Torah Lessons for the Home

Rabbi Shimon Gruen

| Parshas Ki Savo |

Recognizing the Benefits

Still Complaining?

At the end of Parshas Ki Savo, Moshe Rabbeinu gives *mussar* to Klal Yisrael as follows: אתם ראיתם כל אשר עשה ה' וגו' ולא נתן ה' לכם לב לדעת ועינים לראות וגו' *You have seen everything that Hashem has done … and yet you still don't recognize Me*. They saw such *gevurah*, *oisois* and *mofsim*, yet they still weren't able to fully rely on Hashem.

After all they witnessed, why were they still complaining? Shouldn't they have felt like they're in good hands? It's very important for us to learn from this. Sometimes a person has been treated well, someone has done many good things for them, yet when it comes down to it, they're still not 100% confident in the relationship.

Will you always continue to question someone who has been there for you so much? When will it finally all add up, and build some credibility in your heart? When will you fully trust that person?

When Children Teach Parents

I had an incident at home that really drove this lesson home. Every night my wife prepares our childrens' clothes for the next day. One night she forgot to leave out socks for one son. The following night, he said to her, ``Mommy, I really like when you prepare my clothes, and I don't want to wake up in the morning with something missing and have to look for it.'

Think about it. How many times were the clothes prepared in the morning? And how many times were they *not* there? Did my wife really need to be reminded just because once in a thousand times she made a mistake?

That's what Moshe Rabbeinu seems to be telling Klal Yisrael, 'When will you realize that Hashem has been taking care of you for such a long time already? Just trust Him.'

Give Him Credit

There are really two points here. First of all, as mentioned, we must learn to build trust and rely on one another. Secondly, when someone has been treating you nicely and taking care of you consistently, you should give them 'credit' in case they make a mistake.

How can we overlook something that a neighbor or an acquaintance did to us, while with our spouse who has accumulated so much credit by now – we find it hard to overlook. Is it right? Unfortunately, sometimes we don't let the good accumulate.

We don't want to notice how much good there really was.

Appreciate the Dedication

When the Yidden complained in the *midbar,* their complaints were actually pretty genuine. They really were hungry, afraid of the *mitzrim*, and wandering in the desert, which are all understandable things to complain about.

Nevertheless, Moshe Rabbeinu was telling them, 'The fact that Hashem has done so much for you, doesn't that 'earn' Him credit *k'viyachol*?'

What about gratitude? The Chovos Halevavos says that if a person would live a thousand years he still wouldn't be able to pay back Hashem for just one breath. This isn't necessarily easy, but it's definitely something to think about.

Appreciate Your Spouse

When children come to us with complaints, we as parents sometimes feel, 'I did so much for you, and this is how you complain to me?' No one does as much for children as their parents. The Sefer HaChinuch says regarding *kibbud av v'eim* that our natural attitude towards our parents should be gratitude.

We all understand that children may be a bit too immature to really feel the gratitude, but unfortunately, adults are usually the same way. Even after only one year of marriage, is there anyone else who has done as much for you as your spouse?

Although there might be some complaints, some additional things that you wanted or expected, nevertheless think about the things that *were* done. Realize that no one did for you anywhere near the amount of things that your spouse has done. Whom do you call in an emergency? Unless you're in a really abusive relationship there's so much that a husband and wife do for each other, on a regular basis.

But He Was Supposed To!

When we learn this parsha we must strive to attain the *leiv l'daas* and the *einayim liros*, to see how much our spouses have done, and to give them a certain amount of credit; you should be able to give your wife some leeway even when she makes a mistake.

Sometimes people say, 'Well, that is what he was *supposed* to do'. Or, 'do you know how much I had to *beg* before she did those things?' Well, maybe if you would stop complaining so much, it would actually happen without any begging. The truth is that even if you do have to ask for it – at the end you are getting it and benefiting from it!

When there was something that didn't go the way you wanted, it's okay to mention it, but also mention and acknowledge all the things that *were* done in the way you like, in a way that was beneficial for you. You can say 'when you did XYZ it hurt me, but I know that I shouldn't make a fuss about it. You do so much that is good for me all the time; this is definitely an exception.'

Rosh Hashana Preparations

There is a person that I know who has a particular love for Shabbos. He once described to me how at the last Havdalah before Rosh Hashanah, he would thank Hashem for giving him the gift of another year of being able to keep Shabbos properly. It's a big *toivah* from Hashem that he gives us *mitzvos* and allows us to keep them!

Maybe, as we approach the end of the year, it's a good time to stop and acknowledge all the things that our spouses have continuously done for us over the course of the year. Let's look back and see how much good has accumulated.

We should thank our wives and our husbands, 'Wow, that was really a lot! Thank you for a year full of making meals, paying bills, doing homework with the kids, and taking care of the house.' Usually, it's already been a lot of years of doing things.

Don't Let Mistakes Define Your Marriage

Yehuda* and Rochel* had been having a lot of difficulty

in their marriage. For a while things had been very rocky, full of complaints and hardship. On top of all that, Rochel was diagnosed with a severe medical condition, which necessitated numerous doctors' visits, tests and treatments. In spite of all the history, Yehuda was there for her, accompanying her to the doctor, going with her for the treatments, and taking care of whatever had to be done.

At one point Yehuda thought that this could be an opportunity to turn over a new page in their relationship. He allowed himself to be vulnerable and suggested that maybe they could put their past aside, and restart their relationship based on their current closeness.

Unfortunately, because of the therapist's intervention, it was snubbed. A "brilliant" therapist said 'How dare he take advantage of your vulnerable state, to try to erase all that he has done to you?' The truth is that no one is there for you like a spouse, as Yehuda proved by his behavior during a time of crisis.

We cannot define our spouses by their mistakes. We need to be able to recognize that at the end of the day, he is the person that cares about me, and not my therapist or my friend or my neighbor. So why rebuff his attempt to make things right and improve the relationship?

Chinuch: A Child's Reputation

Sometimes we judge a child by what's going on at that particular time. His behavior or his learning isn't the way it should be and we get upset. Do you know how that makes him feel? He might be thinking, 'I can't win, I did so much and this is what I get for it. The whole summer I learned well, and as soon as I slump, that's all my parents see.'

To the contrary! When he's not doing well, point out to him how he's proved himself so many times already. Tell him that you believe in him, and you know that this must be a fluke. Show him that you don't see him as a faulty child, and you understand that what's happening now is an exception. You can really work wonders with your child by letting him know and feel that he has a secure reputation.

-Q&A-

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

Question: As a chosson I was taught not to make a big deal about my will, and to allow my wife to make her own decisions. I try to always do as she wishes, but my wife presses me for what I really think. Should I share what I really think about everything? Wouldn't that cause us to fight all the time?

Answer: As with many other things, we say that it's all about balance. If you're showing indecisiveness all the time, it will definitely make your wife uncomfortable. 'When do you want to go the chasuna?' 'I don't know'. That looks like a weakness. Don't you have a schedule, don't you care about when we go? She wants to see a certain amount of stability.

Certainly, don't be controlling, but answer clearly, with strength and confidence, while at the same time showing that you're willing to be accommodating. "I would like to go at 9:30 after *maariv*. Does that work for you?" Also, don't back off as soon as they're challenged; always try to maintain a healthy balance.

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