehitsalti’ (and I will save), ‘vega’alti’ (and I will redeem) and ‘velakachti’ (and I will take); the Rabbis teach us: for every

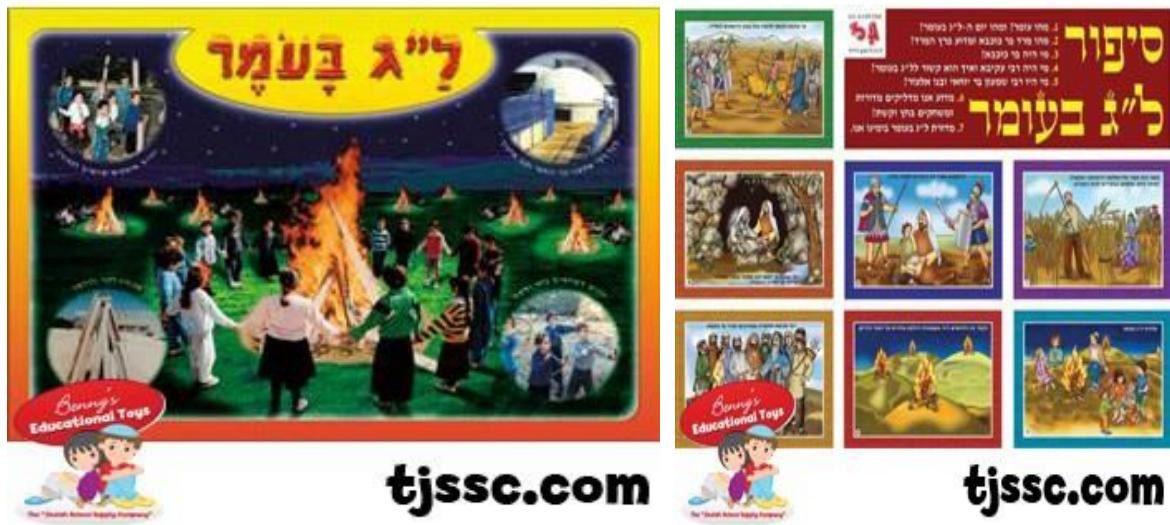
expression of ‘redemption’ we drink 1 cup of wine. Then there is written in the context of redemption: “veheveti etchem el ha’aretz” (and G-d will bring you to the Promised Land) and since this promise is not yet fully fulfilled, there is on the Seder table, the Cup for Eliyahu, the prophet, whom we invite on the Seder Night because he will announce the final Messianic Redemption. The Rabbis teach us further as the historical redemption which took place in the month of Nisan; we also expect the Messianic Redemption in month of Nisan.

On the Seder plate we have 6 items: *zro'a* (a roasted bone of chicken, symbol for the Pesach sacrifice and also for the outstretched arm of G-d taking us out of Egypt), a ‘*beitsa*’ (a roasted hard-boiled egg), symbol for the Feast-offering (Chagigah), *maror* (the herb of bitterness, reminding us of the slavery in Egypt), *karpas* (vegetables, for which we wash our hands, without a bracha, on the Seder night; during the time of the Temple washing of the hands was mandatory before eating of vegetables) we dip the *karpas* in salt water to remind us of the tears of the Hebrew slaves, *charoset* (symbol for the mortar), and the 3 *matzot* (symbol for the three groups in Israel: Kohen, the Levi and the rest of Yisrael).

- The 10 plagues are: *dam* (blood), *tsfarde'a* (frogs), *kinim* (lice), *arov* (wild animals), *dever* (death of the cattle), *shechin* (boils), *barad* (hail), *arbè* (locusts), *choshech* (darkness) and *makat bechorot* (death of the first-born).
- The “Afikoman” is part of the middle Matzah (of the 3 Seder-Matzot), which is set aside for the end of the Sedermeal (it is eaten being satisfied just for pleasure to preserve the taste of Matzah). The ‘Afikoman’ is also to keep the children awake (they “steal” the ‘Afikoman’ and hide it, so that, in order to properly finish the Seder meal, they can “sell” it back to the leader of the Seder meal in exchange for a nice present).
- We do not eat grilled meat on the Seder Night, because we don’t have the Temple anymore and we do not want to create the illusion of eating the sacrifice of Pesach.

The Torah Mitzvot for the Seder Night are: 1. telling one’s children about the Exodus of Egypt so that tradition continues 2. eating a ‘kezayit’ Matzah (at least one or when handmade: $\frac{1}{2}$ in 4–8 minutes).

The Seder night is the only night during the Jewish year on which we say the Hallel prayer.



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4. Lag BaOmer: 18th of Iyar.

On the 2nd night of Pesach the Omer-counting is started. It is a time of sadness, a period of half-mourning.

In the 2nd century of the C.E., most of the students of the yeshiva of Rabbi Akiva in Bne Brak (the greatest scholar of Mishna and Talmud, son of proselytes) died because of pestilence (diphtheria) (except for a few students, among them Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and Rabbi Meir). It also has been a time in Jewish history of mass murdering of Jews, which took place during these weeks of the Omer-counting: during the Roman period (Bar Kochba-revolt which ended with a massacre of almost one million Jews in the city Betar); During the crusades the annihilating of countless Jews in Ashkenas, specifically in the cities Speyer, Worms and Mainz.

During the Omer-counting period no marriages are performed, no haircutting and shaving (for men) is allowed and we may not attend live

musical events etc., except for the 33rd day of the Omer-counting ('Lag Ba Omer') on the 18th of Iyar. On this day the plague of ravaging Rabbi Akiva's students subsided. Later it was also on this date that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, author of the Zohar, passed away and he requested his students not to be sad on his day of death, but rather to be glad, because he is going to enter the world of truth, wisdom and light. Tradition reports us that on this day before he passed away, he revealed many secrets of the Torah to his followers.

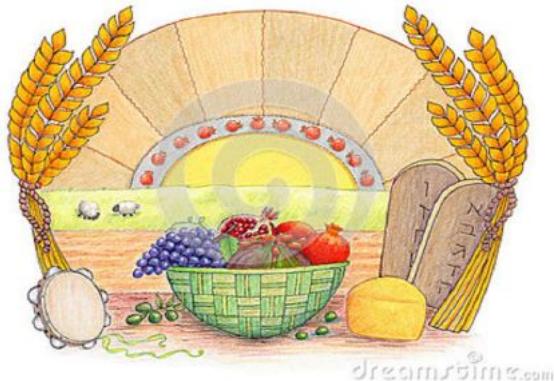
The Omer-counting takes place after nightfall, for 49 nights, accompanied with a 'brachah'.

From the Exodus of Egypt till Shavu'ot there are 50 days. According to the Kabbalah the children of Israel in Egypt were on the lowest level of 'tuma' (spiritual impurity); they only spoke the Hebrew language, bear Biblical names and kept their own dress-code. Reaching the end of the Omer-counting, they rose up to the highest level: the receiving of Torah on Mount Sinai; each day of the Omer-counting they climbed a higher level of spiritual purity/ holiness ('kedusha'). On the 50th day on Shavu'ot they were given the Torah, the Divine Teaching and Wisdom.

Counting of the Omer is a Mitzvah dependent on time and therefore not obligatory for women. Women may choose to count the Omer on voluntarily basis; there are different opinions about if women count with or without a 'bracha'. 'Chinuch' for minor children will therefore be dependent on whose Halachic opinion one is following on counting the Omer for women.

Definitely boy should be acquainted with the Omer-counting and say the day and week of the Omer without 'bracha'. Very educative is an Omer-calendar is exposed in a key-place.

Lag ba Omer is celebrated in Israel by many religious people with visiting the burial place of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his son Rabbi Elazar (on Mount Meron), by traditionally cutting the hair of boys after reaching 3 years of age (except for the "peyos" (side curls, maybe a parallel can be found of the first three years prohibition eating the fruit ('orlah') and the fourth year, bringing the fruits to Jerusalem and consuming it in holiness 'netta revai'). Children are making campfires all over Israel playing with bow and arrow (in remembrance of the victory of Bar Kochba which lasted for 2 ½ years). They used to make at that time campfire to let everywhere be known of the victory against the Romans.



5. **Shavu'ot**: 6th and (7th of Sivan outside of Israel): ‘Matan Torah’. We are celebrating the receiving of the written and oral Torah; the encounter of Revelation with Hashem to all of the Israelite people (according to Kabbalah, even with the souls of later generations of Israelites)!

On Shavu'ot *the firstlings of the seven special fruits of Eretz Israel* were given to the Kohanim by our expressing words of thanks to Hashem giving our forefather and us a good and fruitful land (*Birkat Hamazon*’ 2nd ‘bracha’ Node L’cha’). On the same day the 2 loaves of bread of the new harvest of wheat were brought to the Temple as a sacrifice to be consumed by the Kohanim. In contrast to the Omer-sacrifice which consisted of flour of the first barley-harvest which is usually the nourishment for animals; on Shavu'ot the sacrifice of the new harvest of wheat was brought in the form of two breads, which is the usual nourishment of mankind.

‘Chag Ha’Shavu’ot’ is also called in the Torah and prayer book “*Chag ha Bikurim*”, the Festival of the firstlings of the 7 fruits of Yisrael: wheat and barley (the most important grain species), dates, figs, pomegranates, grapes and olives. According to the Mishna (tractate Bikurim) the inhabitants of Jerusalem were eager to practise much of hospitality on this Festival of Shavu'ot.

We are *eating on Shavu'ot, products of milk*, since milk is containing elements

for our physically growing; similarly the Torah contains all elements for spiritually growing

Men and boys stay awake all night of the first day of Shavu'ot and study Torah (as a preparation for receiving Torah and for making up of what is told us in the Midrash: the children of Yisrael fell asleep the nigh of Shavu'ot and Moshe had to wake them up).

We read from the Torah about the Revelation on Mount Sinai (Exodus:20) and from the Prophets in Ezekiel chapter 1 about visioning the Throne of Hashem.

From the Ten Commandments a child should at least be able to mention 5 and he should know that the Fourth Commandment is about Shabbat and the Fifth Commandment is about honouring parents (this commandment is also applicable after their death; by saying 'Kaddish' and "Yizkor" – praying for their peace of soul and for forgiveness of their sins (the Memorial Service of Yizkor is kept among other Days of Remembrance, on the 2nd day of Shavu'ot).

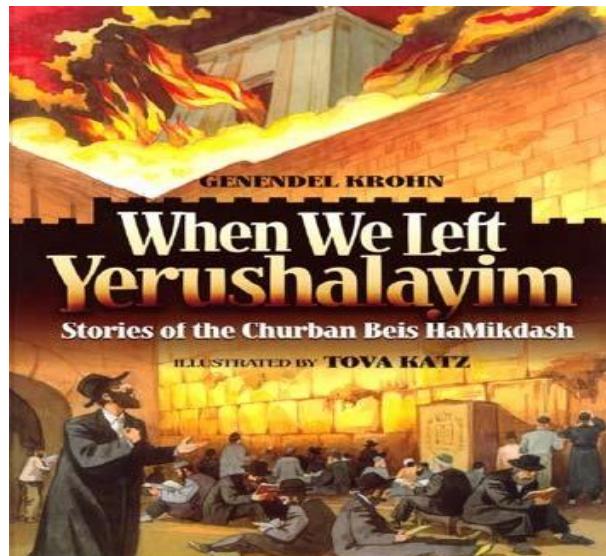
We are reading the ***Scroll of Ruth*** on Shavu'ot. It is advisable and recommended that our children should know the great lines of the story of Ruth. About Naomi and her husband Elimelech who forsake Eretz Israel, because of the famine, and the need to provide for the poor. They left with their 2 sons Beth Lechem and settled in Mo'av. Both their sons married out with non-Jewish women from Mo'av. Both the father and the 2 sons died. When the famine in Eretz Israel was over, Naomi decided to return to their city of origin, Beth Lechem and her 2 Moabite daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpa, wanted to go join her returning to Beth Lechem.

