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VeSain Tal u'Matar in 82 Years

December 4, 2019 8:42 pm15

by **Rabbi Yair Hoffman for 5TJT.com**

Generally speaking, Orthodox Jews are completely not affected by actions of the Catholic pope. Regarding vesain tal u'matar, however, one Pope's actions affected the secular date of when we do things. Read on for clarification.

In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII initiated changes to the calendar that did have some repercussions in our halachic observance, at least in the way we record the secular date as to when in the year we begin amending one line in the Shmoneh Esreh in Chutz La'aretz. In Israel itself we began saying it at Maariv of the 7th of Cheshvan.

The Pope made three changes to the Julian Calendar, but at first, only the Catholic countries followed it.

1] He fast-forwarded the calendar ten days. In 1582, there was no October 5th through October 14th.

2] He ruled that every 100 years there would not be a leap year. There was no February 29th in the year 1900, nor in the years 1700 or 1800.

3] He ruled that every 400 years there would be a leap year and that rule number two would not apply. Rule #3 has only been used twice in the year 1600 and in the year 2000.

What this boils down to is that until the year 2101 we begin saying v'sain tal umatar on the night of December 4th and before a leap year we begin saying it on the night of December 5th. For this year 2019 lemisparam – we say it Thursday night.

As an interesting note, if ArtScroll would have existed in the 1800's it would have said to add in v'sain tal uMatar on December 3rd and before a leap year on December 4th.

IF ONE FORGOT

What happens if you forgot to add it in?

There are actually two major brachos of the 19 brachos in Shmoneh Esreh where it can be added in – Baraich Alainu and Shmah Kolainu. Ideally, we shoot for the first, but if not we can do it in the later one.

IN BARAICH ALEINU

So the answer to what you should do if you did forget, depends upon when you remembered that you did not add it in. If you remembered before saying Hashem's name at the end of the bracha of Baraich Alaynu, then just go back to v'sain tal umatar and continue from there (MB 117:15).

IN THE NEXT OPPORTUNITY

If you remembered after saying Hashem's Name, then you just continue on until the Bracha of Shma Koleinu and add the words, "v'sain tal umatar livracha" right after "vkabel berachamim veratzon es tfilasainu" and before "ki attah shomaya tfilas" (MB 117:16). If one still forgot and did not yet say Hashem's name at the end of the bracha, then just say "v'sain tal umatar livracha and continue saying Ki Attah shomaya.

If you have already said Hashem's Name – then we have a debate between the Mishna Brurah and Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l as to what to do. The Mishna Brurah (117:19) says to say "Lamdeini chukecha" – a Pasuk in TaNach and then to say v'sain Tal uMatar livracha and finish with Ki Attah Shomaya.

Rav Moshe Feinstein questions this and asks how it is possible to just recite random Psukim in the Shmoneh Esreh? [He recommends that one just finish up the bracha and add it before one says Retzai, like the Shulchan Aruch recommends to do if you did end up finishing Shma Kolainu.] Unless you are a talmid of Rav Moshe, most people follow the Mishna Brurah.

If one has already completed the entire Shmah koleinu bracha without having said v'sain tal uMatar, then the Shulchan Aruch rules that you just say it then and recite Retzai.

If you forgot to say it before then and actually started retzai – then you are now in for some major repeating. You have to stop where you are and just go back to the beginning of Baraich Aleinu and continue saying the Shmoneh Esreh from there.

IF YOU FINISHED THE SHMONEH ESREH

If you forgot it and completed the Shmoneh Esreh – then repeat the entire Shmoneh Esreh from the beginning (See SA 117).

NOT SURE WHAT YOU SAID

If you are not sure what you said, we assume you didn't say it for the first 30 days. After 30 days, we assume that you did say it properly. The Mishna Brurah (114:40) suggests that if you sing the words "v'es kol minei s'vu'asah l'tova v'sain Tal uMatar livracha" 90 times then the assumption changes. We assume that you did say it. On Maariv of January 3rd (or January 4th of a leap year) is the day when the assumption changes if you did not end up following the 90 times recommendation.

My father-in-law, Rabbi Yaakov Hirsch zt"l, used to keep a piece of paper in his siddur at Baraich Aleinu for those thirty days in order to remind him to add it in. This is a good idea. It also saves on not having to say the formula 90 times.

For the record, the changes were not Pope Gregory's original idea. The idea first came from an Italian doctor named Aloysius Lilius. Most of what was to eventually become the United States of America did not adopt it, however, until the year 1752.

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Parshas Vayeitzei

What Took So Long for Yaakov to Remember to Daven on Har HaMoriah? These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: #1096 – Davening With A Minyan – Obligation Or Just A Good Idea? Good Shabbos!

Yaakov leaves Be'er Sheva and travels to Charan. He is headed back to the "Old Country," the birthplace of his mother and the place where uncle Lavan lives. Charan was in Mesopotamia – which today is in Turkey, near the border with Syria. At any rate, it is quite a distance from Eretz Yisrael. Rashi cites Chazal on the expression "Vayifgah b'Makom" [Bereshis 28:11] that Yaakov was struck by the fact that somehow, he passed the place where his father and grandfather had prayed and he did not stop to pray there himself. He therefore set his mind to return, and went back to Beis El.

