Bereishis 2018

1.

Helping at home

And God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth.” (1, 26)

"ויאמר אלהים נעשה אדם בצלמנו כדמותנו וירדו בדגת הים ובעוף השמים ובבהמה ובכל הארץ ובכל הרמש הרמש על הארץ."

Radak writes that Hashem said only now that everything in the world is prepared for him and created we can create man. Hashem said we should create the main creation last in order that everything is prepared. This is honorable that man was created last and everything was created and prepared for him. Man was created last, as a sign that he is the crown jewel of creation, to make clear that all creatures preceding him in creation were created to serve, increase pleasure and make life more convenient for him. He is to be master of them all.

Rav Zilberstein (Aleinu L’shabayach) says that **one of the first rules in running a household is teamwork.** The sefer Toldos Yaakov describes the ways of the Steipler. There is a story of an avrech (a yeshiva student, or a young man who learns in a kollel) who visited the Steipler seeking advice about learning. The Steipler gave him advice. When the avrech got up to leave, the Steipler requested he remain for another moment. **The Steipler quipped don’t forgot to help in your house (אל תשכח לעזוב בבית). Yes, I see you are a masmid (diligent person), but ask the members of your house if they need help. He replied all my wife wants is for me to learn. The Steipler replied, that’s her mitzvah, your mitzvah is to help.**

An avrech came to Rav Gifter with question regarding shalom bayis. He asked my wife wants me to take out the garbage and I think it’s beneath the kavod of a ben Torah, what should I do? **Rav Gifter began pondering about this and replied I think you don’t need to take out the garbage.** The man went home and told his wife Rav Gifter’s answer. **The next morning they heard a knock at the door and it was Rav Gifter saying he came to assist with taking out the garbage. No more needed to be said.**

2.

Respect your husband

“Then the man said, ‘this one at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. This one shall be called Woman, for from man was she taken.’” (2, 22)

"ויבן יקוק אלהים את הצלע אשר לקח מן האדם לאשה ויבאה אל האדם."

They are intertwined with each other. Not only does a wife need to respect her husband who is a talmid chacham, but also even if he is a regular person. Rambam (hilchos eishus 15, 20) writes that Chazal commanded **a woman should honor her husband excessively, and have awe of him, do all of her actions according to his word. He should seem to her like a minister or king, walking in the desires of his heart, and distancing herself from what he hates. This is how holy and pure Jews behave in their marriages. These paths should be their pleasant and praiseworthy lifestyle.** (וכן צוו חכמים על האשה שתהיה מכבדת את בעלה ביותר מדאי ויהיה לו עליה מורא ותעשה כל מעשיה על פיו ויהיה בעיניה כמו שר או מלך מהלכת בתאות לבו ומרחקת כל שישנא, וזה הוא דרך בנות ישראל ובני ישראל הקדושים הטהורים בזיווגן, ובדרכים אלו יהיה ישובן נאה ומשובח.)

There is a story of a wife in Los Angeles who applied the words of the Rambam wholeheartedly. There was a man named Fishal who was a simple person. He didn’t have such a respectable job. His wife would work in their store selling items necessary for sewing. Fishal would be in the store for two hours a day. It was incredible to see how she respected her husband. She would consult her husband on many matters, even though she knew better then him. All the buyers would testify to the honor she gave to her husband and refer to him by using important titles. She merited children who became known talmedai chachamim. After her husband passed away, she remarried a big talmid chacham. This is a big mussar for any wife who finds her husband not to be as she thought he would be. If she nevertheless respects him, she will merit many blessings.

The nature of a wife is to have limitless admiration for her husband. There is a fascinating Medrish. The Shir HaShirim Raba (1, 4, 2) quotes a Mishna in Yevamos (64) that states if a man married a woman and stayed with her for ten years and she did not give birth, he is no longer permitted to neglect the mitzvah to be fruitful and multiply. Consequently, he must either divorce her and marry someone else, or take another wife while still married to her. (נשא אשה ושהה עמה עשר שנים ולא ילדה אינו רשאי לבטל) This doesn’t apply nowadays as stated by the Rama (even haezer siman 1) and others.

The Shir HaShirim Raba quotes Rav Edi who relates a story about a woman in Sidon who couldn’t have children for ten years. She and her husband went to Rashbi to ask whether to stay married or not. Rashbi told them just like you got married through a big feast, so too if you want to separate you must host a big feast again. They listened and made a lavish meal and he got drunk. Once his mind was settled, he wanted to monetarily compensate his wife. He said ‘my daughter, take any item you want in my house and bring it to your father’s house.’ She continued to feed him drinks and wine until he fell asleep. She got up and hinted to her servants to lift up his bed and carry him to her father’s house. In the middle of the night, he woke up and he asked where he was. She said ‘you’re in my father’s house.’ So he asked why. **She said ‘you told me I can take anything in your house and bring it to my father’s house. There is nothing I want more than you, so I brought you here.’** (אין חפץ טוב לי בעולם יותר ממך) They went back to Rashbi, told him what happened, and said they don’t want to separate. He davened for them and they had children. The lesson to be learned is **all the worldly items were nothing compared to the value of her husband.** Even though a woman may make mistakes, don’t get angry because really she wants her husband and to do his will more than anything in the world. Someone who acts this way will merit many brachos.

