Torah Lessons for the Home

Rabbi Shimon Gruen

| Parshas Eikev |

Equality and Fairness

Loyalty to Your People

When Hashem said to Moshe Rabbeinu about the Am Yisroel. "They are a stubborn nation, leave me alone and I will destroy them", Moshe did not defend them by arguing about their good qualities. Instead, he answered Hashem, "Don't destroy *amcha ve'nachalascha*. Your nation, your inheritance. They are *your nation, your inheritance* whom you have taken out of Mitzrayim."

Moshe Rabbeinu, the loyal and dedicated leader of Klal Yisrael didn't deny Hashem's criticism. Instead he said, "These are your people, Hashem, stick with them and continue to take care of them". Even though Klal Yisrael had their faults, Moshe Rabbeinu appealed to Hashem to remain loyal to His people.

Lopsided Relationships

There is an important message here about relationships. People don't like to hear this, but the fact is that not all relationships are fair, some are lopsided. Sometimes, you will be putting more into the relationship than you're taking out.

People make the mistake that their relationship is supposed to be equal, tit for tat, and they complain when it's not. "I do so many things for my wife, and for our relationship, shouldn't she be contributing just as much? Why do I have to be the one to call and say good morning every single day? Is it fair that I always have to reach out and she never calls me?"

And the answer is: no! It's not fair, and that's okay.

Inevitable Lopsidedness

Many relationships aren't 'fair', and there's nothing wrong with that. Interestingly in very many relationships someone is getting more than the other one. Or at least in different areas there's one giving more and one receiving more. And sometimes it's in general. Maybe you're the listening ear and the shoulder to lean on in your marriage. You might be the smarter one or earn more money. There's always someone putting in more.

In my book, Get Along with Everyone, I discuss the various types of personalities, and what causes friction between them. Understanding that people have different needs makes you realize that there will inevitably be some combinations where one partner is giving more than the other. You might have to be more careful about your husband's feelings than he is about yours.

Of course not every relationship is lopsided, so if you feel that this isn't relevant to you, excellent. But many times you might be giving more than you're getting in one way or another. If you don't like that, and you're always fighting

it and demanding equality and fairness – you'll never be happy.

Uphill Relationships

Very often just understanding that this is the way the relationship is set up, is actually what will help you achieve a 'balanced' marriage. You might have married someone with more emotional needs than you. You will need to give them a lot of emotional attention and support, before they can give you what you need.

Let's use the example of driving uphill. If you use the gear intended for driving downhill, you'll be struggling constantly, and using extra gas. But if you recognize the fact that you are going uphill, you can switch gears, making everything smoother and easier. Coming to the realization that you may be in a lopsided or 'uphill' relationship will simply put you into the right gear to deal with it properly.

Stop Suffering

Accepting that you're in a lopsided relationship doesn't mean that you have to suffer. On the contrary, it will relieve the unpleasantness that you have been experiencing until now. You now hold the key to getting what you've always wanted. In order for you to get what you need and deserve, recognize that you may have to give extra.

Baruch Hashem, many couples have reached true happiness simply by recognizing the dynamic of their relationship and accepting it. When they stopped trying to be even, they were able to access amazing parts of their relationship that they had not been aware of. You might have to give 60% in order to get only 40%. But very often that is more than what you were getting before! You will also be getting it much more happily and pleasantly now.

Lopsided Parenting

The relationship between parents and their children is almost always lopsided. You're doing things for your children constantly, and giving them far more than they are giving you. The amount of *nachas* that you get is small compared to the time, money, and energy you must invest. The reason people accept such blatant inequality and unfairness, is because that is what they expect, and they are ready for it.

Parents that enjoy the relationship with their children aren't getting more than they are giving. They simply realize that it is necessary to give first, to give a lot, and enjoying the *nachas* will come later. Knowing that this is simply how things are, prepares them for this 'injustice'.

Whether you like it or not, many marriages are uneven as well. Understanding and accepting this will enable you to give your spouse what they need, as well as actually evening out some of the lopsidedness.

Don't Forget

Sometimes people try this for a while and they are successful. Then they stop investing the extra effort, which causes things to slide back to the way they were. This happens because they forgot that this is how their relationship needs to work. There is nothing wrong if they need a reminder or some *chizuk*. They just need to have the realization that it's not going to change, as well as the acceptance and willingness to make it work.

Objectively it may be clear that the husband is always giving more, and still the wife may be feeling that she is giving more than she is getting. This could be because she has high emotional needs and isn't satisfied with what she gets. That doesn't matter. Even if both people feel that they're in a lopsided relationship, if they are willing to accept it and do the best they can, it will work out.

Instead of being resentful, be realistic and accept that this is the way it is. "This is the relationship that I have, and I'm willing to do whatever it takes". Being able to view this in a healthy way with true acceptance will be very helpful for everyone, and allow both sides to access all the potential goodness in their relationship.

It Is What It Is

I hate comparing someone's emotional needs to a sickness. A sickness has a negative connotation, and it's not negative to be more emotional, but there are definitely similarities. A person who *nebach* has some illness, has special needs, and must be treated accordingly. A person's temperament and

sensitivities can also make them 'high maintenance'.

Suppose one spouse is taller than the other. They both accept that it will always be the tall one, and not the short one, who will deal with retrieving things from high shelves. It has nothing to do with fairness. It's simply a question of each one dealing with things according to their particular capabilities and limitations.

The taller one won't be resentful, insisting that their shorter spouse should grow. With emotional needs too, there are certain things that people will never 'grow out of'. Some things can change but others never will.

Chinuch: High Maintenance

Parenting often brings a lot of stress and challenge. It can cause a feeling of, "This child is such high maintenance. I'm giving so much and getting so little in return". But it's important to understand the dynamics of parenting. Sometimes you have to invest a lot before you see anything in return, and sometimes, for the time being, you won't see anything at all.

Understand and accept that this is just the way it is. You have to know that this is your child, *amcha v'nachlosecha,* and you are the only one who can bring out the best in him. Then you'll be able to do it without all the resentment and difficulty, enjoying the nachas when it does come.

-Q&A-

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

Question: It's vacation season and my wife and I can't agree about where to go. How can I avoid this becoming a stressful issue?

Answer: I actually addressed this in my Q&A column in Lehischazek, a Yiddish publication, but I'll share it with our English readership as well.

When you're discussing where to go for vacation, or anything else for that matter, it is important to have clarity about what exactly your goal is. Are you looking to go away in order to relax from stress, to rejuvenate and renew your *kochos*, or are you trying to give your *shalom bayis* a boost? This will make a big difference in figuring out where to go and how to discuss this with your wife.

If it's about *shalom bayis*, use the opportunity to make your spouse happy. Even if it means doing something that you don't really want, it could be a very good idea. Instead of trying to make her do what *you* want, use the opportunity to build your *shalom bayis* and make your wife feel good.

However, if you need a vacation for a break, then you might need to look for a compromise. Discuss it in advance. "Maybe this time we can do what I want, and next time we'll do what you want, or possibly we can split it, half a day one thing, and half a day something else." It might be better to do what your wife wants, and to look for a way that you can get what you need as well. Perhaps by going with someone else. Planning in advance what you're doing and who is taking care of what, can help avoid a clash that can ruin the whole vacation.

Sponsored in honor of Leah, Mazel Tov on the birth of your daughter!
You're a true role model in implementing Torah Lessons as a wife and mother, may you see much nachas!
Tzipoiry W. and Leah G.

To contact Rabbi Gruen please call 718.841.6557 or e-mail rabbigruen@lehair.org
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