

אור פָּנָי מָשָׁה

שיחות מוסר על התורה
מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר
ר宾וביץ זצ"ל

*Shmuessen from
Harav Moshe
Rabinowitz Zt"l*

פרשת ויגש

Volume 8 Issue # 9

לטובליו וטומחו

Sponsored by a talmid
In honor of his Rebbe
Rav Moshe Eliezer
Rabinowitz zt"l

פרשת ויגש

וַיָּגַשׁ אֶלָיו יְהוּדָה וַיֹּאמֶר בַי אָדָנִי יְדַבֵּר נָא עֲבָדָךְ דְבָר בָּאָנָגִי
אָדָנִי וְאֶל יָחָר אָפָךְ בְעַבְדָךְ בַי כָמֹזָה כְפַרְעָה (בראשית מ"ד י"ח)

And Yehuda approached him, and he said, "Please my master, let your servant speak a word in my master's ears, and let your anger not flare at your servant, because you are similar to Paroh"

In the beginning of this *parshah*, Yehuda pleads with Yosef to allow Binyamin to go home, offering himself as a slave instead of Binyamin. Yehuda's words are preceded by the *passuk* וַיָּגַשׁ אֶלָיו יְהוּדָה /And Yehuda approached him. The Ohr Hachaim asks on this wording – Why was it necessary for Yehuda to approach Yosef? He had already been speaking to Yosef, as the Torah tells us at the end of Parshas Vayeshev, and now Yehuda is merely continuing that exchange. If so, there should be no need to approach him; Yehuda is already in front of Yosef conversing with him.

A Person Reflects the Feelings of What is Felt by Another Toward Him

Yehuda Moves Closer to Yosef in his heart

The Ohr Hachaim bases his answer to this question on a *passuk* in Mishlei which teaches us a profound lesson in the workings of the human psyche. (משלי כ"ז י"ט) *As water reflects a face to a face, so is the heart of man to another man.*

When a person looks into a mirror, he will always be shown the exact face that he himself displayed. If he gave a smile, he will be given a smile; if he gave a frown, he will be given a frown. He will never be shown a different face than what he himself displayed first.

The same holds true for human relations. Whatever feeling one party conveys to another will be given back in return.

This lesson is a powerful one and is effective in all dealings that a person has with other people. It can be an employer, a *chavrusa*, a roommate, a spouse, a co-worker, a child, a parent, a sibling, a rebbe or a *talmid*. It is even effective on a police officer who has pulled over a motorist. The *passuk* is offering a foolproof tool in how to win over the other person, and how to effect that there will be a warm, happy relationship between the two people.

The trick is to feel warmth and love to the other person. If one person builds within himself a true feeling of love to the other, it is bound to be reciprocated. If there is a true love generated, it is tangibly felt between the two people involved, and the recipient is then unable to disregard it. He will find himself loving the first fellow in return.

This does not only work for love and warmth but holds true in the opposite direction as well. If a person feels a coldness and a hatred to another person, that feeling is generated to the other party, who will react to the ill-feeling with a coldness of his own.

When There Is A Conflict Between Two Opposing Feelings

What happens when there is a clash between these opposing feelings? If one person were to feel a love toward another person, while that second person is simultaneously feeling a hatred to first person – which of them will succeed in drawing the other into sharing the feeling of the sender? The answer is that as in any struggle between two parties, the winner depends on the strength of each side. Whichever side is generating a more powerful feeling of love/hatred, that is the one who will win the struggle.

There is a talmid in a yeshiva, who for various reasons is bitter and angry. He is always acting in ways that cause the the staff to get angry at him. He misbehaves in class, he speaks with chutzpah, and he is constantly complaining about everything possible in the yeshiva. In short, he is trying his best to provoke ill-feeling around him.

This student's rebbe has an extremely difficult time handling him, and he is constantly throwing the student out of his class in sheer exasperation. It finally reaches the point when the

menahel feels that he has no choice other than to expel the child from the yeshiva.

The student moves onto another yeshiva, where at first, the situation repeats itself. Again, this student displays a negative attitude, and makes it extremely difficult to work with him. However, this time, the rebbe succeeds in winning the child over, and steering him onto a path of positive behavior with a good attitude.

What is the difference between these two *yeshiva*'s? The first rebbe was not a bad person; he also would have so desperately wished that he could change the attitude of this *talmid*. Why was the second rebbe *matzliach*, while the first one was not?

