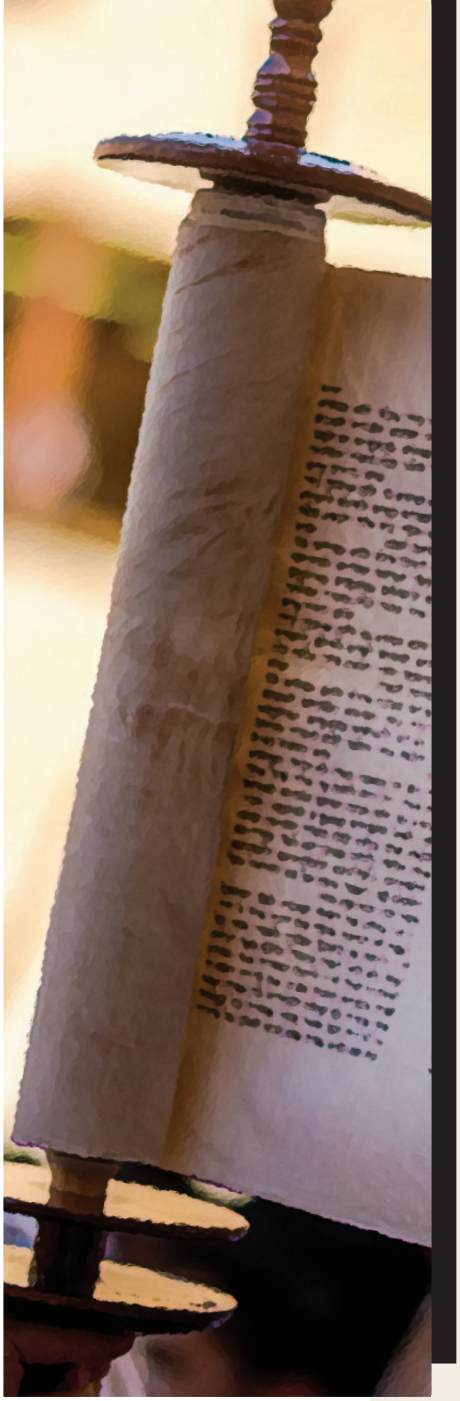


RABBI SHIMON GRUEN

Torah Lessons for the Home

A CONFIDENT ROLE-MODEL

This week's *parshah* includes a warning from Hashem regarding how to eat the *korbanos*, followed by a reassurance that Hashem is the One who makes us holy, if we obey His laws.

The Chasam Sofer adds a layer of explanation to the words of the *passuk*, warning us not to be ashamed of adhering to the Torah and the *mitzvos*, even if people mock us and question our actions. He interprets the words, "They shall keep My charge, lest they incur guilt thereby," as implying that Hashem's *mitzvos* must be adhered to with pride and confidence. We should be confident in the way we live, and trust in Hashem to show us the right way forward even if all around us, we see other people stumbling and falling.

This is so pertinent in our daily lives and interactions with others, especially those close to us. When children see their parents living confidently as *ehrliche* Yidden, with no doubt in the path they have chosen, even if they see others being less adherent or "lenient", the children too will grow up with confidence in their adherence to Torah and *mitzvos*.

However, if parents aren't confident (or even just lack clarity and seem to not have clear direction) and are inconsistent with their values and principles, their children will have no firm foundation to base their own ideas on, and it can certainly be harder for the children to be confident and secure in their own behaviors.

Similarly, even when parents generally have certain standards — but those standards are "relaxed" at certain times, such as during vacation or other stressful periods, this can give children the impression that standards vary based on the circumstances and can be adjusted to our convenience.

It's not always easy, but as parents, we have to look at the way we conduct our lives and think: What do I want my children to remember, in years to come? It's so important to be *mechanech* our children with confidence and *simchah*, and then, with *siyatta diShmaya*, we can look forward to seeing them follow in our footsteps.

