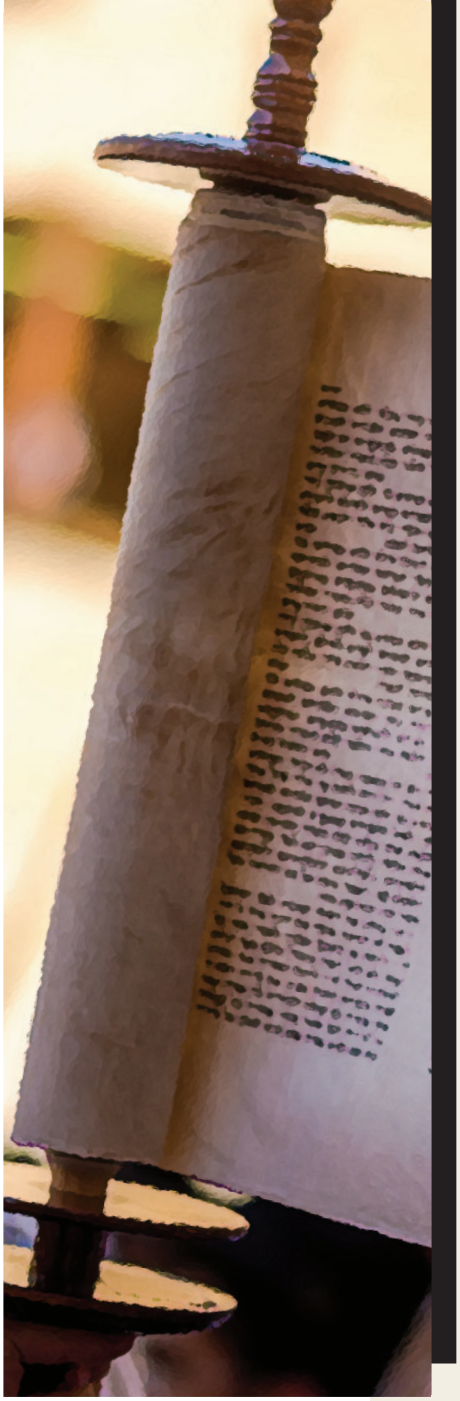


RABBI SHIMON GRUEN

Torah Lessons for the Home

THE LITTLE WE CAN DO

With all the necessary materials donated for the construction of the Mishkan, it was time to erect the structure but, Rashi tells us, the Yidden couldn't complete the job. Therefore, they brought everything to Moshe Rabbeinu — "the tent and all its furnishings, its clasps, its planks, its bars, its pillars and its sockets..." "Moshe had done no work in the Mishkan," Rashi continues, and therefore Hashem decreed that he should finish the construction, "since no human being could erect it [by himself] because of the heaviness of the planks."

Moshe himself could not lift the planks either and protested: "How can a human being erect it?" Therefore, Hashem told him to do what he could and Hashem would complete the work; and so it was.

The Be'er Hasadeh asks how we should understand this. Imagine you're trying to build your *sukkah* and you realize that the long beams you want to extend from one side to the other are too heavy to lift. What do you do? Run to your Rav or *daven* for help? Isn't it more likely that you'll ask your neighbor to lend a hand?

He answers that building the Mishkan was technically an impossible task. It was inevitable that the Yidden would get stuck at some point and realize not that they needed more human force but rather, that they needed Divine force — otherwise known as *siyatta diShmaya*.

Often, when we confront challenges in life, we oscillate between sitting back and letting Hashem do all the heavy lifting, and struggling along on our own. Instead, we need to learn from Moshe Rabbeinu and do the best we can, all while *davening* for Hashem's help in every single area in life.

The Sfas Emes teaches that the "accounting" Moshe Rabbeinu made to the Yidden for all the materials he received as donations for the Mishkan was in fact an accounting of how he reached such a high *madreigah*. Hashem wants us to know that while He helps everyone to fulfill his *tafkid* in life, when we do our best this itself awakens *siyatta diShmaya* that enables us to reach ever higher *madreigos,* and we are given *koichos* greater than we could have imagined.

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Parshas
Vayakhel-Pekudei
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Dear Rabbi Gruen,

My daughter has two beautiful children aged five and three. The three year old was born with hydrocephalus [water in the brain]. *Baruch Hashem* she is doing great; however, she needs and is getting a lot of therapy which comes along with a lot of attention that sometimes makes her older sister very resentful and jealous.

