Rabbi Shimon Gruen

Torah Lessons for the Home

{ Vayigash 5780 }

Self Care

Eat Well And Sleep Well

The *rebbe* Reb Mendel of Riminov explains the *passuk* in this week's *parsha* אל תרגזו בדרך, to mean "Don't *get angry* while you're on the road."

When one travels and is not in his regular setting, he is more likely to lose control over his emotions. He's tired, he's uncomfortable, and he's probably hungry as well. In such a situation, it is very important to remember: Don't get angry! Rest up, eat something, and chances are that with some sleep and food, the situation wouldn't bother you at all.

When you're in a vulnerable situation, notice that you're feeling vulnerable. Remember that you're human and instead of letting your angst out on others, engage in self-care. You'll be pleasantly surprised with the results.

The Horse Is You

Most people know this, but putting it into action is a different story... "I know that I really need to sleep, but I'll push it through...", "I didn't eat anything since the morning – but I'm really busy..." We all know that human beings need to eat and sleep, but we don't always realize just how important it is.

It's like the fellow who owned a horse but felt he was wasting too much money feeding it. Our horse-owner decided to cut the amount of hay at each feeding. When the horse didn't seem any worse for the wear, the owner decided to cut a bit more here, then a bit more here... a few weeks later the horse wasn't getting any hay at all ... and he died.

The owner was dismayed, "Can you imagine?" he said, "Just when I figured out how to get it to work without costing me anything, it went and died on me!"

There are certain expenses that a horse-owner just can't afford to skimp on, and the same goes for us.

Who Ends Up Suffering?

Sometimes a woman might say, "I'll do it. I'll cook supper for the neighbor, prepare for Yom Tov, make an extra two *kugels*, and create a fancy desert! I'll push myself and get it all done." But the truth is; it's an impossible expectation, something has to give. So what will it be? It's usually our closest and dearest who suffer.

Who hasn't heard a variation of the following: "My mother was alwaysnvolved in *chessed* for everyone. But when it came to us, she was always nervous and yelling." "My father always had all the time in the world for everyone, but he never had time for me." This father may be

a genuinely loving and caring person, but if he doesn't know how to prioritize his time, he simply cannot take care of himself, let alone his family!

Prioritizing And Kugelizing

It is so important to realize that a wife/mother or husband/father must be fed and rested. One must learn to prioritize! It is true that you're busy, but the time comes when one must say: "I need to eat something, I need to rest a little. It's not healthy for me to walk around in this condition, I'm not functioning normally. I won't have another *kugel*, but I'll be a mensch! That's more important."

Ask yourself, for whom am I investing all this effort? For my family? For myself? What will my family gain from a *kugel* if I'm not there for them? What will I gain from outside recognition if I lose my *shalom bayis* over it? Your priorities must be straight.

Some people are very nice and cordial at work, but as soon as they come home they vent all their pent-up frustrations on their loved ones. One needs to know what is more important. Ask yourself, "Who am I working for? Am I working for my boss or am I working to support my family?"

Sleep Is The Best Mussar

Someone once told me, "What many hours of Mussar study will not accomplish, can be accomplished by one hour of sleep". Many times a person acts completely inconsiderate and selfish, but the truth is that he's just tired. He is not alert enough to consider the feelings of others.

If someone is feeling very jumpy and impatient, perhaps it's not Mussar that he needs, maybe it's just a few hours of rest, or a little bit of food.

Now, this is perhaps a different subject, but it should be mentioned anyway. Some people take the concept of "self-care" too far and use it as an excuse to evade responsibilities. "Right now I just need to sleep". אל תרגזו בדרך teaches us that we should try not to come home from work tired or hungry. You may want to rest for a few minutes, you may want to have a small snack before leaving the office, but once you are home you need to be present for your spouse and children.

Spouse-Care

Now here's a new idea; Besides for the fact that *you* need to eat and sleep, your spouse needs to eat and sleep too! In a good marriage, both partners look out for each other to ensure that their spouse too, is rested and well-fed. Would you like to take a nap Shabbos afternoon? Your wife would too! Perhaps you can take the children out for a walk so that your spouse can get a much needed rest. Always look out for what you can do for your spouse.

If you were at a late *simcha* and your husband says, "Don't worry - I'll make it through the day somehow". Don't listen to him, try to arrange for the home to be quiet and convince him to grab a few minutes of shuteye.

Usually it goes both ways, if you are truly concerned for your spouse's welfare, your spouse will look out for you too.

And by the way, this is important. If your spouse extended himself so that you can nap, appreciate it and show your gratitude. Some people will say "Nah, I didn't end up sleeping anyway". Why would you say that? You're not going to gain any sleep by complaining. All you will accomplish is that the next time you're tired, your husband won't offer to help — because you just showed him that you don't appreciate it anyway. So although this isn't really our topic; always look out for your spouse, and remember to show gratitude when he/she looks out for you!

Anticipate Difficulties

There is another important point to consider here, and that is the awareness of your

vulnerability. Not always is it possible to take care of your needs, you don't always have food or a bed with you. What do you do then?

The *passuk* tells us אל תרגז בדרך זו! Being vulnerable does not mean that you don't have self-control. You must make every effort to be in the right frame of mind at all times. However, when you are feeling weak, it is better to acknowledge it. Realize that you may encounter difficulties. Life isn't always smooth sailing, but it doesn't give us an excuse to lose control. Our job, as avdei Hashem, is to navigate our lives to the best of our abilities under any circumstances.

Chinuch: Children Are Horses Too

If a child is acting up and seems impossible to discipline, perhaps it is not discipline that he needs, but a snack. Not that a child should be put to sleep or stuffed with food instead of being disciplined. But if you know that the child did not get enough sleep last night, don't waste your time trying to "educate" him. Let him rest up a bit!

If your child doesn't eat the school lunch and is always irritable and picking fights with his siblings when he gets home from school, maybe he's just hungry. Perhaps having a snack ready for him when he gets home will save you much aggravation. It certainly pays to try.



Q&A



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

Question: I didn't feel like it would be the right thing to do, but my son's school pressured me into agreeing that he should repeat a grade. It is a few years later now and I still feel like it was the wrong decision, what can I do?

Answer: There is something important to note here about this question. Many times an argument may arise between parents and educators about the proper course of a child's education. Often parents will give in immediately, as they recognize that the teachers and principals are the professionals here. Don't fall for that. True, many times the school knows better, but sometimes, parents know better. Don't always accept the school's opinion right away, talk it over with someone, and think it through carefully. A decision about a child's future is a very important one, and you should never feel pressured into making a hasty decision.

Another very important point is, to realize that we do not have time machines. We can only deal with the present, if a mistake was made in the past, it was made. There's no way to change the past now. We can only move forward.

In further conversation with this parent, I realized that the main issue was that the child in question is very sensitive. It's very difficult for a sensitive child to adjust to being left back with a new group of younger kids. He he had never accepted the move, never made peace with it, and as a result never adjusted properly.

Sensitive children need more love and attention than other children. Although sometimes it seems that this is the issue or that is the issue, most often when shown enough love, or made to feel comfortable, the side issues suddenly disappear. There are many ways to make the child feel comfortable, and make him feel needed. We need to make this child feel "a part of" rather than "apart from" and all of his issues will *bez"h* hopefully disappear.

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