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**Shmuel Dovid ben
Yeshaya a"h Kaplan**

Yartzeit 10 Iyar

by Family Lichtstein

Parshas
Emor
VOL. 6 | ISSUE 30



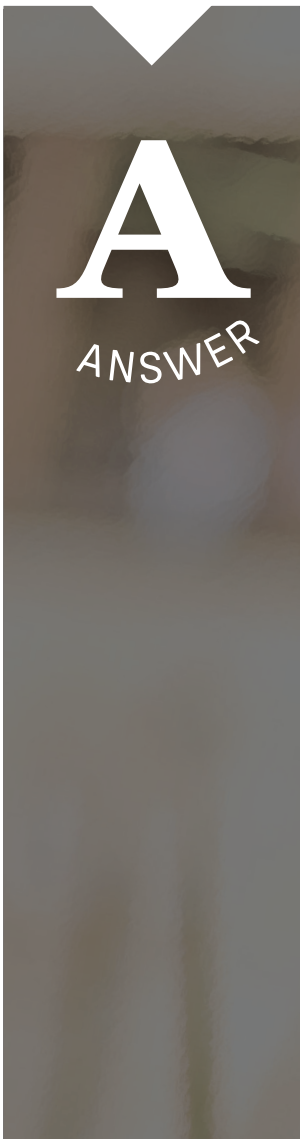
Dear Rabbi Gruen,

I recently heard one of your *shiurim* from Keiravtuni 10+ about how a young married man should deal with a wife who watches movies till late at night — how he should talk to her, to get her to feel that he understands.

I would like to ask you about my son, who's ten years old. He doesn't seem to be so certain what to think about technology and such things. We follow the guidelines of the *rabbanim*, as the *mosdos* demand, but my son knows exactly which of his uncles has a smartphone, which of his friends' fathers does, etc., and sometimes he'll mention a neighbor who has a phone and so forth.

He also has the Shomrim cards that spread awareness about the misuse of technology and its dangers, and said he wanted to show them to me. I told him what we do and that it's not our business to be thinking about what other people do, even if it's his friends' fathers. How can I settle his mind on this issue, or maybe it's normal for him to be like this?

I'd appreciate your opinion, thank you



Before I discuss this issue, I'll mention the importance of each person having their own Rav to address any *hashkafah* and *halachah* questions. Only when a person has a rav, a daas Torah, to whom he can ask his personal questions, can he get guidance and answers that are tailored to him and his circumstances.

Especially when it comes to technology, where innovations are constantly appearing, everyone needs to have a rav he can approach on a regular basis with new questions that come up.

I will try to address this issue in a more general manner so that the ideas will be relevant to more people, and in more situations, than this specific questioner.

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The father asking this question describes a son who isn't comfortable with where they stand regarding the guidelines on technology. The first thing I would stress is that in general, if the father is confident in his position and is consistent, the children will generally become confident and clear as well. However, if these issues are ones that the parents aren't clear about, or haven't gotten clear guidance on, it's certainly much harder to convey any sense of clarity or confidence to their children.

Only when a father knows where he stands, where his red lines are, does it become relatively simple to transmit his clarity to his children. It doesn't matter what uncles or neighbors are doing. This isn't a guarantee, but when

a father is clearly confident, secure, and happy with what he's doing, his children will generally catch on over time.

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Of course, it's not enough to convey clarity and confidence if you don't also follow the rules you're teaching. Children are generally very astute in picking up on where their parents are demanding standards that they don't themselves don't adhere to.

In certain cases, there may be good reasons why a father or mother will do something that they don't allow their children to do. If the circumstances are explained with confidence and clarity, the children will be able to understand, and generally accept, that if their parent does a certain thing differently, there's a good reason for it, and does not apply to them; just as children can understand that even though a Tatty can drive a car, they're not allowed to have the keys.

Another similar difficulty with relaying clear standards is when two parents aren't on the same page (such as when the mother has different standards from the father). Even in such a case, it would be very helpful, if at least for the sake of *shalom bayis* and also *chinuch habanim*, the parents agree on a common standard for the home which will be presented to the children. Even if the children figure out that their parents sometimes do things differently from one another, it is still preferable than hearing them having open disagreements about what the children should be doing.

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Parents should also become comfortable discussing this topic. They shouldn't be afraid of difficult questions — and their confidence in adhering to their standards will usually give them the ability to discuss any questions that arise.

