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subject: **Rav Frand** - Why Must We Treat a Dead Body with Respect?
By Rabbi Yissocher Frand

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Parshas Chayei Sarah
Why Must We Treat a Dead Body with Respect?
These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #1094 – Oops! I Already Davened Mincha. Good Shabbos

Why Must We Treat a Dead Body with Respect?

Parshas Chayei Sarah is the first parsha in the Torah in which the Torah discusses the matter of burial. Previously, people certainly died, but there is not any mention of burial. In this week's parsha, we see the importance that Avraham Avinu attached to finding a proper burial site for his wife. He buried her in the Cave of Machpela. Even though we know that Adam and Chava are buried in the Cave of Machpela, Chayei Sarah is the first place the Torah actually records a person involving himself with the burial of another human being.

The truth of the matter is that we must understand that a body only has sanctity because it contains a living soul while we are living. Once the soul leaves our body, ostensibly we would say that the body has lost the source which gave it sanctity. Therefore, why do we need to treat a body with respect and properly bury a person who died? Offhand, we might argue that a body is simply an empty vessel. What gives a human body importance after

the soul leaves it?

I saw the following suggestion in a Sefer called Machat shel Yad:
The Halacha distinguishes between Tashmishei Mitzvah (items with which a person does a mitzvah, e.g. – Tsitsis, Lulav, Succah, etc.) and Tashmishei Kedusha (items which involve Scriptural writing, e.g. – Sefer Torah, Tefillin, Mezuzah, etc.). After Succos, a person may theoretically throw out his Lulav and Esrog. The law is that Tashmishei Mitzvah do not retain sanctity, and after the completion of their use for the mitzvah performance, a person may discard them. (There is a nice custom to use the Lulav to burn the Chometz before Pesach, but this is only a custom and not a fundamental requirement.) Tashmishei Kedusha, however, remain eternally holy – even after the completion of their service in the performance of a mitzvah. Even if a Sefer Torah or Tefillin fall into water and become ruined, once they had sanctity, the sanctity remains forever.

The law of Tashmishei Kedusha prevails to such an extent that even items used as accessories to an item containing Torah pesukim (such as cloth coverings for Sifrei Torah) have sanctity even after they have become worn out, and must be buried rather than simply discarded.

What is the difference? The difference is that by Tashmishei Mitzvah, once the mitzvah is finished there is no more holiness. However, when the Name of G-d and words of Torah are written on parchment, the holiness remains forever.

This, he explains, is why a human body has sanctity even after death. Every Jew is a vehicle for Words of Torah. Just as parchment becomes holy forever, so too a Jew who spoke words of Divrei Torah, who said the words Shema Yisrael—his body now becomes like a Sefer Torah. Therefore, despite the fact that the soul has left, the words of holiness that were “inscribed” on that body during his lifetime put an eternal Kedusha on that body, for ever and ever.

With this concept, the author explains a very famous Talmudic passage. The Gemara [Berachos 17a] asks: “These women (who do not study Torah), how do they gain merit?” The Gemara answers: The fact that women help their husbands and children learn Torah—not only do they help them, but they wait for their husbands to return from learning and they wait for their children to come back from Cheder (the fact that they drive carpools and take their children to learn)—this is the source of women's reward for Torah study.

The Chofetz Chaim asks the obvious question: And when a woman does mitzvos, is that not a source of merit for her? Will a woman not get reward in the World to Come for giving charity? Women who pray to Hashem and do other acts of kindness do not get reward? That cannot be!

The Chofetz Chaim answers that the Gemara is not speaking about the World to Come. Certainly, women will get Olam haBah for every mitzvah they perform. The Gemara is talking about Techiyas HaMeisim [Resurrection of the Dead]. The Talmud [Ketuvot 111b] expounds from the pasuk “May Your dead come to life, may my corpses arise. Awake and shout for joy, you who rest in the dirt! For Your dew is like the dew that revives vegetation (tal oros talecha)...” [Yeshaya 26:19] Whoever utilizes the Light of Torah, the Light of Torah will revive him. To merit Resurrection, a person needs the “dew (i.e. – merit) of Torah”. For fulfillment of all other mitzvos, indeed, a person will receive reward. However, Lulav, Esrog, Tefillah, etc. will not gain a person new life in the time of Resurrection. Techiyas HaMeisim requires the “dew of Torah” to revive him.

It follows that the Gemara poses a reasonable question: How will these women merit Resurrection? They do not study Torah! With what merit, then, will they receive Techiyas HaMeisim? The Gemara answers they do have the merit of Torah because they are enablers of Torah. Enablers of Torah, from a certain perspective, get even greater reward than those who engage in Torah learning itself. There is “enjoyment” in learning Torah, but there is no “enjoyment” in driving car pool. There is no “fun” in waiting for one's husband to return from learning. The husband's learning is enjoyable for him. Merely waiting for him is not so enjoyable.

In order to merit Techiyas HaMeisim, a person needs to possess the merit of Torah. Why? Because it is the merit of Torah that provides the person with the sanctity that makes him worthy of being revived at the time of Resurrection. We merit such revival because we are in effect Sifrei Torah, Kisvei Kodesh! The Zechus haTorah that women possess in an auxiliary fashion, in an enabling fashion, makes them into Kisvei haKodesh. Therefore, their bodies have eternal sanctity as well and that is why they too will rise at the time of Techiyas haMeisim.

Quoting Lavan's Words and Emulating His Motivation

One of the things we do at a Jewish wedding is called the "Badeken" [veiling of the bride]. If you have ever been by a "Badeken" you notice that the father of the Choson and the father of the Kallah bless the Kallah. What bracha [blessing] is given to the bride immediately before her Chuaph? Typically, we give the same blessing we give our daughters Friday night: May G-d make you like Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel, and Leah (the Matriarchs). However, the official bracha that a person is supposed to give by the Badeken is the pasuk from this week's parsha: "Our sister, may you come to be thousands of myriads, and may your offspring inherit the gate of its foes." [Bereshis 24:60]

According to Halacha, the ancient custom was not that the fathers of the Choson and Kallah gave this bracha, but that the Elders of the City (Ziknei HaIr) came and gave her this bracha. This bracha originates from the bracha Lavan gave his sister, Rivka. A person might ask—we emulate the conniving Lavan? Of all the blessings in the Torah, this is what we say to a Kallah immediately preceding her going to the Chuppah? It seems strange, to say the least!

I saw an interesting observation. Usually, when your daughter, your sister, your relative goes to the Chuppah, you are thrilled. She is now getting married! A fine family! The whole works!

Lavan did not like this Shidduch—not one bit! Do you think he was happy that she was leaving? He tried to talk Eliezer out of immediately taking her back to Yitzchak. "Let the maiden remain with us days or a set of ten [months]; then she will go." [Bereshis 24:55] Lavan was into money. He did not want his sister to marry Yitzchak, who spent his time in prayer. "I do not want my sister to become some kind of Meah Shearim Rebbetzin! I am not happy with this!"

What does Lavan do? He overcame his prejudice, his hesitancy, and he gave a bracha entirely for the sake of heaven. He said, "I may not be happy with this shidduch; and I do not like this lifestyle; and this is not what you learned in your father's house; but I am giving you a bracha with a full heart." – "My sister, may you become the matriarch of thousands and tens of thousands!"

Therefore, when we say those words to our daughter and/or our future daughter-in-law by the Badeken, we are not giving Lavan's bracha. But rather, Lavan's bracha should be an inspiration to us that the true bracha is one in which the person who bestows the bracha does not expect to get anything out of it, an altruistic bracha. A bracha that is entirely for the sake of heaven. "For you—not for me. I get nothing out of this shidduch."

Sometimes a person may think that a shidduch will be helpful for him. No! That is not what I am interested in. It is a bracha entirely for HER benefit. That is the bracha that we must give a Kallah. We are not quoting Lavan, to borrow his words; we are quoting Lavan to emulate his motivation.

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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion.

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To Have a Why

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

The name of our parsha seems to embody a paradox. It is called Chayei Sarah, "the life of Sarah," but it begins with the death of Sarah. What is more, towards the end, it records the death of Abraham. Why is a parsha about death called "life"? The answer, it seems to me, is that – not always, but often – death and how we face it is a commentary on life and how we live it.

Which brings us to a deeper paradox. The first sentence of this week's parsha of Chayei Sarah, is: "Sarah's lifetime was 127 years: the years of Sarah's life." A well-known comment by Rashi on the apparently superfluous phrase, "the years of Sarah's life," states: "The word 'years' is repeated and without a number to indicate that they were all equally good." How could anyone say that the years of Sarah's life were equally good? Twice, first in Egypt, then in Gerar, she was persuaded by Abraham to say that she was his sister rather than his wife, and then taken into a royal harem, a situation fraught with moral hazard.

There were the years when, despite God's repeated promise of many children, she was infertile, unable to have even a single child. There was the time when she persuaded Abraham to take her handmaid, Hagar, and have a child by her, which caused her great strife of the spirit.[1] These things constituted a life of uncertainty and decades of unmet hopes. How is it remotely plausible to say that all of Sarah's years were equally good?

That is Sarah. About Abraham, the text is similarly puzzling. Immediately after the account of his purchase of a burial plot for Sarah, we read: "Abraham was old, well advanced in years, and God had blessed Abraham with everything" (Gen. 24:1). This too is strange. Seven times, God had promised Abraham the land of Canaan. Yet when Sarah died, he did not own a single plot of land in which to bury her, and had to undergo an elaborate and even humiliating negotiation with the Hittites, forced to admit at the outset that, "I am a stranger and temporary resident among you" (Genesis 23:4). How can the text say that God had blessed Abraham with everything? Equally haunting is its account of Abraham's death, perhaps the most serene in the Torah: "Abraham breathed his last and died at a good age, old and satisfied, and he was gathered to his people." He had been promised that he would become a great nation, the father of many nations, and that he would inherit the land. Not one of these promises had been fulfilled in his lifetime. How then was he "satisfied"?