Na'omi told them to stay in Mo'av and remarry again, but the 2 daughters-in-law insisted in accompanying her to Beth Lechem. When Na'omi told them that it would be very difficult to find a husband in Israel, Orpa left Naomi and returned to her parental house in Mo'av, but Ruth answered to her: "don't try any longer to persuade me to stay in Mo'av; where you will go, I will go; your people is my people and your G'd is my G'd".

So together they returned to Beth Lechem in Judea, in spring-season when the harvest of the barley was gathered in. Ruth went to the field of Boaz, who told his workers to leave some extras on the field, so that she could collect enough grain; also later when the wheat was harvested, he told his workers later the same when the wheat was harvested. Na'omi told Ruth to ask Boaz to buy the land of her family back. Boaz and Ruth decided to get married and by marrying Ruth, the name of Elimelech and his sons would not be forgotten and stay alive.

Many reasons are quoted for reading the story of Ruth on Shavu'ot are: 1. Shavu'ot was so to speak the Giyur of the People of Israel, by taking upon themselves the Torah and Mitzvot ('Kabbalat Mitzvot'), which can absolutely be compared to the act of a regular Giyur. 2. "Chessed" is playing an important role in the story of Ruth and is central and vital in Judaism. Ruth was the great-grandmother of King David who, according to the tradition, was born on Shavu'ot and passed away on Shavu'ot.

Tradition is also to decorate the synagogue and our houses with flowers and branches (reasons for this custom are: 1. in the description of the Revelation it is reported that the lower part of Mount Sinai was green; and no sheep was allowed to eat grass during the Revealtion; 2. Shavu'ot is the Rosh Ha'Shanah of the trees of the fruit).



YIS Tisha B'av Kids Program

Exploring the meaning of
Tisha B'av through crafts, stories and video.

Tisha B'av
Afternoon
Tuesday,
July 20



2:30 -
4:00pm
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6. Jewish fast-days:

The 2 most important fasting-days on the Jewish calendar are: Yom Kippur and Tisha b'Av. To fast on Yom Kippur is a commandment from the Torah next to the most important fast-day Yom Kippur is Tisha b'Av the most important rabbinical fast-day. There are a couple of Rabbinical fasting-days, which are: (1) 9th b'Av (the downfall of Judea and Jerusalem and the destruction and burning of both the Beth HaMikdash), (2) 17th of Tammuz (breaking through the walls of Jerusalem and getting into the city and beginning to destroy it), (3) the 3rd of Tishri ("Tzom Gedalyah", remembering the murder of Gedalyah, who was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar as governor of Judea.

Through a complot he was killed and this had the consequence of losing religious autonomy in Eretz Israel and going into Exile of most Jews who remained in Israel, (4) 10th of Tevet (the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem) which lasted for three years and resulted in terrible famine and finally paved the way for destruction of Jerusalem and burning down the Temple and (5) the 13th of Adar (remembering the fasting of Esther and the Jews of Shusan before she appeared for King Achashveros to plead for saving the Jewish People). On that day the Jews were allowed in all provinces to defend themselves and fight for their lives. In a leap year the fast-day of Esther (Ta'anit Esther') is on the 13th of Adar Beth. If it falls on Shabbat it is advanced to Thursday.

Yom Kippur and Tisha b'Av are the 2 most strict ones. We are fasting from sunset till the next sunset, for 25 hours.

Fasting on Shabbat is only allowed, even obligated, on Yom Kippur. In case that other Rabbinical fasting-days fall on Shabbat, those fasting-days are postponed to Sunday.

Full fasting of children is not allowed till one year of Bar- or Bath Mitzvah. The year before Bar or Bat-Mitzvah they start training to fast.

The prohibition of wearing leather (shoes) and of washing, except for the finger after rising up and visiting the toilet, does also apply to children.

Concerning 'Chinuch' in a Jewish religious family and The Three Weeks of Mourning in commemoration of the destruction of Judea, Jerusalem and the two Beit HaMikdash the following guidelines should apply to children:

This mourning-period begins with the fast of the 17th of Tammuz and ends with the fast of the ninth of Av. Men and women who are physically capable of fasting are prohibited on eating and drinking on these two fast-days. There is however no requirement of 'Chinuch' in regard to this Mitzvah: children below the age of Bar- or Bat-Mitzvah are not required to fast fully. There is one restriction which does apply to all children on fast-days: parents should only feed simple food to children who have reached the age of understanding (no delicacies or especially tasty sweets etc should be given to

children on fast-days. For children too young to understand, there is no such restriction.

During this mourning-period there are special restrictions of varying degrees (no shaving or haircutting for men and boys; not attending musical events; for the first nine days of the month Av: not doing laundering of clothes and bathing in warm water, but there is no prohibition on bathing children since this is done for hygienic and health reasons; not eating meat and drinking wine except on Shabbat before Tisha b'Av: children may eat meat in case they otherwise will not be adequately nourished).



שְׁמָעֵ יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד וְאַהֲבָתָ את
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּכָל לְפָנָיו מִזְרָחֵנוּ וּמִזְרָחֵנוּ
הַדְּבָרִים הָאֲכָלָה אֲשֶׁר אָמַן מִזְרָחֵנוּ וּמִזְרָחֵנוּ
לְבָנֵיךְ וְדִבְרָתָם בְּשְׁבָתָן בְּבִתְחַנָּה וּבְלִכְתָּר בְּדַרְךָ
וּבְשְׁכָרָךָ וּבְקָרְמָךָ וּבְשְׁלֹתָתָם אֲלֹתָה עַל דַּרְךָ וּבְדַרְךָ
בֵּין עִינֵיכֶיךָ וְכַתְבָתָם עַל מִזְוֹזִיתָם אֲלֹת מִזְוֹזִיתָם אֲשֶׁר אָמַן
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יְוָהָרָה וּמִכְלָקֶשׁ, וְאַסְפָתָה דָּגֶשׁ, וְיִזְהָרֶךָ וְמִתְּהַרְתָּה
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וּבְשְׁלֹרָרָךְ בְּמֻלָעָן יְרִבוּ יְמִיכָם וַיְמִי בְּנֵיכֶם עַל הַאֲדָמָה
אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעַ יְהוָה כָּאָבֹתֵיכֶם לְתֹתַת לְתֹת לְתֹת כִּימֵי הַלְּטוּמִים
עַל הָאָרֶץ

7. Mezuzot:

'Mezuza' literally means: doorpost. It refers to the case ('Mezuza') which is mentioned in the first and the second part of the "Shema", one of the most central prayers in Judaism. In Jewish houses, schools and institutes etc. this "Mezuza" is fixed on all the doorposts, except for the bathing room and the toilet room, on the right side of the door. The upper side of the case has to point at the inside. The 'Mezuza' contains a handwritten parchment with the first two sections of the 'Shema' (from Devarim 6 and

11), which both end with the words that one should write the words of the Torah on ones doorposts. On the outside of the ‘Mezuza’-case the letter ‘Shin’ is written symbolically for the word ‘Shaddai’ which according to the Kabbalah the letters ‘Shin’, ‘Dalet’ and ‘Yud’, which stand for: ‘Shomer Daltot Yisrael’, ‘the Keeper of the gates of Yisrael’. Fixing the ‘Mezuza’ on the doorposts of our house means that we want to consecrate our homes to ‘HaShem’; it is definitely also a sign of our Jewish identity, of which we are proud of.

We touch with our fingers the ‘Mezuza’ when we are entering or leaving the house symbolically given a kiss to the ‘Mezuza’ and many pious people say the sentence: ‘Hashem may guard safely your going and coming back’. Having the ‘Mezuza’ on our doorposts is also having one of the most centrepieces of the Torah with us, which will constantly remind us of the Mitzvot and our dedication and His Torah.

The ‘Mezuza’ also protects us from physical and spiritual evil; like in the account of Pesach where the blood on the doorposts of the Hebrew People protected them from the 10th plague (the death of the firstborn Egyptians). When living in a ship or caravan one should also fix ‘Mezuza’ on the doorposts.

From my experience as a teacher in many Jewish schools the ‘Mezuza’ in a classroom should be attached on a height that the child could reach and symbolically give it a kiss.

‘Mezuza’ as ‘Tefillin’ has to be acquired from a reliable merchant or directly bought from a ‘Sofer’, unfortunately there many fake-‘Mezuzot’ circulating which either are not written by a G-d-fearing ‘Sofer’ or are even written on a piece of paper.

A qualitative ‘Mezuza’ costs between 50 and 70 Euros, if it is too cheap then it is fake. Never buy a ‘Mezuza’ from Ebay or souvenir-shops in Israel; all these ‘Mezuzot’ are almost 100% fake.

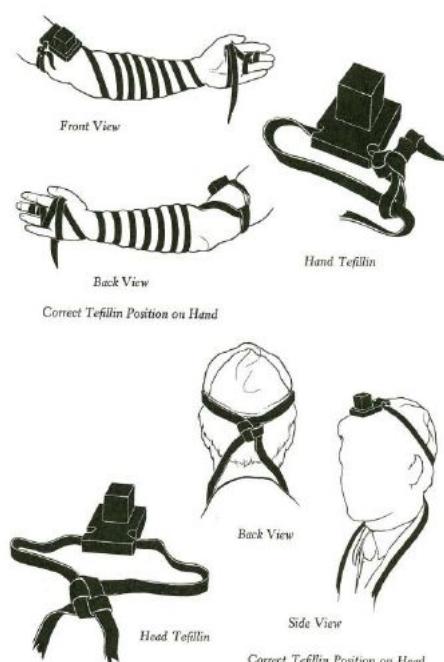
Once in 7 years a Mezuza’ should be checked by a reliable ‘Sofer’ if it is still ‘kosher’. Once it is not ‘kosher’, it should be brought to the synagogue where it will be stored in the “geniza” and buried later like non-kosher Tefillin or holy books in a Jewish cemetery, by the “Chevre Kadishah”.

