



---

Parashat Shemot 5772 - #217

Ask Rav Aviner: [mororly@bezeqint.net](mailto:mororly@bezeqint.net)

Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Tzion

Visit our blog: [www.ravaviner.com](http://www.ravaviner.com)

---

## Stories of Rabbenu — Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

### Our Rabbi and Neuteri Karta

#### Joining in Protest

Neuteri Karta organized a protest against taxes on education which were established by the British in Eretz Yisrael, which would then be divided up by the municipality in a relative manner. Our Rabbi also participated in the protest. A student was surprised: Why is Ha-Rav participating in a protest with Neuteri Karta, who caused him so much trouble to his father (Maran Ha-Rav Kook)? Our Rabbi responded: "For what they did to Abba Ha-Rav z"l, they either have received a punishment or will receive one. Where they are correct – they are correct!" (Iturei Yerushalayim #64 in the name of Ha-Rav Yitzchak Dadon).

#### Meah Shearim

Our Rabbi said that not everyone in Meah Shearim is Neuteri Karta. In fact, many people in Meah Shearim would greet him warmly (Iturei Yerushalayim #64).

#### Finding a Minyan

It once happened that a student did not daven Maariv at the conclusion of Shabbat. He therefore went to find a minyan in Meah Shearim, and he met up with our Rabbi who also had not davened Maariv. Our Rabbi spoke with the student for an hour and three-quarters about the Neturei Karta, who are against the State of Israel and against Tzahal, even at a time when the Master of the Universe is showing us all of the signs of the Redemption, and when everything written in Yechezkel chapter 36 is materializing before our eyes. After all of this, our Rabbi brought him to the shul of the Chasidim of Reb Arele Roth (a group known as Toldos Ahron who are intensely anti-Zionist), not by way of the main road but by way of the courtyard. When they entered the large hall, all eyes turned toward him. They finished the blessing after eating and davened Maariv as if they were completely on fire. They then stood in line to say "shalom" to our Rabbi. After they left, the student asked, "Before we arrived I heard an hour and three-quarters from you against the Neturei Karta, and now they stand in line to say "shalom" to the Rav?" Our Rabbi responded, "One can learn from everyone. How to pray - this is learned here. You should know that when father, Ha-Rav ztz"l, desired prayer of 'all my bones would speak' (Tehillim 35:10), he would come here." Two weeks later, the

student was walking in Meah Shearim. One of the Chasidim of Reb Arele ran after him, saying "Send regards to Rav Tzvi Yehudah from so-and-so." When he related this to our Rabbi, he responded to him, "He is an expert in the writings of my father, Ha-Rav, but he learns them in secret, because if this was discovered he would be in danger, as he was born into Neturei Karta." In fundamental and principled matters, our Rabbi did not differentiate between this stream and that stream. For example, in protests against autopsies, our Rabbi would always participate with different Orthodox streams (Iturei Cohanim #248 - in the name of Ha-Rav Binyamin Eisner).

## Rav Aviner on... Go be a Preschool Teacher

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Vayechi 5772 – translated by R. Blumberg]

Question: I can't decide. On the one hand I have a natural inclination towards being a nursery school teacher (Ganenet) and spending all day tending to sweet little children. On the other hand, I feel like I have talents that go beyond that, and I'm afraid that I'll feel like I've squandered those talents just to be a babysitter who plays with children and cleans their noses. It's true that the children also learn all sorts of interesting things, but that's a very minimal part of the day. As a teacher of older children I'm sure I would be able to teach a lot more.

Answer: If you feel inclined towards being a preschool teacher, don't hesitate! Go for it! Preschool isn't just babysitting. It's a lot more than that. Obviously, we're not making light of babysitting, which is an enormous kindness for poor mothers who are forced to go out to work, and who with great trepidation place their children in the hands of another woman to care for them. Also the small child is beside himself, wondering why he has suddenly been abandoned to the care of another woman, as though his parents want to get rid of him. He's liable to suffer separation anxiety, and when the caretaker is wise and motherly, he feels wonderful and safe – obviously, not like with his own mother, but still wonderful.

