



Honorable Mentchen II: Offering Advice #25

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hanoth Teller

Giving advice is a very important component of *chesed*. In business, professional opportunities, raising children, and marriage, helping others in need of guidance is a wonderful way to do kindness. However, our sages caution us to avoid some important pitfalls. Make sure your intentions are pure and free of personal interest. Live the golden rule, "Do to others as you would want others to do to you." If you're afraid you'll be biased, tell the person outright, "My advice may not be objective." There are many instances in the Oral Torah when judges

would disqualify themselves from rendering judgment because they felt they had even a slight self interest. Giving self-serving advice violates the commandment, "Do not put a stumbling block before a blind man." One may not take advantage of someone who is ignorant in a certain matter by offering them bad counsel. This includes misleading someone in religious matters. However, if one has good reason to suspect someone is soliciting assistance to do something destructive, one is permitted and even obligated to

mislead him.

It's not enough to have good intentions. Make sure you are qualified and knowledgeable before offering advice. Although rarely done with malicious intent, giving misleading information is a great sin included in the confession on Yom Kippur.

Rabbeinu Yonah notes that if you can offer advice, even if the person didn't ask you, you are obligated to do so.

The Gift of Self

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Why does the Torah go to such great lengths detailing the building of the *mishkan* and its various vessels? What is the connection between Parshat Terumah and the month of Adar?

Rav Belsky explains that when a person suffers the loss of a loved one he tends to think of the deceased often. The more intimate the relationship the more poignant the memories. This is how we should think of the *Beit Hamikdash*. The more we contemplate it, the more intimate our relationship becomes. As our vision of the *Beit Hamikdash* takes form, our attachment increases and we feel an ever increasing longing. When we show our willingness to learn about it, a longing is kindled inside us for it to be rebuilt. So while in Tamuz and Av the yearning is one of sadness, in Adar and Nissan it is one of happiness, hope, and a desire for the *Beit Hamikdash* to be restored.

Beginning Rosh Chodesh Adar, some people hang up a sign with the words, *Mishenichnas Adar marbim b'simcha*. In addition, when a new house is built, some have a custom to leave a part of the wall at the entrance to their home unfinished as a remembrance of the destruction. This is a synthesis of both the sad and joyous yearning for the *Beit Hamikdash* to be rebuilt.

The Torah says, "*V'asu li mikdash v'shachanti b'tocham*." B'tocham is plural to teach us that every Jew is meant to create a *mikdash* within himself. The first way to build a dwelling place for Hashem is to take your unique talents and

gifts and elevate them to serve Hashem.

Mishlei says, "*Kabed et Hashem m'honcha*. Honor Hashem with your wealth." Our sages learn that this means, *mima shechonencha*, with the talents He blessed you with. This applies to Torah study too. When a person finds the part of Torah that resonates within him, he creates his *daled amot*, his space from which he connects to Hashem.

As parents, we must identify the special qualities in our children and fine tune and develop them. No one standard applies to all. Every teacher must work to identify the strength and weakness of each of his students and attempt to nurture them. A really great teacher judges each child according to his own ability and builds a relationship with him as an individual. If we understand that building the *mishkan* is building ourselves as unique people, we will focus in on our children as well. We have to teach them that Hashem has a role and a place for each of us and we must develop our unique strengths to elevate His name.

In the Megila, Mordechai says to Esther, "If you will be silent, the salvation will come from a different place." The Midrash explains, if you will be silent now, you will be silent in the future. The Netiv Hamoadim points out, Hashem designs our life precisely for what we are destined to accomplish. If we don't answer that call, later on we will have to answer the ultimate call. Rav Lugasi explains based on the Rambam, that part of our challenge is moving away from the physical and embracing the spiritual. Each time we overcome our

inclinations and break our desires for physical pleasure, we become stronger and lay another brick in our personal *mishkan* for Hashem. Nothing exists in a vacuum. When we replace physicality with spirituality we make room for the light of Hashem to enter. Building a *mishkan* is recognizing that the One above is very much a part of our lives and getting rid of the negative aspects that block us from having a relationship with Him. When we're victorious over our *yetzer hara* we invite the *Shechina* to reside inside us.

This light and feeling of connection to Hashem is what Adar is about. The secret of serving Hashem with joy is creating a bond with Him. The Maharal says that faith generates joy. When a person recognizes that everything that happens to him is Divinely ordained, there's feeling of direction and control. There's no greater *simcha* than knowing that life has purpose and meaning.

The Torah says, "*Anochi haster aster et panai*." Even when we don't see Hashem he is still there. It's not enough to know this intellectually. It has to become a part of us. The Netivot Shalom says you should adopt one *mitzva*, something that you feel your life force is connected to, and resolve to keep it at all times. You should invest in it and stretch your limits to fulfill it, so that Hashem can dwell within you through the performance of this *mitzva*. We have to make Him the focus of our life where our joy comes mainly from *mitzvot*, rather than from physical things. In Adar we live with Hashem and this will ultimately give us the greatest joy.



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Purim Kattan

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The Sar Shalom of Belz explains the verse in Breishit, "*Ki lulei hitmahmanu ata shavnu zeh pamayim*. If we had not delayed we would have returned twice already." *Lulei* has the same letters as *Elul*. *Zeh* is the numerical value twelve. If one didn't repent in *Elul* then one can still return in the twelfth month, *Adar*. The *megilah* says, "*Vayashav Mordechai el shaar haMelech*. Mordechai returned to the gates of the king." The *midrash* teaches that whenever the megila refers to "the king," it refers to the King of kings. Achashveirosh wanted to get rid of the Jews even more than Haman. The decree seemed irrevocable. But with the power of prayer and *teshuva*, Mordechai and Esther helped the Jews return to Hashem. *Adar* can be read as *aleph dar*, The One Above dwells among us always. The

Kotzker Rebbe taught, "Hashem is where you open your heart to let him in." No matter how low we've sunk, He will never leave us.

Rabbi Yehuda bar Shilat, a descendant of Haman, taught, "*Mishenichnas Adar marbim b'simcha*," When *Adar* comes, we increase joy. Esther cried from the depths of the palace. In the palace of the evil Achashveirosh, surrounded by sin and darkness, Esther retained her faith. The *simcha* of *Adar* is the realization that in our darkest moments Hashem is there with us.

On Chodesh Nissan, when the light of the Divine Presence is revealed, our souls are spiritually recharged as we relive the Exodus from Egypt and our birth as a nation. As the

months go by our energy starts to drop. By the time *Adar bet* nears we're running on almost empty. So Hashem in his great kindness gives us *Purim Katan*. A *katan* is one who is dependent on the table of his father. On *Purim Katan* we ask our Father in Heaven, "Extend your hand to supports us." *Purim Katan* is a day of inspiration from above. It is a demonstration of Hashem's profound love and His devotion to us even in the darkest moments.

In a leap year we're given an extra four weeks to tap in to the wellspring of joy, love, and repentance of *Adar*. We can reach out to attain closeness to Hashem, fear of heaven, and clarity of thought and thereby transform *Purim katan* to *Purim gadol*.