

HALOCHOSCOPE

The following question is dealt with in two issues.

A five year old girl is being taught to recite Brochos in a pre-school setting. At home, she refuses to recite them unless her gentile father recites them with her. May the father be taught how to recite them with his Jewish daughter?

In last issue:

- (A) *Brochos* and *Chinuch*, training a child; responsibility for this *Chinuch*
- (B) Teaching a gentile

In this issue:

- (A) A gentile's *Brocha*
- (B) Aiding one in a forbidden situation
- (A) *A Gentile's Brocha*

In order to teach the gentile, one must recite the *Brocha* for him. He will learn it by repetition. Usually, one may not recite a *Brocha* unless he is obliged to do so. It involves the utterance of Hashem's Name. This may not be uttered in vain. A *Brocha Levatalah*, recited in vain, or a *Brocha She'ainah Tzricha*, that was not required, are forbidden, either Scripturally or Rabbinically. Some consider them an outright violation of *Lo Sisa*, the Mitzvah forbidding taking the Name of Hashem in vain, a negative commandment. Others maintain that it is not considered totally in vain, since it is ultimately praise of Hashem. However, it could be included in the positive Mitzvah to show awe for Hashem, *Es Hashem Elokecha Tira*. Yet others maintain that it is not forbidden Scripturally in all cases, but definitely forbidden Rabbincally.

Thus, the only way to teach a *Brocha* would be to eat the food that requires the *Brocha* together with the student, and recite the *Brocha* together. Any other occasion requiring a *Brocha* would have the same rule. An adult teaching a child the *Brocha* would have to be involved in the same activity. Furthermore, the child should not be allowed to recite it in vain because there is a Mitzvah of *Chinuch* on the restriction of *Brocha Levatala*. Accordingly, the child would have to eat or perform the activity. He could not learn the *Brocha* in a class without doing the activity. However, for the sake of *Chinuch*, this restriction is relaxed. The adult may recite the *Brocha* to show the child how to do it, and the child may recite it to learn or to practice. This is not considered "in vain". In our case, the student is not the Jewish child, but her gentile father. Indirectly, the child will benefit from the teaching, when her father helps her recite the *Brocha* later. It is highly questionable whether this could be considered

teaching the child. Furthermore, the teacher does not know for sure whether the father will eventually teach it to the child. In regular cases of Chinuch, a teacher has direct access to his student. He can see immediately whether his utterance of Hashem's Name is serving its purpose. In our case, the gentile might not even teach it correctly to his child, or might misunderstand something and, unfortunately, commit reverse Chinuch. Thus, teaching him the Brocha might not be permitted. However, it is possible that the teacher can not be considered uttering the Name of Hashem "in vain." He is doing it with purpose, to teach the father to teach it to his daughter.

Many involved in Chinuch are concerned with the utterance of Hashem's Name in the Brochos. Originally this concern was with the age of the children. If they are younger than the age of Chinuch for this Mitzvah, it is not real Chinuch. There is a view that considers training a child too young for Chinuch a general fulfillment of *Chinuch Bikedusha*, to sanctify the child. However, his reciting Brochos is not necessarily a good thing. It touches on a violation of showing awe for Hashem, by using His Name with no proper intent. Thus, teaching it is not really connected to Chinuch, and the teacher should be restricted in using the Name for it. Accordingly, they try not to mouth the Name whole, but to prompt the child to do so. The child has either been taught it part by part, and connects it himself, or has been taught it by the teacher in a situation when the teacher was himself obligated in the Brocha. A similar method could be employed in our case, to avoid this particular issue.

Another issue would be the permissibility of the gentile to recite the Brocha. Connected to this would be the permissibility of the Jew to teach the gentile to recite it. One may not aid and abet another to sin. If the other could not have sinned without the help of the one aiding him, the aide is in violation of *Lifnei Ivair*, one may not place a stumbling block before the blind. This includes helping another sin. If the violator could have done it without the help, but the help made it easier, helping is still forbidden Rabbinically. *Lifnei Ivair* applies to aiding a *Ben Noach*, gentile. One may not help a *Ben Noach* violate one of his seven Mitzvos. If the gentile in our case is forbidden to recite Brochos, the Jew may not teach him about them. Furthermore, the gentile might recite the Brochos he has learned in the wrong context. Thus, even if he is permitted to recite them for the correct purposes, he would be in violation if he recited them for the wrong reasons. The teacher would be held liable somewhat for the violations of the gentile.

The issues are whether the gentile may recite the Brocha including Hashem's Name, since he is not obliged to do so. Does the restriction forbidding uttering Hashem's Name in vain apply to the gentile? Maybe, if the gentile is not restricted in this respect, there is no issue of Brocha Levatalah. May a gentile just recite a Brocha if he wants to, even if he is not obliged? Also, is there any concern that the gentile has something in mind other than serving Hashem when reciting the Brocha? Is there concern that he will later use the knowledge he learned in reciting the Brocha for

idoltrous purposes? If so, is the teacher in violation of *Lifnei Ivair*?