The answer again is that to understand a death, we have to understand a life. I have mixed feelings about Friedrich Nietzsche. He was one of the most brilliant thinkers of the modern age, and also one of the most dangerous. He himself was ambivalent about Jews and negative about Judaism.[2] Yet one of his most famous remarks is both profound and true: He who has a why in life can bear almost any how.[3]

(In this context I should add a remark he made in *The Genealogy of Morality* that I have not quoted before. Having criticised other sacred Scriptures, he then writes: "the Old Testament – well, that is something quite different: every respect for the Old Testament! I find in it great men, heroic landscape and something of utmost rarity on earth, the incomparable naivety of the strong heart; even more, I find a people." [4] So despite his scepticism about religion in general and the Judaeo-Christian heritage in particular, he had a genuine respect for Tanach.)

Abraham and Sarah were among the supreme examples in all history of what it is to have a Why in life. The entire course of their lives came as a response to a call, a Divine voice, that told them to leave their home and family, set out for an unknown destination, go to live in a land where they would be

strangers, abandon every conventional form of security, and have the faith to believe that by living by the standards of righteousness and justice they would be taking the first step to establishing a nation, a land, a faith and a way of life that would be a blessing to all humankind.

Biblical narrative is, as Erich Auerbach said, "fraught with background," meaning that much of the story is left unstated. We have to guess at it. That is why there is such a thing as Midrash, filling in the narrative gaps. Nowhere is this more pointed than in the case of the emotions of the key figures. We do not know what Abraham or Isaac felt as they walked toward Mount Moriah. We do not know what Sarah felt when she entered the harems, first of Pharaoh, then of Avimelech of Gerar. With some conspicuous exceptions, we hardly know what any of the Torah's characters felt. Which is why the two explicit statements about Abraham – that God blessed him with everything, and that he ended life old and satisfied – are so important. And when Rashi says that all of Sarah's years were equally good, he is attributing to her what the biblical text attributes to Abraham, namely a serenity in the face of death that came from a profound tranquillity in the face of life. Abraham knew that everything that happened to him, even the bad things, were part of the journey on which God had sent him and Sarah, and he had the faith to walk through the valley of the shadow of death fearing no evil, knowing that God was with him. That is what Nietzsche called "the strong heart."

In 2017, an unusual book became an international bestseller. One of the things that made it unusual was that its author was ninety years old and this was her first book. Another was that she was a survivor both of Auschwitz, and also of the Death March towards the end of the war, which in some respects was even more brutal than the camp itself.

The book was called *The Choice* and its author was Edith Eger.[5] She, together with her father, mother and sister Magda, arrived at Auschwitz in May 1944, one of 12,000 Jews transported from Kosice, Hungary. Her parents were murdered on that first day. A woman pointed towards a smoking chimney and told Edith that she had better start talking about her parents in the past tense. With astonishing courage and strength of will, she and Magda survived the camp and the March. When American soldiers eventually lifted her from a heap of bodies in an Austrian forest, she had typhoid fever, pneumonia, pleurisy and a broken back. After a year, when her body had healed, she married and became a mother. Healing of the mind took much longer, and eventually became her vocation in the United States, where she went to live.

On their way to Auschwitz, Edith's mother said to her, "We don't know where we are going, we don't know what is going to happen, but nobody can take away from you what you put in your own mind." That sentence became her survival mechanism. Initially, after the war, to help support the family, she worked in a factory, but eventually she went to university to study psychology and became a psychotherapist. She has used her own experiences of survival to help others survive life crises.

Early on in the book she makes an immensely important distinction between victimisation (what happens to you) and victimhood (how you respond to what happens to you). This is what she says about the first:

We are all likely to be victimised in some way in the course of our lives. At some point we will suffer some kind of affliction or calamity or abuse, caused by circumstances or people or institutions over which we have little or no control. This is life. And this is victimisation. It comes from the outside.

And this, about the second:

In contrast, victimhood comes from the inside. No one can make you a victim but you. We become victims not because of what happens to us but when we choose to hold on to our victimisation. We develop a victim's mind – a way of thinking and being that is rigid, blaming, pessimistic, stuck in the past, unforgiving, punitive, and without healthy limits or boundaries.[6]

In an interview on the publication of the book, she said, "I've learned not to look for happiness, because that is external. You were born with love and

you were born with joy. That's inside. It's always there."

We have learned this extraordinary mindset from Holocaust survivors like Edith Eger and Viktor Frankl. But in truth, it was there from the very beginning, from Abraham and Sarah, who survived whatever fate threw at them, however much it seemed to derail their mission, and despite everything they found serenity at the end of their lives. They knew that what makes a life satisfying is not external but internal, a sense of purpose, mission, being called, summoned, of starting something that would be continued by those who came after them, of bringing something new into the world by the way they lived their lives. What mattered was the inside, not the outside; their faith, not their often-troubled circumstances.

I believe that faith helps us to find the 'Why' that allows us to bear almost any 'How'. The serenity of Sarah's and Abraham's death was eternal testimony to how they lived.

[1] I deliberately omit the tradition (Targum Yonatan to Gen. 22:20) that says that at the time of the binding of Isaac, Satan appeared to her and told her that Abraham had sacrificed their son, a shock that caused her death. This tradition is morally problematic.

[2] The best recent study is Robert Holub, *Nietzsche's Jewish Problem*, Princeton University Press, 2015. [3] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols, Maxims and Arrows*, 12. [4] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morality*, Cambridge University Press, 2009, 107. [5] Edith Eger, *The Choice*, Rider, 2017. [6] *Ibid.*, 9.

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subject: Rabbi Benjamin Yudin - Service Elevator: Take it to the Top

Rabbi Benjamin Yudin

Service Elevator: Take it to the Top

At first glance it is most perplexing why the Torah would devote over sixty verses to relate how Eliezer (whose name does not appear even once) chooses a wife for Yitzchak. Our Rabbis give an answer, (*Bereishis Rabbah* 60:11) when they remind us that, "yafeh sichson - table talk of the servants of our Patriarchs is even more beloved than the laws of their children". The exact details and nuances are recorded and repeated to teach us how to ideally live our lives.

The servant uses the character trait of *chessed* as the criteria for eligibility to carry on the Abrahamic tradition. He looks for "a little water" (24:17) and receives instead not only a drink for him, but her drawing for all the ten camels that accompany him. It is *passuk* 21 and the commentary of the *Seforno* that I'd like to share. "The man was astonished" at the *zerizos* - alacrity of being totally engrossed in the service of kindness. "Reflecting silently", the servant remains silent, not at any point saying the expected social nicety of, "that's enough" or "you really shouldn't", but rather waiting to see if she will complete her service in the way of *chessed* *hagamur* - total *chessed*, not looking or expecting any reward or compliment. Her persona demonstrated that not only was she not expecting any gift or tip, but even a thank you was not necessary. The test that Rifka passed was not only to see if she would "speak little and do a lot" as Avraham did in his *hachnosas orchim* but to see the level of total altruism, and that was the ultimate litmus test, the *lishma* of her *chessed*.

I'd like to suggest that when beginning a new world order, the foundation must be one of pure altruism and absolute kindness. Hashem saves Noah in the ark. The *Ramban* (6:19) teaches that this was absolutely miraculous, as ten arks could not house all the animals and food for a year. Why, however, does Hashem not provide another miracle, namely an automatic feeder in each compartment so that once a week Noah would fill it and the animals would be nourished automatically? An answer is, as we find in the last chapter of the *Gemara Sanhedrin*, that Shem, the son of Noah, tells Eliezer, Avraham's servant, that they were busy literally day and night feeding the animals. Why? The world was destroyed because of *chomas*, a total breakdown of interpersonal behavior. To start the new world right one needed to correct the flaws of old one; *olam chessed yibaneh* - the world is based on *chessed*, and therefore Noah and his sons were busy non-stop.

Similarly, Avraham Avinu, is establishing a new world, the Jewish world. The foundation of this world as well needs to be built not only on chessed, but in the words of the Seforno, chessed hagamur. The chessed of Avraham demonstrated his total altruism, and this exalted behavior had to be demonstrated by Yitzchak's wife, who must carry on this trait of chessed hagamur.

There are two sources for the performance of chessed in the Torah. The first is (Vayikra 19:18), "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The Ramban explains this mean that one should be empathetic and feel for the next one in their particular situation as you would want others to be there for you in your time of need. Dance at their wedding as you would want people dancing at yours and visit them in their moment of stress, sickness and loss, as you would want to be visited and remembered.

The second source comes from the end of the Torah. The six-hundred and eleventh mitzvah, according to the Sefer HaChinuch, is that of (Devarim 28:9) "v'halachta bedrachov - and you shall go in His ways." As He is just, kind and merciful, so must we be. This charge to emulate the ways of Hashem significantly raises the bar and expectations, not only in the manner of the fulfillment of the chessed, but in the aftermath as well. Hashem does His chessed completely altruistically.

A neighbor is out of work and you knock on his door and give him an envelope of cash, this is a chessed. However, slipping it under the door and running away is a higher chessed, approaching the chessed gamur of the Seforno. (See the eight levels of giving charity as found in the Rambam Hilchos Matnas Aniyim 10:7-14.)

The Gemara (Pesachim 8a) states that one giving charity on condition that their relative be cured, or that they should earn a share in the world to come, is called a tzadik gamur - a completely righteous individual. Tosfos (ibid 8b) asks that isn't one not to serve Hashem on condition of getting rewarded, as stated in the first chapter of Avos (1:3)? Tosfos answers that the one giving the charity is completely sincere about the giving of the charity, and his giving is not conditional on the cure of the sick individual such that if they are not cured, he would not give. This individual is still a tzadik gamur as one can have two simultaneous intentions, one for the mitzvah, one for the cure.