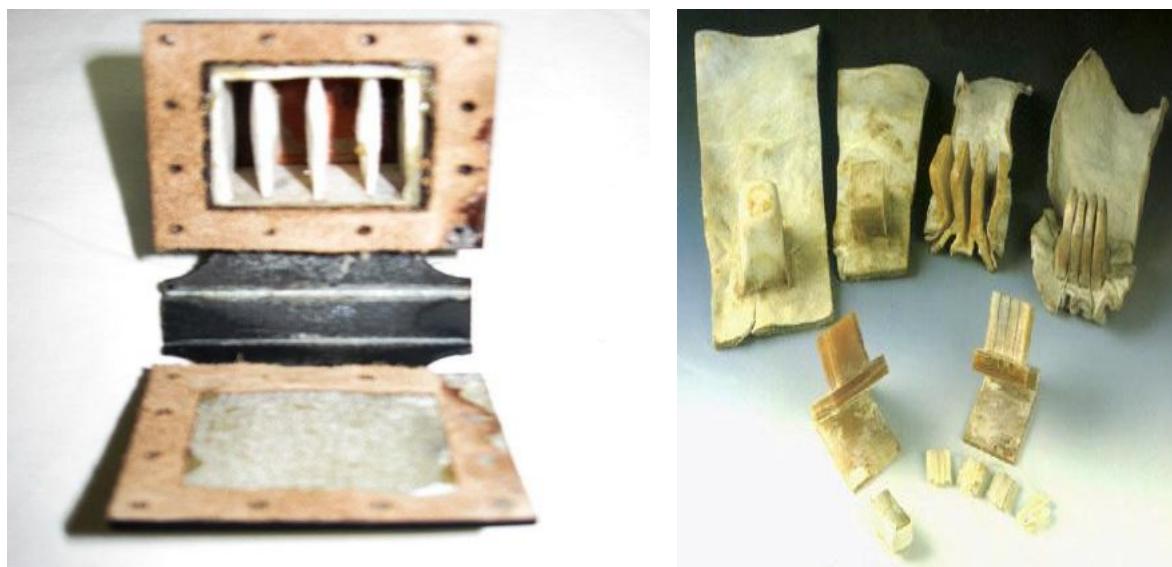
8. Tefillin and Tzitzit: Tzitzit



All authorities agree that boys should be trained to wear the 'Tallit Katan' ('Tzitzit') throughout the day. The correct age would be whenever the individual child is able to understand the Mitzvah (opinions differ: at the age of three till at the age of six years old).

Tefillin





Tefillin bear the Name of G'd and have an intrinsic holiness. The prevailing practice in the contemporary Ashkenasic Communities is to follow the view of Rabbi Avraham Gombiner (1635–1682), named after his Halachic work '*Magen Avraham*' who permit the boys to begin wearing Tefillin a short time (one month) before their thirteenth birthday.

The original meaning of the word “tallit” is garment of wool related to the Hebrew word ‘taleh’ (lamb) as a symbol for the wool, but in today’s Jewish vocabulary it means prayer shawl, which is used for Shacharit (morning-prayer). This “tallit” has “Tzitzit” at all 4 corners. The Mitzvah of the ‘Tzitzit’ is mentioned in the third part of the Shema main prayer (Bemidbar 15: 37–41) and in Devarim 22:12; ‘Tzitzit’ is consisting of 8 threads. HaShem wants to bring the Creation on a higher level by means of the Jewish People; they have to show to the world the existence of the One living invisible G'd. Therefore and because in Torah it says “ure’item” (and you will see) some men expose their ‘Tzitzit’ to (1) That they are wearing ‘Tzitzit’ and (2) That people will be able to ‘see’ them’.

Two other names for ‘Tzitzit’ are: “Tallit Katan” and “Arba Kanfot”. Boys and men are wearing this ‘Tallit Katan’ under their shirts during the whole day.

The ‘Tallit Gadol’ (Big Tallit) are used by Ashkenasim from the time they get married (the reason is that the commandment of wearing ‘Tzitzit’ is followed by the commandment to get married); the Sephardim are wearing the ‘Tallit Gadol’ from Bar Mitzvah age onwards.

The ‘Tzitzit’ is also meant to remind ourselves to the Mitzvot. They symbolize the 613 totality of Mitzvot in Judaism (‘asee’: the positive commandments

which are 248 corresponding to the number of organs in our body; and ‘lo ta’asee’: the negative commandments 365, one for each day of the year): the numerical equivalent of the word ‘Tzitzit’ = 600; together with the 8 threads and the 5 knots, this makes 613. In the ‘Shema’ main prayer it is written about the ‘Tzitzit’: “that you may see it and remember all the commandments of HaShem and perform them, and not be seduced by your heart and your eyes...”

‘Tefillin’:

As it is said in the ‘Shema’ main prayer (Devarim 6 and 11) and in Shemot (13:9 and 13:16), 4 times in the Torah: “Bind them (the Tefillin) as a sign (‘Ot’) upon your left arm and they shall be “tottafot” (four) between your eyes i.e. and on the place of your ‘brain’”.

Boys should have the ability of keeping their body and their thoughts clean and pure; one month before Bar Mitzvah age they may start being trained in wearing Tefillin. Because hand- and head-Tefillin are belonging together, it is not allowed to speak between putting on two pair of Tefillin. The Tefillin on the hand (‘shel yad’) symbolize the action and the feelings of the heart and is placed and worn vis-à-vis of our heart, the source of our feelings, whereas the head-Tefillin symbolize the intellect. The ‘Tefillin shel yad’ has 4 sections from Devarim and Shemot and are written on one piece of parchment (which symbolizes that our acting Mitzvot should be unequivocal and the ‘Tefillin shel rosh’ is written in four pieces of parchments symbolizing the pluralism of human thoughts. Also the binding for both pair of Tefillin is different (7 windings around the arm). Also here we see the word “Shaddai”: the letter ‘Shin’ on the parchment of the little ‘bayit’ (box) on the head, the ‘Dalet’ is the knot behind the neck and the ‘Yud’ in the knot which fixes the little ‘bayit’ (box) on the arm.

The ‘Tefillin’ of Rashi (1040–1105) is arranged according to the order as written in the Torah and this is the one that we are obligated to put on; the ‘Tefillin’ of Rabbenu Tam (1100–1171, (the grandson of Rashi) has a different order of the 4 sections from Devarim and Shemot and is voluntary; the latter may be used after ‘Shemonah Esree’ and without saying the ‘bracha’.

9. **Bat and Bar Mitzvah:**



What makes the change in the life of children (puberty) when they reach the age of religious adulthood. In fact from that time onwards they are obligated to observe all the Mitzvot and prohibitions.

Halachic Religious Adulthood: in Judaism

For most Mitzvot and Halachot, the age of Bat- and Bar Mitzvah is enough evidence of adulthood (girls 12 and boys 13). There are a few exceptions like; writing 'Tefillin' or Torah scrolls, which by Torah Law must be written by an adult man. Most Halachic authorities accept the full growth of facial hair as the beginning of growing a beard as reliable proof and Halachic qualification to perform this task.

Bat and Bar Mitzvah Ceremony:

Strict halachically speaking a boy becomes automatically Bar Mitzvah when he reaches the age of thirteen. Despite this, universal Jewish custom, or "minhag", has established a specific way of ceremony to mark this important occasion in a boy's life. The custom of calling the Bar Mitzvah boy to the

Torah on the Shabbat after his 13th birthday, is so strong that he has precedence for this “aliyah” over all others, except for a groom who is about to be married or was just married in the previous week. The feast afterwards is considered to be a “Se’udat Mitzvah” (meal on the occasion of performing a Mitzvah) as long as the Bar Mitzvah boy gives a speech containing words of Torah.

The ritual marking of a girl’s Jewish religious adulthood has an important effect in strengthening her dedication towards living a life of Torah and Mitzvot. Also here a ceremony should be encouraged, but not in the synagogue, mostly it is celebrated at home or in a hall. The reason for not having the Bat Mitzvah- ceremony in the synagogue is simply that there is not mention of ‘Bat Mitzvah’-ceremony in both Talmud and codex ‘Shulchan Aruch’. It is a concession of Torah-loyal Judaism to strengthen the equality of the young girl and to lend her the feeling that in no way she is inferior to the boy.

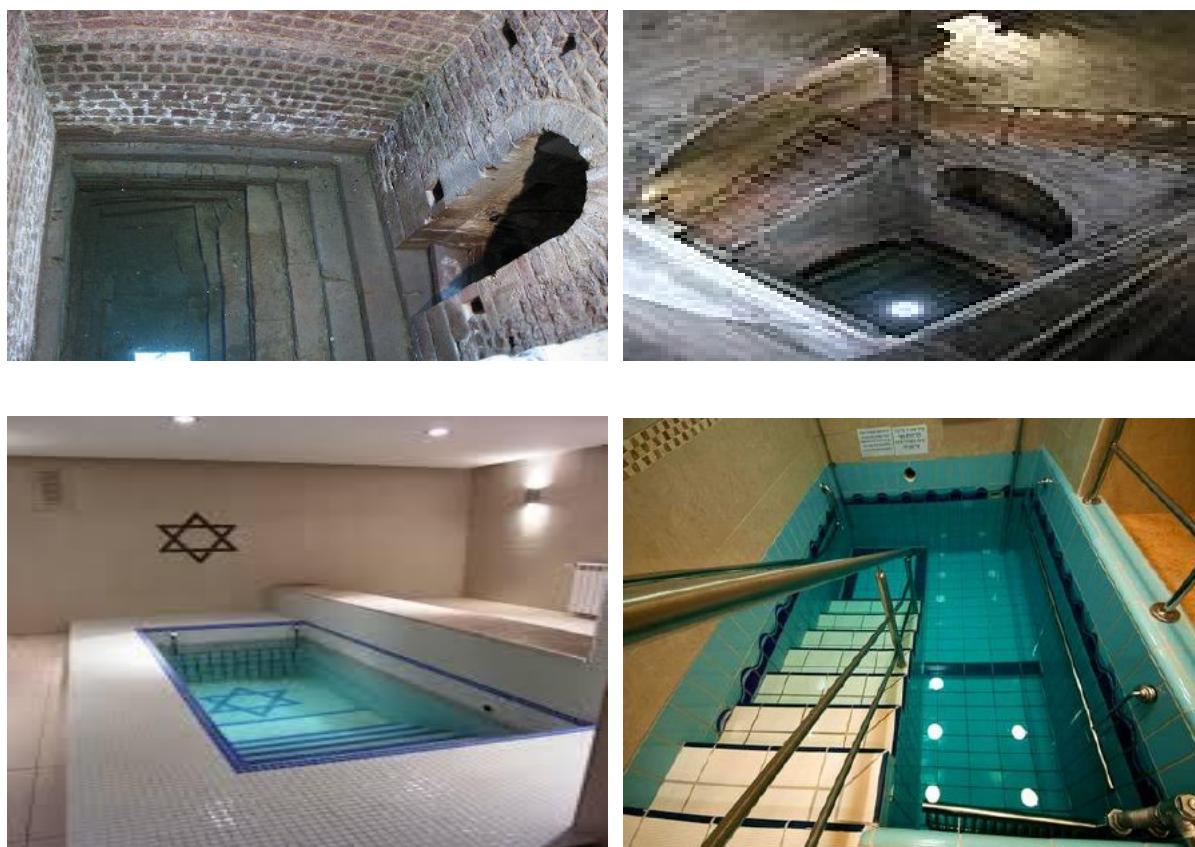
19. Taharat Ha’Mishpachah:



The separation or “Mechitzah” between men and women in synagogue is a Halachic requirement; also in the Second Temple there was already a separation, this is based on the Talmudic idea that a synagogue is a Temple miniature, a holy place which is dedicated only for communicating with G-d

and having a genuine pure thoughts of mind. A mixed-seated synagogue is according to all Halachic authorities unfit for praying and reading of the Torah and represents in the words of my revered teacher, Rabbi J.B. Soloveitchik (1903–1993,) a ‘christianizing’ of the synagogue. There is no holiness to such a place whatsoever. Visitors to such reform-liberal Temples (they call their synagogues ‘temples’, because they do not believe in the rebuilding of the Third Temple) are advised better to visit a club-house or watching a good ‘kosher’ movie and use their time more efficiently.

