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CENTERING THE CHILD: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LOVE AND RAISE JEWISH CHILDREN?

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ABSTRACT

This capstone project examines the intersection between secular research in education, child development, and psychiatry, and Jewish texts and traditions vis-à-vis the raising and caring for children. In combining the researched best practices and teachings from the secular world with the proscriptive and prescriptive guidance and teachings of Jewish tradition and Judaism's sacred cannon, one can begin crafting an understanding of what it means to properly care for, love, and raise Jewish children in the twenty-first century. Chapter one examines the work of Janusz Korczak (1878-1942), Erik H. Erikson (1902-1994), Robert Coles (b. 1929), and Carol S. Dweck (b. 1942) – four exceptional leaders in the fields of child development and care from the last two centuries – and draws conclusions on the ways in which caregivers (parents, educators, the community, etc.) must properly provide for the children under their charge. Chapter two then explores what Judaism, as represented by its sacred cannon (from torahitic to rabbinic texts), has to say concerning children and their place within Jewish culture, sacred narratives, theology, and, more broadly, Jewish life. Chapter three, finally, reflects on the previous two chapters, and then explains this author's decision to convey the gleanings of research through the medium of storytelling – specifically, through the creation of a manuscript that can later be transformed into an illustrated children's storybook. The final section of this paper is the manuscript itself, entitled "Rose's *Kishke* Calamity!" This tale seeks to model the appropriate behaviors and approaches to raising and loving children as presented by the secular, authoritative voices and Jewish texts brought together in the course of research.

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In the intertwined worlds of child rearing, child development, and education there are many authoritative voices to choose from - many experts who can offer researched strategies and 'proven' approaches to facilitating the growth of children. These experts - educators, parents, physicians, psychologists, psychiatrists, and therapists, researchers, sociologists, politicians and more - strive to unravel the deeply complicated process of raising and educating a child. Whether a perspective informed by medical or therapeutic practice, personal experiences, extensive research, or time in the classroom, these experts can offer meaningful ways to approach the act of child rearing.

But what does it actually mean to raise a child? Is it simply ensuring access to food, water, shelter, and medical care? Does it include education? What about creative expression, inspiration, spiritual fulfilment? Does it include love? Having fun? Perhaps a more appropriate question is, 'what are children owed by the caregivers in their lives?' What are the ingredients that go into bringing up a healthy, happy, educated child?

Today, in the twenty-first century, it may seem unnecessary to spell out the answer to this question. One might assume that most modern communities would approach child rearing similarly - that the answers may be obvious and unanimous. But, in truth, there is much diversity of opinion in what it means to successfully raise a child - many experts, parents, and professionals who give differing, and sometimes conflicting, answers.

What's more, it is only recently that the concepts of 'successful child rearing' and 'what children are owed' have even come into focus as a priority for adults globally. For too long

children were commodified or treated as chattel; better to be seen and not heard.[1] Certainly the concept of 'children's rights' (that children, like adults, have inalienable rights that cannot be overlooked or ignored) is a modern invention. As the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) - the United Nation's office focused on advocacy and protection for children worldwide - explains, "In the industrialized countries of the early twentieth century, there were no standards of protection for children. It was common for them to work alongside adults in unsanitary and unsafe conditions. Growing recognition of the injustices of their situation, propelled by greater understanding of the developmental needs of children, led to a movement to better protect them."[2]

In 1924 the League of Nations took the first steps towards establishing a set of rights for children, adopting the Geneva Declaration on Rights of the Child, which stated that "people owe children the right to: means for their development; special help in times of need; priority for relief; economic freedom and protection from exploitation; and an upbringing that instils social consciousness and duty."[3] It would take another thirty-five years for the next round of protective legislation: in 1959 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. This landmark declaration made clear children have a right to "education, play, a supportive environment, and health care."[4] In 1989, forty years after the Declaration of Rights, the Convention of the Rights of the Child was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. This legislation recognized "the roles of children as social, economic, political, civil and cultural actors."[5] The Convention also "guarantees and sets minimum standards for protecting the rights

[1] UNICEF. n.d. *History of Child Rights.* Accessed February 26, 2022. https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/history-child-rights
[2] UNICEF, *History of Child Rights.*
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.

of children in all capacities."[6] As of 2021, 196 UN member states have ratified the Convention, speaking to the shift in global understanding for the need to protect and advocate for children. This is not to suggest, however, that adoption of the Convention necessarily translates to protections *enacted* - but it is a start. When one considers that child rights and protections are less than one hundred years old as a concept, one can at least appreciate the advancements made, while acknowledging how far there is yet to go.

Returning, then, to the question at hand: so what does it mean to love and raise a child? While there are many experts today who can offer answers to this question, combining the perspectives of four thinkers in particular can create a constellation of approaches that, together, help one zero in on a coherent perspective. In examining the work of Janusz Korczak (1878-1942), Erik H. Erikson (1902-1994), Robert Coles (b. 1929), and Carol S. Dweck (b. 1942), one is able to craft a viewpoint and approach to the deeply important work of child rearing.

These four experts provide insight into the lives of children - they write with reverence and true respect for the sacred duty of raising children and understand the critical importance of said work. Each of these thinkers was selected in an effort to bring together a broad range of experienced professionals – representatives of multiple fields that all touch on and deal with the health, development, and wellness of children – both men and women, from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century. Beginning with the earliest thinker of the group: Janusz Korczak's forceful and passionate writing speaks across the years. As a pediatrician, educator, orphanage director, and author, Korczak forcefully defended the rights of the child and devoted his life to both ameliorating their status in the world, as well as in service of their direct care. Erik Erikson was a pioneer in the field of child development in the twentieth century. A clinical psychoanalyst and

[6] Ibid.

cultural anthropologist, Erikson advanced a stage theory that sought to explain how children grow successfully into adulthood. While Erikson's theories continue to be discussed and debated (and indeed, the field of child development, more broadly, continues to evolve and burst with new ideas and research), his commitment to promoting concepts of healthy aging and appropriate development continue to influence the field today. Robert Coles offers his own perspective as an educator, clinical psychiatrist, anthropologist, and author. Coles holds a deep respect for children; he believes in their rich spiritual complexity and abiding moral intelligence. Coles also argued that caregivers play an acutely important role in a child's development. Viewing children through Coles' lens inspires one to recognize and take seriously the profoundly sacred task that is raising children. Carol Dweck, finally, contributes a valuable viewpoint as a current, leading researcher in the fields of social and developmental psychology. Dweck asserts that all children can achieve and grow well if they are taught a growth mindset – an approach to life that stresses grit, resiliency, and the abiding belief that through hard work and continued application anyone can grow and advance. Dweck's research points towards an ethic that caregivers must instill in their children; she provides prescriptive guidance to raising children well and setting them up for success, both in their present and future. In bringing together these four experienced, credentialed, and respected voices - Korczak, Erikson, Coles, and Dweck – a cohesive view of child raising, informed by best practices, solid research, and tested guidance, can be created. What does it mean to love and raise a child? Korczak, Erikson, Coles, and Dweck will assist in answering that question.

JANUSZ KORCZAK

Janusz Korczak was an educator, pediatrician, and author. He was a champion of children's rights and wrote prolifically on the subject of raising and respecting children. Korczak avowed that all children were worthy of love and care, and he lived this truth out until his last

moments. A Polish Jew alive during World War II, Korczak is known and remembered for following the orphans under his care at the Warsaw Jewish Orphans' Home to the Nazi's Treblinka extermination camp - though he was offered an opportunity to leave them for his own safety.[7] Korczak, with courage, unflagging commitment, and deep, abiding love, cared for children. Through his lived experience and published works he teaches that to raise and love a child is to see them for who they are in the present, rather than as 'future-people' in potential; they are whole, complicated beings deserving of true respect, inalienable rights, and deep love, just as they are.

Korczak, as the earliest of the four writers assembled here, offered a groundbreaking and intrepid approach to raising children. Born in 1878 in Warsaw, Korczak preceded the 1924 Geneva Declaration on Rights of the Child by 46 years. A true innovator and committed educator, Korczak was a voice of compassion and empathy at a time when children were not viewed with such respect or patience. Korczak felt that adults hold contempt for children for being exactly who they are - that caregivers propagate an erroneous disdain for youth in the very way they approach, frame, and order their world. Korczak explains,

> From the very beginning, we grow up believing something large is more important than something small. 'I'm big,' a child joyfully declares when placed on a table. 'I'm taller than you,' she says proudly when measuring up against a peer…What is large, takes up more space, inspires respect and admiration. Small is ordinary, uninteresting. Small people have small needs, small joys, and small sorrows. Great cities, high mountains, tall trees: these are impressive…A child is small, insubstantial, there is less of her. We must bend over, lower ourselves to her level. What is worse, a child is weak. We can pick her

[7] Korczak, Janusz. 2018. *How to Love a Child: And Other Selected Works. Vol. 1*. Chicago: Vallentine Mitchell, *ix-x*.

> up, toss him in the air, sit her down against her will, forcibly stop him from running, and frustrate her efforts…The feelings of powerlessness engenders a veneration for strength; anyone- not merely an adult, but anyone older and stronger- may forcibly express his unhappiness, using strength to bolster a demand or enforce obedience…By our own example, we teach disdain for the weak. This is a poor education, a dark omen.[8]

Korczak hammers this point home when he continues to share in the same essay, "The young have little market value. Only in the eyes of the Law and of God is the apple blossom worth as much as the apple, or are green shoots equal to mature grain."[9] Korczak observes that the very way in which society discusses size and power, youth and old age, by necessity nullifies the value and power of children. They are taught from a young age that they are less than-humans only in potential. But Korczak is clear that children should not be underestimated, not be made to feel tiny and insignificant. As he shares,

> We say that they are future people, future workers, future citizens. That they will be, that their life will truly begin later, that it is not serious until the future. We condescend to let them dally alongside, but we are more comfortable without them. But this is wrong, for children have been and will be. They have not dropped out of the blue and only for a short time. Children are not friends we come across fleetingly, whom we can hurry past, whom we brush aside with a smile and our best regards. Children make up a large percentage of the human race, the population, the nation, its inhabitants, our fellow citizens- they are permanent comrades. They have been, will be, and are…the years of childhood are long and important ones for life, for a person.[10]

[8] Korczak, *How to Love a Child, Vol. 1,* 308.
[9] Ibid, 310.
[10] Ibid, 319.

