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Learning to Love a Rebellious Child

Tiferes Shlomo on the Parsha

וירא אליו ה' בלילה ההוא ויאמר אנכי אלהי אברהם אביך אל תירא כי אתך אני

"I am the G-d of your father Avraham, do not be afraid, for I am with you"

The Kabbalists teach that Avraham embodied the attribute of Chesed. His service of Hashem was through love (Ahava). In contrast, Yitzchak personified the attribute of Gevurah. His service of Hashem stemmed from fear or awe (Yirah).

The emotion of love causes a person to draw closer to the one whom they love. In this case, the love of Hashem leads a person to desire to draw closer to Him. Yirah (fear) is the opposite. The feeling of Yirah leads a person to hold back and stay at a distant.

To be complete, our service of Hashem needs to have both Ahava and Yirah.

A service that is purely based on Yirah is not positive as an extreme sense of fear before Hashem or awe of His greatness, could lead a person to fear and hold-back from approaching Hashem to serve Him, feeling too meek and unworthy to do so.

This was the message that Hashem was giving to Yitzchak in the vision described in the verse above.

Hashem refers to Himself as "the G-d of Your father Avraham", alluding to Avraham's service with the attribute of Ahava. Hashem tells Yitzchak אל תירא, "do not be afraid", meaning that his service of fear was too intense and must be curbed.

The reason that Hashem tells him to not be afraid is - כי אתך אני - "for I am with you". Because Hashem wishes for Yitzchak to draw close to Him and because this is ultimately Yitzchak's desire as well, his service of fear is not enough. He must also serve Hashem with love, like the service of his father Avraham.

As parents, one of our greatest desires is to see our children continue in our ways and embrace the values that we raise them with. We invest in their education and try to set an example. We deeply treasure the beauty of our Torah way-of-life and our deepest wish is to be able to pass that on.

These wishes and dreams do not always materialise and we see what we describe as children going "off the Derech" (perhaps more appropriately children who are on their Derech).

Ultimately, we don't know why a child goes "off the Derech". There can be many reasons, many of which are beyond our control and we can't blame ourselves. It happens to the best families and cuts across all communities. Like everything in our lives, everything is directed by Hashgocha Protis and is in Hashem's control. Hashem has His plans for each one of us.

We can only do our best to educate them and guide them for as long as we can, in the best way possible. As they grow up and become independent, our influence lessens as they start to make their own choices in life.

We cannot control the choices they make as young adults and we have to let them grow on their personal life journey. All we can do is love them; Love them for who they are. Love them because they are your child. Love them because they are a precious Neshama.

Yitzchak and Rivka had two sons. For thirteen years they were provided with the very best Chinuch, with Avraham himself as their Rebbe. Their parents were super role-models, beacons of spirituality.

But even in this home of purity, from the age of 13 Eisav gravitated away and by the age of 15 he was openly rebelling against the values of his upbringing.

Yitzchak knew who Eisav was and what he was up to. Yet the Torah tells us that Yitzchak loved Eisav. The Midrash asks how Yitzchak could love such a wayward child?

The Midrash explains that this illustrates the Torah's paradigm of ימין מקרבת, that we should always draw close with the right hand. If Eisav went so far away with his father's love, imagine how much further away he would have gone without it.

Sometimes our children may seem far away. We may feel hurt, loss, rejection, anger, sadness. But we need to put our personal feelings aside and show our unconditional love. Indeed, it is the child that makes it hardest to love, that needs our love the most.

The unconditional love that we give and continue to share and express to them, is the most important thing that we can give. Without it, who knows where they could end up.

Wherever they are at and wherever they are, deep in their heart they know that their parents genuinely love and care for them, unconditionally. They will carry this with them as they go on their own path and it will anchor them and hopefully keep them safe.

The Gemara teaches that in the future, Hashem will come to Avraham and say "your children have sinned against Me". Avraham will respond "Let them be erased to sanctify Your Name." Hashem will go to Yaakov, who experienced the pains of raising children, perhaps he will ask for mercy on their behalf. Yaakov too will say "Let them be erased to sanctify Your Name."