The Gemarah in Tractate Chullin [91b] teaches that Yaakov's return to "the place where his fathers prayed" took place in a miraculous fashion, involving "kefitzas haderech" (allowing him to travel a great distance in a short amount of time). According to Chazal, the Almighty compressed the earth. Suddenly, Yaakov, who was already in Charan, miraculously found himself back on Har Hamoriah.

I saw an interesting question in a sefer called Machat shel Yad from Rav Yitzchak Frankel. Imagine if you know someone whose parents are buried in Paramus (New Jersey). The fellow is travelling on the New Jersey Turnpike and he passes the exit to Paramus. Suddenly, he thinks to himself, "I just passed the cemetery where my parents are buried. Since I am in the neighborhood, how can I not visit 'Kever Avos?'" He makes a U-turn, goes back a couple of miles, and comes to the cemetery.

That is not what took place here. "And Yaakov left Be'er Sheva..." [Bereshis 28:10] He leaves Be'er Sheva, which is approximately 50 miles south of Yerushalayim. He passes Yerushalayim and continues all the way to Charan – perhaps 500 miles to the northeast. Suddenly he says, "Guess what, I passed Yerushalayim and I did not daven over there!" What took him so long? Where have you been for the last 500 miles? It had to have taken him months to make this journey, and suddenly now he remembers that 50 miles out of Be'er Sheva, he neglected to stop at Har Hamoriah? The equivalent is to have parents buried in Virginia, and he drives from Maryland to Florida. Upon reaching Georgia, the driver suddenly shouts, "Woe is me! I passed Virginia! I need to turn around now and drive all the way back up Interstate 95!" That is what happened here. What was Yaakov thinking?

Rav Frankel gives an interesting answer. However, I would like to sweeten his answer with a very beautiful idea from Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky's Sefer. Chazal say that when Rivka told Yaakov to run away and go to her brother's house in Charan, Yaakov did not go there directly. He spent fourteen years in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever. Until Yaakov was fifteen, Yaakov Avinu learned with his grandfather Avraham. At the time he was now leaving home, he was already in his sixties. He was known as "One who dwelt in tents." That means he had been learning for at least 45 years with his father Yitzchak. After learning so many decades with Avraham and Yitzchak, now he needs to learn fourteen years in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever? Why? What was he missing?

Beyond that—we need to ask—was he not disregarding his parents' instructions? Imagine your father tells you, "Go out to the store and buy me a bottle of milk." You go outside and start walking to the grocery store. Suddenly you say, "You know what? I have not learned today." You take a short cut to the Beis Medrash. You stay there for five hours, then you leave, and on the way home, you pick up a bottle of milk at the grocery store. Your father will shout, "What took you so long? Did you go milk a cow? Where have you been for the last five hours?" You will answer, "I was learning in the Beis Medrash!" Very nice. However, when your father asks you to get a bottle of milk, you do not first go and spend five hours in the Beis Medrash! Rivka told Yaakov to go to Padan Aram and stay there. Yitzchak told him to go find himself a wife from his mother's family. However, Yaakov spends

fourteen years in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever before doing anything else! How are we to understand this?

So, we have two questions: 1) Why did Yaakov need it? What was missing in his education until now that required him to spend fourteen years in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever? 2) How can Yaakov justify seemingly ignoring his parent's directive for fourteen years, before traveling to Charan?

Rav Yaakov gives a very famous explanation. He says that Yaakov did need something at the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever that he could not get at home from his father or grandfather. There was something in that Yeshiva that Yaakov had to learn, that he did not receive from his parents. What was that? Shem (the son of Noach) was a product of the Generation of the Flood (Dor HaMabul) and Ever (the great grandson of Shem) was a product of the Generation of the Dispersion (Dor Haflaga). Both of them not only survived, but thrived, in a spiritually hostile environment. The society and surroundings in which they grew up were the antithesis of the Divine Will and the antithesis of holiness. Somehow or another, they were able to overcome their surroundings and remain steadfast in their Service to the Almighty.

Avraham and Yitzchak raised children in pristine environments. The House of Avraham and the House of Yitzchak were mini Batei Mikdash (Holy Temples), or certainly at least mini Batei Kneses (Synagogues). When Yaakov learned with his grandfather and father, certainly he learned all the Torah and he learned to be a Servant of G-d and emulate all that Avraham and Yitzchak gave over to him. However, that would not help in Charan. Charan was a different environment. Chazal use the expression, "Why was it called Charan?" Rashi explains that the name comes from the term "Charon" (anger) – "Until Avraham came along, there was Charon Af (Divine Anger) in the world." Apparently, Charan was not as evil as Sodom and Amarah, but it still incurred the wrath of the Ribono shel Olam.

Yaakov Avinu says to himself, "I am headed to Charan. I need to learn a spiritual approach which will teach me how to survive in such a corrupt environment." That is why he went to study in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky also explains another teaching of Chazal with this idea: In Parshas VaYeshev, on the pasuk "And Israel loved Yosef more than all his sons because he was a Ben Zekunim (literally, a child of his old age) to him" [Bereshis 37:3], Rashi interprets the term Ben Zekunim as Bar Chakim—a wise son. Yaakov taught Yosef all the Torah he learned in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever, in order to make him a wise son.

Why specifically that Torah? Why did he not teach him the Torah of Avraham? Why did he not teach him the Torah of Yitzchak? The answer is that Yaakov Avinu knew, at least b'Ruach HaKodesh (intuitively through the Holy Spirit of prophecy) that Yosef would wind up in an environment that was going to be hostile. He did not know exactly what was going to happen to his beloved son but he knew that Yosef would need to be in such surroundings. Therefore, Yaakov said to his son, Yosef, "I need to teach you the Torah I learned while in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever." There is only one way you can learn how to survive when the environment is hostile to your Divine Service, and that is by studying the curriculum they taught in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever.

