

**COMING OF AGE IN RABBINIC TEXTS:
A CULMINATION CURRICULUM FOR PARENTS AND TEENS**

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Table of Contents

Abstract	3
Acknowledgements	4
Coming of Age in Rabbinic Texts: An Academic Analysis	5
Parenting Teens: A Parallel Parent and Teen Culmination Curriculum	15
Curriculum Overview	15
Pedagogical Applications	16
Lesson 1: What are our obligations to each other at this moment in our lives? (Various Texts)	18
Parent Lesson 1	18
Teen Lesson 1	23
Lesson 2: What are we obligated to teach/learn? (b. Kiddushin 29a-30b)	28
Parent Lesson 2	28
Teen Lesson 2	31
Lesson 3: How do you teach/learn? (b. Yoma 82a)	34
Parent Lesson 3	34
Teen Lesson 3	38
Lesson 4: What does it mean to “know”? (b. Sukkah 42a-b)	42
Parent Lesson 4	42
Teen Lesson 4	47
Lesson 5: What does it mean to let go? (Various Texts)	52
Parent Lesson 5	52
Teen Lesson 5	57
Bibliography	62
Primary Sources	62
Secondary Sources	63

Abstract

My text immersion focused on coming of age in rabbinic texts. Given the parallels between this concept of chinuch and the type of coming of age obligations I hoped to investigate, the bulk of my text immersion focused on two compilations of rabbinic sources: the Encyclopedia Talmudit entry on “חינוך - chinuch” and *A Parent’s Guide to Teaching Children Mitzvot: A Halakhic Guide* by Rabbi Shmuel Singer.¹ The Encyclopedia Talmudit entry on “קטן - katan” or minor was also useful, as were the Encyclopedia Judaica entries on “Bar Mitzvah, Bat Mitzvah” and “Education, Jewish” and various responsa from rabbinic assemblies and seminaries.² These umbrella sources were very helpful with identifying the main rabbinic sources on coming of age, enabling me to dive deeply into direct primary sources. Using a combination of these sources I was able to trace the evolution of these texts through classical rabbinic literature, including elements from the Tanach, Mishnah, Talmud, commentaries, codes, and modern responsa.

Using the texts I studied, for the written portion of my text immersion I put together two projects: an academic paper and a curriculum for parents and teens. The academic paper traces the rabbinic concept of chinuch from its origins and outlines the various lessons and values espoused by the corpus of rabbinic texts on this subject. The curriculum uses rabbinic texts to create a five-session parallel class for teenagers and their parents exploring the process and challenges of coming of age in a modern context.

¹ Encyclopedia Talmudit, “חינוך”; Rabbi Shmuel Singer, *A Parent’s Guide to Teaching Children Mitzvot: A Halakhic Guide* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1991).

² Encyclopedia Talmudit, “קטן”; Norma Baumel Joseph, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Second Edition (New York: Macmillan Company, 2007), “Bar Mitzvah, Bat Mitzvah”; Stanley Abromovitch, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Second Edition (New York: Macmillan Company, 2007), “Education, Jewish.”

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Coming of Age in Rabbinic Texts: An Academic Analysis

As a rabbinical student interested in pursuing campus work, I have long been fascinated by the unique transfer of responsibility that takes place between teenagers and their parents as they prepare to leave home for the first time and go off to college as independent young adults. There is an enormous amount of teaching, modeling, and training that takes place as parents raise their children, and all of their hard work culminates in the ultimate transfer of independence as children “come of age,” leave home, and enter adulthood. Though Jewish tradition typically offers much guidance and liturgy for liminal moments in life, I have been surprised and disappointed at the stark lack of Reform Jewish resources available for this critical time period in families’ lives. With the majority of B’nei Mitzvah and modern confirmation curricula concluding in 7th and 10th grades, respectively, the last years of high school are all too often neglected, leaving parents and teens to make this transition without much guidance from their Jewish communities. As a strong believer in the power of Jewish education, for my text immersion I attempted to fill this void in existing educational resources by creating a new “culmination” curriculum for 12th graders and their parents built on the guidance and wisdom of rabbinic sources.

In order to build the textual backbone of this curriculum, for the study portion of my text immersion I attempted to delve into rabbinic sources on coming of age. I hoped to investigate how the rabbis viewed these critical transfers of responsibility and independence from parents to their children, with an emphasis on where the rabbis believed the locus of responsibility lay throughout these liminal moments. I was curious about which aspects of education and training the rabbis believed were incumbent upon parents and the community

to provide for children and which aspects, if any, children had to individually seek out and learn on their own. I knew that rabbinic literature was rich with wisdom relevant to other life cycle moments, so I was optimistic that there would be a strong bank of sources related to coming of age.

Unlike other modern life cycle moments like birth or marriage which parallel rabbinic conceptions of those moments, the contemporary understanding of when adulthood begins is quite different than the rabbinic conception of coming of age. In modern contexts, the beginning of adulthood is commonly associated with the transition to college, as that is when many children leave home and live independently for the first time in their lives. In contrast, for the rabbis the transition to adulthood took place when a child attained a status of “halachic adulthood” at the age of 12 for girls or 13 for boys.³ According to the rabbis, children were not obligated to observe mitzvot until reaching these ages of maturity, and after those birthdays they were subsequently required to observe and fulfill all mitzvot.⁴ The rabbis selected these ages because they believed these ages were when children developed crucial decision making skills and could begin thinking independently, citing Abraham rejecting his father’s idols at age 13 and Jacob and Esau taking divergent life paths at that same age.⁵

Given this difference in when the transition to adulthood was thought to take place, the closest sources that I could find related to the modern conception of coming of age were those associated with the rabbinic concept of “חינוך - chinuch” or education. The idea or concept of chinuch in the classical sources entails an obligation on the part of parents to

³ *Mishneh Torah*, Seder Nashim, Ishut 2:1 (girls) and 2:10 (boys).

⁴ b. Hagigah 3a states that children were exempt from all mitzvot named in the Torah. In rabbinic literature a child below the age of halachic adulthood is called a “katan,” or small/young one. In this paper whenever I reference a “child” according to rabbinic law I intend to refer to the halachic category of “katan.” b. Hagigah 3a.

⁵ *Pirkei D'Rebbi Eliezar* 26; *Genesis Rabbah* 63:10.

provide their children with the education they needed to become functional adult members of society after crossing the threshold into halachic adulthood.⁶ In order to prepare their children for this state of halachic obligation, parents had a duty to educate their children with regard to the fulfillment and observance of the commandments/mitzvot so that they would be ready to assume their halachic obligations upon reaching this threshold.

According to the rabbis, prior to reaching halachic adulthood, children were considered minors and parents were held responsible for their children's actions.⁷ From halachic adulthood onward individuals were considered liable for their own actions and were considered fully-mitzvot bound adults. Minors' transitions to halachic adulthood became traditionally marked by Bar and Bat Mitzvah ceremonies, which functioned as the first time that individuals functioned publicly as halachic adult in their communities.⁸ A central part of these ceremonies was the recitation of a blessing drawn from the midrash Genesis Rabbah by the parents to their child.⁹ The blessing states, "*Baruch sheptarani mei'ansho shel zeh*, 'Blessed is the One who has now freed me from the responsibility of this child,'" marking the formal transfer of responsibility from the parents to the child for their deeds.¹⁰ With the recitation of this blessing, parents publicly declared their children independent, recognizing their new status as autonomous halachically bound adults.

Even though this parental duty of chinuch is well documented in rabbinic sources, the rabbis consider it a d'rabbanan, not d'oraita obligation, meaning that it does not originate as a requirement from the Torah, but rather that it was later imposed by the rabbis in

⁶ Rabbi Shmuel Singer, *A Parent's Guide to Teaching Children Mitzvot: A Halachic Guide* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1991), 3-4.

⁷ Genesis Rabbah 23:9 states, "Rabbi Elazar said: A parent is responsible for his/her child until the age of thirteen."

⁸ Suri Levow Krieger, "Bar and Bat Mitzvah: History and Practice," *G'vanim* by the Academy of Jewish Religion, volume 1, no 1 (2005), <http://ajrsem.org/teachings/journal/5765journal/krieger5765/>.

⁹ Genesis Rabbah 63:9.

¹⁰ Ibid., translation adapted from http://www.sefaria.org/Bereishit_Rabbah.63?lang=bi.

classical sources. Although some biblical texts like Deuteronomy 6:7 and Proverbs 22:6 hint at the notion of chinuch, telling parents to “Impress [commandments] upon your children” and “Teach a child according to his way so that even when he becomes old he will not turn from it,” respectively, chinuch is never mentioned directly in the Torah as a commandment.¹¹ The parental obligation of chinuch is said to be first clearly articulated by the rabbis in b. Hagigah 6a while discussing what distinguishes a minor from an adult under rabbinic law.¹² b. Hagigah 6a states, “Wherever an adult is obligated on a Torah level, we educate a child in it also on a rabbinic level. And wherever an adult is exempt on a Torah level, a child is also exempt on a rabbinic level.”¹³ Thus, this text established that even though minors were not yet themselves bound by d’oraita mitzvot, parents had a d’rabbanan obligation to teach them said mitzvot in order to prepare them for their impending halachic adulthood.

This Hagigah text speaks to two important distinctions that the rabbis made about chinuch: only individuals who were themselves obligated by various commandments had an obligation to teach them to their children, and children only needed to be taught the commandments by which they would grow up to be obligated. Though this notion may seem logical and straightforward, in the context of rabbinic law it held great significance. Under rabbinic law women were not obligated by the same mitzvot as men, nor were individuals with special needs, such as those who were blind, deaf, mute or had mental handicaps, obligated to the same mitzvot as typically-able individuals.¹⁴ Consequently,

¹¹ Deuteronomy 6:7, translation adapted from <http://www.sefaria.org/Deuteronomy.6.7?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en>; Proverbs 22:6, translation from Singer, 3-4; Encyclopedia Talmudit, “חינוך,” n. 5. Note: whenever a footnote is cited as a source, I also intend to reference the section of encyclopedia content that footnote relates to, as well as all sources it cites. Only the footnote number is listed for the sake of brevity and clarity.

¹² Encyclopedia Talmudit, Talmudit, “חינוך,” n. 28 and Singer, 3-4. Further debate on this subject found in Encyclopedia Talmudit, “חינוך,” n. 10-17.

¹³ b. Hagigah 6a, translation adapted from <http://www.sefaria.org/Chagigah.6a.16?lang=bi>.

¹⁴ Mishnah Kiddushin 1:7 states that women were exempt from all positive time-bound commandments and b. Hagigah 3a states that individuals with certain special needs are exempt from all commandments, just like children. Mishnah Kiddushin 1:7; b. Hagigah 3a.

these beliefs raised serious questions for the rabbis about whether mothers were equally obligated to the mitzvah of chinuch, as well as how daughters and special-needs children should be educated.

