

Adam Disciplined, Eve Not

PARSHA INSIGHTS - BERAISHIS (5760)

BEND DOWN AND LISTEN TO YOUR LITTLE WIFE

“To Adam He said, ‘**Because you listened to the voice of your wife** and ate from the tree about which I commanded you saying, you shall not eat from it, cursed is the ground because of you; you shall eat of it through suffering all the days of your life’” (3:17). The snake had advised Chava to eat from the *aitz hada’as* [tree of knowledge], and Chava caused her husband, Adam, to partake of it.

When Hashem reprimanded the three offenders in this familiar episode, He charged Adam with the crime of hearkening to his wife, Chava. However, He never scolded Chava for obeying the persuasive words of the snake! Where is the consistency in this incident that we think we know so well?

Rav Zalman Sorotzkin addresses the issue; here is a solution. In the reproof to the serpent, Hashem had stated that “I will put animosity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will pound your head, and you will bite his heel” (3:15). We see that everlasting enmity had been created between snakes and people. Furthermore, the power of speech was forever removed from the snake.

☞ See the *d’var Torah* [lesson] on *Beraishis* [Genesis] 5758, available online at TorahMax.com under: “Sefer Bereishis”, “Parshas Bereishis”, “[Hisstory of the Speaking Serpent](#)”- R. Moshe Heigh.

Consequently, there was no further concern that humans would listen to the advice of snakes. These animals would no longer express themselves verbally, plus humans do not generally adore snakes. The actual punishment of Chava was only because of her deed—EATING from the tree. The punitive measure was NOT because she listened to the serpent. There was no need to discipline her for this, since she would never hearken to the words of a snake again.

☞ (I would like to comment that this can teach us a lesson about discipline. Do not make an issue of someone’s wrongdoing if it is impossible for him to ever do it again! Of course, it all depends on the circumstances.)

On the other hand, Adam needed discipline for LISTENING to Chava, besides the scolding he received for eating from the *aitz hada’as*. Why? Obviously, Hashem did not create hatred between wives and husbands just because Adam obeyed Chava, the way He generated eternal resentment between people and serpents. This would not fit well with the continuance of the world, where *shalom bayis* [peace in the home/peace between spouses] is so essential. As a result, Adam was rebuked for hearkening to the words of his wife, SINCE IT MIGHT HAPPEN AGAIN, besides his sin of partaking of the forbidden fruit. The lesson? From then on, he should not obey his wife if her advice contradicts Hashem’s will.

What about worldly issues? What should the husband’s attitude be? The *Gemara Bava Metzia* 59A is famous. In the midst of a *Talmudic* discussion, Rav Papa mentioned to Abaya that a common saying existed among people. “If your wife is little (short), bend over and listen to her words...” A husband is supposed to give ear to his wife’s sagacious advice. This is similar to what Hashem told Avraham regarding his objection to expel his son, Yishmael, because of his negative influences. “ALL which Sara will say to you, hearken to her voice” (*Vayaira* 21:12). Rav Zalman Sorotzkin again brings the above mentioned *Gemara Bava Metzia* 59A, that a husband must heed his wife’s words in worldly matters. Avraham disagreed with Sara’s idea of sending away Yishmael, because he knew it fell under the category of spiritual decisions, usually the domain of the husband. That is why Hashem exhorted Avraham to obey EVERYTHING Sara told him, whether mundane or spiritual. *Rashi* quotes *Chazal* [our Sages], that Sara was greater than Avraham in prophecy; it is proven from this dialogue. This shows that a wife can be superior to her husband in spiritual areas as well, depending on the situation.

Spouses must constantly work on their relationships, forever striving for *shalom* [peace].

By Rabbi Moshe Heigh