

RABBI SHIMON GRUEN

# TORAH LESSONS for the HOME

{ ACHAREI-KEDOSHIM 5780 }

## A TIME FOR EVERYTHING

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### HOLY LIMITS

In this week's Parsha, Hashem instructs Moshe to tell Aharon, "Do not go all the time to the holy place behind the curtain... so that you will not die." The holy place mentioned is, of course, the Kodesh Kodashim. Aharon is warned not to approach at whim, lest his life be endangered.

We sometimes feel that we should expose ourselves to holiness with no limits. We surmise that it's always the right time to do certain *mitzvos*. But doing things at the wrong time might not only be counterproductive, but also, as the *passuk* alludes, "so you will not die" - it might be harmful. Even something as holy and sacred as the Kodesh Kodashim was off limits, save for a small number of times.

The holier something is, the more sanctioned it is. These limits are put in place to evoke respect and reverence in us, and thus they are not to be tampered with.

### THE BENEFIT OF TIMING

When you want to say something to another person, timing it right makes all the difference. To illustrate this point, let's examine how an experienced fundraiser would approach a prospect. He knows that in order to get the biggest donation from him he needs to find the right moment to make his move. He would not approach his subject when he's obviously preoccupied with something, on the phone, or in the middle of donning his tefillin. Even though the cause he is championing is critically important, he realizes that

attempting to deliver his pitch at an inopportune time will only backfire. He waits patiently until he knows he will have the gentleman's full attention, and only then does he approach him with his plea. This way, the chances of him receiving a respectable donation are that much higher.

In marriage, as well, timing is extremely important. So many problems arise simply because the right thing was said - albeit at the wrong time. Some might find it surprising that even in such a close and intimate relationship, not everything you want to say is always in place.

Hashem himself designated specific times for everything we do, and it's up to us to appreciate that concept and apply it to our own lives.

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## READ THE ROOM

Some things should never be said, but it's safe to assume that these do not comprise the majority of the things you want to say. Most things can and should be said, but you must find the right time so that your message and feelings are properly conveyed. However, anything that has the potential to hurt or anger your spouse should be left unsaid.

The trouble with finding the right time is that this is a very tall order. Davening, going to work, and even eating has a designated time. In a relationship, though, there is no list of rules that specifies when the right time to bring up a touchy subject is, and which hours should be entirely avoided. It's up to us to be astute and figure it out.

When we are in a healthy, mutually satisfying relationship, we learn the signs and signals that tell us where our partner is at. When we are mindful and considerate, we realize that even though we might have something pressing to discuss, we must wait for the right moment for the discussion to proceed in a beneficial and productive manner.

When we wait for the right moment, it avoids hurt feelings and disappointment – on both ends of the conversation.

## KOSHER SPEECH

I was once at a *shiva* house after the tragic passing of someone who died while he was abroad. The mourners tearfully relayed to me how one of the people who came by to offer condolences interrogated them as to where the *niftar* was at the time of his passing. “Was there even kosher food in that far-off place?!” He queried.

Under normal circumstances, it is usually perfectly fine to ask someone who is going to or coming from a different location about the *kehilla* infrastructure in that place. But now, in this case, it had only caused additional, unnecessary pain to the mourners. So much hurt can be avoided if we take a minute to think about the timing of our questions and comments, and their possible outcome.

## AVOID NEGATIVE REACTIONS

Suppose you come home from work and want to discuss a major decision with your wife, such as which summer program to join. Your wife is busy clearing away

the supper while helping the kids with their homework, and supervising the younger ones getting into pajamas. Opening the discussion right now might make her upset and annoyed. Unfortunately, some husbands would take this reaction as a personal affront. Oh, so you don't want to discuss this with me? FINE! I'll make the decision myself!!

The same scenario can happen when a wife calls her husband during work to ask an important question, such as when he's planning to leave to the wedding that night. He might be in the middle of something, distracted by his work responsibilities, and cut her off. She might be hurt by his rebuff and stew in her indignance for the rest of the day.

We often hear husbands or wives complain, “It wasn't what he/she said. It was “when” it was said.” Saying something at an inappropriate time might cause the other party to get angry or snappy with us. At the end of the day, it actually serves “us” well to time our utterances effectively.

Some of us might think that if they were important enough to their spouse, they would ALWAYS have time for them. But it is not so.

Even someone who loves you very much still has their own life and responsibilities outside of your relationship, and it is not always possible for them to accommodate you at the exact moment when you need them. Of course, this is not a cue for you to block off several hours of your day when you refuse to talk to your spouse because “you have your own life”. No. This is for you to realize that they might have a legitimate reason for not being available for you at that moment.

