

Annulment of Assumptions: התרת הנחותים

(Metaphor only; not a halachic ceremony.)

On an Elul night, the Cohens set three chairs at the kitchen table: Tatty, Mommy, and their level-headed teen as the third dayan. A small stack of exhibits waited—bank statements, a grocery list, last year's Tishrei calendar, and an index card that read, "What really matters: *kavod* Shabbos and Yom Tov **according to our means**, steady *maaser*, learning with presence, paying people on time, chesed with simchah, and *bal tashchis*." They weren't annulling mitzvos—*chas v'shalom*. They were releasing assumptions that had wrapped themselves around the mitzvos.

Kabbalas Din (Opening)

Gabai (Mommy): "We convene a *beis din* to make peace between our values and our Visa."
Dayanim (Family): "Accepted."

Phones face down. Tea poured. It was time for a pleasant and peaceful reassessment of values.

Bakashas Hatarah (The Request)

With a smile, Tatty read from a card that echoed familiar nusach:

"Before this *beis din* of three—namely, my spouse, our responsible teen, and our spreadsheet—I seek release from habits and shopping rules that I accepted **knowingly or unknowingly, willingly or under the influence of 'for a limited time,'** whether spoken aloud or added to cart at 11:37 p.m.; whether on Prime, pre-order, subscribe-and-save, or quietly stashed in the trunk."

Each member named one holy "yes" they cherish: a new highlight item that sparks simchah, flowers that lift the table, a weekly pushka goal, parsha learning together. Start with kedushah;

sEdus (Evidence)

Facts: The last 90 days, grouped simply—groceries, kids' clothing, rides, subscriptions, "oops" purchases.

Feelings: Where did we feel rushed, pressured, or embarrassed?

Tradeoffs: What got squeezed—tuition breathing room, a chavrusa, calm before candle-lighting, paying a worker promptly (*bal talin*)?

Relatable moments surfaced: late-night Amazon scrolls, double grocery runs without a list, the Uber to "save time," boutique-bakery detours, replacement water bottles #5 and #6, subscription

boxes no one opened, WhatsApp class collections (every other week!), and the coffee that somehow became three. Someone mentioned last year's upsherin photos—how the balloon arch nobody remembers cost more than the music everyone loved. They laughed gently, not to mock, but to notice what clearly has no Torah basis and quietly drains shekels and headspace. Another memory: matching monogrammed Hoodies for Chol Hamoed—kept in drawers while the kids remember the park and the zemiros.

Drishah V'Chakirah (Search and Inquiry)

The dayanim asked questions that cut through the fog:

1. **If no one saw this, would we still do it?** (Value or performance?)
2. **Which middos does it feed—chesed, *tznius* (quiet dignity), gratitude, or comparison?**
3. **If we trim this by 20%, what meaning changes—and what stays exactly the same?**
4. **What did our kids remember a year later—the calm singing, or the coordinated napkins?**
5. **If this spending became a weekly chavrusa, a sefer, bikur cholim visits, or steady maaser—how would our home feel?**
6. **Is this a chumra in style that turns into a kulah in shalom bayis?**
7. **Are we honoring *bal tashchis*, or buying because we didn't make a list?**
8. **If dear friends had our finances, what kind, clear advice would we give them?**
9. **Which purchases actually helped avodas Hashem—learning, tefillah, chesed—and which only helped a photo?**
10. **Where are we stretching for an expectation that doesn't exist outside a group chat?**
11. **Do we need to spend money to enjoy our time together?**

Answers came quickly: The boutique dessert didn't change simchas Yom Tov; the extra hour of calm did. The LED robot at a cousin's simchah was a "wow," but a warm brachah card would have been just as sweet.

Psak (Ruling)

They spoke a short, dignified line—another wink to nusach:

“Those standards we accepted in error or excess—pressures that strain shalom bayis, crowd out tzedakah, or push us beyond our means—**mutar lachem, mutar lachem, mutar lachem**. We keep mitzvos in full dignity and right-size the noise.”

Kabbalos I’Asid (Tiny, Beautiful Moves):

- **Clothing:** One highlight item per person that sparks simchah; basics from the closet or borrowed.
- **Table:** One beloved touch (flowers or a signature dessert) with a calm rotating menu.
- **Giving:** Maaser first; a small “chesed fund” for spontaneous needs.
- **Time:** Protect a weekly family learning slot—joy that outlives packaging.

Gederim (Guardrails that Help)

- Decide clothing/food envelopes **before** shopping; treat the number like part of your kavanos.
- Shared list + a 24-hour pause for non-essentials.
- Turn off one-click; remove saved cards from impulse sites.
- “City of Refuge” for trigger times (late-night scroll, pre-Yom Tov panic): close tabs, 5-minute walk, reread the values card.
- Gemach mindset: borrow platters, swap kids’ shoes, split bulk buys—community creativity melts community pressure.

Mechilah (Repair)

Two lines heal much:

- “I’m sorry for that surprise charge; next time, it’ll be a conversation.”
- “I’m sorry I judged your choice; next time, we’ll decide together.”

Shtar Beis Din (Post It Where Life Happens)

They wrote one page and taped it inside a cabinet: **Our Values (3 bullets) • Our Kabalos (one line per area) • Our Gederim (3 guardrails) • Our Check-In (15 minutes Motzaei Shabbos for two weeks).**

A week later, the Cohens noticed the shift: fewer “urgent” buys, more singing while setting the table, a steady pushka. Mitzvos felt fuller—not because anything holy was less, but because the noise loosened its grip.