Another thing parents should avoid is making sure they don't make guidelines appear like burdens. Parents should not transmit any sense of, "We don't do this, although it would be much easier/more pleasant if we did…"

Here, the famous words of Harav Moshe Feinstein *ztz"l* are very apt. When asked why the children of parents who had so much *mesirus nefesh* for Shabbos ended up not keeping Shabbos themselves, he would reply, "Those parents really did have *mesirus nefesh*. But they would sigh and groan, saying, 'It's so hard to be a Yid…' and so their children took the message that it would be much easier and more pleasant not to keep Shabbos…"

Similarly, parents should never feel that they need to "compensate" their children for being stricter than others with *halachos*, especially in this area. Yes, it can be challenging to be *ehrlich*, but more than that, the parents need to stress how privileged they feel to be more "holy" in this area, and how sweet the rewards are, both in this world and the next. It's important to always bring happy vibes into the home, and it can be beneficial to offer a variety of outlets for children to enjoy (kosher entertainment) so that they don't feel deprived. However, this should not be presented as compensation for all the "good stuff" they are missing out on.

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Regarding the question of what other people do, the father asking the question has taken the correct approach — that is, it's none of our business.

Years ago, when our *kehillos* were much smaller and less homogenous, it was far more common to find all kinds of Yidden within the same *kehillah* and doing things differently, and it wasn't a problem. It seems that back then it was easier for children to accept that in their home there was one way of doing something even though many families on the block did things differently. Today, when our *kehillos* have *baruch Hashem* grown so much, our communities are generally made up of like-minded people who adhere to the same guidelines, so it can be confusing for our children to find that even close family members are doing certain things very differently indeed.

We have to be careful not to judge others and to teach our children not to judge. Aside from being wrong, judging often generates negativity. It can also backfire in cases where children were taught not to do a certain thing like the neighbors because the neighbors are "wrong," and then they find out that it isn't necessarily so. But we also don't need to condone what other people are doing, and there is a clear distinction (even if it's a fine line) between not being interested in what other people are doing and conveying a message of "each to his own."

When it comes to the "awareness" cards with their caricatures of people addicted to computers and so forth, while there are different opinions about the messages on these cards, I think this depends on the way the idea is presented. It's similar to how we cry "Shabbos!" when we see a Yid driving on Shabbos — not to stop him from driving, because, *nebach*, he's not interested in what we shout at him, but to stop *ourselves* from getting accustomed to seeing *chillul Shabbos*, and to remind ourselves that Shabbos is holy. When we ridicule what technology addiction looks like, it's not to look down at the neighbor, but rather to know what *we* want to avoid, and to be happy that we're not slaves to the devices that rob us of the peace of mind Hashem wants us to have.

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When we're confident in where we're holding, it's much easier to stop judging others and to focus on improving ourselves. However, none of this means that our children will follow precisely in our footsteps. Even when we are successful in conveying certain boundaries with clarity and confidence, there's often still plenty of room for individuality within those lines, and we do need to remember that each person will do things differently according to their own personality.

Some children have a more rigid nature and will naturally settle into a way of doing things that closely follows our own. And some children will become even stricter or more stringent than we are, and less willing to tolerate certain things where we are more flexible. Knowing how to convey the message in a style that fits the recipient is so important; and sometimes, the message has to be rewritten entirely. Just as a rav will take into consideration the person who is asking the question and why, before tailoring a correct response, so too, when we answer our children's questions, we have to take their personalities, mindsets, and everything else relevant, into account.



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As in many areas of *chinuch*, when encountering challenging situations or questions, we have to ask ourselves: What do I want my children to remember when they're older?

Do we want our children to think back to their childhoods and recall: "We were very strict about xyz at home, but on vacation, then abc was okay too"? Do we want our children to remember how, "Uncle R let his children watch videos and I'm sure my Tatty would have liked that too, but he kept telling us how the *mosdos* wouldn't allow it"?

Or do we want our children to think back proudly to the time when we were young parents, and tell their own children, "Yes, when we were growing up, we were very particular about this, even though other people took an easier way out, and we felt so proud to be doing the right thing!"

Be'ezras Hashem, when we make a genuine *cheshbon hanefesh* and reach clarity on all matters of Yiddishkeit, we will have the *siyatta diShmaya* to do things right and see our children following in the right path.

TORAH LESSONS FOR THE HOME: EMOR 5784

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