Eliezer is looking for the exceptional chessed. If Rifka is to join the house of Avraham, for her to be the amud hachessed - the beacon of chessed to exemplify and model for the progeny throughout the generations, she had to perform chessed hagamur.

The Chofetz Chaim (in his book Ahavas Chessed 2:23) teaches that ideally before one does a chessed they should first pause and say to themselves: I am about to perform this particular mitzvah. For example, before lending money to another Jew one should focus on fulfilling the mitzvah of (Shemos 22:23) "im kesef talveh - when you lend money." If one is privileged to get someone else a job, one should focus on fulfilling (Vayikra 25:35) "vehechezakta bo - support him." Before paying one's workers in a timely way, focus on (Devarim 24:15) "beyomo te'atnin s'charo - pay the wages on that day." It is rumored that before Rav Elyashiv zt"l opened his door to respond to the many different questions coming his way he would say to himself, I am about to fulfill the mitzvah of gemilus chasadim.

The Chofetz Chaim further advances the performance of chessed, by applying the dictum found in the Talmud (Pesachim 50B) whereby we are taught "a person should always engage in the study of Torah and the performance of mitzvos even though it is not for its own sake, because from learning Torah and performing a mitzvah not for its own sake, he will eventually come to perform for its own sake." While this teaching is usually associated with mitzvos man to G-d, the Chofetz Chaim extends it as well to mitzvos man to man. One should do acts of kindness, even if they may lack the element of complete or total altruism, since with the continuous performance of acts of kindness, one will grow to aspire to do so independent of any personal gain. The good feeling that one has after being thanked for the chessed, and even if one is not thanked, the good feeling that

they have for having done something good, diminishes the chessed. Ideally if one borrows money not only may they not pay interest, but even saying "thank you" is shunned upon by the Rabbis as a form of ribis d'varim, a form of verbal interest. An appropriate response is tizku l'mitzvos. When one realizes how advanced and different Jewish values are from the rest of society, one can say on the one hand - shver tzu zein a yid, and on the other hand I am so proud to be a Jew.

The Medrash (Rus Rabbah 5:9) teaches that the poor person does more for the donor than the donor does for him. This is understood to mean that the poor individual, the recipient, transforms the donor into a giver. When Naomi asks Rus the identity of the one from whose field she gleaned, she responded (2:19) "the name of the man for whom I did today is Boaz." By becoming a giver, Boaz becomes much closer to Hashem who is the constant eternal giver.

I am reminded of the well known story of the misnagid who wanted to know why the Rebbe was late in the winter months in coming to shul in the morning. He once secretly followed the Rebbe and saw him go into the forest to cut wood and bring it to a poor elderly woman's home and prepare the fireplace concealing his identity. When the chassid said that his Rebbe was late because he was in heaven preparing his thoughts for prayer, the misnagid replied "if not higher". May we learn from Rifka and ever venture higher in our performance of chessed.

More divrei Torah and shiurim from Rabbi Yudin

More divrei Torah on Parshas Chayei Sara

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From: Torah Wellsprings <mail@torahwellsprings.com>

Date: November 20, 2019 at 2:49:32 AM EST

Subject: Torah Wellsprings - Chayei Sarah 5780

Attached: Collected thoughts of

RAV ELIMELECH (MEILECH) BIDERMAN SHLITA

Compiled by rabbi Boruch Twersky with permission of Machon Be'er Haemunah

Shidduchim – Everything is Bashert

A Shidduch isn't dependent on any detail: Not on the shadchan's talents, and not on the amount of money he or she owns, and not on yichus. Forty days before the child was formed in the womb, the *shidduch* was decided (see *Sotah* 2.). Hashem is Moshav Yechidim Baisa, brings singles together, (*TeHillim* 68:7) according to Hashem's original plan. Even Lavan and Besuel recognized that, as they said (24:50), MeiHashem Yatza Hadavar "This shidduch is from Hashem." [An engagement party is called a vort, which means 'word' or Davar.] Eliezer prayed (24:12), Hashem Elokei Adoni Avraham Hikara Na Lifanei Hayom. "Hashem, G-d of Avraham, come before me today..." He prayed that he find the shidduch Hayom "today." For that to happen, matters had to happen very quickly. It was already close to evening when he arrived. As it states (24:11), "[Eliezer] had his camels kneel at the well outside the city, towards evening..." and he wanted the shidduch to be completed that same day. Reb Chaim of Brisk zt"l (Likutei Yehudah) explains that therefore every aspect of the shidduch happened very quickly. Vayih Hu Terem Kilah Lidaber ViHenie Rivka Yotzeis, "He didn't yet finish speaking his prayer, and behold Rikvah came out..." "The slave rushed towards her... She hurriedly lowered her jug... She ran again to the well... The girl ran and told her mother's house..." (24:15-28). Reb Chaim Brisker explains that this is because shidduchim, with all their details, are designed by Hashem, including when the shidduch will occur. Rivkah and Yitzchak's shidduch was destined to finish on that day, and therefore everything happened quickly, so it would occur. [FNThe Beis Yisrael zt'l would say ... "When the right minute comes, it happens in less than a minute."]

Lavan and Besuel said, Mei Hashem Yatza Hadavar, Lo Nuchal Daber Eilecha Ra or Tov "The matter is from Hashem. We can't speak with you good or bad." The Rashbam explains that they were saying, "Neither building the shidduch nor destroying it is in our hand, because regardless whether we want it or not, Hakadosh Baruch Hu is doing this, and He has the ability." Hashem, alone, makes shidduchim, and nothing can prevent Hashem's plan from happening. Therefore, although one must do hishtadlus, one shouldn't become anxious and worried. [FN As an older bachur, someone came to the Chazon Ish and said, "What will be with me? I'm already twenty-eight and I still didn't find my shidduch!" The Chazon Ish asked, "How many do you need?" "Just one." "One there will be." An older bachur said to the Chazon Ish, "I have one big kasha (difficulty/question); as Chazal say that a shidduch is kashin (difficult) like kriyas Yam

Suf." The Chazon Ish replied, "The kasha of the Yam Suf was resolved in the end. Your present kashah will be resolved too."

Someone asked the Satmar Rebbe zt'l what is the degree of hishtadlus needed for shidduchim. He replied, "Speak with a hadchan once a week." After the war, Reb Naftali Nebentzal zt'l remained the sole survivor of his family. There was a shidduch he wanted, and he made hishtadlus but it wasn't happening. He asked the Chazon Ish whether he should do some more hishtadlus. The Chazon Ish replied, "You've done enough hishtadlus. Now let Hashem run the world, as He plans it."

He didn't end up marrying that girl, but he married someone else – the girl that was destined for him. Many years later, it was the day of the bris of Reb Naftali's great-grandson. He davened in a vasikin minyan, they gave him an aliyah in honor of the simchah, and everyone shouted "Mazal Tov!" After the tefillah, he said that he wished they wouldn't have given him the aliyah. His childhood friend, who never had children, was in the beis medresh. This friend married that woman he so much wanted to marry years back. Now he realizes the miracle Hashem performed for him by preventing him from marrying her. Otherwise, he would be barren... And now he is celebrating the bris of his great-grandson."The Midrash (Vayikra Rabba 8:1) states:

A princess (Matronisa) asked Reb Yossi bar Chalafta, "In how many days did Hakadosh Baruch Hu make His world?" Reb Yossi Chalafta answered, "Six days, as it states, Ki Sheshes Yamim Asah Hashem Es Hashamayim Vies Haareitz"

She asked, "And from then until now, what does He do?" "Hakadosh Baruch Hu makes shidduchim. The daughter of Ploni should marry Ploni..." She said, "That's all? I can do that as well. I have many slaves and many maidservants. I can match them up in a moment."

Reb Yossi replied, "It seems easy to you, but for Hakadosh Baruch Hu, it's as difficult as kriyas Yam Suf."

The Midrash states that she gathered a thousand of her slaves and a thousand of her maidservants, and had them line up in rows. She said, "Ploni will marry Plonis, and Ploni will marry Plonis." In one night, she married them all off. In the morning they came to her. One's skull was split; another one had his eye knocked out of its socket. One of them had a broken arm. One had a broken leg. One said, "I don't want my spouse." Another said, "I don't want my spouse." She immediately called for Reb Yossi bar Chalafta and said, "Rebbi, your Torah is true and beautiful. Everything you said is true." Reb Yossi replied, "Didn't I tell you? It may seem easy to you, but for Hakadosh Baruch Hu it's as hard as kriyas Yam Suf..."

According to another opinion in the Midrash, when this princess asked the chachamim what Hashem does from Creation until today, the chachamim replied, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu makes ladders. He elevates one and lowers another. As it states (Tehillim 75:8), Ki Elokim Shofet - Ze Yashbil Viszeh Yarim "Hashem is the judge. He lowers this one and raises that one." We see that there are two opinions regarding what Hashem does since Creation until today. Either Hashem is making shidduchim, or Hashem makes ladders, raising some, lowering others. Some explain that these two explanations are really saying the same thing. Hashem is making shidduchim for people, but for shidduchim to occur, Hashem sometimes needs to lower some and to raise others. To explain this, we share the following story that the Pnei Menachem (Gur) told. It happened with his father, the Imrei Emes zt'l: There was a chassid who kept coming to the Imrei Emes, requesting a brachah to become wealthy. The Imrei Emes didn't want to give him this brachah. But this man kept returning, until the Imrei Emes reluctantly agreed, and blessed him with wealth. The brachah transpired. He became from the wealthiest people in Warsaw. But then his eighteen-year-old son had an accident, and both of his feet were amputated. The only girl willing to marry that boy was the daughter of a poor tailor (on condition that the groom's family pays for all the wedding expenses).

The father came to the Imrei Emes and said, "See what happened to me! A wealthy man like me should make wealthy shidduchim. I had to agree to a shidduch that isn't fitting for my son..."

