

CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

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BH

WHEN IS IT ADDICTION?

The laws of the stubborn and rebellious son may seem extremely harsh to modern sensibilities:

If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, that will not hearken to the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and though they chasten him, will not hearken unto them, then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him and bring him out unto the elders of his city and unto the gate of his place and they shall say to the elders: "This, our son, is stubborn and rebellious. He does not listen to our voice. He is a glutton and a drunkard," And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die, so shall you put away the evil from your midst and all Israel shall hear and fear. (Deuteronomy 21:18-21)

Of course, some parents might like to have such a right but the sages of the Talmud found this passage quite objectionable and found ways to legislate it almost out of existence. For example, the mishnah, following, restricts how one can become a "stubborn and rebellious son".

If [the boy accused of being a stubborn and rebellious son] stole [meat and wine] of his father's and consumed [them] in his father's domain [he is not considered a stubborn and rebellious son].

If [the boy accused of being a stubborn and rebellious son] stole [meat and wine] of others and consumed [them] in their domain [he is not considered a stubborn and rebellious son].

Until [the boy accused of being a stubborn and rebellious son] stole [meat and wine] of his father's and consumed [them] in another's domain he is considered a stubborn and rebellious son.

Rabbi Yose bar Rabbi Yehuda says, "[He is not considered a stubborn and rebellious son] until he steals from [both] his father and his mother. (M. Sanhedrin 8:3)

The "stubborn and rebellious son" is an addict. Addicts' first priority is their addiction. It supercedes even the bonds of parent to child. Think of it this way. If your child has a drink in your house that's one thing. If your child goes to his aunt's house and has a drink there, that's still basically the same thing. But if the child takes a bottle of liquor from your house and goes out drinking we've reached an entirely different level of misbehavior. Rabbi Yose further restricts the ruling by saying the stolen food must belong to both of the child's parents.

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think of the creative way the sages basically rule out the existence of the stubborn and rebellious son? What else could be so creatively ruled on today?
2. Bar and Bat Mitzvah parties sometimes become lavish affairs at which under-aged (11, 12 or 13 years old) children manage to get their hands on alcohol. Under this ruling are they guilty of being a stubborn and rebellious son? On a more practical note, what can be done to stop this underage drinking?

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