This is why the brothers were jealous of Yosef. "Why is father teaching only Yosef this special aspect of Torah? Why don't we get that?" They did not understand that specifically Yosef was going to need this education. Yosef was going to go down to Egypt, and needed to survive there and set up an environment that would allow the rest of the family to come there and survive as well.

That is why Yaakov spent fourteen years in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever. Now that we know this, we can return to Rav Frankel's question, and understand the following:

Yaakov spent fourteen years learning this special curriculum. He feels, "I am now prepared to go on to Charan." Then he finally arrives in Charan. Picture the following analogy. There is a farmer from the Midwest. All his life he

has been in “normal Kansas,” in the middle of the Corn Belt and the Wheat Belt. All he knows is farming. He is going to take the big trip to New York City. He looks at the maps and at the atlas. He looks at pictures and videos. He sees pictures of the big buildings and the skyscrapers. Wonderful! He arrives in New York. He boards the subway. Suddenly the subway pulls into the Times Square subway station. Boom! Have you ever been to Times Square? The lights assault you. Despite all this preparation, the Kansas farmer is stunned by what he sees. He never dreamt of what Times Square was really like. (“One cannot compare hearing about something to seeing it”) Similarly, Yaakov Avinu arrives in Charan. He thinks he is prepared. “I spent fourteen years in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever preparing for this moment!” When he arrives in Charan, fear overtakes him. How am I going to survive? I do not think I can manage! So even after the fourteen years in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever, Yaakov was scared. He said, “You know what else I need? I need Zechus Avos (ancestral merit). I need to pray in the place of Har Hamoriah. I need to go back to pray in that holy place where my father and grandfather prayed because my Torah alone – even including all the Torah I learned at Shem v’Ever – will not be enough to get me through this.”

So now Yaakov is ready to go all the way back from Charan. Why? Because he needs the prayers! Then the Almighty did a great kindness for him. “I will bring Har Hamoriah to you.”

This explains why it took several hundred miles for Yaakov to realize, “How could it be that I passed the place where my parents prayed and I did not stop there to pray?” Until now, he thought he was prepared. However, when he saw the reality of what Charan was like—a city that was not only decadent, but was full of thieves and cheaters—at that point, Yaakov said, “I need more than the special Yeshiva training. I need special Tefilos (prayers) as well.”

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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. A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. Torah.org: The Judaism Site Project Genesis, Inc. 2833 Smith Ave., Suite 225 Baltimore, MD 21209 <http://www.torah.org/learn@torah.org> (410) 602-1350

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date: Dec 5, 2019, 8:14 PM

Laban the Aramean

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

The events narrated in this week’s parsha – Jacob’s flight to Laban, his stay there, and his escape, pursued by his father-in-law – gave rise to the strangest passage in the Haggadah. Commenting on Deuteronomy 26:5, the passage we expound on Seder night, it says as follows:

There are three problems with this text. First, it understands the words arami oved avi to mean, “[Laban] an Aramean [tried to] destroy my father.” But this cannot be the plain sense of the verse because, as Ibn Ezra points out, oved is an intransitive verb. It cannot take an object. It means “lost,” “wandering,” “fugitive,” “poor,” “homeless,” or “on the brink of perishing.” The phrase therefore means something like, “My father was a wandering Aramean.” The “father” referred to is either Jacob (Ibn Ezra, Sforno), or Abraham (Rashbam), or all the patriarchs (Shadal). As for the word Aram, this was the region from which Abraham set out to travel to Canaan, and to which Jacob fled to escape the anger of Esau. The general sense of the phrase is that the patriarchs had no land and no permanent home. They were

vulnerable. They were nomads. As for Laban, he does not appear in the verse at all, except by a very forced reading.

Secondly, there is no evidence that Laban the Aramean actually harmed Jacob. To the contrary, as he was pursuing Jacob (but before he caught up with him) it is written: “God appeared to Laban the Aramean in a dream by night and said to him, ‘Beware of attempting anything with Jacob, good or bad’” (Gen. 31:24). Laban himself said to Jacob, “I have it in my power to do you harm; but the God of your father said to me last night, ‘Beware of attempting anything with Jacob, good or bad.’” So Laban did nothing to Jacob and his family. He may have wanted to, but in the end he did not. Pharaoh, by contrast, did not merely contemplate doing evil to the Israelites; he actually did so, killing every male child and enslaving the entire population.

Third, and most fundamental: the Seder night is dedicated to retelling the story of the Exodus. We are charged to remember it, engrave it on the hearts of our children, and “the more one tells of the coming out of Egypt, the more admirable it is.” Why then diminish the miracle by saying in effect: “Egypt? That was nothing compared to Laban!”

All this is very strange indeed. Let me suggest an explanation. We have here a phrase with two quite different meanings, depending on the context in which we read it.

Originally the text of Arami oved avi had nothing to do with Pesach. It appears in the Torah as the text of the declaration to be said on bringing first-fruits to the Temple, which normally happened on Shavuot.