Korczak was living at a time when children's rights were truly a foreign concept. While children were sent to work in factories and workhouses, Korczak pushed back and advocated for their safety and health, for rights and acknowledgement, for freedom and education. As he explained in his seminal work *A Child's Right to Respect,* "Years of work have made it ever more clear that children deserve respect, trust, and kindness; that they enjoy a sunny atmosphere of gentle feelings, cheerful laughter, lively first efforts and surprises; of pure bright, loving joy; where work is dynamic, fruitful, and beautiful."[11] Korczak dared to dream of a world where the orphans under his care were viewed as equal citizens, deserving of love and beauty and fulfilment, just as adults are.

And Korczak was clear on the role adults play in creating this optimal world for children. He argues that caregivers must be prepared to offer more than just basic care such as shelter, hygiene, food. To love and raise a child informed by the principles of Korczak is to protect and guard their inalienable rights as equal citizens and members of our community. To clarify, these were not rights as established under the law. Rather, Korczak crafted and envisioned his own 'children's charter of rights,' so to speak, making clear what he felt all children were owed by the caregivers in their lives:

> Children, depending on their age, mental development and experience, have certain individual rights, which are uncomfortable for adults, and- therefore- most often not recognized by them. Apart from nourishment and hygiene, children demand freedom to release their excess of vital energy, demand the right to undergo a whole series of experiences, methodically incorporating them into their lives, as well as the right to take initiative when it comes to their own needs. Adults' roles should be limited in many cases

[11] Ibid, 317.

> to that of understanding guardians, protecting children against any excessively painful results of their experiments. The relationship between adults, particularly caregivers, and children must never have the character of a struggle for authority and rights: caregivers have an obligation to skillfully arrange conditions under which children may freely develop in the fullness of their rights…The children's obligations toward themselves and their surroundings should progressively work their way into the children's understand and be based on their natural rights, which should never be violated or neglected.[12]

A caregiver, à la Korczak, is someone who ensures children have the ability and right to flourish according to their own needs, at their own pace. Korczak trusted children to have agency in their upbringing. Indeed, this belief is reflected in his establishment of a Children's Court in the orphanage he ran. As Jadwiga Bińczycka, lecturer and member of Korczak Association in Poland and organizer for the World Korczak Movement, explains,

> There were common rules in the orphanage. All members of this community- without any differences of age or position- were subject to the same rules. These rules were protected by the Children's Court which played the essential role in the orphanage's life. Here the children were judges and they, during special sessions, decided who was guilty or who was not…Korczak himself stood in front of the Children's Court several times and was judged by the children. This way Korczak wanted to stress that there were common rules and one ethic for everyone. That helped the orphanage become a community of mutual

[12] Korczak, Janusz. 2018. *How to Love a Child: And Other Selected Works. Vol. 2*. Chicago: Vallentine Mitchell, 158.

> friends, social harmony, cooperation, and common moral principles which were introduced in everyday life.[13]

Korczak ensured that the children living in his orphanage had agency in their upbringing. He trusted them to sit with moral dilemmas and to adjudicate disagreements within their community. He did not underestimate them or do everything for them. Korczak, to use his own metaphor, truly believed that the 'apple blossom had as much to offer as the apple,' and lived that belief out with his actions and commitments.

To raise and love a child in the school of Korczak is to offer guidance, love, compassion, and support, as well as abide by a fierce dedication to protecting the child's right to grow in their own way and time. Children are capable of much in the school of Korczak. To infantilize them, to ignore their rights, to treat them with disdain - like useless chattel - is to severely impinge upon the child's inalienable rights and to fail as a caregiver.

ERIK H. ERIKSON

Erik H. Erikson is a twentieth century clinical psychoanalyst and cultural anthropologist who endeavored to create a stage theory for child development, believing that behaviors in children and adults could be studied and structured into a coherent 'progression or development model.' His groundbreaking work is summarized by the Erikson Institute, an early childhood education institution that today provides academic programs, family services, and research all based on and inspired by Erikson's foundational research. They write,

> His developmental progression — from trust to autonomy, initiative, industry, identity, intimacy, generativity, and integrity — was conceived as the sequential reorganization of

[13] Bińczycka, Jadwiga. 2010. *Janusz Korczak - Champion of Children's Rights*. September. Accessed February 26, 2022. http://www.januszkorczak.ca/Prof_Binczycka.pdf, 4.

> ego and character structures. Each phase was the potential root of later health and pathology. By focusing on the social as well as the psychological, Erikson's stages represented a quantum leap in Freudian thought, which had emphasized the psychosexual nature of development. While much of his theoretical work has since been challenged, Erikson's basic developmental framework — conflict negotiated in the context of relationships — continues to illuminate our thinking, as does the concept of the identity crisis, the confusion of roles that Erikson first identified.[14]

Erikson's research, at its most basic level, asserted that children navigate as series of stages as they grow, each stage transition relating to a dilemma or conflict. As the child progresses through the situation, they either successfully inculcate specific virtues and skills, or they do not. As they grow, the skills and competencies they glean aid them in navigating the subsequent stages - the skills they lack detracting from their ability to progress in turn. Erikson also argues that the child's ability to respond to the dilemma at hand is not only informed by their inherent traits and abilities, but also by the context, place, and time in which they live. For Erikson, a child's progression is informed by both 'nature and nurture' (i.e., what they are born with and how they are raised).

As the Erikson Institute points out, Erikson's research has since been challenged as new research brings nuance and new ideas to the field of child development. However, his overall contributions are not to be underestimated. Erikson's approach, simply described, helps caregivers today understand that children will progress through a series of challenges, dilemmas, and choices as they grow. How they respond and solve those challenges will affect them throughout their life. Their ability to respond will be determined by both their innate abilities as

[14] Erikson Institute. 2022. *About Erik Erikson.* Accessed February 26, 2022. https://www.erikson.edu/about/history/erik-erikson/.

well as by the skills instilled in them by the environment around them. As caregivers, adults must be prepared to help children navigate these dilemmas that they might inculcate the necessary skills to develop successfully into adulthood.

Erikson's research assists caregivers today in forming their own approaches to the act of child rearing. His work reminds adults that those who raise children have a responsibility to provide them with firm *and* flexible guidance that helps them develop their own conscience and decision-making skills. If children develop through 'nature *and* nurture,' then adults must be prepared to provide the 'nurturing.' As Erikson writes,

> As an animal, man is nothing. It is meaningless to speak of a human child as if it were an animal in the process of domestication; or of his instincts as set patterns encroached upon or molded by the autocratic environment. Man's 'inborn instincts' are drive fragments to be assembled, given meaning, and organized during a prolonged childhood by methods of child training and schooling which vary from culture to culture and are determined by tradition. In this lies his chance as an organism, as a member of a society, as an individual. In this also lies his limitation. For while the animal survives where his segment of nature remains predictable enough to fit his inborn patterns of instinctive response or where these responses contain the elements for necessary mutation, man survives only where traditional child training provides him with a conscience which will guide him without crushing him and which is firm and flexible enough to fit the vicissitudes of his historical era[15].

Erikson envisions a deeply dependent relationship between the child and the caregiver. The caregiver must be prepared to help the child grow - their development into adulthood

[15] Erikson, Erik H. 1963. *Childhood and Society*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 95.

depends on the caregiver helping the child's inborn abilities to flourish, while *also* providing direction and guidance towards the formulation of additional competencies. The caregiver must be careful not to 'crush' the child, but also must provide boundaries and maintain expectations to which the child can rise. The act of caregiving, then, for Erikson is a critical element in the child's growth - the adult cannot take their role too seriously.

Erikson, however, also reminds caregivers that they should not become too wrapped up in the child's diagnoses or focused on potentially challenging behaviors. Caregiving is not a clinical experience - it is about being in meaningful, deep relationship with children. As Erikson warns, "Do not mistake a child for his symptom…it is our task to re-establish a mutuality of functioning between the child patient and his parents so that instead of a number of fruitless, painful, and destructive attempts at controlling one another, a mutual regulation is established which restores self-control in both child and parent."[16] Erikson recognizes that to care for a child is about mutual understanding and 'regulation,' that children affect their caregivers just as caregivers affect them. Raising a child in the 'school' of Erikson is about entering into a mutual relationship with the child, seeing them as more than the sum of their parts, and being willing to persistently engage them until a healthy norm has been established.

Erikson summarizes his approach to child-rearing when he writes, "The essential point of…child training is that the child is from infancy continuously conditioned to responsible social participation, while at the same time the tasks that are expected of it are adapted to its capacity."[17] To raise a child à la Erikson is to provide clear direction while also flexibly changing and altering one's caregiving and instruction to fit the specific needs of the child. An educational program informed by Erikson's research would reflect this approach, providing

[16] Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 68.
[17] Ibid, 236.

equitable yet differing instruction based on the competencies, skills, and abilities of each child. While all children are owed education and guidance, while all children should be inculcated with their respective and relevant cultural and societal norms, all children must also be given the room to live in their difference- to be valued in their specific perspectives, approaches, and abilities. Caregivers, à la Erikson, will recognize their critical role in a child's growth - that they must be prepared to help children navigate their progression through life's stages. That the way in which they navigate the challenges and dilemmas in life will affect their future abilities to navigate life's vicissitudes. To love and raise a child informed by Erikson is to simultaneously recognize their innate abilities while also cultivating growth and new skills, and to take one's role in their development seriously.

ROBERT COLES

Robert Coles is a leading American psychiatrist, researcher, and author. He cares deeply for children and has devoted his professional career to better understanding their lives. Highly respected and successful in his field, Coles has "won two Pulitzers, a MacArthur Fellowship, and in 2000, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor."[18] Coles' approach to child rearing is informed by his background as a doctor - as someone who has taken the Hippocratic Oath it is clear he takes his mandate not to do harm seriously. He writes empathically and extensively, using narrative techniques and storytelling to reveal the inner workings, wishes, and worries of children across his many published works.

Coles sees children as fully formed, complex persons capable of deep moral, spiritual intelligence. He has an abiding respect for the experiences of children and wishes for adults to view them as whole beings with complicated, valid emotions and worthwhile observations. Coles

[18] Webber, Rebecca. 2001. *Robert Coles: National Humanities Medal*. Accessed February 26, 2022. https://www.neh.gov/about/awards/national-humanities-medals/robert-coles.

is adept at setting his own adult ego aside and allowing children to become the teachers. As he writes, "Prolonged encounters with children are the essence of the clinical work I learned to do in hospitals and of the work I do in the homes and schools I visit. Each child becomes an authority, and all the meetings become occasions for a teacher - the child - to offer, gradually, a lesson. My job is to listen, of course, and to record, to look…and to try to make sense of what I have heard and seen."[19] For Coles, children are not 'empty-headed vessels' for adults to fill. Rather, children have their own lessons to offer, wisdoms to impart. He continues to explain, "Too often this matter of 'character,' of 'values clarification,' of 'moral development,' gets presented as a one-way street: a boy or girl finally getting the point. Yet within a family or in a classroom, children and their parents and teachers are having conversations, responding to one another, learning from one another."[20] A child-rearing approach informed by Coles must recognize the humility involved in raising children - adults have much to learn from children too!