The answer is that in truth, there is a conflict of feelings involved here. This *talmid* deliberately tries to provoke his rebbe into being angry at him. He wants that hard-feeling and that hurt to exist between them. The rebbe, on the other hand, wants to be *matzliach* with all of his *talmidim*, and he would love to be able to reach the heart of this student as well.

Who Will Win the Struggle?

The question now is, who will win in this tug-of-war?

When the talmid provokes the rebbe repeatedly, until finally the rebbe screams "Enough, you mechutza! Get out of my shiur, now!!" – In that case, the talmid has just won the battle. His feeling of anger toward the rebbe was more powerful than the rebbe's feeling of love toward him.

When, however, the rebbe succeeds in softening the attitude of the boy, that means that the rebbe's feeling of love was more powerful than the talmid's anger.

This then, is the most powerful technique in winning over the heart of a *talmid*. The rebbe must bring himself into feeling a strong love for the *talmid*; a love strong enough to withstand even the *talmid*'s constant provocations. It is not an easy task, because the *talmid* is trying his hardest on his end to orchestrate hard feelings between himself and the rebbe. The rebbe must have the inner

strength to retain his love despite all the *talmid*'s efforts to the contrary. If he can do so, he will succeed in the struggle.

I am aware of an incident in which there was a talmid who had a terrible attitude, and was constantly disrupting the class, speaking with chutzpah, etc. The rebbe tried his hardest to work with him, but seemingly to no avail.

One day, the rebbe called the student over to speak with him. When the boy was seated in front of him, the rebbe told him the following: "I want you to know, that no matter what happens, I am not going to kick you out of my class. I care about you very much, and I want you to succeed, and I will work with you to the end. Even if the yeshiva has to close down, it makes no difference. I will not throw you out of my class!"

*These words hit the boy like a ton of bricks. He was so taken aback by the genuine love that he felt from the rebbe. It was a turning point for the boy, who went on to become a hard-working, well-behaved *bachur*, and who began succeeding in his learning.*

Yehuda Forced Himself to Feel A Love Toward the Ruler

Let us now return to the explanation of the Ohr Hachaim. The question was, why was it necessary for Yehuda to approach Yosef, when they were already engaged in a conversation. The Ohr Hachaim explains that his 'approaching' was not in the physical sense; he did not walk any closer to Yosef. Rather, he approached him in his heart. Yehuda brought in himself a powerful feeling of love to this ruler, which would melt the cold, cruel heart that he was displaying toward them.

This was certainly not an easy task. This ruler had displayed such cruelty toward them from the time that they had first met him.

First, he had baselessly accused them of being spies. He then demanded of them that they bring their youngest brother with them, even after being told of the boy's father's deep attachment toward him.

The brothers had protested, "We can't take him away from his father. The father will be so worried about his fate!"

"Oh really", the ruler had replied. "Well, too bad! Shimon is staying here in prison. If the youngest one comes down to me, Shimon will be released; if not, not. The choice is yours!"

Obviously left with no choice, the brothers had brought Binyomin with them, even at the expense of the anguish they were causing their father. Now, the ruler had framed them, planting the goblet in the youngest one's sack. There was no reasoning with this cruel man; he was just determined to make their lives and their father's life completely miserable.

How could Yehuda feel love toward this horrible, cruel despot?

Moreover, the Ohr Hachaim explains that the righteous children of Yaakov felt a strong hatred toward all idol worshippers. This Egyptian ruler, who according to all reasoning, would have been worshipping the Egyptian gods, was certainly despised by the Bnei Yaakov. It was certainly no easy feat for Yehuda to bring himself to any feelings of love and endearment to this mean, cruel, wicked, idol-worshipping monster of a ruler.

In fact, the Medrash tells us that the brothers were already drawing battle plans for the anticipated war that they would wage against Mitzrayim. There were 12 districts in Mitzrayim; each brother was to take on one district to destroy, while Yehuda would take three. Shechem was going to look like child's play compared to the rivers of blood that would be spilled in the brothers quest to free Binyomin from this ruler.

However, Yehuda still has another way. He was going to win over this ruler with his love. True, it was terribly hard to love this ruler, but Yehuda was a strong person. Not just physically strong, but with a strong heart. He was going to bring within himself this love that

would melt away even the heart of this wicked ruler. The love in his heart would overpower the cruelty of the ruler's heart.¹

Bringing Positivity and Good Feeling to Our Relationships

This concept is relevant for all of our relationships.

