



From the desk of
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עיר התורה שקרובה אליך

Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

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OHR

Parashat Mishpatim

HAMELECH

Help Him Out

The Torah tells us (Shemot 23:5), "When you see the donkey of your enemy crouching under its burden and you feel like refraining from helping him; indeed you shall help him out."

Who is this "enemy" that you are meant to help out? The Gemara explains that there are some people who commit certain sins which make it permissible or even obligatory to harbor animosity towards them! Nonetheless, even such a person, when we see him struggling, we are to lend a helping hand.

Why? Explain the Baalei Tosafot: On the one hand, you may or even must, hate him. On the other hand, this hatred must be constrained to the religious realm; i.e., only hate him for the right reasons, i.e., his wayward behavior. Now, what usually happens when A hates B is that B begins to hate A back. The relationship continues in such a manner that A hates B again, even more. Now, this extra hatred is no longer religiously based; therefore it is not religiously sanctioned. It must be avoided and if necessary, uprooted.

Therefore the Torah gives us this special mitzvah of helping him out so that our hatred of him will be limited and restrained and not get out of hand.

A Love for Lincher

To explain this phenomenon of reciprocated hatred, the Tosafot brought the *pasuk* from

Mishlei (27): Like water, a face to a face, so is the heart of a man to a man. This means to say that just as one sees his reflection upon the water, so too, his fellow man will reflect back one's sentiments towards him. This works in both directions, positive and negative.

Let us bring an example. After the end of the Second World War, Europe was torn and desolate. Soldiers from all sides used their armaments and impudence to take advantage of citizens, innocent survivors.

There was a Jew names Lincher who had been a lieutenant in the army during the war. After the war, he wanted to take revenge against his Rosh Yeshiva who had thrown him out of Yeshiva years earlier due to severe misbehavior. He tracked him down and told the mayor of the city: Bring me this man, or I and my men will pillage the whole city.

The mayor sent for the Rav. One *talmid* begged to escort the Rav. The Rav allowed him to do so, on the condition that he not utter a word. On the way, the *talmid* saw that his *rebbe* was very concentrated on a certain matter, not be disturbed.

When they showed up at the place of Lieutenant Lincher, the lieutenant saw the Rav and the two of them ran towards each other with open arms and embraced. They cried upon each other's shoulders, exchanged a few words of apologies and blessings and the Rav was sent home to safety.



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The *talmid* asked for an explanation. The Rav responded: Aware of this concept of mutual feelings, as I went towards this meeting, I did what I could to arouse feelings of sympathy and even love towards this man. I thought back to his youth and his upbringing and found justification for his uncouth behavior. Once we saw each other, after I had worked on myself so much and brought myself to love him, he automatically felt this love and we embraced. That is how my life was saved.

The Open Window

Rav Yisroel Salanter once travelled on a train in the smoking section with the window open. His seatmate objected, "Why are you smoking?! I can't stand it!"

Without saying a word, Rav Salanter extinguished his cigar (or pipe, whatever it was).

The man was not finished. "Why is the window open?! I'm freezing!"

Rav Salanter closed the window, again without a word of defense.

Upon arrival, Rav Salanter was met by throngs of people who felt honored to get a glimpse of this Torah giant.

When the seatmate understood to whom he had acted so impudently, he came to Rav Salanter's lodgings and begged for forgiveness. Rav Salanter forgave him immediately and inquired as to the purpose of his journey. The man responded that he came to be tested for *Semichah* for *Shechitah*. After the man failed his first test, Rav Salanter

volunteered to learn with him until he would know it well.

When asked why he went all out to help the man who had been disrespectful towards him, Reb Yisroel responded, "I wanted to uproot from my heart any traces of ill will towards him. The best way to do that is to help him all ways, again and again."

Learn from the Donkey

If we must lend a helping hand to all fellow Jews, how much more so in the home, regardless of how we are treated. Some people marry and view marriage as a partnership where jobs and roles are clearly delineated, not to be trespassed. Some think: the husband's job is to bring in a living and to be concerned for the religiosity of the home. And the wife has to take care of the children, cook, bake and clean, etc. Some husbands think that it is beneath their dignity to take out the garbage or to get up in the middle of the night to help with a baby or young child.

We can certainly learn a lesson from this week's *parashah* how much a person is to help out at home. If he is obligated to help a sinner and his donkey, all the much more so he must help out his wife. Not only when they are on the best terms, but even, especially, when their *shalom bayit* could use improvement. There is no better step in the right direction than lending a helping hand around the house, not letting your wife collapse under the pressure of her many tasks.



