Torah Lessons for the Home

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| Parshas Kedoshim |

The Torah is Our Guide

Jewish Marriage is Different

In this week's parsha we read: ואבדיל אתכם מן העמים להיות לי - Hashem has separated us from the goyim and we are His. This means that we have a Torah that guides us in every area of life. We don't need secular principles to guide us because the Torah is our Guide.

In Parshas Mishpotim when the Torah tells us that we should not go to secular court, Rashi teaches us a great *chiddush* "even if they rule as *beis din* rules"! Even in a case where the secular law is the same as the Torah law, the Torah is what guides us and nothing else.

And this is so important when it comes to marriage. There is nothing Jewish about two people getting along, and on the surface, Jewish marriage would seem to be the same as its gentile counterpart. Technically there is probably not much of a difference, so people may think, "What can be wrong with getting goyish advice on my marriage? Is it truly so bad? What will the secular therapist tell me; that I should respect my spouse? How is that against the Torah?"

The truth is that חכמה בגוים תאמין, not everything in secular literature is false and wrong. But we need to realize that the Torah is our guidance for life and everything we do must be in line with its principles. When you follow advice that is outside of the Torah, you may *think* it is accomplishing for you, and getting you places; those places, however, may not be where you would like to end up…

Torah Willpower

Something may sound very correct and very right, but if the Shulchan Aruch says differently, it's wrong; it can't be helped. The gentiles may have discovered the correct way to live in this world (doubtful as that may be) but they certainly have not discovered how to live for the next world. We are here for the next world, and we must accept the Torah's guidance on how to get there.

So many issues in a marriage are resolved when the spouses know that they must answer to a Higher Authority. It is no longer about 'me' vs. 'him', it's about how can 'we' live according to the Torah. Some people have issues with overeating. But in most cases they won't eat *milchigs* before six hours have passed from a *fleishig* meal. They won't eat *motzoei shabbos* before *havdalah*. These are people who have no self-control whatsoever when it comes to matters of food, and yet the Torah supersedes their psyche. The Torah makes up for their lack of willpower.

If we live according to the Torah, we understand the values of *shalom* and the downsides of *kaas* and other wrong *middos*. The positive effects such attitudes have on a marriage are significant.

Matters of Finance

The Torah covers all areas of life. So many marriages experience bumps because of finances. But in truth such issues should not come up in a *frum* home! The Torah provides answers. Ask a *rov*, a *talmid chacham* and *yerei shomayim*; you'll find answers. The Torah is quite clear that money is the husband's domain. Obviously he

should respect his wife and not constantly breathe down her back about every purchase she makes, the Pele Yoetz, and other *seforim* say that explicitly. But certainly a woman has no right to go *against* her husband in matters of finance.

I was involved in two cases this week. A woman was upset that her husband bought himself new shoes for *pesach*. How can a woman criticize her husband for spending his own money? Another woman had been asking her husband for home renovations for some time but he hadn't agreed to it. This week she took matters into her own hands and called down a contractor without her husband's permission. It's straight out *geneivah*! We live in a secular world so people find it hard to hear this, but it's the truth.

The Torah says that a woman must honor her husband over her father; a woman can't tell her husband "We're going to my parents for *pesach* this year". If you have a preference or a request, there are ways to ask for it. But ultimately, the Torah makes our decisions, not the spouse with the stronger personality.

The Torah Places Demands on Us

Everything is in the Shulchan Aruch. No part of marriage stops because a secular (or even frum!) therapist said that "I can't now". It could be that if you would discuss the situation with a Rov he would also say that you should take a break for a week with your spouse's consent, while you try to work things out. But it's a question of *halacha*, and we can't let therapists decide our way of life.

The Torah is our anchor and we can't let go of it. No one will say "I need to relax with a book Shabbos afternoon for my 'emotional health'. It is too stressful for me that the light is off, my therapist allows me to turn it on." We all understand that *halacha* is *halacha* and we need to find a way to work around it. Maybe take off in middle of the workweek to relax with your book, Shabbos is Shabbos! We need to recognize the primacy of Torah and *halacha* in other areas of life as well.

Some people get other secular ideas about 'enhancing' their life together and 'spicing things up'. We have to know that it won't work even if a therapist with a lot of experience (she went through four marriages herself!) says it will. A *yid* has a Shulchan Aruch and a conscience, and if one works against the Shulchan Aruch his conscience begins to work against him, it doesn't feel good.

Marriage is sacred, marriage is in the Torah. When we say *naaseh v'nishma* and accept the Torah, our marriages improve as well.

Chinuch: We Have Red Lines

It is very important to give these ideas over to our children. Our children have to know that there are certain things we just don't do, because that's what the Torah says. We don't have to be nasty about it to give them resentments for life but we can admit that not everything is *geshmak*. As much as we want to, and should be, making everything enjoyable and enticing for children, there must be an element of קבלת עול, "We do what the Torah dictates".

We don't want to do things the *goyishe* way, but even when we do want; the *Eibeshter* doesn't let. We don't live by our own criteria but by the dictates of the Torah.

-Q&A-

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

Question: My child is not so motivated in *Yiddishkeit*, but there are certain things he goes overboard for, in a way that's completely out of bounds. For example, he's not so careful with getting up on time for *minyan* but takes the *minhag* of not "*mishing*" on pesach to the extreme, refusing to eat even in his grandparents' home.

Answer: I'll assume that you've already tried explaining, debating and arguing with your child. If talking sense to your child doesn't work, what will? Your child needs to feel good about himself, he knows that his priorities are messed up, you've already explained that. But he's starving for your admiration. He needs that compliment from you. Explaining why he's wrong won't help, he's not ready to accept that, and your words will only hurt him.

So find something to admire in him, compliment him about it. Even if it's something wrong, praise the good parts in it. "Wow, what self-control you have!" if you praise him in one area, eventually he will improve in other areas as well.

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