

Help! My son is growing up. What should I say?!

How to teach your son the Torah's values on sexuality

# SAMPLE EXCERPTS

## Rationales & Roadmaps

### Clearcut Language

The first point I would like to discuss pertains to the choice of language that is employed in this book. I decided to often use forthright English terminology for things that we generally are particular to only say in *lashon ha'kodesh* or in euphemistic expressions. The basis for this is as follows.

In *Maseches Pesachim* 3b we find the *sugya* that discusses the need to speak with *lashon nekiyah*, in as refined a manner as possible. However, stipulated there is a very important qualification. As a general rule, if employing *lashon nekiyah* will mean that you'll have to speak in a lengthier way, then it's better to choose a more brief manner of expression even if that means using *lashon meguneh*, a relatively more crass way of talking. What emerges, then, is that the most important consideration is ensuring that lessons are conveyed in the most effective way possible.

Another relevant *Chazal* to this discussion is the following statement in *Maseches Shabbos* 33a and *Kesubos* 8b:

הכל יודעין כלה למה נכנסה לחופה אלא כל המנבל  
פיו ומוציא דבר נבלה מפיו אפילו נחתם לו גזר דין של  
שבעים שנה לטובה נהפך עליו לרעה.

*Everyone knows why a kallah enters the  
chuppah but anyone who is dirties his mouth  
and expresses dirty words from his mouth, even  
if he had a seventy-year decree for good signed  
and sealed for him, it will be turned into a decree  
for evil.*

Now let's ask a question. But, before the question, a brief anecdote. Someone once shared with me that the entire *chassan schmuess* that he was given took less than one minute. His *mashgiach* told him, "Make a fist and leave just enough room to be able to insert the finger of your other hand into your closed fist with a bit of difficulty. Ok, good. Now insert your finger and remove it a few times. It's uncomfortable, right? What you've learned is, don't forget to use lubrication."

That was it.

Lucky for that particular individual, his father was a bit savvier regarding the need for comprehensive pre-marital guidance, and he gave his son a book that contains a wealth of information on the topic.

Now let's ask our question. If a *chassan rebbi* wants to actually be helpful to his *talmidim* and takes the time and

effort to explain everything about marital intimacy in a clear forthright manner, is that *chassan rebbi* violating the *issur* of *nibul peh* that the Gemara in *Shabbos* and *Kesubos* is talking about?

Obviously not!

With your indulgence, I'd like to share another anecdote. This time, a personal one. When I was in tenth grade in the Yeshiva High School of Greater Washington, I had a funny lunch break habit. I would sit in on the *bekius shiur* that was for the 11<sup>th</sup> grade boys. Rabbi Dovid Hyatt zt"l was the *rebbi* of that particular class, and he was teaching *Maseches Makkos*.

One day, we were holding on *daf* 7a where it says that *Rabi Akiva* and *Rabi Tarfon* would have always found some way of getting out of executing the death penalty. For example, if witnesses testified that they saw people commit adultery, they would ask the witnesses, "Did you see *k'mikchol b'shefoferes*, like the makeup applicator going into the makeup tube?".

Explaining this line of the *Gemara*, Rabbi Hyatt said something to the effect of, "According to *Rabi Akiva* and *Rabi Tarfon* if the *eidim* do not see exactly what is going on by the *oso makom*, the adulterers cannot be put to death." At which point I blurted out, "*Rebbi*, what does *oso makom* mean?" .....

## *Inyanei Kedusha* – Defining the Term

The subject matter of this book is often referred to as *inyanei kedusha*, and more specific to certain *issurim* that pertain thereto, *kedushas ha'bris* or *pegam ha'bris*.

To the best of my knowledge, all of these terms are rather recent expressions that we do not find in *Chazal* or *Rishonim*. Certainly not often.

But, more importantly, we need to ask the question, what do we mean by *inyanei kedusha*?

Whenever there is something that has the word *kedusha* attached to it, it seems that many people tend to relate to such matters in a mystical or perhaps even quasi-superstitious way. What seems to be going on in some people's minds is, "I really have no idea what is so important about these things, but apparently there is some great spiritual force here at play, and it even sounds a bit scary (or maybe more than a bit scary), so, like woah, these are big heavy matters and I'd better keep in line...".

What we really need to ask, then, is a much more basic question. What is *kedusha*? Now, I am sure that there must be a number of different ways of answering this question, so I am not going to claim that what I'm about to say is **the** answer; but I do believe that it is correct and that it expresses one of the most fundamental concepts in *Yiddishkeit*.

