

הלכות תלמוד תורה • פרק שני

Complete Word-for-Word Interlinear • Navy & Gold Edition

CHAPTER PREVIEW

In this chapter, we learn about the vital communal obligation to establish schools and hire teachers for young children in every single town and region. We will see how the Sages, led by the great Yehoshua ben Gamla, instituted this system to ensure that Torah would never be forgotten by the Jewish people, establishing that even the smallest village must support the education of its youth.

We will also learn the practical halachos of how a cheder must be run. This includes the proper age to start a child in school, the delicate balance a teacher must maintain when disciplining students, and the rigorous schedule of study that must be kept day and night, showing how we must never interrupt the holy breath of children learning Torah.

All introductions, summaries, and contextual notes are the editor's commentary and are not part of the original text.

ה"א

החובה להעמיד מלמדי תינוקות בכל עיר

Halacha 1 • The Obligation to Appoint Teachers of Young Children in Every City

מושיבין מלמדי תינוקות בכל מדינה ומדינה ובכל פלך ופלך ובכל
and in every and district district and in every and province province in every children teachers of We appoint
עיר ועיר. וכל עיר שאין בה תינוקות של בית רבן
their teacher the house of of children in it that does not have city and any and city city
מחרימין את אנשי העיר עד שמושיבין מלמדי תינוקות. ואם לא
they did not and if children teachers of they appoint until the city the people of — we place under ban
הושיבו מחרימין את העיר. שאין העולם מתקיים אלא בהביל פיהם
their mouth by the breath of only exists the world for the city — we destroy appoint
של תינוקות של בית רבן:
their teacher the house of of children of

This halacha establishes the communal obligation to provide Torah education for children and the severe consequences for a city that neglects this duty.

ה"ב

גיל פניסת התינוקות לחדר והנהגת המלמד עמהם

Halacha 2 • The Age of School Entry and the Schedule and Discipline of Young Students

מכניסין את התינוקות להתלמד כבן שש כבן שבע לפי
according to seven or at about age six at about age to study the children — we bring in
כח הכן ובגין גופו. ופחות מבן שש אין מכניסים אותו.
him bring in we do not six than age and less his body and the build of the child the strength of

וּמַכָּה אוֹתָן הַמְּלַמֵּד לְהַטִּיל עֲלֵיהֶם אֵימָה. וְאִינוּ מַכֶּה אוֹתָם מַכַּת
the blow of them strike but he does not fear upon them to cast the teacher them and strikes
אוֹיֵב מַכַּת אֶכְזָרִי. לְפִיכָךְ לֹא יִכֶּה אוֹתָם בְּשׁוּטִים וְלֹא בְּמַקְלוֹת
with sticks and not with whips them strike he shall not therefore a cruel person the blow of an enemy
אֲלָא בְּרִצּוּעָה קְטַנָּה. וְיוֹשֵׁב וּמְלַמֵּדָן כָּל הַיּוֹם כָּלוּ וּמִקְצַת מִן הַלַּיְלָה
the night of and a portion entirely the day all of and teaches them and he sits small with a strap but
כְּדֵי לְחַנֵּכֵן לְלַמֵּד בַּיּוֹם וּבַלַּיְלָה. וְלֹא יִבְטְלוּ הַתִּינוּקוֹת כָּלֵל חוּץ
except at all the children be idle and they shall not and by night by day to study to train them in order
מֵעֲרֵבֵי שַׁבָּתוֹת וַיָּמִים טוֹבִים בְּסוֹף הַיָּמִים וּבְיָמִים טוֹבִים. אֲבָל בְּשַׁבָּת
on Shabbos but good and on days the days at the end of good and days Shabbos from the eves of
אֵין קוֹרִין בְּתַחֲלָה אֲבָל שׁוֹנִין בְּרֵאשׁוֹן. וְאֵין מְבַטְלִין הַתִּינוּקוֹת
the children interrupt and we do not the first they review but at the beginning read they do not
וְאַפְלוּ לְבָנֵין בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ:
the Sanctuary the House of for the building of and even

This halacha outlines the age at which children begin formal Torah study, the limits of physical discipline by the teacher, and the continuous daily schedule of their learning.