In terms of a mother's obligations in educating her children, because women were not considered obligated by the same mitzvot as men a rabbinic discussion in the Talmud argued that women had no obligations in chinuch. b. Kiddushin 29a clearly states, "All the commandments that are incumbent upon a parent to do for his son, men [i.e. the fathers] are obligated to fulfill while women [i.e. the mothers] are exempt."¹⁵ Building on this base text, several medieval and early modern rabbinic commentaries, including the *Tosafot of Sens* and the *Magen Avraham*, affirmed the understanding that women should have no responsibilities in educating their children.¹⁶ However, over the course of centuries this opinion changed, reflecting more modern notions of equality and egalitarianism. From the 18th century onward, later rabbinic commentaries, including the *Chatam Sofer*, *Chayei Adam*, and *Mishnah Berurah*, diverged from the opinion stated in b. Kiddushin 29a, arguing instead that women were equally obligated in chinuch alongside their husbands and in fact played crucial roles in the education of their children.¹⁷

In addition to questions regarding the obligation of women to the mitzvah of chinuch, there was also significant debate around what, if anything, fathers and/or mothers were obligated to teach their female children.¹⁸ While discussing the differing roles of men and women vis a vis nazirite laws, Reish Lakish argued in b. Nazir 29a that, "It is [a father's] duty to teach his son, but not to teach his daughter."¹⁹ Despite the seeming broad and sweeping

¹⁵ b. Kiddushin 29a, translation adapted from <http://www.sefaria.org/Kiddushin.29a.20?lang=bi>.

¹⁶ *Magen Avraham* 343:1-3; *Tosafot of Sens* (for exact citation see Encyclopedia Talmudit "חינוך," n. 64).

¹⁷ *Chatam Sofer* (for exact citation see Encyclopedia Talmudit "חינוך," n. 60); *Chayei Adam* 66b; *Mishnah Berurah* 343:2.

¹⁸ A full summary of debate on this subject found in Encyclopedia Talmudit "חינוך," n. 36-45.

¹⁹ b. Nazir 29a, translation by author.

nature of Reish Lakish's statement, the vast majority of later rabbinic commentaries, including Rabbi Abraham ben Isaac of Montpellier's commentary on tractate Nazir and the *Magen Avraham*, interpreted this ruling narrowly, arguing that daughters needed to be educated alongside sons.²⁰ According to these commentaries, Reish Lakish's text needed to be interpreted narrowly within only the specific context it was raised and that therefore his argument that girls should not be educated applied only to nazirite vows, which did not apply to women. Thus, despite differing halachic expectations for men and women, rabbinic sources generally affirmed that parents were obligated to teach their daughters alongside their sons, with the exception of laws which did not apply to women.

Rabbinic sources handled special needs children similarly to how they handled girls, generally arguing that parents should not be required to teach special needs children mitzvot that they would not be obligated to as adults. The *Shulchan Aruch* argued that individuals with extreme special needs, such as deaf-mutes or severely mentally-deficient children, would never be considered obligated by commandments, and therefore did not need to be educated.²¹ Despite this ruling, the *Shulchan Aruch* was also very careful to clarify that very few people truly fell into this category of no obligations, noting that "even if an individual may be considered emotionally and/or intellectually challenged by people at large, if he is not emotionally and/or intellectually challenged to the degree described by our Sages [ie. completely lacking in any intelligence], he may be included [as an adult] in a *zimun* [the ritual blessing of food after a meals]"²² In making this statement that most individuals with some form of special needs could be counted as one of three or more adults required to be

²⁰ Rabbi Abraham ben Isaac of Montpellier's commentary on b. Nazir 29b; *Magen Avraham* 343:1.

²¹ *Shulchan Aruch Orach Hayim* 55:8-9. Further debate on this subject found in Encyclopedia Talmudit "חינוך," n. 103-104.

²² *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah* 199:10, translation adapted from http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3335631/jewish/Shulchan-Aruch-Chapter-199-Who-May-Be-Included-In-A-Zimun-And-Who-May-Not-Be-Included.htm#footnote45a3335631.

present when reciting the introductory blessings for the grace after meals, the rabbis thus implied that they were considered bound by at least some mitzvot. By so specifically narrowing the category of individuals who were truly free of all halachic obligations, sources like the *Shulchan Aruch* thus opened the door for the majority of children with special needs to be educated at least in some manner.²³

With regard to what the obligation of chinuch entailed, while the rabbis may have viewed the purpose of chinuch as preparing children for halachic adulthood, mitzvot were not the only thing the rabbis believed parents were obligated to teach their children. Rabbinic texts clearly conveyed the belief that parents had an obligation not only to teach their children mitzvot, but also to provide them with the practical survival skills and knowledge they would need to become functional members of society. b. Kiddushin 29a states, “A father is obligated to circumcise, to redeem, to teach Torah to, to find a wife for, and to teach a trade to his son. Some also say, to teach him to swim.”²⁴ When discussing the meaning of the clause “teach a trade to his son,” Rabbi Yehuda articulates the belief that knowing a trade is a requirement for successfully functioning in society, arguing that if a father does not teach his son a trade he relegates his child to a life of thievery and immorality.²⁵ Similarly, when discussing the meaning of the clause “to teach him to swim,” the rabbis state that the purpose of this skill is that “[the son’s] life may depend on [knowing how to swim.]”²⁶ Taken as a whole, this text reflects the reality that the rabbis were

²³ For more discussion on the subject of special needs children, see “Chinuch and Special Children” chapter in Singer, 138-149.

²⁴ b. Kiddushin 29a, translation adapted from <http://www.sefaria.org/Kiddushin.29a?lang=bi> and <http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nashim/Kiddushin.pdf>.

²⁵ The text states, “Rabbi Yehuda said, “Any man who does not teach his son a trade, teaches him to steal.” To steal?! [Do you really think that will be the result of not teaching him a trade?] Rather, it is if he has taught him to steal.” Ibid.

²⁶ b. Kiddushin 30b, translation adapted from <http://www.sefaria.org/Kiddushin.29a?lang=bi> and <http://www.halakhah.com/pdf/nashim/Kiddushin.pdf>.

concerned not only with children's halachic competency, but also with their survival skills and ability to meaningfully contribute to society.

The rabbis also conveyed a strong belief that the process of chinuch is highly individualized and must take place over an extended period of time. For example, in Yoma 82a the rabbis recommend that parents train their children to fast for Yom Kippur over an extended number of years, giving them time not only to become accustomed to the practice of fasting, but also to internalize the meaning and intention behind the fast.²⁷ The text states, "With regard to the children, one does not afflict them by withholding food on Yom Kippur; however one trains them one year before or two years before they reach maturity, by means of a partial fast lasting several hours, so that they will be accustomed to fulfilling mitzvot."²⁸ Furthermore, just as parents were not required to teach girls or special needs children mitzvot they were not going to be bound by later in life, this same Yoma text also highlighted the rabbis' belief that parents needed to individualize education to their specific children and the circumstances they would face in life. Building on this concept of gradual training, the text goes on to explain that the graduated release training plan parents following with their children will vary child to child, with the rabbis specifically highlighting the differences between girls and boys, as well as healthy and feeble children. Thus, the rabbis emphasized that the process of chinuch needed to be tailored to individual children's needs, conveying their underlying belief that chinuch was a complex, highly individualized process that could not be standardized for all individuals.

Beyond the specifics of the obligations of chinuch, rabbinic texts also made it clear that the parental duty to educate and care for children does fully end at the transition to

²⁷ b. Yoma 82a.

²⁸ b. Yoma 82a, translation adapted from the *Koren Talmud Bavli: The Noe Edition - Yoma* (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 2013).

halachic adulthood. Though parents were no longer considered fully responsible for their children's actions after they reached this threshold, the rabbis still believed that parents had a moral obligation to watch over their grown children and guard them from wrongdoing.²⁹ The *Shulchan Aruch* and *Mishnah Berurah* both argued that parents are obligated to observe the actions of their children regardless of their age and attempt to stop them from wrongdoing, lest parents themselves would be considered sinners in their own right for tacitly condoning their children's wrongful actions.³⁰ Furthermore, the rabbis believed that learning was a life-long process that did not cease upon reaching the status of halachic adulthood. Mishnah Avot 5:21 states, "[Rabbi Yehudah ben Teimah] used to say: Five years is the age for the study of Torah. Ten, for the study of Mishnah. Thirteen, for the obligation to observe the mitzvot. Fifteen, for the study of Talmud. Eighteen, for marriage. Twenty, to pursue [a livelihood]. Thirty, for strength. Forty, for understanding. Fifty, for giving counsel. Sixty, for sage-old-age. Seventy, for elderliness. Eighty, for power..."³¹ Just as children required guidance from their parents to attain the milestones before the age of 13, so too do halachic adults benefit from parental guidance throughout the remainder of their lives. Just because the obligation of chinuch may end when children turn 12 or 13, a parent's duty of supporting and morally guiding their children never ceases.

Though the rabbis may have believed the onset of adulthood took place earlier in life than we as modern thinkers believe today, much of the guidance they gave parents with regard to chinuch still holds value for parents of teenagers in present-day contexts. While no rabbinic texts may specifically speak to the liminal moment when teenagers leave home for college, the transfer of responsibility from parent to child that the rabbis believed took

²⁹ Singer, 158-160.

³⁰ *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah* 178:21; *Mishnah Berurah* 225:7.

³¹ Mishnah Avot 5:21, translation adapted from http://www.sefaria.org/Pirkei_Avot.5.21 and http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2099/jewish/Chapter-Five.htm

place at the onset of halachic adulthood very much parallels the modern coming of age process. Regardless of the specific age at which the transfer of responsibility from parent to child is thought to take place, the fundamental obligation parents have to their children to prepare them to function in society and the values and beliefs that underlay the process of educating and mentoring children are largely universal and timeless.

Parenting Teens: A Parallel Parent and Teen Culmination Curriculum

Curriculum Overview

This mini-course outlines a five-session parallel class for teenagers and their parents exploring the process and challenges of helping teens become independent and assume more responsibility over their own lives. Parents and teens are meant to take this class at the same time as each other (see *Pedagogical Applications* below), though they will be taught in two parallel classrooms. Parents and teens will explore many of the same texts during their parallel classes, enabling them to discuss what they learned together between lessons.

In each session rabbinic texts are used as jumping off points for broader discussions of what it means for a child to come of age and what obligations parents have to their children throughout that process. Each of the five class sessions centers around a different essential question about parenting teenagers and growing up. This course is meant to be taught in sequence to a consistent group of adult learners and teens: each successive class session builds on what has been learned in previous lessons, forming a complete narrative arc. The course is intended to culminate in a graduation/culmination ceremony or ritual after the completion of all five sessions.

The first lesson focuses on exploring the nature of parents' obligations to educate their children, as well as teenagers' obligations to their parents. In this lesson parents and teens will begin to grapple with the differences between parenting young children and parenting teenagers, who exist in a hybrid space between childhood and adulthood. The

second lesson investigates what Judaism obligates parents to teach their children, and asks learners to modernize this list as they envision it for their own lives. The third lesson explores how Jewish tradition recommends parents teach their children new skills and rituals (ex: fasting on Yom Kippur). The fourth lesson investigates the space between proficiency and mastery of new skills, and explores the fine line of when teens can be trusted to execute new tasks independently. The final class explores what it means to let go and trust in a teen as they grow up and become independent. Letters written during this final class should be incorporated into the graduation/culmination ceremony ritual that follows this course.

Pedagogical Applications

This course was intentionally designed to be taken in tandem by parents and their teenagers as close to the time when teenagers graduate and leave home as possible. Ideally this course is intended to be directed at 12th graders and their parents, representing a new addition to what most religious schools currently offer in their post b'nei mitzvah programs. However, given that most religious school curriculums currently conclude with confirmation classes in 10th grade, this course can also be adopted to be taught to students as young as 10th grade. Even though these modifications can be made, many of the discussions will resonate more with students and parents who are closer to high school graduation, so schools are urged to use this curriculum with older students if at all possible.

