



נְעִימוֹת הַחַיִּים
Ne'imas HaChaim Project
In memory of Naama Markovits A"H
לע"נ נעמה חנה ע"ה ב"ר יהודה איסר נ"י



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שבת ראש חדש פרשת נה א' חשון תשע"א

Lesson #5: Help a Friend

(Prepared by Rabbi Yechezkel Weberman)

The title of this lesson is misleading, given the general impression that there is no reason or obligation to help someone who is not a friend. In fact, helping someone who one has the right to despise (the parameters of such a right not being relevant to our subject) is one of the few places that the Torah actually commands us to act with good character and proper Midos. That is the Mitzva of helping to unload an overburdened donkey, or to help reload one whose pack has fallen.

Chazal tell us that by helping the despised person one not only gets reward for the Mitzva but enjoys the added benefit of conquering his inclination to not help. That would seem to imply that helping one's friend is so natural that the Yetzer Hara would not stand in the way. That, however, does not seem to be the case.

How many of us can relate to the following story? Yankel was leaving Yeshiva and was rushing home to get ready to play ball at the local gym when he saw his friend Moishe waiting outside in the rain. His first thought was to turn his head and pretend that he did not see him, as Moishe lived a few minutes away in the opposite direction. A nagging feeling caused Yankel to stop and think about the time that he had needed a ride and how frustrated he was that even the people who were going in the same direction as he was did not offer him a ride. Yankel made a quick u turn and picked up Moishe, and even waited a few minutes so that Moishe could get ready for the game.

For some reason, it seems that when we need a little help that it is no big deal, that the person who would lend a hand would not be losing out on lost opportunity to use their time and resources for themselves. Yet, when it comes time to lend a hand, the Yetzer Hara does not lack for solid justification to explain why we should turn away. It is especially amusing when a child refuses to help out because, "I'm doing something." "Something" usually involves sitting on the couch with an object that was once a usable toy or some other important activity. Let us ask ourselves, are the "somethings" that we adults are so focused on significantly more important?

Maybe our generation has a harder time doing little things for others because we expect so much to be done for us that we rarely have to help ourselves. From the time that we are in grade school through high school and beyond there is someone cleaning up our messes and preparing our work environments to be ready for us. In our times it has become possible to shop, bank, and communicate with unprecedented convenience.

Helping others is not just for Hatzolah members or Tomchei Shabbos volunteers or Chaverim. Chazal champion the merit of Chesed that it can be done by anyone, regardless of their resources, and can be done in any way needed. Anyone who has ever needed a helping hand knows that those little favors are greatly appreciated. Hashem gave us all the ability to emulate him, to be a Maitiv to do good for others. Let us take advantage of that aspect of our Tzelem Elokim.