ה'יג

הַנְּהִגַת מְלַמֵּד תִּינוּקוֹת וְהַקְפָּדָה עַל מְלֻאכְתּוֹ Halacha 3 · The Proper Conduct of a Children's Teacher and the Prohibition of Negligence

מְלַמֵּד הַתִּינוּקוֹת שֶׁהוּא מְנִיחַ הַתִּינוּקוֹת וְיוֹצֵא אוֹ שֶׁהוּא עוֹשֶׂה מְלָאכָה
work does who or and goes out the children leaves who the children A teacher of
אַחֲרֵת עֲמָהֶן אוֹ שֶׁהוּא מְתַרְשֵׁל בְּלִמּוּדָן הָרִי זֶה בְּכָלֵל יִרְמִיָּה מִחַ י
10 48 Yirmeyahu is included in this one behold in their instruction is lazy who or with them other
"אָרוּר עוֹשֶׂה מְלָאכָה ה' רְמִיָּה". לְפִיכָךְ אֵין רָאוּי לְהוֹשִׁיב מְלַמֵּד
a teacher to appoint proper it is not Therefore deceitfully Hashem the work of he who does Cursed is
אֲלָא בַּעַל יְרָאָה מְהִיר לְקֵרוֹת וּלְדַקְדֵּק:
and to be precise to read who is quick fear a possessor of unless

This halacha warns that a teacher who neglects his students or performs other work during their study hours is included in the curse of performing God's work deceitfully.

ה'יד

אִסּוּר מְלַמֵּד שְׂאִינוּ נָשִׁי וְאִשָּׁה הַמְּלַמֶּדֶת תִּינוּקוֹת

Halacha 4 · Prohibition of an Unmarried Man or a Woman Teaching Young Children

וְיִמִּי שְׂאִין לוֹ אִשָּׁה לֹא יִלְמֵד תִּינוּקוֹת מִפְּנֵי אֲמוּתֵיהֶם הַבָּאוֹת
who come their mothers because of children teach should not a wife have who does not And one
אֲצֵל בְּנֵיהֶם. וְכָל אִשָּׁה לֹא תִלְמֵד תִּינוּקוֹת מִפְּנֵי אֲבוֹתֵיהֶם שֶׁהֵם
who their fathers because of children teach should not woman and any their sons to

בָּאִים אֶצֶל הַבָּנִים:

the sons to come

This halacha establishes safeguards against improper mingling and seclusion between teachers and the parents of their young students.

ה'ה

מספר התינוקות לכל מלמד

Halacha 5 · The Maximum Number of Students for Each Teacher

עֲשָׂרִים וַחֲמִשָּׁה תִּינוּקוֹת לְמִדֵּים אֶצֶל מְלַמֵּד אֶחָד. הֲיוּ יוֹתֵר עַל עֲשָׂרִים
twenty than more if they were one a teacher with learn children and five Twenty

וַחֲמִשָּׁה עַד אַרְבָּעִים מוֹשִׁיבִין עִמּוֹ אַחֵר לְסִיעּוֹ בְּלִמּוּדָם. הֲיוּ יוֹתֵר
more if they were in their teaching to assist him another with him we place forty up to and five

עַל אַרְבָּעִים מַעֲמִידִין לָהֶם שְׁנֵי מְלַמְדֵי תִינוּקוֹת:
children teachers of two for them we appoint forty than

This halacha establishes the maximum student-to-teacher ratio for children's Torah instruction and when an assistant or second teacher must be hired.

ה'ו

העברת תינוק ממלמד למלמד וממקום למקום

Halacha 6 · Transferring a Child to a Faster Teacher and Traveling Across Rivers

מוֹלִיכִין אֶת הַקָּטָן מִמְּלַמֵּד לְמְלַמֵּד אַחֵר שֶׁהוּא מְהִיר מִמֶּנּוּ בֵּין בְּמִקְרָא
in Scripture whether than him faster who is another to a teacher from a teacher the child — we may lead

בֵּין בְּדִקְדּוּק. בְּמָה דְּבָרִים אֲמוּרִים כְּשֶׁהָיוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם בְּעִיר אַחַת וְלֹא הָיָה
was and not one in a city both of them when were are said words in what in grammar whether

הַנָּהָר מִפְּסִיק בֵּינֵיהֶם. אֲבָל יַעֲרִיר לְעִיר אֹו מֵצֵד הַנָּהָר לְצִדּוֹ אֲפֹלוּ
even to its side of the river from a side or to city from city but between them separating the river

בְּאוֹתָהּ הָעִיר אֵין מוֹלִיכִין אֶת הַקָּטָן אֲלֵא אִם כֵּן הָיָה בִּנְיָן בָּרִיא עַל
upon strong a structure there was unless the child — lead we do not city in that

גִּבֵּי הַנָּהָר בִּנְיָן שְׂאִינוּ רְאוּי לִפֹּל בְּמַהֲרָה:
quickly to fall likely that is not a structure the river the back of

This halacha discusses the conditions under which a child may be transferred to a more efficient teacher, and the safety restrictions regarding traveling across rivers to study.