As written, these lessons are designed to be taught in 90-minute sessions, with content filling 75-minutes of each session, plus an additional 15-minutes for socializing and buffer. These sessions could either be taught over the course of several weeks or months in individual sessions, or in an intensive immersive retreat over the course of a weekend. If the

course is taught as a retreat, additional time could be allotted for parent-teenager debriefs between each session. Individual schools are urged to consider the setting that would most resonate with their student and parent populations.

Lesson 1: What are our obligations to each other at this moment in our lives? (Various Texts)

Parent Lesson 1

Texts:

- Deuteronomy 6:5-9 (V'ahavta), Deuteronomy 11:19, b. Pesachim 113b, b. Sotah 22a, Genesis Rabbah 63:9, Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 178:21

Essential Question:

- Why are we obligated to teach our teenagers?

Enduring Understandings:

- Judaism obligates parents to teach their children. Because teenagers are not yet full adults, they fall under this category as well.

Objective:

- SWBAT explain why Judaism obligates parents to teach their children, including teens.

Outline:

- 10 min - Set Induction
- 45 min - Text Study (Chevrutah and group review)
- 20 min - Concluding Discussion

Set Induction:

- Full Group Discussion - 10 min
 - Ask participants to introduce themselves when they answer any of these questions. Try to get at least one story from every participant -- this serves as a hybrid ice-breaker, introductions, and set induction.
 - Do you consider your teen a child?
 - What is one story about your teen that reminds you they are beginning to grow up and become an adult?
 - What is one story about your teen that reminds you they are still a child in some ways?

Text Study:

- Transition:
 - As you all know first hand, teens represent a weird hybrid between adults and children.

- Today we're going to look into this gray area in between adulthood and childhood and explore what Jewish texts can teach us about parental obligations to teenagers.
- Parallel with this lesson your teens are studying many of the same texts that we will look at together, as will be the case with each lesson in this series. It is our hope that you and your teen can discuss what you've learned at each session with each other at home between classes. Texts that both you and your teen study will be highlighted on your handouts so you know which texts you can discuss with them.
- Today your teens are exploring questions of what their obligations are to you are during this time in their lives.
- First, we're going to begin with two texts we're all familiar with - the V'ahavta and a piece of Deuteronomy
- Texts 1 and 2 (Deuteronomy 6 and 11): Group discussion (10 min)
 - What do these texts show us about Judaism's views about parents' obligations to their children?
 - What other actions do these texts seem to put on the same level of importance as teaching children?
 - Why do you think Judaism places this emphasis on teaching children?
- Texts 3 and 4 (b. Pesachim and b. Sotah): Chevrutah (10 min) → group discussion (10 min)
 - Some other texts take a slightly different approach to convincing parents of the importance of educating their children. We're going to study these two texts in a format called "chevrutah" or partner study. This is the way that Jewish texts have traditionally been studied for centuries. After reading these texts with your chevrutah, discuss:
 - What do these next two texts convey about Judaism's views about parents' obligations to their children?
 - Why do you think the rabbis grouped parents who don't teach their children into the same bucket as these other people?
 - Do you agree or disagree with this classification?
 - Why do you think the rabbis emphasized studying Torah in particular?
- Text 5 (Genesis Rabbah): Chevrutah (5 min) → group discussion (10 min)
 - We now know just how important the rabbis thought it was for parents to teach their children. But that still leaves us with the age-old question of whether or not teenagers count as children.
 - We know that according to Jewish tradition a child is considered an "adult" when they become Bar or Bat Mitzvah (13 for boys, 12 for girls). After that point Jewish law considers them adults, meaning that they are bound by all commandments. But why that age? With your chevrutah, read this next text about Jacob and Esau and try to figure out:
 - Why is it that the rabbis identified this age as when adulthood begins?
 - What happened to Jacob and Esau at that age that made them "adults"?

Modernizing/Concluding Discussion:

- Modernizing this text: Group discussion (10 min)
 - From your own experiences, do you think that your own children had this same clarity about their lives at 13?
 - Why do you think 13 used to be considered the age of adulthood?
 - What is different about our world today that makes 13 no longer the age of attaining full “adult” status?
- Text 6 (Shulchan Aruch): Group discussion (10 min)
 - One last text to look at that speaks to children above the age of 13.
 - What do you think the rabbis mean by “be meticulous with... his children”?
 - Watch over their actions
 - Try to guide morally and ethically
 - Why do you think this text does not distinguish between children who are younger or older than 13?
 - Do you agree with this sentiment of parental responsibility over children, regardless of their age?
- Wrap up and closing thoughts
 - Now that we know Judaism believes parents have an obligation to teach their children, including teenagers, next class we’re going to explore *what* things the Rabbis believed parents were obligated to teach their children.
 - It’s a given we need to provide for our children’s safety and sustenance... but what must parents do on top of that?

Lesson 1: What are our obligations to each other at this moment in our lives? (Parent Lesson)
Excerpts from Various Sources³²

TEXT 1 - DEUTERONOMY 6:5-9 (V'AHAVTA)³³: You shall love Adonai your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. Take to heart these instructions with which I charge you this day. Impress them upon your children. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead; inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. Thus you shall remember to observe all My commandments and to be holy to your God.

TEXT 2 - DEUTERONOMY 11:19³⁴: And teach them to your children—reciting them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up

TEXT 3 - b. PESACHIM 113b³⁵: Seven groups of people are ostracized from heaven, despite the fact that the fact that they have not been ostracized by court: 1) A Jew who does not have a spouse; 2) one who has a spouse, but who has no children; 3) one who has children, but who does not raise to engage in Torah study; one who does not have 4) phylacteries on one's head and on one's arm, 5) ritual fringes on one's garment, or 6) a mezuzah on one's doorway; 7) one who withholds shoes from one's feet. And some add also one who does not sit with a group that is partaking in a feast in celebration of a mitzvah.

Notes:

- *Phylacteries = tfillin (head and arm)*
- *Ritual fringes = tzitzit (similar to a tallis, worn under clothing)*

³² Several sources from this session were drawn from a lesson plan written by Daniel Alter.

³³ Translation from

<http://www.reformjudaism.org/practice/prayers-blessings/worship-services-vahavta-read>

³⁴ Translation adapted from www.sefaria.org.

³⁵ Translation adapted from *Koren Talmud Bavli: The Noe Edition - Pesachim* (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 2013).

TEXT 4 - b. SOTAH 22a³⁶: The Sages taught: Who is an ignoramus [*am ha'aretz*]? Anyone who does not recite the Shema in the morning and evening, said Rabbi Meir. And the Rabbis say: Anyone who does not don phylacteries. Ben Azzai said: Anyone who does not have ritual fringes on their garment. Rabbi Yochanan ben Yosef said: Anyone who has children and does not raise them to study Torah.

TEXT 5 - GENESIS RABBAH 63:9³⁷: Rabbi Levi offered a parable: They [Jacob and Esau] were like a myrtle and a wild rosebush growing side by side; when they matured and blossomed, one yielded its fragrance and the other its thorns. For thirteen years both went to school and came home from school, [but] after this age, one went to the house of study and the other to idolatrous shrines. Rabbi Eleazar said: A parent is responsible for his/her child until the age of thirteen, at which point the parent must say: *Baruch sheptarani mei'ansho shel zeh*, "Blessed is the One who has now freed me from the responsibility of this child."

TEXT 6 - SHULCHAN ARUCH YOREH DEAH 178:21³⁸: The Sages commanded that the people of Israel be zealous for their wives. Everyone who is not meticulous with his wife, with his children and children of his house and does not order his ways always to the point that [his wife and children] are full of wrongdoing and sin, indeed it's like he himself is a sinner.

³⁶ Translation adapted from *Koren Talmud Bavli: The Noe Edition - Sota* (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 2013).

³⁷ Translation from www.sefaria.org

³⁸ Translation adapted from www.sefaria.org

Teen Lesson 1

Texts:

- Deuteronomy 6:5-9 (V'ahavta), Deuteronomy 11:19, b. Sotah 22a, Exodus 20:12, Abarbanel Commentary on Exodus 20:12, Genesis Rabbah 63:9

Essential Question:

- Why are we obligated to learn from our parents as teenagers?

Enduring Understandings:

- Judaism obligates children to respect their parents and obligates parents to teach their children.
- Even though teens are beginning to gain independence, there is still much that they can learn from their parents during these years.

Objective:

- SWBAT explain why Judaism obligates children to respect their parents
- SWBAT explain what can be gained from learning from parents as a teen

Outline:

- 15 min - Set Induction
- 45 min - Text Study
- 15 min - Concluding Discussion

Set Induction:

- Full Group Discussion - 15 min
 - Ask participants to introduce themselves when they answer either of these first two questions. Try to get at least one story from every participant -- this serves as a hybrid ice-breaker, introductions, and set induction.
 - Tell us about a time when your parents treated you too much like a child.
 - Tell us about a time when your parents treated you too much like an adult.
 - Second round of introductions from every participant:
 - How would you like your parents to treat you at this moment in your life?

Text Study:

- Transition:
 - As you all know first hand, teens represent a weird hybrid between adults and children.

- Today we're going to look into this gray area in between adulthood and childhood and explore what Jewish texts can teach you about how to interact with your parents during this time in your lives.
- Parallel with this lesson your parents are studying many of the same texts that we will look at together, as will be the case with each lesson in this series. It is our hope that you and your parents can discuss what you've learned at each session with each other at home between classes. Texts that both you and your parents study will be highlighted on your handouts so you know which texts you can discuss with them.
- First, we're going to begin with two texts we're all familiar with - the V'ahavta and a piece of Deuteronomy
- Texts 1 and 2 (Deuteronomy 6 and 9): Group discussion (5 min)
 - What do these texts show us about Judaism's views about parents' obligations to their children?
 - What other actions do these texts seem to put on the same level of importance as teaching children?
 - Why do you think Judaism places this emphasis on teaching children?
 - What do you think these texts mean by "children"? Do you think these texts apply to teenagers like you?
- Text 3 (b. Sotah): Chevrutah (5 min) → group discussion (10 min)
 - Some other texts take a slightly different approach to convincing parents of the importance of educating their children. We're going to study these two texts in a format called "chevrutah" or partner study. This is the way that Jewish texts have traditionally been studied for centuries. After reading these texts with your chevrutah, discuss:
 - What does this text convey about Judaism's views about parents' obligations to their children?
 - Are there consequences to not teaching children?
 - Why do you think the rabbis grouped parents who don't teach their children into the same bucket as these other people?
 - Do you agree or disagree with this classification?
 - Why do you think the rabbis emphasized studying Torah in particular?
 - Do you think this texts applies to teenagers like you?
- Text 4 and 5 (Exodus and Abarbanel Commentary): Group discussion (10 min)
 - In the ten commandments, Exodus commands us to honor our parents (Read Text 4). Usually the commandments are divided into two groups -- the first five, which relate to God, and the second five, which relate to other people. This commandment is commandment #5 out of 10, so it's in the first group of commandments related to God.
 - How do you think this commandment could be related to God?
 - Abarbanel gives us the following explanation for why he believes this commandment is in the first group of commandments. (Read Text 5)
 - What do you think of his reasoning?

