

And G-d saw all that He had made and behold it was very good. (1:31)

Life is comprised of successes and failures. Some of us have a greater number of successes. Others look at failure more often than at success. This is not a perfect world, but our perspective on life and the world can make a “world” of difference. Hashem created the world that we know in Six Days of Creation. He made some subtle changes during Creation in order to offset some of the problems that arose.

Hashem first created light. This was a powerful, intense and very spiritual light. In fact, it was so spiritually illuminating that the wicked would never be worthy of experiencing it. Hashem, therefore, separated this light from this world and set it aside for the righteous to enjoy in the World to Come.

On the third day, there was once again a disappointment, when Hashem created fruit trees whose bark would taste the same as the fruit. The trees produced a bark, but it did not taste like the fruit. The earth was later punished for not conforming to Hashem’s command.

On the fourth day, the two illuminations, the sun and the moon, had a “situation.” At first, they were both the same size — until the moon complained about having to share its dominion over the world with the sun. In response, Hashem decreased the size of the moon. Once again, the creation produced disappointment.

Yet, as we see from the Torah, despite the shortcomings and disappointments, Hashem said that His creation was *tov me’od*, very good. It could have been better. It could have been perfect. There could have been an absence of strife, no disagreement, no complaints. There might have been — but there was not. Yet, Hashem says that it was very good. Why? Horav Avraham Pam, zl, cited in *The Pleasant Way*, explains that Hashem accentuated the positive. He focused upon the successes — not the disappointments.

Emphasize success; accentuate the positive; focus on winning: these are phrases that we hear all the time. How often do we listen to them? We listen to a shiur, lecture, or speech. The speaker/lecturer has presented a powerful and brilliant discourse. Yet there were a few short moments when his presentation seemed to drag. During the sixty-minute lecture, eight minutes were boring. Does that diminish the value of the rest of the speech? Just because a small part of

an endeavor does not reach the apex of our expectations does not — and should not — decrease its total accomplishment.

Having said this, we are enjoined to make every effort to praise the positive efforts of those with whom we come in contact on a regular basis. This is a reference to those whom we take for granted, the chazzan or baal tefillah in shul, the cook who prepared our food, the one who gives a daily shiur, and of course, our wives and mothers, etc. We tend to ignore the basic expression of gratitude for services rendered, either because we take them for granted or because we do not focus on their positive aspects. We have constant opportunities to perform chesed with a simple good word, a smile, a gesture of recognition. Some of us, regrettably, find it difficult to pay a compliment. We conjure up all forms of excuses for not rendering this common courtesy, but, after all is said and done, it is the result of an insecurity on our part. What we do not realize is that a subtle compliment can make a distinct difference in someone's life, as evidenced by the following story:

The story is told about a famous author who was walking along the East River promenade in New York City, feeling very depressed. He felt at the end of his rope. His life's work, his writing, was of no value. His life felt empty and meaningless. Had his writing really accomplished anything? At that point there seemed to be only one thing to do. Suicidal, he thought about climbing over the railing that divided the promenade from the river and throwing himself in.

He stood there, staring at the dark waters, about to make his final move, when he suddenly heard an excited voice, "Excuse me, I am sorry to impose on your privacy, but are you Christopher D'Antonio, the author?" He could only nod in return. "I hope you do not mind my approaching you, but I had to tell you what a difference your books have made in my life! They have helped me incredibly, and I just wanted to thank you!"

"No, it is I who should be offering gratitude to you," he replied, as he turned around, walking away from the East River and heading home.

Space does not permit me to add many more vignettes of chesed through words. As someone who has spent many years in the field of chinuch, however, I can say unequivocally that nothing does more for a student than positive recognition from his rebbe. This equally applies with regard to the rebbe. Parental recognition of a rebbe's efforts on behalf of their child is crucial for the rebbe, the

child, and the parents.