- *A child has negativity in the home, always complaining about the food, and about the house, and how no one takes care of him, and that he can never get what he wants etc. There may indeed be a problem here that must be dealt with. However, the 'first aid' is to supply the child with an abundance of love. If the love is genuine, the child will eventually feel it and start to change his attitude.*

¹ I heard another *vort* regarding our *parshah*, in which there was a similar struggle between two opposing hearts:

ולא יכול יוסף להסתפק (בראשית מ"ה א') /And Yosef was unable to contain himself, i.e. he could no longer bear the pain he was causing Yehuda and the brothers, and he was compelled to reveal himself. Some *seforim* explain that in truth, it would have been beneficial if Yosef would have continued with his façade even longer. The extra suffering the brothers would have experienced could have brought a complete *kapparah* for their sin. However, Yosef was simply no longer able to contain himself, and he was therefore forced to expose his true identity.

The question is, why did Yosef not have the inner strength to maintain his pretense? He certainly possessed tremendous inner strength in these matters, as evidenced by the fact that he did not inform his father Yaakov of his survival in Mitzrayim, even during the years of his rulership when he would have been able to do so. The *Ohr Hachaim* (פרק מ"ה פטוק כ'') explains that he refrained from contacting his father because he did not want to shame his brothers about their sin of selling him. How much Yosef must have wished to speak to Yaakov Avinu, and yet he contained himself because he understood that it was not the proper course of action for him. Why then could he not control his urge as well, in regard to revealing himself to his brothers?

I heard a *pshat* from my nephew R' Yitzchok Aryeh Epstein to answer this question. Before Yaakov had sent the brothers to Mitzrayim the second time, he had said a *Tefillah*. (וְאַל שְׁדִי תַּחֲנֹן לְכֶם רְחִמָּת לְפָנֵי הָאִישׁ מ"ג י"ד) /Hashem should grant you mercy before the man. Yaakov davened that the ruler should be merciful toward them. This ruler was, of course, Yosef, and as a result of Yaakov's *Tefillah*, he was unable to carry on with the harsh treatment that he was giving them. Although Yosef was trying very hard to proceed with his harsh treatment toward his brothers, his attempts were not as strong as the *Tefillah* of Yaakov Avinu which was pulling in the opposite direction.

- *A worker is not coming on time to his job and is otherwise not achieving his optimal performance. He is lacking in his motivation and interest in helping the business for which he is employed. The employer must bring himself to feel a genuine warmth and goodwill to this worker. This will most probably improve the employee's attitude.*
- *A spouse is an irritable, or otherwise irrational, mood, and begins speaking nastily to the other spouse. The tension escalates until soon they are in a full-blown argument. If either spouse will have the inner strength to rise above the hurt feeling, and instead concentrate on feeling a love to the other partner, the conflict will dissolve.*

However, as mentioned, in all of these scenarios, there is a *t'na'i l'ikuva*/an imperative condition that is necessary for this technique to be effective: The feeling of love must be genuine. If the love is not real, it is immediately sensed by the other party, and it will not accomplish anything. This is not always a simple feat, when there may be a lot of anger and hurt feeling over things that were said or done. The hurt feeling may even be quite justified. However, in order to win over the other person, it is necessary to rise above those feelings of anger and hurt, as Yehuda was doing toward Yosef. If the person can achieve within himself a truly positive, warm feeling for the other person, then he can anticipate seeing real results.

The Power is Effective Even to Bring About Negativity

We have such a powerful tool to control our relationships. In truth, this can even be accomplished on the negative side as well.

There is a worker in a company whom the boss wishes that he would leave. The boss can display a terrible attitude toward him, and eventually the worker will be so uncomfortable that he will be compelled to leave the company.

Let us try to utilize this power with which we were endowed, infusing more positivity and friendship in the world, rather than accomplishing the opposite effect.

Not Mixing in to the Disputes of Others

Yehuda Moves Closer to Yosef So No One Should Hear Their Exchange

The Ohr Hachaim offers another answer as well to his original question. The question was: Why was it necessary for Yehuda to 'approach' Yosef, when he had already been engaged in conversation with him? The Ohr Hachaim explains that until that point in their conversation, Yehuda had been standing in front of Yosef, in the customary place in which a petitioner to the ruler would stand. In the room were standing all the various officials and advisors, as well as the governmental scribes who would be recording every exchange that transpired between the ruler and those speaking to him. At this point however, Yehuda moved closer to Yosef, to a proximity in which no one else would hear the words they exchanged.