Coles knows that each child is different - a singular entity that contains multitudes. To reduce a child to their age and stage, to look down upon youth, is to fail to recognize the complexity and richness found there. In *The Spiritual Life of Children,* Coles observes:

> …there is more to any child than the state of his or her physical health, the nature of the child's emotional condition. There is, for instance, his or her cognitive and intellectual life. How lively is the child's interest in reading, writing, arithmetic? How responsive is the child to the things of this world, to sights and sounds, to the messages brought outside the schoolroom by radio and television and movies, and, inside it, to the instruction offered by teachers, athletic coaches? Or the learning offered by scout leaders, members of the clergy, friends and relatives? A child can be sick in body or troubled in the mind

[19] Coles, Robert. 1990. *The Spiritual Life of Children*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 27.
[20] Coles, Robert. 1997. *The Moral Intelligence of Children: How to Raise a Moral Child*. New York: Plume, 9.

> and still do quite well in school. A child can be healthy in body and reasonably solid emotionally and do poorly in school. Plenty of children who are vulnerable physically and emotionally find ways to excel in school- at athletics, with hobbies and extracurricular activities. Words such as 'bright' and 'talented' and 'skilled' and 'outgoing' ought to remind us to regard the child as a member of a community or as a potential worker, to mention roles not always considered important by some of us who work with boys and girls in well-to-do American suburbs…The child's house has many mansions…[21]

To judge children uniformly, to act as though they are stamped-out products forged on an assembly line, is to grossly underestimate the complexity and uniqueness of each child. To educate and raise a child in the 'school of Coles' is to understand that every child is different, and, more importantly, worthy. Worthy of love, worthy of respect, worthy of time and effort and attention from the caregivers in their lives.

Indeed, for Coles, the role of caregiver is critical in the life of a child. Caregivers provide a model for children - they are the living examples of what it means to grow up and develop. Coles, through his therapeutic relationships with children, recognizes the deeply mutualistic nature of the caregiver/child relationship. He 'watches the watchers,' so to speak, and sees the ways in which children absorb the examples around them. Coles writes,

> We grow morally as a consequence of learning how to be with others, how to behave in this world, a learning prompted by taking to heart what we have seen and heard. The child is a witness; the child is an ever-attentive witness to grown-up morality- or lack thereof; the child looks and looks for cues as to how one ought to behave, and finds them

[21] Coles, *The Spiritual Life of Children*, 307-308.

> galore as we parents and teachers go about our lives, making choices, addressing people, showing in action our rock-bottom assumptions, desires, and values, and thereby telling those young observers much more than we may realize.[22]

Children and adults are engaged in a constant cycle of learning and growth - there is no pause button. Caregivers must carry a steadfast respect for their role in a child's life - taking the job seriously and recognizing the influence they have.

Throughout Coles' works he stresses the need for humility in caregiving, for respecting the complexity of children, for valuing their age and stage in life. For Coles, to love and raise a child is to respect them as complicated beings capable of profound emotional and moral intelligence, and to recognize one's own responsibility and role in a child's growth. To craft an approach to child-rearing informed by Coles is to prioritize a commitment *not* to harm and an equal commitment *to* love - to care deeply about the sacred task of mutual growth one engages in when raising a child.

CAROL S. DWECK

Carol S. Dweck, is a leading researcher in the fields of personality, social psychology, and developmental psychology.[23] Currently the Lewis and Virginia Eaton Professor of Psychology at Stanford University, Dweck has originated the theory of 'growth mindset,' which offers that mindset, or what one believes about oneself, deeply affects one's abilities to achieve, be resilient, and push through obstacles. For Dweck, to raise a child successfully is to teach them this growth mindset - that they can, with effort and time, grow, develop, learn, and acquire new skills, confidence, and competencies.

[22] Coles, *The Moral Intelligence of Children*, 5.
[23] Dweck, Carol S. 2007. *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. Ballantine Books, 303.

Dweck, like Erikson, understands that children have both innate abilities *and* abilities or outlooks that can be taught; Dweck subscribes to the nature *and* nurture model. As she writes,

> Today most experts agree that it's not either–or. It's not nature or nurture, genes or environment. From conception on, there's a constant give-and-take between the two. In fact, as Gilbert Gottlieb, an eminent neuroscientist, put it, not only do genes and environment cooperate as we develop, but genes require input from the environment to work properly. At the same time, scientists are learning that people have more capacity for lifelong learning and brain development than they ever thought. Of course, each person has a unique genetic endowment. People may start with different temperaments and different aptitudes, but it is clear that experience, training, and personal effort take them the rest of the way.[24]

Dweck's research has led her to argue that there is a duality in raising children. Children have inborn skills, proclivities, and interests; *and*, they also can gain new skills, or activate new abilities, as they grow and are nurtured. Caregivers have a critical role to play in the world of Dweck; they must be prepared to cultivate abilities and guide children as they age.

Dweck also asserts that her research has shown that "the view you adopt for yourself profoundly affects the way you lead your life."[25] Dweck believes that it is possible to teach children to be resilient and unafraid of failure - that children can develop, evolve, and grow based on their own outlook and their willingness to try, try, and try again, even in the face of failure. Dweck calls this belief, this willingness to try again, the 'growth mindset.' The opposite of the growth mindset is the 'fixed mindset' - that one is either good or bad at something, that improvement isn't possible, that trying isn't worth it because abilities are either there or aren't.

[24] Dweck, Growth Mindset, 5.
[25] Ibid, 6.

For Dweck, this fixed mindset is the enemy - it limits learners and forces them into a box that hampers their ability to succeed. As she shares,

> Believing that your qualities are carved in stone—the fixed mindset—creates an urgency to prove yourself over and over…[the] growth mindset is based on the belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts, your strategies, and help from others. Although people may differ in every which way—in their initial talents and aptitudes, interests, or temperaments—everyone can change and grow through application and experience. Do people with this mindset believe that anyone can be anything, that anyone with proper motivation or education can become Einstein or Beethoven? No, but they believe that a person's true potential is unknown (and unknowable); that it's impossible to foresee what can be accomplished with years of passion, toil, and training.[26]

For Dweck, this growth mindset is the key to flourishing and thriving. To raise and love a child for Dweck is to teach them this mindset - to assure them that through effort and time they can acquire new abilities. Furthermore, when failure happens, it is not a reflection of their innate abilities or true potential. Rather, it is a mere speedbump in their journey. Dweck envisions a learning environment that is centered around perseverance, resilience, and a willingness to try again, even when it is hard. To raise and love a child in the school of Dweck is to teach them this growth mindset approach. It is to value all that the child innately brings, while also pushing them to push themselves - while believing in them and helping them to believe in themselves.

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[26] Ibid, 6-7.

What does it mean to love and raise a child? One could turn to many sources to answer that question. Based on the work of *these* four thinkers, one arrives at the conclusion that to love and raise a child is to respect them - see them for who they are and truly value them in the here and now. To love and raise a child is to teach them - provide them access to quality education that cultivates their inner virtues, understands their innate differences, and teaches them to navigate the cultural context in which they live. To love and raise a child is to instruct them in the ways of resilience and confidence - to help them recognize that failure is part of life, but with time and effort they can succeed and grow. To love and raise a child is to, quite simply, *love* them - to center the experience of the child, to care deeply for and about their thoughts, emotions, and questions, to protect their rights, and to nurture them as they march on in life.

Robert Coles wrote:

> I found myself, finally, looking at those children in a new light, one they had provided, actually, as young pilgrims just setting out on a journey, getting ready to 'march through life'…Yes, I use the word 'pilgrimage' often - I think it describes the way life unfolds for a lot of us…It's people here, or anywhere, thinking about what life means…searching for the answers to the riddles that come to mind as we seek our why's and how's. To me a pilgrim is someone who thinks ahead, who wonders what's coming - and I mean spiritually…So it is we connect with one another, move in and across space and time- all of us wanderers, explorers, adventurers, strugglers and ramblers, sometimes tramps or vagabonds, even fugitives, but now and then pilgrims: as children, as parents, as old ones about to take that final step, to enter that territory whose character none of us here ever

knows. Yet how young we are when we start wondering about it all, the nature of the journey and of the final destination.[27]

As children walk alongside adults on this road of life, they too wonder and wish, hope and dream. They fear and worry, ask tough questions. They love and seek love. A child's pilgrimage, as Coles calls it, is no less worthy or meaningful than an adult's simply for being 'shorter.' To love and raise a child is to walk alongside them on the journey of life, present, patient, and full of compassion. To raise a child is to educate them and help them grow. To love a child is to ensure their rights, to protect them, and to respect them. As Korczak says,

> Respect [their] lack of knowledge…Respect for the work of acquiring knowledge. Respect for failures and tears…Respect for children's possessions and their budgets…Respect for the secrets and vacillations of the hard work of growing. Respect for the current hour, for today…Respect for each individual moment, for these will die and never come again…Respect for bright eyes, bare cheeks, youthful efforts and confidences…Respect, if not reverence, for pure, bright, immaculate, holy childhood.[28]

[27] Coles, *The Spiritual Life of Children*, 320-335.
[28] Korczak, *How to Love a Child, Vol. 1,* 321-329.

CHAPTER TWO | THE CHILD WITHIN JEWISH TRADITION AND TEXTS

Chapter one of this work sought to explore a series of secular perspectives on the child in an attempt to begin forming an approach to the healthy, productive, successful raising of children. Chapter two, then, adds a critical layer to the pursuit: examining what Judaism - as represented by its sacred texts and narratives - has to say about raising and loving *Jewish* children. By examining a series of texts, from Tanakh to Talmud, Mishnah to Midrash, one can begin to understand the Jewish approach to child-rearing. And indeed, Jewish texts have much to offer by way of prescriptive and proscriptive advice for the caregiver of Jewish children. Additionally, Jewish narratives and tales offer insight into the status of the child within Jewish tradition and culture. In examining Jewish texts, one can begin to hone in on an answer to "what does it mean to love and raise Jewish children?"

The first book of Samuel begins with the story of the namesake's birth. The tale itself centers around Samuel's mother, Hannah – a woman desperate for a son, though she is unable to conceive. Hannah is beside herself as she's taunted for her barrenness, continuously, by her husband's second wife; she lacks appetite and incessantly cries.[1] Weeping openly against the doorposts of the temple, Hannah finally prays to God for a son and makes a special vow: "O Eternal[2] of Hosts, if You will look upon the suffering of Your maidservant and will remember

[1] See I Samuel 1:8-10.