The Imrei Emes replied, "Forty days before the child is formed in the womb, it is decreed in heaven, 'the daughter of Ploni to Ploni.' en your son was in the womb, this girl was destined for him. When this was decreed in heaven, this shidduch would have been perfectly normal. But you insisted that you want to be wealthy. As a wealthy person, you wouldn't agree to such a shidduch. Therefore, your child had an accident so the destined shidduch could occur..."

Similarly, the Sefer Chassidim (216) writes, "If you see a wealthy rasha being meshadech with gedolim, know that he became wealthy because Hakadosh Baruch Hu knew that if he didn't have this wealth, they wouldn't marry with him. Therefore he is given the wealth. The reason they are meshadech with him isn't because of his merits. It is in his parents' merits, or it's because someone had embarrassed him beforehand."

We learn two lessons from this: (1) Even a rasha can receive much goodness if he remains silent when people embarrass him. (2) When a shidduch is bashert, Hashem makes ladders. In this example, Hashem raises the rasha and makes him wealthy so he can make shidduchim with gedolim. Yaakov Avinu was going to Charan to find his shidduch he saw a ladder in his prophetic dream. Perhaps this is because ladders are an essential part of the shidduch process, raising some, lowering others, so they will be equal, and willing to marry one another.

Standing by the Side

A couple was about to finalize a shidduch for their son. Everything seemed perfect to them, and they planned to make the vort that night. But the husband remembered that they didn't yet tell his mother-in-law about the shidduch. "She should also be involved. She might feel insulted if we finalize a shidduch without having her participate in the shidduch." So they made a visit to the mother-in-law, and as they were conversing, they told her about this shidduch that was cooking for their son.

The mother-in-law made some quick inquiries of her own, and she was very excited about the shidduch. "It is so good! In my opinion, finish the shidduch tonight... But I think it would be wrong to finalize the shidduch without including my old mother. Go to her, as though it were a regular visit, and tell her what's going on with your son." They did that, and the grandmother said that she knew the family well. "When I was young, I used to play with this girl's grandmother..." She made her own inquiries, and concluded, "In my opinion, this is a very good shidduch, and I recommend you finish it tonight."

That night, after all the guests of the vort left, the father was thinking about the events of the day, with a smile on his face. "My mother-in-law hinks the shidduch happened because of her. She doesn't know that it was planned before she said anything. Her mother is also taking credit for the shidduch. They don't know that it was all planned, and without them it would have also happened." Then he realized that he thinks he made the shidduch, when actually the shidduch was arranged years before, when the child was still in the womb. Because Hashem makes shidduchim, and enables people the good feeling to think that they made the shidduch.

The shtar tana'im states, Omed Mitzad Hachasan [The father] who stands on the chasan's side..." Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil zt'l explained, when the shidduch happened, the father stood at the side, and he didn't do anything. Hashem alone arranged the shidduch.

Nevertheless, Hashem allows the parents the sensation as though they are choosing the shidduch for their children. It is really an illusion, because Hashem chooses the shidduch, but since the parents are also partners in the child, and they toiled for so many years to raise the child, Hashem gives them the good feeling as though they are part of making the shidduch.

The Chidushei HaRim zt'l taught: There are three primary things that people seek in a shidduch: family, beauty, and wealth. When one does a shidduch based on any one of those three reasons, he may think that the shidduch was his own choice. Therefore, the Gemara brings three pesukim to show that even then, the shidduch was planned by Hashem. For example, Yitchak's shidduch with Rivkah was largely based on family, since Avraham told Eliezer to seek a shidduch from his family. But Lavan and Besuel said, MeiHashem Yatza Hadavar "Hashem made this shidduch." The shidduch didn't happen because you chose family; it happened because that was Hashem's will.

Similarly, the Navi tells us that Shimshon strayed after his eyes. He sought a shidduch who was beautiful. That too was from Hashem, as it states, Meishashem Hih "it was chosen by Hashem."

Finally, the pasuk states, Bayis Vihon Nachlas Avos Umei Hashem Yatza This means that even when you seek Bayis Vihon a house and wealth, meaning a shidduch which will grant you a lot of money, even then MeiHashem Isha LiSh the shidduch was part of Hashem's master plan.

You Hear What Hashem wants you to Hear

Someone came to the Chazon Ish zt'l to ask information about a certain bachur. The father asked, "Does he have yiras Shamayim?" The Chazon Ish told him the truth, though in a subtle way. "His yiras Shamayim could be better." The father thought to himself, "Of course it could be better. Everyone can improve in his yiras Shamayim. The main thing is that he has yiras Shamayim." He probed further, "How is his hasmadas haTorah?" The Chazon Ish replied with the same phrase, "It could be better." Once again, the father misunderstood this to mean that he learns very well, only it could be better. And that didn't bother him, because everyone can learn better. "What about his middos? That's vital. Does he have good middos?" "It could be better." The man was satisfied with what he heard, and the shidduch was finalized.

The Chazon Ish repeated this story to his sister, the Steipler Rebbetzin, and concluded, "He isn't a fool. He has a sharp mind. He should have picked up on what I was hinting to him, but he didn't. Because when a shidduch needs to occur, it will, and nothing can prevent it from happening."

As the Pnei Menachem zt'l said, "When a shidduch is bashert, the parents are led like blind horses. They simply don't see, don't hear, and don't know about the issues that could prevent the shidduch."

A father asked the mashgiach of a yeshiva for information about one of the bachurim. The mashgiach answered in Hebrew, Hakol Lo Biseder "Everything isn't good with this boy." After giving this devastating report, the mashgiach was certain the father wouldn't go on with the shidduch. He was very surprised when on the following day this father invited him to the vort. At the vort, he asked the father why he disregarded his caution. He replied, "Last night, I told my daughter what you said, HaKol Lo Biseder That this voice isn't good, and she said that in her opinion, if the boy isn't able to sing well, that's not a reason to hold up a shidduch..."

The father didn't realize that the mashgiach had said Hakol Lo Biseder, with a Beis, which means nothing is good with the bachur. This is an example how shidduchim happen with hashgachah pratis, and information is misunderstood, or not heard, when that is Hashem's plan.

A simple person wanted his daughter to marry a talmid chacham. A shidduch was offered, and he was very impressed by the information he heard. The shidduch was finalized. At the vort he was among the happiest people in the world. He thought his daughter was engaged to the next Reb Akiva Eigar. Soon though, he discovered that the bachur was ignorant, and not a talmid chacham at all. He began to rethink the information people gave him, and he realized that they were hinting to him that the boy wasn't a scholar. But at the time, he didn't pick up on the cues. He was very upset at himself, and spoke with the Pnei Menachem of Gur zt'l about it.

The Pnei Menachem said, "Sometimes, to enable a shidduch to occur, Hashem takes away the parent's reasoning, because if the parents would think rationally, they wouldn't agree to the shidduch. That's what happened with you. You should be thankful that Hashem gave you your sechel back. Would you prefer to remain without your common sense forever?"

Reb Chaim Brim zt'l was a beloved rosh yeshiva who served in several yeshivos. His principle was that a bachur should never be thrown out of a yeshiva. He would say, "If the bachur is sent out, I'm leaving too." There was a bachur that the yeshiva wanted to expel, but they refrained from doing so, because they didn't want to lose Reb Chaim Brim as their rosh yeshiva. But when this bachur's behavior became even worse, the yeshiva decided that they have no choice. They expelled the bachur, and as forewarned, Reb Chaim Brim took his things, and left the yeshiva.

Just as he left the yeshiva and went outside, he met someone coming to the yeshiva to ask information about that bachur for a shidduch. He was glad he met Reb Chaim Brim, and asked him for information. Reb Chaim replied, "We just had a staff meeting, and the rosh yeshiva, the mashgiach, and all the magidei shiurim said, 'This yeshiva never had such a bachur before! There are eighty-six bachurim in the yeshiva, but none of them are ikethis one!'" The man heard enough (he didn't consider that perhaps that meant that he was unique in a negative way) and the shidduch was finalized.

Someone asked the Ahavas Yisrael of Vizhnitz zt'l: "We say shidduchim are bashert, but isn't it true that someone can speak lashon hara and ruin a shidduch? So we see that it is in man's hands too." The Ahavas Yisrael replied, "When a shidduch is bashert, Hashem arranges it that he will hear information solely from his friends. And when a shidduch isn't bashert, Hashem has him ask information from his enemies." [FN The Shpole Zeida zt'l explained that each person has good points and negative points. When the shidduch is bashert, a wide board comes down from heaven to cover over all his faults. People only see his qualities, and the shidduch is made. When a shidduch isn't bashert, the board covers all of his qualities, only the faults are seen, and the shidduch is rejected.]

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Take a Bow

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Davening in Public

"I am traveling, and the only place to daven is in a crowded terminal. Are there any special laws that I need to know?"

Question #2: Bowing or Genuflecting?

Have you ever genuflected?

Question #3: Bow and Arrow!

Does bowing have anything to do with bows and arrows?

Introduction:

Parshas Chayei Sarah mentions that Avraham bowed to the descendants of Cheis, when they agreed to give him a burial area for Sarah (Bereishis 23:7). The parsha also mentions that Eliezer bowed to Hashem to thank Him that his mission appeared to be achieving success. These provide a special opportunity to discuss some of the laws of

bowing during the shemoneh esrei. As there is far more to this topic than can be covered in one article, we will, bli neder, have to return to the topic at some time in the future.

Thirteen components of tefillah

The Rambam rules that our daily mitzvah to daven includes thirteen factors, five of which are essential components of prayer that, if missing, require that davening be repeated. The headings of these five requirements are: Clean hands, proper covering of the body, cleanliness of the location, absence of physical bodily distractions, and proper focus (kavanah).

The other eight categories are important aspects for discharging the mitzvah, but someone who did not, or could not, observe them has still fulfilled the mitzvah. For example, there is a requirement to daven shemoneh esrei while standing and while facing the Beis Hamikdash. However, if someone could not, or did not, do either, he has fulfilled his mitzvah. Similarly, there is a requirement to bow at points during the shemoneh esrei, but someone who did not do so has fulfilled his mitzvah.