- Do you agree with this placement in the 10 Commandments?
- Text 6 (Genesis Rabbah): Chevrotah → group discussion (15 min)
 - We now know just how important the rabbis thought it was for parents to teach their children and for children to respect their parents. But that still leaves us with the age-old question of whether or not teenagers count as children.
 - We know that according to Jewish tradition a child is considered an “adult” when they become Bar or Bat Mitzvah (13 for boys, 12 for girls). After that point Jewish law considers you an adult, meaning that you are bound by all commandments. But why that age? With your chevrotah, read this next text about Jacob and Esau and try to figure out:
 - Why is it that the rabbis identified this age as when adulthood begins?
 - What happened to Jacob and Esau at that age that made them “adults”?

Modernizing/Concluding Discussion:

- Modernizing this text: Group discussion (15 min)
 - From your own experiences, do you think that teens these days have this same clarity about their lives at 13? What were you like as a 13 year old?
 - Why do you think 13 used to be considered the age of adulthood?
 - What is different about our world today that makes 13 no longer the age of attaining full “adult” status?
 - When do you think you will have this type of clarity about your lives?
 - What do you think parents can/should do for you while you continue working towards that amount of clarity?
- Wrap up and closing thoughts
 - Now that we know Judaism believes parents have an obligation to teach their children, including teenagers, next class we’re going to explore *what* things the Rabbis believed parents were obligated to teach their children.
 - It’s a given that your parents need to provide for your safety and sustenance... but what must they do on top of that?

Lesson 1: What are our obligations to each other at this moment in our lives? (Teen Lesson)
Excerpts from Various Sources³⁹

TEXT 1 - DEUTERONOMY 6:5-9 (V'AHAVTA)⁴⁰: You shall love Adonai your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. Take to heart these instructions with which I charge you this day. Impress them upon your children. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead; inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. Thus you shall remember to observe all My commandments and to be holy to your God.

TEXT 2 - DEUTERONOMY 11:19⁴¹: And teach them to your children—reciting them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up

TEXT 3 - b. SOTAH 22a⁴²: The Sages taught: Who is an ignoramus [*am ha'aretz*]? Anyone who does not recite the Shema in the morning and evening, said Rabbi Meir. And the Rabbis say: Anyone who does not don phylacteries. Ben Azzai said: Anyone who does not have ritual fringes on their garment. Rabbi Yochanan ben Yosef said: Anyone who has children and does not raise them to study Torah.

Notes:

- *Phylacteries = tfillin (head and arm)*
- *Ritual fringes = tzitzit (similar to a tallis, worn under clothing)*

³⁹ Several sources from this session were drawn from a lesson plan written by Daniel Alter.

⁴⁰ Translation from

<http://www.reformjudaism.org/practice/prayers-blessings/worship-services-vahavta-read>

⁴¹ Translation adapted from www.sefaria.org.

⁴² Translation adapted from *Koren Talmud Bavli: The Noe Edition - Sota* (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 2013).

TEXT 4 - EXODUS 20:12⁴³: Honor your father and your mother, that you may long endure on the land that Adonai your God is assigning to you.

TEXT 5 - ABARBANEL COMMENTARY ON EXODUS 20:12⁴⁴: The purpose of this *mitzvah* is to raise the importance of the traditions possessed by parents in men's eyes, so that they believe in them and rely upon them. And since the thrust of this command is to create belief in the tradition of earlier generations... without which the Torah could not exist, therefore this command is found among the five divine commands on the first tablet, rather than among the five commands concerned with human relations that are on the second tablet.

TEXT 6 - GENESIS RABBAH 63:9⁴⁵: Rabbi Levi offered a parable: They [Jacob and Esau] were like a myrtle and a wild rosebush growing side by side; when they matured and blossomed, one yielded its fragrance and the other its thorns. For thirteen years both went to school and came home from school, [but] after this age, one went to the house of study and the other to idolatrous shrines. Rabbi Eleazar said: A parent is responsible for his/her child until the age of thirteen, at which point the parent must say: *Baruch sheptarani mei'ansho shel zeh*, "Blessed is the One who has now freed me from the responsibility of this child."

⁴³ Translation adapted from *Koren Talmud Bavli: The Noe Edition - Sota* (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 2013).

⁴⁴ Abarbanel commentary on Exodus from *Commentary to the Torah Vol 2* (Warsaw: 1862), 38. Copied from Gerald Blidstein, *Honor Thy Father and Mother: Filial Responsibility in Jewish Law and Ethics* (Ktav Publishing House, Inc.: New York, 1976), 22, footnote 73.

⁴⁵ Translation from www.sefaria.org

Lesson 2: What are we obligated to teach/learn? (b. Kiddushin 29a-30b)

Parent Lesson 2

Text:

- b. Kiddushin 29a-30b

Essential Question:

- What are we obligated to teach our children?

Enduring Understanding:

- Beyond just providing sustenance and shelter, parents also have moral and ethical responsibilities to their children.

Objective:

- SWBAT identify and explain the reasoning behind the things the Rabbis believed parents were obligated to teach their children
- SWBAT identify a modern list of the things they believe parents are obligated to teach their children

Outline:

- 5 min - Set Induction
- 40 min - Text Study
- 30 min - Concluding Discussion

Set Induction:

- Full Group Discussion (5 minutes)
 - What was the most important thing your parents taught you?
 - Why do you think that was the most important thing they taught you?
 - *Record on the board for use later in this lesson*

Text Study:

- Transition: Overview of take-aways from previous class sessions
 - We can see that each of us has a different way of valuing the things our parents taught us
 - We learned last time that Judaism believes parents have an obligation to teach their children. Today we're going to explore *what* things the Rabbis believed parents were obligated to teach their children. Just like last time, your teens are studying the same text, which today is a piece of Talmud.
 - It's a given we need to provide for our children's safety and sustenance... but what must parents do on top of that?

- Text 1: Group discussion (10 min)
 - What do the Rabbis say parents are obligated to teach their children? *List these on the board for future use this lesson*
 - Why do you think they gave this list?
 - Why do you think swimming was added on later? Do you think swimming belongs on this list?
 - What does this list reflect about rabbinic society?
- Text 2 Group discussion (10 min)
 - Why do you think Rabbi Yehuda makes this statement?
 - Do you agree with his rationale?
- Text 3: Chevrotah (8 min) → group discussion (12 min)
 - What are the rabbis reasons for obligating parents to teach their children these specific things?
 - Which of these reasons do you find the most compelling?
 - Are there general buckets you would say these different tasks represent? *List these categories on the board for guidance in the next section*
 - Torah: Ethics? Morality? Judaism?
 - Trade: Economic means? Passion and direction?
 - Swimming: Physical survival?

Modernizing/Concluding Discussion:

- Modernizing this text: Chevrotah (10 min) → whole group sharing on board (20 min)
 - What is a modern list of things that we believe we are obligated to teach our children? Use the categories we just identified as a guide and include whatever you want: skills, practices, beliefs, etc (and yes, you can repeat the rabbis' list)
 - Whole group on board
 - What are commonalities on these lists?
 - How does this list relate to the list the rabbis created in our text today?
 - How has this list changed since you were growing up? What role does technology play in adapting this list?
 - *Record this list and have it available as a handout for use during the next class*
- Wrap up and closing thoughts
 - Your teens made a similar list today - if you have time between this class and next class ask your teens about the lists they made and see how it compares to your list.
 - Now that we have a list of what skills, practices, beliefs, etc we as parents have an obligation to teach our children, next session we're going to focus on how to actually train a child to acquire a skill or practice

**Lesson 2: What are we obligated to teach our children?
(Parent Lesson)
Excerpts from b. Kiddushin 29a-30b⁴⁶**

TEXT 1: A Baraita states: "A father is obligated to circumcise, to redeem, to teach Torah to, to find a wife for, and to teach a trade to his son." Some also say, to teach him to swim.

TEXT 2: Rabbi Yehuda said, "Any man who does not teach his son a trade, teaches him to steal." To steal?! [Do you really think that will be the result of not teaching him a trade?] Rather, it is if he has taught him to steal.

TEXT 3: "*To teach Torah to*" How do we know this? Because it is written, "*And you shall teach them to your children*" (Deut 11:21). And if his father did not teach him, he must teach himself, as it is written "*And you shall study*" (Deut 5:1) ...

And the rabbis taught: if he has himself to teach and his son to teach, he takes precedence over his son. Rabbi Yehuda said, "If his son is industrious, bright, and retentive, his son takes precedence over him..."

"*To teach a trade to*" How do we know this? Because Hezekiah said that Scripture said, "*See to a livelihood with a wife whom you love.*" If wife is literal, this teaches just as the father is bound to take a wife for him, so too is he bound to teach him a trade for his livelihood. If wife is a metaphor for Torah, then just as his father is bound to teach him Torah, so too is he bound to teach him a trade...

"*Some also say, to teach him to swim*" What is the purpose of this? Because his life may depend on it.

⁴⁶ Translations adapted from www.sefaria.org and www.halakhah.com

Teen Lesson 2

Text:

- b. Kiddushin 29a-30b

Essential Question:

- What are our parents obligated to teach us?

Enduring Understanding:

- Beyond just providing sustenance and shelter, parents also have moral and ethical responsibilities to their children.

Objective:

- SWBAT identify and explain the reasoning behind the things the Rabbis believed parents were obligated to teach their children
- SWBAT identify a modern list of the things they believe their parents are obligated to teach them

Outline:

- 5 min - Set Induction
- 40 min - Text Study
- 30 min - Concluding Discussion

Set Induction:

- Full Group Discussion (5 minutes)
 - What was the most important thing your parents taught you so far?
 - Why do you think that was the most important thing they taught you?
 - *Record on the board for use later in this lesson*

Text Study:

- Transition: Overview of take-aways from previous class sessions
 - We can see that each of us has a different way of valuing the things our parents taught us
 - We learned last time that Judaism believes parents have an obligation to teach their children and that there is much that even teenagers can learn from their parents. Today we're going to explore *what* things the Rabbis believed parents were obligated to teach their children. Your parents are studying this same text today, just like last time.
 - It's a given that your parents need to provide for your safety and sustenance... but what must they do on top of that?
- Text 1: Group discussion (10 min)

- What do the Rabbis say parents are obligated to teach their children? *List these on the board for future use this lesson*
- Why do you think they gave this list?
- Why do you think swimming was added on later? Do you think swimming belongs on this list?
- What does this list reflect about rabbinic society?
- Text 2: Group discussion (10 min)
 - Why do you think Rabbi Yehuda makes this statement?
 - Do you agree with his rationale?
- Text 3: Chevrotah (8 min) → group discussion (12 min)
 - What are the rabbis reasons for obligating parents to teach their children these specific things?
 - Which of these reasons do you find the most compelling?
 - Are there general buckets you would say these different tasks represent? *List these categories on the board for guidance in the next section*
 - Torah: Ethics? Morality? Judaism?
 - Trade: Economic means? Passion and direction?
 - Swimming: Physical survival?