[2] This translation, as well as all subsequent Tanakhic references, utilizes the New Jewish Publication Society Translation – 2nd Edition, as found in the JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh (1999. *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh.* Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society.) I have chosen, however, to emend the translations when necessary to present a more egalitarian, or gender neutral, stance. For example, I have changed "Lord" to "Eternal" here, as not to

me and not forget Your maidservant, and if You will grant Your maidservant a male child, I will dedicate him to the Eternal for all the days of his life; and no razor shall ever touch his head" (I Sam 1:8-11). The tale, happily, resolves with God "remembering"[3] Hannah, and her eventual conception of her son, Samuel. As shared in I Samuel 1:20, "Hannah conceived, and at the turn of the year bore a son. She named him Samuel, meaning, 'I asked the Eternal for him.'"[4] Hannah then follows through on her commitment: she and her husband raise Samuel until he is of age for Temple service, and then bring him to Eli the Priest when it is time. Hannah's tale – the story of Samuel's birth – serves as a telling example of the way in which children are valued within Judaism; they are gifts from God and to be deeply desired.

In this biblical annunciation scene, a barren mother is rewarded by God with the birth of a child – a miraculous act resulting in the ultimate blessing from the Divine. Indeed, throughout Judaism's sacred cannon there are many stories involving children that stress their divine connections and prized status within Jewish tradition. Sarah, Rebekah, and Hannah – prominent women of Tanakh, all of whom are introduced as childless either due to age or being barren – are rewarded with sons through an act of God.[5] In each tale, the miraculous birth of the child serves to underscore the sacred blessing they represent. And in Hannah's tale specifically, her emotional longing and desperate prayer for a child only serve to underscore her overwhelming desire to have a child and be a parent. As Psalm 127:3 summarizes, "(3) [Children][6] are the

associate God with a masculine title. All translated Jewish texts (Tanakhic, rabbinic, etc.) contained in this paper will reflect that egalitarian approach.

[3] I Samuel 1:19.

[4] I Samuel 1:20.

[5] Sarah conceives though menopausal: Genesis 18:11-13, Genesis 21:1-2. Rebekah conceives though barren: Genesis 25:21. Hannah conceives though barren: I Samuel 1:5, I Samuel 1:20.

[6] Again, I have selected to emend the translation, changing "sons" to "children," in order to be more inclusive and reflect my egalitarian approach to Jewish texts and teaching (thus avoiding the privileging of male children over others).

provision of the Eternal; the fruit of the womb, God's reward." To elevate the child to a gift from God is to highlight the importance they play within the Jewish family-structure.

It is worth noting that the intense stress Judaism places on procreation (or having children more broadly, for not all children are brought into families via procreation – adoption is a celebrated and accepted practice within Jewish tradition[7]) might place pressure on Jewish peoples today to become parents or caregivers. For those Jews who would prefer to remain child-free, perhaps the import Judaism places on having children could cause stress or feelings of alienation from an established cultural or religiously motivated norm. However, this conversation or concern is outside the scope of this work (which seeks to simply establish the import or status of the child within Judaism) and thus is not explored further here. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the potential pressure, while ultimately focusing on the broad conclusion evinced here - that Judaism stresses the import of children within the Jewish community.

Throughout the Tanakh stories center around children and make clear the way in which Judaism values them. Time and again children are framed as a gift; time and again narratives push the importance of children, and the lengths to which adults should (and do) go to either have or protect said children. Torah teaches that children are to be protected from potential calamity even at the risk of the parent's safety (Mother Zipporah placing baby Moses in the reed basket, sending him downriver to safety in defiance of Pharaoh's orders, in Exodus 2:1-3); that conceiving children should be every couple's priority (God's command to 'be fertile and

[7] See BT Sanhedrin 19b, which states "anyone who raises an orphan in their house…[it is] as if they gave birth to them" (Translation taken from: Steinsaltz, Adin Even-Israel. 2012. *The Noé Edition Koren Talmud Bavli, Tractate Sanhedrin Part 1, Vol. 29*. Jerusalem: Koren Publishers.) To adopt a child is no different from birthing the child according to the Talmud – an important and affirming stance for non-biologically-related caregivers and children.

multiply,' in Genesis 1:28); that children are a manifested blessing from God and a sign of the people Israel's covenant with God (God's promise to Abraham of land, wealth, and progeny 'as numerous as the stars' after the *Akedah*, in Genesis 22:16-18); that children are to be deeply, abidingly loved, and that a parent or caregiver's well-being is bound up in the safety and health of the child (Judah's refusal to return home from Egypt without his brother Benjamin, for the fear for his safety and ensuing absence would 'kill' their father Jacob, in Genesis 44:30-31; or Midrash's assertion that Sarah's death at the beginning of *parashat Chayei Sarah* results from the immediately preceding moment of the *Akedah*, i.e. because of the grief and worry she felt for her son Isaac, in Midrash *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* 32:9 on Genesis 23:2[8]) . As each generation engages with Torah and the sacred narratives of Jewish tradition, they actively transmit the values and teachings contained therein (children are to be had, to be protected, to be valued as a covenantal gift from God). If children are also the symbol of hope and future – the inheritors of tradition, representative of the next generation and of the continuation of the Jewish project and people – then their import must also be stressed so that the tradition itself may propagate and continue; they become sacred vessels into which caregivers pour their *own* hopes and dreams for the Jewish future. The sacred texts of Jewish tradition actively underscore the high status of children, making clear the sacred space the occupy for the Jewish community of today (and tomorrow!).

Rabbinic texts also help illuminate the role and status of the child, both within Jewish thought broadly, and in the lived Jewish experience. In the Talmud one rabbi, Rav Dimi, reflects, "Youth is a crown of roses; old age is a crown of thorns" (BT Shabbat 152a).[9] Dimi's

[8] Friedlander, Rabbi Gerald, Translator. 1916. *Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer*. London.
[9] This translation, as well as all subsequent Talmudic references, utilizes the William-Davis Talmud Translation as found in the Koren Noé Talmud (Steinsaltz, Adin Even-Israel. 2012. *The Noé Edition Koren Talmud Bavli*.

observation paints a 'rosy picture' of childhood – one can imagine a sense of carefreeness, of inborn potential, and beneficence in Dimi's portrait of youth. The image of a crown also implies the lofty role a child could play in Dimi's picture; a 'mini-royal' bedecked in the freshness of adolescence, literally blooming with life and potential. Meanwhile, old age is represented with thorns, inviting associations with pain, brittleness, and, perhaps, even decay (there are no blooms on the aged crown). Through the symbolism Rav Dimi employs one can see how he prizes childhood and elevates youth.

And Dimi is not the only rabbinic sage to weigh in on the different stages of life. In Mishnah Pirkei Avot 5:21 one reads,

> [Judah ben Tema] used to say: At five years of age the study of Scripture; At ten the study of Mishnah; At thirteen subject to the commandments; At fifteen the study of Talmud; At eighteen the bridal canopy; At twenty for pursuit [of livelihood]; At thirty the peak of strength; At forty wisdom; At fifty able to give counsel; At sixty old age; At seventy fullness of years; At eighty the age of might; At ninety a bent body; At one hundred, as good as dead and gone completely out of the world.[10]

Judah Ben Tema's developmental progression may not be informed by twenty-first century child development theory, however it does reflect a general understanding that there are different milestones and foci for every stage and season of life. Intriguingly, it is worth highlighting that Ben Tema's child, through the age of eighteen, is focused on study and growth – learning, education, and development seem to be the main tasks of youth. The import of education within

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Jerusalem: Koren Publishers). Egalitarian changes have been made to better reflect my gender-neutral approach to Jewish texts.

[10] This translation, as well as all subsequent Mishnaic references, utilizes the Herbert Danby translation (Danby, Herbert. 1933. *The Mishnah.* Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers). Egalitarian changes have been made to better reflect my gender-neutral approach to Jewish texts.

a Jewish child's life will be explored further within this chapter; it is clear Ben Tema certainly prizes education as a worthwhile endeavor for Jewish children. As one ages within Ben Tema's progression, the focus turns to experience and life's milestones (marriage and pursuit of a livelihood, i.e., a vocation, are mentioned). Then, with old age comes a 'bent body,' and the expectation that one is 'as good as gone' from the world. Ben Tema's progression might be somewhat disheartening – today one is loathe to assert that the aged should be seen as 'less than,' or 'as good as gone from the world.' Of course, on the other hand, one might argue that Ben Tema's progression very accurately reflects the prejudice or lack of attention paid to the elderly in some cultures within modern society – that it isn't *pre*scriptive as much as *de*scriptive. A discussion of this regrettable phenomenon, however, is outside the scope of this work. Nevertheless, Ben Tema offers a window into the rabbinic perspective on children – that in youth one has unlimited potential, and the time to devote to learning and growth. The life cycle represented here seems to highlight the early stages of life, and the meaningful milestones one reaches therein; and, as one ages, it highlights the ways in which one begins to 'exit' or withdraw from the world (perhaps even shrinking in significance). Like Dimi with his 'crown of roses,' Ben Tema paints a picture of productive youth alongside deteriorating old age.

These rabbinic texts are but a few of many that seem to elevate the child, connecting them to the 'good things' of life, and prizing the status and potential of youth. When drawn into conversation with the Tanakhic texts examined earlier, these texts, altogether, create a constellation of approaches that make clear that Jewish tradition seems to view children overwhelmingly positively – as a blessing from God, full of potential, to be much valued, appreciated, and deeply, completely loved.

Jewish texts also have much to share beyond how children should be viewed; Judaism has much to say about what it means to raise and love said children, as well. Among the many teachings contained within Jewish texts concerning children and parenthood, one central theme is often stressed: the importance and role education plays in successfully raising children (as seen above in Ben Tema's progression of development). The duty to educate one's child in the ways of Jewish tradition is elevated to a command from God: "Take to heart these instructions with which I charge you this day. Impress them upon your children..." (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). And again, in Deuteronomy 11:18-19: "Therefore impress these My words upon your very heart; bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead, and teach them to your children…" As Moses relates God's imperatives to the people Israel it is clear that transmitting God's teachings – Torah – through education is of critical importance; these passages from Deuteronomy elevate education to a divine decree.

