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Shabbat Shalom Weekly

The most popular electronic weekly in the Jewish world with over 300,000 readers.

Rabbi Kalman Packouz
Aish HaTorah

When do you spank your child? When I grew up it was, "Wait until your father comes home!" Then my father would take me into his bedroom, close the door and spank me. One time I got the clever idea of putting a thin book (hard-cover) in the back of my pants. My father spanked me "not noticing" the book. I am forever grateful.

Years later I took my son into my bedroom to discipline him. Figuring he was a bit old for a spanking, but wanting to make an impression on his younger siblings outside the door, I asked him, "Do you realize that what you did was wrong and why it was wrong?" "Yes" he remorsefully responded. "You won't do it again?" "No" he solemnly replied. "Then here's what we're going to do. I am going to slap my knee and you are going to yell out." He smiled, loving the idea. I hit my knee and he cried out. I did it a second time and he cried. I did it a third time and he cried out even louder. Cautioning him to look solemn and regretful, we walked out of the room.

Popular culture goes through waves of permissiveness and strictness. Back in the 50's and 60's Dr. Spock's Baby and Child Care (now in it's ninth edition) was the "bible." It advised not to spank your child. Originally published in 1946, Dr. Spock (no

relation to Star Trek) was later criticized for "allegedly propagating permissiveness and instant gratification that led young people to join (the anti-Viet Nam war) movements."

I know one person who told me that he raised his child with Dr. Spock's book and "had no problem with permissiveness or rebellion." He would use the book to spank his son.

King Solomon, considered to be the wisest of anyone who ever lived, advised in Mishley (Proverbs) 13:24, "Spare the rod and spoil the child." He also wrote in Koheles (Ecclesiastes) 3:1 "There is a time for everything..." So, when, how and why should one spank his child?

I asked my teacher, Rabbi Noah Weinberg, of blessed memory, to clarify and advise. He started with a story, a parable: "A little boy was playing with a ball on his driveway; the ball got away from him and rolled into the street. The boy followed the ball, oblivious to the oncoming car. The driver slams on his brakes, narrowly missing the child and then lowers the window near the child and starts yelling at him to watch where he's going and not to play in the street. The driver drives off and the boy returns to play with his ball on the driveway.

Again, the ball gets away from the boy and he chases it into the street with a repeat performance of the driver narrowly avoiding hitting the boy, rolling down his window and screaming at the child. The third time it happens, the third driver throws his car in park, leaving it running in the middle of the street, door left open and takes chase after the child to 'spank the living daylight's' out of him. Who is the third driver? The child's father!"

"Why" asked Rabbi Weinberg "did only the third driver take chase after the child? The other drivers may have cared about not hitting a child, but the third driver loved his son and wanted to make sure he would never do it again!" One spans his child when there is truly an important lesson to be learned!

Rabbi Weinberg advised that a parent should never spank his child when he's angry, but whenever the situation is serious enough to warrant corporal punishment, the parent should display anger to add to the impact of the punishment. Hitting one's child is NOT about the parent expressing his anger and venting his rage. It is about imparting an important lesson in life on what not to do.

Rabbi Weinberg also advised not to use one's hand when hitting, but to use an object -- like Dr. Spock's book. I am sure that this advice was based on King Solomon writing "spare the rod" rather "spare administering corporal punishment." Explained Rabbi Weinberg that hitting with an object makes the punishment one degree less personal -- it is not you/your hand that is imparting the punishment. Also, there is a delay which will dissipate the anger while searching for something appropriate to take in hand to spank.

Lastly, Rabbi Weinberg told me that if one punishes his child appropriately, the child will learn to listen to his parents and that one would rarely need to spank him after age 2 or 3.

There is a time for everything. Love your child. Spend time with your child. Quality time is really quantity time. Your child will know that you love him because your priority is to spend your time with him or her. However, if you want your child to learn that there are boundaries for behavior, be prepared to show that love through spanking your child.

