

A day in the life



A stay-at-home mom's attempt to fill the day of her little one with ruchnius and meaning

Education in the truest sense begins at the moment of birth, and especially when the child begins to show signs of understanding, at age one or one and a half. The child is developing rapidly during this period, and we must fill its waking hours with games and pastimes that have genuinely educational content. Unfortunately, most mothers have not learned how to use their child's playtime to the best educational advantage since, understandably, they are anxious to avoid too much disruption of their household routine.

Similarly, even when the child begins daycare or playgroup, on its return home the mother should fill the hours before bedtime with some sort of positive activity. The problem is, however that she knows not what nor how—and the problem becomes more insistent during vacation time, *Shabbos* and festivals.

An idea worth trying is to form a committee of kindergarten workers who themselves are mothers—women of experience in early childhood education and the home—whose mission will be to mull over the problem and put forward a variety of proposals. These would then be circulated in a special publication dedicated to this topic. (*The Educator's Handbook*, Rabbi Hodakov, p.196-197)

Many times a woman could be heard, while doing housework, cooking, baking, or cleaning the home, telling small children *chassidische* stories. This left a strong impression on the children. (*Sefer HaMaamarim*, Admor HaRaayatz 5711, p. 59)

From the time a baby is born the father and mother need to have in mind raising the child to Torah and *avodas Hashem*. When the father [or mother!] comes to learn, he should learn beside the child in order that his ears should cleave to the words of Torah. (*Shevach Habris*, p. 36-37)

Many stay at home mothers would like to do more to surround their child with *kedusha* and just need some help coming up with ideas. This is the schedule we try to keep. It won't work for every person. Each person should find what works for their lifestyle, personality and the temperament of the child.

Our Schedule:

- **Modeh Ani** I say *Modeh Ani* for her when I go into her room in the morning
- **Negel Vasser** I Wash Chani's *negel vasser* in crib. Once we are ready I wash her *negel vasser* at sink with *brocha*
- **Morning brachos** Chani stands on chair and holds her own *sidder*
- Read **Hayom Yom**
- Eat breakfast while listening to Rabbi Levi Goldstein's the **Living Sidrah cds** on that week's *parsha* [note: This is what works for us. Parents should feed a hungry child before doing all of the above.]
- We say **brachos** on the food with a pause in Hashem's name [Check with your own rabbi or *mashpia* for what to do with a child that does not yet speak]
- **Kinderlach davening** We sing *hireni mekabel*, the "tzdakkah tzdakkah tzdakkah that is what we give" song and mommy and Chani give *tzdakkah*, holding plush Torah: sing "Torah *tziva lanu Moshe...*" and Torah songs, "(little Torah let me hold you tight", "Hashem gave us a present do you know what it was?". We open to *Shema* in the siddur and say *Shema*. Sing song from *Chassidische Chalomos* Rebbe's *niggunim* cd: "First there was Reb Isroel the *Heilecher* Baal Shem tov song..." - flipping through Rebbe board book
We sing *Ach tzaddikim*
I sing the "Aleph Beis" song to her while pointing to the letters and *nekudos* in the *siddur*. Now she knows how to open to the Aleph Beis page in the *Chitas* on her own and brings it to me.

Sheyivaneh Beis Hamikdash dancing while holding up *Beis Hamikdash* model or pointing to picture of *Beis Hamikdash*. Sometimes we hold hands and hold her dolls to form a circle and dance now!

- Sing the **Rebbe Psukim** to *niggunim*. Sometimes I use a big bubble wand to make bubbles for her to catch while singing these to her.
- **Play Tanya with Racheli Jack's cd** I sit on a low stool by Chani's bookcase. She also has a little stool she sits on. She usually sits next to me and pulls out a *sefer*. [For more ideas of how to do this with a baby see the Anash Chinuch Newsletter #1]
- **Walk and give Chani dvar Torah** This is usually something I've just learned or a review of something very important I want her to know (e.g.- How much Hashem loves her, Why we want Geulah, What the world will be like, a summary of the parsha, chassidus on the parsha etc.). I speak from the heart. I've been doing this since she was born. Most of it probably goes way over her head, but it is good for her to know that we fill our time with Torah, when we walk we speak words of Torah and that we are purifying the air.
- **Likkutei Sichos Chavrusa over Skype** It is good for her to see that her mommy learns. She usually sits with us by the computer loving the attention, and then goes off to play when she is bored.
- **Read short section from the sefer the Rebbe Speaks to Children** in preparation for next *chag*
- **Do housework with Chani** I try to involve her as much as possible and let her "help" me. For example, when putting away laundry she takes the clothes out of the hamper and hands them to me to put them away. When I sweep the floor she runs to get her broom and "helps" me to sweep. When I cook she sits with me in the kitchen, and I let her hold things, mix, drop vegetables into a bowl etc. We can already see how this is instilling good *middos* in her from her constant desire to help out!
- **Play time** We play *Chassidische Chalomos* in background. I try to bring in as much *kedusha*/education to our play as I can think of. For example, she has a small *negel vasser* in her small kitchen. We "wash" her *negel vasser*, "wash" her dolls *negel vasser*...
- **I learn 1 halacha from kitzur Shulchan Aruch** and read it out loud to her. It's good for her to see that we try to squeeze as much learning into our day as possible
- **Davening** When I *daven* I hand Chani a *sidder* so she can feel free to "daven too", she gives *tzdakkah* too when I do. Sometimes she even stands by the wall and flips through her *siddur*!
- **Story time** I read her a story- I love the set "Stories the Rebbe Told Us" At some point in the day we usually

read from picture books. We only buy her books that we feel have something to teach her and that are of *kedusha* content. Why fill her mind with *shtus* when there are so many great books available?

- **Tehillim** We sing a few *prakim* of *Tehillim* that we are trying to learn *be'al peh*
- **Dance to Niggunim** Play *Nichoach* and dance around with Chani... she loves this!
- We play some **Morah Music**- I selected some of the more *ruchnius* songs and a few for her to learn to follow instructions
- **Crafts** I try to find Jewish craft ideas online. We don't do it every day, but once in a while and especially before *chagim* to make cards for family members etc. It is good for children to have outlets for self expression. Sometimes we try to draw something connected to what we are learning in parsha or *chagim* etc.
- **Bedtime routine** kiss *mezuzah*, say *shema*, *kush* pictures of the Rebbeim we have up on her wall before going to bed, *tzdakkah*, then I sing her a *niggun*.

Some tips:

- If entertaining your kinderlach all day is overwhelming to you, consider making arrangements with another mother with similar aged kids. You watch them a few hours, and then she watches them a few hours.
- The Rebbe asked that children have their own *sfarim*, so we use Chani's own *sfarim* whenever possible. She doesn't know how to read yet but she can recognize certain pages already because we leave the bookmarks on those pages and we use them as part of our daily seder. For babies you can also put a *Chitas* in the baby's crib and have the baby kiss it once a day.

Please email anashchinuch@gmail.com with some inspiring things you do with your child!