



Likkutei Sichos

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Practice is Perfect

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1.

PUNISHING MINORS

Regarding the law of the “*shifchah charufah*,”¹ Rambam² rules:

When a nine-year-old³ boy has relations with a *shifchah charufah*, she is given lashes and he is required to bring a sacrifice, provided that she is an adult, not a virgin, and acts willfully, as explained. For the male is not liable to bring a sacrifice until she is liable for lashes, as implied by the verse: “there shall be an inquiry...,”⁴ and he shall bring his guilt offering.”⁵

Raavad disagrees with Rambam:

This is an error. A minor never receives a punishment, and this sacrifice is a type of punishment. She, too, would not be punished {if he is a minor}, since their punishments are interconnected {by Scripture} as the Gemara in *Kerisus* expounds.⁶

Numerous answers explain Rambam’s position:

a) *Maggid Mishnah*⁷ says that Rambam maintains:

This law depends entirely on the woman’s eligibility to be punished. The man, however, does not need to be eligible for punishment. As the Gemara says, “In any case where the woman is flogged, the male brings an offering. In a case where the woman is not flogged, the male does not bring an offering.” The Gemara then proceeds to deduce this law from the verse: “There shall be an inquiry..., he shall bring his guilt offering.” This implies that if there is no inquiry, then he shall not bring his offering, but not vice versa.

Thus, since Rambam maintains that the punishment “hinges entirely upon her,” and she is lashed, therefore, “he brings an offering.”

¹ *Vayikra* 19:20, ff. {The term *shifchah charufah* refers to a woman who is half a Canaanite maidservant and a half-freed woman who has been consecrated by a Hebrew servant. Concerning the infidelity of such a woman, the Torah says: “They shall not die, because she was not freed.” If she was freed entirely, one is liable for execution by the court, for she becomes a consecrated woman in a complete sense.}

² *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Issurei Biah*” ch. 3, par. 17; “*Hilchos Shegagos*” ch. 9, par. 3.

³ {In the original, “בן תשע שנים ויום אחד”; lit., “nine years old and one day.”}

⁴ {Meaning, the woman is to receive lashes.}

⁵ *Vayikra* 19:20-21.

⁶ *Kerisus* 11a.

⁷ Commenting on *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Issurei Biah*,” ch. 3, par. 17.

This answer, however, needs further clarification: Indeed, the punishment “hinges entirely upon the woman,” but how (because of this) can we penalize a “minor”? As Raavad notes elsewhere:⁸ “Even were we to say that the law concerning the male depends upon the law concerning the woman, and not vice versa, regardless, how can we make a minor culpable on account of this woman?”

[Radbaz⁹ suggests that Rambam maintains that the sacrifices offered are not a punishment but an atonement. Therefore, although a minor is not punishable, he may still need atonement.

However, this answer seems insufficient. Why would a minor need the atonement of a sacrifice specifically for having relations with a *shifchah charufah*, considering that we do not find any other sins for which a minor is required to offer a sacrifice?]

b) *Lechem Mishnah*¹⁰ says that the source for Rambam’s opinion is the exposition of *Toras Kohanim* on the verse: “*a man* — this comes to exclude a minor. Or perhaps the verse excludes a nine-year-old youth? Therefore, {to forestall this conclusion} the verse says, ‘*and a man*,’ {thereby including a nine-year-old youth}.” However, Raavad rules like the Gemara in *Kerisus*, which maintains that the laws governing the two parties are “juxtaposed” {in the verse}, and thus, their laws are interconnected. Thus, when either party is a minor, neither is culpable. (This view differs from that of the *Toras Kohanim*.)

This answer also requires further clarification: Why, according to *Toras Kohanim*, specifically in the case of the *shifchah charufah* does the Torah make an inference to include a nine-year-old youth, and not do so for any of the other forbidden relations, etc., where also “his act of cohabitation is considered to have legal standing”?¹¹

⁸ Commenting on *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Shegagos*,” ch. 9, par. 3.

⁹ *Responsa of Radbaz*, sec. 2094.

¹⁰ Commenting on *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Shegagos*,” ch. 9, par. 3.

¹¹ Yet the minor is not liable — *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Issurei Biah*” ch. 1, par. 13, ff.

