Rabbi Shimon Gruen

Torah Lessons for the Home

{ Tetzaveh 5780 }

Discerning Wisdom

Smart Craftsmen

When the Parsha this week details the instructions on how to sew the Kohen Gadol's clothing, the *passuk* tells us about the tailors, "*And you should talk to all who have a wise heart….*". Why does the Torah specify that the craftsmen who were hired for the job be "wise of the heart"? It's understandable that someone would need skill to fashion a garment, but intelligence? Later in the Parsha, when we are told how to build the Mishkan, we see the same reference. We would thus have to deduce, that the jobs that were assigned for the construction and beautification of the Mishkan and the Kohen Gadol were not just about the technical aspect. If it was just about putting up some boards and sewing on some buttons, then anyone – even a non-Jew – could have done it.

In fact, I remember that many years ago, as a child, we were tasked with building models of the different *keilim* of the Mishkan. One group was given the *Menorah*, another the *Mizbeiach*, and my group was assigned the *Keruvim*. The father of one of the boys in my group was rather wealthy, and, wanting to help us out, he hired a non-Jewish worker to build the model for us. We showed him a picture from a *Chumash* and he modeled a beautiful replica of the *Keruvim* for our group. It thus figures, that when it came to building the actual Mishkan, more than just practical know-how was required for the job.

The Eleventh Commandment

Even though the Parsha this week does not really discuss interpersonal relationships, we can glean insight for our personal lives from this *passuk*. The first *bracha* we say every morning is "*…Who grants us the wisdom to differentiate between day and night*". Hashem has given us all the potential to see right from wrong. Some people are smarter, and some less so. The main thing, though, is that no matter how brilliant you are, don't forget to *use* those brains! Or, like a head counselor in my childhood summer camp used to say, "Remember the 11th Commandment, kids! Don't be stupid!"

An interesting thing to note is that the Passuk calls the craftsmen "*chachmei leiv*", wise of the heart. Isn't that a bit odd? Usually wisdom is associated with the brain, not the heart. But here, they needed to be people whose hearts and minds were in sync. A sharp intellect is sometimes needed to be able to execute that which your heart really desires.

The Wisdom Within

Some things in life don't require major talent or skill, but can only be navigated successfully with much thought and concentration. Marriage is one such thing. Many elders from the previous generation scoff at all the *shiurim* and classes that are available for today's youngsters where they learn about marriage, parenting, and relationships. They claim that they all got married without it and are doing just fine! The truth is, they're probably right.

Marriage and parenting do come naturally to many of us; it's an instinct that Hashem has blessed us with. However, it takes keen wisdom to know how to be a supportive spouse and a competent parent. We go to classes to learn how to better access that innate wisdom. Unlike driving a car or developing an app, there are no rules to learn and there are also no practice runs.

The Root of the Problem

Problems in marriage usually do not occur due to a lack of intelligence. Most of the time, when someone comes to discuss difficulties he is experiencing in his relationship, he knows precisely why these things happened. When you see someone else make the same mistake, you can immediately point out the problem and even offer a viable solution. You might find individuals who make a living from helping couples, or teaching tens of children, but when it comes to their own home they struggle. Why is that? The reason for this discrepancy is that pesky little thing that gets in the way of our straight thinking.

Emotions.

Emotions are at the root of all our bad decisions. That is why we need "*chochmas leiv*", a wisdom that supersedes emotions.

Periodic Evaluations

There are several ways to utilize our wisdom to improve our marriage and relationships.

Successful businessmen regularly assess how their business is doing. Are they making more money than last year? Are they reaching their goals? Are they productive enough? Based on their findings, they implement changes so that their business can prosper and thrive in the most efficient way possible.

Why not do the same with your marriage? Every so often, take a couple of minutes to consider: Am I happily married? If you notice there's a problem, don't shove it under the rug. Ask yourself: Is there anything I or my spouse can do to improve the situation? How can I help?

When you find yourself consistently coming up against the same challenge, it's time to ask yourself, "What can I do to prevent this from happening again in the future?" A funny anecdote I once heard drives this point home. A man was hired to replace an outgoing *menahel* in a large *cheder*. As a helpful tip, the outgoing *menahel* told the newcomer that he prepared three envelopes for him to open, one at a time, every time there was a crisis. The contents of the envelope will help him deal with the problems.

When the inevitable first crisis arrived, the *menahel* eagerly tore open the envelope. "Don't worry." The letter inside said, "This too shall pass." The second time there was a crisis, the letter said, "Keep your cool. Everything will be alright." By the time the third crisis was upon them, the pithy letter warned, "It is time for you to prepare three envelopes for your successor. Your days here are numbered." When you find yourself repeatedly facing the same problem, there is a reason for it. Take a moment to try and figure it out so that you can prevent the problem from happening again in the future.