In the context of first-fruits, the literal translation, “My father was a wandering Aramean,” makes eminent sense. The text is contrasting the past when the patriarchs were nomads, forced to wander from place to place, with the present when, thanks to God, the Israelites have a land of their own. The contrast is between homelessness and home. But that is specifically when we speak about first-fruits – the produce of the land.

At some stage, however, the passage was placed in another context, namely Pesach, the Seder and the story of the Exodus. The Mishnah specifies that it be read and expounded on Seder night.[1] Almost certainly the reason is that same (relatively rare) verb h-g-d, from which the word Haggadah is derived, occurs both in connection with telling the story of Pesach (Ex. 13:8), and making the first-fruits declaration (Deut. 26:3).

This created a significant problem. The passage does indeed deal with going down to Egypt, being persecuted there, and being brought out by God. But what is the connection between “My father was a wandering/fugitive Aramean” and the Exodus? The patriarchs and matriarchs lived a nomadic life. But that was not the reason they went down to Egypt. They did so because there was a famine in the land, and because Joseph was viceroy. It had nothing to do with wandering.

The Sages, however, understood something deep about the narratives of the patriarchs and matriarchs. They formulated the principle that ma’asei avot siman lebanim, “What happened to the fathers was a sign for the children.”[2] They saw that certain passages in Genesis could only be understood as a forerunner, a prefiguration, of later events.

The classic example occurs in Genesis 12 when, almost immediately after arriving in the land of Canaan, Abraham and Sarah were forced into exile in Egypt. Abraham’s life was at risk. Sarah was taken into Pharaoh’s harem. God then struck Pharaoh’s household with plagues, and Pharaoh sent them away. The parallels between this and the story of the Exodus are obvious. Something similar happened to Abraham and Sarah later on in Gerar (Gen. 20), as it did, also in Gerar, to Isaac and Rebecca (Genesis 26). But did Jacob undergo his own prefiguration of the exodus? He did, late in life, go down to Egypt with his family. But this was not in anticipation of the Exodus. It was the Exodus itself.

Earlier, in our parsha, he had gone into exile, but this was not because of famine. It was out of fear for Esau. Nor was it to a land of strangers. He was travelling to his mother’s own family. Jacob seems to be the only one of the patriarchs not to live out, in advance, the experience of exile and exodus.

The Sages, however, realised otherwise. Living with Laban, he had lost his freedom. He had become, in effect, his father-in-law's slave. Eventually he had to escape, without letting Laban know he was going. He knew that, if he could, Laban would keep him in his household as a kind of prisoner.

In this respect, Jacob's experience was closer to the Exodus than that of Abraham or Isaac. No one stopped Abraham or Isaac from leaving. No one pursued them. And no one treated them badly. It was Jacob's experience in the house of Laban that was the sharpest prefiguration of the Exodus. "What happened to the fathers was a sign for the children."

But where does Laban come into the phrase, *Arami oved avi*, "A wandering Aramean was my father"? Answer: only Laban and Laban's father Betuel are called Arami or ha-Arami in the whole Torah. Therefore Arami means "Laban."

How do we know that he sought to do Jacob harm? Because God appeared to him at night and said "Beware of attempting anything with Jacob, good or bad." God would not have warned Laban against doing anything to Jacob, had Laban not intended to do so. God does not warn us against doing something we were not about to do anyway. Besides which, the next day, Laban said to Jacob, "I have it in my power to do you harm." That was a threat. It is clear that had God not warned him, he would indeed have done Jacob harm.

How can we read this into the verse? Because the root a-v-d, which means "lost, wandering," might also, in the piel or hiphil grammatical tenses, mean, "to destroy." Of course, Laban did not destroy "my father" or anyone else. But that was because of Divine intervention. Hence the phrase could be taken to mean, "[Laban] the Aramean [tried to] destroy my father." This is how Rashi understands it.

What then are we to make of the phrase, "Pharaoh condemned only the boys to death, but Laban sought to uproot everything"? The answer is not that Laban sought to kill all the members of Jacob's family. Quite the opposite. He said to Jacob: "The women are my daughters, the children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks. All you see is mine" (Gen. 31:43). Jacob had worked for some twenty years to earn his family and flocks. Yet Laban still claimed they were his own. Had God not intervened, he would have kept Jacob's entire family as prisoners. That is how he "sought to uproot everything" by denying them all the chance to go free.

This interpretation of *Arami oved avi* is not the plain sense. But the plain sense related this passage to the bringing first-fruits. It was the genius of the Sages to give it an interpretation that connected it with Pesach and the Exodus. And though it gives a far-fetched reading of the phrase, it gives a compelling interpretation to the entire narrative of Jacob in Laban's house. It tells us that the third of the patriarchs, whose descent to Egypt would actually begin the story of the Exodus, had himself undergone an exodus experience in his youth.[3]

Ma'asei avot siman lebanim, "the act of the fathers are a sign to their children," tells us that what is happening now has happened before. That does not mean that danger is to be treated lightly. But it does mean that we should never despair. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their wives experienced exile and exodus as if to say to their descendants, this is not unknown territory. God was with us then; He will be with you now.

I believe that we can face the future without fear because we have been here before and because we are not alone

[1] Mishnah Pesachim 10:4.

[2] The principle does not appear explicitly in these terms in the classic Midrashic or Talmudic literature. A similar expression appears in Bereishit Rabbah 39:8. A key text is Ramban, Commentary to Gen. 12:6, 10. It was widely adopted by subsequent commentators.

[3] On this whole subject, see David Daube, *The Exodus Pattern in the Bible*, Faber, 1963.