Indeed, as one explores Jewish texts it becomes apparent that educating children properly is an obligation of all Jewish parents. As Kiddushin 29a relates, "A parent is obligated with regard to their child to teach them Torah, to find them a spouse, and to teach them a trade. And some say: A parent is also obligated to teach their child to swim." This Talmudic passage relates the various ways in which a parent must educate their child. Not only must the child learn the content and teachings of Jewish tradition (i.e. Torah), they must also learn life skills (i.e. swimming) and a profession (i.e. a trade). The parent has a large responsibility to their child – they must even secure them a life-partner. The Talmud, then, is clear that parents should provide broadly for their child in the course of raising them. The education the parent provides or ensures must be robust, broad, practical, and relevant. To demonstrate that a parent loves their Jewish

child, according to the Talmud, is to educate them, broadly, in the ways of life and provide them with the necessary skills and lessons to navigate adulthood and its attendant responsibilities.

It is also worth highlighting that while Jewish texts makes clear the obligations the parent has to their child vis-à-vis education, the entire Jewish community is actually engaged with the education of its younger members. BT Bava Batra 20b relates the tale of one Yehoshua ben Gamla who fortuitously established a system for communal learning in recognition that not everyone has a parent or caregiver able to provide for their education:

> If not for [Yehoshua ben Gamla] the Torah would have been forgotten from the Jewish people. Initially, whoever had a father would have his father teach him Torah, and whoever did not have a father would not learn Torah at all… When the Sages saw that not everyone was capable of teaching their children and Torah study was declining, they instituted an ordinance that teachers of children should be established in Jerusalem. But still, whoever had a father, his father ascended with him to Jerusalem and had him taught, but whoever did not have a father, he did not ascend and learn. Therefore, the Sages instituted an ordinance that teachers of children should be established in one city in each and every region. And they brought the students in at the age of sixteen and at the age of seventeen. But as the students were old and had not yet had any formal education, a student whose teacher grew angry at him would rebel against him and leave. It was impossible to hold the youths there against their will. This state of affairs continued until Yehoshua ben Gamla came and instituted an ordinance that teachers of children should

> be established in each and every province and in each and every town, and they would bring the children in to learn at the age of six and at the age of seven.[11]

Bava Batra, here, stresses the importance of communal educational spaces so that all children have the opportunity for an education; it elevates education to a communal obligation (i.e., it is not just the responsibility of primary caregivers). This text speaks to the Jewish people's collective or cultural approach to education – it is of significant enough import that everyone should contribute to and ensure the children of their town have access to a quality education.

And indeed, the Mishnah elevates education to an even higher level: education isn't just a parental or communal obligation, it is actually an expression of God's love for God's people. Consider this piece of text from Mishnah Pirkei Avot which utilizes the metaphor of the parent-child relationship to characterize the relationship between God and Israel, and then frames education as an expression of said relationship. Pirkei Avot 3:14 offers,

> Beloved is humanity for they were created in the image of God. Especially beloved is the human for it was made known to them that they had been created in the image of God, as it is said: "for in the image of God God made humanity" (Genesis 9:6). Beloved are Israel in that they were called children to the All-Present. Especially beloved are they for it was made known to them that they are called children of the All-Present, as it is said: "you are children to the Eternal your God" (Deuteronomy 14:1). Beloved are Israel in that a precious vessel was given to them. Especially beloved are they for it was made known to them that the desirable instrument, with which the world had been created, was given to

[11] To clarify: I have elected to maintain the masculine language ("father," "him") in this translation as it relates an 'historical' tale that makes clear only male children were provided for within these schools. Later in the passage, it transitions to "children" – this is not my emendation, but rather a gender-neutral term already present in the text.

them, as it is said: "for I give you good instruction; forsake not my teaching" (Proverbs 4:2)."

This piece of Mishnah conceives of the Jewish people as being 'especially beloved' in that they're like God's children, and that God has evidenced this love by gifting them with Torah – i.e., a collection of teachings – or essentially, education. To be loved by God is to be loved like a parent loves a child - to be held accountable, to be protected, to have expectations, aspirations and hopes for one's future. To be loved by God is to be taught – to be given instruction and education. One can extrapolate, then, from this piece of Mishnah that to love and raise a Jewish child well is to share in God's Torah and teach them well. God's ultimate expression of love for the Jewish people is education. As adults emulate that love – for they were created in God's image as this Mishnah relates – they should offer instruction in the ways of Judaism, and robust general education to their children, as well. This Mishnah underscores the way in which Judaism views the ideal parent-child relationship: one marked by love and engaging in sacred learning.

Fascinatingly, Jewish texts also relate the actual mechanics of said education. Many different Jewish texts highlight that proper [Jewish] education must be responsive and flexible, based on the needs, ability, and learning-level of the child. Additionally, all learners are to be respected regardless of ability or knowledge. In the midrashic work Numbers Rabbah, for example, one Rabbi Issachar offers a beautiful framing for the way in which Jewish students are beloved by God, regardless of their skill level: "Rabbi Issachar said of a child who says 'Masha' instead of 'Moses,' 'Ahran' instead of 'Aaron,' and 'Aphron' instead of 'Ephron,' that the Almighty says about this: 'Even their stammering I love.' A child may jump over the holy name of the Almighty again and again and they are not punished; yea, moreover, the Almighty says,

'[It is] their very jumping I love.'"[12] Rav Issachar's thoughtful teaching is a reminder of God's enduring love for all God's peoples (regardless of ability), and an inspirational approach to education. God in this text not only loves the student, but loves them *for* their 'missteps' or 'mispronunciations.' God in this tale offers an example to all educators – that one should appreciate the efforts and the learning process itself when working with students; it isn't about the product, but the efforts made and skills gleaned along the way. Perfection isn't the goal in Rav Issachar's teaching. Rather, simply being present, trying to learn, and applying oneself become the goal of the student. God as the model teacher evinces that unconditional support, compassion, and love are the goal of the educator. A beautiful example by which to live, learn, and educate.

Other texts, too, offer insight into the ways in which one should instruct Jewish children. In Mishnah Pesachim – a piece of text focused on the Passover seder and the many 'how-to's' of said experience – one is given insight into how the parent must teach the Passover story to their children. Pesachim shares, "And according to the intelligence and the ability of the child, their parent teaches them about the Exodus. When teaching their child about the Exodus, the parent begins with the Jewish people's disgrace and concludes with their glory" (Mishnah Pesachim 10:4). This text makes clear that Jewish parents (or educators, more broadly) should teach responsively, framing the conversation according to the child's ability and making sure the learning fits that child's needs. This progressive educational approach aligns with many modern educational practices today. Whole-person learning, progressive education, and responsive learning all stress the importance of instruction and curriculum that is relevant to and responds to

[12] Numbers Rabbah 11:3, as translated and sourced from the Jewish Agency's 'Biblical Perspectives on Child Development' Curriculum (The Jewish Agency for Israel. 2005. *Biblical Perspectives on Child Development.* August 28. Accessed March 2, 2022. https://archive.jewishagency.org/life-cycle/content/24224).

the backgrounds and needs of each student.[13] It is inspiring to see such modern educational approaches reflected in a Jewish text crafted in the 2nd-5th centuries C.E; the timeless nature of Jewish wisdom and tradition only serves to underscore its prescience and the continued relevance of its approach today.

Mishnah Pesachim also highlights the importance of crafting a narrative that inspires the learner to engage and find meaning in the work. The text directs the parent (or instructor) to begin the lesson with tales of 'disgrace,' and then move towards 'glory.' This 'order of operations' invites the teacher to frame the discourse in such a way that the story, or teaching, ends on a positive, inspirational, or comforting note – what Jewish tradition refers to as a *nechemta*. This thoughtful approach, hopefully, invites the learner, in turn, to pursue additional study. Inspired or uplifted by the tale, the student can find meaning in the work and ideally continue their efforts. While all subjects and stories don't have a 'happy' or positive focus, one can attempt to ensure that the learners find meaningful connections to the subject-in-question. Additionally, Pesachim's directive to frame the story properly is a reminder to all educators that they are responsible for creating meaning and understanding for their learners. A good teacher should consider the way in which they are communicating and teaching and be thoughtful enough to craft a narrative that one can follow and from which one can learn. Teachers have an obligation, per this Mishnah text, to draft lessons that are clear, navigable, accessible, and that inspire further exploration and connection to the subject at hand.

While there are many more texts one can examine to further understand the way in which one should properly educate the Jewish child (more than can be included within the specific

[13] 2010. *Academy of Management Learning & Education, Vol. 9, No. 2*, 194. Accessed March 2, 2022. https://www.jstor.org/stable/25682448?seq=3#metadata_info_tab_contents.

scope and breadth of this work), an additional text worth highlighting here is a selection from BT Shabbat 119b, which elegantly draws together the various threads explored throughout this chapter. BT Shabbat relates an *aggadic* (i.e., a poetic, creative, or non-*halakhic*) perspective on children:

> Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: What is the meaning of that which is written: "Do not touch My anointed ones and do My prophets no harm" (I Chronicles 16:22)? "Do not touch My anointed ones," these are the schoolchildren, who are as precious and important as kings and priests; "and do not harm My prophets," these are Torah scholars. Reish Lakish said in the name of Rabbi Yehuda Nesia: The world only exists because of the breath, i.e., reciting Torah, of schoolchildren. Rav Pappa said to Abaye: My Torah study and yours, what is its status? Why is the Torah study of adults worth less? He said to him: The breath of adults, which is tainted by sin, is not similar to the breath of children, which is not tainted by sin. And Reish Lakish said in the name of Rabbi Yehuda Nesia: One may not interrupt schoolchildren from studying Torah, even in order to build the Temple.

While this text is *aggadic* in nature, meaning it does not offer conclusions on Jewish law or a legal-rational proof for a specific behavior, law, or commandment, there is still, nevertheless, much to unpack in this piece of creative text. That schoolchildren are called "precious" and "anointed," that they are related to "kings and priests," makes clear their import and beloved status. Though children are typically thought of as powerless or lacking in agency (as they are minors), this text reframes them into the most powerful figures in society (that of royalty and religious leaders), again highlighting the high status of children within Jewish community. Furthermore, Reish Lakish and Rabbi Yehuda Nesia reflect that the world itself "only exists

because of the breath of schoolchildren." This beautiful, poetic idea seems to tie children (specifically 'schoolchildren'; again, stressing the import of engaging in study and education) to the act of Creation itself; that in studying Torah children can tap into that Divine connection. As the text goes on Abaye reminds his friend Rav Pappa that children are free from sin, while adults are tainted in their age; another comparison that serves to elevate the child above that of the adult – in their innocence and youth children have not yet been corrupted by sin and poor decision making. Perhaps not entirely truthful – for many caregivers can think of examples of times in which their child(ren) acted less an angelic – yet still it serves to illustrate the lengths to which these rabbis go to underline the perfection or lauded nature of the child. Finally, Rabbi Yehuda Nesia concludes, sharing that not even for the redemptive act of rebuilding the Temple can one interrupt the learning of schoolchildren. While the Temple was already destroyed in the time of Rabbi Yehuda Nesia, this teaching makes [symbolically] clear the importance of engaging in study. This text may specifically speak about Jewish education, i.e. the study of Torah. However, it offers modern readers a window into the Jewish perspective on education in general. Clearly, children are of a special status within the Jewish community, and education is a central part of raising said children successfully.