Yehuda explained this unseemly conduct to Yosef. He said to him, "Please do not be angry with me. I am acting this way because you are of a similar status to Paroh himself. Therefore, even if you would begin to agree with my point of view, you would still be unable to concede to me. That would be below the dignity of a ruler of your stature and would thus be inappropriate for your cabinet members to hear such a concession from you. In fact, were you to be bested by me, I would then even be held guilty for having caused your belittlement. I therefore wish to speak to you where others cannot overhear, so that you will be free to acknowledge the correctness of my words, without being hindered by the indignity that this would cause."

Avoid Being Involved in Others' Disputes

We learn an important lesson from this Ohr Hachaim. Many times, two people – henceforth referred to as "Reuven" and "Shimon" – are involved in a disagreement for a while. As time passes, they may be looking to settle their differences and return to a state of peace between them. Perhaps they will make certain compromises which will satisfy each of them to a certain extent.

However, there is something which prevents Reuven and Shimon from reaching this agreement: They committed the grave error of involving others in their dispute. This can cause a host of unnecessary

difficulties, which would not have been there had they not allowed others into their affair.

- Reuven and Shimon themselves will be ashamed to give in, for fear that this will cast them in an unfavorable light in the eyes of all those involved. Neither one wishes to appear as the weaker side.
- Even if Reuven and Shimon can overlook insults that were committed against themselves, one of them may feel that he is not in a position to forgive the insults that were committed against another's honor – perhaps a parent or another figure whom he respects. He will thus bear the grudge for longer, in deference to the honor of the others involved. Or perhaps, if that other figure wishes not to forgive, Reuven or Shimon may prolong the fight out of respect for the wishes of the person whom he honors.
- Those others will continue to bear the grudge even after Reuven and Shimon themselves had already strived mightily to overlook their anger. These people on the sidelines will then protest when they hear that the fight is being abandoned. They will say, "How can you forgive him when he has perpetrated such terrible injustices against you?" Similarly, they will reject many possibilities of compromise, arguing that they are unfair to their side.

As explained from the Ohr Hachaim, this was essentially the argument that Yehuda was putting forth toward Yosef. If the others would hear their exchange, Yosef would then be unable to forgive Yehuda, due to the perceptions of the others involved.

It is so important that whenever possible, outside figures should not be included in a dispute unnecessarily.

Bringing a Third Party to Arbitrate

Certainly, there are times where the two sides agree to have a third party arbitrate. In that case, it is certainly commendable to involve a third party. This is not spreading the argument; on the contrary, it is a way for them to reach a peaceful agreement, provided that they will accept the ruling of the rav or friend etc. unconditionally.

Similarly, sometimes outside intervention may be necessary to help someone. Perhaps there is someone who is being genuinely abused,

mistreated, or otherwise taken advantage of. In such a case, the victim might be compelled to turn others for help, and that will be the proper course of action. However, how much care must be taken not to involve others purely for the sake of the dispute itself.

A Married Couple

על כן יעזוב איש את אביו ואת אמו ודבק באשתו (בראשית ב' כ"ד) /Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother, and he will cling to his wife. The question is, is the *passuk* condoning a person completely abandoning his parents at the time of his marriage? What about the *mitzvah* of *Kibbutz Av Veim*? A person should maintain a close a close connection with his parents after his marriage, allowing them to have *nachas* from himself and his family. What does the *passuk* mean that a person should 'leave' his parents?

My father z"l would explain that the *passuk* is referring to the issue that we are discussing. After a couple gets married, there will be issues that will crop up between them. The couple must be prepared to work through these issues together, without immediately involving their parents. As soon as the parents are involved, it becomes that much more difficult to resolve the problem, because there are then two people's issues involved on each side, as explained earlier.

Similarly, the parents must be so careful not to mix themselves in where they should not be involved. This certainly applies when they were not approached by their children for help, and even when they were approached, how much caution they need to exercise. They cannot ignore a plea for help; sometimes there can even be significant issues in which it is imperative for them to be supportive of their child. But they still cannot overstep the line. Perhaps they should help their child contact a professional if necessary, rather than becoming involved themselves.

It is so important to hold an issue at a low level, rather than magnify it by involving extra parties unnecessarily.

Bez"H we should take these lessons to heart and live our lives with other people based on the guidelines the Torah provides us.

*To subscribe to the weekly shmuess by email,
or for audio recordings of the shmuessen,
Call / Text 848-299-7212
or email: ohrpneimosh@gmail.com*

*A sampling of the audio shmuessen can also be obtained at
www.shasilluminated.org/rabbi-moshe-rabinowitz*