The parents are doing a good job and are very patient with her, but everything has its limits. Any tips that could be helpful would be appreciated.

Thank you



B'chasdei Hashem your little granddaughter is doing well. That's so much to be thankful for.

Very often people tell me how much they gain from reading about the challenges other people face — it helps them to put their own situations in perspective and, just as importantly, to thank Hashem that they are not dealing with some of the things others are.

Having a healthy child seems just part of the way of the world to those who have never known otherwise, as natural as the sun rising in the east. In truth, it's not something that should be taken for granted, just like so many of the other blessings Hashem grants us, day after day.

Sometimes, the essence of a challenge lies not so much in the difficulty itself, but rather in the perspective we take. If we expect everything to go smoothly and it doesn't, we can easily become shaken. If we remember that everything depends on Hashem's constant control on a day-to-day basis, everything

becomes simpler. It becomes easier to deal with a "problem" child, a "difficult" spouse, and so forth.

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You're right that "everything has its limits" and yet, we don't always know where those limits are. Your daughter and her husband are the ones directly facing the challenge of their little girl's situation and they are the ones being given *koichos* to deal with it. It could be that what looks "impossible" or "unbearable" to you feels manageable, albeit hard, to them.

If they've reached out to you for help and advice, that's wonderful. Grandparents are often well situated to be able to provide support and technical assistance. Nonetheless, all grandparents and other relatives, no matter how well-meaning, should always be aware that they are one step removed from the situation and can't always assess it accurately. What feels like loving advice from you can sometimes come across as unwanted interference, unless it is presented carefully.

It's important to remember that your daughter and her husband are under a lot of stress and this alone could cause them to respond to your ideas in a way that feels inappropriate or even ungrateful to you. If this happens, try to understand why. Regardless of how much you love them and want to help, you don't and can't fully comprehend their needs. I have seen cases where the genuinely good advice of truly loving and caring grandparents was rejected by their adult children simply because they felt pressured to take it.

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I'm sure you do have good advice. It's vital to offer it in a non-pressuring way. In fact, it's much better to wait and offer it only after being asked. There are many ways of addressing this complex situation that you're observing, including some that may look or feel wrong to you but which work for your daughter and her husband. You may have to take a step back and allow them to do things their way even if you don't like it or think that they are struggling unnecessarily.

What you can freely do is offer your help without stipulating conditions. Especially in this case, where there is another grandchild to take into account, grandparents can be invaluable. Ask your daughter how you can help best. If she doesn't have ideas, make a few suggestions and let her decide what works for her.

And, aside from that, tell her what you have told me in your letter — that she and her husband are doing an amazing job looking after each of their children in the best way possible. Everyone needs a regular dose of *chizuk* and how much more so, parents who are dealing with an ongoing challenge.

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Your children probably know this already, as you do yourself, but it's entirely normal for the healthy sibling to feel jealous and even bitter at the attention the sick

child receives, even if on some level she understands that her sister needs it. It's unfair to expect any child, and certainly a child of five, to simply accept that her little sister is always the center of attention.

This could actually be one area in which you as a grandparent can offer more help. Your daughter and her husband naturally have more sympathy and feeling for their sick child, feelings that others may not be able to grasp entirely. This could even lead them to expect the older sister to share that feeling, which isn't entirely reasonable, even though it's understandable. What you can do is ensure that the five-year-old gets plenty of attention of her own, quality time for herself that her younger sister doesn't share in, so that she, too, can feel special.

Almost all of the organizations catering to sick children and their families operate on this principle — that siblings are impacted by the extra attention lavished on the sick child and also need to get plenty of attention. In fact, the siblings have to deal not only with a sick child being the prime focus, but also with parents who are often distracted, stressed, and impatient. You describe your daughter and her husband as very patient, which is wonderful, but if you can take the five-year-old out once in a while for an outing or just for a visit to your home, this can work wonders and allow her to bask in the attention that she naturally craves.

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You can also encourage the five-year-old to *daven* with you for her little sister, and tell her how much difference her *tefillos* make and how special she is for doing what she can to help. Remind her that her parents love her just as much as her little sister and that each person needs to get love in a different way.

It can often feel harder to look on while one's child struggles than to step in and do some of the heavy lifting oneself. Sometimes, the challenge isn't about trying harder than we can — it's about recognizing that we can't, and accepting that it's time to ask for help — because we need Hashem's help all the time, especially when we think we can manage without it.



TORAH LESSONS FOR THE HOME: VAYAKHEL-PEKUDEI 5786

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