Torah Portion of the Week: Matos and Masei

Matos includes the laws of making and annulling vows, the surprise attack on Midian (the '67 War wasn't the Jewish people's first surprise attack!) in retribution for the devastation the Midianites wreaked upon the Jewish people, the purification after the war of people and vessels, dedicating a portion of the spoils to the communal good (perhaps the first Federation campaign), the request of the tribes of Reuben and Gad for their portion of land to be east of the Jordan river (yes, Trans-Jordan/Jordan is also part of the Biblical land of Israel). Moshe objects to the request because he thinks the tribes will not take part in the conquering of the land of Israel; the tribes clarify that they will be the advance troops in the attack and thus receive permission.

Masei includes the complete list of journeys in the desert (the name of each stop hints at a deeper meaning, a lesson learned there). God commands to drive out the land's inhabitants, to destroy their idols and to divide the land by a lottery system. God establishes the borders of the Land of Israel. New leadership is appointed, cities of the Levites and Cities of Refuge

(where an accidental murderer may seek asylum) are designated. Lastly, the laws are set forth regarding accidental and willful murder as well as inheritance laws only for that generation regarding property of a couple where each came from a different tribe.

**Dvar Torah
from Twerski on Chumash
by Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, M.D.**

The Torah tells us that when the tribes of Reuben and Gad made their request to settle east of the Jordan, they offered to be in the forefront of the army conquering the Land of Israel. They told Moses that: "pens for the flock shall we build here for our livestock and cities for our small children" (Num. 32:16).

Rashi states that the words of Gad and Reuben, placing the provisions for their livestock before that of their children, indicates that they accorded greater value to their possessions than to their children.

We may ask, how could anyone possibly give greater importance to their possessions than to their children? We may indeed be critical of Gad and Reuben, and be totally unaware that many of us are guilty of the same thing.

Today, a parent returns home from work late, and equipped with a cell phone, his mealtime with the children is interrupted. Whatever time he or she could spend with them is commandeered by business calls.

There is nothing that should take preference over our children. We must teach our children and we must discipline them, because without discipline they cannot possibly make an optimum adjustment to life. But at all times, our primary concern must be what is best for them, rather than what is best for us. If these two should conflict, the child's welfare must be given preference.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

Hug your kids at home, belt them in the car.



The Family Parsha

By Nesanel Yoel Safran
Lessons, stories and discussion questions for parents and kids

Enjoy the Ride

This week's Torah portion describes in detail the 40-year journey of the Jewish people, from their escape from the slavery of Egypt, until they entered the Land of Israel that God gave them as an eternal gift. One thing we can learn from the fact that the Torah mentions each stop along the way is not to focus only on 'goals' and destinations as we 'journey' through life, but to enjoy and appreciate every moment of our lives.

In our story, a kid discovers that 'getting there' can be as much fun as 'being there.'

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

"When are we ever going to get there?" Josh cried out in frustration as the car wove its way along the winding mountain road. His parents were taking him and his sister, Emily, on a vacation to a resort hotel in the mountains - which was great, but what definitely wasn't great was the long, boring trip to get there!

"We must have been driving a zillion hours already! I can't take it any more!" he groaned, turning to Emily in the next seat. But his sister, who had her face pressed up against the window, didn't answer or even seem to hear him. In best brotherly fashion, he punched her in the arm to get her attention.

"Ow!" she turned around. "Why'd you do that?"

"I'm b-o-r-e-d, that's why. This trip is taking forever. I wish we could just push a button and get there already instead of wasting all this time!"

"Who said you have to waste it?" Emily asked, her usual cheerful smile returning to her face.

"Well, what else am I supposed to do?"

"How about enjoying it? We're on vacation, after all."

Josh rolled his eyes. "Wrong! We are going on vacation. Once we get to the hotel, the lake, the speedboats, the sauna ... then, we'll be on vacation."

Certain he had made his point, Josh folded his arms smugly across his chest. But Emily just gave him one of her patented crinkle-nosed head shakes that meant she thought he was out to lunch.

"Listen, mister, maybe your vacation isn't going to start for another two-and-a-half hours when we get to the hotel, but mine started the minute we got into the car, if not earlier. Why wait until we get somewhere to enjoy ourselves, when there's so much to enjoy along the way?"

"What on earth are you talking about?"

She laughed. "For one thing, just look out that window. Have you ever seen more gorgeous or interesting scenery?"

Josh, who hadn't bothered looking out the window except to try to occasionally read the signs saying how many more miles they had to go, reluctantly followed Emily's pointing finger.