The Rambam (Hilchos Tefillah 5:10) explains that, for most people, davening requires that we bow five times in the course of the recital of the shemoneh esrei. I will explain shortly why I wrote "for most people."

These five times are:

At the beginning and end of the first brocha of shemoneh esrei

At the beginning and end of the brocha of modim

At the very end of the shemoneh esrei

Most people?

Why did I say that the requirement to bow five times at every prayer is for "most people?"

This is because the Rambam (Hilchos Tefillah 5:10) alludes to the following passage of Talmud Yerushalmi (Brochos 1:5): "For the following brochos, one should bow: For the first brocha, both at the beginning and at the end, and for modim, both at the beginning and at the end. Someone who bows for every brocha should be taught not to do this. (See also Tosefta, Brochos 1:11 and Bavli, Brochos 34a.) Rabbi Yitzchak bar Nachman cited in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, 'A kohein gadol bows at the end of every brocha; the king, at both the beginning and end of every brocha. Rabbi Simon quoted from Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, 'The king – once he bows, he does not straighten up until he completes his entire prayer. What is my source? The verse that teaches, and it was when Shelomoh completed praying to Hashem this entire prayer and this entire supplication, that he then stood up from before the mizbei'ach of Hashem from bowing on his knees (Melachim I 8, 54).'"

We see that there is a dispute between Rabbi Yitzchak bar Nachman and Rabbi Simon (his name is not Shimon, but Simon, spelled with a samech, and he is an amora frequently quoted in the Yerushalmi) whether Shelomoh Hamelech teaches us that a king should always daven shemoneh esrei while kneeling, or whether this was a one-time practice, but not something that a king is always required to do.

Thus, those whom the Torah insists receive much honor must bow more frequently during their daily tefillah. The kohein gadol is required to bow in every brocha of shemoneh esrei, which is forbidden for everyone else, as we see in the above-referenced Tosefta. The Rambam rules according to Rabbi Simon, that the king, who receives much greater honor, is required to bow for his entire prayer.

Term limits?

This poses a question: The Tosefta rules that we should not bow in every brocha of shemoneh esrei; yet, we have now been taught that both the kohein gadol and the king should bow in each brocha of shemoneh esrei. How can it be that something is forbidden for everyone else and is required of the kohein gadol and the king?

The answer to this question seems to lie in the following explanation of Tosafos (Brochos 34a s.v. melamdin), who asks, "What is wrong with bowing extra times?" Tosafos provides two answers to the question (see also Tosafos Rabbeinu Yehudah and Bach, Orach Chayim 113):

1. If people develop the habit of bowing whenever they want to, it will cause Chazal's takkanah (requiring that we bow at the beginning and end of only these two brochos) to become uprooted. Therefore, we insist that they not bow any extra times.

2. It is being ostentatious about his religious observance, a halachic concept called yohara.

The Tur (Orach Chayim 113) rules according to Tosafos. Based on Tosafos's first answer, he concludes that it is permitted to bow in the middle of any brocha of shemoneh esrei, just not at the beginning or end.

We can also explain why Rabbi Yitzchak bar Nachman ruled that the kohein gadol and the king bowing in each brocha does not violate the ruling of the Tosefta. This was the takkanah – that a commoner bow only in two brochos, and the kohein gadol and king bow in each brocha.

When the bow breaks

As I mentioned above, the halacha is that bowing is not essential, which means that you fulfill the mitzvah to daven, even if you did not bow. There are extenuating circumstances in which you are not permitted to bow, but you are required to daven without bowing. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 113:8) cites such a case -- someone who must daven in a public place, and a person opposite him is sporting a cross or other idolatrous image. The halacha is that you should daven but you should not bow, so that a bystander not think that you are bowing to the image.

Don't bow to idols!

At this point, we can address our opening question: "I am traveling, and the only place to daven is in a crowded terminal. Are there any special laws that I need to know?"

The answer is that you should look around to see if any of your co-travelers are sporting crosses or other signs of idolatry, and, if they are, do not bow during your davening.

Take a bow

The Rambam mentioned that we are required to bow five times, including another time at the end of the shemoneh esrei, whose source is from a different passage of Gemara (Yoma 53b). "Rabbi Chiya, the son of Rav Huna, reported that he saw that Abayei and Rava would take three steps back while bowing." This passage of Gemara is quoted not only by the Rambam, but also by the Rif and the Rosh (both at the end of the fifth chapter of Brochos, after they quote the other halachos about bowing during davening). Because of space considerations, we will have to leave the detailed discussion of the topic of bowing at the end of shemoneh esrei for a different time.

How can you bow?

We now have some background to understand the words of the Rambam and the other rishonim who rule that we are required to bow five times during the shemoneh esrei. However, we do not yet know what type of bowing is required. We do know from the verse in Melachim quoted above that when Shelomoh Hamelech bowed, he actually kneeled with both knees on the ground. We do not usually consider this to be a Jewish way of prayer, but associate it with other religions. What does the Torah teach about this?

In Tanach and Chazal we find at least five different levels of bowing, each with its own defining terms.

Hishtachavayah

Hishtachavayah is bowing in which a person is completely prostrate, with arms and legs stretched out completely flat on the ground (Megillah 22b; Shavuot 16b). The Gemara proves this from the rebuke that Yaakov gave to Yosef, after the latter told his father about his dream, *havo navo ani ve'imcha ve'achecha lehishtachavos lecha artzah*, "Will it happen that I, your mother and your brothers will bow (root: hishtachavayah) down to you to the ground?" Thus, we see that the word hishtachavayah refers to bowing all the way to the ground.

This type of bowing is mentioned several times in Tanach and the Gemara. Some people bow this way during the repetition of musaf on Yom Kippur when we "fall kor'im."

Kidah

Kidah is kneeling and placing one's face against the floor. On the basis of a posuk (Melachim I 1:31), the Gemara (Brochos 34b; Megillah 22b; Shavuot 16b) proves that this is the meaning of the word kidah. If you have ever seen how Moslems pray, this is what kidah is.

Korei'a al birkav

Korei'a al birkav is called, in English, kneeling. As I mentioned above, this is what the posuk describes Shelomoh Hamelech doing when he dedicated the Beis Hamikdash (Melachim I 8:54).

Shocheh

Shocheh is what in English is called bowing, which means lowering your head and upper part of your torso, but remain standing on your feet.

Kor'im

Kor'im or more accurately, keri'a (the root is spelled kof, reish, ayin, not to be confused with the word for reading, which is spelled kuf, reish, alef) is used at times to mean when you bow and also bend your knees as part of your bowing. In English, this is called genuflecting.

How do we bow?

The Gemara (Brochos 12a), cited by the Rambam (Hilchos Tefillah 5:10), rules: "Someone who is praying should bow at the word Boruch, and straighten himself to an upright position when he says the name of Hashem." The Gemara continues: "Rav Sheishes, when he bowed, bowed down like a stick, when he straightened himself upright, he straightened himself like a snake." Although there are other interpretations of this passage of Gemara, Rashi explains that Rav Sheishes bowed down in one motion, but when he straightened himself upright upon reciting the name of Hashem, he did so in two motions, his head first, and then the rest of his body, so that he should not give the impression that bowing was something that he did not want to do. The Rambam (Hilchos Tefillah 5:10) and the later authorities codify this as the proper

method of bowing in shemoneh esrei. To quote the Rambam, "How should one bow? When he says Boruch, he should bend his knees; upon saying Attah, he should bow quickly; and upon saying Hashem's name, he should slowly rise, his head first and then his body." However, an older or ill person is not required to bow with his entire body, and it is sufficient if he simply bends his head. This last ruling is quoted in the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 113:5.)

Modim

In three of the places in the shemoneh esrei when we bow, we do so when saying the words Boruch Attah Hashem, and, according to the instructions that we have studied, we now know how to genuflect and bow when we say these prayers. However, the other two places, at the end of davening, and for modim, there is no "Boruch" in the tefillah when we bow. Therefore, at these places, common custom is to bow, but not genuflect (Mishnah Berurah).

Bow like a bow

This subtitle is not meant to be a corny pun, but an expression of the halacha. The Rambam (Hilchos Tefillah 5:12) rules: "All these bowings require that one bow until all the vertebrae in the spine protrude and (his back) is shaped like a bow." In Hebrew, this is not a pun: the word for bow, *keshes*, and the word for bowing, *korei'a*, bear no similarity.

The source for the Rambam's explanation is from the following passage of Gemara (Brochos 28b): Rav Tanchum quoted from Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, someone who is praying must bow until all the vertebrae in his spine protrude. Ulla said: Until a coin the size of an issar can be seen opposite his heart. Rav Chanina said, once he tilted his head, he is not required to do more. Rava explained Rav Chanina to mean that this is true when it is obvious that he is trying to bow more, but he is unable to do so, because of age or infirmity (see Tur and Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 113).

The halachic authorities also rule that someone should not bow so low that his mouth is opposite his belt (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 113:5). This is because it looks like he is trying to show off (Mishnah Berurah).

Bowing or genuflecting?

