

RABBI SHIMON GRUEN

TORAH LESSONS for the HOME

{ SHEMINI 5780 }

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

NO SHAME

In this week's Parsha, Moshe bids Aharon to approach the *mizbe'ach* to bring the Korban Chatos. Rashi explains that Moshe's encouragement was needed because Aharon was overcome with shame and trepidation. Moshe calmed him down by saying, "Why are you embarrassed? *Lakach nivcharta!* This is precisely what you were chosen for!"

At every stage in life we have different responsibilities. As a child we need to listen to our parents, as a young adult we need to make it to class on time, as an employee we need to complete our assignments, and as a husband and father we need to provide for our families.

It doesn't really matter whether we think it is necessary, we'd rather be doing something else, or if we never saw our folks or friends do it – as a parent, spouse, or member

of our community, we have to make it our business to get it done. That is what you were chosen for. There's no shame in that!

NOBODY READS MINDS

It is important to clarify that there are certain things that both a man and a woman are obligated to do per Torah and Halacha. Those are not the things we will be discussing today. What we will talk about are the different tasks around the house that could be done by either one of you. Things like who takes the trash out, who pays the bills, and so on.

In many houses these are divided based on necessity according to societal norms or it is a shared responsibility. And that is perfectly acceptable.

It only becomes a problem when you assume that your spouse is *supposed* to do

something. Your assumption might be based on your personal belief, your selfish needs, or because that is how it was done in your childhood home. Whatever the case may be, if you feel like the responsibilities in your home need to be divided up a certain way, you must discuss it with each other. Simply assuming that your spouse will do it, just because you decided that it was their *job*, sets you up for disappointment and resentment. It doesn't really matter what your reasoning is. Your rationale bears no weight if the two of you are not in agreement.

It reminds me of that fellow who dreamed that he was destined to become a big rebbe, and was about to set up his major chassidus. A clever friend made him aware that unless his "*chassidim*" dream the same thing, his fantasy isn't really worth much.

SKewed EXCUSES

There are some things that are not necessarily Torah obligations, but are still a must. For example, it's a father's job to lead his family's *seder*, and take his sons to *shul*. It's a mother's job to make sure her family has what to eat and what to wear. Claiming that you don't have patience or that it's "not your type", is not an excuse. "This is what you were chosen for!"

Some rationalize that by not doing these things, they are able to be better at their other responsibilities. Like when a mother won't ever cook or clean, so that she would have more time to attend to her children. Or a man who doesn't daven *Mincha* and *Maariv* so that he has more time to daven *Shacharis* with concentration.

Of course, if you are sick or otherwise incapacitated, or if you can easily afford for someone else to do it properly for you, that's another story. But spinning tales, only to get out of doing what is expected of you, causes dysfunction and conflict to ensue.

YOU CAN'T ESCAPE IT

Some people are afraid that they are really not the right man/woman for the job, and what is being asked of them is truly beyond their capabilities. In such a case, you must honestly ask yourself if that feeling is just a cop-out, or if it's

an actual disability and needs to be worked on. Perhaps you ought to cut corners in another area of your life to be able to properly do what you must.

A young man once told me that all this pressure and responsibility of abiding to the Yeshiva guidelines is making him dizzy. "When I get married," he declared, "I will move to some hick town where there will be acres and acres of land between me and the next person. I don't want to have to deal with people anymore!" I gently pointed out to him that the family he is planning on taking with him to that isolated plane will also be "people" he will have to deal with.

There are responsibilities and obligations that will be expected of you at all times, whether you live with hundreds of people in close proximity, or just the most important few. You have to be a *mentch* everywhere!

MORE WAYS TO SHOULDER THE BURDEN

Part of your responsibility is simply listening to what your spouse has to say. When your spouse is going through a rough time, you can support them emotionally by hearing them out. You don't need to solve their problems, nor do they expect you to give them any advice. All they need from you is a shoulder to cry on or

another adult to vent to. It might not be enjoyable for you, but whom else should your spouse rely on, if not you?

You also have a responsibility to *your relationship*. That means that even at a time when you feel like your marriage is struggling, don't give up! Despite the fact that you think your spouse is not doing enough to improve your relationship, it doesn't absolve you from your obligation. There is always something more that you can do.

NO REASON FOR FANFARE

When you take responsibility and do your job, don't expect a standing ovation. In *Pirkei Avos* we are taught not to brag about our accomplishments in learning and *avodas Hashem*. Why? Because this is what we were created for! So too, we can't be busy patting ourselves on the back for a job well done, when truthfully, it had to be done! A husband shouldn't be bragging about his efforts to bring home *parnassah*, just like a wife shouldn't expect a trophy for washing the children's clothes.

Understandably, that in no way indicates that you should not appreciate each other's efforts! You absolutely should! When your wife changes your child's diaper or wipes his nose, she deserves a 'thank you' from you. When your

husband calls your son's *rebbe*, show him your appreciation! But when it comes to your *own* accomplishments, when you do the things that you have to, don't demand recognition from the entire universe. After all, "this is what you were created for!"

Becoming a husband and father, as glamorous and exciting as it may be, comes with serious responsibility. It is sweet, fulfilling, and exciting, but responsibility nonetheless.

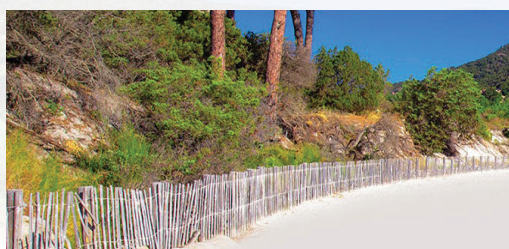
CHINUCH: RESPONSIBILITY TO YOUR CHILDREN

Parenting is not an easy job, by any stretch of the word. Every child requires a different approach and you might feel pulled in many directions at once. But as their parent, you have a responsibility to provide for your child physically, mentally, and emotionally.

It's very possible that you feel drained, tired, and exhausted. You might be in no

mood for your children or their endless needs. But they depend on you! Don't rely on the fact that there's another parent. It doesn't mean you get to shift the responsibility onto them.

You were blessed with this child, and you need to keep your end of the deal and provide him with his needs, even if you would rather just sip a drink and read. Being a parent is an awesome responsibility. You are shaping your child's future! Don't take it lightly!



Q&A

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



QUESTION:

My wife has demanded that I give her something and it is impossible for me at this time. She is very upset by that and told me that until I don't give it to her, she won't give certain things to me.

ANSWER:

It's wrong for a woman - or anyone- to communicate that way. But whether she's right or wrong has no bearing on how you have to approach the situation you're dealing with. Having said that, while it might be very painful for you to be in this position, it's very important not to promise something that you will not deliver. Even though it might get you what you need, you must refrain from empty promises. However, you don't have to give up on what your wife said she won't give you, either.

The best approach, as always, is healthy and gentle communication. Tell her that while you hear her request and you want it as much as she does, it is just not possible for you to comply at the current time. Assure her that you understand the importance of her stipulation, and you will therefore expend every effort to make it happen as soon as possible. You can be clear that you want her to reconsider her conditions based on your current situation.

Don't force it or make demands of her. Just show genuine concern and understanding, and hope your message gets through.

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