

RABBI SHIMON GRUEN

TORAH LESSONS for the HOME

{ YISRO 5780 }

RISE UP BY LOWERING YOURSELF

THE MOST IMPORTANT BUSINESS

In this week's Parshah, we read that Moshe Rabbeinu came down from the mountain to be with the Yidden. Rashi elaborates on this by saying "*and he did not tend to his other business*". What does this mean? What other business did Moshe have?

Moshe Rabbeinu was now on the level of a *malach Elokim*. He might have wanted to review some of the prophecies he just received on the Mountain. He might have chosen to continue to tend to his personal *avodah*. Instead, he chose to lower himself to the level of Klal Yisrael and to speak to them in a way that they could understand.

He didn't have to do it. He had many lofty things to accomplish, and yet, he chose to be with his people.

This is a fundamental component of a healthy and happy home.

FOR THEIR SAKE

Every person has topics that interest him, and others that

really don't. True greatness is being able to take an interest in something that is important to someone else, even if it does not necessarily interest you.

When Yisro told Moshe Rabbeinu to come out and greet him in the *midbar*, he told him "Come out and greet us! Do it *b'gin ishtecha* – for the sake of your wife, or *b'gin banecha* – for the sake of your children". It's not always easy to crawl out of our own heads and acknowledge what is important to someone else. Sometimes it's difficult to feign interest in something our spouse is obsessed with. But for their sake and for the sake of your home, let go of your opinions and your reservations, and take an interest in their life. It is a vital part of living peacefully with each other.

Tzei – Even if the topic is not of particular interest to you, go out of your way, *b'gin ishtecha* – for the sake of your wife. The husband might not have patience to hear all about the reunion she attended yesterday, and no, the wife is not even slightly enthralled

by the new gadget he can't stop raving about. For the benefit of your marriage and out of respect for each other, show some real interest. Don't trivialize what is important to them.

JOIN THE GREATS

It's also crucial to remember that what's important to us might mean nothing to someone else. Being able to put our opinions aside, and taking the time to listen to someone else's, puts us into the category of the greatest of men.

Take a look at men like Moshe Rabbeinu, as mentioned above, and so many of our later *gedolim*. They could've spent their time learning and growing in their *avodas Hashem*, but chose instead to listen to people's worries, angst and even random observations for hours and hours. You don't have to do that. You don't have to spend your days listening to everyone's else's pain points, but the least you *can* do is *b'gin ishtecha uvonecha* – do it for your own family.

“WHO” NOT “WHAT”

Even if there is no way for you to muster up the enthusiasm for whatever it is your spouse is sharing with you, forget about “what” is being discussed and think about “who” is doing the talking. Refrain from being patronizing. Show genuine interest - simply because your spouse is dear to you, and do it out of respect for him or her.

Let’s say your husband really wants you to accompany him to a function, be it a simcha or a *siyum* or whatever it might be, don’t tag along resentfully like an unwilling toddler sulking the whole time. Look at it as an opportunity to do something for your husband and show him how important “he” is to you. If your wife is hung up on researching every single *cheder* within the one-mile radius as you’re getting ready to enroll your oldest child, don’t dismiss her obsession saying you have more important things to deal with. Validate her concerns and take the time to really listen to everything she has to say on the matter, because “she” matters.

It’s quite ironic that when we lower ourselves to the level of others by taking an interest in something we find completely trivial, we are actually raising ourselves up to astounding heights. When you find the fortitude to venture out of your comfort zone for the sake of someone else, you have the potential to reach levels of greatness similar to those of Moshe Rabbeinu.

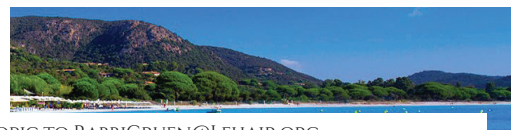
CHINUCH: CHILDISH INTERESTS ARE IMPORTANT, TOO

Children, too, have interests. To you it might seem like childish interests, because, well... but to them, these interests are real and important! Don’t dismiss them indifferently. Bend towards your child, “*b’gin banecha*”. This doesn’t mean that you should become childish yourself and exhibit the same passion for the latest edition of comics as your child, but it does mean that you should take an active interest in what he enjoys, and don’t forget to praise his vast knowledge in whatever he is busy with at the moment!

By doing so you are raising him to be a confident young man and encouraging him to pursue his passions and dreams.

What should you do if you think your child’s obsession is useless or stupid? Show an interest anyway. Chances are, once you indulge him, the obsession will fade away. Suppose your kid is preoccupied with the makes and models of cars right now. This fixation has no practical benefit for him whatsoever, and you think he should drop it. However, instead of trying to knock it out of his head, sit down by the window with him and point to different cars and let him tell you about them. Ask him questions! Let him show off his expertise. Once he sees that you are duly impressed, he might very well move on to his next project.

By lowering yourself to your spouse and children, and showing an interest in what is important to them, you are essentially doing what you’ve always wanted to do. You are connecting with them and building a strong and solid foundation for a happy home.



PLEASE FEEL FREE TO SEND ANY QUESTIONS, ON THIS TOPIC OR ANY TOPIC TO RABBIGRUEN@LEHAIR.ORG

Q: What can I do to motivate a smart, capable boy to review his lessons at home? I tried encouraging him, begging him, forcing him, and nothing has worked. He instead chooses to while away his time doing nothing.

A: When it comes to questions such as this, it’s important to remember that each case is different. Sometimes it is appropriate to be a little strict with a child, while other times only a gentle approach will work.

In this particular situation, knowing that the father was a *melamed* to boys one year younger than the child in question, I suggested that the father ask his child for help in preparing for his daily teaching lesson. Although his son was learning a different *masechta* in cheder, he still felt really important that his father needed his help, and wasn’t merely trying to make him learn. Indeed, when the father complimented the child for his great work, this generated a wonderful feeling in the child and he began to enjoy learning with his father. Eventually, he even agreed to review his own lessons with him.

When we give our spouse or child the feeling that we need their assistance, it makes them feel important and enhances their connection with us.