In schools and during festivities this separation is also today observed by Torah-loyal Jews. “Taharat Ha’Mishpachah” means that a married woman is observing the laws of “Niddah” and is supported and encouraged by her husband, which means that each month during her fertility there are at least 12 days of separation of no psychical contact (after her menstruation 4–5 days she is keeping another 7 clean days and she is visiting the Mikvah at nightfall of the 12th day and may be intimate again with her husband).



20. Mikvah:

The Mitzvah of ritual purity by using the ritual bath–Mikvah belongs to the category “Chukim”, statutes for which no direct reason is given in the Torah. The statute of using the Mikvah in order to reach ritual purity has to do with

changing of status and the transition of the past into the future. In Leviticus (18:19) the ritual bath for women after menstruation ('Niddah') is prescribed and in Numeri (31:21–24) the ritual bath is prescribed for the vessels acquired from non-Jews. When a Jewish community is about to be founded, the construction of the Mikvah has priority above all necessary community facilities, in order to make it accessible for the Jewish woman to observe the laws of family purity. In Judaism the family and family life have priority. 'Taharah' or ritual purity is reached by immersion in a kosher Mikvah. After the immersion in 'living waters' of a kosher Mikvah he or she becomes a newborn human being (Giyur) or the woman gets a new status (after Niddah).

For further reasons and explanations in the context of 'Niddah' and 'Giyur' compare my essay '*Conversion to Judaism and Proselytes in the Context of Halakhah and Jewish History*' on my website www.bestjewishstudies.com under the link 'Essays and Articles' in reference to Mikvah.

When new vessels: pans, glasses, crockery and cutlery (from a non Jewish factory) are bought, we should "touwel" them in a special Mikvah for vessels ('Kelim Mikvah'), which means immerse them in the 'living water' of the Mikvah. By doing so, we dedicate them to 'Kedusha' (holiness) to be used exclusively for kosher eating; we make them suitable to fit and be used in our kosher kitchen and household. When somebody immerses in the Mikvah, one should wear no ornaments and no objects or make-up which does not belong to the body (attention: eye-lenses have to be taken out before immersion). A proselyte ('ger' or 'gyoret') also have to immerse into a kosher Mikvah in the presence of the 'Beth Din', because of their change of identity and getting the status of a newborn (regardless of their past). The Mikvah symbolizes the spiritual purity, but from linguistic point of view it also means 'new hope' (Jeremiah 17:13: 'Eternal, the source of Israel's hope'). A Mikvah-woman ('balanit') is necessary to be present to control that the women's hair are in the Mikvah and that she has the right position when immersing (she may have not have her legs tight together or her fists closed). There are very strict Halachic norms and requirements for a kosher Mikvah (a swimming pool or water from the tap in the bathtub does not fit the requirements of 'living water' and therefore by using this facilities the woman remains 'Niddah' and the potential proselyte remains non-Jewish).



21. Marriage:

The following features and interrelation between men and women have to be part of the preparation for Giyur of children in the age of 12–18:

There is no living together before a Halachic valid ‘Chuppa’ and ‘Kiddushin’ (Halachic religious Jewish marriage). Even intimacy like kissing, holding hands, touching the intimate parts of the body and shaking hands are absolutely forbidden from Halachic point of view. This is one the reasons that religious Torah-loyal schools are segregated and has no co-ed classes and even the teaching staff has to have a dress code fitting the spirit of Torah and religious Jewish education. This is also the explanation why Jewish girls before marriage are not using the Mikvah after menstruation (‘Nidda’) in order not to endorse immorality within the Jewish society.

- What is a ‘Chuppa’?

A. Canopy:

Bride (‘kallah’) and bridegroom (‘chatan’) are standing under the canopy, which symbolises the future house in Israel that they are going about to lay the foundation of it. The Sephardim use a ‘Tallit’ spread above ‘chatan’ and ‘kallah’ or the bridegroom and bride are covered by a common ‘Tallit’ based on the words of Ruth to Boaz: (Ruth 3:9) ‘And you will spread your wings on your maid and be my

redeemer'.

B. Head covering:

The 'Chuppa' is also the beginning of covering the hair of a married woman. Covering the head of a married woman is even from the Torah obligatory, but there are different ways of fulfilling this requirement ('sheitel', shawl, hat etc.). Another reason for covering the hair of a married woman is: the woman's hair is regarded as an ornament and many times in the Halacha as erotic. By covering her hair she saves the privilege to look at her natural hair for her husband and children. It is also a matter of Jewish identity for a married woman to cover her hair appropriately.

C. 'Yichud': 'Chuppa' also means 'Yichud': 'chatan' and 'kallah' are now alone together for a short time and are enjoying privacy which is part of a married life.

- The 'Ketubah' is a marriage contract regulating the rights and obligations of the future husband and wife. It is most important for the women to guard the 'Ketubah' safely, because it guarantees the rights of the wife. In case of loss a replacement 'Ketubah' has to be issued by a Halachic recognized 'Beth Din'. A 'Ketubah' is a prime proof of Jewish identity and has really invaluable significance in case of doubts about the Jewish status of the children of a 'gyoret'.
If a 'Chuppa' takes place in a synagogue it is an obligation to separate men and women, which is done by means of a "*mechitzah*" or both men and women are sitting on different sides.
- After the 'Chuppa' there is an obligation for 'Se'udat Mitzva' (the festive wedding meal) takes place and at the end of this meal, '7 brachot' are recited in honour of 'chatan' and 'kallah'.

'Yichud':

- A Jewish man and a woman are not allowed to be together in a closed room without others present, except for a father with his daughter, a mother with her son and a husband with his wife.

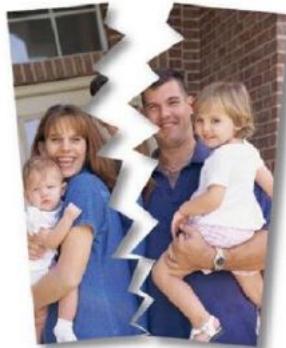


- *Yichud for children:*

It is forbidden by Jewish Law for a member of one gender to be alone with a member of the opposite gender for more than a minimal amount of time in a place which is inaccessible to the public; due to the fear of immoral behaviour that could take place. Girls below the age of three years and boys below the age of nine years are forbidden to be left alone with adult members of the opposite gender. There is no prohibition of "yichud" for a son and his mother, a daughter with her father, a brother with a sister or a grandparent with a grandchild of the opposite gender.

In my Halachic work, '*Halacha Aktuell*', vol. II, page 557–561 I deal with adoption from a Halachic perspective. Most Halachic authorities are lenient about 'yichud' of adoptive parents with their adoptive children. An exception to this is the late Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902–1994) who represents a very strict standpoint and does not allow 'yichud' between adoptive parents and their adoptive children without somebody adult being present.

- A 'gyoret' may not marry a Kohen. In case of a marriage it is invalid and the children of such a marriage will lose their status of being a Kohen.
- Divorcing in Judaism (which is, like a Jewish marriage a matter of Civil Law, a judicial procedure) is possible with a "get".



The woman who did ‘sell’ some of her ‘rights and freedom’ to the husband when she married him, is ‘buying’ these ‘rights and freedom’ back. If there is no “get”, she is religiously officially not divorced and the children who eventually will be born to her with another man, will not be recognized, and will have the status of ‘bastards’ (“mamzerim”) and could not marry a ‘kosher’ Israelite man or woman.

- A “shadchan” or match-maker is a person who has many connections and a lot of experience in social and marriage relations. A “shidduch” is an act of match-making and by success one should pay the ‘shadchan’ or ‘shadchanit’ the broker fee which was agreed.





19. **Death:**

Mourning in Judaism starts immediately after the funeral. The period between the actual death and the funeral is called: “*aninut*”, in which the bereaved is still in a kind of “shock” and is exempted from all positive ‘Mitzvot’ (‘Assee’), such as putting on Tefillin, prayer, ‘berachot’ etc and consolation visits are paid.

It seems to me very important why in Judaism the funeral has to be taken place as soon as possible:

1. ‘Kevod Hamet’ (the honour of the deceased), namely the corpse begins to disintegrate very fast; because 70% of the human body consists of water and to avoid bad smell which emanates from the corpse. Keeping the corpse in a moratorium for a long period is inconsistent with the Halacha.
2. ‘Kvod HaChaim’ (the honour of the living i.e. the survivors). The process of consolation cannot take place as long as the body is not buried. Only after the burial the survivors are mentally ready to accept consolation.

The three stages of mourning are:

1. “*Shivah*”, seven days staying home (preferably in the home of the deceased) after the funeral when the bereaved family is sitting on low chairs and friends and family are visiting to comfort them to have all prayer-services in the home of the deceased, to take care of their physical needs. There is no mourning on Shabbat, the mourners are dressed with Shabbat-clothes and regular shoes and go to pray in the synagogue, unless a ‘minyan’ can be organized in the home of the deceased also on Shabbat. The Shabbat-day counts for the ‘*Shiva*’-period. The seventh day is not completed, because in matters of mourning (avilut) we are lenient and therefore we count a part of the seventh day as a full day. There is a very nice Jewish Hungarian custom after standing up from ‘*Shiva*’ that the bereaved family makes a round on foot around the block where the deceased used to live and so formally and emotionally to say farewell to the deceased.

2. “*Shloshim*”: 30 days of mourning after all the seven first-degree relatives. The counting for the ‘*Shloshim*’ starts after the funeral and this period we don’t shave our beards or have a haircut or do not participate in any joyful events accompanied by live music, such as marriage or Bat/Bar-Mitzva. In Israel at the end of the ‘*Shloshim*’ the grave stone (‘*matzevah*’) is erected
3. “*Shanah*” (a full year of mourning after father or mother). Eleven months of saying “*Kaddish*” (orphan’s prayer) after someone’s father or mother died. ‘*Kaddish*’ saying is only after our deceased parents; is the only real honour that we can perform for them after their deaths and (a) serves for to elevate their soul on a higher position in the world to come and (b) they should rest in peace near the Source of all living (‘*Tzror Hachaim*’), namely with Hashem.

A Jew or Jewess will be buried and will be taken care of by the “*Chevre Kadishah*” (literally: the holy society), whose members (male or female) are elected by the Jewish community and who voluntarily without honorarium make all the necessary arrangements around death and burial, including ‘*tahara*’ (the washing and purifying of the body of the deceased person and dressing him or her with the prescribed white simple linen clothing known as ‘*tachrichim*’. The service of the ‘*Chevre Kadishah*’ is immeasurable for any community with Jewish religious infrastructure since very few people can handle this service. It liberates the mourning family from the worries about funeral-place and funeral-announcements.

