

NACHAS IS MORE THAN JUST A MITZVAH

Category: Bereishis, Toldos

Why did Yitzchak need to eat a meal before giving a blessing? Was he just cranky on an empty stomach?

The Give and Take in a Relationship

In this week's Torah portion, we read about the blessings that Isaac wanted to give to Esau. He called Esau and said to him, "Go out into the field, hunt game for me, and make a tasty dish just the way I like it. Then bring it to me, and I will eat it so that my soul may bless you."

This is a bit strange. If Isaac wants to bless his son, he could call him into a room and give him his blessing, like parents bless their children on Friday night or on the eve of Yom Kippur. Why does he ask Esau to prepare a complete meal and only then will he bless him? If Isaac was hungry, Rebekkah could have prepared a meal for him. So, why did he link the blessing to the food?

In Chassidic circles, there is something called *ma'amad* where Chassidim give of their own money for their Rebbe's personal expenses. An emissary called a *Shadar* is sent around to the cities where Chassidim live; he updates the locals on what's happening at headquarters, and each Chassid has the opportunity to give his *ma'mad* donation and have the names of his family taken to the Rebbe for a blessing.

Once, when the *Shadar* of the wealthy Reb Yisroel, the Rebbe of Ruzhin, returned from his collection trip and handed his list of names to the Rebbe, the Rebbe noticed that one name was missing from the list. "Why is one name missing," the Rebbe asked, "Did something happen to my Chassid that I don't know about?" The *Shadar* explained that since this particular Chassid usually gives two rubles and the trip to his village costs four rubles it was a waste of time and money to visit him. "Fool," the Rebbe exclaimed, "We are not takers, we are givers!"

G-d created everyone with the ability to be a receiver as well as a giver. One

cannot only give or only take. In any human relationship if one partner constantly talks without ever listening to the other, the relationship will fall apart in short order. On the other hand, if one partner only listens without offering any feedback, this too is a recipe for doom. We must each do our fair share of giving and of receiving. The same applies to the Rebbe-Chassid relationship. The Chassid supports his Rebbe materially and the Rebbe supports his Chassidim spiritually with his guidance and blessings.

The Ruzhiner Rebbe needed to receive the two rubles from his Chassid in order to keep the relationship healthy, not because he needed the money.

Isaac needed to receive something from Esau in order to make Esau a proper vessel for his blessing.

[In the town of Lubavitch a Chassid asked the Rebbe Rashab for help in a very serious matter. The Rebbe brusquely answered that he was unable to help. Hearing this, the Chassid left the Rebbe's room and broke down crying. When the Rebbe's older brother R' Zalman Aaron heard why the Chassid was crying he entered the Rebbe's room and inquired how it could be that a Chassid asks for a blessing and the Rebbe can't help?

When the Rebbe heard about how the man was crying he called him back into his office and assured him that, with G-d's help, everything would turn out fine.

What changed? The Rebbe waited until the man gave something of himself - tears, and beseeching G-d, for then the Chassid created the vessel he needed to receive the Rebbe's blessing.]

Give Nachas

The same applies to our relationship with G-d. You might ask, "What can we possibly give to G-d?" The answer is, as stated in Tanya, Nachas.

Nachas is one thing that can not be bought. One can't give it to themselves - we can only get it from others. When parents hear good reports from school or when they see their little boy reading the Torah at his Bar Mitzvah they are filled with nachas. And G-d wants us, His children, to give him nachas.

But what does it mean to give nachas to G-d?

At the beginning of his leadership the Rebbe would officiate at the weddings of his Chassidim. Once, Moshe Groner, a yeshiva boy collected all of the pictures of the Rebbe performing the ceremony at these weddings and put them together in an album for the Rebbe's mother. A few days later the boy had the opportunity to visit the Rebbe in his office and the Rebbe thanked him profusely for bringing his mother so much nachas.

The Rebbe then offered to reimburse the boy for the costs of the album and pictures but the boy refused claiming that it was his mitzvah and that he wanted to keep it. When the Rebbe heard this he said, "Here I'm talking about nachas and you're mixing in mitzvos!"

What is the difference?

There are two reasons why a Jew would do a mitzvah. 1. Because G-d told us to. 2. Because he wants to receive the reward for doing mitzvos, both in this world and the next. If he is really holy he'll do it to become more connected to G-d but still the focus here is on himself.

Nachas, on the other hand, is all about the other, thinking about the other, bringing the other pleasure.

Lets give G-d nachas, in addition to the mitzvos. Do something good just for the sake of giving Him pleasure—and you'll feel His fatherly kiss on your forehead.