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date: Dec 5, 2019, 10:54 PM

subject: Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky - Keeping the Dream of the Beis HaMikdash Alive

Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky

Keeping the Dream of the Beis HaMikdash Alive

Exile is a primary component of the life of Yaakov Avinu. In Parshas VaYeitzei he had to leave Eretz Yisrael and later, in Parshas VaYigash, he left once again to spend the rest of his life in Mitzrayim. Chazal emphasize that we must learn from how our avos responded to the challenges that they faced. How did Yaakov survive being away from Eretz Yisroel for so long, first in the house of Lavan and then in Mitzrayim?

As Yaakov embarked on both of his trips to exile, he began by consecrating something for avodas Hashem. In Parshas VaYeitzei he poured oil on a stone thereby dedicating it as the cornerstone of a sanctuary to be completed upon his return to Eretz Yisroel. When leaving Eretz Yisroel for Mitzrayim, Yaakov stopped at Be'er Sheva to offer korbanos; as his time in Eretz Yisroel was coming to an end, Yaakov dedicated those last moments to avodas haKorbanos. Sensing that in chutz la'aretz there would be no opportunity for avodas haKorbanos, he brought the last korbanos of that era.

As the period of korbanos was coming to an end, Yaakov was already preparing for the next stage of avodas haKorbanos. The stone he anointed was only the first step in the house of Hashem he planned to construct in the future. Similarly, Chazal teach us that as Yaakov went to Mitzrayim, he took cedar wood with him to enable his descendants to build a Mishkan years later. It was this vision that enabled Yaakov to survive a galus which would be devoid of the ultimate connection to Hashem that comes through the medium of korbanos. After returning to Eretz Yisroel, Yaakov lived in the house of Hashem which he had consecrated years earlier. As his descendants spent hundreds of years in the galus of Mitzrayim, they clung to the dream of their ancestor Yaakov that someday they would build a Mishkan using those very pieces of cedar wood dedicated years before.

Ma'asei avot siman l'bonim - the deeds of our forefathers are a sign for their children. We have been without a Beis HaMikdash for almost two thousand years. And yet, the Beis HaMikdash has remained a very real part of our lives. From our daily beseeching Hashem to rebuild it to our study of the intricacies of korbanos, the Beis HaMikdash has always remained a focal point of our lives. A nation that hasn't experienced the offering of korbanos for almost two thousand years continues to relive the glory of the Beis HaMikdash during Mussaf on Yom Kippur and during the Seder night. At the culmination of these highlights of the year, we fervently express our hope that the next year we will merit to celebrate these glorious days in Yerushalayim with the Beis HaMikdash rebuilt. Just as Yaakov taught us to look forward to the day when a stone would become a house for Hashem and cedar wood would be transformed to be a Mishkan, our prayers and study of korbanos will set the stage for the third Beis HaMikdash. The commitment to keep the dream of the Beis HaMikdash alive during galus did not begin with Yaakov; he knew this to be true because Hashem had already taught this to Avraham. At the time when Hashem promised Avraham to give his children Eretz Yisrael, Avraham asks Hashem through what merit will the Jewish People be granted Eretz Yisrael. Hashem responded that it is the merit of korbanos, to which Avraham responded by asking how will they merit to return to Eretz Yisroel after the Beis HaMikdash is destroyed. Hashem revealed to Avraham that the merit of learning about korbanos will enable them to return. It was this lesson of keeping korbanos an integral part of our lives, even in the absence of the Beis HaMikdash, that was transmitted to Yaakov. Yaakov in turn taught this to his descendants. The Jewish People

have remained loyal to the dream of the Beis HaMikdash. May we merit to see this dream become a reality in our days.
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date: Dec 5, 2019, 8:14 PM

What's In a Name?

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

"Who am I?"

This is the most powerful question that a person ever asks himself. For many of us, there are no easy answers to that question. We are uncertain of our own identities.

Social scientists believe that this question is typically asked by adolescents. After all, it is legitimate for young people to be unsure of who they are. The task of the adolescent is to begin to define his or her identity, to formulate tentative answers to the question, "Who am I?"

Often, however, individuals persist in struggling to answer the "Who am I?" question long after they have passed the stage of adolescence. The so-called "midlife crisis" can be understood as a time in life when one again asks himself the question, "Who am I?", and a crisis arises when no clear answer to that question emerges.

An important component in the formulation of an answer to the "Who am I?" question is the answer to another question, "What's in a name?" Each of us has a name, almost invariably given to us very early in our lives by our parents or parent figure.

I would like to suggest that our sense of personal identity is in a large part determined by the names that we have been given. Our names were chosen for us because they have a certain meaning to those who named us. When our parents gave us our name, they also gave us a message about whom they expected us to be. Whether we ourselves are conscious of that message depends upon how explicit our parents were in their choice of our name. But on some level, we know that our name was not randomly chosen, and to a greater extent than we realize, our self-concepts are shaped by our names. In this week's Torah portion, Vayetze, no less than eleven newborns are given names. In every case, these names are given by women; by Leah and by Rachel. Each name is carefully crafted by these women and is designed, not only to reflect the emotions of the moment, but to shape and give direction to the destinies of each of these children.