Modernizing/Concluding Discussion:

- Modernizing this text: Chevrotah (10 min) → whole group sharing on board (20 min)
 - What is a modern list of things that we believe parents are obligated to teach their children? Use the categories we just identified as a guide and include whatever you want: skills, practices, beliefs, etc (and yes, you can repeat the rabbis' list)
 - Whole group on board
 - What are commonalities on these lists?
 - How does this list relate to the list the rabbis created in our text today?
 - How has this list changed since your parents were kids?
 - What are some things they have wanted to teach you that you don't think you need to know anymore?
 - What are some things you wish they would realize you needed help learning?
 - *Record this list and have it available as a handout for use during the next class*
- Wrap up and closing thoughts
 - Your parents made a similar list today - if you have time between this class and next class ask your parents about the lists they made and see how it compares to your list.
 - Now that we have a list of what skills, practices, beliefs, etc we think parents have an obligation to teach their children, next session we're going to focus on how to parents were actually expected to teach their children different skills

**Lesson 2: What are we obligated to teach our children?
(Teen Lesson)
Excerpts from b. Kiddushin 29a-30b⁴⁷**

TEXT 1: A Baraita states: "A father is obligated to circumcise, to redeem, to teach Torah to, to find a wife for, and to teach a trade to his son." Some also say, to teach him to swim.

TEXT 2: Rabbi Yehuda said, "Any man who does not teach his son a trade, teaches him to steal." To steal?! [Do you really think that will be the result of not teaching him a trade?] Rather, it is if he has taught him to steal.

TEXT 3: "*To teach Torah to*" How do we know this? Because it is written, "*And you shall teach them to your children*" (Deut 11:21). And if his father did not teach him, he must teach himself, as it is written "*And you shall study*" (Deut 5:1) ...

And the rabbis taught: if he has himself to teach and his son to teach, he takes precedence over his son. Rabbi Yehuda said, "If his son is industrious, bright, and retentive, his son takes precedence over him..."

"*To teach a trade to*" How do we know this? Because Hezekiah said that Scripture said, "*See to a livelihood with a wife whom you love.*" If wife is literal, this teaches just as the father is bound to take a wife for him, so too is he bound to teach him a trade for his livelihood. If wife is a metaphor for Torah, then just as his father is bound to teach him Torah, so too is he bound to teach him a trade...

"*Some also say, to teach him to swim*" What is the purpose of this? Because his life may depend on it.

⁴⁷ Translations adapted from www.sefaria.org and www.halakhah.com

Lesson 3: How do you teach/learn? (b. Yoma 82a)

Parent Lesson 3

Text:

- b. Yoma 82a

Essential Question:

- How do you teach a child to know how to do something?

Enduring Understanding:

- The process of training a child is highly individualized and must happen over an extended period of time

Objective:

- SWBAT explain how the rabbis recommend parents teach their children non-intuitive skills or practices
 - Gradual release, practice over time
 - Different expectations for different groups
- SWBAT apply these recommendations to instruction related to modern-day tasks that parents currently teach their children

Outline:

- 5 min - Set Induction
- 40 min - Text Study
- 30 min - Concluding Discussion

Set Induction:

- Full Group Discussion (5 minutes)
 - How did you potty train your child?
 - What steps did you take?
 - How did you know when to start?
 - How did you know you had succeeded?
 - How was this process different for each of your children?

Text Study:

- Transition: Overview of take-aways from previous class sessions
 - Now that we have a list of what skills, practices, beliefs, etc we as parents have an obligation to teach our children, today we're going to focus on how to actually train a child to acquire a skill or practice

- Today's text comes from Yoma, the section of the Talmud which deals with Yom Kippur and its observances and practices. The portion we will be reading today deals with how to teach a child to fast on Yom Kippur. Your teen is studying this same text today.
- Text 1 (Mishnah): Group discussion (5 minutes)
 - What does the mishnah tell us to do?
 - What “problems” do you think the rabbis might find in this text? What things might they debate about?
- Text 2 (Talmud): Chevrotah (8 min) → Group review (12 minutes)
 - Chevrotah: identify what different plans you see for how to train children
 - Group review: What different plans do we see here for how to train children? (on board)
 - Two tracks: Feeble child (1 year before) vs. healthy child (2 years before)
 - Why do you think these two tracks exist?
 - Three rabbinic opinions (see chart)
 - Discussion prompts:
 - Why do you think the rabbis structure training in this way?
 - Why does it matter to the rabbis which type of law a child is obligated by?
 - Why are girls and boys different?

Sage	Who?	Train	Complete by Rabbinic	Complete by Torah
R Huna	Girls	8-9	10-11	12
R Nachman	Boys	9-10	11-12	13
R Yochanan	All	10-11	x	12 (girls) → infer 13 (boys)

- Text 3 (Talmud): Chevrotah (5 min) → Group review (10 minutes)
 - Chevrotah discussion:
 - What does training mean to the rabbis?
 - How is this training different from the training discussed in texts 1 and 2?
 - Group Review:
 - What stages of training are identified?
 - Training - Younger children = delay the time of eating
 - Completion/Mastery - Older children = full day of fasting

- What does “so he will begin to understand the concept of affliction” mean? Why would the rabbis want parents to teach their kids this?
 - Learning the principle behind the actions
- Why do you think the rabbis made this distinction?
- How do these categories of training relate to the chart we made?

Concluding Discussion:

- Group Discussion (10 min)
 - What do the rabbis recommend when it comes to training children?
 - What aspects of these recommendations are appealing to you? Which are troubling?
 - How does this parallel/diverge from your experiences with potty training?
 - What, if anything, would you add to the rabbinic recommended training process?
- Modernizing This Process (15 min)
 - Does this recommended process apply to all the skills we identified last lesson that we have an obligation to train our children in?
 - Pass out list from last class → Chevrotah discussion → full group review
- Wrap up and closing thoughts (5 min)
 - Now that we know how to “train” a person, next class we will focus on what it means to “know” something and whether or not “knowing” something brings you into the realm of expectation.
 - Limitations of what it means to “know” something (ex: just because you know how to drive, should you be allowed to drive under all circumstances?)
 - They may know some things, do they necessarily know everything? And even if they do know it do you let them act as if they know everything?

Lesson 3: How do you teach/learn? (Parent Lesson)

Excerpts from b. Yoma 82a⁴⁸

TEXT 1 - MISHNAH: With regard to the children, one does not afflict them by withholding food on Yom Kippur; however one trains them one year before or two years before they reach maturity, by means of a partial fast lasting several hours, so that they will be accustomed to fulfilling mitzvot.

TEXT 2 - TALMUD: The Gemara asks about the wording of the mishna: Since it is stated that one trains children two years before their maturity, is it necessary to say that one trains them one year before? This expression in the mishnah is superfluous. Rav Hisda said: this is not difficult. This statement that one trains children one year before their maturity is referring to a feeble child; that statement that one trains children two years before their maturity is referring to a healthy child.

Rav Huna said: One trains a healthy child of eight years and nine years to fast for several hours; at ten and eleven years they complete the fast by rabbinic law; at twelve years they complete the fast by Torah law. This applies to girls who reach maturity and become obligated in mitzvot at age twelve. And Rav Nachman said: At nine years and ten years one trains them to fast for several hours; at eleven and twelve years they complete the fast by rabbinic law; at thirteen years they complete the fast by Torah law. This applies to boys. And Rabbi Yohanan said: There is no obligation with regard to children completing the fast by rabbinic law. Rather, at ten and eleven years, one trains them to fast for several hours; and at twelve years girls are obligated to complete their fast by Torah law.

Notes:

- *Rabbinic law = the rabbis say you have to do something*
- *Torah law = the Torah says you have to do something (more serious)*

TEXT 3 - TALMUD: ... The Gemara asks: And is training called completion? Doesn't training mean that the child performs only part of the mitzvah? Wasn't it taught explicitly in a baraita: What is training? If the child was accustomed to eat every day at the second hour of the day, one feeds him at the third hour, so he will begin to understand the concept of affliction. If he was accustomed to eat at the third hour, one feeds him the fourth hour. Rava bar Ulla said: This is not difficult; these are two different types of training. There is training of small children to wait slightly longer before eating, and training of older children, in which one habituates them to fasting a full day.

⁴⁸ Translations adapted from the *Koren Talmud Bavli: The Noe Edition - Yoma* (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 2013).

Teen Lesson 3

Text:

- b. Yoma 82a

Essential Question:

- How do you learn to do something new?

Enduring Understanding:

- The process of learning a new skill is highly individualized and must happen over an extended period of time

Objective:

- SWBAT explain how the rabbis recommend parents train their children to acquire non-intuitive skills or practices
 - Gradual release, practice over time
 - Different expectations for different groups
- SWBAT apply these recommendations to instruction related to modern-day tasks parents teach their children

Outline:

- 5 min - Set Induction
- 40 min - Text Study
- 30 min - Concluding Discussion

Set Induction:

- *Option 1* - Full Group Discussion (5 minutes)
 - How did you learn to drive?
 - Who did you learn from?
 - What steps did your parents take when they taught you this?
- *Option 2* - if not all students have learned how to drive, adapt questions to another skill, ex: riding a bike, playing a musical instrument/sport

Text Study:

- Transition: Overview of take-aways from previous class sessions
 - Last class we made a list of what skills, practices, beliefs, etc you believe parents have an obligation to teach their children. Today we're going to focus on how to actually train a child to acquire these skills.
 - Today's text comes from Yoma, the section of the Talmud which deals with Yom Kippur and its observances and practices. The portion we will be

reading today deals with how to teach a child to fast on Yom Kippur. Your parents are studying these same texts today.

- Text 1 (Mishnah): Group discussion (5 minutes)
 - What does the mishnah tell us to do?
 - What “problems” do you think the rabbis might find in this text? What things might they debate about?
- Text 2 (Talmud): Chevrotah (8 min) → Group review (12 minutes)
 - Chevrotah: identify what different plans you see for how to train children
 - Group review: What different plans do we see here for how to train children? (*on board*)
 - Two tracks: Feeble child (1 year before) vs. healthy child (2 years before)
 - What’s the difference between a feeble child and a healthy child?
 - Why do you think these two tracks exist?
 - Three rabbinic opinions (see chart)
 - Discussion prompts:
 - Why do you think the rabbis structure training in this way?
 - Why does it matter to the rabbis which type of law a child is obligated by?
 - Why are girls and boys different?

Sage	Who?	Train	Complete by Rabbinic	Complete by Torah
R Huna	Girls	8-9	10-11	12
R Nachman	Boys	9-10	11-12	13
R Yochanan	All	10-11	x	12 (girls) → infer 13 (boys)

- Text 3 (Talmud): Chevrotah (5 min) → Group review (10 minutes)
 - Chevrotah discussion:
 - What does training mean to the rabbis?
 - How is this training different from the training discussed in texts 1 and 2?
 - Group Review:
 - What stages of training are identified?
 - Training - Younger children = delay the time of eating
 - Completion/Mastery - Older children = full day of fasting

- What does “so he will begin to understand the concept of affliction” mean? Why would the rabbis want parents to teach their kids this?
 - Learning the principle behind the actions
- Why do you think the rabbis made this distinction?
- How do these categories of training relate to the chart we made?

