

LETTERS

Ask Rabbi Shais Taub

Dear Rabbi Shais Taub

A few months ago you addressed the topic of parental alienation for a few weeks in a row. I didn't write to until two weeks ago and a fresh take on this but here's my story and a fresh take on this highly debated topic.

There is a lot of awareness about parents who are alienated from their children and how best to break it is for them. These parents find each other via support groups to keep themselves strong. But I want to speak about a different trend hidden under the umbrella of "my child broke off" or "my very well-adjusted young adult from their relationship with us." We're not the only ones going through this and we certainly know many others with the same script.

I'm one of those children who has not had any relationship with my parents for the past 15 years to the point that they haven't met any of my children. Shortly after my husband and I got married, my parents started speaking negatively about my husband every because they disliked him personally and they tried to convince me to feel the same. They got me caught up in the negativity, and I was trapped between me and my husband.

After discussing it with rabbis and therapists, we came to realize that my parents' actions were not okay and we were guided on how to set healthy boundaries to avoid the negativity. We went out of our comfort zone to do this in the most respectful way, being fully guided by Aish Torah at

My Parents Don't Talk to Me

every step of the way. As a result, things came to a head, and we were disconnected from the family. My parents made it clear that as long as I am living with my husband, I am no longer part of their family. This was all due to the healthy relationship we were pursuing.

My parents joined the support groups of parents who sadly had children who cut off from them, and they tell the same "story" to anyone willing to listen. Unfortunately, the plan of each parent has been found and accepted as fact, with no one thinking otherwise.

I would like to see you weigh in on this topic and perhaps give the "alienated children" out there some support and chizuk for the suffering we are enduring.

Alienated Daughter

Dear Alienated Daughter

Thank you for sharing your story, which I think helps underscore the complexity of the very painful topic. The story of what led to alienation is rarely as simple as it seems. I think this is important for people to realize.

Before I go any further, I want to clarify that you did not write to me for advice; rather, it was so that I could "buckle up" the topic in light of what you shared. The comments that follow are those of a general nature. I hope they are helpful and that the articulation of these ideas is helpful in your own understanding of this issue.

As you mention in your letter, the subject of parental alienation was discussed some months ago in this column, and an aim was to remember the discussion elicited some strong responses that were classified with my approach. But I will repeat now something

There are two sides to every story, and they might not even be aware of how the other side understands what happened.

I write them. The backstory in such cases is rarely as straightforward as people think it is. To the contrary, there are two sides to every story, and not only do the parties not agree with each other's version of the story, they might not even be aware of how the other side understands what happened. Your story is a case in point.

When emerges from this is that the goal in such situations should not be to figure out who is right and who is wrong, which may never happen, but to accept that the story is complicated and try to move both parties in the direction of reconciliation. Full reconciliation may not always be possible, but at least when people start to move away from their entrenched positions, there can be an easing of tension and healing can begin. The only way this can happen, however, is by realizing that establishing the facts of what really happened is not as important as figuring out a way forward. Indeed, the opposite is often true. Only after there is peace can people look back and understand what really happened.

Ironically, there was another subject that received pushback from readers months ago: husbands and wives making sacrifices for peace rather than trying to get their own way. I think the criticism of my approach is that such sacrifices from both sides are essential of what I said about parental alienation. People want there to be "winners" and they want the right to take a side. But this is not the path to peace. Trying to establish whose version of the facts is correct only deepens conflict.

BRINGING EVERY DETAIL OF YOUR VISION...



...TO REALITY

RESEARCH PAPER
BY
RESEARCH PAPER
BY
RESEARCH PAPER
BY

of you can be worked out. If you decide to work out this issue with a therapist, I would suggest looking for a therapist who understands parental alienation. Not every qualified therapist is helpful in this delicate matter. I wish you, and all who share similar pain, much success.

Y.B.

The Need for Specialists

An organization weighs in in reference to "Letters," Issue 496

Dear Editor:

I would like to add a thought to the well-reasoned letter written by A.M., entitled "Go to Therapy Together." In his letter, the writer presents the logical concept that when there are relationship conflicts between parents and children, both parties should be seen by the therapist. A.M. further explains that by being seen together, the therapist will be in a better position to see if the parent or child are the cause of the conflict.

What I would like to add is that the above is an excellent recommendation when dealing with basically reasonable people. However, in many cases of alien-

Alienated but Offering Connection

A suggestion from a reader in reference to "Ask," Issue 490

Dear Editor:

I appreciate the courage of the alienated daughter in sharing her story and her pain. I also believe that this is a case of estrangement and not alienation. However, we only see one side of the story and not the parents' side, which is critical before we can get a true understanding of the issue.

Being cut off from parents is extremely painful, and it's even more painful if this results in being cutting off from the entire family. Hearing the words "either your husband or us" engenders feelings that are indescribable.

I would like to offer a humble opinion. It might be a good idea to write a letter from time to time to your parents or other family members saying how much you would like to resume contact and that you understand and feel bad that they disagree with your decision. But nevertheless, you wish to be part of the family, and you are asking what you can do from your side to make it easier for them. Perhaps one day an arrangement that suits both

Ami
MAGAZINE

1575 50th St.,
Brooklyn, NY 11219
letters@amimagazine.org
Phone: 718-534-8800
Fax: 718-484-7731

Most MEHUDAR Yissachar-Zevulun deal - ENTIRE SHAS IN 1 YEAR

SHAS YIDEN

At Farher and Siyum Hashas – Rosh Chodesh Kislev 5781
"Never in my life have I seen such a fascinating Torah sight - young avreichim with a full mastery of the entire Shas, Rashi and Tosfos, like others know Ashrei Yoshvei!"