### **MAKE THE TIME**

It’s impossible for you to be available for each other 24/7. If you were, there would be some serious boundary infringements and possible enmeshment. Because of this, it’s very important to set a time – once a day, or several times a week – when you can talk to your spouse uninterrupted. It could be taking a walk outside once the kids are in bed, while eating supper together, or just taking a drive around town. You don’t have to discuss heavy topics every time you do this, but this will be your little island of time – apart from the daily grind of children and chores – where you can discuss anything you wish.

It’s self-understood that not every time your spouse wants to have a discussion with you it needs to be premeditated and scheduled, and otherwise you refuse to accommodate them. Marriage isn’t a business with scheduled meetings and written agendas. Anything can be discussed when the time is right. Setting aside a time to spend together is to prevent a scenario where you never get to discuss *anything* in private because you’re always within earshot of children, or too exhausted or busy to take a minute for each other.

### **ASK QUESTIONS**

You won’t always be in the mood of the same things at the same time. Therefore, it’s important to discuss things beforehand. It’s perfectly acceptable to ask your spouse, “Is now a good time to discuss xyz?” Or “Are you ready to tell me about abc?”. After a while, you will learn how to gauge your spouse’s mood and know when the appropriate thing to do is listen, when only inconsequential topics will fly, and when it’s okay to introduce more loaded topics.

Even if you haven’t yet mastered this skill, you can always be sure that when your spouse is emotionally charged due to other circumstances

– such as right after a falling out with a friend, hearing bad news, etc. – it is not the time to introduce any complex discussions. Just steer clear of more drama, empathize, and wait for the mood to pass.

If you are the one who was approached at the wrong time and you reacted negatively, it’s okay to circle back the next day and tell your spouse, “I’m sorry I overreacted yesterday. I was busy/tired/hungry/distracted. Can we try again now?” When you explain that it wasn’t “what” was said as much as “when” it was said, a lot of pain and anguish can be avoided.

### **ALWAYS BUSY WITH THE RIGHT THING**

Rav Avigdor Miller was once asked what he will do when he hears that Moshiach is coming. “What do you mean?” he said, “I will continue doing whatever I’m in the middle of doing!” When you are always doing what you need to do at any given moment, then it figures that when Moshiach arrives – hopefully really soon! – whatever you will be in the middle of doing will be the right thing.

Serving Hashem is done within a timeframe and not all *mitzvos* can be done at all times. The same thing is true

within a marriage. Sometimes you need to step in and help, other times you need to back off and leave. When you take the time to pay attention and pick up the cues, your interactions will be that much more pleasant and productive.

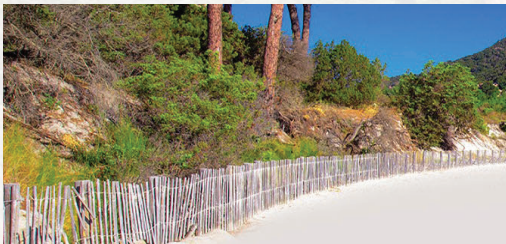
**CHINUCH:  
TIME TO REBUKE**

When your child is acting up or misbehaving and you

really feel like telling him off, take a moment to assess: Is now the right time? Does it have to be while his friends are standing there and watching? Must it happen when he comes home embarrassed and sheepish with a disciplinary note from school? Maybe it can wait? Maybe right now he needs to be calmed down, and an educating discussion

can happen later – when the atmosphere isn't so tense?

If you will lash out and yell, or even gently chide him, at a time when he is not ready to listen, your words will simply go over his head. If you want to get your message across effectively, it pays to wait a little while, until the dust settles, before you say your piece.



**Q&A**

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO SEND ANY QUESTIONS, ON THIS TOPIC OR ANY TOPIC TO [RABBIGRUEN@LEHAIR.ORG](mailto:RABBIGRUEN@LEHAIR.ORG)



**QUESTION:**

Is it advisable for couples to work together as a therapeutic method of improving the relationship?

**ANSWER:**

Therapy is not magic. A therapist can only help you as much as you can help yourself. He or she might help you verbalize what it is you're feeling, or help you rephrase your words so that you're saying what you're really trying to say. But if your words are hurtful and your sentiments are negative, that will come across clearly, even while in the therapy room.

The same thing will happen when you work together. If you are going to utilize the opportunity of being together for most hours of the day to compliment each other, to talk to each other, and to collaborate with each other, then it can indeed be very helpful. But the moment you feel that working together is only triggering you and causing more friction in the relationship, you know it's time to call it quits.

As in most cases, there isn't a clear-cut answer or a one-size-fits-all solution. The main thing to remember is that once you find yourself constantly getting annoyed with each other, there is nothing wrong with admitting that this isn't working. But if you are both aware of the goal you are trying to attain, and you're willing to make concessions in order to achieve it, then there's a chance that it will work out.

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