

## HALACHIC SUGGESTIONS FROM CHILDREN

Question:

I suspect that my question will have ramifications for many others, even if their background is not the same as mine. I did not have the privilege of a Jewish education as a child and I am gratified that my ten year old son is fortunate enough to go to a wonderful cheder. He is, *Boruch Hashem*, an eager and bright student and he retains a lot of information. Thus, we are in an uncomfortable situation where he knows more than I do about various topics in *halacha*, *minhag* and history. 'Daddy, are you sure that you say that *bracha*?' or 'I think that my Rebbe said that we have to wash for that' has become a frequent refrain in my home. He is respectful and sweet, and also right.

My question is; do I thank him for the information and tell him 'sweetheart, I never had the chance to go to Yeshiva and I appreciate your help,' or perhaps I should tell him 'I am your father and while I appreciate your help, it's not in place. He tries very hard to always correct me *kehalacha*, by saying 'I think I learned', or 'isn't the *halacha* so and so.' He is a great kid and I don't want to squash his innocence, but I also don't want him to view me as an *am ha'aretz*. Like I said, I am sure that other father's in today's generation face similar dilemmas.

Answer:

Unfortunately our schools do not stress the *Dinim of Kibud V'Aim* to the extent that they deserve as they are certainly a cornerstone of *Yiddishkeit*. I am sure that the readers of this answer relate to their importance and it needs no further explanation.

As we grow and live in a *Torah* environment, we learn the behavior that we should have towards our parents. However, our *Dor*, in general, does not practice a **living example** for the next generation in *Kibud Av V'aim* as prescribed by *HaKadosh Boruch Hu*.

We don't sit in our parents' *makom kavuah* - very easy to practice, nor do we start eating before they begin - also quite easy. However, how many of us never interrupt a parent when they are speaking? How many of us contradict a parent by saying "It's not so" or something of that sort? And I can give many more examples.

How many of us speak to our parents in the third person, as our grandparents did and as we do for our *Rabbonim* and *Rebbeim*? The questioner's son probably speaks to his *Rebbe* in the third person, in order to show proper respect. But he probably does not speak to his parents in the same way, because we do not train him to do so; nor does he stand up when they enter the room, as he does for his *Rebbe*. Therefore, it translates into the parents not receiving their proper *derech erez*; whereas the *Rebbe* does. "My *Rebbe* said" becomes more important than what my mother or father said, even in mundane matters, as the lines between *halocho* and other matters become blurred.

I am not fooling myself into thinking that we can immediately change this generation's behavior. I have found it difficult to get used to hearing some of my grandchildren, who were trained in

*Yeshiva* and *Bais Yaakov* schools, speaking to me in the third person. However, I do not stop them, even if it sounds foreign to my ears and is not yet accepted by the community at large.

Interrupting a parent, or telling the parent that they are acting incorrectly, even in a *dvar halachoh*, is against the *Torah* and must be stopped. .

Speak to your son's *Rebbe* and principal and ask them to please stress the *halochos* of behavior towards parents. If this does not achieve results, then it is incumbent on you, the parent, to learn with your son. This is just as important as stopping your ten year old from doing other wrongs. You must teach him how to talk to you and your wife even though you say he is respectful to you. He has not, as yet, reached the level of understanding the finer ramifications of the *halochos* involved. Do we not teach them to say "thank you" and "you're welcome", etc? Why not teach them how and when to speak to a parent? Why not teach him to stand up for you and your wife, just as he does for his *Rebbe*?

If the child sees his parent doing something incorrect, his only option should be to ask his father to learn the relevant *halochos* with him, and if the father catches on, then fine. Otherwise, he has to know his place and keep quiet. And I don't think that a ten year old is able to have the necessary and complete sensitivity to handle such a situation. If a major issue does arise, the child should discuss with his *Rebbe* or *Rav* how to handle it with his parents.

I want to make myself clear by stating that I think that this is a problem which is quite prevalent in our community, even in the homes of children who come from a family where the father attended *Yeshiva*. *Achshere dora*, our present generation is growing in *Torah* and *Yiras Shomayim* and our children are *shteiging* in *Yiddishkeit*. As a result, they feel that they know more or better than their parents. However, we must remember that they are not here to educate us. We are here to educate them. Our children must know their place even if they feel they must correct their parents in an *eidel* and respectful manner, as our young boy in the question has done. My point is that the child should not correct or teach his parents no matter how respectful he is. In this case, the father should have his own plan for furthering his Jewish education and he should continue to grow. When his son will observe this growth in his father, he will continue to respect him more and more for his efforts and sincerity to do the *Ratzon Hashem*.

Please don't worry about demanding your own personal *kovod* or being afraid of losing your children's friendship. They are sons and daughters the *Torah* way first and friends second.

*Gut Shabbos.*