Torah Lessons for the Home

Rabbi Shimon Gruen

| Parshas Chukas |

Getting 'Shalom Bayis Help'

Bringing People Together

In Parshas Chukas we learn about the great mourning of Klal Yisroel over Aharon's passing, even more than they mourned Moshe. Why the great sorrow? Chazal tell us that Aharon was especially beloved by the people because he loved peace and did his best to make peace among the people.

The midrash tells us that 80,000 bachurim named Aharon were at the funeral. Who were these young men?

There were many couples who had separated and were ready to divorce, but due to the intervention of Aharon Hakohen they got back together. Since they had sons only in Aharon's merit, the boys were named Aharon after him, and they formed a special procession at his great funeral.

Helping the Couple

I'm sure Aharon had many methods of increasing peace between husband and wife, but Chazal only tell us one example: Aharon would tell the husband that his wife sincerely regrets her actions and is embarrassed and would like to make peace. He would then say the same to her, that her husband desires to make up. And so, when they met, they would each apologize and get back together.

I think this example teaches us something very important about helping others with their marital peace. It's not about listening to a man's grievances against his wife and sticking up for him. Nor is it about telling a woman "You're so right! I don't know why you stand for this!". Aharon Hakohen was all about benefiting *the marriage*, not the spouse standing in front of him.

So often people make the mistake of taking guidance from someone who wants to help them, but not their marriage. And we need to be honest with ourselves; "Am I looking to help *myself*, or my marriage?"

One of the 613 Mitzvos

Of course you may not be looking for help in the marriage, it could be that you're just looking to get out of it. But I don't think you would be looking for "Shalom Bayis help" in that case, you can just hire a divorce lawyer!

It's true that writing a get is one of the mitzvos in the Torah and there's even a whole *masechta* about Gittin, but it's definitely not the first thing one should jump to when getting into a disagreement with one's spouse.

If you wake up in the middle of the night to find a fire raging in your room, your first thought would be to lunge for the exit. If you can't find the exit or it's blocked by the fire, you would try to extinguish the fire. When something comes up in your marriage, your first instinct shouldn't be to look for the exit. Always see if there's anything you can do to improve your marriage. It's very tempting to look at improving your situation, but we should really be looking towards what can be done to improve the marriage.

Paved with Good Intentions

Therapists and relatives may be well-meaning. But while they mean well and are looking out for

you, they may not necessarily be looking out for the good of your marriage. When Aharon Hakohen heard of a conflict, he wished only to promote peace and harmony. When one's primary objective is shalom, one will never badmouth someone to their spouse.

By the way, I say this all the time; everyone is well-meaning. Your husband is well-meaning too! Are you really married to an evil psychopath? Generally speaking, people mean well, we just have to learn to see things from their perspective. Aharon was an expert at that. He was an expert at getting people to reconsider their grudges and to look towards their spouses with a forgiving eye.

If you're looking for someone who will help your marriage, not just protect "you" - find someone like Aharon. It's a mistake to think that someone is looking out for *you* but neglecting your *marriage*. The truth is that your marriage *is* you. Benefitting your marriage will ultimately be your true benefit.

Learning From Aharon

And it's not a contradiction. A good adviser will look out for you *and* for your marriage! I get terribly disturbed when I hear of this rebbitzen, or that chosson teacher giving people advice that goes against the Torah. People, well-meaning people of course, suggest things that are against Torah, against common sense, and not even helpful!

You can validate someone and sympathize with their feelings without badmouthing their spouses. If you're seeing a therapist who says things against your spouse, that's your sign: This is not Aharon Hakohen. This is not the Torah way! Let us learn from Aharon Hakohen who was loved by everyone because of his love for peace.

Chinuch: Increase the Connection

The mishna tells us that Aharon Hakohen was "*Ohev es habriyos umekarvan laTorah - he loved the people and that's how he connected them with Torah*". Avos D'Rabbi Nosson explains that Aharon would befriend people and be very nice to them; they would feel guilty and think: "If this tzaddik only knew who I really am, he would never treat me like this!" And so they were inspired to better themselves.

This is such important advice for chinuch. Always maintain that connection, work on building it up, and everything else will follow. If somebody tells you "You can't take this from a child! Put your foot down! Show him his place!" The person advising you may be well-meaning, but again, it's not the Torah way! May we all be zoche to follow in the footsteps of Aharon and increase peace and harmony in all our relationships.

-Q&A-

Please feel free to send any questions, on this topic or any topic to RabbiGruen@Lehair.org

Question: My baby came home from the babysitter with an injury, and my wife refused to call and find out what happened. Understandably I got upset at her and started to threaten that if she doesn't call, I will. It's pure negligence, and I think a mother needs to be responsible about this! How do I explain this to my wife if she doesn't understand it herself?

Answer: As soon as you accuse someone of wrongdoing, you're setting yourself up for failure. When you tell someone what they did wrong, and what they should have done, you're putting them on the defensive, and they will only become more entrenched in their position. It could be that they didn't put much thought into their position at all. But now that you put them into defensive mode they will come up with ways of defending their position and turn it into a debate.

All the more so if you start throwing threats at each other "If you don't call, I'll call", it's just escalating the situation. If your wife appears nonchalant about the situation, it could be she's right, maybe it really isn't such a big deal. She knows the babysitter well and trusts her. It happens that a toddler gets scratched up by another kid in playgroup. It's not the end of the world yet, and there's no need to report the babysitter to the child abuse authorities.

You can accept the way your wife sees the situation but still suggest that she call the babysitter. "You're right, it's probably not a big deal, but I would really appreciate if you can call just to double check. If it's hard for you I'll call myself." That's a good way to say it! You haven't attacked her or her responsibility as a parent. You've validated her opinion, yet at the same time even managed to get your threat in so that she takes you seriously. Don't let your child's "booboo" get in the way of your shalom bayis!

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