Let us consider but two examples: Leah gives her third son the name Levi, which means "connected," or "attached." This reflects her confidence that with the birth of a third son, her husband, Jacob, will become more attached to her. But it is also a message to the baby Levi that he will grow up to be "attached" to others. In his lifetime, he is typically number two of the duo "Simon and Levi," secondary to his brother. And his progeny become "attached" to the Almighty and to all things sacred as the tribe of priests for the rest of Jewish history.

Leah then names her fourth child Judah, which means to praise or to thank, because of the special gratitude she experiences with his birth. And Judah ultimately, in his own life and through his descendants, gives praise to the Lord in his actions and with his words.

In more recent times, it has become rare for a Jewish parent to invent a new name for his or her child. The prevalent custom is to name a child for a deceased ancestor or for some other revered personage. The child who carries the name of a grandparent surely internalizes the message that in some way his life should reflect some of the values of that grandparent. I know for whom I was named. He was my great-grandfather, my mother's mother's father, Tzvi Hersh Kriegel. He was an immigrant to America, hailing originally from Galicia. His portrait adorned one of the walls of my grandparents' home, and it showed an immaculately dressed, bright-eyed but old-fashioned middle-aged man, with a luxuriant red beard. As a child, I

learned much about him from his widow, my great-grandmother. I learned of his commitment not only to Jewish observance, but to all aspects of the Galitzianer culture, especially to its wry humor and nostalgic Chassidic tunes.

I visit his grave ever more frequently as time goes on. And I both consciously and unconsciously model myself after him. When I ask myself, "Who am I?", a significant part of my answer relates back to him and to his name bequeathed to me.

I have found myself preaching over the years to those parents who would listen that they should choose the names they give their children carefully, and that rather than choose a name because they like the way it sounds or because of its popularity, they should select a name of a real person, someone who stood for something, someone your child could eventually emulate.

In my Torah study and in my readings of Jewish history, I have noticed that during different eras, different names seem to predominate. I find it fascinating that the names Abraham, Moshe, David, and Solomon are today quite popular and have been certainly since the days of that second most famous Moses, Maimonides. Yet, in Talmudic times, those names seemed to have been quite rare. We find no major rabbis in the Mishnah or in the Gemara who carry the names of the aforementioned four biblical heroes. No Rabbi Moshe, no Rabbi Abraham, but strangely more than one Rabbi Ishmael. And of course, returning to this week's Torah portion, Judahs and Simons aplenty.

"What is in a name?" A message to help answer the persistent and challenging question, "Who am I?" As is so often the case in rabbinic literature, one question answers the other.

There is a passage in the works of our Sages which tells of the three names each of us has. There is the name which we were given at the time of our birth, which is the name we have discussed in this column. But there is also the name that we earn by our own deeds, the part of the answer to the "Who am I?" question that we ourselves provide.

And finally, there is a name that others give us, the reputation that we deserve. It is that name to which King Solomon in his Kohelet refers when he remarks, "A good name is better than fragrant oil, and the day of death than the day of birth." And it is that very name which the Mishnah in Avot has in mind when it concludes that of all the crowns of glory that humans can achieve, there is one that stands supreme: the keter shem tov, the crown of a good name.

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date: Dec 4, 2019, 1:22 PM

VAYETZEI

Rashi quotes the well-known Rabbinic observation that the departure of a righteous person from a society is an indelible loss to the community. Now I do not want to sound like a heretic, God forbid, but for many years I was troubled by this statement. From my personal experience and observation of life, I did not always find this to be realistic and accurate.

I have lived in many communities and when a great man from that community passed away or left to live in a different area, life in that original community seemed to go on as usual. Everyone certainly missed the presence of that great person but after a few days no one's life seemed to be truly altered or affected by that person's absence. The bitter truth of life is that out of sight is out of mind. Therefore, I have always struggled to understand the deep meaning of what Rashi quotes.

As I have aged, hopefully gracefully, I am beginning to gain a glimmer of understanding into those words and an insight into that sublime message. A certain community had a distinct problem and for various reasons contacted me to hear my opinion as to how it should handle the situation. That

community had a great and wise person whom I knew personally, living there for half a century. While that person was alive, the community had no need to call upon any outside person for advice or counsel. But now that the person was no longer present and this problem had arisen and threatened to cause irreparable harm to the fabric of the community, they and I agreed that though this wise person would have been able to solve the problem equitably and peacefully, they needed to turn to outside sources for help. At that moment, they felt the absence of this great man and even though no one human being is indispensable, so too no human being is ever replaceable either.

When Yaakov left Be'er Sheva, I imagine that not everyone took notice of his absence. Everyone in Be'er Sheva got up the next morning and went about their usual daily tasks. However, it is obvious that in the twenty-two years of Yaakov's absence from that community, problems and issues arose that had he been present he would have been consulted on and would have helped solve. It was at these moments that the full realization of Yaakov's absence became apparent. As was observed by Rashi, about the absence of a good and wise person, it is at these times that it becomes real and evident to all.

Such is the nature of life, that much greatness and goodness is not appreciated until somehow it – in the form of a human being – is no longer present within that society. We always see things much more clearly in retrospect than we do in the present. This is an important lesson that is worthy of our consideration.

Shabbat Shalom.
Rabbi Berel Wein

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By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky
Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya
Parshas Vayeitzei
Sheepish Leadership

Sheep. You wouldn't think they'd play a major role in determining our leaders, but they did. The Midrash says that one of Moshe's defining acts that moved G-d to choose him as the leader of Israel was his attitude toward his animal flock. Once an ewe wandered from the pack, and Moshe scoured the desert to find it. He finally found the parched and exhausted creature, and he fed and carried her back to the rest of the flock. G-d was impressed. On the way home, Moshe saw a very fascinating sight. A burning bush. The rest is history.