At this point, let us refer to our second opening question: Have you ever genuflected? Since we bend our knees when we say the word boruch, someone who davens three times a day and bows by bending his knees at the beginning and end of the first brocha and at the end of modim genuflects nine times a day. Thus, the surprising answer is that you probably genuflect many times a day, without knowing that you are doing so! Genuflect, kneel, korei'a

There is a very interesting linguistic curiosity that I want to point out. The word genuflect comes from a contraction of two words, *genu*, related to knee, and *flect*, which means to bend. (Think of the English verbs *deflect*, *flex*.) Language experts explain that the origin of the word *genu*, which is Latin, and the words, *knee* and *kneel*, which are German, are of common origin, both coming from a common cognate ancestor that refers to the knee. This association is very surprising, because old German and pre-Latin languages, although both of Indo-European origin, have few common sources. When there are common roots in both, the origin of the word can invariably be traced to the time of the *dor ha'pelagah*, when the scattering of the nations occurred and the languages of mankind became divided. In these instances, the true root of the word is invariably Hebrew, notwithstanding that linguists categorize Hebrew as a Semitic language and not Indo-European. This rule bears true here again, once we realize that it is not unusual that a reish sound becomes a nun when changing languages, as in the example of Nevuchadnetzar, called Nevuchadretzar at times. Thus, since, according to Chazal (see Yoma 10a), German is the older of the two languages (German and Latin), clearly the original root was *kof*, *reish*, *ayin*, the shresh of the word *korei'a*, which means to bow on one's knee or knees, or to genuflect or kneel, with the reish becoming an "n" sound, first in German and then later in Latin. Thus, the English words *knee* and *kneel* and the Latin word *genu* all originate from the Hebrew word *korei'a*, or, more accurately, its root, *kof*, *reish*, *ayin*.

Conclusion

The power of tefillah is very great. Through tefillah one can save lives, bring people closer to Hashem, and overturn harsh decrees. We have to believe in this power. One should not think, "Who am I to daven to Hashem?" Rather, we must continually drive home the concept that Hashem wants our tefillos, and He listens to them! Man was created by Hashem as the only creation that has free choice. Therefore, our serving Hashem and our davening are unique in the entire spectrum of creation. Understanding how much concern Chazal placed in the relatively minor aspects of davening should make us more aware of the fact that davening is our attempt at building a relationship with Hashem. As the Kuzari notes, every day should have three very high points -- the three times that we daven. Certainly, one should do whatever one can to make sure to pay attention to the meaning of the words of one's Tefillah. We should gain our strength and inspiration for the rest of the day from these three prayers. Let us hope that Hashem will accept our tefillos together with those of all Klal Yisrael!

Weekly Halacha :: Parshas Chayei Sarah

Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

To Borrow Or Not To Borrow?

Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya

Question: Is it permitted to borrow another person's tallis or tefillin without first asking him for permission?

Discussion: We generally assume that most people — even minors{1} — will be pleased to have others perform a mitzvah with their possessions if it costs them nothing{2}, especially since they, too, receive some credit for the mitzvah being performed by the borrower{3}. Thus it is permitted, in many cases, for one to occasionally{4} borrow another person's tallis, tefillin{5} or lulav and esrog{6} in order to fulfill the mitzvah. There are, however, some notable exceptions to this policy:

- We only assume that an owner will be pleased if a mitzvah is performed with his property; if the borrower suspects or knows otherwise, it may not be used without permission. Similarly, if the owner is present, we do not rely on the assumption that he will not object; he should be asked for permission directly.
- If the item is kept in a private locker, if it is brand new or if there are special circumstances for which reason the owner would not want it to be used, e.g., the borrower is ill, unkempt or unclean, it is forbidden to borrow it without permission{7}.
- The tallis or tefillin may not be removed from the premises (even if they will be returned), and they must be folded and put back exactly as they were found{8}.

Question: Is it permitted to borrow another person's sefer without first asking him for permission?

Discussion: Shulchan Aruch rules that the assumption mentioned in yesterday's Discussion — that an owner is pleased to have others perform a mitzvah with his property — does not apply to sefarim. This is because, unlike other ritual objects, sefarim tend to tear and could easily get damaged during learning. Mishnah Berurah{9} rules in accordance with this view and prohibits borrowing any sefer, even for occasional use, without asking permission. But several poskim suggest that nowadays, when sefarim are plentiful and inexpensive, we can assume that most owners will not object to others learning Torah from their sefarim, especially if the sefer is used only occasionally{10}. In addition, some poskim maintain that leaving a sefer in a shul or a yeshiva is an indication that the owner wants his sefer to be used by others to learn Torah{11}.

Question: Does the prohibition of ribbis apply to neighbors borrowing goods from each other, or does it apply only to money-lending and business deals?

Discussion: The prohibition of ribbis applies to goods borrowed between neighbors. A neighbor who borrows one challah may return only one challah to the lender. If a 5 lb. bag of sugar is borrowed, only that amount may be returned{12}. There are, however, several notable exceptions to this prohibition:

- If the difference between the item borrowed and the item returned is insignificant to the degree that people generally do not care about, the prohibition does not apply; a slightly bigger homemade challah, therefore, may be returned, since homemade challoos—as opposed to store-bought challoos—are not held to an exact weight{13}.
- Neighbors (or members of a club, etc.) who have a type of relationship where they constantly borrow from each other without being careful to return everything they borrow, do not run afoul of the prohibition of ribbis. This is because the neighbors are not “borrowing” from each other; they are giving each other gifts{14}. [Note that many neighbors do not have such a relationship.]
- When a borrower is uncertain of the precise amount he borrowed, he may return an amount which is great enough to assure that the loan is paid up. It

is preferable that the borrower stipulate that any extra return is an outright gift{15}.

• A neighbor or friend who borrows a food item may return that item exactly as borrowed, even if the price of the item has gone up in the interval. This is permitted because prices tend to fluctuate by small amounts and neighbors and friends generally are not particular about such a small difference{16}.

Question: Is it an obligation to lend money to another Jew, or is it merely an optional act of chesed?

Discussion: **The mitzvah of lending money** to another Jew in need is a mitzvah chiyuvis, an obligatory mitzvah, similar to any other mitzvah in the Torah. One who has money that he could lend, and refuses a direct request to lend another Jew money, transgresses the mitzvah of im kesef talveh es ami, which Chazal interpret as an obligation on the lender{17}. One is exempt from the obligation to lend money only when the lender truly believes that he will not be repaid, either because he does not trust the borrower to pay back or because he does not believe it possible that the borrower will have the means with which to pay him back. Still, if he could assure himself of repayment by obtaining collateral from the borrower, he is required to do so and may not refuse the latter's direct request for a loan{18}.

Question: If a lender feels that he cannot lend money to a potential borrower because he does not trust him, may he avoid insulting him by telling him that he has no funds available?

Discussion: In such a case, he may respond that he has no money to lend. The real meaning of his response is that he has no money to lend to him, which is a true statement and not considered a lie at all. The same holds true when someone that you do not trust asks to borrow a car or any other item that you do not want to lend to him. You may say that the car is not available or you may use any other excuse which will not offend the person asking for the item{19}.

1. *Igros Moshe, O.C. 2:107.* 2. *Pesachim 4b.* 3. *Mekor Chayim, O.C. 14:4.* 4. *But not on a regular basis; Mishnah Berurah 14:13.* 5. *Rama, O.C. 14:4* 6. *Rama, O.C. 649:5. This applies only from the second day of Succos on, since on the first day one must own his lulav and esrog in order to fulfill the mitzvah.* 7. *See Aruch ha-Shulchan, O.C. 14:11-12.* 8. *Mishnah Berurah 14:13-15.* 9. *14:16, quoting Peri Megadim. See also Beis Baruch 11:167.* 10. *See Aruch ha-Shulchan 14:13; Ma'aseh Ish, vol. 4, pg. 142 and Likutei Mehariach. Harav Y.S. Elyashiv is quoted (Mamon Yisrael, pg. 65) as ruling leniently on this issue.* 11. *See Minchas Yitzchak 7:130, based on Beirur ha-Gra, C.M. 163:95. See also Chesed l'Alafim 14:15.* 12. *See Y.D. 160:17.* 13. *See Chelkas Binyamin 162:21. But it is forbidden to return a bigger bakery challah, since those are regulated by weight and size. See Ashrei ha-Ish, Y.D. 14:10.* 14. *Halichos Yisrael, The Laws of Ribbis, pg. 35. See Chelkas Binyomin 160:79.* 15. *Minchas Yitzchak 6:161; 9:88-2; Bris Yehudah 5:10. See Chelkas Binyomin 160:33.* 16. *Mishnah Berurah 450:2 based on Rama, Y.D. 162:1. See Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 450:4.* 17. *Ahavas Chesed, Halva'ah 1:1.* 18. *Ahavas Chesed, Halva'ah 1:8 and Nesiv ha-Chesed 13.* 19. *See Shalmei Moed, pg. 537, quoting Harav Y. Y. Kanievsky and Harav S.Z. Auerbach. See also Titen Emes l'Yaakov 5:15 for several sources for this ruling.* *Weekly-Halacha, Text Copyright © 2012 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Torah.org. Rabbi Neustadt is the Yoshev Rosh of the Vaad Harabbonim of Detroit and the Av Beis Din of the Beis Din Tzedek of Detroit. He could be reached at dneustadt@cordetroit.com*
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Gauging Goodness
Based on a Naaleh.com shiur

by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Summary by Channie Koplowitz Stein

We seem to see a redundancy in the first verse of Parshat Chayei Sara which begins, "Sarah's lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years, and seven years." Then the verse concludes with, "[these were] the years of Sarah's life." Rashi tells us that this apparent repetition is to tell us that all the years of Sarah's life were equally good. However, this seems to raise more questions. How can one say Sarah's years were all good when the Torah itself records her challenges and hardships?

The Be'er Yosef explains that people have different strengths at different stages of their lives. In youth there is an eagerness and alacrity, while in maturity one acts more deliberately. Generally, one lacks the forethought of the mature mind in youth, and one loses the swiftness and eagerness as one ages. But Sarah was different. At every stage of her life, she possessed all these traits and used them all in her service to Hashem. Even when she experienced difficulties, she accepted them as being good. How was she able to do this?

The Daas Schrage explains that Sarah led a purely spiritual life. As such, she was not bothered by physical concerns and challenges. Her life on that exalted level, therefore, was a life of total equanimity. How could Sarah reach such a level? Leovdecha Be'emet notes that Sarah is derived from the same root as *sherirut*, control and mastery. She was master over her emotions and inclinations, rather than letting them control her.

