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PARASHAH

LESS IS MORE

Torah for Your Table by Rabbis Yisroel and Osher Anshel Jungreis

Devarim, the fifth Book of the Torah, is also referred to as *Mishnah Torah*, a review of the Torah. Knowing that he will soon die, Moshe Rabbeinu reviews the Torah with his beloved people and admonishes them for their sins.

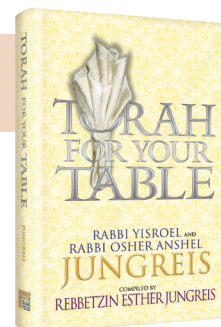
Too often, when we admonish members of our own families and friends, we have a ten-

**“DON'T CRITICIZE A FOOL,
FOR HE WILL HATE YOU;
CRITICIZE A WISE MAN
AND HE WILL LOVE YOU.”**

dency to fall into the trap of “overkill.” We go on and on, and unfortunately, don't quite know where or when to stop. To be sure, we may be motivated by love and genuine concern, but, because of our heavy-handedness, by the time we finish, our words are interpreted as abuse rather than as loving, concerned guidance.

Not only does such criticism fail to be instructive or helpful, but it will elicit just the opposite reaction. Instead of correction and improvement, it will generate resentment, disdain, and further rebellion.

Moshe teaches us that, when it comes to criticism, less is more. There is a Talmudic dictum, “*Dai lechakima b'remiza* — For the wise, an allusion suffices.” Admittedly, there are those who are not wise and remain deaf to admonition, but such people remain obdurate no matter what, and even a sledgehammer won't move them. Harping on a subject is not only counterproductive, but it will generate contempt. Before criticizing, collect your thoughts and weigh your words carefully. Shlomo Hamelech taught, “Don't criticize a fool, for he will hate you; criticize a wise man and he will love you.”



PARASHAH

CHINUCH CONCESSIONS

Rabbi Frand On The Parashah 2 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

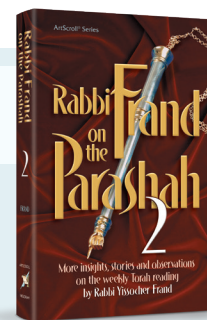
“ויטב בעיני הדבר” - *The idea was good in my eyes* (1:23).

Parashas Devarim begins with Moshe Rabbeinu reviewing the main events that occurred in the 40 years since the Jewish People left Egypt. In recalling their request to send spies to reconnoiter Eretz Yisrael before proceeding to the Land, Moshe castigates them for the disorderly manner with which they made their request, but he concedes that “the idea was good in my eyes.”

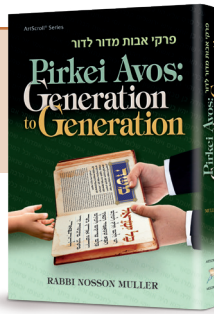
The *Gemara* (*Sotah* 34b) deduces from Moshe's statement — “The idea was good in my eyes” — that only he felt that it was a good idea to send spies, but Hashem did not.

Hashem knew that sending spies would end in disaster, and He did not want them to go. This is difficult to understand. If Hashem knew that the spies would end up poisoning the minds of the nation against Eretz Yisrael, why did He agree that they could go? Hashem should have told Moshe, “Tell them that I am God, I call the shots, and I said, ‘NO!’”

Rav Mottel Katz, the late *rosh yeshivah* of Telz in Cleveland, Ohio, deduces an important lesson in *chinuch* from this incident.



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חמשה תלמידים היו לו לרבן יוחנן בן זכאי... רבי אליעזר
בן הורקנוס בור סוד שאינו מאבד טפה

"Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai had five primary disciples... Rabi Eliezer Ben Hyrkanos was like a cemented cistern that loses not a drop" (Pirkei Avos 2:11).

At first glance, this quality seems to be out of place. Does having a good memory define someone as special and a person to emulate? It is definitely a gift from Hashem that one needs to appreciate. However, what is there to learn from such a quality that Rabban Yochanan felt the need to point it out?

The answer is that, true, having a good memory doesn't prove any greatness of character. However, what a person does with the gift he is granted from Above says worlds about him. Rabban Yochanan was pointing out what Rabi Eliezer ben Hyrkanos did with the gift of a phenomenal memory. He didn't use it to memorize statistics, to perform amazing card tricks, or for record-breaking achievements. Rather, he used it solely to fill his mind with holy words of Torah, and so he merited to not lose even one drop of what he had amassed. No matter what type of memory he would have been blessed with, had Rabbi Eliezer cluttered his mind with frivolous and impractical pieces of information, the wisdom of Torah would have never been able to remain within him.

