

The 5 Love Languages
Rosh Hashana D2 5774
Rabbi Steven Saks

If your spouse makes a decision regarding your children, and you disapprove of that decision, what should you do? The answer should be obvious; you should speak to your spouse about it. Apparently, that wasn't obvious to Rebecca. Rebecca was troubled by the decision of her husband, Isaac, to give the blessing of the firstborn to their first born son, Esau, rather than to their younger son, Jacob; however, she didn't speak to Isaac about her concerns, instead, she tricked him. She ordered Jacob to disguise himself as Esau and trick his father into giving him the blessing of the first born.

Why would a *Tzedekess* (righteous woman) like Rebecca engage in this deceitful, distasteful behavior instead of saying to her husband, "Dear, can we speak about a concern?" Well, it appears that Isaac and Rebecca never spoke at all! The text of the Torah never records a word spoken word between Isaac and Rebecca. Not one! Yet, they stayed together. Maybe that's the key to a lasting marriage. Don't speak to each other.

It doesn't take a marital counselor to see right from the beginning Isaac and Rebecca were going to have problems. When Rebecca first laid her eyes on her husband-to-be, we are told by the great commentator Rashi that, "*Ra'atah oto hador, v'tohah mpnav* (She saw he was splendid and was taken by him)." She was

swept right off her feet. When Isaac looked up he didn't see Rebecca; rather, he sees camels. He didn't notice his wife-to-be. He sees the camel she is riding on! It's no wonder years later that Rebecca resorted to trickery instead of trying to speak to Isaac; she must have felt unappreciated and that her husband was uninterested in her and her concerns.

How could Isaac have made Rebecca feel appreciated and have opened the lines of communication that are necessary for any healthy marriage or relationship? And more importantly, how can we? Allow me to recommend a book to Isaac as well as to you, The 5 Love Languages by Dr. Gary Chapman. Dr. Chapman explains that there are five distinct manners in which people can feel loved which he calls the five languages of love. They are:

Words of Affirmation

Quality Time

Receiving Gifts

Acts of Service

Physical Touch

Each one of us has a primary language and we feel most loved when our primary love language is being spoken to us.

When Isaac first saw Rebecca he missed an opportunity to share words of affirmation with his *kallah* (bride). Undoubtedly, regardless of whether a bride's primary language is words of affirmation or not, she expects to be complimented on her wedding

day. All Isaac had to do instead of focusing on the camel was to say, "You look beautiful."

Sometimes words of affirmation are not as easy to find. Let me share an example with you from The 5 Love Languages by looking at:

Love Language One: Words of Affirmation

Twelve years and two children after their wedding day, Bill and Betty Joe had just about fallen out of love, as is unfortunately often the case. The only thing the couple could now agree on is that they both loved their children.

Betty Jo complained that Bill was never around to help out around the house or enjoy leisure time with her because he is always working. Bill complained that Betty Jo did not appreciate the fact that he worked hard to support the family, and that she displayed little affection.

Dr. Chapman discovered that despite the animosity, each spouse appreciated certain things about the other. Bill acknowledged that Betty Jo is a good housekeeper and an excellent cook when she chooses to cook. Betty Jo agreed that Bill is an excellent provider. Dr. Chapman made a simple suggestion to the couple: express verbal appreciation for things you like about the other and for the moment suspend criticism about the things you don't like. In other words, a compliment a day keeps the counselor away. Over the next two months Betty Jo regularly complimented Bill for:

- Being aggressive in his work
- Paying the bills on time
- Being generous with finances

Bill regularly complimented Betty Jo for:

- Keeping the house clean
- Taking the kids to school and church activities
- Cooking dinner about three times a week

At the end of the two-month period, Bill felt emotionally renewed. He felt appreciated and as though Betty Jo “made me feel like a man again.”

Betty Jo appreciated Bill compliments, but did not feel emotionally renewed because Bill was not spending time with her. Unlike Bill, Betty Jo’s primary love language is not words of affirmation; rather, it is quality time, our second love language. Before turning to our second love language, allow me to share one of Dr. Chapman’s suggestions with you. If you have trouble coming up with words of affirmation, as you watch TV, listen to conversation, or read, pay attention to words of affirmation that others use and write them down. When the time is right, use them.

Love Language Two: Quality Time

Bill explained that he was not able to spend much time with Betty Jo because of the demands of his job. Bill told Dr. Chapman of his climb up the professional ladder and knew that in the next five years he would be where he wanted to be. Dr. Chapman asked Bill, “Do you want to be there alone, or do you want to be there with Betty Jo and the children?” Bill responded that he wanted his family with him to enjoy his success. Bill suddenly realized that he had to make time for his family. Dr. Chapman had Bill list things that Betty Jo said that she would like to do with him such as

- Going to the mountains with and without the children
- Meeting for lunch during the week
- Going on a family picnic without his complaining about the ants.

Bill managed to reorganize his work so that they could have family time together, and these activities emotionally renewed Betty Jo. She felt loved again by her husband. It is important to note that the activity is not an end to itself, but a vehicle to create an emotional bond.

When a father is sitting on the floor rolling a ball to his two year old, his attention is not focused on the ball but his child. The undivided attention the father is giving his child creates a bond. If the father is speaking on the phone while playing with his child, his attention is diluted as is the quality of his time. Block aside time for

your loved ones, time in which you can give them your undivided attention.