We could answer that there is, in fact, no reason, and it is simply a Scriptural decree. But on what grounds could we suggest such a thing? Surely, it would be smoother to assume that there is some rationale.

2.

KORBAN PESACH AND TORAH STUDY

There are other instances where Rambam mentions that a minor is obligated to offer a sacrifice or is obligated to fulfill a mitzvah. To mention one:

In *Hilchos Korban Pesach*,¹² Rambam rules:

A convert who converted between the first and the second Pesach, and similarly, a child who reaches maturity between these two festivals, are both obligated to offer the second *korban pesach*. If the first *korban pesach* was slaughtered also for the sake of the minor, then he is exempt {from offering the second *korban pesach*}.

Kesef Mishneh asks: “Is a minor subject to obligations and exemptions?” *Kesef Mishneh* answers, “Rabbeinu Yosef Kurkus, of blessed memory, says: ‘Since the Torah includes a minor as someone on whose behalf the *korban pesach* is slaughtered, and additionally, the minor can be counted as part of the group who will partake of the *korban pesach*, he can be exempted from the second *korban pesach* in this way.’”

Ostensibly, this is difficult to understand: In the end, at the time of the first *korban pesach*, this person was a minor, and exempt from all mitzvos. How does it help that someone else is obligated and slaughters the *korban pesach* for the sake of the minor when the minor is exempt, for the time when the minor will be obligated — after he becomes an adult — on *Pesach Sheni*?

Moreover, in *Hilchos Talmud Torah*,¹³ Rambam states: “A person who was not educated by his father must arrange for his own {Torah} education once he is

¹² *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Korban Pesach*,” ch. 5, par. 7.

¹³ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Talmud Torah*,” ch. 1, par. 3.

discerning, as the verse states....” The Tzemach Tzedek comments:¹⁴ “{The reason for this:} There may be a biblical obligation that also devolves on the minor.” [The inference here is from Rambam’s (unusual choice of) words, “once he is discerning”¹⁵ (as opposed to, “once he reaches maturity”). This indicates that a **minor** is obligated to learn Torah even before he becomes an adult.]

This, still, is difficult: How can a minor possibly be subject to an obligation?

3.

A RABBINIC OBLIGATION OF EDUCATION

To clarify this matter, we need to preface by explaining a greater novelty in our understanding of a minor’s obligation to perform mitzvos in general:

There is a well-known dispute amongst the *Rishonim*¹⁶ regarding the mitzvos that a minor performs as part of the obligation to be educated: Rashi¹⁷ and Ramban¹⁸ maintain that the (rabbinically mandated) educational-mitzvos are “not his (not the minor’s) mitzvos; rather, they are the father’s. For the minor is not subject to mitzvah obligations at all.” Thus, a minor cannot discharge an adult’s obligation to say *Birkas Hamazon*¹⁹ (and the like) even when the adult’s obligation is only rabbinic in nature. In contrast, *Tosafos*²⁰ and *Ran*²¹ maintain that upon reaching the age of education, a minor is deemed obligated

¹⁴ In his work of *Chiddushim al HaRambam*, right at the beginning.

¹⁵ The same words are used in the beginning of sec. 2 of the Alter Rebbe’s *Hilchos Talmud Torah*. But there, the Alter Rebbe continues, “and when he learns on his own, *after* he becomes an adult and is discerning and is able to learn.” We can posit {however} that the Alter Rebbe’s intent also conforms with (the Tzemach Tzedek’s comments on) Rambam, when he says, “once he is discerning,” {even} *before* he becomes an adult. This intent is evident from the fact that the Alter Rebbe did not say *earlier*, when outlining the obligation, “he must teach himself *after* he becomes an adult and is discerning.” Although the Alter Rebbe says afterwards, “after he becomes an adult and is discerning,” is only in relation to the continuation, regarding the way the adult should schedule his learning, in contrast to the order followed when we teach the youth.

¹⁶ {Torah scholars of the 11th through 15th centuries.}

¹⁷ *Berachos* 48a, s.v., “*ad she’yoichal*.”

¹⁸ *Milchamos Hashem, Berachos* 20b.

¹⁹ {Grace after Meals.}

²⁰ *Berachos* 48a, s.v., “*ad she’yoichal*.”