Your Spouse's Feelings and Preferences

You can't really tell what another person is feeling, but a smart person might be able to determine why his/her spouse is behaving a certain way. If you sit around waiting for them to open up to you and tell you how they're feeling, or that something is bothering them, it might come out as an explosion with a lot of pain and resentment. Alternately, it might never come out, but they will live their lives needlessly hurting. With a little sensitivity and intuition, both of your lives could have been so much richer and fuller.

It doesn't take much to know what you like for yourself, but it takes an astute mind to figure out what someone else likes. You might even know what your spouse appreciates, but you might not know the right way to give it to them so that both of you are happy. Let's say your wife appreciates a certain tuna sandwich. For three weeks you bring home that sandwich for her. Shockingly, after three weeks, she seems a bit disenchanted by it and your credit card is being declined for some odd reason. You need to use your wisdom to figure out how to give your spouse what they appreciate, without draining your financial or mental resources. Think about it. How can both of you be happy?

Who is Wise?

These days, when we buy a new machine or gadget, there's no need to read the fat instruction manual that comes in the box. Everything is so user-friendly, even a child can learn how to use these devices without too much assistance. Many people enter into their marriage thinking that this is how it will work as well. They'll figure it out – what can be the big deal? For some individuals, this approach might even be successful! But in order to get that deep, satisfying connection with each other, an appreciation for each other's presence in our lives, we need to use our minds to figure out what works and what does not. Because unlike technology, relationships have not become less complicated with the passage of time.

In Pirkei Avos we learn that "*Who is wise? He who can foresee what will happen.*" Is that telling us that a wise person is granted prophecy? How can one know what will happen? Every person slips up and makes mistakes, but it is a wise person who learns from them. He can point to the cause and say, "This is why this went wrong. In the future, I will not do that again." When you think before you speak or act, and you take a moment to envision what might ensue, you are utilizing your wisdom to enhance your relationship.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe Rash"ab taught that we need to spend 15 minutes every day to evaluate how we are doing with our children's *chinuch*. Perhaps we can do something similar for our marriage. Take a couple of minutes out of your day to think about how you're doing. If you are consistently struggling, instead of trying to find someone to blame, figure out a way to improve the situation so that the problem does not occur again in the future.

The wisdom lies deep within you. You are the best candidate to turn your good marriage into a great one.

Chinuch: Asking for Help

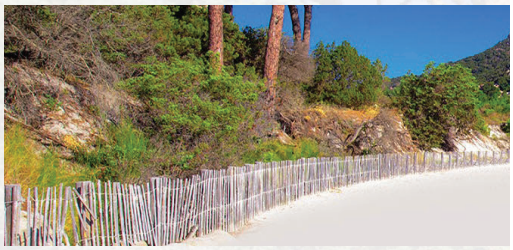
As mentioned above, we need to take 15 minutes out of our day to think about our parenting. We need to realize that each of our children is different and what works for one child does not necessarily work for the other. Instead of yelling or forcing the issue, try to find out why things happen. Your child is not your clone, and you need to regard him/her as a separate human being. Perhaps you should even consult with your child about how to handle a specific situation. It's been

a while since you were a kid yourself, maybe your child can give you some insight into the goings on in his life.

Sometimes it might be appropriate to consult with an expert. "*Who is wise? Someone who learns from every person.*" When you talk to someone about your troubles, it doesn't mean that that person is any smarter than you. But because he is not emotionally involved in your life, he might have the ability to objectively view your situation and come up with possible solutions.

Building a home is a lot like building the Mishkan. You need great skill and a lot of brain work to create a happy marriage and successful children. Use your G-d given skills to turn your dreams into a reality.

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Q&A

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



Question:

My wife sometimes struggles with handling all the housework and keeping our kids out of trouble. I try not to let it bother me and to look away, but sometimes, when things come to a head, I lose my temper. What can I do to prevent this from happening in the future? Incidentally, sometimes my wife does manage wonderfully.

Answer:

We just spoke about using our wisdom. Take a moment to objectively assess the situation. When you squelch your disapproval and stay quiet, are things getting any better? When you explode and shout, are things becoming easier?

Of course, none of these solutions help. When you quietly stew in your anger, the pressure builds up inside, and when something dangerous or terrible happens, you completely lose it. What you need to do is find a calm, quiet time to discuss it with your wife. Don't blame her or put her down. As you have mentioned, she has the potential to manage just fine. It might be very difficult for her to perform her best when she constantly feels judged by you. Show her some compassion and support. Offer to help her out and prepare to be surprised by the change you are about to see.

It's also possible that the last time you broached the subject your tone wasn't right, and that's why it didn't go over so well. It might be helpful to seek guidance on how to communicate your message in a non-confrontational way without becoming hurt by the reaction. Proper communication makes life so much less complicated; it is worth the effort.

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