Of course, it is important within this framework to acknowledge that there is nuance to this conversation – that Judaism rarely speaks uniformly on any one issue. While Jewish texts do seem to overwhelmingly assert that children are to be valued and properly educated, there are other texts that speak to the duality of a child's position within society. For as much as children are loved and lauded, they also lack in certain rights and privileges afforded to others. For example, though adhering to and following God's *mitzvot* are the *raison d'etre* of the rabbinic

world and culture, children are not bound by those selfsame *mitzvot.*[14] Jewish tradition explains this is because they are not yet able to adequately understand and be responsible for the many prescribed/proscribed behaviors *halakha* demands.[15] While the reasoning is certainly sound, this exclusion ultimately speaks to the dualistic position or status of children – they are viewed as future or potential full-members of the community, even symbolically related to "kings and priests,"[16] but not they aren't fully members yet. Consider, too, that there are narratives contained within Jewish tradition that are less-than-positive for the child. The *Akedah* relates the tale of a child almost sacrificed by their caregiver upon God's orders. While the story ends with Isaac's reprieve, it still shows a child endangered by their caregiver and powerless to save themselves. Ultimately, children – for as lauded and respected as they are in Jewish tradition – do lack in agency and power within the Jewish family and community structure. One must understand that while Judaism does make clear that children are a blessing, and that caregivers have many important and robust obligations for the care of that child, children are also lacking in certain rights and abilities. Any conclusions one draws must be informed by the nuanced nature of the discussion and acknowledge that while children are deeply respected and valued within Judaism, they are not on equal footing with the caregivers (i.e., the adults) in their life.

Through the study of Jewish texts one can better understand how children are viewed within Jewish tradition, as well as craft an understanding of what it means to raise and love Jewish children. It is clear that children are prized members of the Jewish community and are considered a blessing from God; they are pure, full of potential, fresh and beautiful like new

[14] Rubin, Mordechai. n.d. *Does Halacha Impose Obligations Upon Minors?* Accessed March 2, 2022. https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4838320/jewish/Does-Halachah-Impose-Obligations-Upon-Minors.htm
[15] Rubin, *Minors.*
[16] See BT Shabbat 119b above.

blooms. One can also conclude that children are deserving of a robust education that prepares them to not only navigate the Jewish world, but the broader world as well. To raise a Jewish child is to ensure that they have access to a proper, personal education that meets their needs and encourages them into further study; this is the responsibility of their parent, or caregiver, as well as the broader Jewish community. As the Jewish Agency so thoughtfully summarizes in their "Biblical Perspectives on Child Development" Curriculum,

> In the Jewish family, the most tangible element of parental love is the great dedication and effort consecrated toward the child's education. The major educational institution for children mentioned in the Bible is the family (public education was not instituted until the days of Joshua ben Gamla in the first century CE). All family relationships were clearly defined in order to ensure the necessary atmosphere of love, respect, and mutual trust-now generally recognized as the essential psychological foundation for healthy mental development and learning.[17]

This helpful summary makes clear that the ideal caregiver-child relationship in Judaism is one marked by abiding love and care, as well as a commitment to the successful education of said child. In examining these texts from Tanakh, Mishnah, Talmud, and Midrash, one is able to hone in on an answer to the question, "what does it mean to love and raise Jewish children?" To love and raise Jewish children is to recognize them as a blessing from God, to deeply value them and the part they play not only within one's specific family, but as part of the broader Jewish community, and, most importantly, to provide for a robust education that inspires them to continue learning and engaging, not only with their studies, but with the Jewish people, as well.

[17] The Jewish Agency for Israel. 2005. *Biblical Perspectives on Child Development.* August 28. Accessed March 2, 2022. https://archive.jewishagency.org/life-cycle/content/24224.

CHAPTER THREE | SHARING THROUGH STORYTELLING: MY CAPSTONE PROJECT

Over the course of this capstone project, I have attempted to answer the question, "What does it mean to love and raise Jewish children in the twenty-first century?" There are many resources one can turn to in their efforts to answer this question. From medical professionals to therapists, educators to caregivers – all have much to say on the topic; and Jewish texts and tradition have much to share, as well. In examining a variety of works - both from the secular world and the Jewish faith - and in speaking with professionals in the field of education, one can craft an approach to, and cultivate respect for, the sacred work of raising children.

In chapters one and two of this paper a series of authoritative voices were brought together to begin outlining what meaningful, successful, healthy caregiving of Jewish children looks like. Chapter one focused on the work of experts in the fields of education, child development and research, and psychiatry or mental health. These accomplished professionals provided critical insight into the lives of children; how they develop, what specific needs they have (social, emotional, developmental, intellectual, spiritual, etc.), how they should be educated, and how they should be viewed and respected were all examined.

Chapter two, then, provided an additional layer of guidance in its exploration of the Jewish perspective. In referencing Torah, Tanakh, Talmud, Midrash, and medieval rabbinic texts, chapter two offered an understanding of Jewish tradition's specific approach to raising children. Judaism makes clear that to love and raise a child successfully is to both highly value and care for the child, as well as ensure and provide for that child's education. In short, to love and care for a Jewish child is to teach that child the ways of Jewish tradition and, more broadly,

the world; education is *the* expression of parental[1] love in Jewish tradition. In marrying the guidance of Jewish tradition (as summarized in chapter two) to the best practices evinced by the great thinkers of chapter one, one creates a constellation of resources that all-together promote a healthy vision for raising and loving Jewish children today.

If there exists a successful model for raising Jewish children (and it is clear from the research that specific guidance certainly exists), then there should be a mechanism for transmitting that ideal vision to caregivers of Jewish children today. While text studies or lectures could certainly prove useful, there is another medium I have chosen to explore: that of the illustrated children's storybook.

Storytelling provides an engaging, interactive, immersive way to communicate values, ideas, and information. As one teaching resource for New York University's faculty puts it, "Stories engage our thinking, emotions, and imagination all at once. As listeners we participate in the story with both mind and body as we enter the narrative world and react to it. Storytelling is a human art form that teaches about the human experience."[2] Participants are drawn into the narrative as they speculate and imagine; they naturally place themselves into the tale, wondering how they would react or what they would do. Questions are asked, new ideas are explored. To engage with a story is to experience new worlds; in experiencing the new, the reader learns new

[1] Throughout this paper I have endeavored to use the word "caregiver" in place of "parent," whenever possible, to reflect the understanding that not all who raise and love children are specifically parents. Grandparents, aunts and uncles, siblings, teachers, and more are all part of the 'village' it takes to raise a child. Caregiving knows no boundaries and requires no specific titles, and families come in all shapes and sizes.

[2] NYU. 2022. *Faculty Teaching and Learning Resources: Storytelling in Teaching and Learning*. Accessed February 28, 2022. https://www.nyu.edu/faculty/teaching-and-learning-resources/strategies-for-teaching-with-tech/storytelling-teching-and-learning.html.

things about themself, too. Educator Rudine Sims Bishop thoughtfully summarized this 'magical' ability of storytelling when she famously said,

> Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created and recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience.[3]

Bishop's framing of stories as 'windows and mirrors' is a beautiful way to represent the power of narrative. As a window they let the reader see into another world; as a mirror they let the reader see *themselves* in *their* world, and invites consideration of how they might be part of something bigger than themselves. Stories can inspire change, growth, and new understandings – they provide a framework within which to explore new ideas.

The Jewish people, as well, are no strangers to storytelling. Judaism has employed narrative and story for millennia as the core of its tradition. Indeed, Jews often refer to themselves as 'the People of the Book,' though this expression didn't originate with them. As journalist Alan Rosenbaum explains,

> While historically the term originates from Islam, which categorized the Jews as 'people of the book' – meaning those who possessed an earlier revelation from God that was written down – the term most often refers to the intimate connection between the Jews

[3] Bishop, R. S. (1990). *Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors*. Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom,6 (3).

> and the Torah – the Hebrew Bible (*Tanach*), and the many books associated with it, such as the Talmud, commentaries, and codes of Jewish law. Judaism reveres the written word, from the Torah scroll that is painstakingly written on parchment to the printed Talmud that contains the rabbinic explanations of the Bible… Jews have always had a special reverence and appreciation for books.[4]

Rosenbaum speaks to the special love the Jewish people seem to have for story, and helpfully reminds that while the beloved moniker "People of the Book" may have referred to a status originally conferred by others, today it represents a status claimed and perspective evinced from within. Every Passover, Jews gather around their Seder tables to retell the story of the Exodus from Egypt. In that retelling they read from a H*aggadah* which demands "in each generation, each person is obligated to see himself or herself as though he or she personally came forth from Egypt."[5] To be a "People of the Book" is to live and breathe story – to see the sacred narratives of Jewish tradition as being continually relevant, contextual, and personal to the individual Jew today.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks once reflected on the power of storytelling within Jewish tradition, as well, and the relationship all Jews have to the sacred narratives Jews carry and share. He writes,

> [Journalist Andrew Marr said], 'The Jews have always had stories for the rest of us.' I love that testimony. And indeed, from early on, storytelling has been central to the Jewish tradition. Every culture has its stories. (The late Elie Wiesel once said, 'God created man

[4] Rosenbaum, Alan. 2020. *Why are the Jews called the people of the Book?* October 29. Accessed February 28, 2022. https://www.jpost.com/judaism/why-are-the-jews-called-the-people-of-the-book-647247.
[5] Jacobs, Rabbi Jill. n.d. *I Was Redeemed From Egypt*. Accessed February 28, 2022. https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/i-was-redeemed-from-egypt/.

> because God loves stories.') Almost certainly, the tradition goes back to the days when our ancestors were hunter-gatherers telling stories around the campfire at night. We are the storytelling animal…
>
> I believe that I am a character in our people's story, with my own chapter to write, and so are we all. To be a Jew is to see yourself as part of that story, to make it live in our time, and to do your best to hand it on to those who will come after us.[6]

Rabbi Sacks, here, confirms that Jews are a people of storytelling – the 'storytelling animal' as he opined. He connects storytelling to the Jewish people's ancient past and elevates its importance today. Critically, he also places himself into the narrative, avowing that he and others all have the opportunity to be part of the Jewish chain of tradition, as well as the responsibility to pass it on to the next generation. Story becomes a vehicle for transmission, connection, and education in Sacks' framing. To be Jewish, it seems, to tell and share stories. In creating a children's storybook that models the rich gleanings and best practices in child-raising explored in chapters one and two, I hope to create a resource that allows Jewish children and their caregivers to see what a healthy, safe, happy Jewish home (or learning environment) can look like via a medium that is special and sacred to the Jewish community.