The *Medrash* in *Eichah Rabbah* (2:13) says that if someone tells you that there is *chochma* by the *Goyim*, believe him; but if someone tells you that there is Torah by the *Goyim*, don't believe him.

Of course, that makes perfect sense to us, right? After all, the Torah is **our** special bris with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. It's the *chemdah genuzah* that the *malachim* claimed should really have no place being given to humans of flesh and blood that live in a physical realm, and Hashem only gave it to his *mamleches kohanim v'goy kadosh*.

So, yes, it makes perfect sense to us that if someone were to say, "You know, there is Torah by the *Goyim* as well," that we should not believe him.

But can we ask a question? Where does *chochma* come from?

All the amazing mathematical equations, numbers, formulas, and structures that govern the laws of the universe; all of the incredible engineering in everything from cockroaches to dolphins to silently soaring snow-owls, it's all the *chochma* of *Mi sheh'amar v'hayah ha'oilam*, isn't it?

Anything which can genuinely be identified as *chochma* means that it is Hashem's *chochma*. It is the *mah rabu maasecha Hashem kulam* **b'chochma** asisa!

So, if *chochma* is the wisdom of Hashem, and Torah is the wisdom of Hashem, in terms of the *chochma* of it, what is the difference? Why is it that *Goyim* can acquire *chochma*, but they cannot acquire Torah?.....

## Laying Foundations - Part I

### Teach a man to fish

Before launching into the material, I'd like to make a brief preliminary point. The goal of this book, from my perspective, is **not** to provide parents with a rigid script, as if to say, "Ok, give over the following points to your son, and then you're done." That is **not** at all what I am trying to do here.

So what am I trying to do?

What I am trying to do is empower parents with the knowledge, clarity, and confidence to be able to accurately and successfully convey to their children the Torah's lessons about sexuality. And doing that is much more of a dynamic, ongoing process than it is a one-time lesson plan .....

## Toras Chaim

The *Torah ha'kedosha*, as we all know, is a *toras chaim*; as the *pasuk* in *parshas Acharei Mos* says, *v'chai bahem*. There is nothing in life that the Torah does not have what to say about it. From the moment a *Yid* wakes up in the morning with *modeh ani* and *netilas yadayim*, until the moment that he goes to sleep with *shema* and *ha'mapil*, the Torah gives us clear, detailed instructions and a values-based framework for everything that we do. From how to get dressed and what types of clothing to wear, to how and when to go to the bathroom, what and how and when to eat, what and how and when to learn, how to do business... In every aspect of life, the Torah is there to tell us what to do, how to do, when to do, and what is the deeper meaning of it all.

You could look at life as a complex machine and the Torah is the comprehensive user's manual. No detail – absolutely no detail at all – was left out of the manual. That way, if you follow the Manufacturer's instructions, your machine called life will function optimally in every way. Of course, on a deeper and more fundamental level, there is no distinction between the machine and the manual. For the *Yid*, the Torah is, in essence, life itself.

Sexuality is no exception to this rule of *toras chaim*. In fact, sexuality is a **prime** example of this. There are a **huge** number of references to sexuality in the Torah. In *Chumash*, in *Navi*, in *Gemara*, *halacha*...



If you think about it, this really shouldn't come as any surprise at all. After all, sexuality is one of the most powerful forces in man<sup>1</sup>. Perhaps even the most powerful. Additionally, sexuality plays a central role and vital function in life. So, of course the Torah is going to have a whole lot what to say about it.

Because I believe that this is a crucial point to absorb, to recognize just how often the Torah talks about sexuality, I am going to list – without any commentary whatsoever – a sample of the Torah's references to sexuality that come up in *Chumash* with *Rashi* just in the first three *parshiyos* of *Sefer Breishis* .....

Let's also not forget that every single *bar mitzvah bachur* is *mechuyav*, fully obligated, to do *shnayim mikra*. And we all know that it says in *Shulchan Aruch* that the optimal way to do *shnayim mikra* is with both *Targum Onkelos* as well as *pirush Rashi*<sup>2</sup>. So let's ask the imaginary straw man who doesn't want his child to know anything about sexuality until he arrives at his *chassan* classes, what exactly are you going to do with all of these *pesukim* and *Rashis*? Are you going to black them out of your son's *Chumash*?!.....

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<sup>1</sup> Unless obvious otherwise because of the specific context, man is a reference to mankind. Meaning, both men and women.

