



Adapted from the sefer חמין במוצאי שבת a collection of maamarim on  
תנא דבי אליהו given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Melave Malka

### Melave Malka Parshas Vayishlach 5761

In Parshas Vayishlach, immediately after Yaakov Avinu is injured in his struggle with the *Sar shel Eisav*, the Torah tells us that Bnei Yisrael will therefore never eat the *gid ha'nasheh*, the part of an animal's body that corresponds to the part of Yaakov Avinu's body that was injured in the struggle.

It is difficult to understand the connection between the injury suffered by Yaakov Avinu, and the practice of not eating the *gid ha'nasheh*. Among the various approaches of the Rishonim, we find the following wonderful commentary of the Sforno:

“We do not eat the *gid ha'nasheh* as a declaration that Yaakov's injury occurred to a limb that we consider unimportant”

The Sforno teaches us that the Torah's immediate statement that the descendants of Yaakov will not eat the *gid ha'nasheh*, comes to mitigate any distress or shame that Yaakov Avinu might have felt had the *Sar shel Eisav* damaged an important part of his body. The Torah declares that this *gid* has no significance. The halacha also treats the *gid ha'nasheh* as something with no taste, as if it were *eitz b'alma*, a piece of wood.

While we cannot presume to understand the thoughts and feelings of Yaakov Avinu, we can apply the Sforno's lesson to our lives.

This *peirush* of the Sforno teaches us that even the greatest, holiest people in our history, have human emotions. Events in their lives, as in all of our lives, can cause them distress, sadness, or embarrassment. The



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Torah obligates us to be aware of those around us, and think deeply about their feelings. We must utilize all of our abilities to ensure that our interactions with others do not cause them distress or sadness. Instead, we must utilize our creativity to help them feel good about themselves and their situation.

I recall a beautiful incident from the life of my grandfather Rav Yochanan zy”a. Once, he went to visit an acquaintance who was seriously ill. While he was there, a very famous Rav, one of the Gedolei Hador, also came to visit. When this Rav saw the patient, he sighed in pain and exclaimed, “Oy Vey.... To see you looking like this...”

My grandfather was very humble, and never interfered with great Rabbanim such as this one. In this case, however, he immediately corrected him. “Baruch Hashem, he looks so much better than before, he is getting stronger and healthier!”

When my grandfather returned from the visit, he told me the story, and commented sadly, “The heavens did not provide that Rav with the right words for the situation.”

Later, I met one of the patient’s sons. He related that his father told him that the great Rav’s statement depressed him so much, that he despaired and felt like giving up. However, the words of my grandfather strengthened him and gave him the courage to fight his illness to the extent that, *Baruch Hashem*, he returned to a life of health and happiness.

We must understand that even people who are strong, wealthy and influential, are also vulnerable. They, like all people, can benefit from kind words and encouragement. We must avoid saying anything that could bring a person down. Instead, we should always prepare ourselves to transmit love, hope and encouragement.



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Chanukah is an especially appropriate time to work on this. The Magen Avrohom (Shulchan Aruch (סימן תר"ע) states that "It is customary for impoverished young men to collect door to door on Chanuka"

Chazal teach us that the state of poverty is not limited to financial difficulty. In Maseches Nedarim (מ"א.) they state that "אין עני אלא בדעת". One who is impoverished in his understanding, is truly poor.

Each of us experiences dark times and painful events that we can't understand. In those situations, we are like a poor man yearning and begging for help.

We must open our hearts and try to revive the spirits of each person who is sad, distressed, or hopeless. Relieving them from the thoughts that trouble them can truly bring them life.

Dedication to this goal will help us receive the lights of Chanukah and to draw close to Hashem Yisbarach with our hearts and souls, אכי"ר.



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