



I MADE A MISTAKE

Dear Parents,

Erev Shabbos Parashas Shemini 5781

This week's *Parsha* contains an invaluable lesson in just how difficult, yet important it is to admit one's mistakes. After the tragic death of his two sons, *Aharon HaKohein* assumed that due to his *Halachic* status as an *Onein* (mourner) he was exempt from eating any part of the *Rosh Chodesh* offering, and had it burnt completely.

Moshe Rabbeinu reprimanded *Aharon* for burning the *Rosh Chodesh* offering and a debate ensued between them. When *Moshe* heard *Aharon's* reasoning, *Moshe* immediately and unconditionally admitted he was mistaken. In fact, the *Pasuk* states (*Vayikra 10:20*) "And *Moshe* heard, and it was good in his eyes." The *Seforno* explains that *Moshe* actually rejoiced upon hearing his brother's and (surviving) nephews' reasoning and ability to understand and explain the proper *Halacha* in this instance.

“...**Moshe immediately and unconditionally admitted he was mistaken.**”

There are a number of insights to be drawn from here. First, even though *Moshe Rabbeinu* was the greatest of the great, and also the most humble person who ever lived, the Torah nevertheless found it worthwhile to praise him for admitting a mistake. It obviously, therefore, was no small accomplishment even for a *Moshe Rabbeinu*. (*HaRav Yehuda Leib Chasman zt'l, paraphrased by Rabbi Elyakim Rosenblatt, zt'l*)

Secondly, it is one thing to admit one's error, but to rejoice in having been 'put in his place?' *Moshe* had not only disagreed with *Aharon*, he had just sharply rebuked him! The reason he rejoiced is because *Moshe's* goal was not to be right. It was to live by the truth. *Aharon* showed the way and for that *Moshe* was grateful and elated. (*Love Peace, Rabbi H.D. Becker p.167*)

How often does the following happen to us: We berate our child for a perceived wrongdoing and the child protests his innocence. A while later we realize that our accusation was misplaced. It takes tremendous inner strength to admit we were wrong, especially when we spoke in anger and with righteous indignation and we now need to say "I'm sorry."

“... **It takes tremendous inner strength to admit we were wrong.**”

All of us - teachers and parents alike, often feel that we cannot admit to our children that we've been wrong. Our concern is it will undermine our authority. Our subconscious (and conscious!) feeling is that if we're not always right, our children will lose confidence in us and our guidance. *Moshe* is teaching that the reality is just the opposite. Who more than the

leader of the entire nation, the guarantor of the perfection and purity of the Torah has a need to maintain an aura of being right? One can easily envision the fallout from a loss of confidence in *Moshe's* leadership and authority. Nevertheless, there was a higher calculation - is it the truth? Moreover, confidence in *Moshe* was actually strengthened, because he embodied and lived by truth. This cemented his stature and authority, it did not undermine it. A follower can more easily put his faith in a leader who has unswerving loyalty to the truth, than to one who pushes his own agenda and ego.

If we cannot bring ourselves to admit we were wrong we need to realize the following: Our child knows he was unjustly accused and probably realizes that we recognize we were wrong. If we insist we are perfect, our children will find out that it is not true. We should better be role models of people who are imperfect and growing. (It needs to be stated that if we constantly are making and admitting mistakes, that is a problem of a different sort!) This will guide our children's development in a much more wholesome and productive direction.

“**We can choose whether the lesson is - it's important to always appear to be right, or it's important to live by the truth...**”

Our children learn many things from us. We can choose whether the lesson is - it's important to always appear to be right, or it's important to live by the truth, even when it's uncomfortable or difficult at the moment. When a person has the self-confidence to willingly and joyfully admit there's a better way, a wiser opinion, his stock rises, his trustworthiness increases.

Will our joy come from winning an argument or battle of wits, or will we be joyful when the truth is uncovered, even at the expense of our personally held opinion? If we can make this paradigm shift in our thinking and attitude, we will cement the bonds of love and connection and we will truly be forging a path of greatness for our children to follow.

Best wishes for a *Shabbos* of true joy and *Nachas*,

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