

D'var Torah by Rabbi M. Jaroslawicz for Parshas Tazria-Metzora 5775 (2015)

One of the Mitzvos mentioned in this week's Parsha, Tazria–Metzora, is the Mitzvah of Bris Milah, circumcision. Much more than just a physical procedure, the Bris Milah imbues a child with a burst of spiritual sanctification that hopefully will remain with him for the rest of his life. That is, if he does not stifle it as he gets older.

In order to make sure that the child is totally susceptible to receive this spirituality at its highest possible level, the Bris is scheduled so that the child first lives through a Shabbos, the holiest and most sanctified of days. The Bris is performed on the eighth day to insure that every baby experiences at least one Shabbos before being brought into the covenant of our holy forefathers.

One of the “Harachamon’s,” a special blessing recited during Birchas Hamazon after the Seudas Mitzvah at the Bris, translates as follows:

“The Merciful One should bless the father of the child and his mother... and they should be meritorious to raise him to maturity, to educate him, and to make him wise....”

Our rabbis are quick to ask: Education of a child, “Chinuch,” begins when a child is still little, way before he grows to maturity. So why is it that the Harachamon above places, “raising the child to maturity” BEFORE “educating him”? The process should be reversed! First the parents should be meritorious to “educate him” and only THEN to “raise him to maturity”?

Answers Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin, zt”l: In theory, one would think it should be easy to be Mechanech (educate) a boy or girl when they are young and to guide them smoothly in the path of Torah observance while they are still in their formative years. But, unfortunately, as they get older and are subjected to outside influences, we see that the path is not always so smooth. All too often, we see children still in their teens already knowing “better” than anyone and beginning to forge their own lives independent of the strong values that their parents tried to impart to them.

It is truly a “blessing” to be able to retain relationships with children who allow you to be a part of their continuing education. A blessing to have your children value your opinion and direction, navigating life through a Torah lens, even in their teens. It is this very blessing that we give to the parents of the baby boy right after the Bris.

“The Merciful One should bless the father of the child and his mother... and they should be meritorious to raise him to maturity, to educate him, and to make him wise....” Even AFTER the baby has matured, he should still be open to his parents’ values and educational input. That, indeed, is a Beracha – and, perhaps, one of the most important Berachas for our very difficult and tumultuous times.

As we count down to Shavuot, remembering the day that we willingly received the Torah, we should direct some of our prayers to asking Hashem to watch over our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, to help them maintain the pure covenant represented by the Bris, unflinching in the face of negative world influences, even as they get older.

Have a Great Shabbos.