The Pirkei D’Rebbi Eliezer (perek 16) states that **a groom is similar to a king (חתן דומה למלך).** The Otzros HaTorah (marriage pages 317-320) relates eighteen ways how grooms are similar to kings. Additionally, brides are similar to queens. This concept is derived from the Gemara in Kesubos (17a). The Gemara relates that king Agrefus allowed a bride to pass in front of him when they met at a split in the road. **A married couple must build their house in a kingly manner. Kings are involved only with the most important and major issues that arise. This is precisely how brides and grooms should act. They should focus on the most significant matters. When one focuses on crucial matters they don’t have time to quarrel with one another. When they do this then they will surely live happy lives.**

3.

Jealousy and education

“Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Chanoch. And he then founded a city, and named the city after his son Chanoch.” (4, 17)

"וידע קין את אשתו ותהר ותלד את חנוך ויהי בנה עיר ויקרא שם העיר כשם בנו חנוך."

There is a story of an individual who lived in a very affluent area. He was also very wealthy. He was as the pasuk in Koheles (2, 4-6) says “I built myself houses and I planted vineyards. I laid out gardens and groves, in which I planted every kind of fruit tree. I constructed pools of water, enough to irrigate a forest shooting up with trees.” However, he said when he looks at his neighbor he gets jealous. Recently he saw his neighbor acquire a new car and he became jealous. He asked Rabbi Zilberstein how is it possible according to the Torah not to be jealous. Rabbi Zilberstein says he needed a lot of siyata dishmaya to answer him properly. It’s hard to discuss all the reasons behind the mitzvah, so he said he davened to Hashem to get an answer. Rav Zilberstein responded does your neighbor have a sickness? If you want to be jealous, you also need to be jealous of his sickness. The pasuk in Shemos (20, 14) says “you shall not covet your neighbor’s house: you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male or female slave, or his ox or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.” ("לא תחמד בית רעך לא תחמד אשת רעך ועבדו ואמתו ושורו וחמרו וכל אשר לרעך.") Why does the pasuk need to end “or anything that is your neighbor’s”? The Torah is teaching us that **if you are jealous of what your friend has, you need to be jealous of everything he has, including his sickness.** Rav Zilberstein’s words were well received.

Chazal say after Cain killed Hevel he had a lot of regret. He realized the main reason he killed Hevel was because he wasn’t taught how bad jealously is. Therefore, he named his child Chanoch, which means educate. (חנוך מלשון חינוך) Meaning, we must educate our children not to be jealous. He actually named a city Chanoch in order to instill within other the importance of proper education.

**Another way to eliminate jealousy is to live with the belief that everything we attain is divinely decreed. Someone educated from youth with this perspective will not have any jealousy.** (See writings on parshas Yisro 2016 for an elaboration of this.)

The Kozhnitzer Rebbe writes in his sefer Avodas Yisrael, a person shouldn’t say when I get older I’ll serve Hashem. The pasuk in Bamidbar (15, 20) “as the first yield of your baking, you shall set aside a loaf as a gift; you shall set it aside as a gift like the gift from the threshing floor.” "ראשית ערסתכם חלה תרימו תרומה כתרומת גרן כן תרימו אתה." He homiletically explains that the main part of a person’s life is when he is younger and his traits are developing. The simple translation of the word עריסה (the exact wording of the pasuk is ערסתכם) is dough. However this word can also mean crib. Thus the pasuk would translate as follows; **even a child who seemingly doesn’t hear/see anything can be educated in the ways of Hashem.** The Mishna in Avos (perek beis) quotes Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya who said happy is the one who gave birth to him! (רבי יהושע אשרי יולדתו.) What is so special about his mother that she merited getting quoted in this Mishna? Many mefarshim quote the Yerushalmi (mesechas Yevamos (1, 6)), Rebbi Yehoshua’s mother used to bring his crib into the Beis Medrish in order that he would listen to the Torah. She didn’t want him to lose out on any precious Torah. (See writings on parshas Vayeilech 2016.)

We can learn this idea of chinuch starting from infancy from the Greeks. They decreed to write on the horn of a bull we have no portion with the God of Israel. (אין לנו חלק ונחלה באלוקי ישראל) Why specifically on the horn of an ox? The former Rosh Yeshiva of Gateshead (רבי גורביץ) said he once saw on display they used to use horns as bottles to nurse children. This is what the Greeks wanted, to instill in the young children their pasul hashkafa. (See writings on Chanukah 2015 for another answer.)

There is a story about a certain gadol hador who people were asking many questions to. When he closed the door, his gabai (attendant) said the Rebbe will be out in a few minutes. Rav Zilberstein said he wanted to hear so he got close to the door and heard the Rebbe was teaching his child or grandchild the aleph beis. Then they opened the door and let everyone in to ask their questions. The obligation to educate our children is very strong. **No matter where a person is holding in life he must not make excuses not to teach children. The derech hatorah (Torah way) is to set time constantly, checking on the children’s progress and supervising their ways.** Then we’ll have hatzlacha with chinuch and setting our children on the proper path.

Thank you Yeir Ausabel for typing this up.