Torah Lessons for the Home

Rabbi Shimon Gruen

| Parshas Tazria |

Removing the Obstacles

In this week's parsha we learn about the *mitzvah* of Bris Milah. Most *mitzvos* add to the *kedusha* of a *yid*, like we say אשר קדשנו במצוותיו, we gain in *kedusha* by doing *mitzvos*. The *mitzvah* of *milah* however, is unique in that it does not come to add to a *yid's kedusha*, only to enhance and increase the *kedusha* already inherent in every Jew. A *goy* gains nothing by removing the *orlah* "All gentiles are *areilim*" (Yirmiyahu 9:25) "Even when they are circumcised" (Nedarim 31b) because it is not a blockage to his inherent *kedusha*; he has no inherent *kedusha*. When a *yid* performs this *mitzvah* by removing the *orlah*, his inherent *kedusha* shines forth.

Some relationships seem ideal, they are "*yiddishe* relationships", there is incredible potential in them. But there's an *orlah*, there's something that is not allowing the relationship to flourish. There is one blockage that is putting a strain on the entire relationship. And so the Torah is teaching us, before adding *kedusha* to a *yid*, before performing the hundreds of thousands of acts that bring *kedusha* to a Jewish life, an eight day old baby must be circumcised. First remove the obstacles, allow the natural inherent beauty to come to fore, and then you can add on *mitzvos* and *maasim tovim*.

Don't Ignore The Obvious

I think this lesson can be applied to the Jewish home - obstacles to a relationship must be removed. Problems must be dealt with. If you know there's a problem, get rid of it as soon as possible. You know, the story is told of a man who was sitting on a park bench with a carrot protruding from his ear. A passerby approached and said "Excuse me, there's a carrot in your ear". "What?" "There's a carrot in your ear!" "What?!" "THERE'S A CARROT IN YOUR EAR" "I can't hear you, there's a carrot in my ear!"

Sometimes we prefer to ignore the problem in the hopes it will go away. We acknowledge the obstacle but spend our lives tiptoeing around it; in fact we should just deal with it, get rid of the *orlah* and allow our relationships to flourish.

Deal With It

Meir* came to see me this week, he has a great wife, truly dedicated to him and the children. She was very sweet and only saw the good in everyone, including her husband, but had one complaint about him. She kept complaining that he doesn't compliment her enough. Meir fully agreed with her assessment, which is why he came to see me. "Rabbi Gruen, it's true that she deserves compliments, but what can I do? I'm just not the type of guy that dishes out compliments! Is there any way I can make her happy while avoiding compliments?"

If you know your problem, deal with it. Don't try to work around it. I had another client who consistently annoyed his wife, Esther*, by sleeping in. Everyone in the family was awake, hustling and bustling in preparation for a new day, while the husband, the father of the home was spread eagled in bed. It was very annoying, as Esther vociferously informed him. Dovid* showed up at my office asking if I thought taking Esther on vacation would

solve the issue. I didn't think so; just deal with the issue at hand!

The Elephant Under the Rug

Then there's the issue of the elephant in the room. You know, those topics that get stuffed under the rug until the rug touches the ceiling… Sometimes there is an issue that spouses are afraid, or ashamed, to bring up with each other and it creates immense stress on the relationship. When everyone knows about the *orlah* but ignores it, it causes great problems later on.

Pinchas* came to see me. He and his wife have very different ideas on how to educate their boys. This results in constant conflicting messages for their kids. He'll tell his kids one thing, and the next day his wife will tell them the opposite. He acknowledged to me that if they would only have girls they would have a happy marriage, there would be no problem. So here is an example of a beautiful holy marriage, yet in order for the *kedusha* to shine forth, a specific obstacle must be removed.

It may be easier for Pinchas to leave this issue unresolved, but in reality, it just causes a lot of trouble. You need to clear the air. If there is something bothering you, admit it, bring it out in the open, and deal with it.

Now, it bears mentioning that some things *are* best left in the dark. If the issue you wish to deal with can be dealt with on your own, without causing pain to your spouse, it is surely preferable. Some therapists think that every problem must be brought up and dealt with in broad daylight, but this is not the Torah way. Problems should certainly be dealt with, but as much as possible, in a discreet manner. This is an issue we have discussed at length and elaborated more on in previous parshiyos.

Chinuch: Make the Bris ASAP

When it comes to raising children, it is our job to ensure that the bright diamonds entrusted to us are not scarred in any way. If there is any blockage obstructing your child from achieving success, it is your responsibility to step in and attempt to resolve the issue in a healthy way. This is one of the most important tasks entrusted to parents, to allow their child's potential to shine forth.

If your child is being bullied or hurt, or if you notice any red flag, don't stand on the side and hope it will be resolved. Get involved, do something. Sometimes a parent is in denial or for whatever reason refuses to clear out the blockage. Isn't it a shame to let something get in the way of our children's success? Something we can easily deal with?

We cannot allow the obstacles to remain, we have to allow our children's potential to shine through.

-Q&A-

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

Question: My child keeps asking for more and more of me. I can't figure out the balance. When I give too much i feel guilty that I'm spoiling her, but if I withhold what she wants, I feel guilty too, maybe it *is* right to give in sometimes. Can you give me clear guidance in this matter?

Answer: In the case of this question, I happen to know that the parents are in disagreement over how much giving is too much. I think that's an important point to address before addressing the question. In chinuch it is so important for both parents present a unified front. Sometimes a parent has an argument with a spouse and will come ask me what is right only to turn around and say "Ha! I was right!"

Chinuch is not an exact science, rules are subjective, every child is different. So the first step for you would be to discuss this with your spouse. If the two of you can't agree you can both decide to ask a third party, but do it together, as a team. Once you have taken the time to thoroughly discuss the issue and have reached a decision, it's okay. Problem solved, no need to feel guilty.

If a child's parents are firm that he does not need chocolate chip cookies before going to bed, or whatever this discussion is about, you can rest assured that he will not grow up damaged. If however his parents are in constant conflict about what to give him, he is not growing up in stable home environment.

May Hashem give us all the courage to do the right thing ומלתם את ערלת לבבכם וערפכם לא תקשו עוד ונתתי לכם לב בשר במהרה בימינו אמן

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