²¹ *Ran on Megillah* at the end of ch. 2, s.v., “*chutz*.”

rabbinically to recite *Birkas Hamazon*; therefore, a minor can discharge an adult of the adult's obligation when it is rabbinic. (That is, when the adult eats only the smaller quantity of bread, it obligates him rabbinically to recite *Birkas Hamazon*.)²²

Rambam,²³ however, rules that “a son may recite Grace for his father.” This proves that Rambam maintains {like *Tosafos* and *Ran*} that the (rabbinic) obligation rests on minors to perform educational-mitzvos²⁴ and not just on their fathers.

[This is also evident from Rambam's wording in numerous other sources. As he says in *Hilchos Tzitzis*,²⁵ “It is, however, a rabbinical **obligation** for every child who knows how to wrap {in a *tallis*} to wear *tzitzis* in order to educate him to fulfill mitzvos.” In *Hilchos Berachos*,²⁶ Rambam says: “Children, however, are **obligated** to recite Grace because of a rabbinic decree in order to educate them to perform mitzvos.” In *Hilchos Sukkah*,²⁷ he says, “A minor who does not require his mother's presence... is **obligated** to fulfill the mitzvah of sukkah according to rabbinic decree in order to educate him to perform mitzvos.” And similarly, in *Hilchos Lulav*,²⁸ he says, “A child who knows how to shake the lulav is **obligated** rabbinically regarding the lulav in order to educate him to perform mitzvos.”]

Here, too, this is difficult to understand: How can we suggest a minor is subject to an obligation, even a rabbinic obligation? Seemingly, a minor is not

²² {For readability, the original Hebrew parenthetical remark has been expanded to enhance clarity.}

²³ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Berachos*,” ch. 5, par. 15-16.

²⁴ This, evidently, is also the opinion of the Alter Rebbe. (True, the Alter Rebbe writes at the beginning of *Hilchos Talmud Torah* that “although a minor is exempt from all mitzvos and his father is also not obligated to educate him in the mitzvos of the Torah....”) In *Shulchan Aruch* “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 186, par. 3, he says that a minor (even if he did not eat to the point of satiation) can discharge an adult of his obligation to recite *Birkas Hamazon*. The Alter Rebbe is precise in his wording, saying, “for **the minor is obligated** rabbinically {lit., “*m'divrei sofrim*”} just **as the adult is.**”

²⁵ Ch. 3, par. 9.

²⁶ Ch. 5, par. 1.

²⁷ Ch. 6, par. 1.

²⁸ Ch. 7, par. 19.

sufficiently mature cognitively,²⁹ as the Gemara puts it,³⁰ “Are youngsters obligated!?”

4.

PREREQUISITES

We can posit the following explanation — Rambam subscribes to one overarching rationale expressed in numerous laws:

By way of introduction, we have discussed on numerous occasions the following idea: In several places, when the Torah instructs a person to perform a mitzvah but performing the mitzvah depends on a prior activity being performed (or the like), we find that the prior activity attains a resemblance of the importance and the nature of the mitzvah itself, since the prior activity is a prerequisite for the mitzvah. (Without it, the mitzvah becomes impossible.) Thus, we view it as if the Torah had instructed a person to perform the prior activity in addition to the mitzvah.

In general, all *machshirei* mitzvah³¹ fit into this category. This is especially so according to the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer,³² who maintains that *machshirei* mitzvah may override Shabbos prohibitions (in situations where the mitzvah itself overrides Shabbos prohibitions) just like the mitzvah itself.

Moreover, the Jerusalem Talmud³³ says that a person must recite the blessing, “Who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to make a *sukkah*, or *lulav*, etc.” when preparing and provisioning the *sukkah* and *lulav*, and the like.

This idea (that a resemblance of the mitzvah and its parameters carry over into the other matters that are essential for the mitzvah) applies not only to

²⁹ See *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Maachalos Asuros*,” ch. 17, par 27; “*Hilchos Korban Pesach*,” ch. 2, par. 4.

³⁰ *Pesachim* 116a.

³¹ {Activities necessary in order to be able to fulfill a mitzvah. In the singular, a *hechsher* mitzvah.}

³² *Shabbos* 130a.

³³ *Berachos*, ch. 9, halachah 3.

activities, as discussed, but also to the help given by other people to fulfill matters of Torah and mitzvos. For example, a law in *Hilchos Talmud Torah*³⁴ is as follows: “One for whom it is impossible to learn {Torah}... should support others who learn, and it will be considered as if he learnt **himself**.”