King David was also a shepherd. The Midrash tells us that David's handling of sheep was also the impetus for G-d to choose him to lead His flock. David had a very calculated grazing system. First he would allow only the young sheep to pasture. They would eat the most tender grass. After they finished, David allowed the older sheep to graze. In this manner the tougher meadow grass was left for those sheep with stronger jaws. The Midrash tells us that G-d was impressed with David's abilities to discern the different needs of varying age groups and foresaw in those actions the leadership qualities needed to be King of Israel.

So much for the careers of two of our greatest Jewish leaders as shepherds. What troubles me is this week's Torah portion which contains a long episode that also deals with sheep. It expounds in detail exactly how Yaakov manipulated genetics and had the acumen to cultivate an amazingly large and diverse flock. However, I am troubled. Why is a long narrative of seemingly inconsequential breeding techniques detailed so intricately? The Torah spends nearly twenty verses on a half-dozen varieties of sheep colors and

explains how Yaakov bred them. Why are such seemingly insignificant breeding details given so much play in the Torah? Let us analyze the story: Yaakov worked fifteen years for his father-in-law, Lavan. No matter how arduously he toiled, Lavan constantly tried to deny Yaakov compensation. Finally, he forced Yaakov to accept a share in the sheep as wages, but only with certain stipulations. He would only compensate him with sheep that were an mutation from the normal flock. First, he set Yaakov's wages to be paid with only speckled lambs that born of Yaakov's flock. Yaakov, in a procedure that would have astounded even Gregor Mendel, produced sheep exactly according to those specifications. Next, Lavan allowed him striped sheep. Again, miraculously Yaakov cultivated his flock to produce a bounty of striped sheep! The Torah repeats the episode in various colors and stripes. What could be the significance of its importance?

Rabbi Aryeh Levin was once standing outside his yeshiva in Jerusalem while the children were on a 15 minute recess break. His son, Chaim, a teacher in the yeshiva, was standing and observing, when suddenly his father tuned to him. "What do you see my son?" asked Rav Aryeh. "Why," he answered, "children playing!"

"Tell me about them," said Reb Aryeh. "Well," answered Reb Chaim, "Dovid is standing near the door of the school, with his hands in his pockets, he probably is no athlete. Moishie is playing wildly, he probably is undisciplined. Yankel is analyzing how the clouds are drifting. I guess he was not counted in the game. But all in all they are just a bunch of children playing." Reb Aryeh turned to him and exclaimed, "No, my son. You don't know how to watch the children.

"Dovid is near the door with his hands in his pockets because he has no sweater. His parents can't afford winter clothes for him. Moishie is wild because his Rebbe scolded him and he is frustrated. And Yankel is moping because his mother is ill and he bears the responsibility to help with the entire household.

"In order to be a Rebbe you must know each boy's needs and make sure to give him the proper attention to fulfill those needs."

Yaakov had a very difficult task. His mission was to breed twelve tribes — each to be directed in a unique path. Some sons were to be merchants, others scholars. Judah was destined for royalty, while Levi was suited to be a teacher of the common folk. Each son, like each Jew, had a special mission. Hashem needed a father for the twelve tribes who would not breed all his children in the same mold. If Moshe's and David's destinies were determined by their care and compassion for their animal flock, perhaps Yaakov's development of twelve tribes was pre-determined by his development of a wide array of his flock. Only someone who knew how to cultivate unity in diversity would know how to produce the forebearers of the Jewish nation.

Dedicated by Mr. And Mrs. Joel Mandel

Drasha is the internet edition of
Fax-Homily — a project of the Henry & Myrtle Hirsch Foundation
Yeshiva of South Shore – 516-328-2490 – Fax : 516-328-2553
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<https://vosizneias.com/2019/12/05/the-unknown-mitzvah-of-looking-at-shabbos-candles/>

The Unknown Mitzvah of Looking at Shabbos Candles

December 5, 2019 8:28 pm2

NEW YORK (Rabbi Yair Hoffman 5TJT.com)

For some reason, the Mitzvah or custom of looking at the Shabbos candles (See Ramah in Shulchan Aruch 271:10) is not so well known.

There are three reasons that are cited for this custom. The first reason discussed in the Maharil (Hilchos Shabbos 202) is that the Gematria of Ner is 250 – if we double that (for two candles), we get 500 and this is a cure for psi'ah gassah – taking large steps – indicative of excess haughtiness. Psi'ah gassah, according to the Gemorah in Brachos (43b) removes 1/500th of a person's sight. The Ramah in his Darchei Moshe cites another sefer – Saichel Tov which brings an additional reason – the number 500 is equivalent to the total number of limbs of a man and a woman. There is a third reason cited in Saichel Tov in the name of the Maharash. Looking at the Shabbos candles allows him to concentrate better.

The second reason seems to be a bit strange. What difference does it make if the Gematria is equivalent to the total number of limbs of a man and woman?

Also, why does the Darchei Moshe only mention that the Saichel Tov brings another reason – but doesn't state what the reason is? Also, the Ramah in his Darchei Moshe points out that one should look at the cup of wine. He answers that one can look at both, but still – doesn't it disturb one's concentration when one looks at two different items? Shouldn't a person just concentrate on one thing?