We are told that when Rebecca was being brought to meet Isaac, he was *la'suach ba'sadeh* (meditating in the fields) towards the evening, which is understood to mean that he was reciting Mincha (the afternoon service), as explained by the Talmud (Berachot, 26b). By creating the Mincha service, Isaac created a fixed time for God on a daily basis; he should have also created a fixed time for his wife to ensure he was giving her the regular attention needed to maintain a healthy relationship. Make fixed time for your loved ones; it's a *Mitzvah* (commandment)!

Love Language Three: Gifts

When we think of giving gifts, we think of giving physical objects. Receiving physical gifts certainly makes people feel loved, especially if receiving gifts is their primary love language. But let me suggest another type of gift, the gift of self.

Jan told Dr. Chapman that her husband Don loves playing softball more than he loves her. Dr. Chapman asked why. Jan explained that ten minutes after she had given birth to their first child, Don left her and their daughter to play softball. Jan felt that Don had "deserted" her on the most important day of their life, and 15 years later was still upset about it. Don explained to Dr. Chapman that he had gone to play softball in order to share his good fortune with his friends and was shocked to find that Jan was upset with him when he returned to the hospital. While Don's

intentions were good, he failed to understand that more than anything; Jan needed her husband with her to share in the joy of their life -changing moment.

During moments of joy, crisis or tragedy, the most valuable gift we can give to a person whose primary love language in receiving gifts is the gift of our presence. Conversely, if you would like your spouse, family member or friend to accompany you to a specific event, don't assume they can read your mind. Verbalize your feelings. Sometimes what is painfully obvious to us is not obvious to others. Look at Don. How can you give the gift of presence? You can say to the person you are giving the gift to that, "I would like to give the gift of my presence to you at any event or occasion you like this month. You tell me when and I will do my best to be there."

If you want to give a gift to your loved one but you are not sure what type of gift to give, Dr. Chapman suggests giving a lasting tribute. Give a gift to your loved one's favorite church (or in our case, favorite synagogue, Adas Kodesch) in honor of her birthday, anniversary or other occasion and ask for the institution to send a card to her.

The Fourth Language of Love: Acts of Service

What we do before marriage is not necessarily an indication of what we will do for our spouse after marriage. Mary complained to Dr. Chapman that her husband Mark went hunting regularly. Mary

explained that before marrying Mark, he would routinely help her with chores such as washing the dishes after she had cooked him dinner. Mary explained that these "acts of service" made her feel loved. Dr. Chapman asked Mark why he stopped performing these acts after they got married. Mark explained that he just thought his marriage would be like his parents. His dad worked and his mom took care of household chores. By withdrawing his help, Mark inadvertently made Mary feel unloved. It also became clear that the reason Mary criticized Mark for going hunting was not because she disliked the idea of him hunting, she disliked hunting because she felt unloved by the fact that Mark would leave her with chores to do while he would go out with the guys. It turns out that all Mark had to do to earn Mary's support of his hunting was to help out around the house a little. In fact, Mark started coming home and asking Mary, "What can I do to help you this evening?" At first, Mary could not believe it, but this has continued for three years now. Again, Mary feels loved.

Now a cautionary note. While it is admirable to perform an act of service, you should not allow yourself to be treated like a doormat. Manipulation by guilt ("If you are a good spouse or daughter, you will do this for me") is not language of love. Likewise, coercion ("You will do this or else") is not a language of love. If you find yourself being treated this way, say, "I love you too much to allow you to treat me this way; it is not good for either of us."

If you want your spouse's help, instead of demanding or nagging, give a thanks in advance. For example, " I want to thank you in advance for washing my softball uniform before the game on Sunday."

The Fifth Language of Love: Physical Touch

Let's not just think of physical touch in terms of the obvious - physical relations. Even during a hectic day, a quick touch on your spouse's shoulders as you hurry by to take care of a chore can convey love. If your spouse's primary language of love is to be touched, a touch in a time of trouble may be far more comforting than anything you can say.

Please remember, though, that just because you like a certain form of touching does not mean that your spouse does. Continuing to touch in a manner your spouse finds irritating conveys the opposite of love. Allow your spouse to be your guide; your spouse is the one you are seeking to love and knows what will be perceived as a loving touch.

Now that we have studied the "Five Love Languages" we have to find our own language as well as the one of our loved ones. How do we do so? In order to find your own love language, ask yourself three questions:

1. What does your loved ones do or fail to do that hurts you the most? The opposite of what hurts you is probably your love language.

2. What have you most often requested of your loved ones? The thing that you most often requested is likely the thing that would make you feel loved.

3. In what ways do you regularly express love to your loved ones? Your method of expressing love may be an indication that this is your primary love language.

In order to find your loved one's primary love language, ask yourself these three questions:

1. How does he express love to others?

2. What does she request the most?

3. What does your loved one complain about the most?

While complaints can be irritating, they can be a great source of information. If your loved one says, "We don't spend much time together anymore," you may be inclined to counter, "What do you mean; we just went for a walk last Tuesday night," for remarks like these instinctively make us defensive. However, if you answer, "What would you like to do together," you will most probably get a response that will help to build the relationship. Complaints of

loved ones are the most powerful indicators of their primary love language.

We saw that although Isaac was able to communicate with God, he was not able to communicate with his wife, and this led to disaster. Of course, over these High Holidays, we are focusing on building and repairing our relationship with God as we spend much time in prayer. However, it is just as important that we put effort into building and repairing our relationships with our loved ones. I shared [The 5 Love Languages](#) you because we can use it as a tool for building and repairing relationships. Now let's get to work!