

The Foundation for Starting Training

Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it (Pr 22:6).

Introduction

In our children's lives there are certain turning points, or milestones. "Going to training" at age six is such a time. This is a good time for us to pause and consider how and what we are building in their lives. What is their foundation? Is it solid? Will it endure? We want to be sure that what we are putting into them will bear the weight of their life as disciples of our Master Yahshua. Our Elohim is building a city with foundations.

When we know that they and we have passed the test we rejoice, just like Abraham rejoiced and gave a great feast when Isaac was weaned (Gen 21:8). And why did he rejoice? In part because now his son could be free to be by his side, to receive the life Abraham had for him. It was a turning point in Isaac's young life. In the same way, when a child is judged worthy to be sent from Imma and Abba's side to begin training in a classroom with the Rabbi and teachers, it is a turning point. It is a judgment that a foundation has been laid in the child's young life.

From the beginning we have heard that a child's character is set by the age of four, that those few short years of tenderness are the rich soil for the planting of a lifetime's worth of good habits. And since parents are the source of each child's spiritual, physical, and mental development, they need to be careful to not depend on anyone else, not rabbi, teacher, elder, or older child to bear the burden of laying this foundation.

Parents, the ones to whom God has specifically delegated the authority of child training, are the ones who exercise this awesome power to influence the hearts and minds of these very young children. He holds parents strictly accountable for their children's proper discipline and training during this time. They are responsible for every influence that comes into the souls of these little ones.

Since "Even a child is known by his actions, whether his conduct is pure and right" (Pr 20:11), it is obvious when this foundation has indeed been laid. Everyone in the household with eyes to see will recognize when a child has been trained well enough to be sent to training. What honor is due the parents who have labored hard to bring their child under control! The submissive, tractable child is now on a course that will lead him to bar mitzvah and the life of a disciple. These parents can now delegate their authority to a teacher or rabbi to help them with their child's training. The child can now be trained, taught and apprenticed in the many aspects necessary to become an adult, equipped for works of service. When there is genuine agreement between parents, rabbi and teachers about a child's training, our Father will bless this delegation of authority and add grace and faith to the teaching that takes place in a classroom.

Sending a young child to begin training in a classroom is, therefore, a milestone in his young life worthy of celebration.

How to Judge whether a Child is Ready for Training

The children of the Edah are already controlled before they are allowed to "go to training" at six years of age. Otherwise, the rabbi will not allow them in training and will send them or take them to their parents. Parents cannot turn their children over to anyone else to be controlled, especially to the rabbi or training teacher. All children of the Edah, by the age of six, have been required to listen quietly to their parents without any back talk or complaint.

When a child continues to play around or not focus his attention on you, or he chatters or ignores you when you are giving him instructions, he is expressing rebellion. A child should have been trained and controlled to be able to pay strict attention to his parents before being turned over to a training teacher. Otherwise, if he is allowed in a training group he will disturb the rest of the controlled children. A child is required to pay attention to you by looking you in the face, into your eyes, and verbally acknowledging his acceptance of your instruction with an attitude of respect and honor (Eph 6:1; Ex 20:12). If parents have, from the beginning of their child's life, demanded this attention and respect, their child will be ready for training.

A child that has a foundation of respect and obedience in his life will, by the age of six, be able to live up to

the standards listed below. No child is perfect, but the question is one of practice. Is he under control? Does he respect the authority of adults, especially his parents? Is he easily led? Is he ingenuous, tractable, and pliable? If so, he is teachable and can be judged as ready to begin training.

Some Standards for Starting Training:

- The child is able to receive instruction and correction from his parents without back talk or complaint.
- He or she can sit still (for example, at the table, during preparation time, during teachings), and stand still (at the minchot).
- He or she looks at adults when spoken to and verbally acknowledges instruction, correction or encouragement with an attitude of respect and honor.
- The child can walk from one place to another rather than run, jump, bounce, flop, etc.
- He can pay attention, listening for increasing lengths of time (he can sit through and respond to a Breaking-of-Bread story).
- He can apply himself to tasks that are challenging, difficult and demanding of him, both emotionally and physically (by the time a child is ready for training he should be able to work all morning by his imma's side in the kitchen, having peace in doing her will).
- He has learned self-control in social situations (he can be at the minchot without talking to, touching, signaling or engaging in other forms of foolishness with the children around him).
- He demonstrates a will to please his parents.
- He responds to the authority of other adults besides his parents favorably.
- He respects older children.
- He is able to speak before the household.
- He sings with a loud voice.