

RABBI SHIMON GRUEN

TORAH LESSONS for the HOME

{ KI SISA 5780 }

ACTIONS AND WORDS

SEE IT TO BELIEVE IT

In this week's Parasha Moshe Rabbeinu asks Hashem, "How will it be known that I and Your nation have found favor in Your eyes? When you will go with us..."

Why did Moshe ask Hashem to demonstrate it to us? Why didn't he just ask if we had found favor in His eyes?

The Ha'emek Davar brings a fascinating insight that sheds some light onto this topic. In Parshas Bereishis we read that during Creation "Hashem saw and He said 'It is good.'" Hashem created it Himself. Why didn't He pronounce it "Good" until He saw it?

Hashem has put it into the very nature of the world that until something is actually seen, the knowledge of its existence is not good enough.

We see this by the story of the Chet Ha'Egel as well. Hashem told Moshe that

the Yidden have created a Golden Calf. Interestingly, this bombshell did not cause Moshe to break the *luchos*. Only when he came down from Shamayim and saw with his own eyes how the Yidden are praying to the Calf, did he lose his grip on them.

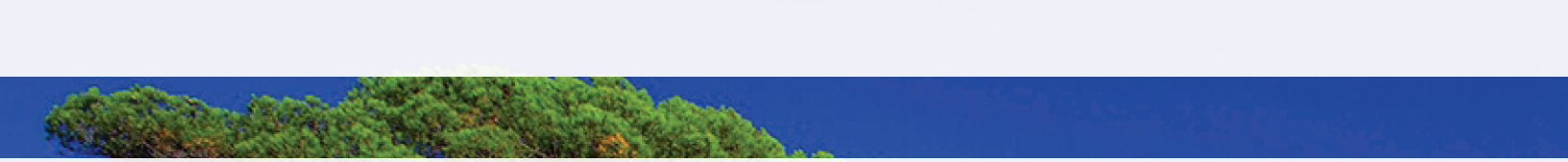
SAYING IT IS NOT ENOUGH

This manifests in our everyday life as well. When we are in a relationship, even though we might know intuitively that the other person cares for us, and they even tell it to us outright, it may not suffice. It is in our very nature to want to see proof of that commitment. We don't fully believe it until we see it.

After we make a mistake, we try to let our spouse know that we're sorry so many times. We make solemn promises that we will improve. And it just is not accepted. We feel as if we can speak until we're

red in the face and still get the same cold response. What might be the cause of this wariness? A demonstration of our sentiments is missing. When our actions don't back up our words, they don't carry much value. As humans, we crave consistency. When we create expectations with our promises, the betrayal of our lack of action, is that much more hurtful.

Even in a case where your spouse does not doubt your intentions - she believes what you tell her - actually proving it will drive the point home. She might accept your apology for arriving home late. But when she sees you making an effort to be home on time every evening, it carries so much more weight than a simple promise. When your statements are mere lip service, it might come across like someone who claims he is Jewish in his heart but doesn't keep any of the commandments.



It's not very authentic. One sincere action is worth more than a million promises.

TAKE THAT FIRST STEP

At times you might feel like no matter what you say and no matter how hard you try to prove yourself, you still can't gain your spouse's trust. They will always give an excuse as to why you were going to do whatever it was that you did, and that it wasn't really meant as a gesture towards them. In such cases it might be helpful to ask, "What would you like me to do to prove to you that I really mean what I say? What will make you believe me?" This will give you the opportunity to show them that you really do care. If they ask for something that isn't possible for you to comply with, have an open conversation telling them why that isn't an option right now, and try to come up with something more feasible together.

Make sure not to sit around and wait for an opportunity to demonstrate that you have improved. Be proactive and find a way to do it of your own accord! If you will wait for them to ask, it might not have such a strong impact. After all, he asked you for it, didn't he? Don't wait until you have to be reminded of your commitment. Once a reminder has to be issued, your action might lose its value somewhat. When you initiate the gesture, it will resonate

so much more because after all, actions do speak so much louder than words.