Sadly, sometimes things are difficult and complicated in his own home, and for various reasons the infant or toddler feels hurt and unwanted. In such a case, daycare becomes the only place that provides him with a safe haven.

Obviously, we must add that there are women who go to work not because of poverty, but because they feel the need to do something else. That, as well, is considered a serious, justified reason to place a child with a caretaker. We are not making light of toddler daycare, but are making the point that preschool has yet another dimension to it.

Likewise, we are not making light of the various things children learn in pre-school. A small child is not a little idiot. He is a small, wise person. The intellectual talents that develop in him at an early age are the basis of all his future learning, especially in light of the findings of Developmental Psychology. We know that these years are decisive as far as a child's future abilities. The small child internalizes the buds of rational thinking. He also gains familiarity with the world around him. Yet nursery school is more than that. It is not a little school. It is not a little academy. It is something else.

There is something else important in preschool: friends. The child learns to get along with others, to show them consideration. To listen to them. He learns to give help and to receive help. He learns to participate in group play. He learns discipline. All this prepares him to integrate into society. Don't we often see people who are incapable of getting along with others, in their family, in their marriages, at work, in their nation? Why wait for a special time to solve this problem when it will involve many hardships? Why not begin with early childhood when it's so simple and easy? Indeed, by such means we bring the small child an enormous blessing.

Still, preschool is even more than that. It's more than preparation for life in society. It's more than taking care of children. It's more than a miniature academy. It's more than a workshop in how to cooperate.

So what is preschool? It's a place where the child grows and develops, body and soul. He develops naturally. We don't try to instill in him what isn't already there. Rather, we try to help him to bring out what he already has within – with the help of an environment that is appropriate to his character and his traits. After all, why is “kindergarten” called that? Because the child is likened to a flower, and just as every flower needs a garden and a gardener, so does every child need a kindergarten and a teacher, not to infuse him with what he doesn't have, but to reveal what he does. How? Through his natural movements. And what are they? Mostly play.

All this is based on a universal assumption: even a small child possesses the image of G-d. He has divine worth stored away, and that divine content has to be uncovered by way of the right environmental conditions.

In “Israeli Culture” (Le-Netivot Yisrael vol. 1), the first article Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook wrote in his life, he explained that the function of education is to uncover man's hidden traits, and to thus enable him to succeed in all he does. If, however, we try to infuse man with elements that are foreign to his personality, he is liable to become an unsuccessful person. It's like organ transplants. Even though they are for a man's own good, the body fights against them as against a foreign object that invades the body. In order for the transplant not to be rejected, the immune reaction has to be suppressed. In other words, the person's intrinsic nature has to be weakened.

Therefore, a natural paradise has to be created for the child, in which each child can grow freely in his own way. This definitely involves minimizing the academic aspect and the social-obedience aspect. The main thing is the personal aspect.

This is the goal of all of the activities there: running, dancing, group games, songs accompanied by pantomime, walks and visits to the neighborhood, study of flora, seeing how things grow (to help the child to understand how he, himself, grows), and especially, all sorts of very intelligent games that help the child develop all his strengths. And the preschool teacher receives in-depth professional training in order to direct the child in all these spheres.

Yes, the whole child has to be educated: physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially, and in science, general knowledge, ethics, and faith. And really they are all one, flowing forth from the one G-d whose name is one. The child must flourish with the unity and harmony of all his energies.

That is the preschool teacher's job.

The rest of the world has also begun to arrive at these conclusions, bolstered by the appearance (about 200 years ago) of the “New Education” advocated by Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and in particular, Fröbel, followed by Montessori. The aim of the Old Education was to fill the pupil with information, in the greatest quantity and quality possible. The aim of the New Education is to involve the pupil in the learning and educational process.