"See how tall and thick the trees are here compared to home?" she asked "And how the license plates on most of the cars are bigger than ours and a different color?"

"I guess it's kinda interesting," nodded Josh "but what does any of that have to do with being on vacation?" As they were talking, the car started to slow down, then pull into the rest stop on the side of the road.

"Oh, no!" the boy sighed. "Another rest stop? That means even more wasted time until we get there!"

He noticed Emily's eyes lit up - almost like she was happy about the whole thing.

"Come on, Josh" she grinned. "Let's go enjoy the next part of our vacation."

After getting their parents' nod of approval, with nothing better to do, Josh followed her to the tourist information desk, where there was a candy machine and various brochures and maps were neatly laid out on a counter in front of a big poster of the out-of-state symbol.

"The maps and stuff are free. Y'all can help yerselves," the woman behind the counter said.

"Isn't this interesting, Josh? I've never seen any of these brands of candy before, have you? And," she added with a whisper "did you notice that lady's accent?"

Josh, who was starting to enjoy himself, grabbed a couple of maps. He liked deciphering maps and figured he could check them out back in the car.

"Okay, guys, hop into the car and we're on our way," their dad said. "Mom and I certainly hope you're going to enjoy your vacation."

Josh looked at Emily and smiled. Thanks to her, he already was.

Discussion Questions

Ages 3-5

Q. How did Josh feel about the ride to the hotel at first?

A. He was bored and thought the only thing that mattered was getting there.

Q. How did he feel in the end?

A. His sister helped him to see that he could even enjoy himself along the way.

Ages 6-9

Q. What life-lesson do you think Josh learned that day?

A. He had thought that all that counted was something's goal or end-point and everything else was just wasted time. But he discovered that while goals are valuable, there is plenty to enjoy and appreciate along the way.

Q. Do you think a person could always find something to enjoy or appreciate in his life? Why or why not?

A. While there are some extreme situations that would require super-human effort to enjoy, the overwhelming majority of life's

events and experiences are packed with potential for interest and enjoyment - we just have to search it out.

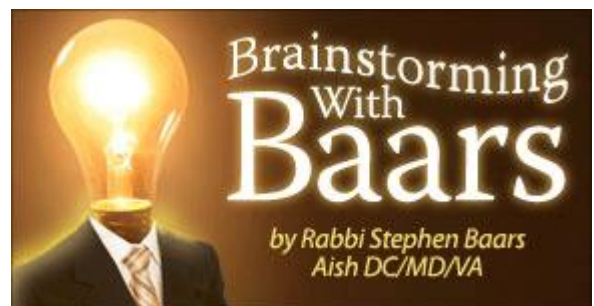
Ages 10 and Up

Q. Life has been described as a 'journey,' what does that idea mean to you?

A. One idea is that we have been put in this world to grow personally and develop our character and, as such, our life is a journey toward that end. In a deeper sense, Jewish sages and mystics teach that our life in this world is just a temporary part of a journey to a world of everlasting spiritual ecstasy. The written and oral Torah is a map of how to navigate that journey successfully.

Q. Based on the above, does that mean we should ignore the world in front of us, since it isn't the end-point or goal?

A. Not at all. God wants us to enjoy this world; he gave it to us as a gift. However, He wants us to stay focused, not to harm others, and realize that the 'paths' we choose in this world, to the extent that we live in a meaningful and ethical way, will determine how easily we will arrive at our journey's destination.



Lying

"The tongue is the pen of the heart."

-- Bachya Ibn Pekudah (11th century Spanish Rabbi)

"If a man makes a vow to God, or makes an oath to obligate himself, he must not break his word. He must do all that he expressed verbally." (Numbers 30:3)

Rav Yaacov Weinberg zt"l pointed out that the literal translation of the above verse is, "He must not profane his word." The

Torah is implying there is something special about that which proceeds from your mouth. Not fulfilling what you say is not just a question of breaking your word, but has a far more meaningful effect.

The opposite of profane is holy. If you don't profane your words then they are by default, holy.

Animals don't speak because their communication only serves for the purpose of survival. For that you don't need words. Words achieve a far more noble goal, they are the medium by which we connect our inside world with the outside one, and alternatively, by which we absorb the outside world into our inside one. We have the potential to change when we use and listen to words.