Maran Hagaon Harav Chaim Weiss, shlit"a
Rav Ha'ir Beitav IIII

Tel: 718-702-1528 Address: 1274 49th Street #562, Brooklyn, NY 11219
www.shasyiden.com

ated children, where children have rejected their parents, there is another element of influence involved that is the cause of the break.

One of our members shared with us her personal experience as follows:

"In my run-around I learned that therapists who understand the manipulative tactics that play on the minds of children are hard to find. More so, I have found that as the target, I was simply re-traumatized by the unknowledgeable therapists and once again discredited. It was only those who were fluent in psychological games such as gas-lighting, trauma bonds, silencing and devaluing who were able to grasp that an innocent party was being presented as unloving or fearsome. This knowledge is usually found among forensic psychologists."

As the director of Broken Ties, an organization that offers support to alienated parents, I would like to ask that anyone that is licensed in this field please contact us at brokenties3@gmail.com. We are in desperate need of your services. For those that are interested in speaking to a therapist knowledgeable in alienation feel free to contact us as well.

For more information on alienation you can visit our website at www.brokenties.org.

May we all be *zocheh* to be reunited with our loved ones very soon!

G.W.
Director
Broken Ties

Perspective By Tzodek Katz

DIVORCE REMORSE

TOO MANY NEWLYWEDS ARE EAGER TO CALL IT QUITS THESE DAYS

Recently I've been approached by quite a few people who are suffering from "divorce remorse," which has compelled me to write this article.

It's not that the previous generation was heartless and uncaring; on the contrary, they cared a great deal. It's just that they weren't living in 2020.

To be honest, I've always been hunched when people walk someone meant for after divorce. When there is a "what-if" scenario, the concern is that the individual should have when a couple gets divorced? In fact, having been involved in a divorce full time for many years, my experience has only been confirmed by repeated encounters with what I call "divorce remorse."

It often happens that the gut is not the couple's reality in a bright future but the squandering of an opportunity to work on building a beautiful marriage. Facing the divorce has given them head on, and becoming better through their efforts to deal with the challenges they encounter along the journey.

Obviously every case is unique, and I'm not saying that you should ever get divorced. But there has definitely been a massive spike in the number of people who realize, after being on the market for the second time for a year or so, that the excitement leaves their thoughts they had while they were married pale in comparison to how they must now feel in trying to get remarried. This is true for both women and men.

Seeing this news, and really, I'd like to share some of my thoughts.

In my opinion, one of the biggest problems is that when a couple is contemplating divorce, the reason they are dealing with becomes magnified, analyzed and discussed with so many people that it creates a situation that's very hard to step out of even when a resolution is possible.

When I was growing up, my grandmother would always tell us about her older sister. It seems that after being married for only a short period of time, she went home to her parents to complain about her new husband. Her parents sat her down and said, "You're a married woman now, and we don't want to hear about it. Go back home and work it out."

In the good old days, a smart, knowledgeable rabbi would sit down with the couple and try to get out the fire before the whole house burned down. These days, each side has a therapist to talk to and to represent him or her, which often leads to an escalation into a full-blown war.

I had the privilege of speaking about this phenomenon with Rabbi Eliezer Shuch, C.F., who was instrumental for many years in keeping couples together. He felt very strongly that couples having individual therapists was a very big problem because the job of a therapist should be to assist the couple in communicating with each other rather than validating each side's complaints. Another problem is the tendency of some therapists to lead couples immediately to the emergency exit without a parachute, which only provides short-term relief and has difficult, long-term repercussions.

Another factor is that we are unduly influenced by the larger money in which we live and whose labels are contradictory to all of our best values.

Another observation: The "abuse excuse" is being abused, meaning that the word is used around entirely too casually these days. When children see it, it can mean anything from being beaten to not having received the exact high-end bicycle they wanted for Chanukah. In the context of marriage, many newlyweds who don't realize that acting in that way really requires some time are quick to allege abuse, unaware that there's a learning curve, just as there is with anything unfamiliar.

When a child comes home from the first day of school with complaints, we don't tell him, "Okay, your teacher is mean. We're going to make you go to a new school." Instead,

In the good old days, a smart, knowledgeable rabbi would sit down with the couple and try to put out the fire before the whole house burned down.

22 AMI MAGAZINE // NOVEMBER 19, 2020 // 8 RISLEY 051

Divorcing a Psychopath

Leaving can be a matter of saving yourself

In reference to "Perspective," Issue 494, and Letters, Issue 496

Dear Editor:

Letter writer A.M. has a great suggestion, as does Tzodek Katz—to go to therapy together. Rosie Steiner seems to understand it better. Psychopaths refuse therapy;

they think they are perfect and know more than any therapist.

Psychopaths are very manipulative and deceiving. Most people are fooled by their charming personalities, unless they have experienced one up close.

Most people don't want the stigma of being divorced; it is very embarrassing. I used to think that people who were divorced were spoiled and couldn't figure out how to get along. Now that I am in that situation, I see how wrong I was. Leaving is often a matter of saving yourself.

In my case, there was no arguing; it was suffering in silence. I knew that either I was going to have a mental breakdown because of all the suffering, or that I would leave.

In hindsight, the suffering was not humane. No person should endure the abuse I experienced. People need to realize that there are people out there who are sick, and it's important during dating to read the signs.

Chaya R.

A Memory of Rav Yaakov

Hope for kindness

In reference to "Streets of Life," Issue 495

Dear Editor:

HIGH-END WHEELS,
HIGH-END SERVICE

When you sign your lease, our personal service is just beginning. You'll be ensured a smooth ride throughout.

SILVER WHEELS
AUTO LEASING

718-360-9420
525 Dahill™ Brooklyn, NY 11218
sales@silverwheelleasing.com