And indeed, today, caregivers of children, broadly, and Jewish children, specifically, seem thirsty for resources such as this. In an effort to include voices of professionals currently in the field and round out my research, I interviewed a leading expert in Jewish early childhood education, as well an experienced public-school elementary educator. Both professionals shared

[6] Sacks, Rabbi Lord Jonathan. 2020. *Why Storytelling Is Essential to Jews and Judaism*. January 28. Accessed February 28, 2022. https://www.algemeiner.com/2020/01/28/why-storytelling-is-essential-to-jews-and-judaism/.

that resources that target social-emotional learning, as well as provide opportunities for caregivers and students to learn together, would be useful.

Cathy Rolland, the Union for Reform Judaism's director of emerging networks and engaging families with young children, shared, specifically, that it is critical to give "children age-appropriate settings in which to explore and create their own journeys."[7] Rolland went on to reflect that it is also important to "[support] parents on those same journeys, as well."[8] Rolland's observation makes clear that children *and* their caregivers need opportunities to learn together, engaging with spaces (such as early childhood learning centers) or resources that speak on their level and give chances to create connections and meaningful understandings about Jewish life. A storybook that children and caregivers can read together provides that framework; in this case – a framework to explore what healthy, happy Jewish homes look like.

Lisa Berkun, a public-school elementary teacher based in Baltimore, Maryland, also reflected that resources were needed that allow caregivers and children to explore social-emotional skills – that children entering her classroom today seem to need more help in this area.[9] She went on to say that "teachers can use all the help they can get with [social-emotional learning resources]," and that she "would rather have too many resources than not enough."[10] Berkun and Rolland's observations confirmed for this author that the creation of a resource that would invite caregivers and children to learn together would be deeply meaningful. Furthermore, creating a story that not only modeled a happy, healthy Jewish home, but also included characters that could model social-emotional skills and ethical behaviors would also be useful.

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[7] Rolland, Cathy, interview by Caitlin Brazner. 2021. *Director of Emerging Networks and Engaging Families with Young Children, URJ* (July 21).
[8] Rolland, 2021.
[9] Berkun, Lisa, interview by Caitlin Brazner. 2021. *Educator* (August 11).
[10] Berkun, 2021.

Storybooks that model healthy relationships, safe homes, and social-emotional skills all provide caregivers with another tool in their toolkit for raising and educating the Jewish children under their care.

But what should the story be about? What best practices for child raising should be modeled and included? What should the format of the book be? These were all important questions in consideration of this project. In developing the children's book itself, I desired to attempt to bring together the research, best practices, and guidance explored earlier in chapters one and two, creating characters and a tale that could model the social-emotional skills, environment, and ideal caregiving that the four thinkers, the interviewees, and Jewish tradition spoke of. In weaving together these different threads, one can create a rich 'story-tapestry' that models for children and their caregivers what a loving, Jewish home in the twenty-first century looks like.

From the four thinkers covered in chapter one, one learns that children must be taught resiliency and grit – that they should strive to learn new things and take on new challenges with alacrity (Carol Dweck). That children should be deeply respected and viewed as complex beings with real, meaningful emotions and concerns (Janusz Korczak). That children's caregivers should engage with them in true, authentic relationships and provide for their education and growth (Robert Coles). Additionally, critically, that education must be robust, challenging, contextual and relevant so that children might find meaningful success and build their self-esteem and confidence as they grow and develop (Erik Erikson). These four thinkers, when brought together create a constellation of best practices for raising and loving children. They speak of respect, learning, and socio-emotional growth; of care, loving mentorship, and

guidance. Any characters or story modeling these approaches must show the kind of resilience, loving-care, attention, and instructive challenge of which these authors speak.

From the interviews conducted in the course of research it is evident that resources that bring caregivers and children together to explore both Judaism and social-emotional skills would be useful. Inspired by the desire to provide opportunities for extended learning and further exploration of the themes contained in the tale, I have decided to add resource pages after the story itself to provide meaningful tools for the caregiver to continue the learning process. These pages will contain short explanations of the Jewish content contained in the tale, as well as highlight different themes and skills that the characters display. Additionally, discussion questions and activities for further engagement will be provided. These pages will allow families and teachers to dive into some of the themes contained in the story, to reflect on and evaluate the characters' behaviors, to draw conclusions on what a healthy, loving, home looks like, and to challenge themselves to take on new behaviors or approaches to Jewish life in their own lives.

From the exploration of Jewish tradition and text one understands that a loving, Jewish home is all about prizing the child, as well as education – about the caregiver truly loving and being deeply grateful for the child themself, as well as ensuring that the child is prepared not only for Jewish life, but adulthood in general. Jewish caregivers are biblically commanded to ensure that Jewish children have many opportunities to learn, grow, develop, and explore. This story, which seeks to model a healthy, happy Jewish home, should ensure, then, that it shows the caregiver(s) loving *and* teaching the child, and the child, in turn, actively attempting to learn new things.

In bringing these different goals together, a story can begin, then, to take shape. I have chosen to adapt a true story from my own life: the night in which my great-aunt Rose (in her

seventies at the time) attempted to make *kishke,* a stuffed intestine dish traditionally made in *Ashkenazic* Jewish households for Passover Seder. Having forgotten to poke the casings to let out the steam, the pressure built inside the *kishke* until it exploded in the middle of Seder, both breaking the oven and splattering the kitchen with a large mess. This lively evening provides the kernel of an idea that can be adapted for younger audiences in the form of an illustrated storybook.

In this version of the tale, Rose will be transformed into a six-year-old child, eager to learn something new – even if she has never tried it before – and to help her family prepare for Seder by contributing to the cooking of the *kishke.* In this way child Rose will evince the growth mindset of which Carol Dweck speaks. Her mother will lovingly and patiently attempt to teach Rose the proper method, thus modeling the Jewish approach to parenthood (i.e. education, love, and transmission of traditions), as well as Robert Coles' assertion that caregivers must engage with and be resources for their children. Additionally, her mother's willingness to allow Rose to take on making something as important as the *kishke,* the beloved main dish of their family's Seder, represents the 'challenging and relevant education' of which Erikson speaks (the outcome of Rose's work truly matters – she has been given a chance to own a meaningful tradition and to build self-esteem should everything work out) and the unflagging support and belief in children's capabilities Janusz Korczak relates. When things do not turn out, Rose will be upset, yet model resilience when she apologizes, contributes to the clean-up, and then asks to try again (again Carol Dweck). This tale will provide a rich, exciting narrative for children and their parents to follow, all while modeling the appropriate behaviors, social-emotional skills, Jewish traditions, and best practices in child-raising of which chapters one and two spoke.

In creating this story, and the accompanying resource pages for continued learning, this author hopes to provide a rich tool for caregivers and teachers that successfully illustrates what it means to love and raise Jewish children well in the twenty-first century. In incorporating a narrative and characters that model best practices from the secular fields of child development, research, and education, as well as from Jewish tradition, this storybook will serve as an interactive tool that inculcates and evinces Jewish values, as well as rich, meaningful, deeply loving caregiving that is grounded in legitimate research. In sharing this book, I hope to provide another tool for caregivers of Jewish children, one that they can explore alongside their children, as both engage in the sacred process of learning, imagining, and growing.

THE STORY

Title: *Rose's Kishke Calamity!*

Intended Audience: Ages 5-8

Passover was coming, and Rose[1] was excited! She loved Passover – the beautiful Seder table, the delicious food, and seeing all her family and friends as they celebrated the holiday together.

Every year, Rose watched as her parents got the house ready.[2] And this year, Rose was ready to help!

"Can I help[3] make the *kishke*?"[4] she asked her mother. *Kishke* was her family's favorite Passover dish. Grandpa David loved it, and always said "it wasn't Passover without the family *kishke!*"[5]

[1] Rose is a six-year-old girl. In an effort to reflect the diversity of Jewish families, the family could be illustrated as a multiracial family so that more readers might 'see themselves' in the story.
[2] Show different scenes of family preparing the house for Seder (search for *chametz,* setting the Seder table, etc.)
[3] Rose displays here Carol Dweck's (chapter 1 expert) growth mindset; she is eager to help and try something new. She jumps into her task with confidence, though she has never done it herself before.
[4] *Kishke* is a traditional *Ashkenazi* dish enjoyed by many families during Seder. For readers who are not Ashkenazi, perhaps they might consider what favorite dishes their family prepares. For educators using this book as a classroom resource, they could facilitate a discussion with their students of their respective family Seder traditions, including the favorite foods and practices. A lesson could be planned around Seder traditions around the world and highlight the ways other Jewish communities (for example, the Sephardic community) approach Seder and its accompanying foods and dishes.
[5] Illustration could show a stern-faced but loveable older relative, intimating the traditional importance of the dish and underlining the import of her task.

"Of course," her mother said,[6] handing her the recipe[7] and pulling up a chair.[8]

Rose followed her mother's instructions and read each direction. She handed her mother the spices. They mixed together the delicious breading. They gently stuffed the casings and tied off the ends.[9]

"Can you help me practice the Four Questions, mom?" her brother, Sam, called out from the living room.

"Rose, can you finish the last steps[10] while I help your brother?" her mother said.

"Sure!" said Rose.

She spooned sauce all over the dish and carried the *kishke* to the warm oven.[11]

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[6] Rose's mother models Robert Cole's (chapter 1 expert) approach to parenting – she engages with her child, she attempts to teach her child something new, she models positivity and enthusiastically welcomes Rose into the workspace alongside her. Rose's mother models collaboration and sets an example Rose is inspired to follow (i.e., Rose wants to help mother in the kitchen and learn how to carry out the very task mother is engaged in). Coles speaks of parents as models for their observant children; he argues parents have a duty to educate and encourage their children. Rose's mother does just that.

[7] Rose's mother here models a central tenet of Jewish tradition vis-à-vis parents and their children: she is teaching her daughter the ways of Jewish tradition and passing down to her child a 'text' (i.e., the recipe) and practice of Jewish cultural life (preparing Seder). As explored in chapter two, Jewish parents have an obligation (it is elevated to a biblical imperative; see Deut 6:6-7) to teach their children the ways of Jewish life. Rose's mother does just that.

[8] Illustrate Rose's mother showing willingness to have her help; Rose isn't a hindrance or nuisance – her mother believes she can take this task on and isn't afraid to have her help or affect the outcome of the special dish. (The chair is for Rose to stand on, highlighting her young age.)