The same applies to women — similar to the concept of *machshirei mitzvah*, discussed above. *Ran*³⁵ famously writes that although women are not commanded to fulfill the mitzvah of procreation, “nevertheless, she has a **mitzvah** because she **aids** her husband in fulfilling **his mitzvah**.” Meaning, since a husband can only fulfill the mitzvah with his wife, she, too, has a (resemblance of the) mitzvah.

This principle holds true even when a woman’s aid to her husband is not essential, when she merely helps in creating the possibility for the mitzvah. The law is³⁶ that although the woman is not obligated (in the mitzvah of Torah study), “if she physically or financially assists her son or husband to study Torah, she is **apportioned reward** along with them. And her reward is great, since her husband and son are obligated to perform this mitzvah, and they do so by means of her assistance.” Meaning, since her son or husband learns Torah with her help, she receives a portion of the reward given for keeping the mitzvah of Torah study.

5.

THE CHILD’S MITZVAH IS SPECIFIC

In all the instances discussed above, however, including *machshirei mitzvah* (and the blessing over mitzvos according to the Jerusalem Talmud), the reason that we need the previous activity of the *hechsher* mitzvah, and the making of the lulav, and so forth, or the participation of women in order to

³⁴ *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Yoreh Deah*,” ch. 246, sec. 1, and *Rama*, *ibid*; Alter Rebbe’s *Hilchos Talmud Torah*, ch. 3, par. 4.

³⁵ At the beginning of *Kiddushin*, ch. 2.

³⁶ Alter Rebbe’s *Hilchos Talmud Torah*, ch. 1, based on *Sotah* 21a; *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Yoreh Deah*,” ch. 246, *Rama*, par. 6.

procreate, is because in reality, the mitzvah can only be performed after that **other** activity (the preparatory activity or the assistance, etc.). Therefore, that other activity also attains a resemblance of the importance and characteristics of the mitzvah.

Nonetheless, the preparatory activity or assistance are not a part of, or a detail of, the mitzvah and the commandment.

[For this reason, the preparatory activity or assistance do not become an actual part of **this** mitzvah. (The blessing is) “to **make** a lulav” — *making* (and not *taking*). And we find the same idea intimated in the words of the *Ran*. He says, “she has a **mitzvah**,” without specifying what mitzvah. Meaning, according to *Ran*, her mitzvah is not necessarily the same as the **mitzvah to procreate** incumbent upon the **man**.]

Superior to this {relationship between a mitzvah and its prerequisite}, in our context, is the mitzvah of education. For example: A minor’s connection to and involvement in the mitzvah of his education is not (limited to the fact) that without the minor, the father could not fulfill the mitzvah of education. Rather, this (too) is the actual mitzvah — (the father needs to educate) his son so that the son will do **this mitzvah**. Therefore, we can posit that *Tosafos* and Rambam would also agree that, indeed, the Sages originally placed the obligation to educate the son only on the father and not the son. Because, however, the father’s mitzvah is to educate his son to perform the specific mitzvah, concomitantly, an obligation devolves upon the son to fulfill these mitzvos. Meaning, the son {although a minor} is also considered **obligated** in this matter.³⁷

Put differently: The father is obligated to educate his son to perform this mitzvah. Thus, even though the son performs the mitzvah because of the (obligation **placed upon the**) **father**, the actual (complete) performance of the

³⁷ There are a number of practical differences between this opinion and the opinion that a minor is obligated {rabbinically} at the outset {to perform mitzvos, and not just as a consequence of an obligation placed on fathers}.

mitzvah, nevertheless, is done **by the minor**, because of the commandment (placed upon the father). Therefore, the minor is considered obligated.

This principle holds true to the extent that the minor could relieve an adult of his obligation (when the obligation is only rabbinic), and we find a similar principle concerning biblical mitzvos, as will be discussed.

6.

