

Transmitting the Mesora

But beware and watch yourself very well, lest you forget the things that your eyes saw, and lest these things depart from your heart, all the days of your life; and you shall make them known to your children and to your children's children. The day you stood before Hashem your God at Horeb.... (Devarim 4:9-10)

Based on the proximity of these two pesukim, Rav Yehoshua ben Levi says (Kiddushin 30a):

Whoever teaches his grandson Torah, it is as if he had received the Torah at Har Sinai, as it states: “And you shall make them known to your children and to your children's children,” adjacent to, “the day you stood before Hashem your God at Horeb.”

Rav Yosef Soloveitchik (M'penine HaRav) notes that R. Yehoshua ben Levi emphasizes the significance of teaching a “grandson.” If the Gemara wanted us to assume that this statement related to a son as well, it would have used the terminology of “grandson as well”. Yet, there is no such inference! Apparently, there is something unique about transmitting Torah to a grandchild.

Rav Soloveitchik distinguishes

between two concepts: teaching Torah and transmitting Torah. With respect to one's children there is a primary obligation to teach them Torah. With respect to a grandchild, however, this obligation is secondary, as it is to spread Torah in general. Anyone who teaches another Torah is viewed as if he is his child (See Rashi Bamidbar 3:1). Rav Yehoshua is informing us that Har Sinai wasn't only about limud haTorah, it was about the transmission of Torah. “Moshe kibel Torah MiSinai, umesarah l'Yehoshua” (Avot 1:1). There was a kabblalah – a receipt of the Torah – and a mesirah – a transmission to every generation. Perhaps there is a greater mesiras haTorah when it skips a generation to a grandchild. When I teach my son, I am ensuring the transmission of Torah to the next generation, but there is no assurance that it will be further transmitted. When I teach my grandson Torah, I am ensuring the transmission of Torah to yet a second generation. That sort of transmission is what strengthens the future of our people and connects us to our source at Har Sinai.

In Reflections of the Rav, Rav Soloveitchik writes:

Grandfathers and grandchildren, though members of different

generations, are part of one fraternity – the Mesorah community (those who preserve the integrity of the transmitted tradition)... As the child is born, he is absorbed into the Mesorah community. He will hopefully, speak our language, study our texts, share our solemnities, dream our dreams, and adopt our ideals.

We are referred to as Bnei Yisrael or Beit Yaakov. Why are we not identified as Bnei Avraham or Yitzhak? What was unique about Yaakov was his direct connection with his grandchildren. Nowhere in Tanach do we witness any direct interaction between Avraham and his grandson Yaakov, or between Yitzhak and his grandchildren. Yaakov, however, directly blesses his grandchildren, the sons of Yosef, Efraim and Menashe. Yaakov overcomes a generation gap and is able to transmit the mesora to a second generation. Yaakov was the first to underscore that Torah transcends time. That is why he merited to have his name attached to all future generations.

Especially during this challenging time when our children are lacking an organized framework, as camps and summer programs are closed, we must make time to learn with our

children. In addition, we should transmit our love and appreciation of the Torah. Set a personal example by portraying to our children how we set aside time to study Torah daily, under all circumstances. It is our duty to ensure that the love and appreciation of Torah permeates throughout future generations.

May we merit the proper transmission of Torah to our children and grandchildren and fulfil the statement in Kohelet (4:12): the threefold cord (three generations) will not easily be disconnected (from Torah).