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Parashat Ha'azinu 5786-פרשת האזינו ה'תשפ"ו

Dvar Torah- Rabbi Yehuda Mann, Rosh Beit Midrash (ymann@torontotorah.com):

One Small Step for Man, One Giant Leap for the Soul

There was once a person who came to Rav Chaim Kanievsky, zatzal, with a question. By Rav Chaim, people felt comfortable asking anything — Torah, blessings, and everyday life issues.

This person had a nephew in Miami — not religious, not really connected. But whenever he visited from Israel, he would stop by. Out of respect, the nephew and his wife would "play along": Nati, the husband, would put on a kippah, and his wife Zehava would make sure to order kosher food. Very respectful — but it was all a show.

Then one visit, the uncle arrives — and is stunned. There's a mezuzah on the door! Nati answers, wearing a proper kippah. "What happened? You became a baal teshuvah?" Nati smiles: "Yes. And I'll tell you why."

A few months earlier, Nati and was walking by the Miami beach. Suddenly they noticed a group of Jews — dressed formally, in the middle of the week — heading toward the ocean. Who goes to the beach in their best clothes? Then it clicked: "It must be Rosh Hashanah! They're going for Tashlich!"

And Nati thought: *I might be secular, I may not live a religious life, but to not even know today is Rosh Hashanah? That's too much.* So he followed them.

At the beach was a Chabad shaliach who introduced himself: "Moishe Katz." He asked if Nati wanted to say Tashlich. "Sure." Did he want to hear shofar? "Why not." He blew for him, then said once again warmly: "My name is Moishe Katz, I'm with Chabad here. If you ever need anything, you're always welcome."

Nati came home and told his wife Zehava: "You won't believe it. Today is Rosh Hashanah! I said Tashlich, I even heard shofar — from a Chabad rabbi named Moishe Katz."

Zehava froze. "What did you say his name was?"
"Moishe Katz."
She said: "You know my grandfather — my mother's father — was also named Moishe Katz? And he too was a *baal toke'a*!"

At that moment, they both realized this couldn't be coincidence. They began attending Chabad, first on Shabbos, then during the week, then taking on kashrus, then Shabbos — until they became full baalei teshuvah.

The uncle, amazed, told the story to Rav Chaim Kanievsky and asked: "If Hashem wanted them to return, why didn't He send Moishe Katz ten years earlier? It would have made all the difference!"

Rav Chaim answered without hesitation: "Because Hashem was waiting for Nati to take the first step. The moment he saw Jews going to Tashlich and thought, *I also want some Yiddishkeit,* that's when Hashem sent him all the hashgachah — the shofar, the shaliach, everything. But the first move had to come from him."

And this brings us to our parsha, Ha'azinu. The Torah gives us a powerful image of Hashem in **Devarim (32:11):** *"Like an eagle arousing its nest, hovering over its young…"*

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch explains: Most birds carry their chicks in their claws, leaving them exposed from under — vulnerable to arrows and predators. The eagle is different. It carries its young on its back, shielding them from danger under, as if to say, *"If you want to strike, strike me first."*

But there's a condition. Before the eagle can lift its young heavenward, the chicks must leave the comfort of the nest. The eagle stirs the nest,

hovers nearby, and waits. The chick must summon courage to jump. Only then does the eagle carries the chick, and soars into the skies.

So too, Hashem hovers over us, ready to protect and lift us higher than we can imagine. But the first move has to come from us. We must take the leap out of our comfort zone — out of old habits and routines. Once we do, Hashem carries us the rest of the way, shielding us from harm, raising us closer to Him.

That's the message for us now, in the days following Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. We've been inspired. Now is the moment to act — to take one step forward, even a small one. That single step is enough to unleash a world of *siyata dishmaya*, of Divine help, that can change everything.

May we all have the courage to take that first step, to jump onto the Eagle's back. And may Hashem lift us higher and higher — because with Him, the sky is not the limit. The sky is only the beginning.

Halacha- Rabbi Yehuda Mann, Rosh Beit Midrash (ymann@torontotorah.com):

Hosting Non-Religious Relatives on Yom Tov

Question: Someone told me it's a halachic problem to host my non-religious cousin for a Yom Tov seudah. Honestly, I was shocked. Isn't it outrageous? To me, it feels not only important for "family shalom", but also a beautiful opportunity to share the warmth of Torah and mitzvot. Could it really be a problem?

Answer: Your instinct is very correct—*shalom* and *kiruv* are central values in Yiddishkeit. But the halachah here is a bit nuanced, and it's worth understanding the background.

The **Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 512:1)** rules that while one may cook on Yom Tov for himself, one may not cook for a non-Jew. The Torah permits to cook on Yom Tov only "*Lachem"*- "for you" (i.e., for Jews). Because of this, Chazal added a safeguard: one should not invite a non-Jew to a Yom Tov meal. The concern was practical—if a guest suddenly shows up, the host may end up cooking extra food especially for him, and that would be prohibited.

The **Mishnah Berurah** applies this halachah further, writing that a Jew who publicly desecrates Shabbos might fall into the same category as a non-Jew for this halachah. On the surface, this would seem to forbid inviting a non-observant Jew for Yom Tov.

That, of course, is a very painful conclusion. But the Rabbis worked hard to address this, and many offered important approaches:

1. **Chazon Ish – Tinok Shenishbah:** Today's non-observant Jews are not considered intentional "rebels," but rather *tinokot shenishbu*—people raised without sufficient Torah knowledge. Thus, they don't carry the halachic status of *mumar*, and the concern of the Shulchan Aruch doesn't apply in the same way.
2. **Not Public Desecrators:** The **Mishnah Berurah (385:6)** and **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach** note that someone who refrains from chillul Shabbos out of respect—whether in front of parents or Rabbis—is not considered a *mechalel Shabbos b'farhesya*. Many of our relatives would never openly desecrate Shabbos at the table, and so the halachah shifts.
3. **Tzitz Eliezer – Invitation vs. Cooking:** Rav Waldenberg pointed out that while one may not cook specifically for such a guest, the restriction against *inviting* was only ever said about a non-Jew, not about a Jew. Thus, the core *issur* does not apply to our situation.
4. **Rav Elyashiv – A Practical *Eitzah*:** To be extra careful, Rav Elyashiv suggested transferring ownership of the food to the guest before Yom Tov (*zachin l'adam*). That way, you're not considered hosting them.

Conclusion: The Shulchan Aruch's concern was purely practical—that extra cooking might be done. But our Rabbis emphasized that this should not come at the expense of family connection or kiruv. With proper care, there is no reason not to invite non-religious relatives for Yom Tov—and indeed, doing so can create shalom, achdut, and a living kiddush Hashem.