

Draw Them Close

Rav Avraham Altman, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Ateres Tzvi, would travel each year to Argentina, where he grew up after his family fled Europe when he was a child. In the winter of 2016, he traveled there with his son, Rav Eliyahu Meir, on behalf of the yeshiva. During their stay, father and son visited different shuls, delivering *derashos* and words of *chizuk* to strengthen the local Jewish community.

One Shabbos, after Rav Eliyahu Meir spoke in a local shul, a man approached him and warmly thanked him for his *derashah*. As they spoke, Rav Eliyahu Meir learned that the man owned a large pants-manufacturing factory. He suggested that he and his father visit the factory, and the owner readily agreed.

When they arrived on Monday, the owner listened with interest as they spoke about the yeshiva and wrote them a generous check. Then, with a troubled expression, he confided in them about his business partner. The man was Jewish but very far removed from Torah and mitzvos, and he was considering marrying a non-Jewish woman, *Rachmana litzlan*. The owner had tried repeatedly to dissuade him, but nothing had helped.

Rav Altman asked him to call his partner into the room. Though uncomfortable at having revealed something so personal, the owner complied. When the partner entered, Rav Altman greeted him warmly and shook his hand. "Your partner just gave us a generous donation for the yeshiva," he said. "But since you are partners, you have a share in it as well, so I owe you a thank-you, too!"

Rav Altman told him briefly about the yeshiva and the *zechus* of supporting Torah. Then, still holding his hand, he looked directly into the man's eyes. "You know something?" he said warmly. "You really impress me. I can see that you are a very special person."

The unexpected words touched the man deeply, bringing tears to his eyes.



Rav Avraham Altman

Rav Altman invited both partners to dinner the following evening. As they sat together, Rav Altman continued treating the man with genuine warmth and respect. At one point he casually asked, "Tell me, are you married?"

"No," the man replied.

"Then I give you a *berachah* that this year you should get married," Rav Altman said. "And I'm coming to dance at your wedding. Don't forget to invite me. I'll make every effort to come from Eretz Yisrael especially to dance with you."

Rav Altman later recalled that he could see the turmoil on the man's face. The man had no idea that the Rav knew of his plans, but one thought must have been racing through his mind: *The Rav is going to come from Eretz Yisrael to dance at my wedding, while a priest is officiating?*

Several months later, in Av, Rav Altman received an emotional phone call from the factory owner. His partner had completely abandoned his plans and was now engaged to a Jewish woman who was stronger in Yiddishkeit than he was. The wedding would take place that winter, precisely when Rav Altman was scheduled to return to Argentina. And

זכרו תורת משה

Rav Altman kept his promise: He attended the wedding and danced with the man at his kosher Jewish wedding.

Rav Altman had never rebuked the man or told

him what was wrong with him. Instead, he showed him what was right with him. He treated him with warmth, dignity, and genuine affection, allowing the man to see himself differently.

Sweet Like Honey

When **Rav Yechiel Zucker** established Tiferes HaChaim Seminary in Ashdod, he went to **Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman** (1914–2017) for a *berachah*. Rav Shteinman surprised him with a suggestion: “You should have a *mashgiach* in the seminary.”

Seeing Rav Zucker’s confusion, Rav Shteinman explained that he meant the type of *mashgiach* the Chazon Ish had envisioned. People had once complained to the Chazon Ish that a strict *mashgiach* in a certain yeshiva had been replaced by a much gentler man. They feared that without a firm hand, the *bachurim* would no longer remain under control.

The Chazon Ish responded with an insight from the laws of *kinyanim*. There is a *kinyan* of *chazakah*, establishing possession, and there is *meshichah*, drawing something toward oneself. The same principle, he explained, applies to *chinuch*: It is better to draw a *bachur* toward you than to hold him tightly so that he cannot get away.

Rav Shteinman apply that principle in practice. On one occasion, a student at Rav Zucker’s seminary had violated its standards so seriously that her dismissal seemed unavoidable. Because the matter involved the future of a Jewish *neshamah*, the administration consulted Rav Shteinman, who reluctantly agreed that she would have to leave.

Then someone from Lev L’Achim offered another possibility. A woman was willing to take the girl under her wing, surround her with love and warmth, and devote herself to helping her rebuild. The moment Rav Shteinman heard this, his decision changed. “She is not leaving the seminary,” he declared. “If there is someone willing to give her warmth, there is hope. You will yet see much *nachas* from her.”

And so it was.

Years later, when Rav Zucker became a *mashgiach* at Yeshivas Torah B’Tifartah, he again went to Rav Shteinman for a *berachah*. Rav Shteinman’s grandson introduced him: “This is Rav Zucker from Ashdod. He has become a *mashgiach* in the yeshiva.”

Rav Shteinman smiled. “*Tzucker iz zis... gedenk, m’darf zayn a zisser mashgiach*,” — sugar is sweet. Remember, a *mashgiach* has to be sweet.

It was an entire approach to *chinuch* expressed in a few words. A parent, rebbi, teacher, or *mashgiach* does not succeed merely by holding on tightly enough that a child cannot slip away. The goal is to draw him closer: closer to Torah, closer to *yiras Shamayim*, and closer to Hashem.

Because in *chinuch*, the strongest *kinyan* is not always *chazakah*, holding on.

It is *meshichah*: drawing them close.



Rav Yechiel Zucker