

RABBI SHIMON GRUEN

# TORAH LESSONS for the HOME

{ EMOR 5780 }

## SLOWLY BUT SURELY

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### GETTING READY FOR GREATNESS

Nothing happens overnight, and the counting of the *omer* drives that message home for us. In fact, we read about that process in this week's Parsha. The *possuk* (23:15) says, "And you should count 'for yourself'...seven complete weeks... until the morrow of the seventh week you should count, until the fiftieth day."

The purpose of our exodus from Mitzrayim, all of the *makkos* and the miracles by the Yam Suf, was for us to get to Kabbalas HaTorah at Har Sinai, where Hashem chose us as his nation. All of the counting, day by day, week by week, was in preparation for the climax – accepting upon us Hashem's Torah.

In order for us to be worthy of receiving Hashem's most prized possession, we needed to gradually extricate

ourselves from the shackles of Mitzrayim. As each day passed, we shed another layer of impurity, until, on day 50, we were ready. Chassidus explains that this is hinted by the extra words in the *possuk*, 'count for yourselves'. We count in order to improve ourselves and gradually rise through fifty levels of holiness in anticipation of *kabalas hatorah*.

### HAPPINESS IS A PROCESS

Mattan Torah is considered the wedding of *Knesses Yisrael* and the Torah, indeed, many *minhagim* of a *chasuna* are modeled after the great event at Sinai. Just as receiving the Torah was preceded by a process of self-reflection and character refinement, so too we must approach our marriage through a gradual process of improvement

Marriage is not necessarily synonymous with Shalom Bayis. True, some people have

it easier than others. But it's a process for everyone. A happy and satisfying relationship does not materialize overnight. Getting married takes only as long as saying "*harei at mekudeshes...*", but Shalom Bayis happens gradually, in steps.

### FAULTY ASSUMPTIONS

A young boy once asked his parents, "What will happen when I'm big and need to get married? How can I get engaged to a strange girl??" His father tried to calm him down, and explained that once he will be married to her she will not be strange any longer. The boy nervously retorted, "But it's not fair! You got to marry Mommy, Zeidy got to marry Bubby, and only I have to marry someone I don't know??"

It's a joke of course, but sometimes we make the same mistake when we look at a marriage that's a finished

product, and assume that it came this way.

When we aspire for our relationship to resemble a relationship of someone else, we might think that this is how it always was. We have no way of knowing how much work was put into that relationship over a span of *years*.

We sometimes assume that just because someone appears to have it all together, they really do. Someone once complained to my wife at a simcha that she has a lot of trouble getting her kids to settle down before she leaves for the night. "You're in *chinuch*," she told my wife, "It must be a breeze for you to put your kids to sleep." Let me make a clarification here: yes my wife and I have studied successful parenting, however our children are NOT born angels, just so you know. Everything takes time and effort and nothing just happens by itself.

### **GIVE IT TIME!**

Some people come to me for suggestions on how to improve their relationship, and I try to help them. I remind them to compliment more, help out more, show appreciation, etc. But then a week goes by and they come running back to me, all disappointed, that my suggestion didn't help them at all! But it has only been a week! A week is a very short time! How many times did you try my suggestion this week? How many times did

you slip up? You need patience and persistence, and a little more time, before you will see a tangible difference.

Furthermore, how can you be so sure that there weren't any changes? The situation might not be perfect yet, but maybe there were some tiny little subtle improvements? A perfect relationship doesn't happen overnight. Problems don't disappear with the flick of a finger. When you are ready to invest in it and slowly but surely do what's right, eventually you will see the results of your efforts.

We sometimes need to reflect back to the past to realize how much has really changed. Some people feel so discouraged thinking that all their efforts were for naught. But when you think back to the same time last year, or last month, you might realize that things *have* actually gotten better! Maybe he compliments you more, maybe she is more communicative? Maybe he doesn't come home late so often, maybe she yells less? Look at how much you've grown, at how far you've come! Tell each other that you notice the changes, and take a moment to appreciate how much better your relationship is now.

