

And you shall teach them diligently to your children, and speak of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.”

-Deuteronomy 6:7

YHWH’s blueprint for learning

The scripture above is part of the foundational prayer and statement of faith spoken by our people since Sinai, given to us by YHWH. Our Sages teach that on the Shema hangs all of Judaism. In this lesson we will focus on the part of the Shema that pertains to educating our children. In Deuteronomy 6:7 Hashem describes clearly and specifically how He wants His instructions relayed. Could the reason for this be that He knows the way we learn and wanted to ensure that His instructions were retained and taught from generation to generation? My vote is yes. I also believe that we can use this information to better understand how we learn and apply that to the way we instruct our children in every aspect of life.

“And you shall teach them diligently”

The first duty of a Jewish parent is to diligently teach our children. The Hebrew word translated as diligent is *שָׁנַן* (shanan). The Brown-Driver Hebrew Lexicon’s primary definition for Shanan is “to sharpen, pierce, to teach incisively.” Webster’s 1828 dictionary gives this definition for incisively, “keenness of thought, expression, or intellect, **detailed training, precision instruction**, penetration to the heart of a subject and clear, sharp, vigorous expression”. Incisively is not a passive word. It clearly suggests specific involvement of the parents in the education of their children. It tells us that we are to instruct our children in such a way that it cuts deep into their hearts. This is precisely why many of us have felt called to homeschool our children. We felt called because we WERE called. Although He could have, YHWH did not appoint a tribe to be the teachers of the children. This was a job given to the parents and grandparents. His plan is one of transmittal, from generation to generation, parent to child. This instruction is enforced later in Deuteronomy 32:7 “Remember the days of yore, understand the years of generation after generation. Ask your father and he will relate it to you, your elders and they will tell you”.

I also want to add that I have heard many supporters of public education state that in the time of Yeshua children were given a public education. This is simply not the case.

The Talmud, tractate Bava Bathra 21a shows that prior to around 70 AD (CE) children learned from their parents. It was only when a boy became a young man that he would go to the home of the Rabbi for further religious instruction.

With that said, let me get to the real reason for writing this. The purpose of this lesson is not to discuss the importance of home education because if you're reading this than its likely that you have already chosen to homeschool your children. I write this to challenge the WAY most of us homeschool. For many of us, in our decision to follow in the footsteps of our Master Yeshua we have committed ourselves to live a life in opposition to the world around us. As converts almost every aspect of our lives is different than it used to be (and if it's not your probably missing something :)...(just saying) from the way we dress, to the way we interact with the world, even to the way we eat, our lives are changed. With this knowledge, can it be possible that there is a more Hebraic way of educating our children? My response is a resounding YES!

In our zealously to properly educate our children many of us make the mistake turning our homes into mini schools, mimicking what we see in a traditional western class room. If you have not yet read the article previously posted called "Understanding Educational World View" please do so, in it we clearly explain the dangers of the western education system.

So, without further ado...

"When you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up."

The key words in this passage that I will focus on here are sit, walk, lie, and rise. It is taught that on a sod level these 4 words encompass every aspect of life.

The Hebrew for the word for sit is יָשַׁב (yashab) literally meaning "to sit down (specifically as judge, in ambush, in quiet) it can also mean where you sit to work". Various sod level meanings include, when we sit in judgment or make decisions, the quiet or still moments, times of reflection.

The Hebrew for the word for walk is הָלַךְ (halak) to walk both literally and figuratively, to continually instruct, to exercise, to pass through life. Various sod level meanings include the "day to days" of our life, time of action and rehearsal.

The Hebrew for lie down is שכב (shakab) to physically lie down for any purpose, to cast down. The sod level meanings include when one reaches then end of their days, mistakes we make, when we're at our lowest, when we succumb.

The Hebrew word for rise up is קום (qum) to rise both literally and figuratively, intensively and causatively, to accomplish, continue, decree, do right, to stir up. The sod level meanings here include the beginning of life, accomplishments, when we "make good", when we strengthen, succeed, overcome, or endure.

