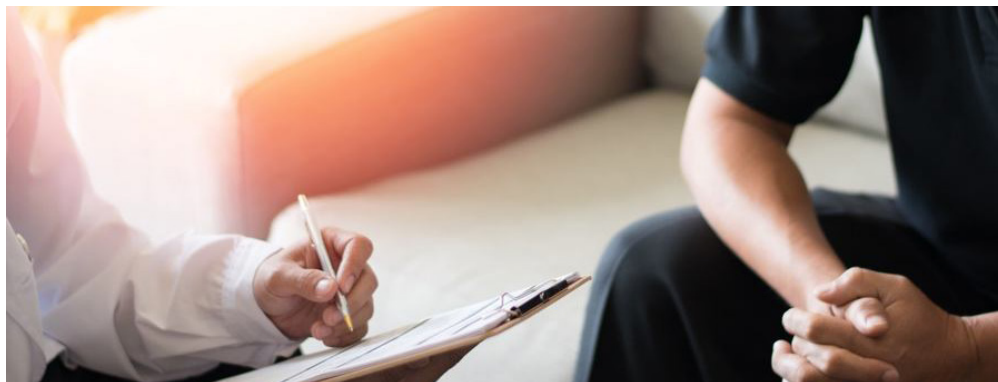


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## THE HONOR SYSTEM: MAY A THERAPIST LEAD A CLIENT TO FEEL NEGATIVELY ABOUT HIS PARENTS?

Adapted from the writings of Dayan Yitzhak Grossman

Our previous two articles on parental alienation discussed the questions of whether the mitzvah of honoring parents applies when its fulfillment would entail great psychological pain for the child, and whether it applies when the parents are sinners. In this final article in the series, we discuss the legitimacy of psychotherapy that involves the engendering and expression of feelings of contempt, disdain, or anger toward a parent.

### THE SEFER CHAREIDIM & THE ARUCH HASHULCHAN

The Sefer Chareidim rules that the mitzvah to honor parents applies to internal feelings as well as outward action, and he goes so far as to assert that the former is the essence (*ikar*) of honor. One must consider his parents great people and honored individuals, and as a result he will certainly honor them in word and deed.<sup>1</sup> The Aruch Hashulchan agrees that we are commanded regarding internal feeling, although he maintains that the mitzvah of honor (*kibud*) concerns action, but the

mitzvah of reverence (*yirah*) concerns feeling.<sup>2</sup>

### R' YITZCHOK ZILBERSTEIN

Accordingly, R' Yitzchok Zilberstein rules that

It is absolutely forbidden to bring parents' responsibility (for a child's problems) to the child's attention, for this involves the sin of "Accused is one who degrades his father and mother."<sup>3,4</sup>

Elsewhere, however, Rav Zilberstein, discussing an eighteen-year-old girl suffering from depression, social anxiety disorder, and difficulty concentrating on her studies, was willing to condone therapy that involved her "scorning" her father, who had severely abused her. If the father has not yet repented, then although—as discussed in the previous article—the daughter is still prohibited to cause him pain, this prohibition

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<sup>2</sup> Aruch Hashulchan *ibid.* se'if 8.

<sup>3</sup> Devarim 27:16.

<sup>4</sup> Shiurei Torah Lerof'im, cited by R' Naftali Bar-Ilan, Tipul Psikholohg Vechibud Horim, Choveres Assia 95-96, 5775.

<sup>1</sup> Sefer Chareidim perek 1 os 35.

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### PARSHAS MIKEITZ

#### MEAL MANDATE

Excerpted and adapted from a shiur by  
 Dayan Yehoshua Grunwald

The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 670:2) writes that a meal eaten on Chanukah is not a *seudas mitzvah*. The Rama cites a *yeish omrim* ("some say") that although there is no obligation, a *seudah* eaten on Chanukah is "*ketzas mitzvah*" (something of a mitzvah) due to the dedication of the *mizbeiach* that took place during this period. The Rama cites a third view that the custom is to sing songs and recite praises of Hashem at Chanukah meals, and this transforms them into *seudos mitzvah*. This approach is the accepted halacha.

The Binyan Shlomo suggests that the Rambam has a different perspective, as the Rambam writes that Chanukah is "days of joy," which the Binyan Shlomo interprets to mean that one must drink wine and eat meat on Chanukah. But he does not understand why neither the Shulchan Aruch nor the Rama cites this view.