Citing Rav Hutner, Rabbi Grossbard reminds us that Hashem commanded Adam to rule over all the creatures. Rav Hutner interprets this to mean that man must dominate not only the other creatures of the earth but also those base and negative characteristics in his own personality. Hashem gave us that ability, for we bless Hashem each morning by saying that He girds Yisroel with strength, with the strength to overcome our earthly tendencies and other negative traits. Sarah understood that if she could ascribe everything in her world to Hashem, she would have no cause to feel any negative emotion. While we will never reach the spiritual level of Sarah Imenu, by studying a little Mussar each day, we will become more aware of our emotions and our negative characteristics, and we will gain some power at controlling them.

The Gemara notes a variation in blessings. When we experience something good, we bless Hashem with *HaTov v'haMetiv*, He Who is Good and Who causes good. On the other hand, when we experience a calamity, like the death of a loved one, we say, "Boruch Dayan emet - Blessed is the truthful Judge." However, after 120 years, we will look back at all we experienced in the physical world and realize that even what we perceived as negative was all for the good. With this new knowledge and perspective, the blessings will be reconciled and all will be *HaTov v'haMetiv*. We will realize, as the *Halekach Vehalebuv*, notes, that even the challenges were for our benefit, just as an inconvenient cast helps heal a broken bone. Sarah internalized this concept. She realized that even her childlessness and suffering came from a benevolent God.

Sometimes when we look back upon our experiences, we see the benevolent hand of God and realize that our lives worked out well precisely because Hashem led us away from what we thought was good. Nevertheless, says the *Tiv Hatorah*, when we can't see the good, we must still believe that it is for the good.

This idea can perhaps be understood through the analogy of song, *shir*, continues Rabbi Schorr. Music has many cadences that go up and down. Yet when heard as one unit, one senses the harmony between the parts, and it is beautiful. So too is life has its ups and downs. We must not get frozen in particular down moments. We must rather try to see the unified whole with the total picture as good and harmonious.

"V'ahavata et Hashem...b'chol modecha," we are meant to love Hashem *bechol middah umiddah*, in every measure and in every emotion, says Rabbi Schwab. Each person is one unique manifestation of the form of God in which Hashem created him. Therefore when one accepts the slings and

arrows of life with the same equanimity as he accepts outrageous good fortune, he becomes a true servant of God, for he is validating the unique aspect of God Himself that Hashem has invested within him.

As descendants of Avraham and Sarah, notes the Slonimer Rebbe, it is incumbent upon us to continue their legacy, to perform an act of *chessed* every day, even if it is just to smile and lift someone's spirits. Even if we are going through difficult times, our acts of *chessed* will bring down *chessed* from Above, and we too will be blessed, as was Avraham, *bakol*, with all.

Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Chayei Sarah

פרשת חיי שרה תשפ

יהיו חיי שרה מאה שנה ועשרים שנה ושבע שנים

Sarah's lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years and seven years. (23:1)

Rashi explains that the repetition of the word "years" divides the life of Sarah *Imenu* into three periods, each with its own uniqueness. Each period, however, also shares a particular characteristic with its predecessor. Thus, at one hundred, she was as free of sin as a twenty-year old (a person does not suffer Heavenly punishment until age twenty), and at twenty she maintained the innocent, wholesome beauty of a seven-year-old. *Rashi* concludes, *Kulan shavin l'tovah*; "All of her years were equal in goodness." Our Matriarch had a good life, in which each of her superior character traits synchronized with one another to achieve the ultimate goodness that one can experience in this world. (While at age one hundred she maintained a sublime level of perfection as she manifest at age twenty, and at age twenty she was as capable of greatness as at age one hundred, however, to have been on a level of achievement as at age twenty seems to be a bit of a stretch.) What impact could Sarah have had at such a young age?

I came across a story that seems tailor-made to address this question. It relates the impact that a young boy had on the life of another boy that catapulted the beneficiary to such spiritual elevation that otherwise could have ended in infamy.

A *Rosh Yeshiva* was lecturing to a class (either upper elementary or early high school) that was comprised of a mixture of students of various ages. (Quite often, students could be a few years apart, based upon level of proficiency and availability of instructors.) Every class has its one or two boys who – due to age, lack of parental discipline, or personal factors which have yet to be addressed – do not fit into the same discipline mode as the rest of the class. Thus, if something out of the ordinary occurs in the room, one of the students is usually the "address" to which the *rebbe* turns. Sometimes, what takes place is so out of character (of class discipline) that it is difficult to pinpoint the perpetrator. Today was that day. During the *Rosh Yeshiva's shiur*, lecture, on a particularly difficult passage in the *Gemarah*, a paper plane came in for a landing right on top of the *Rosh Yeshiva's Gemarah*. Someone in the back of the room had made a paper plane and tried his wings at the expense of the *Rosh Yeshiva's shiur*.

This was unmitigated *chutzpah*, audacity. Perhaps it might take place in a primary school class, but during the *Rosh Yeshiva's shiur*? Absolutely unheard of. The *Rosh Yeshiva* took a few minutes to settle his nerves. He attempted to restart the *shiur*, but was unable to do so. Finally, he said, "The student who did this should stand up and leave this room!" Nothing. The room was still. No one rose from his seat. No one moved. The *Rosh Yeshiva* was known for his patience, but, this time, it had worn thin: "I repeat. The student who committed this act should immediately leave the room!" This was serious business. The *Rosh Yeshiva* rarely raised his voice, and, even when he did, it was to emphasize a Torah-related thought/concept. This was too much for him to handle. Boys did not fly paper airplanes in his classroom. He tried a third time, with "feeling": "Whoever committed this act must leave the room immediately!" This time, the *Rosh Yeshiva's* voice was almost a shout. A few moments passed in silence – until someone stood

up and began shuffling toward the door. Thirty pairs of eyes turned to look at the source of the noise. It was none other than young Nachman, a bright boy who was one of the youngest in the class. Although this act was out of character for him, perhaps his youth had gotten the better of him. Shame was written all over his face. He clearly felt bad, as did his friends and the *Rosh Yeshivah*, who had regarded young Nachman with special affection.

A few days passed. Nachman apologized; the *Rosh Yeshivah* understood that boys will be boys, especially if they are much younger than the others, and Nachman rejoined the class. End of story? No, there is more.

Fast forward thirty years. After visiting various doctors and taking a number of tests, a husband and father received the dread news that he had feared from the very onset: He was gravely ill. He had some measure of hope. A therapy had been recently discovered and used successfully by a few physicians. There was, however, one problem: It was extremely expensive, and this family was barely able to make ends meet on a good day. Now, with their father and primary wage-earner bedridden, the required funds were not simply a hurdle; it was an impossibility.

When situations appear hopeless, however, the *askanim*, community workers/brokers, who are guided by the *chesed* lodestar, kick in and literally move heaven and earth to provide solutions for the predicament confronting their Jewish brothers and sisters. From full-time learners to part-time learners, from hourly workers to business owners, everyone took to the streets and knocked on doors in search of funds to help the young father who lay deathly ill: *Mi k'amcha Yisrael*; "Who is like Your people, *Yisrael*?" Doors and hearts opened; pocketbooks opened; money slowly started pouring in to help this family.

One of the family members, a brother-in-law, took it upon himself to visit an entire neighborhood. Apartment to apartment, door to door he went, explaining the reason that he (a distinguished lay leader) was collecting money. A young father lay bedridden, his family starving. Does one need a better reason? As he walked through the *shechunah*, neighborhood, a door opened, and standing before him was a prominent young *Rosh Yeshivah*, a charismatic educator who had literally impacted the lives of hundreds of young men. He was a well-respected and admired *Rosh Yeshivah*. "How can I help you?" he asked. The brother-in-law explained that he was on a mission to raise sufficient funds, so that his brother-in-law could receive treatment for the illness that was ravaging his body. "My brother-in-law, *Reb* Nachman Galinsky, is in dire straits. Without the money, he has no chance of receiving treatment."

"What did you say his name was? *Reb* Nachman! *Oy, Reb* Nachman!" The *Rosh Yeshivah* began to raise his voice, "Oy, *Reb* Nachman is ill! *Oy*. I owe my life to *Reb* Nachman! Every bit of *ruchniyos*, spirituality, that I have achieved, every bit of Torah that I have studied, every *talmid*, student, that I have taught, is all due to *Reb* Nachman. If not for him, I would probably not be *frum*, observant. He gave me back my life. I owe him everything."

The *Rosh Yeshivah* began the story with which he had lived (and probably had haunted him) for so many years. "I was a little '*shticky*' (liked to fool around, did not always follow the rules, usually as a result of immaturity), and, one day, in the middle of the *Rosh Yeshivah's shiur*, I let fly a paper airplane. I did not expect the *Rosh Yeshivah* to react with hurt and then anger, but he did, and he would not budge until the perpetrator announced himself and left the classroom. It was different in those days. If a boy was not ensconced in the protective environment of a *yeshivah*, he was a ripe candidate for the secular Zionist movement that was captivating the country. *Kefirah*, heresy, filled the streets, the cafes, the meeting places. Everywhere, it was about living a life divorced from Torah. The new deity was Nationalism/Zionism/Communism/Socialism. I was not a spiritually strong student. If I left the *yeshivah*, it would mean the end of my *Yiddishkeit*. So, I remained still, quiet, ignoring the *Rosh Yeshivah's* three calls for the perpetrator to leave the *shiur*. At the very last moment, as I was about to give myself up and say goodbye to my religious commitment, little Nachman

Galinsky arose from his seat and left the room. He accepted the onus of guilt for what I had done. My *Yiddishkeit* could now remain intact.

"It was at this moment that I realized that I had been granted a new lease on my spiritual life. I began to learn with greater passion and *daven* with more fervor; my acts of *chesed* and caring for others meant much more to me now, because they were personal. All of this was due to Nachman Galinsky. Do you know the *z'chusim* that he has? Every bit of Torah that I or my students have learned is because of him. *Oy*, do I owe him!"