<sup>2</sup> *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 285:2

## Love & Life, Life & Love

It would seem that much of the reticence towards teaching our children about sexuality is driven by our own discomfort with it. There seems to be a sense that sexuality is some sort of a dark force, an enormous dark force, that presents a tremendous danger to our spiritual welfare and well-being. That sexual urges and fantasies, if allowed full expression, will serve as a portal to a dark underworld of immersion in crass physicality and gross materialism. A Godless world of never-ending hedonistic indulgence.

Naturally, then, there would tend to be a great deal of anxiety, deep anxiety, about sexuality. An abiding sense that it is something that we have no choice but to engage in, but that we try as hard as possible to eschew from the context of our daily lives except for when absolutely unavoidable. To one extent or another, we've created a virtual reality of sorts called "no sexuality here!"

The value of *tznius* has been warped into pervasive shame.

But that shame is entirely **un-**warranted. Sexuality is **not** a shameful thing. On the contrary, it is a beautiful, sacred facet of our being<sup>3</sup>. It is a facet of our being that makes

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<sup>3</sup> Igeres HaKodesh (meyuchas l'Ramban), HaDerech HaRishon B'Mahus HaChibur. See also Yevamos 63b, "Said Rava, come and see how wonderful a good wife is...for the pasuk says, 'One who has found a woman has found goodness'. If the pasuk is referring to a

us like our Creator and empowers us to partner with the *Borei olam*, as we see from the statement of *Chazal* that in the creation of each new child there are three partners: *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, the father, and the mother<sup>4</sup>. He has endowed us to become creators like Him, together **with** Him.

If you really start to ponder this matter, it becomes clear that this creative force stems from an incredibly powerful wellspring of eternal love. *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* wanted to give. He *kavayachol* had love – *ahavah mi'lashon hav* – so He created beings to whom He would be able to give. His love generated creation, and the greatest gift that He gives us is life. True being. To share, as it were, in **His** being. To touch the infinite and become, *kavayachol*, part of it.

The *mefarshim* explain that the entire essence of *Shir HaShirim* is to serve as the deepest expression of the love between *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* and the Jewish People<sup>5</sup>, and the vehicle for expressing that love is through the metaphor of the passionate relationship between two

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wife, how great is a good wife that the pasuk praises her. And if the pasuk is referring to Torah, how great is a good wife that the Torah is likened to her.” Accordingly, if the depth of love between Hashem and the Jewish People is likened to the passionate love between a man and a woman, as in *Shir HaShirim*, we see then that it is a very positive, sacred thing.

<sup>4</sup> Niddah 31a

<sup>5</sup> Yadayim 3:5

lovers that includes abundant, explicit references to sexuality. A man and a woman who are madly, passionately in love with one another. A love which finds its most intense expression in lust and sexual union.

Sexuality, then, is the deepest mechanism of love and life. Life and love.....

Admittedly, this idea of teaching lessons of this sort beginning when children are very young is my own *chiddush*, at least as far as I am aware, and by no means am I suggesting that anyone should feel compelled to adopt my approach. What I would ask, though, is that you read this with an open mind, give yourself a chance to fully grasp the approach that I am promoting, and then decide, in concert of course with your own *daas Torah*, if you want to adopt this approach or perhaps utilize parts of it in your own revised way.

With that we will now proceed to sample lesson one entitled:

### Seed – Mechanism of Life

On the third day of *maaseh breishis*, the Torah introduces us to the basic component of the life cycle. Seed.

ויאמר אלקים תדשא הארץ דשא עשב מזריע זרע עץ  
פרי עשה פרי למינו אשר זרעו בו על הארץ ויהי כן .

In plants, animals<sup>6</sup>, and people<sup>7</sup> there is a “seed”, of one sort or another<sup>8</sup>, from which life sprouts forth; and in many species, this requires a transfer of seed from a male to a female. The following is a sample script that a parent could use to introduce this concept of the fundamental mechanism of the life process. The first installment could be taught to children as young as three or four years old, and the second installment can be added as the child gets older.

Here is the first installment.....

## Laying Foundations - Part II

### Union – A basic human need

The first idea which the Torah conveys directly regarding human sexuality pertains to it being a basic need without which man<sup>9</sup> cannot function in his full capacity. The

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<sup>6</sup> Noach 7:3

<sup>7</sup> Breishis 4:25

<sup>8</sup> Even non-flowering plants such as ferns, mosses, and fungi have spores through which new ones come forth.

