



Parashat Pinchas 5771 - #194

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On the Parashah...

Parashat Pinchas: Fix Yourself and Then Fix Others

[Tal Chermon, p. 448 based on the book "Nivi Zahav" of Ha-Rav Zev Gold]

When Maran Ha-Rav Kook visited America to raise money for the yeshivot in Eretz Yisrael and Europe, one of the Rabbis asked during a reception: Why isn't Ha-Rav more of a zealot? Maran Ha-Rav Kook answered at length, recalling a story about a great Torah scholar and ethical person: "He once came to his Rabbi and said that he wanted to perfect the world through the Almighty's kingdom. His Rabbi said to him: Go, my son, and may Hashem help you. He went and tried, but was unsuccessful. The world remained as it was. He came to his Rabbi a second time to lament the lack of blessing in his actions. His Rabbi asked him: My son, have you already spiritually repaired your country and your homeland that you are now concerned about repairing the entire world? He took the hint and attempted to fix his country. But he also failed; no one listened to his voice. He returned to his Rabbi and related his new failure. His Rabbi said to him: My son, have you spiritually repaired your city? Why should you begin with a whole country? This wise man listened to him and turned to repairing his city, but the residents of his city also do not obey him. His Rabbi said to him: My son, have you already fixed your household? He realized that he was correct, and so he attempted to repair the members of his household. But they also did not listen to him. When he returned to lament before his Rabbi, the Rabbi said: My son, perhaps you did not fix yourself. Go and worry – first and foremost – about your own soul. After you are certain that you have repaired everything, and that you have no blemishes at all – then the members of your household will see and learn from your ways, and they will be an example for the city, and the city for the country and the country for the entire world. This needs to be the path of a person who desires to spiritually repair others."

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Number of children

Question: We have two boys and two girls. I want to continue to enlarge the family, but my wife does not. What is Ha-Rav's advice?

Answer: After you have a boy and girl, one should continue to have children, as it says: "In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not withhold your hand" (Kohelet 11:6 and

Yevamot 62b). But we are not told how many children to have. The guiding principle is to have the most children possible based on one's ability – one's physical ability, one's emotional ability, and one's financial ability. One's ability is a personal decision. You cannot force your wife to have more children if she is somehow unable. This reminds me of the words of the Mesech Chochma on the mitzvah of "Be fruitful and multiply" (Bereshit 9:7). As is known, women are not obligated in this mitzvah. This is a wonder – how can a man have children alone? The Mesech Chochma explains that women are not obligated in this mitzvah because pregnancy can be quite difficult, childbirth is difficult, and taking care of a baby all of the time is difficult. The Torah does not force someone to do something which may sometimes be beyond his ability. But if Hashem does not command women to have children, how will children come into the world? Because Hashem implanted within women a desire for children, as we see with Rachel: "Give me children or I will die" (Bereshit 30a). Therefore, a woman has children because of her desire to do so. There is a balance between the desire and the difficulties, and a woman navigates between them. This appears in the Torah, not when Hashem commands Adam: "Be fruitful and multiply" (Bereshit 1:28), but after the flood when he commands Noach: "Be fruitful and multiply." The first command was issued before the curse "You shall bear children in pain" (Bereshit 3:16) and there was therefore no reason to be lenient. But now there is the difficulty of the curse. I therefore recommend that you not pressure your wife. Let her decide on her own whether or not she is able.

Stories of Rabbenu — Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

The Honor of Women

Our Rabbi gave classes for the yeshiva students at his house, and they set up an amplification system so that women could hear in the apartment next door. There was sometimes a problem with the system and our Rabbi would wait until they fixed it. He would explain that for the honor of women he was obligated to delay his class so that they too could hear.

With all of our Rabbi's care regarding issues relating to modesty, our Rabbi was at the same time strict about women's honor. Before Kiddush on Shabbat day, he would ask over and over: "Are all the women here? 'Women are obligated in Kiddush during the day' (Berachot 20b)."

Our Rabbi would remind his married students that there is an obligation to provide their wives with spiritual food. In contrast to the general thought that women are exempt from learning Torah, he would emphasize with a smile that this does not apply to learning about faith: "Is faith a time-bound, positive mitzvah?"

When the Beit Midrash was in the dormitory building, the women's section was close to the entrance to the Beit Midrash. There was a sign: "Women are requested not to linger in the hallway after davening" [in order to prevent women and men from intermingling]. When our Rabbi saw it, he asked that the note be taken down and rewritten in a more general manner, in order not to offend the honor of the women: "The community is requested not to linger in the hallway after davening."

Our Rabbi was extremely particular not to stare at women. Even when a woman came to him for a long conversation on an important matter, he listened to her carefully and responded warmly – but his eyes were always averted to the side. He was the same when he gave a class to women. He would stand for a woman who was a Torah scholar, but he would not directly look at her. (Ha-Rav Eliyahu Mali – Iturei Cohanim #176)

Family Matters - Ha-Rav writes weekly for

the parashah sheet "Rosh Yehudi" on family relationships

A Child's Life – A Jungle

Expressing love to a child is truly life saving. If a child does not feel that others love him – he is finished.

We have to remember that a child's world is like a jungle. All sorts of people cause him distress and disturb his contentment.

He is surrounded by friends in school, the park, home, etc., and they bother him at times, and sometimes take from him, or he feels that they are taking from him. The teacher scolds him, the neighbor yells at him. Often times close relatives visit and volunteer to educate him: "Where are your manners? A little honor for your parents! Sit up straight! Look at how you are eating! Why don't you study well? What type of grades are these?!" A huge flood of comments.

And relationships with siblings are not simple. He loves them, but they sometimes threaten to take his place. He is not alone – he has competition.

In brief – a child lives in a jungle. This can be difficult. But in this dangerous world, there is a wonder drug: Love and expressions of love. Offer them generously.

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