

# Hitkashrut/Hiskashrus: Connecting to the Tzaddik

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Reb S' learns in the Mir Yeshiva (Jerusalem). He recently became interested in Breslov. He e-mailed me asking, "What does it mean to be *mitkasher* (*miskasher*) to a tzaddik?" A lot of people ask, because they really want to know. Here's a mildly edited version of our e-mail exchange.

OB:

Tell me what you think it means

Reb S':

"To make the connection."

OB:

But what does that mean: "to make the connection"?— it's only a translation of *mitkasher*.

Reb S':

OK. A good point. What does it mean???

OB:

First, note that *hitkashrut* is NOT the same as *d'veikut* (*d'veikus*, literally, clinging, cleaving), even though there is a concept of *d'veikus rucha b'rucha* to be had with tzaddikim.

So I'll translate it a few different ways. Each English word touches, I think, on a different facet of connection and/or a different level of connection, but not every word works in every use of *mitkasher*.

Thus we have:

I hereby:

associate, affiliate, align with, bind, attach and identify with

the genuine tzaddik(im).

BUT! There is a non-translative meaning, which I heard from one of my teachers, Reb Tzvi Cheshin. It is: I **submit** myself to the genuine tzaddik(im).

That is, I submit my thinking, speaking and behavior to the teachings of the tzaddik(im), i.e., to the standards the tzaddik(im) have set. For example, anybody who lives by, i.e., submits himself to, *Shulchan Arukh* is *m'kushar* to Reb Yosef Karo. This I heard a few times from Reb Chaim Kramer.

There's another degree (perhaps type) of *hitkashrut*. Rebbe Nachman zal once said that he had three types of chassidim. The first came to his *tish* (table, i.e., Shabbat meals) to eat *kolitch* (aka *shirayim*, leftovers). The second type came to hear Torah. There are two *girsas* (versions) concerning the third type: *Girsa One*: They have me (Rebbe Nachman) *arein g'bakt in hartz* (baked into their hearts). *Girsa Two*: They are *arein g'bakt in hartz* (baked into the Rebbe's heart).

I think this story-*hitkashrut* goes all the way back to Avraham Avinu, whose *talmidim* (students, disciples) all had his name (*Bereishis Rabbah* 43:2 on the episode of Avraham Avinu pursuing the Four Kings with the 318 men.) It certainly goes back to Yehoshua bin Nun. Elisha *HaNavi* (the Prophet) also left everything to go with Eliyahu *HaNavi*.

The "translative" type, mentioned earlier, is, I think, the contemporary version of being born into a sheivet (tribe). Do we choose a chassidus (i.e., a *derekh*) or does a chassidus choose us? □