Torah Lessons for the Home

Rabbi Shimon Gruen

| Parshas Acharei Mos |

In the Right Time

There Are Limitations

In this week's *parsha*, Moshe Rabeinu warns Aharon not to approach the *kodesh kodashim* unless he is specifically commanded to do so. ואל יבא בכל עת אל הקודש! The significant and the sacred always have more limitations than the mundane. One would think that entering the *kodesh kodashim* is an immersion in holiness, shouldn't we try to all pile in there all the time? And the answer is no. Everything has its time and place.

Yom Kippur is very holy, but it's not the time to go to a *mikvah*. The cause you're collecting for is very important, but don't ask me for a donation while I'm *schlepping* home my groceries. Some things are always an intrusion, yet there are things that do not need to be avoided at all as long as they're timed correctly. The same applies to conversations with your spouse. Before starting a discussion ask yourself; "Is now the proper time?"

Some people don't like to hear this. "What do you mean?? My husband should *always* be available for me!" Your spouse *is* available, but at the proper time. Like it or not, people have moods and it is not a question of how they *should* be or *should* react. It is simply a question of practicality; is now the right time?

The Winning Comment

I will never forget, I visited a friend right after he had tragically lost a family member. The *niftar* had been in a far-flung country and the *levayah* had been delayed until the remains could be transported, it was a widely publicized tragedy. As in a lot of such cases many well-meaning people came to the *shivah* home to take part in the *mitzvah* of *nichum aveilim*.

"Here is the winner of the 'stupid comment contest' over the past week" my friend remarked. Someone came and asked where his relative had obtained kosher food on his distant travels…

The truth is, there is nothing wrong with asking how a *frum yid* managed to find kosher food halfway across the world. It's definitely an interesting conversation starter. But not at a *shivah*. Everything has a time. And it gets complicated; it's not something you can learn from your chosson teacher: "Don't ever discuss finances between 5 and 7 PM". There are no rules and you need to employ the elusively uncommon 'common sense'.

Respect Another's Space

Many squabbles can be avoided if only people

would recognize this concept. Someone decides that he *must* discuss his summer vacation plans as soon as he gets home from work. When his wife rebuffs him for bringing up this subject now, he decides to go ahead and make the plans without her. Why? Does your wife have to be in the same mood as you all the time? It's not that she doesn't care about this subject. Just not *right now*.

Or you have a woman who calls her husband at work demanding an answer about something. One must recognize that it might not be the right time. Your husband may love you very much, but that doesn't mean his brain can be in different places at once. First check to see if it's a good time; respect his space.

Don't bring something up when emotions are high. If your husband just 'lost it' with the kids, it's not a good time to remind him of better educational methods. It's very important, but doing so now will just backfire; it's not the right time!

Communication is Imperative

The possuk says ואל יבא בכל עת, "He shouldn't come *at all times*", but there are times when he should come. A couple must ensure that they have time to talk to each other, this is so important! If you don't have time, go out for a walk, take a break; communication is imperative. Try to stick to some type of schedule even when you're not necessarily n the mood. I'm not saying that everything should be on a tight prearranged schedule. You call a 'meeting' and it's an opportunity to 'share' what's on your mind. And there are 'rules'; your spouse has to wait thirty seconds before responding. You might not believe it, but there are couples like that!

There is nothing wrong with asking if now is the right time to have a certain conversation. In fact it's beneficial to do so. It's good to know in advance what you're getting into and you can always try again later. A husband is instructed שארה כסותה ועונתה לא יגרע, *onah* means a set time. When there is a set time for things in a marriage, everything is much smoother. A lot of frustration occurs when two people are not in the same mood at the same time, and arranging things beforehand goes a long way towards resolving sticky situations.

Acknowledge Your Moodiness

In the event your spouse brought something up and you rejected him, it's nice if you're the one to bring it up next. "Sorry that I wasn't available yesterday, I just wasn't ready to discuss it at the time. What was it you wanted to say? Is now a good time?" Some people are too proud to do that, but it goes a long way towards productive conversation.

By the way, it's important to recognize that sometimes you're not ready for what your spouse is saying. There is actually nothing wrong with what she is saying, you're just not ready for it right now. So many times we get insulted and begin to fight back instead of acknowledging that your spouse is entitled to say what she wants to say and you're entitled to ask that the conversation take place at a different time - just make sure you're not *always* asking for conversations to take place at a different time...

What Time is it Now?

The possuk states ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלקיך שואל מעמך, "And now Yisroel, what does Hashem ask of you?" The *seforim* put the emphasis on the word *now*. What does Hashem require of us *now*. There are different things required of us at different times, and it is our job to gauge what 'time' it is now. This week Eli* told me that he just can't figure his wife out; she is always in a different mood! It may not always be easy, but our job is to gauge what 'time' it is, how's the mood, what conversation should I bring up now? Is it the proper time for a joke? Every time brings with it different responsibilities and something that was appropriate to say an hour ago may not be appropriate right now.

There is a time for a compliment, and a time for a joke. There's a time for criticism and a time to keep quiet. There's a time for everything.

They say that a *masmid* is not someone who learns all the time. Rather a *masmid* is one who learns when it's time to learn, sleeps when it's time to sleep, and eats when it's time to eat. I heard that Rav Avigdor Miller *ztz"l* was once asked how he would react to the news of Moshiach's arrival. He answered that he would continue doing whatever he was doing! A *tzaddik* always does what is right for that moment and we should endeavor to do the same.

Chinuch: Hold Off the Mussar

The same lessons should be applied to interactions with our children. It is certainly a parent's prerogative to tell off a child. But when? A father complained to me "Whenever I point out my son's wrongdoings he denies them and argues back". When do you point them out to him? In front of his siblings? A child has feelings too and we must consider them.

There is a time to tell off a child, and a time to compliment and praise him. We just experienced the great *yom tov* of Pesach. Everyone knows that the *heilige seder nacht* is a time to instill *emunah* into our children. In Yiddishkeit everything is structured, there is a time and place for everything. So while it is certainly praiseworthy to speak about *emunah* all the time. Pesach is the time devoted to this.

In all relationships there is a balance to be maintained, on the one hand you want to bring to the relationship, you want to give. On the other hand if someone is taking too much from you, it is probably not a healthy relationship, you need boundaries. With a child too, sometimes you need to give unconditionally; "I bought you a gift 'just because', for no reason". Other times you must refuse to give "Sorry dear, we can't buy that for you right now". לכל זמן ועת, there is a time and place for everything, only we must know what is for when.

-Q&A-

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

Question: Is it beneficial for a couple to work together as a team, or should we keep family and business separate?

Answer: I keep hearing this question and I think the reason it keeps coming up is because there's no answer! It's beneficial for some couples and detrimental to others. There's no clear cut answer. If there was, no one would ask; everyone would know. I've seen it work out both ways. I've seen couples who worked together and thrived. They enjoyed each other's company, appreciated working together and felt fulfilled in their respective roles. On the other hand, I've seen couples whose harmony was ruined along with their business.

Sometimes people ask me about going to couples therapy. The answer is the same; it depends. I haven't met a marriage counselor or even a rov who does magic, waves his wand and restores harmony to the home. So what can therapy accomplish? Sometimes there are things you can't say on your own but you'll succeed when you have the conversation at the therapist's. If you use the opportunity to say the right words at the right time, you can gain immensely. Same with business, if you know how to use the opportunity of working together to compliment each other and communicate, that's great. But if working together causes friction, I would tell you to stay away.

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