



REAL MEN SEEK COUNSEL

Dear Parents,

Erev Shabbos Parashas Vayechi 5780

In Western culture, the idea of manhood provokes thoughts of ruggedness, strength, leadership-- someone unemotional, but powerful. The notion of a man is of one who is self-assured, decisive and independent. What typical man ever asks for directions...? It is therefore very relevant to investigate what is the *Torah's* image of a "man".

In the *Haftora* for this week, which is the 2nd *Perek of Melachim Aleph*, *Dovid HaMelech* is on his deathbed (hence the connection to this week's *Parsha*) and is exhorting his son *Shlomo*, the future king, to "be strong, and become a man." (*V'Chazakta VeHayisa L'Ish - Melachim I 2:2*) The *Ralbag*, in his commentary explains what it means to "become a man." He explains that *Dovid* is telling *Shlomo* not to act like an adolescent but rather like a mature adult. What is that line of demarcation between an immature youth and a wise older person? The *Ralbag* says it is "seeking counsel." How counterintuitive! Asking for advice may conjure up an image of indecisiveness, hesitancy and even a lack of confidence. It is quite the opposite of the modern image of "manliness."

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This is a window into the *Torah's* concept of what an adult should look like, and here specifically, how the King of the Jewish People should conduct himself. Seek advice, don't just act independently. Consult with those greater than you and bounce ideas off of even those smaller than you. Asking *sheilos*, consulting with friends and mentors do not diminish one's 'bigness', on the contrary, they are the very essence of an adult *Torah* personality. Someone who is truly 'manlike' is confident enough and wise enough to "network" and seek out the wisdom and guidance that will help him accomplish his goals.

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How do we inculcate this notion within our children? As with other approaches to life – the greatest impact is the model the parents present to their children. Do we form our ideas and act on them based only on our own feelings and perceptions? When an issue arises that evokes strong emotions – are we smart enough to seek an unbiased opinion from a trusted friend or confidant, or perhaps an expert or someone with experience in this area, or do we plow ahead with what our feelings of the moment push us to do? Do our children hear the words come out of our lips: "I'll have to ask the *Rav* for a *Psak*," "Let me consult with my *chevrusa* – he's a very wise fellow." "I need to contact my *Rosh Yeshiva* – this is a very important decision." Even better – take the child along, when appropriate, to discuss a vexing issue or conflict with the *Rav*, to give the child first-hand experience in receiving a decision from a *Torah* authority.

Closer to home, when a seemingly intractable issue arises with a child do we offer to go to a trusted *Rebbi* or *Mechanech* to discuss our concerns? When reflecting upon a school issue in our child's life that to our child seems unfair – do we jump to condemn, or do we help our child see the possibility of another point of view. Are decisions made after due deliberation, or is a snap decision made and then we find our ego doesn't allow us to reconsider our decision, despite mounting evidence to the contrary.

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“Let me consult with my *chevrusa* – he's a very wise fellow.”**

The hallmark of youthfulness is being impetuous – doing things with too little forethought before acting. The hallmark of adulthood is giving thought to one's actions, and that was the core of *Dovid's* advice to the crown prince.

Best wishes for a wonderfully thoughtful *Shabbos* with our princes and princesses!

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