There is a male-section and a female-section of ‘*Chevre Kadishah*’. They take respectively care for the ritual washing; the body returns in purity (“*Tahara*”) to its Creator, like it was given by Him in purity. For the same reason also autopsy is forbidden, because the body has to return complete to his/her Creator. Cremation is absolutely forbidden in Judaism because of the Jewish Believe in “*Techiyat Hametim*”, the resurrection of the dead by HaShem. A Jewish cemetery or Jewish graves have no time-limit and therefore both Jewish communities of Antwerp bury their dead members nearby the Dutch community of Putte where the cemetery is property of the Jewish community and therefore the cemetery and the graves have no time-limit; this in contrast to the non-Jewish cemeteries in Flanders and The Netherlands where the graves are only for a short limited time of 20–30 years rented and are usually after this period cleared of their remains unless prolongation is taken place, but this kind of arrangement is not ‘eternal’. It is a rabbinical duty and a great Mitzvah to comfort those who are mourning after the loss of their beloved ones during ‘*Shiva*’ and effectively during the whole year after death; this is called “*Nichum Avilim*”. It is a Biblical duty to mourn for the seven first-degree relatives (father, mother, sister, brother, son, daughter and husband/wife). It is of course only

naturally and understandable that someone who lived as a Jew/Jewess wants to find his eternal rest among his own people. It is not an expression of ‘elitarism’ or separation, but as the Bible states in I Kings (2:10): ‘And King David was laid down with his ancestors and was buried in the city of David’. A person who is Halachically non-Jewish may not be buried in a Jewish cemetery and a Halachically Jewish person may not be buried in a non-Jewish cemetery.

Death and Mourning in respect with children:

The Halachic requirements for minors are quite different from those for adults.

Concerning “*Keriah*” (tearing, commonly done today in conjunction with the funeral-procession) is the same for a minor as for an adult.

Concerning “*Shivah*” and the obligations of a full year of mourning after father or mother, there is no obligation for minors under the age of Bar- or Bat Mitzvah. Reason for this decision is quite logical: there is not Mitzva of ‘Chinuch’ concerning ‘Avilut’. We do not promote and make use minors to the sad domain of ‘Avilut’.

A Kohen (and a minor Kohen) is forbidden to have physical contact or be under one roof with a corpse (except when the deceased is one of the seven close relatives). Also a Kohen visiting the cemetery has to keep distance from the graves of his beloved one and not come physical near their grave. Parents of Kohanim-children may not actively bring their sons in any contact the dead or a cemetery.



Left: my *Talmid* (student) for many years, Baruch Shlomo van Sant, before the *Beth Din* for *Giyur* of the Chief Rabbinate in Kiryat Gat, Israel

Right: Baruch Shlomo says the *Shema* by heart.



Left: My student for many years and *Giyur*-candidate Elisheva Daniëla, is congratulated by the Orthodox *Beth Din* of Bnei Brak, Israel, after the *Mikveh*. On the left is the *Rosh Beth Din HaRav HaGaon* Rabbi Jisrael Wiesel, *Shlitah*.

Right: Elisheva Daniëla together with the *Mikveh*- lady after the *Giyur* procedure.

20. **Reasons for Giyur:**

It is mandatory for the teacher and mentor as well as the *Beth Din* to find out the motive(s) for the *Giyur* of the minors reaching understanding intellectual level and teenagers. The teacher and the *Beth Din* have to ascertain that their wish becoming Jewish is not an outcome being pressured by their parents, but absolutely voluntary. It is also the duty of the teacher and *Beth Din* to tell the children or teenagers that by staying a Noachide they will have also a share in the world to come. It is also a part of the duty of the *Beth Din* to stress to minors of understanding age that their *Giyur* is conditional and provisional until they reach religious adulthood when they still have the possibility to step out of Judaism if they wish to do so.

The five groups in which the thirteen Principles of Faith are subdivided: 1. The Definition of HaShem 2. The Prophecy 3. The Essence of Torah 4. Reward and Punishment 5. The Resurrection of the Dead and the Coming of the Messiah.



The ‘Thirteen Principles of Faith’ were composed and compiled by **Maimonides** (12th century) in his commentary on the Mishna and they also form the basis for the well-known religious synagogal hymn “Yigdal”, recited in our daily Morning Prayer.

Maimonides is considered the greatest codifier and philosopher of the Jewish People. He is often referred to as the **Rambam**, after his Hebrew initials: **Rabenu Moshe Ben Maimon**. He was born in Cordoba, Spain, on a Shabbat, on the 14th of Nissan, on ‘Erev Pesach’, in the year 1135. When he was 13 years old, his family was forced to emigrate to Morocco (Fez), because of Islamic religious intolerance by the Islamic fundamentalist group of the Almohads. There he started to write his Commentary on the Mishna (the earliest foundation work of the Talmud), which he wrote in Judeo-Arabic (most Mediterranean Jews were speaking at that time Judeo-Arabic). Again because of Muslim persecutions and religious intolerance they had to leave Fez and continued their wanderings to find a suitable place of residence. They arrived in 1165 in Eretz Yisrael, but finding life very difficult in the Holy Land under the reign of the intolerant Crusaders and they moved to Egypt, where Maimonides became the spiritual leader of the Jewish community in Egypt. He spent twelve years extracting decisions and laws from the vast sea of Talmudic and Gaonic literature of the Written and Oral Law. Having a phenomenal, genius and photographic memory he codified Jewish Law in his famous Codex Maimoni (Mishne Torah’) subdivided in into 14 book (called also ‘Yad HaChazakah’) containing all the Jewish Law relevant to our time and also to the time when the Temple existed. He also became a famous physician and in 1185 he was appointed to the royal Court of Saladin, the Sultan of Egypt and Syria. In the world of medicine he is known to be the father of preventive medicine; his motto is: ‘the best doctor is the one who will make sure that you will never need a doctor’.

Maimonides was the most classical Jewish philosopher and wrote the most known Jewish philosophical work “*The guide to the Perplexed*” (‘Moreh Nevuchim’). He passed away in the year 1204, age seventy, and was mourned by all Jews over the world. He was buried in Tiberias and his grave place is visited by many admirers in the world of the ‘Yeshivot’.



Of all Jewish commentators on TeNaCh and Talmud in the last thousand years of Jewish history in Europe, **Rashi**, called after his initials: **Rabbi Shlomo Yitschaki** or **Rabban Shel Israel** (the Teacher and Rebbe of all Israel), is the most famous and the most studied on Jewish schools and 'Yeshivot'. He lived in the Middle Ages in France and studied in Ashkenaz, from 1040 – 1105. When he passed away he had the age of 65. We stand every time puzzled how one man could compose such a gigantic and huge work which is still studied eagerly by all children: 'Yeshiva'-students, great Rabbis. For me personally there is only one explanation: Rashi wrote his commentary of TeNach and Talmud being inspired by 'Ruach Hakodesh' (Holy Divine Inspiration)

In his commentary on Talmud he explains masterfully and genuinely the meaning of the text in a very understandable manner, so that he opens the gateway and doors to a work which was considered to be in the early Middle Ages 'sealed with seven seals'. In his commentary on the whole TeNaCh he refers firstly to 'Pshat' (literal meaning), 'Midrash' (homily) and Talmud to clarify the text. Rashi was one of the pioneers to deal with Hebrew grammar and also made very important Halachic decisions, such as the order of the sections of the Tefillin and the allowance to start praying 'Ma'ariv' with 'Plag Hamincha' (about three hours before nightfall); the 'Plag Hamincha' can be found in every Jewish calendar of high standard. Rashi also established the Fourteen steps of the Seder (kadesh/u'rchats/karpas/yachats/maggid/r'achatsah (with brachah)/motsi-matsah/maror/korech/shulchan orech/tsafun/barech/hallel/nirtsah).

21. Tzniyut:



Covering the Head of Jewish children and adults

According to Rabbi David Halevi Segal (1568–1667) known after his famous Halachic work, *Taz*, parents would be required to stop their male child from going uncovered (i.e. violating the negative commandment: ‘you should not imitate the ways and dress-code of the non-Jewish world’).

Although Halachah ('Shulchan Aruch') requires only that the head be covered during times of prayer, learning Torah and eating, one is encouraged to fulfil this practice at all times. Rabbi Avraham Gombiner (1635–1682) known after his famous Halachic work '*Magen Avraham*' says: "if children cover their heads while being young, they will be imbued with the fear of G'd": "*yirat shamayim*".

Nowadays covering of the head for males has become a matter of identity among religious Jews; a religious Jew going publically with no head covering will be regarded by many Jews as not trustworthy in all matters pertaining to Halacha.

Religious Ashkenasic Jewry is particular strict on this matter, whereas Sephardic Jewry will make many times concessions, which in my humble opinion is unjustified.

Haircutting and Dress code for boys, girls and teenagers:



The Torah identifies five areas on the male face and head known as “peyot” (corners). Three of these “peyot” may not be removed by a razor or knife and may only be taken care of with scissors or an electrical shaver which is not uprooting the hair of the beard. The exact location of the “peyot” is unclear, but the Halachic authorities state that it is proper to avoid using a razor or knife on any part of the male face. The two other “peyot” are located at the two temples of the head. These laws regarding haircutting and shaving apply only for males. Halachically there is no prescribed time (age) at which a boy’s hair should first be cut and in which style exactly, but a custom exists in most communities of not cutting a boy’s hair until he reaches the age of three. It is important to clarify a stereotype that all Jews let grow long side-curls; it is exclusively a Chassidic custom to let the side-curls untouched during the whole life-time. It was a common pleasure of the Nazis to humiliate and molest Chassidic Jews and to cut off their ‘peyot’ side-curls and laugh at this horrible dehumanizing act.

Even some contemporary non-Jews who dislike seeing Chassidic Jews walking around with side-curls, they should realize that we live thank G-d in a free democratic society and we may choose our manner to dress or to cut our hair. The same tolerance that they show for people walking with all their body covered by tattoos, skinheads and people wearing piercings on their lips, ears and nose, maybe awarded to Chassidic Jews who like to dress in the traditional centuries old garments and let grow ‘peyot’ like their forefathers in Eastern-Europe, Morocco or Yemen.

A Jew is prohibited from wearing clothes (including jewellery, styles of haircutting, accessories) meant for the opposite gender. Parents should take care of this from the time of a child’s birth.

The same is the case concerning wearing clothes made of a combination of wool and linen, called “shatnez”, prohibited by the Torah and nowadays can easily be checked in a so called ‘shatnez’ laboratory, available in every Jewish mega-centre, like Antwerp, London, Paris etc.