<sup>9</sup> Here again, the term “man” is meant in the generic sense as a reference to mankind; meaning, both men and women. It is clear from numerous sources that sexual gratification is a basic need for

*pasuk* in *parshas Breishis* (2:23) says, “*Vayomer ha’adam zos ha’paam etzem mei’atzamai u’vasar mi’besari*, and the man said, ‘this time [it is] a bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh’.” *Rashi* explains this statement of Adam by quoting the following *Gemara* in *Maseches Yevamos* 63a. “*Melamed sheh’ba Adam al kol beheima v’chaya v’lo niskarera daato ad sheh’ba al Chava*. This indicates,” says the *Gemara*, “that Adam had intercourse with every single domesticated and wild animal, but his mind did not settle until he had intercourse with Chavah.”

Now, here’s a very important rule of thumb to know. It is generally the way of *Chazal* to express esoteric *aggadeta* lessons in a form of code language which require the right “keys” to unlock the meaning of their words<sup>10</sup>.

Accordingly, many *mefarshim*<sup>11</sup> explain that this statement about Adam engaging in intercourse with the animals does not mean that he actually, physically engaged in sexual intercourse with all of the animals. Rather, what it means is that Hashem left it to Adam to discover in his own mind with whom he should engage in sexual union. He saw that all the animals have mates and

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women at least as much as it is for men (see for example *Breishis* 3:16 with *Rashi*, *Shabbos* 152a, *Pesachim* 72b, *Kesubos* 64b, *Rashi* on *Pesachim* 87a, *Ran* [on the *Rif*] on *Shabbos* 5b, and *Kiddushin* 81b).

<sup>10</sup> *Ramchal*, “*Maamar al Hahagados*”

<sup>11</sup> *Toldos Yitzchak*, *Maharsha* (*Yevamos* 63a), *Ben Yehoyada* (*ibid.*)

recognized that he also needs a mate. But Adam was not sure who that mate should be.

Before Chavah was created, Adam **thought** about what it would mean for him were he to mate with any of the members of the animal kingdom. He went through each and every one of them in his mind and recognized that none of them would ever be able to satisfy his needs. His mind would remain forever unsettled.

This is similar to a person who is never able to achieve satiation. If a person does not get the nutrients that he needs, and he is left with a persistent, underlying feeling of hunger or lack, his mind will not settle<sup>12</sup>. He will feel restless, and he will not be able to function properly or at full capacity.

When Adam thus came to a state of recognition that nowhere in the animal kingdom is there to be found a mate for him, and that he is hopelessly alone and in a state of agitated unease, it is at that point that Hashem created Chavah for him<sup>13</sup>. That way, man would be fully and forever cognizant that she, and only she, is the appropriate mate for him.

Only through engaging in sexual intercourse with a woman who is right for him and intended for him is man

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<sup>12</sup> Yoma 81a & 82a (and see also Yoma 75a)

<sup>13</sup> This is what seems to be the most logical way to understand the sequence of events based on how Rashi explains the pesukim.

able to achieve a state of satiation<sup>14</sup> and thus internal equilibrium. Only with appropriate sexual gratification can man's mind become settled<sup>15</sup>.

People sometimes seem to feel ashamed of the fact that they feel a need for sexual gratification. But, once again, we see very clearly from the Torah that such shame is entirely *un*-warranted. The Torah is clearly assigning it full legitimacy by indicating that sexual gratification is one of man's basic needs. This is another key point in developing a complete and balanced understanding of sexuality as a whole.

Granted, the basic need of sexual gratification is an advanced concept that we cannot expect a person to grasp until he has reached a mature state; and, quite possibly, it will only be fully understood once a person is married and able to engage in sexual intercourse. However, I believe that the foundations for eventually coming to an understanding of this idea can be laid even in early childhood.

Accordingly, here is a sample script for introducing this concept to a young child. This sample script is a bit longer

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<sup>14</sup> Kli Yakar Vayeishev 39:6

<sup>15</sup> Of course, there are other basic needs that man has in order for his mind to be able to settle, such as nutrition as mentioned above. We are just focusing on the particular need of sexual gratification.



than the sample script of the previous lesson, so please bear with me.....

### Kids Questions on Half & Whole

Similar to the discussion regarding people seed, if the lesson on the human need for uniting with the opposite sex is conveyed in the manner of the sample script – wherein it is seamlessly woven into the overarching lesson about *achdus Hashem* – it is unlikely that a young child will ask questions about the specific point of male-female union. However, just in case, and, once again, to alleviate parental concerns, here is a sample script of questions and answers. As in the previous discussion, the answers in this sample script are intended for children that are younger than eight or nine. As the child matures and grows, the answers to his questions should accordingly be with greater nuance and accuracy.