I would be hard pressed to see an aspect of life that is not represented in one of these words. Moreover **if all 4 words represent every aspect of life, does it not mean that all of life is necessary to educate our children properly?** Learning is not a clinical activity to be done in a vacuum. It is best done intermingled with life and practically applied. Am I advocating for no "school time" and to throw away all of your expensive text books and curriculums you ask? NO... well maybe, most of those books are okay, but it's important that we keep them in their place and use them properly. What I am saying here is that learning has to be alive if you want it to be affective. What Hashem lays out for us is a plan that creates a lifestyle of learning. Also you will find that the more you are able to apply this approach to learning the more you will find children who love to learn, who seek out knowledge and understanding. Not children who begrudgingly trudge through their lessons, but children who ask questions and are engaged in their education.

But how do we do this?

First, understand that this is a process that is going to take you a little while to get right. Just as it took you some time to learn Kashrut, how to properly keep the feasts and other aspects of Natsari Judaism this is going to take time.

Here are just a few tips to help you on your way...

1. **Tear down the wall that divides "school time" from the rest of the day.**

YHWH wants us to learn as we live. Try to look at your day with new eyes, find those physical object lessons that you can use to teach your children. If while on a walk you see a flock of geese, when you get home pull out your

field guides and classify them, learn about their migration habits, the science of flight, etc. You will be amazed how much a child will learn this way. The majority of parents I know who educate this way find that by 5th grade their children are testing at 9th and 10th grade levels in the sciences.

The bottom line is you don't want your child to think that they have to turn on their brains only for certain hours of the day.

Try integrating your child's learning into your daily routine. I'll give you an example. For many years I had a home business painting and selling old world style tapestries and floor cloths to help subsidize our family income. The evening was the time that I would measure and cut my canvas to prep them for the next day. There was a lot of math involved so rather than teach math during the day I saved it for the evenings. It ended up being the perfect thing for my child who hated math. She could see why math was necessary and have the physical object lessons before her nightly helped her to get the concepts.

2. **Combine and connect subjects of study** for example, for older children rather than having a separate text book for spelling and vocabulary. Have your child keep a notebook and as they go through the week every time they come to a word that they don't know or if you notice them misspelling a word frequently have them write it down. Then you can have them write the word a few times, look up and write down the meaning, and perhaps use it in a sentence. This eliminates 2 school classes.

Another example I can use from my life is my tapestry business. I was able to combine many subjects of study into my tapestries. I would have the children help me choose my new design by choosing era, place and time in history. We would study the art from that period, and the geography and history of the country. The only rule I had was that we could not do the same place twice. By the end of a year we covered more information than we had ever before.

3. **Learn in season** This is something I have only just begun to do but it has shown some wonderful results. I live in the north and our winters are very harsh and long. 2 winters ago while struggling to find some physical object

lesson for science it occurred to me that perhaps winter time wasn't the time of the year to be teaching science. I sat pondering this idea and instantly scriptures came to mind that refers to the seasons. The most prevalent is Ecclesiastes 3 that starts with, "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven". I decided to give it a try and it's been wonderful. Now I reserve our literature and history study mostly for the winter months (wonderful for those cozy winter days) and we do science in the summer time.

4. Keep your children close and involve them in your lives If there's anything I can say that will change the way you educate your children (in particular the older ones) it's this. It's amazing how little time families spend together, even homeschool ones. How often does your day go like this; lessons in the morning, lunch, maybe a little school work in the afternoon then their off to their IPods, video games, friends, Facebook, and the next time you see them is MAYBE dinner but more likely the next time you see them is the in the morning for lessons. I'm not suggesting that your children should be with you 24-7, everyone is entitled to their free time. What I am saying here is that you may be missing out on beautiful moments and opportunities to teach and sometimes even learn from our children (don't tell my daughter I said that part). It's somewhat less affective if you were out for a walk by yourself and saw those geese we mentioned earlier to rush home and get your children to be interested in looking up information about them. These opportunities only come up when we give them space to come.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact Hadassah or Myself. Our email addresses can be found on the staff page. Together let us join in the legacy of learning that began on Sinai, guiding our children through example and opportunity. Teaching them when we sit in our homes, when we walk by the way, when we lie down, and when we rise up. And, may we continue to strive to have our lives be an act of teshuva that brings us closer to YHWH's plan for us.