PILGRIMAGE AND TORAH STUDY

An illustration of the above principle with a biblical mitzvah: Regarding the obligation to rejoice on Yom Tov, Abayei says,³⁸ “As for a woman, her husband must make her joyful.” Rashi explains,³⁹ “In Babylon — by gifting colorful garments to her.” *Tosafos*⁴⁰ asks a question based on the what is stated in tractate *Chagigah*:⁴¹ “Who is considered a minor (and thus exempt from the obligation of the Yom Tov pilgrimage)? Any person too young to hold his father’s hand and ascend from Jerusalem to the Temple Mount.” The Gemara⁴² asks: “Who brought the minor up until this point {all the way to Jerusalem}?” The Gemara answers: “Up to this point (his mother brought him), as his mother is also obligated to rejoice on Yom Tov.” *Tosafos* infers that this shows that a woman is obligated to ascend to Jerusalem for Yom Tov because of her obligation to partake in the *shalmei simchah*.⁴³ Rabbeinu Tam⁴⁴ then elaborates:

On Yom Tov, a husband must make his wife joyful... the obligation {to rejoice on Yom Tov} devolves upon the husband, not on his wife, etc. And regarding what it says in tractate *Chagigah* that the mother is obligated, this is also a result of her husband’s obligation, and not her own {inherent obligation}.

³⁸ *Rosh Hashanah* 6b; *Kiddushin* 34b.

³⁹ *Rosh Hashanah* 6b; see Rashi on *Kiddushin* 34b.

⁴⁰ *Tosafos* on *Rosh Hashanah* 6b, s.v., “*ishah*.”

⁴¹ {*Chagigah* was a voluntary offering that the Jewish person would offer three times a year, during the pilgrimage to Jerusalem.}

⁴² *Chagigah* 6a.

⁴³ {The offerings of rejoicing.}

⁴⁴ {One of the distinguished members of the group of talmudic commentators known as the *baalei Tosafos*.}

Based on this, we can infer the following according to *Tosafos's* opinion: Although there is no inherent obligation on the woman to rejoice on Yom Tov (by offering *shalmei simchah*), since her husband, however, is obligated to make his wife happy, her rejoicing also shifts into the category of this mitzvah. This is true to the extent that the Gemara actually uses the terminology, “she is obligated... in rejoicing.” (This is in contrast to the terminology used by *Ran* concerning the mitzvah of procreation: “She has **a mitzvah.**”)

Based on all the above, we can also explain, **along similar lines**, the law regarding the obligation of Torah study that applies to a minor, and the Tzemach Tzedek's explanation of Rambam, mentioned above (Section 2): Torah study is different from the other mitzvos that the father is not biblically obligated to educate his son to perform. The obligation on the father to educate his son to perform other mitzvos is only rabbinic. By contrast, a father is biblically obligated to teach his son Torah, etc. Thus, perhaps the biblical obligation also applies to the minor.

We can say that the explanation is as follows: Since there is a biblical obligation concerning the Torah study of a child (because of his father's obligation to teach him), therefore, the child's Torah study is categorized as obligatory. Therefore, if a father did not teach his son Torah, a biblical obligation remains.

7.

KORBAN PESACH

We can posit further, **along similar lines** to the above, and explain Rabbeinu Yosef Kurkus's solution to the question on Rambam's words regarding the *korban pesach*. [“If one slaughtered the first *korban pesach* for the sake of the minor, the minor is exempt from bringing the second sacrifice.”] “Since the Torah includes the minor as someone on whose behalf the *korban pesach* is slaughtered, and the minor can be counted as part of the group who will partake

of the *korban pesach*, he can be exempted from the second *korban pesach* in this way.”

By way of introduction: The *Rogatchover Gaon*⁴⁵ explains⁴⁶ that Rambam’s law, “If one slaughtered the first *korban pesach* for the sake of the minor, the minor {who became an adult in the meantime} is exempt from bringing the second sacrifice,” applies only when the minor’s father counted his child as one member of the group who would collectively slaughter and consume the *korban pesach*. Here, the minor is exempt from bringing the second sacrifice. However, if the minor was included in the slaughtering of the sacrifice just as a member of the household — “a lamb for each father’s house”⁴⁷ (even if we assume that “a lamb for each father’s house” is a biblical obligation) — the minor would be obligated to bring the second sacrifice. The reason the minor may partake in the *korban pesach* by virtue of the verse, “a lamb for each father’s house,” is that he is subservient to his father, and not because the minor is his own person. Therefore, the minor, as an independent person, is not included in the mitzvah of the *korban pesach*. However, when the father counts his son as part of the group that will partake in the *korban pesach*, and thus, the *korban pesach* is slaughtered also for the child {individually, as his own person}, only then is the child {who became an adult in the meantime} exempt from offering the second *korban pesach*.