The only way to get to this point is to be patient with yourself and with your spouse, and acknowledge that nobody is perfect just yet. We're all a work in progress and we have to give ourselves the space to

gradually grow into our best selves, step by step.

### **VALUE YOUR INVESTMENT**

The more you invest in something, the more valuable it becomes to you. There was a story with the Bais Yisroel of Gur, who sent one of his close followers, Bunim, to reprimand one of his *gevirim* for planning to send his only child to university.

After Bunim relayed the Rebbe's message to the *gevir*, the *gevir* asked him, "If I give you \$100,000 would you stop going to the Rebbe?" "No. I don't think I would stop going to the Rebbe if you give me all that money." Bunim said after mulling over this strange offer.

What if I give you \$500,000? How about \$1,000,000?"

The *gevir* went on to explain. "To me, my son is worth more than all of that money. I went through a concentration camp, I suffered through a Holocaust, and then I finally had the courage to build a family and have a child. I am not ready to give this child away for the Rebbe!"

When Bunim dejectedly returned to the Rebbe to tell him of his failed mission, the Rebbe wanted to know what the *gevir* had said to him. Bunim hesitantly relayed the story, and the Rebbe said, "You know what? He's saying something very profound. When a person invests so much of himself into something, it's extremely difficult to let go of it."

This is not to say that we can so blithely dismiss a Rebbe's orders, but, like the Bais Yisroel, let's take a lesson out of this man's *chutzpah*. When you invest in your relationship, you give it all you have, don't be so swift to give it up when you hit a snag. Don't throw in the towel because you're not seeing any changes. Wait it out. Give it time. Ever so slowly, the changes *will* become apparent. Don't discard something that you have worked so hard to build.

### HANG IN THERE

To build a solid snowman, we start with a small snowball and roll it until it becomes a beautiful big ball of snow. If we are not consistent, however, the snowflakes will dissipate and flutter off to the side.

Take initiative, roll that first snowball, and keep pushing onward until your snowman is standing beautiful and strong. And don't just wait around until the project is complete before you stand back and admire it. Notice the little changes, keep track of the minor improvements, and never give up!

Remember to notice your spouse's hard work as well. It won't cause them to lose momentum when you compliment their hard work and acknowledge their efforts. On the contrary, it will only encourage them to keep it up.

Let's not be like the gentile guest at the seder who got

bored and ran away right before Shulchan Oreich. We want to reap the rewards of our hard work by hanging in there, step by step, day by day, until we reach "Nirtza", b'Ezras Hashem.

### CHINUCH: THE PROCESS OF CHILD REARING

Our goal when being *mechanech* our children is to bring them to Kabbalas Hatorah, to raise them to be righteous and upstanding *ovdei Hashem*. No child is born perfect. As they grow their needs change, they mature, they learn right from wrong, and eventually they turn into "mentchen".

We can't expect from a 3-year-old what we expect from a 9-year-old, and we can't expect from a 9-year-old what we expect from a 15-year-old. We have to make sure that our expectations are age appropriate, and realize that raising a child takes patience. They don't metamorphose into perfect human beings in a matter of minutes.

Make sure to let your child know that you notice how much he's growing. You can even tell him that you don't expect perfection of him, just his best efforts. Positivity begets positivity, so with encouragement and patient guidance, you will IY"H be *zoche* to celebrate your efforts when your child grows into a mature young man.



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

### QUESTION:

My friend shared questionable ideas for private married life, and I'm not sure if it's okay to implement them. Whom do I ask?

### ANSWER:

Any questions regarding such issues should be directed to a qualified Daas Torah, preferably your personal Rav/Rabbi.

Having said that, I want to strongly advise against the discussing of private matters between friends. Besides for the breach of privacy and lack of *tznius*, such conversations are inherently dangerous and have resulted in numerous damaged relationships and avoidable problems. If you have an issue or problem you need help with, then by all means seek out a qualified, appropriate party that can help you sort it out. But pointless chatter about such a sacred topic has only been known to create problems where there were none.

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