Concluding Discussion:

- Group Discussion (10 min)
 - What do the rabbis recommend when it comes to training children?
 - What aspects of these recommendations are appealing to you? Which are troubling?
 - How does this parallel/diverge from your experiences from when your parents taught you how to drive?
 - What, if anything, would you add to the rabbinic recommended training process?
- Modernizing This Process (15 min)
 - Does this recommended process apply to all the skills we identified last lesson that you believe parents have an obligation to teach their children?
 - Pass out list from last class → Chevrotah time → full group review
- Wrap up and closing thoughts (5 min)
 - Now that we know how to “train” a person, next class we will focus on what it means to “know” something and whether or not “knowing” something brings you into the realm of expectation.
 - Think about when you felt ready to take your drivers test vs when your parents let you take it. What caused the difference in timeline?

Lesson 3: How do you teach/learn? (Teen Lesson)

Excerpts from b. Yoma 82a⁴⁹

TEXT 1 - MISHNAH: With regard to the children, one does not afflict them by withholding food on Yom Kippur; however one trains them one year before or two years before they reach maturity, by means of a partial fast lasting several hours, so that they will be accustomed to fulfilling mitzvot.

TEXT 2 - TALMUD: The Gemara asks about the wording of the mishna: Since it is stated that one trains children two years before their maturity, is it necessary to say that one trains them one year before? This expression in the mishnah is superfluous. Rav Hisda said: this is not difficult. This statement that one trains children one year before their maturity is referring to a feeble child; that statement that one trains children two years before their maturity is referring to a healthy child.

Rav Huna said: One trains a healthy child of eight years and nine years to fast for several hours; at ten and eleven years they complete the fast by rabbinic law; at twelve years they complete the fast by Torah law. This applies to girls who reach maturity and become obligated in mitzvot at age twelve. And Rav Nachman said: At nine years and ten years one trains them to fast for several hours; at eleven and twelve years they complete the fast by rabbinic law; at thirteen years they complete the fast by Torah law. This applies to boys. And Rabbi Yohanan said: There is no obligation with regard to children completing the fast by rabbinic law. Rather, at ten and eleven years, one trains them to fast for several hours; and at twelve years girls are obligated to complete their fast by Torah law.

Notes:

- *Rabbinic law = the rabbis say you have to do something*
- *Torah law = the Torah says you have to do something (more serious)*

TEXT 3 - TALMUD: ... The Gemara asks: And is training called completion? Doesn't training mean that the child performs only part of the mitzvah? Wasn't it taught explicitly in a baraita: What is training? If the child was accustomed to eat every day at the second hour of the day, one feeds him at the third hour, so he will begin to understand the concept of affliction. If he was accustomed to eat at the third hour, one feeds him the fourth hour. Rava bar Ulla said: This is not difficult; these are two different types of training. There is training of small children to wait slightly longer before eating, and training of older children, in which one habituates them to fasting a full day.

⁴⁹ Translations adapted from the *Koren Talmud Bavli: The Noe Edition - Yoma* (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 2013).

Lesson 4: What does it mean to “know”? (b. Sukkah 42a-b)

Parent Lesson 4

Text:

- b. Sukkah 42a-b

Essential Questions:

- What does it mean to “know” how to do something? What is the difference between proficiency and mastery of a skill?
- To what extent does knowledge of a task imply ability to independently perform that task? How do expectations change when a person’s actions in performing that task have implications for the safety or well-being of others?

Enduring Understanding:

- There is a difference between “knowing” something and being under the realm of expectation for it. Proficiency of a skill does not imply mastery of that skill.
- Obligation is not imposed immediately once you are proficient at something, especially when your actions have implications for others.

Objective:

- SWBAT explain how the rabbis distinguished between “knowing” how to do things and being ritually obligated to perform those tasks
 - When actions have implications for others, obligation takes longer to be imposed

Outline:

- 10 min - Set Induction
- 45 min - Text Study
- 20 min - Concluding Discussion

Set Induction:

- *Option 1* - Group Discussion (10 minutes)
 - How did you teach your teenager to drive?
 - When did your teen think that they could take the driving test?
 - When did you think your teen could take the driving test?
 - What did they have to prove/demonstrate to you before you would let them go to the DMV?
 - How was this timeline different from your teen’s self-understanding of when they were ready to take their driving test?

- After they got their license, what restrictions, if any, did you impose on their driving? Why?
 - Weather? Others in the car? Time of day? Distance?
- When did you ease these restrictions, if you had them? What did your teen have to prove/demonstrate to you before you eased them?
- *Option 2 - If not all parents have teenagers who have learned to drive, adapt Option 1 questions to have parents reflect back on their own personal experiences learning how to drive as a teenagers.*
- As this discussion brights to light, just because a person might feel like they “know” something, that does not always mean they “know” that thing enough to be obligated (or even just allowed...) to perform it every day.
 - This is especially the case when it comes to young adults.
 - Just because you are proficient at something, does that mean you have mastered it entirely?

Text Study:

- Transition
 - Today we’re going to explore what it means to “know” something and investigate whether or not “knowing” something brings you into the realm of expectation for that thing.
 - Realm of expectation = category in Jewish law where you are required to do something (and if you don’t do it you get in trouble)
 - Last class we explored how the rabbis believed you should train a child.
 - Especially when it comes to children, there are limitations of what it means to “know” something once you’ve been trained in it (ex: just because your child “knows” how to drive, should they be allowed to drive under all circumstances?)
 - When children learn a new skill they may know some things, but do they necessarily know everything about that skill? And even if they do know everything, do you let them act as if they know everything?
 - This is the gray area we are going to explore today
- Text 1 (Mishnah): Group discussion (5 min)
 - Ordinarily a child is not obligated to shake lulav
 - Why in this case do you think the rabbis obligate this child to shake lulav?
- Text 2 (Talmud): Chevrutah → group discussion (15 min)
 - What actions do the Sages obligate a child to if they “know” how to do them?
 - Do you think it is fair to bring children into the realm of expectation because of their knowledge of these tasks?
 - Which more so than others?
 - Do you notice anything weird/different about the wording of the third obligation - for phylacteries?
 - This obligation is placed on the father, not the child

- Sages explain this is because people were likely to have extra lulavs or tzitzit, but people generally would not have extra tfillin
 - Also the sizing of tfillin is very individual, whereas lulavs and tzitzit are more “one size fits all”
- Text 3 (Talmud): Chevrutah → Group discussion (15 min)
 - What is different about the things we’re trusting children with in this section?
 - They have implications for us too so the stakes are higher
 - In the last piece all the actions only related to the child -- there would be no issues for anyone else other than the child.
 - Here we would be in trouble for eating ritually impure food if the child prepared it incorrectly.
 - Why do you think this distinction is made between private and public domain?
 - What is different about actions taken in these two spaces?
 - Why do you think the child is trusted more in the public domain than in the private domain?
 - What does making this distinction teach us about rabbinic society?
 - Extreme reverence of obligation - not wanting to sin at the hands of others
- Text 4 (Talmud): Group discussion (10 min)
 - How does this ruling relate to the ones we just read in the last section?
 - Why do you think Rav Huna adds this statement?
 - Why is an adult required for the slaughter? To protect the child? To protect people who would eat the meat? Both?

Modernizing/Concluding Discussion:

- Modernizing the Text (5 min)
 - What are some modern day equivalents of trusting a child to ritually sacrifice or prepare food for us?
 - Do we still have this sense that one person’s correct or incorrect actions can have implications for others today?
 - Do you agree with the Rabbis’ rulings in these cases?
 - Would you trust your children once they gained “knowledge” of these things?
- Conclusion (15 min)
 - What does it mean for an action to become “binding” today?
 - Implications for the safety/well-being of the person doing the action?
 - Implications for the safety/well-being of others?
 - What does “knowing” have to look like for you for it to be binding for your child?
 - Case study: back to the driving test
 - How do the Rabbis’ rulings in these pieces of Talmud relate to to how each of you handled the driving test with your teenager?

- Are there any times where your teenager has shied away from independent mastery of a task? Ex: they know how to do something but they are either ambivalent about doing it themselves or they actively don't want to
 - What do you make of this ambivalence towards independence in some areas?
- Wrap up and closing thoughts
 - Now that we've explored the lines between knowing and obligation, in our final session next week we are going to be looking at what it means to let go and trust in your child as they grow up.

Lesson 4: What does it mean to “know”? (Parent Lesson)

Excerpts from b. Sukkah 42a-b⁵⁰

TEXT 1 - MISHNAH: ... A minor who knows how to wave the lulav is obligated in the mitzvah of lulav.

TEXT 2 - TALMUD: ... It is taught in the mishnah: A minor who knows how to wave the lulav is obligated in the mitzvah of the lulav. The Sages taught: A minor who knows how to wave the lulav is obligated in the mitzvah of lulav; one who knows how to wrap himself in a garment, is obligated in the mitzvah of ritual fringes; if he knows how to preserve the sanctity of phylacteries in a state of cleanliness, his father buys him phylacteries; if he knows how to speak, his father immediately teaches him Torah and *Shema*.

Notes:

- *Ritual fringes = tzitzit (similar to a tallis, worn under clothing)*
- *Phylacteries = tfillin (head and arm)*

TEXT 3 - TALMUD: ... The Sages continued: If a minor knows how to protect his own body from ritual impurity, it is permitted to eat ritually pure food that came into contact with his body. If a minor knows how to protect his hands from ritual impurity, it is permitted to eat ritually pure food that came in contact with his hands. If a minor knows how to be asked and accurately clarify which objects he touched, his status is like that of an adult based on the following distinction: If the question was with regard to ritual impurity in the private domain and it is a case of uncertainty, the time in question is deemed impure. However, if the question was with regard to ritual impurity in the public domain and it is a case of uncertainty, the item in question is deemed pure...

Notes:

- *Private domain = in one's own house*
- *Public domain = in the streets, in a public space*

TEXT 4 - TALMUD: ... If he knows how to slaughter an animal, one may eat from animals that he slaughtered. Rav Huna said: That is the halakha provided that an adult is standing over him overseeing the slaughter.

⁵⁰ Translations adapted from the *Koren Talmud Bavli: The Noe Edition - Sukka* (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 2013).

Teen Lesson 4

Text:

- b. Sukkah 42a-b

Essential Questions:

- What does it mean to “know” how to do something? What is the difference between proficiency and mastery of a skill?
- To what extent does knowledge of a task imply ability to independently perform that task? How do expectations change when a person’s actions in performing that task have implications for the safety or well-being of others?

Enduring Understanding:

- There is a difference between “knowing” something and being under the realm of expectation for it. Proficiency of a skill does not imply mastery of that skill.
- Obligation is not imposed immediately once you are proficient at something, especially when your actions have implications for others.

Objective:

- SWBAT explain how the rabbis distinguished between “knowing” how to do things and being ritually obligated to perform those tasks
 - When actions have implications for others, obligation takes longer to be imposed

Outline:

- 10 min - Set Induction
- 45 min - Text Study
- 20 min - Concluding Discussion

Set Induction:

- *Option 1* - Group Discussion (10 minutes)
 - Let’s think back to learning how to drive. There’s usually one huge sticking point in the process: when you think you’re ready to take the drivers test and when your parents think you’re ready to take it. How did this work with your parents?
 - After you had your license, did your parents impose any restrictions on your driving? What restrictions? Why these restrictions?
- *Option 2* - if not all students are old enough to drive, ask students about when their parents let them stay home alone and when their parents trusted them to babysit their siblings and/or other children

- As this discussion brights to light, just because a person might feel like they “know” something, that does not always mean everyone else trusts that they “know” that thing enough to be obligated (or even just allowed...) to perform it every day.
 - This is especially the case when it comes to teenagers.
 - Just because you “know” something, does it mean you *really KNOW* it? How does your opinion compare with your parents’ opinion and/or society’s opinion?

