



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

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Educating - By Setting A Personal Example

יִקַּח־נָא מֵעַט־מַיִם וְרָחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשְׁעֵנוּ תַּחַת הָעֵץ (בראשית יח:ד)

Please let a little water be taken, and bathe your feet, and recline under the tree (Bereshit 18:4).

The Torah does not state קח (direct command to take) but rather יקח (a passive command, it will be taken for you) from which the gemara derives that Avraham asked a messenger (Yishmael) to provide the guests with water (Bava Metzia 86b). The gemara suggests that actions that Avraham performed personally, Hashem performed directly for Am Yisrael. Avraham personally prepared food for the guests and so God directly provided Am Yisrael with the manna. However, since Avraham provided water through a messenger, God provided water indirectly, via the well in the desert.

The Eish Tamid inquires- what is so wrong with Avraham asking his son Yishmael to bring water to the guests? Obviously, it was to teach him how to treat guests – so why is it viewed less favorably?

PERSONAL EXAMPLE

Perhaps it is to portray that the most powerful means of educating our children is by setting a personal example.

Later in the parsha the Torah informs us that Avraham taught his children.

כִּי יִדְעֵתִיו לַמַּעַן אֲשֶׁר יֵצְאָה אֶת־בְּנָיו וְאֶת־בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו וְשִׁמְרוּ דֶּרֶךְ ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט (בראשית יח:יט)

For I have known him because he commands his sons and his household after him, that they should keep the way of Hashem to perform righteousness and justice (Bereshit 18:19).

Yet, in the text we do not find any evidence of Avraham teaching his children *midot*. Clearly, he taught them by example. The most powerful tool in education is one of setting a personal example. A child is most influenced by seeing the way in which a parent or role model conducts themselves.

MANOACH

A similar lesson is derived from the *haftara* of *Parashat Naso* which recounts the famous story of the birth of Shimshon: An angel appears to the (unnamed) wife of Manoach and tells her that she will soon have a son. The angel instructs her that she must not drink wine during her pregnancy, as her son will be a *nazir* from birth. She runs to tell her husband what happened. Manoach is incredulous and asks to meet the angel. The angel indeed reappears in the same place, and if we look closely, we see

that he also repeats his message verbatim. Only after hearing the message himself does Manoach accept it and pledge to obey it.

Rav Shimon Schwab asks what is really going on here. Manoach heard the exact same message from the angel that he had heard from his wife. What did the angel say that clarified things for Manoach?

Rav Schwab explains that Manoach knew the laws of *nezirut* and was asking an educational question: “How can I bring up a child who is a *nazir* if I myself am not a *nazir*? I am going to be drinking wine and going into cemeteries! Get the angel back here to teach me how I can educate my child about something that I myself do not observe!”

The angel answered: “You’re right. You cannot educate your child in something if you do not do it yourself.” If one is not teaching by example, they are not truly educating. Manoach, too, had to become a *nazir*. If we look back at the *pesukim*, we can see some ambiguity:

מכל אשר יצא מגפן היין לא תאכל ויין ושכר אל
תשת וכל טמאה אל תאכל כל אשר צויתיה תשמר
(שופטים יג:ד)

From all that comes out of the grapevine shall not be eaten (*tokhal*), and wine or strong drink shall not be drunk (*tesht*), and any unclean (thing) may not be eaten; all that I commanded her; observe (*tishmor*). (*Shoftim* 13:14)

We read all of these terms – *tokhal*, *tesht*, *tishmor* – in the third-person feminine form, but they can also be read in the second-person neuter form. It’s not “she shall not drink.” Rather, it can be read, “you shall not drink.” The angel was instructing Manoach to become a *nazir* and set a personal example for his son Shimshon!

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If one wants to educate a child to not talk during davening and to learn Torah in his free time, constantly demanding it of a child may not always be the best way to achieve this goal. Serving as a role model and setting a personal example may prove more effective.

During this challenging time, our children are influenced by the manner in which we react to pressure. If we act with a recognition that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is in charge of everything that transpires then that will strengthen our children’s *emunah* and *bitachon* as well. May we be able to be the proper role models for our children so that they can mature as healthy, *bnei torah* and *ba’ale midot*! ■

Mazal Tov to Camp Dror Director
Cindy & Israel Wiesel and family
on the birth of a **granddaughter**,
Tzofia Reut, daughter of
Elie & Sarina Wiesel