Perhaps the answer is that the Rambam can be understood differently. The Maharshel (Yam shel Shlomo, Bava Kama 7:37) suggests that the Rambam calls Chanukah *yemei simcha* because one who makes a special meal on Chanukah transforms it into a *seudas mitzvah*, even if it is not obligatory. He proves this from the implication of the Gemara (Bava Kama 80a) that the ceremony of "*yeshua habein*" (possibly the *shalom zachar*; see Tosafos) is a *seudas mitzvah*. The Maharshel argues that if such a meal can be considered a *seudas mitzvah*, then certainly one in honor of (continued on page 2)

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### Power Trip

**Q** I'll be staying in a hotel one night of Chanukah on a business trip. The hotel prohibits fire on the premises without special permission, but the process of obtaining permission is time consuming. I am on a tight schedule, and taking that time would cause me a significant financial loss. Must I do that, or may I use an electric menorah instead?

**A** Let us first address the loss question and then the matter of the electric menorah. Although *ner* Chanukah is a mitzvah *deRabanan*, it is more stringent with respect to the loss that must be (continued on page 2)

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only applies when the goal of the disparagement of the father is his degradation, but not when it is done for a therapeutic purpose, and for the benefit of the daughter—which is ultimately for the benefit of the father, so that he will have a healthy daughter...

If the father has repented,

We may assume that he is willing to allow his daughter to despise him in her heart, in order that she be healed and be able to marry, and in order that the father shall achieve atonement for having abused her.<sup>5</sup>

**R' NAFTALI BAR-ILAN**

R' Naftali Bar-Ilan objects to the former ruling of Rav Zilberstein cited above, arguing that it is impossible to understand the Sefer Chareidim and the Aruch Hashulchan to mean that one must overlook every flaw in his parents; after all, "the Torah and the Prophets have already taught us that even the greatest of the great are susceptible to sin." He cites two other approaches to the position of the Sefer Chareidim: R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg explains that one must honor his parents simply due to the fact that they are his parents, despite the knowledge that they may not be objectively superlative people, "for honor is not a true thing but a human feeling." But R' Chaim Shmuelevitz explains that "the son is obligated to find in his father certain qualities in which he excels beyond anyone else, in which he is the *gadol hador*." Rav Bar-Ilan concludes that according to these alternate approaches to the Sefer Chareidim,

It is permitted for a psychologist, in the course of his therapy, to bring to the patient's attention that his parents are the ones who have caused his problems, and to support him in expressing anger toward them. There is no concern that this involves the prohibition against *lashon hara*, since this is only for the sake of the treatment, and it is permitted for both the child and the therapist to discuss openly and in detail the conduct of the parents.<sup>6</sup>

**R' SHLOMO AVINER**

R' Shlomo Aviner also permits the feeling and expression of anger toward parents in the context of therapy, although he only permits "disconnection" of the child from his parents when "objectively necessary for the healing of the child."

There is no halachic prohibition against feelings of anger toward parents, and there is only a prohibition against expressing these to them in an insulting manner, in order to shame them. Accordingly, if the therapist believes that the

<sup>5</sup> Shiurei Torah Lerof'im, cited by Dr. Ben Zion Sorotzkin, Kibud Horim Mis'allelim, *cheilek* 2. Cf. the rest of Dr. Sorotzkin's article for further discussion of our topic and related issues.  
<sup>6</sup> Assia *ibid*.

opportunity for a child to verbally express his anger toward his parents in the presence of the therapist is what will heal him, there is basis to [allow] this...

But the disconnection of a child from his parents is certainly prohibited according to halacha, unless we arrive at the conclusion that this disconnection is objectively necessary for the healing of the child.<sup>7</sup>

**R' ELIEZER MELAMED**

R' Eliezer Melamed acknowledges that the Torah does not require children to believe in the perfection of their parents, but he nevertheless rules unequivocally that therapy that causes the patient to blame all his problems on his parents, "who pressured him, became angry at him, and even hit him—in other words, they 'abused' him," causes the patient to flagrantly violate the mitzvah to honor parents, and is accordingly forbidden:

Even if such treatment would be effective from a psychological standpoint, it is prohibited to participate therein since it is contrary to the mitzvos of the Torah. Just as a person may not steal or murder in order to ameliorate his suffering, so, too, is it prohibited to violate the mitzvos of the Torah in order to ameliorate his suffering...