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Mitsvah: Help Your Wife

One of the *talmidim* of the Alter of Slobodka got married. Shortly thereafter, the Alter asked him if he helps his wife on *Erev Shabbos*. He responded in the affirmative, quoting the relevant sources which advocate helping assist in Shabbos preparations.

The Alter replied, "Do not only have in mind *Kavod Shabbos*. Also intend to do the mitsvah of helping your wife.

Let's Learn from our Leaders

The Rav of Yerushalayim, Rav Shmuel Salant, was found hanging up the laundry to dry. His wife said, "It's really not right for the Rav of Yerushalayim to be doing that."

Rav Salant answered, "Really I should hire someone to help you, but I have not the money. So I'm doing it myself."

The Steipler Gaon (Rabbi Yaakov Yisroel Kanievsky) finished learning late at night and noticed the dishes piled high in the sink. The Rebbetzin woke up to a pleasant surprise of washed dishes.

A similar incident transpired in the home of Rav Moshe Feinstein.

The Respectable Water-Carrier

Here is a story told over by a neighbor of Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld:

Rav Yosef Chaim once knocked on my door, carrying two pails of water. He asked for permission to bring them in. I was stunned. After

the Rav deposited the pails, I followed him outside and discovered that my wife had taken pails to the well and filled them up. Not able to carry them all at once, she began carrying what she could and asked her young children to watch the other pails. The children began trying to take the pails of water, but they were obviously too heavy for them.

Just then, Reb Yosef Chaim walked out of his house and saw children struggling with their water. Immediately he bent down to take two pails and asked them for their address.

I did not know what to say. I was quite ashamed. Reb Yosef Chaim took note of my perplexion and soothed me saying, "I always yearn to help out fellow Jews, but due to my position as Rav of Yerushalayim, no one lets me help. Finally, I found these young, innocent children who allow me to do this mitsvah. Thank you."

The Home Front

An *avreich* who learned in the Ponevezh Yeshiva would always help his wife at home, including bathing and dressing the children. One day, he received a position as a *Maggid Shiur* in a Yeshivah. He now thought that in this role, it was beneath his dignity to continue helping in the home. But his wife really needed his assistance.

Not knowing what to do, she turned to Rav Shach for advice.

Rav Shach called for the *Maggid Shiur*. He began asking about his new job and also about his family. Then Rav Shach said, "You know, Torah



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must go hand in hand with *chessed*. You now teach Torah. You must also be involved in *chessed*. I know of a woman who has many children and she is not able to take care of them by herself. Do you think that you can be of assistance?

The Maggid Shiur answered, "Certainly, I will try my best."

Rav Shach handed him a small piece of paper, saying, "Here is the address and name of the family."

Seeing his own name and address, he immediately got the message.

Out with the Ash

Chatam Sofer points out: In Sefer Vayikra, we are told of the many details of *avodah* in the *mishkan*, the vast majority of which were carried out by *kohanim*. It is interesting to note that, for the most part, the *Kohanim* are referred to as *Bnei Aharon*, sons of Aharon. On one occasion, however, Aharon's name is used on its own. This is a reference to carrying out the ashes which had accumulated upon the *mizbeiach*.

Says the *Chatam Sofer*: The Torah wishes to stress that even the Kohen Gadol should not view it as beneath his dignity to carry out the ashes.

So too, every Jewish home is a miniature *Beit Hamikdash*. No husband dare think of it beneath his dignity to take out the garbage. It is one of the important *avodahs* of the *Beit Hamikdash*.

Donkeys and Peace

On our *pasuk* in *Mishpatim*, Sefer Panim Yafot comments: A person should view it as a great *zechut* if he merits to help out a fellow Jew. Helping a Jew is helping yourself.

Medrash Tanchuma says: Picture this: two donkey-drivers are making their way on the road. They are not best friends, to say the least. Constantly quarrelling and hurling insults at each other.

Unexpectedly, one man's donkey collapses under its burden. Aware of the Torah's demands in such a situation, the fellow donkey-driver lends a helping hand. Thankful for his service, the beneficiary begins thinking, "I guess deep down he really cares about me." Then, they begin talking to each other pleasantly. They get to an inn and sit down and eat and drink together, enjoying each other's company.

What brought about this change of heart? Adherence to the Torah's directives.

Certainly at home, when husband and wife do all they can to help each other, especially when there are various pressures in the home, that is the best way to achieve and maintain marital harmony. Lending a helping hand at home will not diminish your honor at all, - it will only magnify it.

Shabbat Shalom Umevorach

Mordechai Malka