Finally Hashem will come to Yitzchak, who will respond "Master of the World, are they my children and not Your children? Just as You called them Your child when they accepted the Torah at Har Sinai, they are still Your child even if they have sinned."

Reb Meir of Premishlan explains why Yitzchak will be the one to appease Hashem's anger. Yitzchak will tell Hashem "I, a mere mortal, had a son who rebelled and still I loved him. You, who are a merciful and compassionate, certainly you should love your children Yisroel, even if they have sinned".

This is the meaning of the verse ויאהב יצחק את עשו. With this, that Yitzchak loved Eisav, he will ensnare Hashem with his mouth in his defence of the Jewish people, that Hashem should always love them with the unconditional love as a father loves their child.

By loving each of our children unconditionally, we will cause Hashem to do the same, so that even if we are in Golus because of our sins, He will bring us back home and shower us with love.

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| 1. Shabbos 127b | 8. Shulchan Aruch Harav 333:6 | 14. Ta"z 333:2 | 18. Shulchan Aruch Harav 307:23. Note that some Acharonim write that the leniency does not apply to the Baal Habayis as there is an additional concern that they may erase something from the list. See Sharei Teshuva 307:4 |
| 2. Shabbos 127b | 9. Kaf Hachaim 333:13 | 15. 307:5 | |
| 3. Chagigah 27a, Menachos 97a | 10. Mishna Shabbos 126b, Rambam Hilchos Shabbos 26:15 | 16. If it is very hot, one may ask a non-Jew to turn on an air-conditioner even if there is no Mitzvah need | |
| 4. Rashi, Meiri, Rabbeinu Gershom | 11. Beis Yosef 333, Ta"z 333:1, Magen Avraham 333:1 | 17. Shabbos 148b, Shulchan Aruch 307:12 | |
| 5. Beis Yosef | 12. Levush 333 | | |
| 6. Siman 72 | 13. Shabbos 126b | | |
| 7. 333:1 | | | |

The Weekly Halacha Analysis

The Definition of Hachnasas Orchim

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One of the most well-known Mitzvos between man and his fellow man, is Hachnasas Orchim, welcoming and hosting guests.

Hachnasas Orchim falls under the umbrella of Gemilus Chassadim¹. It is also part of the Mitzvah of Ahavas Yisroel and fulfills the Mitzvah of Tzedaka. It is one of the Mitzvos that our sages teach that one receives the principal reward in the world to come, but also enjoys the “fruits” in this world.

Amongst the Mitzvos, Hachnasas Orchim is considered as a “great Mitzvah”. The sages² teach that the Mitzvah of Hachnasas Orchim is even greater than greeting the presence of the Shechina. They also teach³ that nowadays, in the absence of the Mizbeach which would bring atonement through the sacrifices, a person’s table brings them atonement. This refers to the Mitzvah of Hachnasas Orchim⁴.

When one hosts guests in fulfillment of Hachnasas Orchim, the meal is considered a Seudas Mitzvah⁵.

Because of its status as a Mitzvah, there are a number of Halachic leniencies that can apply in different areas of Halacha. Some of these leniencies will be discussed below.

Which type of guests qualify?

However, not every case of hosting guests qualifies as a Mitzvah in the Halachic sense. The Halachic criteria to be considered Hachnasas Orchim depends of the type of guests one is hosting and the circumstances under which one is hosting them.

The Terumas Hadeshen⁶ writes that one only fulfills the Mitzvah of Hachnasas Orchim when hosting guests who have come from out-of-town, and one hosts them in their home. The Ram”o⁷ adds that the same would apply if the guests from out-of-town are staying in someone else’s house and one hosts them for a meal.

The Alter Rebbe explains that If one invites their friends who live in the same town to eat with them, this is not considered Hachnasas Orchim in the Halachic sense, and the leniencies will not apply⁸.

The reason that this is not considered as Hachnasas Orchim, is because these people would otherwise be able to eat in their own home. They have only been invited as a sign of friendship and not out of need. Even though these guests would not have prepared food for Shabbos, there is still no Mitzvah because there was no Mitzvah-need to have invited

them prior to Shabbos and had they not been invited, they could have prepared.