The explanation for this is like what we discussed above: The Torah says that a minor (as an independent person) may be counted as part of the group that will consume the *korban pesach*. Thus, on account of the biblical mitzvah (on the father), the minor becomes subject to the mitzvah of the *korban pesach*. Therefore, “if one slaughtered the first *korban pesach* for the sake of the minor, the minor is exempt from bringing the second sacrifice.”

⁴⁵ {Rabbi Yosef Rosen, of Rogatchev, Belarus, 1858–1936, author of *Tzofnas Paneach*.}

⁴⁶ *Tzafnas Paneach, on Mishneh Torah, “Hilchos Terumos,”* ch. 2, par. 12.

⁴⁷ *Shemos* 12:3.

8.

COMING BACK TO THE *SHIFCHAH*

Based on all the above, we can posit, **along similar lines**, regarding the teaching: “When a nine-year-old boy engages in relations with a *shifchah charufah*, she is given lashes and he is required to bring a sacrifice.” As a result of him cohabiting with her, a **biblically imposed** penalty (of lashes is placed upon the *shifchah charufah*). In other words, his act precipitated the punishment of lashes. Thus, the minor’s actions also have a biblical force regarding what was done, and so he is required to bring a sacrifice, meaning, he needs atonement.

We can say that the reason (for the difference between the prohibition regarding a *shifchah charufah* and other forbidden relations, where the minor is completely exempt)⁴⁸ is as follows: Prohibited relations with a *shifchah charufah* is generally different from other prohibited relations. As Rambam says,⁴⁹

Having relations with *shifchah charufah* differs from all other forbidden relations in the Torah. For she is lashed, as the verse says, “there shall be an inquiry,” and he is liable to bring a guilt offering, as the verse says, “He shall bring his guilt offering.” Whether he transgresses intentionally or inadvertently with a *shifchah charufah*, he must bring a guilt offering.

The wording here infers that the fact that the punishment for this sin is unique proves that the core (prohibition) is unique: “Having relations with a *shifchah charufah* is different.”

Rambam then continues:

If he has relations with her many times, whether intentionally or unintentionally, he is required to bring only one sacrifice. She, however, is liable for lashes for every act of intimacy, as is the law regarding other relations forbidden by a negative commandment.

Meaning, for the *shifchah charufah*, this act of relations is considered a negative commandment, but not for the man.

⁴⁸ Kerisus 11a; Mishneh Torah, “Hilchos Issurei Biah,” ch. 1, par. 13, ff.

⁴⁹ Mishneh Torah, “Hilchos Issurei Biah,” ch. 3, par. 14.

We can posit that this also explains *Maggid Mishneh's* words, "Rambam maintains that the law hinges entirely on her...." The Gemara says:⁵⁰

In any case where the woman is flogged, the man brings an offering. In a case where the woman is not flogged, the man does not bring an offering. From where do we derive this? Rava said that it is as it is written: "And if a man lies carnally with a woman, and she is a maidservant who has been designated for another a man, and who has not been redeemed, or freedom has not been granted her {there shall be an inquiry... He shall bring his guilt offering to Hashem.}" Since until here, the verse is dealing with a man, let it first write: "He shall bring his guilt offering to Hashem," and at the end let it write: "There shall be an inquiry." Why does the Torah first write: "There shall be an inquiry," and at the end write: "He shall bring his guilt offering to Hashem"? This is what the verse is saying: If there will be an inquiry {meaning that the woman is to be flogged,} then, "he shall bring his guilt offering to Hashem." But if there will not be an inquiry, then he shall not bring a guilt offering.

Rambam understands the Gemara to mean that the syntax of this verse shows that the verse is more than just a statement of the law; the verse is presenting a **resemblance** of the reason and cause, meaning, the statement, "He shall bring his guilt offering to Hashem... and it shall be an atonement for him," is a consequence of the fact that it was he who bought about that "there shall be an inquiry." (Meaning, he made her culpable to be lashed {and then her culpability generates his liability to bring an offering}.)