Due to a serious matter of life and death, the Chasam Sofer once

needed to meet with an emperor on Shabbos. The rav's stately demeanor and presence made quite an impression on the emperor and the Chasam Sofer was able to accomplish what he had come for quite easily. As the rav got up to leave, the emperor called for his aide to present his esteemed guest with a royal cigar in commemoration of his visit.

The aide rushed to bring the rav the cigar and presented it to him in full glory on a plush, velvet cushion. Before the Chasam Sofer could utter a word, the emperor took a lighter out of his pocket, ignited it, and offered the flame to the Chasam Sofer to light the cigar, right then and there. The attendants who had accompanied the Chasam Sofer were aghast. What were they to do? If the emperor would be insulted by their rebbe's refusal to smoke on Shabbos, everything they had managed to accomplish would go up in smoke – literally!

In a stroke of pure genius, the Chasam Sofer smiled broadly, raised his hand in refusal, and said to the emperor, "My honored friends, I have no words to thank you for the gift you wish to bestow upon me. I do not take your show of honor lightly. Yet,

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There are times when children want to do something that their parents deem inappropriate. Our parental instincts tell us to lay down the law and prohibit them from doing what they want to do. We reason to ourselves that we are required to educate our children, and sometimes this means that we have to say, "No."


But is it always right to say no?

We learn from the spies, said Rav Katz, that there are times when we have to concede, even if we know that what our children want to do is wrong.

WE HAVE TO KNOW WHEN OUR CHILDREN ARE ABLE TO ACCEPT A "NO."

Hashem knew that the people simply were not ready to accept His denial of their request. Had Moshe returned from Hashem with a negative response, they would have thought to themselves, "How are we supposed to go and fight against a country without sending spies? Everyone knows that you do not fight without intelligence information."

Had Klal Yisrael been on a high-enough spiritual level to accept Hashem's refusal, He would have said no. But Hashem realized that they were not ready to accept His decision wholeheartedly, so He did not refuse their request.

Sometimes, noted Rav Katz, *chinuch* is all about conceding. We have to know when our children are able to accept a "no." When they are just too set on doing what they intend to do, they will not accept our refusal. This concept is actually mentioned clearly in the Gemara (Yevamos 65b) as well: "Just as it is a *mitzvah* to say words that will be accepted, it is also a *mitzvah* not to say words that will not be accepted." 

as much as I would enjoy the cigar you are now offering me, doing so would only provide a brief period of pleasure. If you would permit me to take the cigar home with me so that I can display it in a place of honor in the room where I study, it would mean so much more to me. Doing so would allow me to remember our treasured friendship whenever I cast my eyes upon it.”

The emperor was more than honored to hear such words of praise. He immediately withdrew his hand from lighting the cigar and ordered his servants to have the cigar delivered to the rav’s house.

What a beautiful and poignant story.

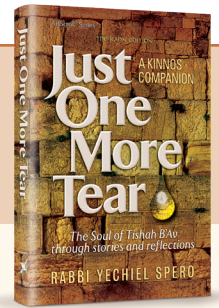
EVERY BREATH WE TAKE IS A GIFT.

Yet, the lesson that Rav Chaim Kaufman would emphasize to his students when telling this story is perhaps even more touching. Rav Chaim would say, “Each of us is given many ‘royal cigars’ throughout our lives. Every limb is a gift - our eyes, our ears, our mouth... Every breath we take is a gift, as are our families, friends, and livelihood, and of course our personal and unique talents that are all bestowed upon us by Hashem. The question we must constantly ask ourselves is: Are we using the ‘royal cigars’ we receive to their utmost? Or do we waste the gifts we are given and ‘smoke them away’ with unnecessary and sometimes even forbidden actions? Our daily job is to use the ‘cigars’ we merited to receive and constantly look at them as vehicles that enable us to continuously solidify our relationship with our Emperor, Hashem!” 📖

NINE DAYS

THE VOID

From the newly-released
*Just One More Tear – A Kinnos
Companion* by Rabbi Yechiel Spero



During this period of the year, we mourn what we lost with the destruction of the Bais Ha-Mikdash. We recall all the suffering and sadness and pain of galus, which will result in the coming of Mashiach, the birth of our redemption. And then it will have all been worth it. Every challenge that comes our way is another step in the journey as we greet Mashiach. As weary and worn as we may be, we must try to remember where we are heading and what our glorious destiny will be.

