

RABBI SHIMON GRUEN

TORAH LESSONS for the HOME

{ VAYAKHEL PIKUDEI 5780 }

PLENTIFUL PRAISE

NEXT LEVEL ACCOLADES

When Moshe Rabbeinu relayed the prophecy of the instructions he received for building the Mishkan to Betzalel ben Uri, it doesn't say that Betzalel did as Moshe told him. The *passuk* tells us that Betzalel did as "Hashem" told him. Rashi explains that Moshe had told him to first make the vessels and then construct the Mishkan. Betzalel answered him that the way of the world is to build the edifice first, and only then to furnish it. Moshe agreed with Betzalel and praised him effusively, telling Betzalel that he must be a pious servant of Hashem, since he understood His word better than him.

Moshe had repeated Hashem's words to Betzalel as he interpreted them. He didn't ask for Betzalel's input. Besides, what Betzalel said wasn't rocket science. Anyone could've figured that out on his own. Yet, Moshe didn't just tell him, "Nice work! You're right!" Moshe was the greatest Navi of

all time. Coming from him, even that would've been noteworthy. But Moshe went so far as to tell him that you must be really special in the Eyes of Hashem if He chose you to come up with this phenomenal idea. That is a whole other level of praise.

SO MANY REASONS...

We have so many opportunities throughout our life to give those close to us a compliment and to show them appreciation. And yet, we pass up on it. It's usually not on purpose or malicious in intent. We often simply don't think. Your wife prepared your favorite snack for you this morning, and you absentmindedly munch on it while reviewing last month's reports at your desk. You don't even realize that something special just happened. Take a moment to think how much a phone call to thank her would have brightened her day!

Another reason why we might let something go unnoticed, is

that we don't realize how much time and effort the other person put into it. Your husband worked half an hour to clean the car because he knows it bothers you when he leaves his daily debris flying around. When you not only notice it, but exclaim in delight and pleasure, it makes his efforts feel worthwhile!

Sometimes we think that the other person couldn't care less whether we noticed or not. You will never know how much it means to your wife when you compliment how good she looks, until you try it.

Lastly, we are scared that the compliment might not be the honest truth, and so we refrain from verbalizing it. It's common knowledge that for the sake of peace, it is allowed to embellish the truth. If you want to be brutally honest, then do so with yourself and your own flaws. When it comes to your spouse, don't be afraid to compliment generously, even if it's not perfectly accurate.

WHEN THE EGO GETS IN THE WAY

“Who am I to give my wife a good word?” You might think, “She’s doesn’t need my compliment. She seems to be managing just fine without me.” Well, when you don’t praise her, she is forced to praise herself, hence her appearance of self-sufficiency. But she really does need you to notice and compliment her. And the same can be said the other way around.

In some cases, the thought process is the complete opposite. “Why would I cheapen myself and tell my husband that his smile this morning made my day? Pfft! Please. He’ll think me silly for making a big deal out of it.” Refraining from praising your spouse because you fear they will laugh at you for it, is just a nasty little trick your ego is playing on you. Go ahead! Tell him you appreciate him and watch his face light up!

SEARCH AND YOU SHALL FIND

Everything can be fodder for a compliment. She got all the kids out to school on time. He remembered to bring in the mail. She helped a friend with a problem. He gave his parents a ride to the airport. Jump at the opportunity and lay it on thick! Be careful not to come across overly solicitous or patronizing, because then you will have defeated the purpose.

The difference between an okay marriage and a great

marriage, is the generosity with which you give each other a good word.

Not always is the difference immediately apparent. Your spouse might not always have the ability to instantly show you how much they appreciate your compliment or praise. But the change is there, and the ripple effects will become apparent – if you only give it some time.

Yes, there will always be the people who will brush off your words saying “Meh, big deal.” Perhaps it would be wise to figure out a way they should hear your compliment back from someone else. How nice would it be if her mother told her, “I hear you made a delicious supper last night! Your husband told Totty about it in shul.”