[9] Each of these cooking instructions can be their own page, with a full spread illustration of the various cooking activities. Mom should be in the background of each scene, helping Rose do each action.

[10] Here Rose's mother models Erik Erikson's (chapter 1 expert) approach to raising children. Erikson argued children need opportunities to cultivate self-confidence – that taking on challenges and successfully navigating them allows one's ego to flourish, which aids in development and growth. Rose's mother trusts her to not only help make the *kishke,* but she also trusts her to finish it alone as well. Rose's mother boosts her confidence by entrusting her with this task, especially as Grandpa has set the state for *kishke's* importance at the Seder. Erikson also talks of challenging and relevant education (that the learning one engages in should connect to real-life outcomes and challenge one to stretch and grow). Rose is trusted to make the *kishke,* something the family truly cares about, and is given the opportunity to truly contribute. Should she be successful, Erikson would argue this is a meaningful moment for skill-building, confidence-building, and ego-boosting.

[11] Illustration on left page should show a recipe book on the counter, large enough to see that Rose can't see the final step, which says to poke the casings with a fork to let out the steam. Perhaps a mixing bowl or spoon partially obscures the text so that the reader can see there's one more step that Rose doesn't notice.

"Done!" she said, running off to help her father finish cleaning the living room.

Suddenly… KABOOM! A great bang and explosion burst in the kitchen! The loudest pop that ever popped![12]

Rose and her family ran into the kitchen – eyes wide in disbelief. Orange and brown stuffing covered every inch of the white kitchen. The ceiling dripped, the cabinets were splattered, the oven was caked in goop! Rose was shocked! She looked at the mess, and then checked the recipe.

"Oh no! I missed the recipe's last step. I never poked the casings with the fork to let out the steam. "This is my fault – they exploded because of me!"[13]

Rose's father walked over and gave her a giant hug.

"It's ok Rose – we all mistakes. Next time you'll read more closely."[14]

"I'm sorry," Rose said. "I'll help clean up!"

"We all will!" Rose's mother said.[15]

[12] Consider a full-page spread showing the explosion and mess – pop-up or movable elements could be special here.
[13] Illustration of Rose here looking sad, regretful, and embarrassed. Parents looking shocked, but then forgiving in the scene when they approach Rose.
[14] Rose's father here models the love, kindness, and support of which Janusz Korczak (chapter 1 expert) speaks. Korczak stresses the import of caregivers in children's lives – that they have a sacred task in which to engage, i.e. supporting and loving the child. Additionally, Korczak speaks of the need to positively reinforce and support children in their endeavors; Rose's father does just that. Korczak was an educator as well. Rose's father embodies that spirit when he says, "next time you'll read more closely." He is encouraging her to try again and offering helping advice for her next attempt; he believes in and respects her ability to get this right (even having made a mistake already, even at her young age, etc.).
[15] Show Rose, mother, father, and brother Sam all cleaning up the mess together. No one looks annoyed or mad at Rose – they are working together.

When they were finished cleaning, Rose asked, "Can I try to make the *kishke* again,[16] mom? I'll be more careful this time!"

"Of course!" She said.[17]

"Ta-da!" Rose said, as they took the warm *kishke* out of the oven.[18]

"Mmm, is that *kishke* I smell?" asked Grandpa David.[19]

"Good job, Rose!" said her mother.

"We're so proud of you!" said her father.[20]

As they sat down to start the Seder, Rose placed the *kishke* on the table with care.

"Happy Passover everyone!"[21]

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[16] Here again Rose evinces the growth mindset of Carol Dweck (chapter one expert) – she wants to try again (though she just failed) and is eager to give it a go!

[17] Depict multiple scenes across full-page spread of Rose making the kishke again, including a specific scene that shows the full line of the recipe card that says to poke the casings with a fork, and Rose explicitly doing that.

[18] Show Rose and mother taking completed, successful *kishke* bake out of the oven.

[19] Illustrate Grandpa David walking in overcoat (smiling and excited), as if he just arrived, and the family welcoming him in.

[20] Rose's parents show what it is to love and raise a Jewish child in the twenty-first century. They support her and show active interest in her endeavors, they teach her new [Jewish] things, and give her room to fail, they model forgiveness and kindness, and help boost her confidence when she succeeds (and fails!). Rose's parents center her experience in this tale – they let her try and take charge, and care deeply for her feelings and well-being. Rose and her parents provide a model of loving and raising healthy, happy Jewish children. They combine the best practices of the secular experts examined in chapter one and the wisdom of Jewish tradition and its approach to raising children (i.e., providing education and supportive love). This story models what it means to love and raise a child well today.

[21] Roses wishes everyone a happy Passover in the end – she is happy and proud of herself for having contributed. She seems to have successfully onboarded a new skill after multiple, eager attempts (Dweck), she feels loved and supported by her parents (Coles and Korczak), and she has gained new confidence and a healthy growth of her ego (Erikson). Her parents have taught her something new and helped her grow as a participant in Jewish tradition (reflecting the Jewish understanding that education and inculcation into the community's ways are the expression of parental love).

RESOURCE PAGES CONTENT[22]

About Passover:

Passover is a week-long holiday that celebrates the Jewish people's Exodus from Egypt. Jewish families and friends gather each year in the spring to tell the story of the Israelite's escape from slavery to freedom and the Promised Land. A *Seder,* or festive meal*,* is held where participants tell the Passover story, eat symbolic foods, and share readings, songs, and prayers from the *haggadah* (the service booklet for the Seder).

On *Kishke*:

Kishke is a traditional, *ashkenaz* (Eastern European) dish of stuffed intestine or sausage. There are lots of different, traditional Passover dishes and foods eaten and loved in Jewish communities across the world! Did you know the Adeni Jews of Yemen eat egg-themed dishes on Passover – from fried to hard boiled to omelets. In Afghanistan and Iran Jews include scallions with their Seder meal. During the singing of *Dayenu,* it is traditional to sling the scallions at one another, symbolizing the whips of slavery. In Gibraltar, south of Spain, some Jews include a pinch of actual brick dust in their *charoset,* the sweet apples and nuts mixture, to truly symbolize the bricks and mortar the Israelites used in their labors.[23] What does your family like to eat at Seder?

***Kishke* Recipe**

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[22] This content would be printed in the last few pages of the storybook, providing background information on the Jewish content of the tale and extended learning opportunities for caregivers and educators reading and using this book.

[23] PJ Library. 2020. *How Passover is Celebrated Around the World.* April 3. Accessed March 9, 2022. https://pjlibrary.org/beyond-books/pjblog/april-2020/how-passover-is-celebrated-around-the-world

Make a *kishke* of your own! Try this delicious *kishke* recipe from Chef Michael Ruhlman – but don't forget to poke the casings! Otherwise, you might find yourself in a sticky situation like Rose…

Michael Ruhlman's *Kishke,* from *The Book of Schmaltz: Love Song to a Forgotten Fat*[24]

Serves: 6-8 (as a side dish)

Ingredients:

- .5 cup schmaltz
- 1 Spanish onion, cut into large dice
- 5 garlic cloves, smashed with the flat side of a knife
- 1 large carrot, peeled and cut into large dice
- 2 large celery stalks, cut into large dice
- 1.5 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1.5 cups matzo meal (or 6 squares of matzo, well pulverized in a food processor)
- 1.5 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon sweet Hungarian paprika
- 2 large eggs, beaten
- 30 inches beef casing, cut in half and well soaked
- .25 cup chicken stock

Instructions:

[24] Ruhlman, Michael. (2013) *The Book of Schmaltz: Love Song to a Forgotten Fat.* Boston: Little, Brown & Company.

Heat .25 cup schmaltz in a large sauté pan over medium-high heat and add the onion, garlic, carrot, celery, and 1 teaspoon salt. Cook it all for a few minutes, stirring, then reduce the heat to medium-low and cook until the vegetables are tender and beginning to brown, another 30 minutes or so. Transfer the vegetables to a plate to cool.

In a food processor, combine the remaining .5 teaspoon salt, matzo meal, pepper, and paprika. Pulse the blade a few times to distribute the seasoning. Add the cooled vegetables, the remaining .25 cup schmaltz, and the eggs. Process until it's uniformly combined; it should hold together when squeezed. If it's too dry, add another few tablespoons of schmaltz or .25 cup chicken stock and purée some more.

If roasting, preheat the oven to 350°F.

Next, make sure the beef casing has been well soaked and flushed with plenty of cold water. Stuff each piece with the kishke by hand; the kishke will double in size, so stuff the casing extremely loosely, only about half the diameter of what the casing will contain. Tie off each end with a strong knot of kitchen string. Poke the casing all over with a knife tip, needle, or sausage pricker to help prevent the casing from bursting—it may burst anyway depending on how you cook it; the casing becomes very delicate, so be gentle.

Poach the kishke in poultry stock at just below a simmer until cooked through, about 30 minutes (don't worry, you can't overcook it). Or, if you prefer, place the kishke in an oven-safe casserole dish, cover with simmering hot stock, and place in a 200°F oven for 45 minutes.

EDUCATOR'S RESOURCE PAGE SAMPLE:

אומץ לב | *Ometz Lev* | Courage

When we try to do something new, we show *ometz lev,* courage. Rose tries to make *kishke*, something she has never done before. And when it goes wrong, she fixes her mistakes and tries again!

Discussion Questions:

1. How does Rose show courage when she decides to try making the *kishke* herself?
2. When the *kishke* explodes, how does Rose handle the situation?
3. What was courageous about Rose's apology?
4. What does *ometz lev*, courage, look like? Sound like? Feel like?
5. How can we show *ometz lev*, courage, in our own lives?

Let's Try It! Challenge:

What can you do this week that takes courage? Is there new a food you can try? A new friend you can say hello to? A tough project at school you can tackle with new energy? This week let's try to have *ometz lev*, courage, and go for it!

Touchstone Text for Teachers & Caregivers | *A text to spark curiosity and provide inspiration*

"Growth mindset is based on the belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts, your strategies, and help from others. Although people may differ in every which way—in their initial talents and aptitudes, interests, or temperaments—everyone can change and grow through application and experience…The passion for stretching yourself

and sticking to it, even (or especially) when it's not going well, is the hallmark of the growth mindset."[25] – Carol S. Dweck, Ph.D. in *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*

Leading researcher in developmental psychology and educational excellence, Dr. Carol Dweck teaches the importance of the growth mindset – the belief in one's ability to accomplish new things and acquire new skills with effort, time, and a resilient attitude. Rose in the story has this growth mindset, as do her parents. How can you help the children in your life learn and adopt this growth mindset?

[25] Dweck, Carol S. 2007. *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. Ballantine Books, 6-7.

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