ה'ז

התרת פתיחת תלמוד תורה ואסור מחית שכנים

Halacha 7 · Neighbors Cannot Protest the Opening of a Torah School for Children

אֶחָד מִבְּנֵי מְבוֹי שֶׁבִקֵּשׁ לְהַעֲשׂוֹת מְלַמֵּד, אֲפֹלוּ אֶחָד מִבְּנֵי
of the residents of one even a teacher to become who wished an alleyway of the residents of One

הַחֲצֵר, אֵין יְכוּלִין שְׂכֵנָיו לְמַחֹת בִּידּוֹ. וְכֵן מְלַמֵּד תִּינוּקוֹת שָׂבָא
who came children a teacher of and likewise against him to protest his neighbors are able not the courtyard

חֵבְרוּ וּפָתַח בֵּית לְלִמּוּד תִּינוּקוֹת בְּצִדּוֹ כִּדִּי שְׂבִיבָאוּ תִינוּקוֹת אֲחֵרִים
other children that will come in order at his side children to teach a house and opened his colleague

לו או כְּדִי שְׂבוּאוֹ מִתִּינוּקוֹת שֶׁל זֶה אֶצֶל זֶה, אִינוּ יָכוֹל לְמַחֹת
 to protest able he is not this one to this one of from the children that will come in order or to him

בְּיָדוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר יִשְׁעִיה מִבַּּ כֹּא "ה' קָפֵץ לְמַעַן צִדְקוֹ יִגְדִּיל
 to make great His righteousness for the sake of desired Hashem 21 42 Yeshayahu as it is said against him

תּוֹרָה וַיַּאֲדִיר":
 and make it glorious Torah

This halacha establishes that neighbors cannot prevent someone from opening a Torah school in their courtyard or alleyway, nor can competing teachers protest, because increasing Torah study is of supreme importance.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter outlines the essential laws of communal education, beginning with the historical enactment of Yehoshua ben Gamla to place teachers in every region and village, and the severe communal ban or destruction decreed upon any town that neglects this duty. The Rambam rules that children should begin formal study at age six or seven, depending on their health, and details the guidelines for teachers, who may use only a gentle strap for discipline rather than cruel beatings. Finally, the halachos establish a continuous schedule of learning throughout the day and into the night, which is never interrupted—even for the building of the Beis HaMikdash—allowing only for review on Shabbos and brief breaks on Erev Shabbos and Yom Tov.

לְמַעֲשֶׂה WHAT TO TAKE HOME

The foundation of our entire existence does not rest on the grand, sophisticated achievements of adults, but on the pure, uninterrupted breath of children learning Torah. Chazal teach us that the world itself is sustained by this pure breath, which is why we never disrupt their learning, not even to rebuild the Beis HaMikdash. This teaches us a profound lesson about our own priorities: the spiritual growth and Torah education of the next generation must come before any other project, no matter how holy or important it seems.

Because this work is so sacred, the Torah demands absolute integrity from anyone who teaches or guides children. A melammed who is lazy or distracted is described with the chilling words, 'Cursed is he who does the work of Hashem deceitfully.' When we teach our children, we cannot do it halfway or with a divided mind. It requires our full presence, patience, and a gentle hand, using only a small strap to guide, never a harsh rod, to ensure that the sweetness of Torah is never associated with cruelty.

Furthermore, the halachah rules that we do not prevent a new teacher from opening a school next to an existing one, because 'the jealousy of scribes increases wisdom.' We do not look at Torah education through the lens of business competition or personal honor. Our only goal is that Torah should be magnified and made glorious.

Today, show a child in your life, whether your own child, a grandchild, or a student, that their Torah learning is the most important thing in your world. Ask them what they learned today, listen with your full attention without looking at your phone, and let them see the joy and pride in your eyes as they speak.