Sometimes, the problem is a bit different. You do the requisite actions. You help out, you are on time, you lend a hand, but without any feelings or emotions. You do it robotically and without any sentiments. You might then wonder why your spouse is still not happy. When the recipient of your favor feels like a burden to you, and that you are just helping them to get it over with, they will walk away with a bitter taste in their mouth and a giant lack of appreciation. What a wasted opportunity! You're doing it anyway. Infuse your action with a little love and warmth. Use it as a building block to get closer and more connected to each other.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

Perhaps it is you who is hard to please. Are you the spouse who refuses to believe promises and affirmations? Don't be that way. Don't sit around and wait for your partner to bend over backwards to show you they mean what they said. If their actions are not a direct contradiction to their words, there is really no reason for you to doubt them. Be the bigger man!

If you find that what your spouse is doing fails to prove their intent to you, speak up

and tell them how they can make it up to you. She's not a mind reader! When you harbor secret expectations without letting her know what you are waiting for, you're on the fast track to disappointment and frustration.

Make sure your requirements are not impossible to fulfill. Be reasonable and compassionate, and as always, be prepared to compromise!

MOVING ON...

Even if your spouse really did make a terrible mistake, don't dwell on it forever and expect them to slip up again. When you see that they're improving, forgive and forget. Don't be like that fellow who was headed to Pinsk, but mistakenly made himself comfortable on the train to Minsk. When the other passengers told him that he was traveling in the wrong direction, he refused to alight the train. "Can't you see I'm all settled in here?"

Remember the end goal. You want to be happy and live peacefully with each other. Wallowing in the past and being impossible to appease, leads you away from the direction of your dreams.

CHINUCH: DEMONSTRATE YOUR LOVE

You can't possibly give your child everything. You can't always say "yes" to their requests. But hearing "No" from

you might be very difficult for them to accept. That's not because they don't trust you, but because they do not have the capacity to comprehend the reasoning behind your refusal.

Even if you really want what's best for your children because you love them deeply, they don't always feel it. One might get indignant and say, "Don't they see how much I do for them?" No! No, they do not. To your kid, this is how things are *supposed* to be! He cannot fathom the kind of emotional, physical, and financial struggles you have to contend with on

a daily basis just to give him a stable childhood.

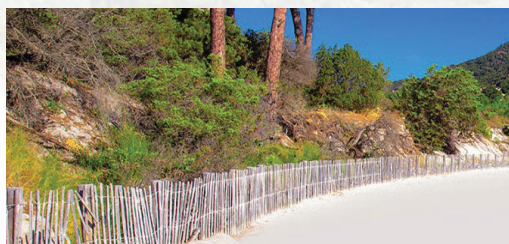
He never asked you for any of these things. He didn't beg you to buy him clothes, or pay the electricity bill, or his tuition. But he did ask you for Playmobil. And when you tell him no, he starts doubting if you really love him. He knows his friend Tzvi loves him, though. You know how? Because Tzvi gave him a snack during recess that afternoon...

We need to assure our children of our love, so that they trust that our "No" isn't mean-spirited. It's simply because sometimes we just *have* to say

that "No". (After all, Playmobil is expensive!)

Telling our children we love them is not always enough. We have to show it to them in tangible ways, on their level, so that they can actually feel it.

And just like with your spouse, when you want something from your child, be specific. Don't tell him, "I want you to apply yourself more to your learning." Tell him instead, "I would like you to learn every Shabbos afternoon for fifteen minutes." That way, your child knows what you expect of him and has an easier time to comply.



Q&A

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



QUESTION:

In a previous segment, we have mentioned that it's very important to let your spouse know when something is bothering you because otherwise resentment can build up, and then burst out as an explosion.

Chaim* told me that he and his wife both read that article and his wife has since then been in a terrible mood, criticizing his every move and pointing out all his flaws. After all, didn't I say that it's dangerous to keep things bottled up inside?

ANSWER:

Last week we mentioned the notion that in marriage, using your brains is of utmost importance. When we say that one should not keep things bottled up inside, it does not mean that every little irk needs to be verbalized. Don't nitpick.

When you express your dissatisfaction in a way that offends your spouse or disrupts your family unity, and especially if it makes all of you be in a bad mood, then it is not being done right! Grievances need to be communicated calmly, in a non-confrontational way, with respect and sensitivity. It is not healthy communication if it causes hard feelings.

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