Tziniut:

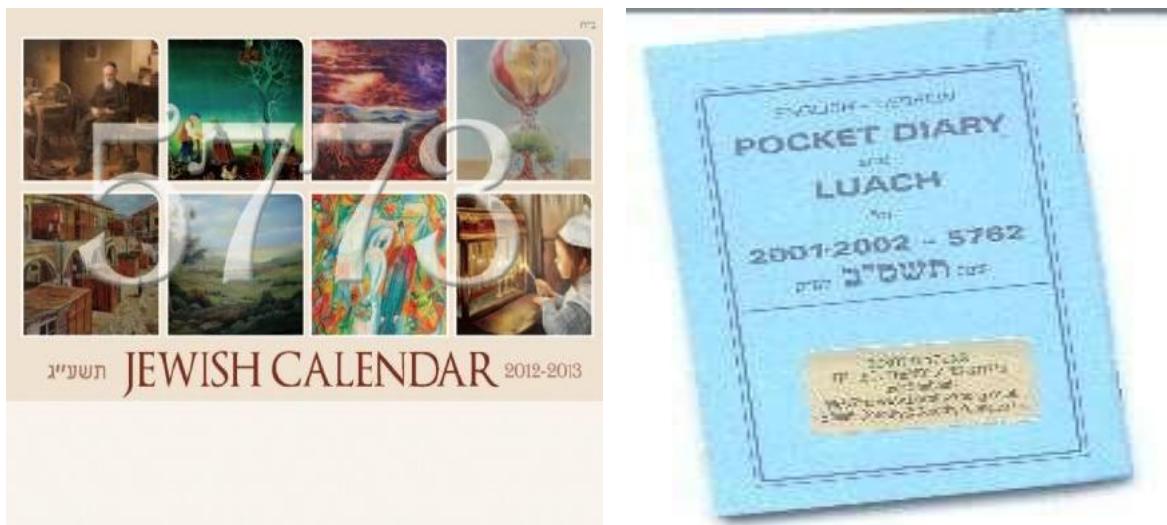
Part of modest behaviour is that open displays of affection between the genders must be restricted to husband, wife and children or grandparents and grandchildren.

Proper and modest clothing is also a part to the “tziniut” way of life. A Jewish girl and woman are required by Halacha to keep her arms above the elbow and her legs above the knee covered in public at all times. There is no uniform age at which the need to cover the legs and arms begins (depends on the maturity of the girl’s body).

The following clothing should be on the black list of a religious Jewish girl or woman: trousers of any kind and fashion, because Halachically they represents a male way of clothing an exception may be according to some Halachic authorities in the cold freezing winter time when a girl is wearing pants under her skirt to avoid freezing or a woman who is exercising ski-sport may dress in the above mentioned fashion). No tight shirts or pullovers stressing the female’s femininity. No transparent skirts, shirts or dress, even if it only makes the arms of the girl or woman transparent. No décolleté, neither in the front nor in the back of a Jewish girl or lady. And finally no sleeveless shirts or gowns for Jewish girls and ladies.

Once minors have reached a point where they are embarrassed to be seen unclothed by parents of the opposite gender, close affectionate behaviour and also swimming together is forbidden by the laws of “tziniut”.

The concept of “tzniut” extends for boys and men to hear unrelated women sing, since this might lead to suggestive thoughts and erotic feelings. This does not apply for women and girls of the family singing ‘Zemirot’ on Shabbat in presence of their brothers and fathers, but it applies to in-laws of the opposite gender.



25. **Luach:**

The Jewish calendar is a must in every Jewish home, preferably different versions, like a desk or pocket-edition, and a wall-calendar.

A religious Jewish boy or girl has to be able to handle a Jewish calendar from a certain age depending on the intellect level of the boy or girl. He or she should be able to read the Hebrew date corresponding to the civil date, knowing the Hebrew names of the months, knowing to find the times of beginning and end of Shabbat and Festivals.

The Jewish calendar is based on the cycle of the moon, whereas the regular calendar is based on the cycle of the sun. Every month of the Jewish year has 29 or 30 days usually in alternating order. Seven times in 19 years an extra month is added in order to be able to keep the Jewish Festivals in the right season prescribed in the Torah. In a Jewish leap year there are 13 months, when the month of Adar Beth is added.

In this way we can cope with the gap between a moon-year and a sun-year. If we would not take care of the gap between the two systems we will not be able to celebrate the Festival in the proper season. The Jewish year starts on 1 and 2 Tishri, but the counting of the months starts with 1 Nisan, the month of the Exodus from Egypt.

There is much information to be found on the Jewish calendar, such as:

- The Hebrew date
- the 'Parashat Hashavu'ah'
- the beginning ('Hadlakat Hanerot') and the end ('Motsa'ee') of the Shabbat
- the times of prayer, 'Zman Tefillin' and 'Tzitzit', especially important in winter time (no 'Tefillin' and 'Tzitzit' as long as it is still night)
- the starting and end-times of Festivals and possible of putting 'Eruv Tavshilin'

- Fast-days and the time the fasting starts and ends
- Rosh Chodesh and ‘Shabbat Mevarchin’ (Shabbat of announcing and blessing the coming new month)
- ‘Chazot’, half an hour after Halachic midday (depending on the length of the day), we may start to pray ‘Mincha Gedola’
- ‘Plag Hamincha’, the earliest time we may accept and start Shabbat as well as the earliest time to start to begin to pray ‘Ma’ariv’ (evening prayer)
- ‘Shkia’, sunset which is Halachically already Shabbat and Yom Tov and some communities begin to kindle this time the light of Chanukah
- ‘Tzet Ha’Kochavim’, Halachic nightfall with the visibility of three stars in the sky

Rosh Chodesh (the beginning of a New Month) is in fact a micro- Rosh HaShana; we are looking back and in retrospect our failures and merits in the past month and looking forward with hope and good wishes and blessings for the New Month. Rosh Chodesh belongs to the category of Half-Festivals, it has the same Halachic status of Chol HaMo’ed (in the in-between days of Pesach and Sukkoth); there is no prohibition to work on Rosh Chodesh.

Special prayers are recited in honour of Rosh Chodesh in the three Shemoneh Essene’s of the day and in the ‘Birkat HaMazon’ “Ya’aleh Ve’yavo”, asking HaShem to remember us for good, asking for grace, goodness and compassion for us and all of Israel. After Shacharit ‘Half Hallel’ (incomplete Hallel, skipping 2 Psalms) is said on Rosh Chodesh (on Rosh Chodesh Tevet the Complete Hallel is said since this is done during all the days of Chanukkah. On Rosh HaShana which is also Rosh Chodesh Hallel is not said, because it is also a Day of Judgement and the books of Life and Death are open and it is unfit to pray songs of praise under these circumstances). Hallel is said with ‘Tefillin’.

26. Extra:

- *Special Shabatot:*

“Shabbat Shirah”: we read in the Torah about the dividing of the Red Sea which marks the end of Exodus. After this miracle, Moshe and the People of Israel sang the famous song ‘As Yashir’ (Ex.15:1–20). Mostly on this Shabbat, Tu B’Shvat comes together and so on this Shabbat we celebrate also the New Year of the Trees by eating fruits of the seven special species of Israel and a new fruit and saying the blessing of ‘Shehecheyanu’.



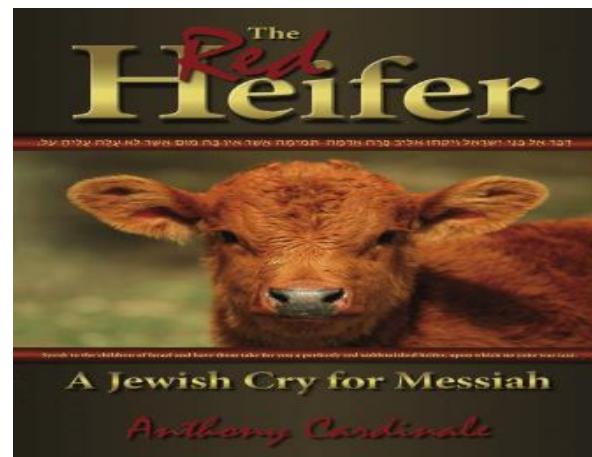
'Shabbat Shekalim': on the Shabbat (preceding or on) 1st Adar. The reading from the Torah is from Exodus 30:11-16, dealing with the contribution of 'Half a Shekel' which every Jew (age 20-50) had to donate for the acquiring of the public sacrifices in the Tabernacle. It was also a way of census to know how many men are available for military service.



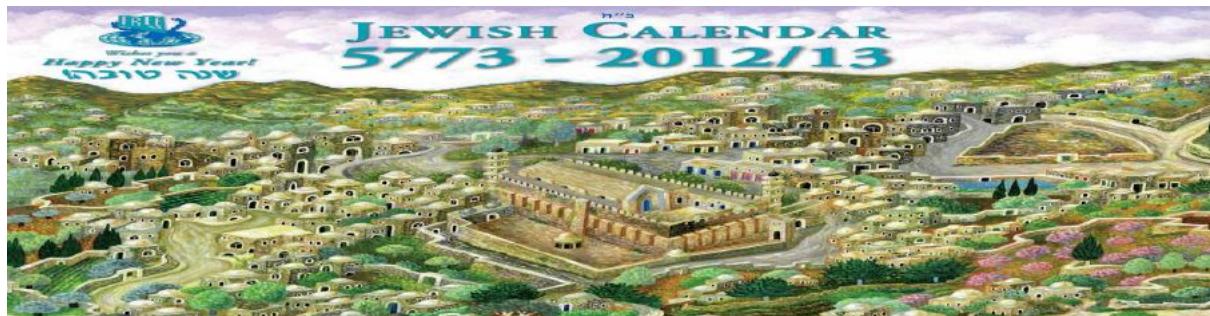
'Shabbat Zachor': the Shabbat preceding Purim, on which we read from the Torah Deuteronomy 25:17-19 about Amalek the arch-enemy of the People of Yisrael, who attacked Yisrael without reason (symbolic for latent and virulent antisemitism). Haman was the great-grandson of the king of the Amaleks, Agag.

My late Rebbe, Rav J.B. Soloveitchik s.z.l., used to say that these days Amalek is the baseless ideas that advocate hatred of Jews. The Amalekites no longer

exist, but their ideas do.



'Shabbat Para': the first or the second Shabbat after Purim, when the Festival of Pesach is nearing. In the time of the Temple people used to get pure 'Tahor' after coming in contact with a dead body (now being 'Tamee') in order to be able to attend the Pesach-sacrifice and to enter the Temple-area. The process of purification was by sprinkling the ashes of the red heifer mixed with 'Living Water' and so being now 'Tahor' and fit to participate in the festivities of Pesach. The Torah reading is from Numeri chapter 19.



'Shabbat Ha'Chodesh': on or just before 1st Nisan. Exodus 12:1-20 is read where the Torah commands us to have independent Hebrew calendar and that the month of Nisan of the rebirth of Israel will be the first of the cycle of the Hebrew months. Standing two weeks before the Festival of Pesach we also hear in this reading about the special 'Mitzvot' of Pesach and the total prohibition of 'chametz' during Pesach.