Therefore, this law {concerning a *shifchah charufah*} also applies to a minor: Regarding other forbidden relations, however, the prohibition and liability is placed upon both parties in their **own right**; therefore, we cannot subject a minor to obligations and punishments (even an obligation to seek atonement). Also, a minor cannot become drawn into the obligation placed on the other person, since the {prohibited} act that each party plays is considered as an independent phenomenon (that is prohibited and carries liability).

In contrast, with respect to a *shifchah charufah*, "the law hinges entirely on her." The man must bring a guilt offering only because his actions caused the woman's liability. Here, a minor can also be (drawn in and) included. (This is like the idea discussed above: Since the father has a mitzvah to teach Torah to

⁵⁰ {*Kerisus* 11a.}

his son and educate him in performing mitzvos, the child can also be considered “obligated.” The same applies here:.) The minor’s act, biblically, is considered an action that causes the woman to incur the punishment of lashes; therefore, “he must bring a sacrifice.”

9.

TORAH EDUCATION

Based on all the above, we can learn a lesson about the great value of education, and specifically, concerning Torah study.⁵¹

— Education has a unique connection with the days of *sefiras ha’omer*, between Pesach, the time of our freedom, and Shavuos, the time when we received the Torah. (*Sefiras ha’omer* also links these two festivals.)

In the observance of Pesach, we see a clear emphasis on educating young children in the ways of mitzvos. Firstly, as mentioned above, regarding one of the primary mitzvos, in the context of the Exodus (the *korban pesach*), we see that the Torah includes young children, as discussed above. Also, the Pesach seder, the telling of the story of the Exodus, is based on (and connected with) the verse,⁵² “You shall tell your child.” [In general, the Jewish nation’s exodus is compared to the birth of a child in the prophecy of *Yechezkel*.⁵³ This birth is immediately followed by the education that forms the foundation for the rest of the child’s life.]

The same is also true of Shavuos, the time of the Giving of the Torah. Shavuos commemorates the first time that our Father in Heaven taught Torah to His children — the Jewish nation. As the verse says,⁵⁴ “You are children of Hashem, your L-rd.”

⁵¹ {The lesson is explained after a lengthy preface about the connection between education, Torah study and the time when the *sichah* was delivered. This preface is bracketed by two double em-dashes in bold.}

⁵² *Shemos* 13:8.

⁵³ *Yechezkel* 16:4 ff.

⁵⁴ *Devarim* 14:1.

Similarly, this applies to a {human} father and son in this world. Regarding mitzvos, in general, a father is not obligated biblically to train his son to observe mitzvos. The obligation is only rabbinic. However, “regarding Torah study, a father is obligated **biblically** to teach his son Torah.”⁵⁵ Moreover, the Torah was given to the Jewish people in the merit of education; only after the Jewish people declared, “Our children will be the guarantors,” did Hashem agree to give the Torah.⁵⁶ —

Only by educating a child in the way of mitzvos can a child develop into his own person and forge a personal relationship with the mitzvah. (As discussed above, the child is deemed to be obligated to perform the mitzvah.) This is even more true regarding Torah study: When a person teaches Torah to a child — it is “a mitzvah for each and every wise Jewish man to teach all students, even though they are not his children, as the verse says,⁵⁷ *You shall teach them to your sons...* — these are your students”⁵⁸ — the child becomes a new person. The student becomes connected with the Torah (and with the Giver of the Torah). As our Sages say,⁵⁹ “Anyone who teaches another person’s son **Torah**, Scripture credits him with having **fathered** him.”

All the above teaches us of the tremendous obligation incumbent upon **every person** to invest effort in devoting himself to the furtherance of the Torah education of, and the mitzvah performance by, Jewish boys and girls. Especially nowadays, when we are preparing for the summer vacation, it is crucial to ensure that every Jewish boy and girl should be in a Torah and G-d-fearing environment throughout the summer months (ideally, for all twenty-four hours of the day). This will also set the stage for their educational advancement in the following school year.

— Based on talks delivered on *Shavuos* 5728 (1968) and *Shabbos parshas Naso* 5731 (1971)

⁵⁵ Alter Rebbe’s *Hilchos Talmud Torah*, ch. 1, par. 1.

⁵⁶ *Midrash Rabbah, Shir Hashirim*, ch. 1, sec. 4 (1).

⁵⁷ {*Devarim* 6:7.}

⁵⁸ Commenting on *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Talmud Torah*,” ch. 1, par. 2.

⁵⁹ *Sanhedrin* 19b.