Text Study:

- Transition
 - Today we’re going to explore what it means to “know” something and investigate whether or not “knowing” something brings you into the realm of expectation.
 - Realm of expectation = category in Jewish law where you are required to do something (and if you don’t do it you get in trouble)
 - Last class we explored how the rabbis believed you learn new skills
 - Especially when it comes to teens, there are limitations of what it means to “know” something once you’ve been trained in it (ex: just because your child “knows” how to drive, should they be allowed to drive under all circumstances?)
 - When children learn a new skill they may some things, but do they necessarily know everything? And even if they do know everything, do adults still let them act as if they know everything?
 - This is the gray area we are going to explore today
- Text 1 (Mishnah): Group discussion (5 min)
 - Ordinarily a child is not obligated to shake lulav
 - Why in this case do you think the rabbis obligate this child to shake lulav?
- Text 2 (Talmud): Chevrutah → group discussion (15 min)
 - What actions do the Sages obligate a child to if they “know” how to do them?
 - Do you think it is fair to bring children into the realm of expectation because of their knowledge of these tasks?
 - Which more so than others?
 - Do you notice anything weird/different about the wording of the third obligation - for phylacteries?
 - This obligation is placed on the father, not the child
 - Sages explain this is because people were likely to have extra lulavs or tzitzit, but people generally would not have extra tfillin
 - Also the sizing of tfillin is very individual, whereas lulavs and tzitzit are more “one size fits all”
- Text 3 (Talmud): Chevrutah → Group discussion (15 min)
 - What is different about the things we’re trusting children with in this section?
 - They have implications for us too so the stakes are higher

- In the last piece all the actions only related to the child -- there would be no issues for anyone else other than the child.
 - Here we would be in trouble for eating ritually impure food if the child prepared it incorrectly.
- Why do you think this distinction is made between private and public domain?
 - What is different about actions taken in these two spaces?
 - Why do you think the child is trusted more in the public domain than in the private domain?
- What does making this distinction teach us about rabbinic society?
 - Extreme reverence of obligation - not wanting to sin at the hands of others
- Text 4 (Talmud): Group discussion (10 min)
 - How does this ruling relate to the ones we just read in the last section?
 - Why do you think Rav Huna adds this statement?
 - Why is an adult required for the slaughter? To protect the child? To protect people who would eat the meat? Both?
 - If you were the child in this situation, would you want this responsibility?

Modernizing/Concluding Discussion:

- Modernizing the Text (10 min)
 - What are some modern day equivalents of trusting a child to ritually sacrifice or prepare food for us?
 - Do we still have this sense that one person's correct or incorrect actions can have implications for others today?
 - Do you agree or disagree with the Rabbis' rulings in these cases?
 - Do you think your parents should trust you to do these things once you've "knowledge" of them?
- Conclusion (10 min)
 - What does it mean for an action to become "binding" today?
 - Implications for safety/well-being of person doing the action?
 - Implications for safety/well-being of others?
 - What does "knowing" have to look like for your parents to trust you to do something?
 - Case study: back to the driving test
 - How do the Rabbis' rulings in these pieces of Talmud relate to to how your parents handled your driving tests?
 - Are there any times when you have known how to do something but you haven't really wanted to be do it for yourself? Ex: do the laundry, stay home alone, etc
 - What distinguishes these areas of ambivalence from things you really care about doing by yourselves?
- Wrap up and closing thoughts

- Now that we've explored the lines between knowing and obligation, in our final session next week we are going to be looking at what it means for your parents to "let go" and fully trust you as you graduate and get ready to head to college on your own.

Lesson 4: What does it mean to “know”? (Teen Lesson)

Excerpts from b. Sukkah 42a-b⁵¹

TEXT 1 - MISHNAH: ... A minor who knows how to wave the lulav is obligated in the mitzvah of lulav.

TEXT 2 - TALMUD: ... It is taught in the mishnah: A minor who knows how to wave the lulav is obligated in the mitzvah of the lulav. The Sages taught: A minor who knows how to wave the lulav is obligated in the mitzvah of lulav; one who knows how to wrap himself in a garment, is obligated in the mitzvah of ritual fringes; if he knows how to preserve the sanctity of phylacteries in a state of cleanliness, his father buys him phylacteries; if he knows how to speak, his father immediately teaches him Torah and *Shema*.

Notes:

- *Ritual fringes = tzitzit (similar to a tallis, worn under clothing)*
- *Phylacteries = tfillin (head and arm)*

TEXT 3 - TALMUD: ... The Sages continued: If a minor knows how to protect his own body from ritual impurity, it is permitted to eat ritually pure food that came into contact with his body. If a minor knows how to protect his hands from ritual impurity, it is permitted to eat ritually pure food that came in contact with his hands. If a minor knows how to be asked and accurately clarify which objects he touched, his status is like that of an adult based on the following distinction: If the question was with regard to ritual impurity in the private domain and it is a case of uncertainty, the time in question is deemed impure. However, if the question was with regard to ritual impurity in the public domain and it is a case of uncertainty, the item in question is deemed pure...

Notes:

- *Private domain = in one's own house*
- *Public domain = in the streets, in a public space*

TEXT 4 - TALMUD: ... If he knows how to slaughter an animal, one may eat from animals that he slaughtered. Rav Huna said: That is the halakha provided that an adult is standing over him overseeing the slaughter.

⁵¹ Translations adapted from the *Koren Talmud Bavli: The Noe Edition - Sukka* (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 2013).

Lesson 5: What does it mean to let go? (Various Texts)

Parent Lesson 5

Text:

- Genesis Rabbah 63:9; My Jewish Learning Article; Mishnah Avot 5:21

Essential Questions:

- What does it mean to let go and allow a child to become more independent?

Enduring Understanding:

- It is difficult but necessary for parents to give their children more independence as they grow up. Parents and teens must be sensitive to each others needs and desires throughout this process.
- Letting go does not mean complete distancing from children; there is always space for guiding children and maintaining a strong relationship with them.

Objective:

- SWBAT explain the *baruch she'petarani* blessing
- SWBAT write a letter to their teen articulating their wishes and hopes for them as they “grow up” and graduate (to be presented at culmination ceremony)

Outline:

- 5 min - Set Induction
- 35 min - Text Study + Personal Discussion
- 35 min - Concluding Discussion + Letter Writing

Set Induction:

- Group Discussion (5 minutes)
 - In a few weeks you're going to be participating in your teenagers' culmination ceremonies. Take a moment and think back to the last public Jewish ritual moment that most of you had with your teenagers -- their Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
 - What did you do at your own child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah ceremony?
 - What role do you wish you had played in their ceremony?
 - Tonight, we're going to start thinking about what role you can all play in your teen's culmination ceremonies.

Text Study:

- Transition
 - Throughout this course we have explored many different questions related to our teenagers.

- Today, in our final session we are going to investigate what it means to let go and trust in your teen as they grow up and become more independent. At the end of this lesson we'll start working on letters to your teens that you will present them with at their culmination ceremonies.
- Text 1 (Genesis Rabbah): Chevrutah → group discussion (5 minutes)
 - To begin our session together, we're going to look at what parents traditionally did/said in their children's Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremonies, which you will be given the chance to say to your teens at culmination if you desire. Returning to one of the first texts we studied together - we're going to focus in on the end of the story about Jacob and Esau that we read together (bolded section), which is where this tradition comes from. Re-read this story with your chevrutah and then discuss:
 - What does this blessing mean to you?
 - What do you think the rabbis intended this blessing to mean?
 - Why do you think they wrote it?
- Text 2 (My Jewish Learning Article): Chevrutah → group discussion (10 minutes)
 - As we have discussed throughout this course, oftentimes the rabbis' advice about parenting needs modernizing in order to become relevant to our lives (ex: we no longer believe teens are fully adults at 13). Our next text explores how some synagogues use this ancient blessing in a modern context. Read with your chevrutah and explore:
 - How does this modern interpretation of the *baruch she'petarani* blessing resonate with you?
 - Is this a blessing you can imagine giving your children at their culmination ceremony? Why or why not?
- Personal Narratives: Group discussion (20 minutes)
 - Is this process of letting go something you've begun with your child?
 - How did this process go for you when you were a teenager leaving home?
 - What lessons can you draw from your own experiences?
 - How does this process feel as a parent?
 - What's an example of when it's gone well?
 - When has it not worked as well?
 - How do you anticipate that your child graduating and leaving home will affect this process?
 - *Facilitate a group conversation sharing stories and advice about the process of letting go and giving their teenagers more independence. Help the group find commonalities and highlight any wise advice that is shared.*

Concluding Discussion

- Text 3 (Mishnah Avot): Group discussion (10 minutes)
 - One final text exploring the timeline of growing and aging, according to the rabbis. *Hebrew is included so that you can better explore what each milestone means in the original text.*

- How does this timeline resonate with you?
- Do you agree/disagree with any of its demarcations?
- What do you notice about how it outlines life?
 - What things are before 13?
 - What comes after 13?
- What role do you think parents play in the milestones that come after 13?
 - Parents are still very important - just in a different way
- Letter Writing (20 min)
 - Now that we've reached the end of our course together, we want to take some time and look back over what we've explored.
 - For the next 20 minutes, we'd like you to begin drafting a letter to your teen, articulating your hopes and dreams for them as they officially "grow up" and graduate. You will present your teen with this letter at their culmination ceremony in a few weeks and bless them with the *baruch she'petarani* blessing that we've studied together in this course. These letters will not be read aloud publicly -- they are meant to be private for just you and your teen.
 - This letter can take any form you want it to -- words, poetry, pictures, whatever feels right to you. You can touch on lessons or values you hope they've gained, things you want them to know moving forward, anything that feels right to you.
 - This 20 minutes of work time is just a beginning -- you will have plenty of time to continue working on these letters between now and the culmination ceremony!
 - If it would help you or if you get stuck during this 20 minutes, feel free to discuss your letter with a chevrotah. This 20 minutes is for you to use as you see fit.
- Wrap up/conclusion (5 minutes)
 - Please keep working on these letters and get them ready to present to your teen's culmination ceremony. At this ceremony you will have the opportunity to present your teen with this letter and bless them with the *baruch she'petarani* blessing that we've studied together in this course if you choose to.
 - As each of you continue to navigate the path of parenting your teenagers, I hope that this course has helped you create connections with other parents and provided you with some resources to lean on as you help your teens grow up and become more independent.

Lesson 5: What does it mean to let go? (Parent Lesson)

Various Texts

TEXT 1 - GENESIS RABBAH 63:9⁵²: Rabbi Levi offered a parable: They [Jacob and Esau] were like a myrtle and a wild rosebush growing side by side; when they matured and blossomed, one yielded its fragrance and the other its thorns. For thirteen years both went to school and came home from school, [but] after this age, one went to the house of study and the other to idolatrous shrines. **Rabbi Eleazar said: A parent is responsible for his/her child until the age of thirteen, at which point the parent must say: *Baruch sheptarani mei'ansho shel zeh*, "Blessed is the One who has now freed me from the responsibility of this child."**

TEXT 2 - The Parents' Role in a Bar/Bat Mitzvah Service⁵³

By Rabbi Daniel Kohn

In a strictly traditional bar mitzvah celebration, the role of the bar mitzvah boy's parents (usually, just the father) during the worship service is to recite a blessing, *baruch she-p'tarani*, declaring the child to be liable for his or her own actions, according to Jewish law. (In traditional circles, girls do not participate ritually in the service and hence do not usually receive this blessing.) In liberal synagogues, parents often say only the shehecheyanu blessing, thanking God for being alive to celebrate the occasion, and some are taking on new roles, like presenting a tallit (ritual prayer shawl) to their child and leading parts of the service.