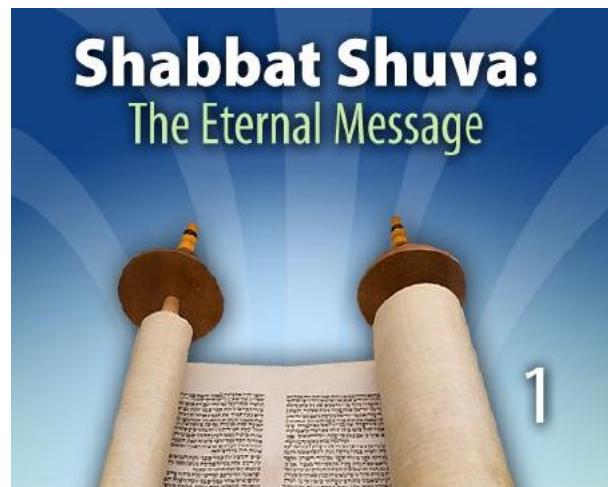


'Shabbat HaGadol': the Shabbat preceding the Festival of Pesach is called "Shabbat HaGadol" for different reasons: a) the Rabbi is giving a long presentation about the Mitzvot and prohibitions of Pesach. b) Because of the miracle of the Exodus started with this Shabbat by taking the Pesach-lamb without fearing the Egyptians who considered most of the animals as deities. c) In the Haftarah of this Shabbat, the last chapter of Malachi and the end of the Prophets is written about The Great Day of HaShem, when Eliyahu the prophet will appear and announce the Coming of the Messiah.



Linked to Torah Tidbits

'Shabbat Nachamu': the Shabbat following Tisha b'Av. We read Yeshayahu chapter 40, which starts with the words: 'Nachamu, nachamu, Ami'. The prophet speaks about the consolation of the Jewish people after the destruction of the First Temple, their return from the Babylonian exile and the protection of the People of Israel by HaShem.



'Shabbat Shuva': the first Shabbat of the New Jewish Year which is between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur. The Haftarah (Hosea 14:2-10) of this Shabbat starts with the word: Shuva ("retun Israel to your G-d, because you have stumbled in your sins"), which is also fitting the season of the Ten Days of Teshuva.



'Shabbat Bereshit': following Simchat Thora we start on this Shabbat a new cycle of the Torah reading beginning with the Book and Parasha of Bereshit (Genesis) which reading-cycle we will end on the next Simchat Torah.

27. General knowledge of Judaism:



Listening to the Torah reading



With Rabbi Shmuel Greenberg and son

The difference between a 'Rav', Rabbi and a Rebbe



'Chazan' Yossele Rosenblat
(1882-1933)



'Chazan' Zevulun Kwartin
(1874-1952)



'Chazan' Benjamin Muller
(1948)

*What is a 'Chazan', a 'Ba'al Tefillah', a 'Shaliyach 'Tzibur'?
The difference between a 'Beth HaMidrash' and a 'Beth HaKnesset'*



At the bris of Rabbi Chaim Ganzweig's son: Reb Moshe, as sandak, with Rabbi Ganzweig.

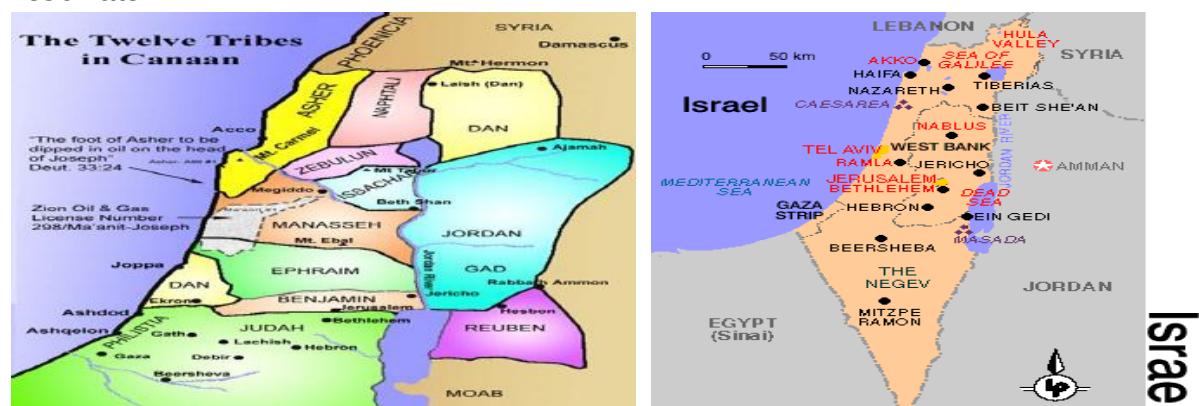


'Brit Milah'

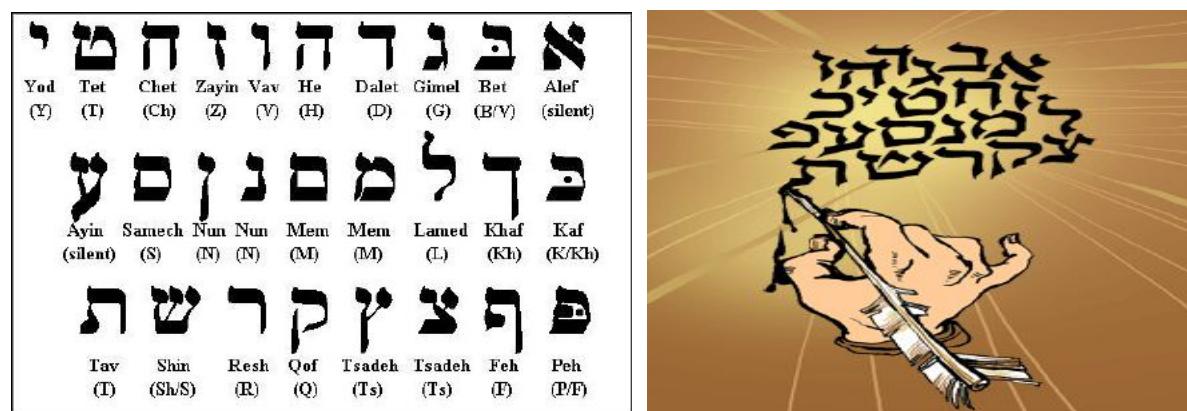


'Pidyon HaBen'

The order for 'Aliyot' to Torah-reading during the week and on Shabbat and Festivals



Why 'Eretz Yisrael' is called the Holy Land? (Three reasons)



Why "Ivrit" is called the Holy Tongue? (Three reasons)

Why there are no Festivals written in the Torah during summer and winter?



What is the 'Kotel'? Where is it situated?

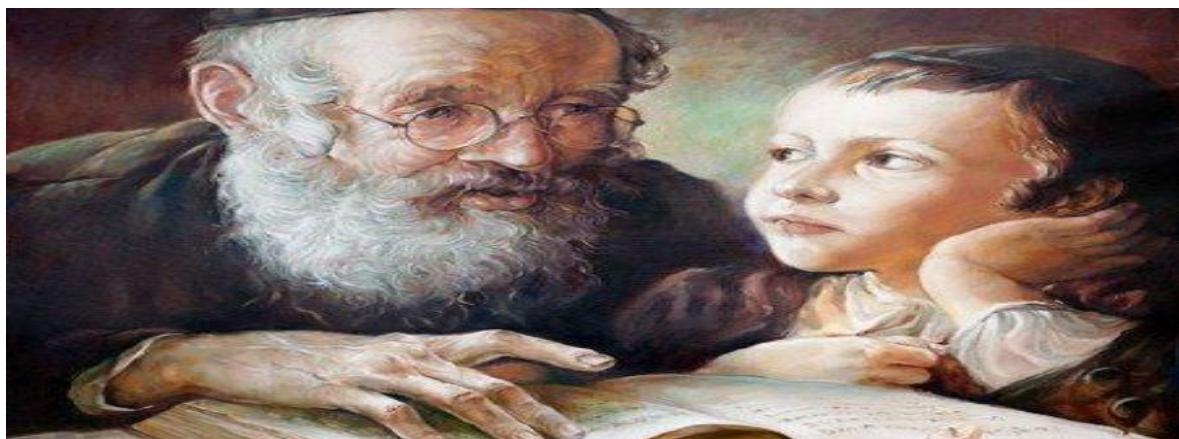
28.'Chinuch' and the Religious Jewish Education of Children and Youth:



In addition to teaching their children Torah in all its various forms, parents are obligated to educate their children in other areas of knowledge as well, so that they can later provide for their livelihood. In Hebrew the word for parents is 'orim' related grammatically to 'morim' (teachers). The Torah sees parents in the first place as our first teachers and so we refer in our prayers

to our parents many times as teachers.

In the 'Viduy' (confession of sins) of Yom Kippur we confess our sins of this dishonouring our parents and teachers ('orim u'morim'). We also refer in the prayers of 'Birkat Hamazon' by mentioning our parents publically like in a speech and after their life in the 'Yizkor' prayer as 'avi mori' (my father, my teacher), 'immi morati' (my mother, my teacher).



Teaching One's Son Torah:

The duty of a father and a mother to teach their son or daughter Torah is an actual Torah Law, derived from the verse Deuteronomy 6:7, is incorporated in the 'Shema', one of the main prayers of Judaism and the only prayer which is an obligation from the Torah and its text is completely taken from the Torah.

שמע | יִשְׂרָאֵל,* יְהוָה | אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְהוָה | אֶחָד:*

—ברוך שםך בבוד מלכותך לעולם ועד.—In an undertone

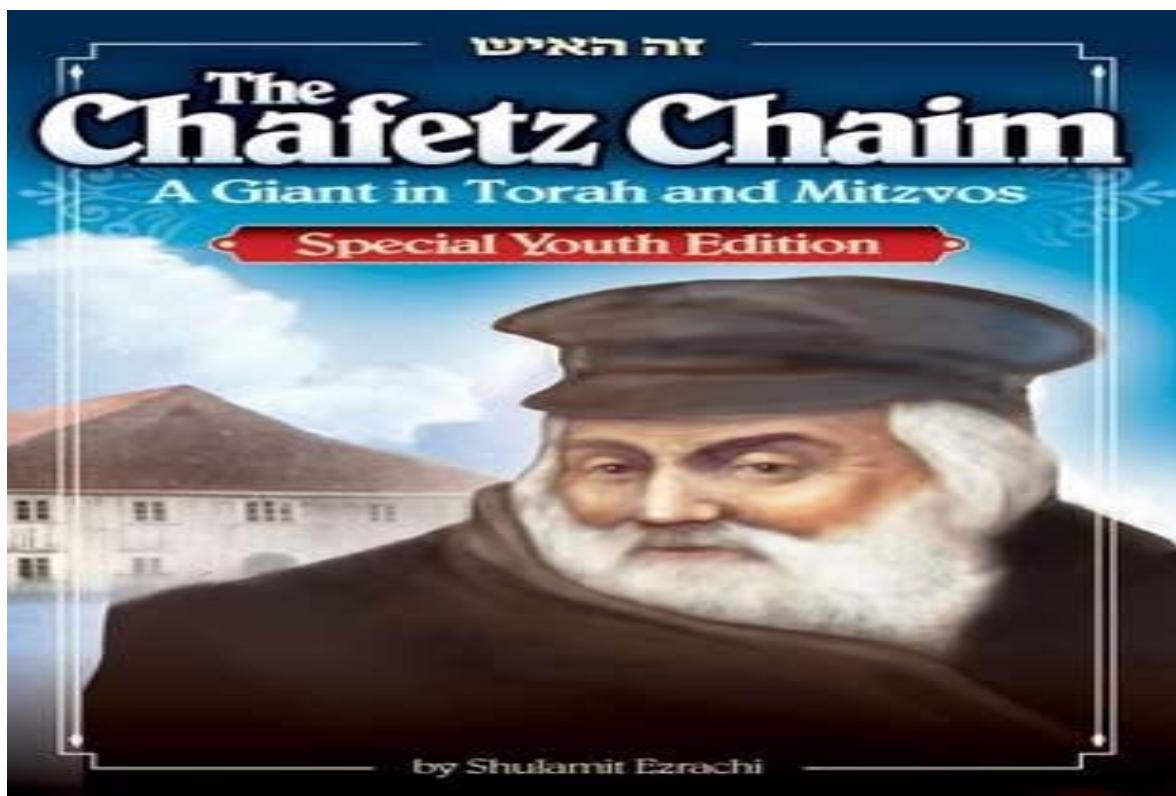
ואהבתת* את יהוה | אלהיך, בכל-לבך, ובכל-נפשך,
ובכל-מארך: וקיי הדרבים קאלה, אשר | אנכי
מצוך היום, על-לבך: ושננתם לבעיך, ודברת קם, בשכחה
בביהקה, ובכל-כתקה בذرיך, ובשכחה ובקומך:
וקשרתם לאות | על-יביך, והני לטטלה
בין | עיניך: וכתבתם על-מזוזות ביתך, ובשעריך:

Touch the arm-tefillin at ...
... and the head-tefillin at ...
... then kiss your fingertips.