*Question: How do a man and a woman join close together?*

*Answer:.....*

## Teaching Sexuality from Mishnayos

### Problem or opportunity?

In this lesson, I would like to focus on two examples of *Mishnayos* that make explicit references to sexuality.

Unfortunately, these types of *Mishnayos* – and, likewise, *Gemaros* – are often viewed as an uncomfortable obstacle that needs to be overcome. The sense often is, “Oh, no. Not one of these again. What am I going to say? How can I get this over with as painlessly as possible and without my kid starting to wonder what it really means...”

A number of years back, I had conversations with two different *mechanchim*, each one on a different occasion. Both were *maggidei shiur* in mainstream *yeshiva ketanas*, one in a *Sephardi yeshiva ketana* and the other in an *Ashkenazi yeshiva ketana*.

Here is how the conversation more-or-less went with the *maggid shiur* from the *Sephardi yeshiva ketana*:.....

### Brachos 2:5

Ok, so here is the first example that I’d like to discuss. There is a *Mishna* that appears in the second *perek* of the very first *Masechta* in *Shas* that directly addresses sexuality. That’s right. Just like in the *Chumash*; in *Shas* as

well, the topic of sexuality does not take long at all to make its debut. *Maseches Brachos, perek beis, Mishna hei*, says as follows:

חתן פטור מקריאת שמע בלילה הראשון עד מוצאי שבת אם לא עשה מעשה

*On the first night, a chassan is exempt from saying shema. If he did not yet do the act, this exemption continues until motzaei Shabbos.*

*Rabi Ovadiah Mi'Bartenura* is, as we well know, the *pirush* on *Mishnayos* that is utilized most often and serves as the most basic *pirush*. Here is how he explains this *Mishna*.

**חתן** - שנשא בתולה פטור מקריאת שמע לילה ראשונה, משום דטריד שמא לא ימצאנה בתולה. ואני שמעתי שמתירא שמא יעשה כרות שפכה בבעילתו, וטרדא דמצוה היא ורחמנא אמר ובלכתך בדרך בלכת דידך הוא דמחייבת הא דמצוה פטירת. **אם לא עשה מעשה** - אם לא בעל עד מוצ"ש שהם ד' לילות, טריד. ומשם ואילך לבו גס בה ותו לא טריד, ואעפ"י שלא עשה מעשה חייב בק"ש:

**Chassan** – *this is talking about a chassan who just married a besulah; he is exempt from shema on the first night because he is preoccupied with his concern regarding whether or not he will actually find his new wife to be a besulah. An alternate explanation is that the chassan is*

*preoccupied with the concern that perhaps when he does beilah (performs the act of sexual intercourse)<sup>16</sup> he will turn out to be a krus-shafcha. This type of mental preoccupation – meaning he is busy in his mind with his concerns – is considered that he is osek b'mitzvah, and the Torah says u'v'lechtecha va'derech, only on your own “going” are you obligated to say shema, but not if you are involved with a mitzvah. **If he did not yet do the act** – this means if he did not yet do beilah (perform the act of sexual intercourse), until motzaei Shabbos, which is four nights, he is still considered preoccupied*

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<sup>16</sup> My sense is that for boys who are younger than ten, it is best not to use the term “sexual intercourse”, and instead say, “does beilah”. Once boys are ten or older, if you see that he is developmentally ready for it, then it makes sense to introduce the specific English expression, “sexual intercourse”. It can be hard to pin down what exactly could serve as an indication that the boy has reached the requisite level of maturity, but I think that if, in general, he displays a rudimentary understanding of the way the world works, then it is a good indication that he has reached that point. In Israel, where politics is (unfortunately) a very commonly discussed topic, if you see that your son already has an interest in understanding politics and seems to grasp it, at least on a basic level, that to my mind could serve as a decent indication that he has reached a level of maturity wherein he can process complex concepts and therefore is in all likelihood able to be introduced to the term “sexual intercourse” and be able to understand it, at least on a basic level, in the context of the greater picture of human and societal functioning, and understand that it is not a term that he should be using in his everyday discussion or that he should tell his friends about.

*and thus exempt. But from that point on, he is already comfortable with his new wife and is no longer preoccupied. Therefore, even if he has not yet done the act, he is obligated in the mitzvah of saying shema.*

Thus far, all we have done is put down the *Mishna*, with the *pirush* of the *Bartenura*, and the translation into English. Now, what is about to follow are some additional words of explanation and elaboration that one can convey while learning this *Mishna* with one's son. As always, it's just a sample text. By all means, do find your own words to use. Not only that, do find your own ideas and points to convey and emphasize.