If one invites their local friends to join a meal in honour of a guest from out of town who is being hosted, the local guests are also considered as Orchim. Friends who have come from out-of-town also qualify.

If someone from out-of-town pays board and lodging, the leniencies of Hachnasas Orchim do not apply to their hosts⁹. If they are only paying to stay, but meals are not included, it would be Hachnasas Orchim to host them for meals.

Shabbos Leniencies

On Shabbos, one is not permitted to empty a storeroom¹⁰, even if the objects are not Muktzah¹¹. This is because of Tircha¹² – the sages did not want us to exert ourselves on Shabbos. However, if it is being done for the sake of a Mitzvah, one may empty the room even if it causes great Tircha. The Mishna gives the examples of clearing a room to use as a Beis Midrash¹³ or for the sake of guests – to make room for them. The same applies to any Seudas Mitzvah¹⁴.

On Shabbos one is generally not permitted to ask a non-Jew to do a forbidden action on Shabbos on their behalf, even if the action is only Rabbinically forbidden. One of the exceptions is the principle Shvus Dshvus Bemakom Mitzvah, that for the sake a Mitzvah, one is allowed to ask a non-Jew to do something that is only Rabbinically forbidden on Shabbos¹⁵.

Being that Hachnasas Orchim is defined as a Mitzvah, the leniencies applicable to Mitzvos also apply to Hachnasas Orchim.

An example of this would be asking a non-Jew to carry food through a Karmelis on Shabbos (a public area that does not qualify as a Biblical Reshus Harabim). This only applies if the food is essential for the meal and to honor the guests.

There may also be scope for leniency to permit asking a non-Jew to do Rabbinically forbidden things to make it comfortable for a guest, even if this would not be sufficient to justify asking them to do it for one’s own sake. Examples could include asking a non-Jew to turn on an air-conditioner if it is uncomfortable¹⁶ or to turn on LED lights if it is too dark.

On Shabbos, certain reading materials are forbidden, under the Rabbinic prohibition of Shtarei Hedyotos. This enactment was to prevent people from coming to read financial documents that may in turn lead to writing on Shabbos. The Mishna gives the example of reading a list of the names of one’s guests or from a menu that lists

the foods that are going to be served¹⁷.

The prohibition of Shtarei Hedyotos does not apply for the sake of a Mitzvah. Based on this, the Acharonim justify the practise that for the Mitzvah of Hachnasas Orchim, one may read from a guest list or menu. The Mishna is discussing reading from a guest list when one is hosting their friends from in-town, which does not qualify as a Mitzvah¹⁸ as discussed above.

Other types of Hachnasas Orchim

The Acharonim write that having guests who live in the same city may still qualify as Hachnasas Orchim, depending on the circumstances. The Shulchan Aruch was just discussing the standard case, whereby someone who lives in-town is presumed to be able to provide for themselves.

Inviting someone who is poor and would not be able to eat in their own home would certainly be considered Hachnasas Orchim. The same would apply when inviting someone who is unable to cook for themselves or have someone else prepare for them.

The Acharonim also write that inviting guests who have a real emotional or psychological need for company qualifies as Hachnasas Orchim. Examples would include inviting those who are lonely or people who need support and friendship – such as someone who is going through a hard time.

Inviting someone who does not have friends or someone who does not ever get invited out, would also qualify as by doing so, one lifts their spirits. Inviting someone who is struggling, in order to give them a break, may also qualify as Hachnasas Orchim.

Hachnasas Orchim also applies when hosting people who are “spiritually poor”. Inviting someone who does not observe Shabbos at home or would not have a Shabbos meal at home, would certainly be considered Hachnasas Orchim. Inviting someone as part of Shlichus or Kiruv, in order to bring them closer to Torah-observance, would also be considered Hachnasas Orchim.

Hosting Bochorim or seminary girls from out-of-town could also qualify as Hachnasas Orchim. This is not only when hosting them on a Shabbos-off when they have nowhere else to eat. It may also apply even if they could eat in the Yeshiva, as they may be homesick or miss being in a family environment which may impact their emotional wellbeing.

Sources on reverse