MAKE IT A THING

It’s interesting to note that when someone makes a mistake, we’re really quick to generalize. “You never remember my birthday!” or “You always leave your socks on the floor!” But when they do something nice we just let it slide because, well, that’s how it *should* be! Why don’t we humor the system and flip this around? When our spouse slips up, we let it slide without mention. When they do something nice, we generalize the compliment. “Wow! You’re always so quick to notice when I need repairs done around the house!” or “You always make such beautiful desserts for Yom Tov!” The positive feelings this will generate might very well

cause the compliment to become a fact.

GIVE AWAY THE CREDIT

Even if you and your spouse accomplished something together, let your spouse take the credit for it. It will make them feel better about themselves and appreciative towards you.

Remember the well-known story of Rabi Akiva and Rachel? Rachel inspired Rabi Akiva to leave town to learn, and he did – for twenty-four years! He was away from home for more than two decades, building an empire of 24,000 *talmidim*, whom he nurtured and taught Torah. When he came back home, Rachel was pushing through the crowds to go and meet him. Rabi Akiva motioned to his *talmidim* to let her pass, saying “What’s mine and what’s yours all belong to her!”

Rabi Akiva didn’t have to go this far. He could’ve simply said that she played a major role in his accomplishments. He didn’t have to give her full ownership of them. But he said that when she was within earshot, because he wanted to repay her for her sacrifice and make her feel good. It didn’t cost him anything or make him any less of a leader when he gave her the credit.

GENEROUS APPRECIATION

When you give that compliment, don’t be stingy. Elaborate. Tell your husband how his good deeds inspired you to do a good deed of your own. Tell your wife that her commitment to her weight loss plan is helping

you curb your unhealthy cravings as well.

You might argue that you're always saying the words "thank you". Why does your spouse still complain that you don't show her any appreciation? "Thank you" on its own might at times not be enough. Be specific. Show them that you're not just saying it to check off the little "show appreciation" box. What does it cost you to tell her "why" you liked the food, or "why" you appreciate that he helped you with bedtime? The best part is that the person who will benefit the most from your generosity might end up being you!

If your spouse is still complaining, it might be time step up your game. Show appreciation so often and compliment so heartily, that nobody should be able to say you don't do it enough.

The biggest advantage to that is that the entire atmosphere in your home will change. The focus will shift to looking for opportunities to praise each other. Praise and appreciation are reflective. When your wife sees you searching for ways to tell her things that make her feel good, she will feel obligated to do the same. This will result in a relationship that is so much more rewarding than what you had until now.

CHINUCH: GENERALIZE THE PRAISE

The same thing can be said when complimenting a child. Don't skimp on the praise. When he does something nice, generalize it. "You always share so nicely with your brother! What a giving person you are!" "You davened so nicely this morning. I see you're a real Yerei Shamayim." Use every opportunity that comes your way to build him up and tell him what a wonderful human being he is. He will be inspired to live up to his potential and your words might just turn out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

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

QUESTION:

A father was having some trouble in his relationship with his married child. After talking to him for a bit it turned out that when the child was a newlywed, the father related to him as if he were a friend. When the child began taking advantage of that and started speaking and behaving disrespectfully, the father just let it slide. But as the hurt and resentment built up inside of him, and he felt he could take it no longer, he started giving him the cold shoulder.

ANSWER:

Every situation happens for a reason. Although the father cannot be faulted here, this unfortunate situation might have been prevented if he had set down healthier boundaries at the outset. You need to give your child the feeling that he is needed and that you appreciate him, but if he starts taking advantage of your closeness by disrespecting you as his parent, then there is no reason for you to just sit there and take it. In the nicest way possible, you need to let your child know that such comments or actions are not appropriate. Even if your child might be taken aback by the rebuke – after all, he's an adult now! – if you keep giving him the good feeling, and making him feel important to you, eventually he will come around. A cold war has never helped anyone.

While it is true that the child should have been the one coming to ask for help on how he could make up with his father, that didn't happen. And so, the father was the bigger man and took initiative, making an effort to repair the relationship. He made the smart choice. Sometimes we must choose between being right and being in a fight.

To contact Rabbi Gruen please call 718.841.6557 or e-mail rabbigruen@lehair.org
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