The Talmud debates the permissibility of milk, which comes from a live animal. It should have some connection to the prohibition of eating a limb taken from a live animal, or the blood (milk is considered "clouded" or "broken down" blood). Its permissibility is derived from a verse praising the availability of milk in *Eretz Yisroel*. The question is raised, we know that *Avraham Avinu* observed the entire Torah before it was given, as though he were a regular Jew. This includes *Lifnei Ivair*. He served his guest angels milk. Why not prove the permissibility from Avraham Avinu? One answer is that he presumed them to be *Benei Noach*, and they are not forbidden to consume blood of a live animal, but only a limb. If this argument may be extended, we also know that Avraham had a policy of insisting that his guests recite a Brocha after eating, or paying for their meal. If he presumed them to be *Benei Noach*, how could he teach them a Brocha? The implication is that it is permissible to teach a Brocha to a gentile. There seems to be no issue of the Brocha being in vain and none of the various concerns for *Lifnei Ivair* that we raised. One could counter that Avraham was assured that they would not misuse his lessons by the way he taught them. He was also able to see that they learned them correctly. He also felt that the importance of teaching them to thank Hashem at that moment overrode the concern for what could take place in the future. Some commentaries maintain that he did not teach them the type of Brocha that we recite nowadays, but a generic version. This might not constitute a Brocha in vain, but is simple praise for Hashem.

If one hears a gentile recite a Brocha of his own accord, the Poskim debate whether there is an obligation, or even permission to answer *Amein*. There are three views. One maintains that one should not respond even if he heard the entire Brocha. Others maintain that on hearing the entire Brocha one must respond. If he only heard a part of it, the concern is that the gentile included a reference to his private idols or gods. When he recites the whole thing in one's presence, we may assume that he does not use Hashem's Name for his personal deity. And the third view requires a response even if one did not hear the whole Brocha. One view considers it only a voluntary requirement. Evidently, a gentile may recite the Brocha. Responding *Amein* is also clearly a sign of encouragement for him to do so. [See Brochos 53b Sotah 10b, commentaries, Poskim. Tur Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 215:1-2, commentaries. For references on Brochos see *HalochoScope* VII:2.]

(B) Showing support for a forbidden situation

In this case, the situation in which the child is placed involves a forbidden relationship on the part of her parents. They are living in an intermarriage, with no prospect of ending it. The personal situation of the mother is such that it is included in the three cardinal sins, which require her to give up her life rather than violate it. It is forbidden to send her into this situation. If she goes voluntarily, one must try to save her, under the rules of the Mitzvah of *Tochacha*, preventing a fellow from sinning. However,

there is a view that when one sins habitually (known as a *Mumar*) there is no requirement to stop him, nor is the bystander held liable for the violation in any way. [A *Mumar* is one who violates one single Mitzvah, and certainly if he violates a number of the most serious offences.] Some extend this to any sin that the *Mumar* wishes to violate. Though this view is contended, the consensus is to allow apathy when the *Mumar* is violating the very sin which made him a *Mumar*. However, it is questionable whether this would extend to a case where the mother might be looking for legitimacy in any small way. It is possible that the lack of cooperation would help force her to reconsider her situation, but more likely that it would discourage her from doing the little she does for her child.

A second issue arises with regard to giving a Jewish girl to the care of a gentile. Though she is his child biologically, she is not considered related to him by Jewish law. Accordingly, one may not help keep the child in his control. Removing her is only possible legally by impressing on her mother the importance of either leaving him or having him convert legitimately. Helping the father care for the girl could be considered passive help in maintaining his control.

Since the mother is evidently concerned for the Jewish education of her child, there is some hope that she might relent if she cannot achieve this. The risk is that working with the father might lead to her feeling vindicated in the present situation. This could be good reason to refrain from teaching the father the *Brochos*. Thus, in this situation concern for the child's needs is in conflict with concern for the parent's needs. The child's needs are Rabbinical, *Chinuch*, as is responsibility of the onlooker, while the mother's needs are Scriptural, as an adult Jewess.

However, the responsibility to the child is definite. She is clearly being taught about her Judaism and absorbing it. She does not resist, and the chances of teaching her to be observant in the long term are also definite. In the case of the mother, first one must bear in mind the dispensation of the obligation for her spiritual welfare based on her behavior. In addition, she must be persuaded to change her lifestyle. This is unlikely. The mere act (or absence of action) of refraining from helping the child will probably not be enough to discourage her from continuing her behavior. As such the situation is a case of *Safeik*, doubt, versus *Vadai*, definite accomplishment. Therefore, since nothing else is being done to try to force her mother to leave the father there is no point in refraining from teaching the child about Judaism. [See *Kesubos* 3b, *Poskim*. *Yoreh Deah* 157:1, 151: *Shach* 6, commentaries.]

[See also *Igros Moshe* O.C. II:73. However, our case involves compulsory Mitzvos. That ruling involves an optional Mitzvah, which is also a public honor. In our case, in the privacy of the home, one should probably try to isolate the responsibility to the child and help her.]

© 2002 Rabbi Shimon Silver
1516 KANSAS AVE.
WHITE OAK, PA 15131 (412) 673-6274

Please note, New e-mail: halochoscope@hotmail.com