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Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

IN THE HEART OF THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner on...

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Q&A on Education with Rabbi Shmuel Jablon

Rabbi Shmuel Jablon

Head of Lower School at Fuchs Mizrachi School in Cleveland and just named Principal of the Torah Academy of Greater Philadelphia's Lower School for next year

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Keys to Success
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A critical key to success is knowing to ask advice from others. One major figure with whom I consult is Rabbi Shlomo Aviner *shlit"a*, Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim and Rav of Bet El. In addition to his many areas of expertise, he is an expert on the education of children. Below are translations of some questions I have asked, and answers I have received.

Question: In school we prefer to teach Judaic Studies *Ivrit b'Ivrit* (with the language of instruction as Hebrew). But sometimes that is difficult for some students- either due to difficulties learning a second language or because it's hard to explain something in Hebrew. What is the Rav's view of teaching this way.

Answer: Mix (the languages)- *Ivrit b'Ivrit*, a little in English and a little in Hebrew, particularly with deep things such as Jewish thought. Then it is allowed. You see that the Gemara is in Aramaic; and you see that Targum Onkelos is in Aramaic. You see that the

Rambam wrote “The Guide for the Perplexed” and his commentary to Mishna in Arabic. HaRav Sadya Gaon wrote a translation of the Torah into Arabic. You see that this is permitted. Sometimes Rav Kook gave classes in Yiddish for old students who didn’t know Hebrew.

Question: And if there are students who CAN learn *Ivrit b’Ivrit* but they can learn more Torah if there is English?

Answer: Teach in Hebrew and sometimes add English so they can understand more.

Question: What is the Rav’s opinion on “skipping classes”?

Answer: In order to skip classes, one also needs emotional maturity. Practically, one should get advice from a child psychologist.

Question: How can we strengthen the connection that students (outside of Israel) have to the Land of Israel?

Answer: Talk about the Land of Israel, of the honor of the nation, of the strength of the Israeli Army, of national pride, and talk and talk. Of course, one must teach everything but the direction is towards the Land of Israel!

Question: How does one teach against “chutzpah” (gall)?

Answer: Teach that modesty is a great strength– and bring examples of Avraham, Moshe and David.

Question: After numerous talks with children about behavior and “chutzpa,” is there a place for educational, natural consequences?

Answer: Along with good education– which comes with love, encouragement and joy, there is always a need to set limits/boundaries; and one who crosses them needs to bear the consequences. This is part of the concept (of education).

Question: Does the Rav have advice as to what pictures of *Gedolim* (great Torah leaders) should be hung on the walls of the school?

Answer: *Gedolim* that the students admire– “Your eyes should behold your teacher.”

Question: When should we begin educating about dressing modestly?

Answer: One should begin educating for modesty at age six, like all other areas of education. Of course, one should not pressure, like in other areas of education.

Question: For younger children, is it best in school to daven the Amida silently or out loud, in order to be sure everyone is reading properly?

Answer: It is best to daven silently, in order to educate them in what, according to Jewish Law, we are supposed to do. If there’s an educational necessity, it is possible to daven out loud. It’s not possible to know in advance if they are reading correctly. One has to test and see.

Question. Sometimes we have students in Jewish Day Schools in America who are very weak and have great difficulties and sometimes feel bad about themselves. But the only other choice would be for them to be in a non-Jewish, secular school. What should be done?

Answer. In general, they simply need to be in a Jewish school, as outside they will be totally assimilated. It's hard for him. One must speak to him, try to help him so it won't be so difficult.

Question. And if the child disturbs other children?

Answer. That is a different matter. You are teacher for all of the children; and it's impossible for one child to be able to disturb everyone. Every child is allowed to disturb a little. But one cannot have one child destroy an entire class. You're responsible for the whole class. If they are good teachers, they will succeed.

Question. If a school has limited funds, and one can either spend money to assist weak students or to strengthen students who may grow into being Torah scholars, what takes precedence?

Answer. It is all important. But it is more important to strengthen the strong students. This is what our Rabbis teach us. You cannot save the entire world. But what you do, you should do well. I am not saying to forget about the weaker students. But what you do, do well. It's not up to you to finish the work, but you're not exempt from starting. Whatever you do, do well.

Question. So if there are two students, one weak and one strong, what takes priority?

Answer. Strengthening the stronger one. If he becomes a Torah Scholar, he'll bring even greater blessings.

Question. Is this the case even if the weaker one will need to leave the school?

Answer. It's difficult to judge specifics. But in general, this is the priority. Is it better to give money to get two nurses or one doctor for a hospital? I prefer one doctor to two nurses.