By no means is my intention here to suggest that my elaboration and the points that I am emphasizing are **the** points that have to be made. You certainly can use my points, but the main thing that I am trying to get across is that a father (or mother if that may be the case as discussed in the introduction) can, and I believe definitely should, capitalize on *Mishnayos* such as these and use them as golden opportunities to teach the boy something about what the Torah says about sexuality.

Going back to the teaching-about-*chessed* analogy mentioned previously, just like there is no one right way to teach a child about *chessed*, and there is no one right point that should be emphasized in the context of any particular *pasuk*, *Mishna*, *Gemara*, *Midrash*, or story that

addresses the topic of *chessed*, so too is that the case regarding sexuality.

I don't believe that someone could say, "You **have** to say precisely x-y-z and you **have** to convey it in precisely such-and-such way." Yes, there are basic *yesodos* as to the proper understanding of sexuality *al pi Torah*, and yes there are general guidelines as to how and when to give over those lessons. However, as mentioned previously, the main thing that we're doing here is going fishing together, so to speak; and, indeed, catching a bunch of fish together. But the main point is to learn **how** to fish.

So, in this context, the main point is to illustrate how learning such a *Mishna* together with your son can and should be utilized as an opportunity to convey important Torah lessons about sexuality. With that very important caveat said, here is my sample elaboration on this *Mishna* of a *chassan* being *patur* from *krias shema*.....

## Chatas Neurim

"They have hormones!"

Boys' struggle and preoccupation with the *issurim* of *histaklus*, *hirhurim*, and *zera l'vatata* can be huge. It can become a source of tremendous anguish, and a pathway to developing an emotional pathology born of a toxic mix

of guilt, shame, fear, disgust, estrangement, anger, and more. This point is underscored by what Rav Shlomo Wolbe wrote – more than forty years ago – as was already mentioned above. At this point it is pertinent to cite the full quote<sup>17</sup>:

*The difficult period of adolescence is fertile ground for the development of guilt feelings, particularly for religious youngsters. Masturbation is a severe prohibition. The overwhelming majority of youngsters stumble in this, and they are completely unable to overcome it. The result is guilt feelings.*

*Accordingly, there is a need for appropriate guidance from rabbanim and mechanchim.*

*Obviously, a rav is not authorized to forgive sins, and certainly not to permit that which is forbidden. But what he can do is provide guidance. He can calm the youngster and help the youngster to be patient with himself.*

*At the same time, it is important to help the youngster develop a robust social life and discover the awesome treasures of the Torah that will awaken within him a desire to acquire*

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<sup>17</sup> Translated and paraphrased from the original Hebrew

*Torah knowledge and experience spiritual growth.*

*The Mishna in Avos says, "Torah is good together with derech erez". What that means is that exerting effort to learn Torah and develop a robust social life eventually brings a person to forget about sin. Instead of a constant, futile battle against sin, there should be a positive force of exerting effort in Torah learning and cultivating a good social life. That way, little by little, the youngster will be weaned off of masturbation... But without proper education, there is no escaping the reality that a youngster will sink into feelings of guilt and hopelessness.*

I believe that what we see from these words of Rav Wolbe is that the primary focus should not be on the *oygevald* of the *issur*, but on the need to ensure that a boy will develop a healthy, well-balanced sense of self, and a healthy, well-balanced connection to his *Yiddishkeit*.

There is no question that the *issurim* of *histaklus*, *hirhurim*, and *zera l'vatata* are inherently serious prohibitions, as are all *issurim* in the Torah, but that is not what we are meant to be focusing on when we are dealing with the *chinuch* of our boys.

This point was made in a particularly dramatic way by Rav Reuven Feinstein shlita, the Rosh HaYeshiva of the



Yeshiva of Staten Island, about twenty years ago. I heard this from Dr. Shloimie Zimmerman, who is known as a key psychologist, therapist, and expert on family and educational matters, who confirmed that he was present when the incident occurred. What happened is that a number of people were having a meeting with Rav Feinstein to discuss various *chinuch* issues, and, at one point, two of the people that were at that meeting asked him, “What should be done about the fact that boys are being *motzi zera l’vatala?*” The Rosh Yeshiva responded to their question by grabbing both of them by the arms, he held on to them tightly, and said loudly – almost yelling – “Leave the boys alone, they have hormones!” .....