

## Mishnah study as an introduction to Jewish values education

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This paper outlines an approach to introducing central values of belief and ethics in the school setting through study of sources from the Mishnah. Values education aims to strengthen students' religious awareness and give them the tools they will need for dealing with traditional sources of Jewish thought concerning values. Appropriate texts from the Mishnah offer an excellent entrance into the hallways of Jewish thought. Presented in an interesting and systematic manner, mishnaic sources address fundamental issues concerning Jewish values which the later literature treats extensively. My discussion is based on a collection of some ninety *mishnayot* from the order of *Nashim* whose common denominator is their ideational content. These *mishnayot* focus not on halakhic guidelines but on values, ethical facets, the meaning of the commandments, and theoretical aspects of Jewish law. Selected *mishnayot* concerning family life are presented here by subject. Among them: the obligation to raise a family and care for children, relations between spouses, marriage, divorce, *agunah*, etc.

Attention to literary structure and linguistic components of the mishnaic text contributes another important dimension and adds interest and vitality. The selected passages presented in this paper could effectively serve as a unit of study in Jewish values education, in Oral Torah, or in Jewish thought. Alternatively, they could be used as supplementary material to a unit on family and interpersonal relationships, or as source material for lessons on the place of Torah in Jewish life, with emphasis on those elements that students choose from among them.