Simchat Torah is not only the end and the beginning of the reading of the Torah, but it is above all the commitment that we acquire as people that the study and the values of the Torah will have its strong stamp in the education of the new generations. It is this uninterrupted transfer from generation to generation that has kept us as people and that guide us in the education of our children. I believe that no one will be surprised if I tell you that we live in a world where the education of children and youths is getting harder and harder every day. It is hard for a classroom to be more attractive than a chat, the PlayStation, Facebook or Twitter. It is not weird to see that a family conversation is interrupted by the TV, the computer or videogames. Our youth is less and less interested in sharing, spending time with the family and socializing with their environment. Many discouraged and full of doubts parents are constantly approaching to seek help. And as it has happened generation after generation, our Jewish tradition has some tips that can help these parents in their children's education. Below there are two passages of our tradition that speak about education and that can enlighten us in this time we are living and it can also help us make this Simchat Torah meaningful in the generational transfer and study of the Torah.

In the book of Devarim we are told about the rebel son, who does not listen to his father or mother (Devarim 21:18-21). Does this sound familiar? We could say that many of our children, according to their parent's, fall within this category. The Talmud, in Masejet Sanedrin (71st) draws attention to a detail expressed by the Torah and it is that when parents bring out this son to the elders of the city, the parents say: “this son will not listen to us”. So the Talmud wonders: why is the plural being used, us? And the Guemara answers: since if the parents do not have an equal voice, this young person is not guilty and cannot be considered a rebel son.

According to the Jewish tradition, parents' teaching must be similar. The father cannot say one thing and the mother another one, both voices, both teachings, must be similar so as to allow this kid to receive a good education. Unfortunately we live in a world where many times this requirement is not met. Divided families, separated parents, children that receive a teaching from their fathers that is so different from the one they receive from their mothers. In this way, Jewish tradition tells us, teaching is very difficult. Going back to solid families, where the parents’ voice is listened equally and where the teaching be concurrent, is one of the first requirements that Judaism ask us so as to give our children a good education.

Another Talmud passage that shows us about this generational transfer appears in Masejet Pesajim (Pesajim 116th). In the Seder night, when the second cup is reached, the son asks to the father the Ma Nishtana. But what happens if the son is unable to ask? Or if the son does not know what to ask? Mishnah tells us that then the father tells him, and according to the son's understanding, the father teaches him. Mishnah tells us that not all children are the same. Not all kids learn equally or at the same time, each one has their own rhythm. It is the responsibility of the father to know his son's abilities and to teach him accordingly.

From these two passages we learn three main characteristics of Jewish education and the study of the Torah: 1.- the teaching passed on must be equal between the parents, not the father's voice on one hand and the mother's voice on the other. 2.- It is the parents responsibility to know the level of development of their children so as to teach them according to the stage of life they are in and 3.- Not all children learn in the same way, each one has their own personal rhythm and each one has their own particular interests. It depends on us solely to know how to stimulate them so as to allow them to fully develop their abilities.

Simchat Torah is the moment that our calendar gives us to transform the teachings of the Torah in tangible values and concrete actions in the education of our children. May us renew ourselves in the millenary reading of the Torah and find in it a guide for our days.

Chag Sameach!

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