We now see how the actions of a young boy can resonate, be remembered, and have an effect for decades.

ויהיו חיי שרה מאה שנה ועשרים שנה ושבע שנים שני חיי שרה

Sarah's lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years and seven years, the years of Sarah's life. (23:1)

Rashi explains the seeming redundancy of *shnei chayei Sarah*, the years of Sarah's life, by asserting that *kulam shavin l'tovah*, all of the years of Sarah *Imeinu's* life were equal in their goodness. This does not mean that Sarah did not experience adversity in her life. Childless for ninety years is definitely not what anyone would call "good." Sarah, however, accepted whatever was thrown at her as being the *ratzon*, will, of Hashem. Sarah had many positive character traits and attributes, abiding commitment to Hashem which she instilled in our nation's DNA. As the first Matriarch, she is the Mother of our People. Yet we know little about her life. We know that she was the life companion of Avraham *Avinu*, who worked side by side with him to bring the world's pagan population under the wings of the Divine Presence. That she was righteous is without doubt. Interestingly, the Torah does not allude to any specific quality, especially one which would transform her life to a life of *tov*, good. It was her attitude toward life that was transforming. Why did the Torah not emphasize a unique attribute, a manner of serving Hashem, that was specific to her?

I think the Torah does allude to a powerful life lesson concerning Sarah. We revert back to *Parashas Vayeira* to see the *middah*, attribute, that defined our Matriarch. When Sarah *Imeinu* sought to send Yishmael away, Avraham was not happy. Yet Hashem said to him, *Kol asher tomar eilecha Sarah, shema b'kolah*, "Whatever Sarah tells you, heed her voice" (ibid 21:12). *Horav Shlomo, zl, m'Radomsk* interprets this *pasuk* in a novel manner. When Hashem instructed Avraham to listen to Sarah, He was doing more than simply pointing him in the right direction. (Sarah's leadership was based upon her acute ability to see beyond the superficial innocence of young Yishmael and his Egyptian mother.) Hashem was intimating to Avraham the reason that Sarah was spiritually above and beyond everyone else: *Shema b'kolah*. Every word that emerged from her mouth, every sound that she uttered, echoed *Shema*, the word/expression which denotes one's overriding commitment to *kabbolas ole Malchus Shomayim*, accepting the yoke of the Heavenly monarchy upon herself. Whenever Sarah spoke, it was no ordinary form of expression, since *Shema Yisrael* – the depth, commitment and devotion represented by these words – was apparent and emergent from her voice. Sarah lived for the Glory of Heaven. Sarah reflected *kabbolas ole Malchus Shomayim* in her every expression. *Shema* was always *b'kolah*. This was Hashem's beautiful tribute to our first Matriarch. She lived with *mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice, guided by her desire to sanctify Hashem's Name.

The words that we speak, the things that we say, are extraordinary manifestations of Divine Creation. Hashem created Adam *HaRishon* in order that he express himself using the power invested in him by Hashem when "He blew into his nostrils the breath of life", *Vayipach b'apav nishmas chaim*." *Targum Onkeles* writes: *V'hava b'adam l'ruach m'malela*; "And it was for a speaking spirit in man.") The power of speech is G-dly, because it contains within it a component of the Divine. This is all the more reason for maintaining the consecrated status of speech. Obviously, one who protects his/her power of speech from spiritual contamination will find special Heavenly favor.

Giveret Frieda Mendelson, *H.Y.D.* was one of the victims of the Sbarro terrorist attack in Yerushalayim in the late summer of 2001. She rarely frequented a restaurant. It was just not her thing. She devoted herself to setting up Torah classes for women, specifically *shiurim*, classes, that addressed the ills of *lashon hora*, evil/slanderous speech. On the day that she died a martyr's death, she had fasted in preparation for a test that had to be taken on an empty stomach. Originally, she had planned to pack a sandwich which she would eat after the test, but she had decided against it. If she was hungry, she would pick something up. For some reason, after the test, she decided to go to Sbarro's for brunch.

Shortly before she left for the test, she had spoken with her son (*Rav* Mendelson) and said something totally atypical, "I am getting on in years, and I already see the end coming." Her son wondered why she would speak like that. "*Ima*, you're still a young woman. There is no reason for you to worry. You have so much to accomplish for the women in the *shchunah*, neighborhood, who rely on you for inspiration."

She replied, "It is not as if I want to die. It is just that after reading *sefarim* which address the period immediately following death, I have become very fearful of *chibut ha'kever*, punishment of the grave. (During the body's decomposition in the grave, the soul is aware of, and identifies with, the decomposition which is very painful to it. This is a painful and frightening period, especially for those who have placed a premium on material and physical pleasure.) Indeed, I pray constantly to Hashem that He spare me from this pain. I ask that when my time comes, that I be taken straight to my place in *Gan Eden* without having to suffer along the way."

Understandably, this was not a usual conversation between a healthy mother and son. She had no reason to give any thought to an early demise – no more than for anybody else. She was in her prime, healthy, active, inspiring, and spiritually impacting the lives of others. Yet, she expressed to her son that her request of Hashem was that her soul ascend to *Gan Eden* without having to "stop" along the way.

Hashem listened to her request. The *Rambam* writes that the *neshamah*, soul, of anyone who leaves this world *al Kiddush Hashem*, who dies sanctifying Hashem's Name, who dies because he or she is a Jew, ascends immediately to *Gan Eden*. *Giveret* Mendelson's last minute decision to eat at Sbarro's was as surreal as it was propitious, because now she would have her plea answered. Her life was devoted to elevating Jewish speech through awareness of the holiness of the Jewish tongue. Thus, when she made a request of Hashem, He listened.

This, however, is not the end of the story. There is more. On the day of the bombing, a woman who was not from the *shchunah* came to the *shul* in Yerushalayim where *Giveret* Mendelson *davened*. Her husband (*Rav* Mendelson) is the *Gabbai Roshi*, Chief Sexton, of the *shul* in charge of seating and all daily *shul* business. The woman asked *Rav* Mendelson to sell her a seat. He explained that no seats were available. The *shul* was full. The woman was obstinate. She must have a seat. When he saw that she was not going away, *Rav* Mendelson, in an attempt to stall her, asked her to select a seat. The woman walked through the women's section which seated a few hundred women. She walked from seat to seat, looking, sitting, standing, until finally she stopped at a seat, and said, "This one. I want this seat." This was *Giveret* Mendelson's seat which had tragically become available that day.

Horav Elchanan Wasserman, *zl*, writes (*Koveitz Shiurim, Kesubos* 208), "Whenever we find that the blessings or curses uttered by *tsaddikim*, righteous Jews, are fulfilled, it is because the word that emanates from a holy mouth/tongue achieves, even if there is no *kavanah*, specific intention behind it (just an utterance). It may be compared to the ax that is wielded without intention (on the part of the ax). Likewise, man's speech has incredible power and validity behind it. One who has contaminated his speech through inappropriate use, however, will wield an ax blade that is rusty and dull. It has been weakened through improper use. This is food for thought – or speech.

ותאמר שמה אדוני

She said, drink, my lord. (24:18)

Eliezer asked Rivkah (*Imeinu*) if she had water to spare. The young girl's actions, her outstanding *chesed*, kindness, in not only providing for Eliezer, but also for his camels, indicated the type of person she was. In addition, she did not tarry in carrying out his request. As soon as Eliezer asked her for water, she immediately ran to do his bidding. These two aspects of Rivkah's character are evident. Another one of her attributes is often overlooked, but should be underscored: *derech erez*, manners, respect, human decency. This, explains *Horav Yitzchak Yaakov Ruderman, zl*, is to be gleaned from the word *adoni*, my lord/master. Rivkah did not know Eliezer, yet she addressed him with respect. This was probably the way in which she spoke to everyone. Indeed, acting with *derech erez* is the foundation upon which our Torah stands. Regardless of the person who stands before us, we must always address him or her respectfully. *Horav Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky, zl, Rav* of Vilna and pre-World War II *gadol ha'dor*, preeminent leader of European Torah Jewry, would greet and treat anyone who passed his door with the utmost care and respect.

Derech erez is similar to *kavod Shomayim*, the honor of Heaven. When a person leaves this world, he is asked by the Heavenly Tribune: "Did you engage in Torah study? Did you coronate your Heavenly Father morning and evening? (Did you pray daily?); did you coronate your friend in a satisfactory, pleasant manner? (In other words, did you treat your friend with respect?) (*Reishis Chochmah Shaar Ha'Yiraah* 12). Thus, we see that the way in which we treat others follows naturally from the way in which we act towards Hashem.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* cites a number of passages from *Chazal* which stress the importance of *derech erez*. He concludes with an interesting observation in which he distinguishes between an *adam gadol*, great man, and an *adam hagun*, decent and honest man. The *Midrash* teaches that when the three angels (disguised as Arabs) passed by Avraham's tent, he immediately ran towards them to invite them in to grace his home and feed them. *Chazal (Bereishis Rabbah* 48:9) teach that Avraham mused to himself, "If I see that the *Shechinah* waits for these men (Avraham was engaged in conversation with Hashem, Who had appeared to him to visit him during his recuperation from his *bris milah*. The Patriarch "excused" himself to tend to the wayfarers.), then I know that they are an *adam gadol*, great men. If I see them proffering respect to one another, then I know that they are *hagunim*, decent and honest men. *Chazal* intimate that being an *adam gadol* is insufficient. One must achieve the level of *hagun*, integrity and decent; he must possess and manifest positive, refined character traits in order to define himself as a *hagun*.

In Memory of our beloved parents, grandparents, and great grandparents
Rabbi Justin Hofmann

הרב יקותיאל בן יוסף ז"ל נפטר ל"ה חשוון תש"ע

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צפורה בת החבר אברהם יוסף שמחה הכהן ע"ה נפטרה י"ג כסלו תשע"ג

From the Elzas, Greenfeld and Levine families

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