The Father Traditionally Recited a Single Blessing

The *baruch she-p'tarani* blessing reads, "Praised are You, Adonai our God, ruler of the universe who has excused me (from being liable) for this one (meaning, the child)." The blessing was traditionally recited by the father, and today is said by both parents in some liberal synagogues. The blessing has two forms, one that mentions God's name and one that does not. Although this seems like a rather strange and perplexing blessing for parents at their child's coming of age ceremony, it is entirely consistent with the spiritual significance of the event.

In traditional Judaism, children younger than bar/bat mitzvah age are exempt from the spiritual obligations of observing the Jewish mitzvot, or commandments. This means that

⁵² Translation adapted from www.sefaria.org

⁵³ <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-parents-role-in-a-barbat-mitzvah-service/#>

children are not required to fast on Yom Kippur, observe Shabbat (Sabbath) prohibitions, or perform other religious rituals, although in actuality children are slowly educated about the commandments and inculcated into their eventual observance.

When children attain their Jewish legal majority, or adult status (at age 12 for a girl and 13 for a boy), they become legally and morally responsible for their own actions and religious observances in the eyes of God. At the same time, the parents are no longer responsible for any sins committed by the child. When parents recite *baruch she-p'tarani*, they are publicly declaring their children to be both ritually and legally responsible adults in the Jewish tradition.

For some rabbis in the liberal movements, the concept of religious liability no longer resonates, and they have chosen to omit this blessing. Yet others are either encouraging its use or offering it as an option. These rabbis are re-visioning the meaning of the blessing in a more modern context—as symbolizing a new stage in the child's life and in the parent-child relationship. It is a form of “letting go,” in which children are becoming their own persons and must make their own moral judgments. To make the blessing more palatable to the modern ear, some of these rabbis have developed kavanot (spiritual preparations) to introduce it or new translations of the blessing itself.

TEXT 3 - MISHNAH AVOT 5:21⁵⁴:

הוא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, בֶּן חֲמִשׁ שָׁנִים לְמִקְרָא, בֶּן
עֶשֶׂר לְמִשְׁנָה, בֶּן שְׁלֹשׁ עָשָׂר לְמִצְוֹת, בֶּן
חֲמִשׁ עָשָׂר לְתַלְמוּד, בֶּן שְׁמוֹנֶה עָשָׂר
לְחֻפָּה, בֶּן עֶשְׂרִים לְרִדּוֹף, בֶּן שְׁלֹשִׁים לְכַח,
בֶּן אַרְבָּעִים לְבִינָה, בֶּן חֲמִשִּׁים לְעֵצָה, בֶּן
שִׁשִּׁים לְזִקְנָה, בֶּן שִׁבְעִים לְשִׁיבָה, בֶּן
שְׁמוֹנִים לְגִבּוֹרָה, בֶּן תְּשַׁעִים לְשׁוּחַ, בֶּן
מֵאָה כָּאֵלוֹ מֵת וְעֶבֶר וּבֵטֵל מִן הָעוֹלָם:

[Rabbi Yehudah ben Teimah] used to say:
Five years is the age for the study of Torah.
Ten, for the study of Mishnah. Thirteen, for
the obligation to observe the mitzvot.
Fifteen, for the study of Talmud. Eighteen,
for marriage. Twenty, to pursue [a
livelihood]. Thirty, for strength. Forty, for
understanding. Fifty, for giving counsel.
Sixty, for sage-old-age. Seventy, for
elderliness. Eighty, for power. Ninety, for a
bending stature. One hundred is the age of
one who has died and passed away and no
longer exists living in the world.

⁵⁴ Translation adapted from www.sefaria.org and
http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2099/jewish/Chapter-Five.htm

Teen Lesson 5

Text:

- Genesis Rabbah 63:9; My Jewish Learning Article; Mishnah Avot 5:21

Essential Questions:

- What does it mean for you to graduate and become more independent?

Enduring Understanding:

- It is difficult but necessary for parents to give their children more independence as they grow up. Parents and teens must be sensitive to each others needs and desires throughout this process.
- Becoming independent does not mean complete distancing from your parents; there is always space for you to turn to your parents when you need them and maintain strong connections with them.

Objective:

- SWBAT explain the *baruch she'petarani* blessing
- SWBAT write a letter to their parent thanking them for what they've learned and gained from them growing up (to be presented at culmination ceremony)

Outline:

- 5 min - Set Induction
- 35 min - Text Study + Personal Discussion
- 35 min - Concluding Discussion + Letter Writing

Set Induction:

- Group Discussion (5 minutes)
 - In a few weeks you're going to be participating in your culmination ceremony. Take a moment and think back to the last public Jewish ritual moment that most of you experienced with your parents -- your Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
 - What did you do at your own Bar or Bat Mitzvah? Did what you do make you feel like you were "becoming an adult"?
 - Now that you're approaching culmination, what do you think you'd like to do at that ceremony to show you're more of an adult now?

Text Study:

- Transition
 - Throughout this course we have explored many different questions related to growing up and gaining independence.
 - Today, in our final session we are going to investigate what it means for you to graduate and for your parents to "let go" of you as you leave the house. At

the end of this lesson we'll start working on letters to your parents that you will present them with at your culmination ceremony in a few weeks.

- Text 1 (Genesis Rabbah): Chevrutah → group discussion (5 minutes)
 - To begin our session together, we're going to look at what parents traditionally did/said in their children's Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremonies. Returning to one of the first texts we studied together - we're going to focus in on the end of a story about Jacob and Esau that we read together (bolded section), which is where this tradition comes from. Re-read this story with your chevrutah and then discuss:
 - What does this blessing mean to you?
 - What do you think this blessing might mean to your parents?
 - What do you think the rabbis intended this blessing to mean?
 - Why do you think they wrote it?
- Text 2 (My Jewish Learning Article): Chevrutah → group discussion (10 minutes)
 - As we have discussed throughout this course, oftentimes the rabbis' advice about parenting needs modernizing in order to become relevant to our lives (ex: we no longer believe teens are fully adults at 13). Our next text explores how some synagogues use this ancient blessing in a modern context. Read with your chevrutah and explore:
 - How does this modern interpretation of the *baruch she'petarani* blessing resonate with you?
 - Your parents might choose to read this blessing to you at your culmination ceremony in a few weeks. How will it feel to hear it from them? How do you think it will feel for them to say it to you?
- Personal Narratives: Group discussion (20 minutes)
 - Is this process of letting go something you've begun with your parents?
 - How does this feel as a teenager? How do you think it feels for your parents?
 - What's an example of when this process has gone well for you and your parents?
 - When has it not worked as well?
 - How do you anticipate that graduating and leaving home will affect this process?
 - *Facilitate a group conversation sharing stories and advice about the process of letting go and gaining more independence. Help the group find commonalities and highlight any wise advice that is shared. Encourage teens to have empathy for their parents as they navigate this difficult process.*

Concluding Discussion

- Text 3 (Mishnah Avot): Group discussion (10 minutes)
 - One final text exploring the timeline of growing and aging, according to the rabbis. *Hebrew is included so that you can better explore what each milestone means in the original text.*
 - How does this timeline resonate with you?

- Do you agree/disagree with any of its demarcations?
- What do you notice about how it outlines life?
 - What things are before 13?
 - What comes after 13?
- What role do you think parents play in the milestones that come after 13?
 - Parents are still very important - just in a different way
- Letter Writing (20 min)
 - Now that we've reached the end of our course together, we want to take some time and look back over what we've explored. Just as this process of growing up and graduating can be scary and frustrating for all of you, so too is it for your parents.
 - For the next 20 minutes, we'd like you to begin drafting a letter to your parents, which you will present to them at your culmination ceremony. Even if they may have bugged you over the years, they've done a lot to help you get to this point in your life. Use this letter however you see fit -- it's your space to tell your parents anything you want them to know at this point in time and thank them for things they've done for you over the years. You can touch on lessons or values you've gained, experiences you're thankful for, things you've appreciated, things you want them to know moving forward, anything that feels right to you.
 - These letters will not be read aloud publicly -- they are meant to be private for just you and your parents. This letter can take any form you want it to -- words, poetry, pictures, whatever feels right to you.
 - This 20 minutes of work time is just a beginning -- you will have plenty of time to continue working on these letters between now and the culmination ceremony!
 - If it would help you or if you get stuck during this 20 minutes, feel free to discuss your letter with a chevritah. This 20 minutes is for you to use as you see fit.
- Wrap up/conclusion (5 minutes)
 - Please keep working on these letters and get them ready to present to your parents at your culmination ceremony.
 - As each of you continue on the path of gaining independence from your parents, I hope that this course has made you think about some things you never have before and helped you and your parents create stronger connections with each other as you navigate this process together.

Lesson 5: What does it mean to let go? (Teen Lesson)

Various Texts

TEXT 1 - GENESIS RABBAH 63:9⁵⁵: Rabbi Levi offered a parable: They [Jacob and Esau] were like a myrtle and a wild rosebush growing side by side; when they matured and blossomed, one yielded its fragrance and the other its thorns. For thirteen years both went to school and came home from school, [but] after this age, one went to the house of study and the other to idolatrous shrines. **Rabbi Eleazar said: A parent is responsible for his/her child until the age of thirteen, at which point the parent must say: *Baruch sheptarani mei'ansho shel zeh*, "Blessed is the One who has now freed me from the responsibility of this child."**

TEXT 2 - The Parents' Role in a Bar/Bat Mitzvah Service⁵⁶

By Rabbi Daniel Kohn

In a strictly traditional bar mitzvah celebration, the role of the bar mitzvah boy's parents (usually, just the father) during the worship service is to recite a blessing, *baruch she-p'tarani*, declaring the child to be liable for his or her own actions, according to Jewish law. (In traditional circles, girls do not participate ritually in the service and hence do not usually receive this blessing.) In liberal synagogues, parents often say only the shehecheyanu blessing, thanking God for being alive to celebrate the occasion, and some are taking on new roles, like presenting a tallit (ritual prayer shawl) to their child and leading parts of the service.

The Father Traditionally Recited a Single Blessing

The *baruch she-p'tarani* blessing reads, "Praised are You, Adonai our God, ruler of the universe who has excused me (from being liable) for this one (meaning, the child)." The blessing was traditionally recited by the father, and today is said by both parents in some liberal synagogues. The blessing has two forms, one that mentions God's name and one that does not. Although this seems like a rather strange and perplexing blessing for parents at their child's coming of age ceremony, it is entirely consistent with the spiritual significance of the event.

In traditional Judaism, children younger than bar/bat mitzvah age are exempt from the spiritual obligations of observing the Jewish mitzvot, or commandments. This means that

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children are not required to fast on Yom Kippur, observe Shabbat (Sabbath) prohibitions, or perform other religious rituals, although in actuality children are slowly educated about the commandments and inculcated into their eventual observance.

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