Therefore the liar has broken a vital link with the world around him. He has destroyed (profaned) the value of speech. The liar therefore says words without any comprehension of what they mean to him and therefore can say ridiculous and obvious untruths. Eventually he will drown in the confusion of who he is and what life means.

Shakespeare proclaimed, "Above all else, to thine own self be true." The Jewish concept is rather different, being true to oneself is only possible IF to others you are true.

In a similar vein, our Sages explain that it is important to teach your mouth to say "I don't know." Just as saying "please" and "thank you" change a person and make them more grateful, similarly, "I don't know" creates an inner humility.

I remember going with my son to the airport. The security officer asked me the standard questions (this was before 9/11) amongst them: "Did anyone give you anything to take on your journey?"

I answered in the affirmative. This created quite a commotion, the officer seemed to be unsure what to do next, she rushed away and took some time returning, only to nervously type something into her computer.

Eventually I asked, "Is there something wrong?"

"Yes!" She was not pleased, "I never got that answer before and I don't have the protocol for it."

I laughed. I said to her, "Do you think most people are telling the truth, or lying?"

"Lying." She answered.

Now let me ask you a question, would you lie to your son?

Then how can you lie WITH your son?

How about teaching him to lie?

If you lie, it's not simply that you have said something that is untrue. It's much worse than that, you have made yourself a liar.

A liar can't teach his children to be true. "When everything depends on just one tiny lie, we forget that in order to correct one lie, seven others have to be told." (Shevat Yehudah)

BRAINSTORMING QUESTIONS TO PONDER

Question 1: Think of a time when you lied in order to get ahead. If you could, would you prefer to be a person that never lied, or to remain as you are? Why?

Question 2: Have you ever lied to someone very close to you and harmed that relationship?

Question 3: Look back over your life; have you ever lied to yourself?



a Life Lesson
by Adam Lieberman
Relevant insights on how to live a happy, more meaningful life, gleaned from the weekly Torah portion.

Privacy Please

In this week's Torah portion, God tells Moses that the Jewish people should wage war against the people of Midian. Moses

then gave them specific instructions on how they should wage this war. When they returned from the battle, however, Moses learned that they failed to follow his exact instructions and:

"Moses... and all the leaders of the assembly went out to meet them outside the camp. Moses was angry with the commanders of the army..." (Numbers 31:13-14)

A LIFE LESSON

Even though Moses was clearly upset with those who were in charge of the battle, he did something so vitally important in leadership - he went out to meet them outside the camp. Moses practiced one of the most important concepts in dealing with people - and that's always to reprimand people in private. In fact, the blockbuster best-selling book entitled "The One Minute Manager" devotes much time to this powerful principal.

Sadly, people in a position of authority don't like doing this because they have a strong ego-based need to put their power on display for all to see. So, in an effort of to show everyone that "they're the boss," they actually like to reprimand people in front of others. This makes you no better than a school yard bully and clearly makes you much more of a coward than a leader.

Ironically, people act this way because they wrongly believe that they'll actually gain respect by occasionally (or regularly) letting everyone know that they're in charge. But great leaders have long recognized that people truly want to do the right thing and publicly adding salt to their wounds is just plain stupid.

Parents are the most important "leaders" in the world. God entrusts them with the responsibility of raising His children, and He certainly doesn't want His children to be publicly ridiculed. There are certainly times that parents have a rush of frustration when their child does something wrong and have a powerful urge to yell at them for all to hear. But this isn't at all how to discipline or educate your child. Even though Moses was angry with his commanders, he didn't let it get the better of him. He chose to go outside the camp so he wouldn't embarrass them in front of their men.

There are countless times throughout the day that you'll be in a position of being a "boss." Whether as a customer in a store, a

patron at a restaurant, or hiring a landscaper - for a brief period of time you can act any way you choose. While you might feel a need to let these people know "who's in charge," it will only make you look like a fool. And if there is something they did that you're upset about, then let them know without anyone else being able to hear. This will not only make them actually listen to what you're saying, but it will also build your own self-esteem by not living in the fantasy world that you can get taller by publicly knocking someone else down.

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