Rabbi Shimon Gruen

Torah Lessons for the Home

{ Bereishis 5780 }

Loosen Up

Marriage is Invented

In parshas Bereishis we are introduced to the world and then to the institution of marriage. Marriage is that important. There are many lessons in our parsha relevant to marriage, but let's look at one of the first lessons.

When Hashem created a helpmate for Adam he did not create her out of nothing, he didn't even form her out of earth as He did Adam. Rather, He put Adam to sleep and removed part of his skeleton, and that was used to create Chava.

This is vital to every marriage, we need to lose some of our "backbone" before getting married. "*Nechis darga, nesiv itsa - Get off your high horse in order to get married*" is the gemara's advice to us (Yevamos 63a).

In introducing the concept of marriage, the possuk this week tells us לא טוב היות האדם לבדו - *It is not good for man to be alone*". Perhaps we can read it a bit differently "*It is not good for man to be for himself*". Marriage chips away at our innate selfishness like nothing else. We learn to be considerate of others and to relax our expectations for life.

Lessons of Sukkos

By the way, the Yom Tov we just experienced, Sukkos, teaches us this lesson as well. It's important that we take along the lesson our sukkah offered us for the rest of the new year.

Sukkos is all about "a temporary dwelling"; we learn to be flexible, we learn that it's not all about *me* and *my* comfort. In the sukkah we get used to doing things that may not be compatible with our personal comfort and preferences. For seven days we exercise our flexibility muscles.

Sitting in the cold, on a folding chair, with the mosquitoes is not something we need to do all year, but sometimes tolerating people around us may give a bit of a similar feeling!

We live to serve Hashem on His terms, even though they may often differ with what we had planned. Getting married and doing things for your spouse is *avodas Hashem* too. When we lose some of our rigidity in marriage, and we act flexible, we are making Hashem happy.

But not only do we make Hashem happy when we adopt this attitude. We make all the people around us happy too! It's not easy to live with someone who always needs things done his or her way.

But We Discussed It!

Some people can't appreciate this, while they

agree with all this in theory – in practice, certain things are unacceptable to them. If someone is very rigid and unbending it doesn't help to tell him "Sorry, but it didn't work out, it's the will of Hashem".

"What do you mean 'Hashem'?! We discussed this!!"

He may be ready to accept that the rainy weather is from Hashem, or that when *he* makes a mistake it's from Hashem, but that *his wife* doesn't have dinner ready on time?! That's from Hashem?! How dare she?

When it comes to relationships one must learn to be tolerant of the failings of others. It's impossible to live together with a spouse who is always looking for the "right" or "correct" way of doing things. People are not perfect, and if you want to live together with people, you must accept that.

Appreciate When It Goes Right

When talking about people's rigidity, I think it's important to mention the following. Oftentimes, what is frustrating you is only a small part of the picture.

Suppose you were late with a payment because your husband forgot to deposit a check. That's annoying; but in your mind it's even more annoying because he *always* does that. Is that so? Is that really true? Why don't you focus on the positive?

It doesn't *always* have to be the exact way you want it. If it works out most of the time, or some of the time, appreciate it! If only you can learn to tolerate the few bumps on the road, and learn to look at the big picture, and accept that yes, most of the time things are good – then you will have changed the course of your marriage.

Chinuch: Who Are They?

There is a great amount of flexibility required if one wants to be a successful parent. The *passuk* says חנוך לנער על פי דרכו – one must teach a child according to his strengths. Every child is different, as it states in the *Haggada shel Pesach* כנגד ארבעה בנים דברה תורה – the Torah provides four different versions of the *yetzias mitzrayim* story to accommodate the varying personalities of four different children.

There is a certain flexibility that you need to show in child rearing. You have to ask yourself "Who is he? Who is she?" Just because you treated your first and second child one way, doesn't mean that it will work for the third child as well. You can't say "This is the way we do things in this house". As the father or mother, you have the responsibility of matching your parenting style to each child's needs. It's not easy, but you need to be able to bend a bit and learn.

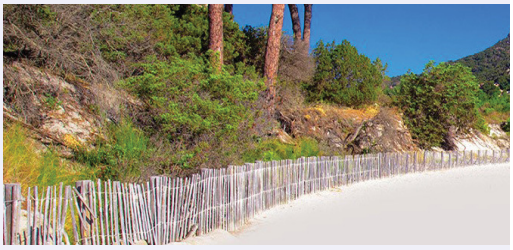
From the beginning; understand your child's soul, and try to speak to *him*. That's the way of the Torah. In order to be successful, you must learn to tailor your approach to each child.

Did You Live Up To Their Expectations?

There is another thing that we say to parents who stubbornly cling to their expectations of the perfect child that they envision: "Didn't your father also have a vision for you? How much of that did you achieve?"

A child is not clay. You can mold your child a certain way, but at the end of the day, every person is an entire world. Every individual has a world of possibilities, a world of choices, and a world of free will. Yelling until you're blue in the face won't change your child. Sometimes, you have to learn to take a step back and try to look at the situation a bit more objectively.

Success means different things for different children and we have to recognize and accept that. It's not realistic to expect your children to line up looking like clones. כשם שאין פרצופיהן שוות, כך אין דעותיהן שוות – *their faces aren't exactly the same, and their minds are certainly not the same.*



Q&A

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



Question:

My son is a very talented fifteen year old and a natural leader, although I'm not sure how much he recognizes this. B"H he's doing very well in Yeshiva as far as learning is concerned, and is not difficult, yet the Rosh Yeshiva explained to him that due to his influence even a minor comment, or smirk from him during a shmues destroys all the efforts of the hanhala to influence the boys. He was actually even given a trial period to see if this can stop, but he seemingly doesn't realize the implications of his actions; he wasn't any different, and now the Yeshiva is refusing to allow him back. I can't just send him to a different yeshiva because he's always had a hard time adapting to new situations. What would you suggest?

Answer:

The answer really seems to be twofold, as my true opinion is that the yeshiva is not necessarily dealing with this the right way. I don't mean to be critical of anyone, I simply think that based on what you're telling me, it would be smarter if they would make good use of his charisma and use it to their benefit, as opposed to trying to simply deal with his unintentional undermining of their authority. This is something that I would suggest to them if they were the ones coming with a question. But as of now, it doesn't seem that that's the case.

Therefore my advice to you would be to discuss the situation with your son very technically – meaning, without blame or logic. Don't try to explain or prove their point to him. Discuss it on a very technical level. Lay out the facts, how they feel, what they plan on doing, and put the ball in his court. Tell him clearly that it may be a mistake, but the fact is that this is how it's being perceived. As a mature and responsible boy, it's his job to try to make sure that they don't feel this way.

Again, make sure he doesn't feel blamed; be clear that you're sure that this may be totally unintentional on his part. Don't go into long explanations about how undermining authority can destroy a yeshiva etc., simply lay out the facts and tell him that you are confident that he is capable of doing a good job. Ask him if he can come up with a way to do things differently and thereby convince them to give him another chance. The less responsibility you take, the more creative he will probably become.

As an aside, it sounds like he's a sensitive boy and a bit self conscious, which can indirectly explain why he's giving off this "attitude" albeit unintentionally. That's why my first suggestion is probably the more practical and realistic. Maybe there's someone whom the hanhala respects that will be able to discuss it with them.

Daven to Hashem that whatever is really best for your child should happen with the least amount of discomfort.

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