



GROWTH

At The SHABBAT TABLE

PARSHAT KI TETZE

Family First

R' Igal Haimoff shared something incredible from R' Reuven Feinstein. Back when R' Reuven made a Bar Mitzvah for his son, his father, the revered *gadol* R' Moshe Feinstein, wasn't there for that Shabbat. He attended the weekday party, but couldn't make it for the Shabbat event, because he had to be at an Agudah Convention. Someone daringly asked R' Reuven if he was insulted that his own father didn't come for Shabbat, to which he gave an astounding answer.

"No," he replied confidently. "I'm sure that my father loves me very much." R' Reuven went on to explain: "My father learns in the early hours of every morning before *tefillah*, nonstop. Nothing could bother him or pull him away from his *limud*, except for one thing. When I was a child going to yeshiva, he would interrupt his learning just to take my clothing and warm them up on the radiator, so that by the time I would get up, my clothes would be warm and cozy.

"Furthermore, our family would spend the summer break in the mountains, and my father would have a special *chavruta*-session with me every day. But the second that the fun-hour for the kids came, as the horses went around gathering all the children for games, my father closed the book and said, 'Okay, we're finished now; go have some fun.' He knew how important it was for me as a child to play and have fun. He was sensitive to spare me from the shame of being the only kid who was 'stuck' studying while all the others were having a blast.

"Thirdly," continued R' Reuven, "I always had a chair next to my father. Whether it was Friday night or Shabbat day, whether we had guests or not; my father always reserved a special seat next to him just for me. Nothing was ever too important for him to even slightly display any disregard for me, whatsoever..."

R' Moshe was a real gadol, as he displayed it at home and treated his children with the utmost respect and sensitivity. The biggest rabbi in America, who had plenty of things on his mind, didn't allow the "big things" to cloud his vision of seeing his children and being in tune to what they need and the attention they craved...

"The most valuable thing we have in this world is to walk around holding Hashem's Hand, always." (Charlie Hanary)

The Basics

R' Aharon Pessin once related a potent message to carry through Elul.

There was a certain fellow who was extremely stringent and unwavering in his observance of mitzvot – but not so much when it came to mitzvot bein adam lachavero, commandments pertaining to interpersonal relationships. For mitzvot between him and G-d, he made sure to perform exceptionally, with every possible Rabbinic bonus you can imagine. But when it came down to interpersonal mitzvot, especially between him and his wife, there was absolutely nothing there...

One month, this individual was unable to recite Birkat HaLevana, the blessing on the moon. Finally, the last night to make Kiddush Levana arrived, and of course, it was a very cloudy evening. At 10 o'clock, he said to his wife, "Listen, I'm tired. I'm going to sleep. Stay awake, and just look up into the sky. When you see the moon coming out, come and wake me up." Being a good wife, she stayed up. Her husband went to bed, and she was waiting. 10:00... 11:00... 12:00... 1:00... 2:00... At 2:30, she couldn't believe her groggy eyes. The clouds had moved away, and the moon was visible, between the clouds! She ran upstairs and attempted waking her husband. "Get up! Get up!" she exclaimed. "Go, sanctify the moon!" She kept trying and trying, but to no avail. "Come on, go say Birkat HaLevana! The moon came out!" He was out cold. She persisted, and finally, after 20 minutes, he broke out of his slumber. "Oh... okay, okay," he finally mumbled. He started stretching his arms, slowly getting up... he went to wash his hands, get dressed, and at 3:05 am, he got outside. He looked up, bewildered. "Where's the moon?" he crankily thought. Apparently, by the time he had finally woken up and had gotten out of bed, the clouds had once again covered up the moon. He stormed back into the house and started yelling at his wife, "WHY'D YOU WAKE ME UP?? WHAT ARE YOU DOING, YOU FOOL?! YOU'RE SUCH A FOOL; WHAT DID YOU DO?!" He kept blowing off more steam, degrading and belittling his poor wife. After a few moments, she looked at him and responded: "You know what, you're right; I am a fool. The moon is so much smarter than me. When the moon realized that you're coming to sanctify it, it ran away. But when you came to sanctify me under the chuppah, I stayed. You're right, I am a fool – the moon is much smarter than me..."

Every day in Shacharit, we say: לעולם יהא אדם ירא שמים. Simply understood, it means: Always, a person should have *yir'at Shamayim*...

However, this line can be read with a little more depth: "לעולם יהא אדם" – a person should first be "a *mentsch*," conducting himself with basic human dignity and respect with other people, especially one's spouse and immediate family, and only then "ירא שמים" – work on being meticulous with all the other mitzvot...