In Petach Tikvah, there lived a *tzaddik* named Ray Leibele Brodie, who had been a *shamash* of the Chofetz Chaim and a very close *talmid*. In fact, the Chofetz Chaim was his *shadchan* and hosted his *vort* in his home. Ray Leibele continued to be *meshamesh* the Chofetz Chaim even after he got married. For a small period of time, with his wife’s permission, he slept at the home of the Chofetz Chaim so that he could take care of him in the middle of the night. The Chofetz Chaim was already advanced in age and Ray Leibele would tie a string from the Chofetz Chaim’s hand to his own so at the slightest pull, he could be there to help his beloved *rebbe*.

One could say that the two of them were very closely connected.

Much of the Chofetz Chaim’s influence rubbed off on Ray Leibele. But it was especially the Chofetz Chaim’s focus on *Mashiach* that became part of Rav Leibele’s life. After Rav Leibele passed away, during *shivah*, his *rebbeztin* revealed that in a corner of a closet in their bedroom, there was a pair of brand-new, beautiful *Shabbos* shoes set aside for *Mashiach*’s arrival. Every evening, prior to going to sleep, Ray Leibele would gaze longingly at them and he would sigh, “Today, I was not *zocheh* to wear these shoes. Maybe tomorrow I will...”

He felt something missing in his life.

A tangible void.

But he never stopped hoping and never stopped believing.

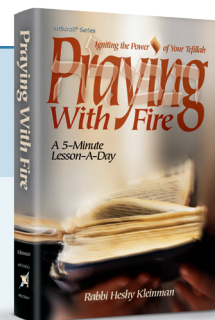
Until Mashiach comes, we should all feel that void. 📖

UNTIL MASHIACH COMES, WE SHOULD ALL FEEL THAT VOID.

EMPOWERING OUR PRAYER

MORE PRECIOUS THAN LIFE

Praying with Fire by Rabbi Heshy Kleinman



King Chizkiyahu lay upon his sickbed, feeling with certainty the approach of death. The *Gemara* (*Berachos* 10b) tells us that in pleading with Hashem to let him live, he presented what he saw as an irrefutable merit: He had hidden the Book of Cures, which contained the cure for every disease. *Rashi* explains that Chizkiyahu hid this book so that sick people would not be tempted to place their faith in it and would instead feel the need to pray to Hashem.

Rav Mordechai Gifter posed the following question: If nothing is more sacred than human life, and one may even desecrate the *Shabbos* to save one individual, how could King Chizkiyahu have endangered so many people who may have been cured had the book still been accessible?

Rav Gifter answers that this episode teaches us the incomparable value of *tefillah* — even the potential loss of life did not outweigh it. Had the book been available to all, there would have been no compelling reason to pray to Hashem. This, more than loss of life, would have been the ultimate loss. It was preferable to hide the Book of Cures at the risk of human suffering and death rather than risk snuffing out man's desire to pray.

Similarly, the verse, “*For Your kindness is better than life; my lips will praise You*” (*Tehillim* 63:4) is explained by the *Malbim* to mean that the fact that our lips can praise You [Hashem] is better than life itself.


Rav Shimshon Pincus (*She’arim B’Tefillah*, p. 137) elucidates this idea with an allegory:

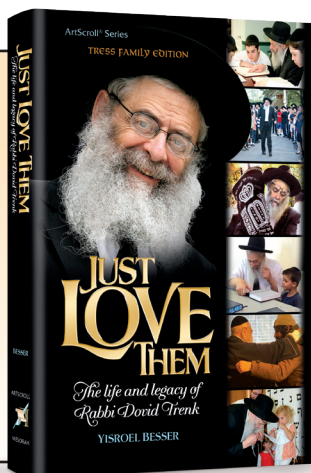
A person diagnosed with a serious illness hopes to find

the ideal doctor — an expert in his field who also has a wonderful bedside manner to reassure and encourage his patients. The patient will not only be cured, but will be fortunate enough to form a relationship with a special individual who will care for his every need.

People who receive the blessings of this world without sincere prayer bypass the essential purpose of life: the opportunity to grow spiritually and connect with Hashem.

THE FACT THAT OUR LIPS CAN PRAISE YOU IS BETTER THAN LIFE ITSELF.

As Rav Yechezkel Levenstein explains (*Ohr Yechezkel*, Vol. 1, p. 222), a primary goal of man's creation is to draw near to Hashem by breaking the barriers that separate us from Him. The goal is not, as people may think, merely to enjoy the benefits of this world. Thus, when beseeching Hashem for health, a livelihood, the best for our children, and all our other needs, our primary objective is to connect with Him. The spiritual growth and closeness to Hashem that we achieve through prayer is far more valuable than anything we receive in return. In truth, it is more precious than life itself. 



JUST LOVE THEM

The life and legacy of Rabbi Dovid Trenk

*A once-in-a-lifetime book about
a once-in-a-lifetime mechanech.*