Therefore, play isn't just play. It, and other activities like drawing, reading, writing and music, are powerful pedagogical pursuits. To be a preschool teacher is no small feat. It's something great. Our sages compared Torah scholars to the sun, and teachers of small Jewish children to the stars. Seemingly the sun is much larger, but that isn't true. There are stars a million times as large, but since they are far off, they look small. The Ben Ish Chai explains this in his book “Ben Yehoyada”: The child looks small, because his full size is still far off, but truthfully, he is big.

This is especially so in light of the emergence of Depth Psychology, which likewise has determined that early childhood is the decisive age for shaping a person's inner personality.

Preschool involves marvelous educational creativity, perhaps the most marvelous there is. It's a bit like post-high school yeshiva. There the learning is independent, such that a person achieves true spiritual freedom.

Actually, the ideal preschool is a child's home. It's his mother, the simple, loving mother. Preschool is a reflection of home, and the main characteristic of the preschool teacher is motherliness. She enlists her motherly love to sing “mothers' songs” to the child, to foster the child's appreciation of nature, of the world, of the love of G-d, of the love of everything, and thus to escape his selfishness. This is the meaning of “your mother's instruction” (Mishlei 1:8).

Preschool is a family-oriented educational philosophy. It's an atmosphere of trust and intimacy. It means escaping from selfishness, not necessarily in the sense of preparation for living in a society, but in becoming open to the world at large, to the Master of the Universe. Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook, in his Igeret HaChinuch (170), explained that the chief purpose of education is to make man upright and good, and the secondary purpose is to prepare him for life's battles.

And indeed, that is the purpose of preschool. The main thing is not the preparation for professional life, but one's personal growth. It is not to become a useful citizen, but a human being.

We said that a game is not just a game. It develops the body, the intellect, one's good traits. Preschool games are well-planned to facilitate the child's development, his understanding of the laws of nature and of life, not through lectures but through independent activities. Indeed, it is the child's right to develop according to his nature, and games are what most characterize him at this age.

By the way, cleaning a child's nose is also something important that shouldn't be scoffed at. The concern the teacher shows for the small child's hygiene also belongs to the warm, friendly approach of the preschool teacher. She also helps the child in his relations with his peers. She creates a simple, safe and sheltered environment. A heaven on earth.

Much more than what I said has to be said about the marvelous preschool. You, after all, are a mother, or you will be one. Every mother is a preschool teacher, and every preschool teacher is a mother. Surprisingly enough, in State-Religious education, there is a shortage of preschool teachers. It's as if being a preschool teacher is not a respectable profession. That's not so. It is very respectable indeed. It is very important. It is the foundation of all else.

Good for you that you yearn to be a preschool teacher! Good for you that you received such a gift from the Master of the Universe!

Go be one!

## **Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law**

### Shaking hands with an elderly woman

Q: Is it permissible to shake hands with an elderly woman?

A: No. It does not matter whether she is elderly or young. Ha-Rav Ovadiah Yosef once received the Israel Prize, and it was presented by the Prime Minister, Mrs. Golda Meir. She put out her hand, but he did not shake it. People said that it was not polite. He responded: The Torah is more important than politeness. And Ha-Rav Mordechai Eliyahu once met with the Queen of England and she put out her hand. There were cameras from all around the world, but he stood still like a soldier and did not shake it. That evening Rav Eliyahu received a letter from the person responsible for royal protocol apologizing for the incident. They checked the books of protocol for the British Kingship, and found that the Queen of England was not to put out her hand to a Jewish Rabbi (A **Jewish** Rabbi!). Therefore, if you do not shake a woman's hand, you have the authority of Halachah, Ha-Rav Yosef, Ha-Rav Eliyahu, and even the Queen of England (who is extremely polite)! One must have to think ahead of how to deal with such a circumstance should it occur: carry a bag in each hand. Have a ready response: I am saving my hand for my wife. Or: My Rabbi is strict and says it is forbidden. What can I do?

Special thank you to Orly Tzion for editing the Ateret Yerushalayim Parashah Sheet