

Parenting in the Parsha

פרשת ראה Pride and Joy

בָּנִים אַתֶּם לַה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם לֹא תִגְדְּדוּ וְלֹא תִשְׂימוּ קִרְחָה בֵּין עֵינֵיכֶם לְמַת:

You are children of the L-RD your G-d. You shall not gash yourselves or shave the front of your heads because of the dead.

ר"מ אומר ב"כ וב"כ אתם בנים וכה"א והיה מספר בני ישראל כחול הים. פירושו ע"פ מה דאיתא לעיל פסקא מ"ז כשישראל אין עושין רצונו של מקום והיה מספר בני"י כחול הים ואמר שפיר ראייה מהא דכתיב והיה מספר הרי דאין עושין רצונו של מקום ואפ"ה כתיב והיה במקום אשר יאמר להם לא עמי אתם יאמר בני אל חי, הרי דקרוים בני אל חי אף בכשאין עושין רצונו של מקום

R' Meir says either way you are called children (of Hashem) as it says "And the numbers of *Bnei Yisroel* will be like the sand of the sea." The explanation is based on what is brought down earlier chapter 47, when the *Bnei Yisroel* don't fulfill the will of G-d then their numbers will be like the sand of the sea. There is good support brought (for this idea) from that which it says "and the numbers will be" even though they are not doing the will of Hashem nevertheless it says "and it will be I the place where it will be said about them 'you are not My people' you will say 'we are the sons of The Living G-d.'" See that they are called sons (of Hashem) even when not doing G-d's will.

- Meshech Chochma

I like to see a man proud of the place in which he lives. I like to see a man live so that his place will be proud of him.

- Abraham Lincoln

Yiddish is a great language filled with color and expression that captures much of the heart and soul of Jewish heritage. And, as we all know, much of the colorful, expressive thought of the Yiddish language loses something in the translation. One of those great, pithy expressions of the Yiddish language is *es pas nisht*, it is not fitting or appropriate. What the expression is meant to convey is that while certain actions or associations may be appropriate for others, they do not fit a person of your stature or standing. It is not befitting for you.

In this week's *parsha* the Torah captures the essence of the concept of *pas nisht* in the introductory statement that precedes the *issur* of *lo tishgedu*, the prohibition to maim oneself because of the anguish over the loss of a loved one. That introductory statement "*banim atem laHashem Elokeichem*" you are children of *Hashem* serves as the reason for you to avoid such behavior. It doesn't *pas*. It may be appropriate behavior for others, but it does not befit you as a child of *Hashem*.

The regulation of behavior with the statement *es pas nisht*, or its English equivalent cannot be effective in a vacuum. It can only be employed against a backdrop of many years of fostering a sense of identity and pride in that identity. If one does not see himself as unique and special as a child of G-d himself, then he will disagree with your assessment that a particular behavior is not befitting and he will proceed anyway.

In parenting, and in families, this is an imperative. We must raise our children to believe that being part of their family is a privilege and a point of pride. We must raise them to feel that they are something special because they are part of your family and that expectations of them are different because they are something special.

Of course, we never want to train our children to look down on others or to judge them unfavorably. But, it is possible to condition our children to feel that other families and individuals are perfectly OK, but your family adheres to a higher standard.

Very often, parents are uncomfortable when their children ask “why does that family allow their children to do this, or go there, or watch that?” Those can be very difficult and uncomfortable moments when one is unprepared for them, and they can leave you feeling vulnerable as a parent. We hate for our children to think other parents are nicer, more giving and more understanding than we are. But, if you have invested years in fostering your child’s pride in himself, his lineage, and his family, then your answer is simple. *Es pas nisht*. That is not something that fits our family or you as a member of this family. We understand that no member of the royal family will be caught in a low-class establishment. It simply doesn’t fit their station and their place in life.

Those times where you have to say no to your children even though “everyone else is doing it” can be points of great friction and great stress. Alternatively, they can be points where your child can hold his head up high, puff out his chest and say “You’re right. It doesn’t fit.” Start now by inculcating your children with a sense of pride in family and in self. Reinforce the value and greatness of who he is and where he is from. When the time arrives you will reap the benefits of that investment when you and your child agree that there are things that simply don’t *pas* for a child of your amazing family.

Good Shabbos,

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