



BE A MENTSCH

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What is our Precious Heirloom?

פְּרִשֵׁת קְדוּשִׁים

Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah Hilchos Talmud Torah 244:5) states that the first pasuk which we teach a child as soon as he or she learns to speak is תּוֹרָה צְוָה לָנוּ מִשָּׁה לְנוּ מִשָּׁה. מוֹרְשָׁה קְהִילַת יַעֲקֹב. The second pasuk we teach a child is שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל. Why don't we start with שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל since that is the pasuk that connects us with Hashem? Rav Yaakov Weinberg זצ"ל explained that **first** we need to know **why** we are connected to the Torah. **Secondly**, because of our connection to the Torah, we **are** connected to Hashem. Every child must know that Torah is our מוֹרְשָׁה.

The difference between the words יְרוּשָׁה and מוֹרְשָׁה teach us this lesson. An **inheritance**, like a house, jewelry or money is something we may receive from our parents which we can use for ourselves and do with it whatever we want. However, an **heirloom** is something which is even more precious than the rest of the **inheritance** because it has special meaning to all the members of the family! Maybe it has been in the family for many years, maybe it saved someone's life or maybe it kept a person close to Yiddishkeit. Although when we receive the **heirloom** from our parents we can use for ourselves, we must also see that it is passed on to the next generation, to our children. תּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת is the Jewish people's **heirloom**, our מוֹרְשָׁה. It is something we have received from our parents which we must pass on to our own children. It is not only our most prized possession, it is our lifeline!

These שְׁפָתוֹת after פְּסָח, we begin learning פְּרָקֵי אָבוֹת. It is a Minhag Geonim over a thousand years old to say that week's Perek in shul after מְנַחֵה. Rashi at the end of פְּרָקֵי אָבוֹת teaches us that we must learn how to behave from our אָבוֹת and pass it on! **Be A Mentsch** means we must learn how to behave and what is Derech Eretz from those who came before us. As the Mishna says in this week's Perek, " רַבֵּי " (פרק ג' משנה י"ז) "אֵלְעֵזֶר בֶּן עֲזַרְיָה אָמַר: אִם אֵין דְּרַדְּ אַרְצָא, אֵין תּוֹרָה and our connection to Hashem can only grow stronger if we improve our Derech Eretz!

Have a Great Shabbos!