A father is halachically required to pay for his son's and daughter's Torah school tuition (this extends to the secondary level and the higher education level such like 'Yeshiva'-study or girl's seminary study). Informal Torah education starts when a boy or girl is three years old ("Torah Tziva" and the first sentence of the 'Shema'). Formal schooling begins nowadays at the age of five or six. It consists of learning the Written Torah (TeNaCh), and Oral Torah (Mishnah and Talmud). It is noteworthy that the famous world known, Rabbi Liva of Prague, known also as the 'Maharal' of Prague, insists in his writings on the following education pedagogical method: from age 5-10 a

child should only dedicate himself in learning Torah and Tenach and master the 20 Books of the Holy Scripture; from age 10–15 a child should exclusively dedicate his time to learn the Six Order of the Mishna and master them; from age 16 and onwards a young fellow should exclusively dedicate himself to learn and master the Talmud. The ‘Maharal’ is very much critical of the reversed order that a young boy should start learning Talmud before he knows to read a verse from the Torah with the commentary of Rashi.....

Torah Education for Girls:



Sarah Schenirir (1883–1935) (left) is the founder of the first 'Beth Yaakov-seminary in Krakov, Poland. Later it extended all over Poland, West-Europe, Israel and America. The standard of this primary, secondary and seminary-schools enjoys a very high reputation concerning Jewish and general studies.

The '*Chofetz Chaim*' (1838–1933) argues that under contemporary conditions, parents are also required to have their daughters instructed in these subjects, if they want them to grow up to be observant Jews, except for the part of the Oral Torah (Mishnah and Talmud). Another argument cited is that if we don't provide for religious education of our daughters, it would mean the breakdown and collapse of the religious Jewish family since there will be no compatible female mates to 'Bne Torah' (Yeshiva students). Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895–1986) agrees with the '*Chofetz Chaim's*' standpoint, but allows teaching of ethical or moralistic portions of the Mishna, such as "Pirkei Avot" and 'Mussar' works such as 'Chovot HaLevavot' written by Rabbi Bahya ibn Paquda (born 1040) or 'Messilat Yesharim' written Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto (1707–1746). Many girl's seminaries and schools follow this point of view. Rabbi Chaim David Halevi (1924–1998), Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv in his Halachic work 'Mekor Chayim' and my revered teacher Rabbi J.B. Soloveitchik (1903–1993), s.z.l. broadens the list of Torah subject extensively and substantially. There are girl's seminaries and schools which follow this approach.

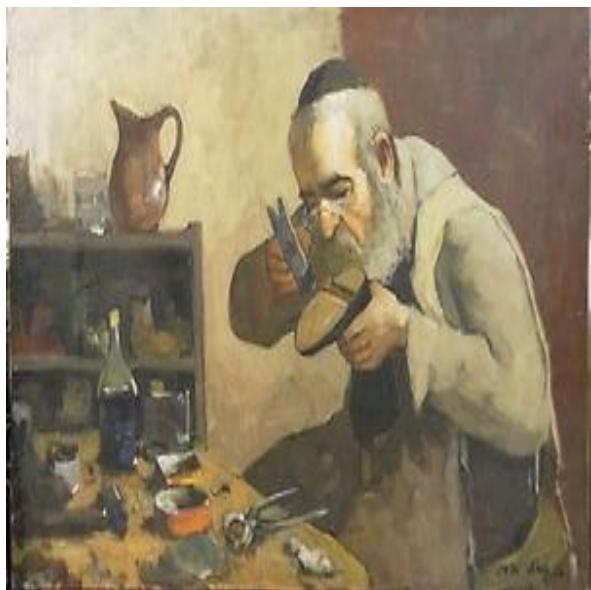
Parents have an undisputed obligation to raise their daughters to be pious, religious and committed daughters of Israel

.

Teaching Secular Studies:

The concern for keeping secular subjects in a secondary and inferior position for religious Jewish students must be taken seriously. It is common practice in most Jewish day schools and girl's school to devote the morning hours to Torah studies (best and most concentration of the children) and to reserve the second part of the day to secular studies. It is noteworthy that the 'Gaon of Vilna' (1720–1797) had an extensive knowledge of general subjects, like mathematics, astronomy, Hebrew grammar, Jewish history and general knowledge of the spoken language in Vilna, Lithuania. He advocated very much that Torah-students should have knowledge of general subjects and by his own initiative, let translate important books of geometry and science into Hebrew. Also it is known that the greatest 'Gaon' of our time after the 'Shoah', the 'Chazon Ish' (1878–1953), had profound knowledge of mathematic, geometry, agronomy and anatomy of the human body and good knowledge of zoology specifically to the anatomy of kosher birds and animals.

Teaching young fellows and girls a Livelihood:



The Mishna states that a father is obligated to teach his son a livelihood, so that he will be able to support himself as an adult and not be a burden on the community. This obligation is mentioned together with the father's obligation to instruct his son in Torah. The Talmud adds that some opinions require a father to teach his son how to swim, because this can sometimes be life saving. In today's reality in most families, both husband and wife, have to work in order to safeguard a livelihood. It is surely an obligation to teach girls also an appropriate profession such as a teacher, social worker, secretary, so that the family could get along with 'parnassah' (livelihood). In my Dutch essay about '*Torah im Derech Eretz*', I cite a long list of great Rabbis such as Rashi (1040–1105), Maimonides (1135–1204), Rabbi Yehuda Levi (1075–1141), Nachmanides (1194–1270), Rabbi Don Yitzchak Abarbanel (1437–1508), Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–1888) , Rabbi Azriel Hildesheimer (1820–1899) and finally my revered teacher Rabbi J.B. Soloveitchik (1903–1993), s.z.l. who all advocated that next to extensive Torah studies one should have a profession in order to support himself and his family.

The Care of Children and Halachah:

Halachah requires that parents take proper care of their sons and daughters and make sure that their physical and spiritual needs are met.

The Obligation to Provide for Children:

A Jewish father/mother is halachically required to provide adequate food for their children. The same holds true in regard to providing clothing, shelter, medical care and of course adequate Jewish religious schooling. They must do this until their children reach the age when it is customary for them to go to work on their own. Unfortunately some 'children' never reach that age and live long-time on the costs (in Yiddish: 'kest') of their parents or better to say in-laws and become totally addicted financially on their parents or in-laws. This is unhealthy and some would say it is even a parasitic way of raising children.

Charity ('Tzedakah') and Children:



A Jew/Jewess is required to give one-tenth of his yearly net-income to charitable causes: "Ma'asser Kesafim".

One is supposed to put poor and destitute relatives ahead of strangers. There are different opinions whether one is permitted to count the money spent on supporting his children or tuition for religious Jewish education as part of the 'Ma'asser Kesafim'. We should teach our children to give 'Tzedekah' wholeheartedly and even provide them money to give in school for 'Tzedekah'. Also here in this respect a role-model in demonstrating their children how important it is not be selfish and share our income with poor destitute refugees, sick people and elderly. Our great teacher Maimonides () lists eight degrees in priority in giving

'Tzedekah'; first and most important is to provide a poor person with the means to stand on his own and to be able to provide for his family; secondly to donate in an anonymous way, so that the donator and the receiver don't know to whom the Tzedakah went and who was the donator of the 'Tzedekah'.

Minyan and Synagogue Services



The purpose of bringing children to the synagogue is to teach them to stand with awe and reverence in the presence of G'd, to learn to pray on their level and to make the synagogue for them an acquainted homely place where they like to come and to meet Jewish friends.

The Talmud tells us that a minor boy can be called for the 'Maftir' on Shabbat. The 'Shulchan Aruch' codifies this as Halacha: a minor may be called to 'Maftir' and the 'Haftara' (the Reading of the Prophets).

The Halacha authorities state that minor boys may be given the honour of 'Hagbaha' (raising the Torah up at the end of the reading) and of 'Gelilah' (the rolling and tying of the Torah), or to hold a second Torah Scroll while the first one is being read from.



'Birkat Kohanim' (the Blessing of the Kohanim) (Ashkenasim outside Israel only perform it on Festivals; Askenasim in Eretz Israel and Sephardim throughout the world have this blessing as part of their daily 'Shacharit'-service): The reason according to the Ashkenasic custom to perform it only on Festivals is because that the Kohanim commanded to bless Israel 'b'ahava' (in love and joyous mood), this is only the case on Festivals where we are suppose to be in 'Simcha' as it is written: 'you should be joyful on your Festival'.

The Mishna rules that a minor boy should not take part in the Priestly Blessing. 'Tosafot' (the Commentary to the Talmud) and 'Shulchan Aruch' disagree and decide that a minor is permitted to participate with other adult Kohanim.

Later Halachic authorities agree and include the Priestly Blessing prior to the 'Birkat Kohanim' as part of 'Chinuch'. The Kohen-boy should be able to hold his hands in the right position and utter the words of the Priestly Blessing correctly.

Conclusion:

The parental duty of 'Chinuch' continues throughout the lifetime of every parent and every child. It is a G'd given privilege and a vital important relationship that exists between parents and their children.



My late father, Rabbi Shmuel Yosef Daum, s.z.l. 'Avi Mori', 'my father, my teacher' (1924–2003) who was a legendary teacher and educator for adults and children during fifty years, used to tell me that as long as your parents live, you never stop to be a child. You lose your childhood once your parents pass away. Similarly learning Torah is a never-ending obligation and 'Mitzva' and it is our service for Hashem during our life-time to which we must commit ourselves with our body and spirit. It ends when we unfortunately have to leave this world.

Colophon

Prof. Rabbi Ahron Daum, B.A, M.S., Emeritus Chief Rabbi of Frankfurt of Main
First day of Rosh Chodesh Chesvan 5774
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His work helped us greatly in forming our essay which is vital for children and young people in who are in a conversion process (Giyur) according to the Halachic requirements.

We wish the author longevity, health and resilience of mind, 'bis 120'.