Just as it is prohibited to eat foods that are not kosher, so, too, is it prohibited to go to a psychologist who does not accept upon himself the mitzvos of honoring parents.

Even a psychologist who wears a yarmulke is susceptible to sin in this area. There is a concern that he might distinguish between his religious obligation in his personal life and his profession, and when he comes to treat people, he sheds the mitzvos of the Torah and accepts upon himself the currently regnant psychological theory.

In the course of his discussion, he elaborates:

There is no mitzvah for children to think that everything that their parents do and think is perfect; on the contrary, children are supposed to think independently and to choose good...But the obligation of honor obligates [children] to see the good in [their parents], to understand them, and even if according to the child's opinion there are many flaws in their *midos*, it is incumbent upon him to seek out their good points, to emphasize them in his mind, and to judge his parents favorably, for otherwise, even if he honors them by act, he will not fulfill the mitzvah.<sup>8</sup>

**R' AVIGDOR NEBENZAHL**

Rav Bar-Ilan is unhappy with Rav Melamed's stance

<sup>7</sup> Iturei Kohanim #85 p. 8, cited by R' Uriel Banner, *Gidrei Mitzvas Kibud Horim Vehashlachoseihem al Tipul Psichologi*, Sefer Assia 12, 5769 (Assia 63-64). Cf. Rav Banner's discussion of this ruling, along with that of Rav Zilberstein and the comments of the Sefer Chareidim and the Aruch Hashulchan.  
Cf. Kibud Horim Bemisgeres Tipul Psichologi (Pis'chu She'arim).  
<sup>8</sup> R' Eliezer Melamed, Kibud Horim Uchvod Shamayim.

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incur in its performance than many mitzvos *de'Oreisa*, because of the imperative of *pirsumei nisa* (publicizing the miracle): The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 671:1) rules that a pauper must sell his garment to fund the mitzvah of *ner Chanukah*.



RAV ARYEH FINKEL

Based on this, R' Akiva Eiger (*ibid.*) and the Aruch Hashulchan (*ibid.* 2)

write that this mitzvah is excluded from the general principle that one need not spend more than a fifth of his possessions to fulfill a mitzvah. Accordingly, one must assume a great financial loss if that's necessary to fulfill this mitzvah.

The Pri Megadim, however, doesn't require a person to spend more than a fifth for *ner Chanukah*, but he nonetheless maintains that some financial loss would be required (*ibid.*).

Whether electric light is fire has been the subject of great halachic debate. R' Chaim Ozer Grodzensky said yes and allowed *borei me'orei ha'eish* to be recited over it. Still, most *poskim* hesitate to allow an electric menorah for various reasons, including that it doesn't resemble a traditional menorah because it lacks a wick and fuel and that its ignition is not considered a direct action. But R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach writes that in the absence of an alternative, one may use an electric light on Chanukah and make a *bracha*. You may follow this ruling.

Note, however, that all this only applies to incandescent bulbs, because their red-hot tungsten coil is considered fire; fluorescents and LEDs are not fire. Also, the device should be powered by a battery rather than plugged into the wall, because the former is somewhat similar to the traditional oil or candle lamp whose fuel is in a container and is depleted as time passes.

as well, and he dismisses his concern about the treatments that may utilized by a therapist who is not committed to the Torah.<sup>9</sup> In a response to Rav Bar-Ilan, R' Avigdor Nebenzahl explains that while there is a difference between physicians who fear Heaven and those who do not with respect to various mitzvos even in the case of ordinary physicians, this difference is much greater in the case of doctors who treat mental health, "who operate according to various theories," and accordingly,

In my opinion, it is not recommended to turn to doctors who treat mental health who do not fear Heaven, since their goals are different from our goals.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Assia (95-96) *ibid*.  
<sup>10</sup> Assia *ibid*.

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Chanukah is a *seudas* mitzvah, though not obligatory. Thus the opinion of

the Rambam is essentially the first approach of the Rama.

According to the Brisker Rav (cited in Kuntres

Chanukah Umegilah), the Rambam means by "yemei *simcha*" that it is forbidden to fast and eulogize on Chanukah. According to the Rash of Ostreich (quoted in the Bach), the Rambam agrees with Rabbeinu Yo'el that a *seudah* with bread on Chanukah is in fact obligatory (and therefore one would repeat *birkas hamazon* if he forgot *al hanisim*).

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