I would like to suggest perhaps that all three reasons in the Saichel Tov are inter-connected with each other and that there is a profound message in his words. But before we get to this idea, let's ask two more questions:

The Gemorah in Shabbos 23b states in the name of Rav Huna that one who is ragil – who is accustomed to Ner (Rashi – the Shabbos lamps) receives children who are Talmidei Chachomim. Why the word “accustomed?”

Wouldn't the term “hazahir” – one who is careful – be more appropriate? None other than the Maharsha himself poses this question.

Also, why is it that his children become Talmidei Chachomim? Why not him?

It is possible to resolve all five questions with one idea. One of the greatest causes of marital discord on the husband's side is a particular form of haughtiness called narcissism. Looking at the Shabbos candles and contemplating the fact that the limbs of a husband and wife add up to 500 forces the man to consider the consequences of not addressing or controlling his psiya gasa – his step of haughtiness – his narcissism.

Focusing on the idea of the man and the woman complete to form 500 – will enable him to focus on his growth – connecting to both Hashem with dveikus and connecting to his wife a la the verse, “v'davak b'ishto. He needs to do this in addition to focusing on the Kiddush itself.

When one has marital harmony – that is a recipe for well-adjusted children, who can now flower into Talmidei Chachomim.

Why the term ragil – accustomed? The answer is that the Hebrew word “zahir” means to be careful to do it, but we need more here. We need the person to contemplate it on a regular basis – to be accustomed to focus on the need for marital harmony (the sum of the limbs of both man and wife) and the need to eliminate narcissism. I is not merely a Mitzvah that is performed and forgotten about. It is a constant and steady reminder of taking care of the garden that is our marriage.

May the custom of looking at the Shabbos candles enable us all to live in shalom and to creat well-adjusted children. Amain.

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Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Vayetztei

פרשת ויצא תשפ

ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע וילך חרנה

Yaakov departed from Beer-Sheva and went towards Charan. (28:10)

Chazal (Bereishis Rabbah 68) address the concept of Heavenly intervention with regard to *shidduchim*, matrimonial matches. We derive from Yitzchak Avinu's *shidduch* that *mei'Hashem yatza ha'davar*; “The matter stemmed from Hashem” (Ibid. 24:50). The *Midrash* states: “There are those for whom their *zivug*, pair/spouse, comes to them (as was manifest in the case of Yitzchak Avinu), and there are those who must go to their spouse (as was evinced with Yaakov Avinu, who had to travel to Canaan to seek his designated spouse). What is *Chazal* teaching us with this statement? It is a fact of life that some people find their designated spouse more easily than others. Yitzchak did not have to travel to seek his wife. Rivkah came to him. Yaakov, their son, experienced a much more difficult *shidduch* process. He had to travel to find his future wives and work twice for seven years before his actual match was confirmed. This was not a case of “like father, like son”; Yaakov's *shidduch* was not an easy journey. What novel idea is *Chazal* introducing when they say: Some travel to their spouses; for others, their spouses travel to them?

Horav Baruch Dov Povarsky, Shlita, explains that this documents *mei'Hashem yatza ha'davar*, “The matter stemmed from Hashem.” Not only is the identity of one's spouse Heavenly determined and designated, but even how and where the *shidduch* will achieve fruition is all from Hashem. Hashem has His reasons for every bit of “angst” that is intrinsic to *shidduchim*. It is all Heavenly-mandated and included in the story of the *shidduch* of these two people.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains why Hashem has arranged life this way. Secular culture asserts that the successful marriage of two people is the merging of two personalities and characters that are able to interface harmoniously, together with their physical attributes and appearance. As the *Rosh Yeshivah* asserts: Certain colors blend perfectly with other colors. In the case of a *shidduch*, too, it is an aggregate of varied natural and physical components that blend together as one. It is not so simple. In fact, it has very little – if anything – to do with a physical, natural standpoint. A *shidduch* is a spiritual cohesion of two *nefashos*, spirits/souls; the synchronization of the *neshamos* of two individuals, male and female, who were originally counted as one – separated – and now have come back together. The spirits of this man and woman must conform to one another, as they establish a spiritual congruence to set the foundation for a successful marriage. Only Hashem can accomplish this.

Each *zivug* is different. Some require very little action to complete their *zivug*. For a couple, it was not necessary for Yitzchak Avinu to go out “in search” of Rivkah *Imeinu*. Instead, she came to him. Our Patriarch Yaakov required considerable toil in order to set up his home. He was destined to travel to Charan, to live there for years with his family. Furthermore, his time in Charan spanned fourteen years, during which he learned in the *yeshivah* of Shem and Ever. This, too, was part of the spiritual perfection process of his *shidduch*.

Why does marriage have to be so spiritually accurate? Simply, because through the vehicle of marriage, one is granted the opportunity to bring down a *neshamah*, soul, from Heaven – a soul that is implanted within the physical container (the child) comprised of the DNA of both parents. Thus, the spiritual correlation of the parents will impact future generations, as their descendants build their homes upon the foundation of Torah values. A

deeper reason exists, however, for the perfection of the spiritual coalescence of man and woman in matrimony.

Chazal (*Pirkei Avos* 5:1) state, “By means of Ten Utterances, the world was created.” *Pirkei D’R’Eliezer* (3) states that the tenth *maamar*, utterance, is, *Lo tov he’yos ha’adam levado; ee’sse lo eizer k’negdo*, “It is not good that man be alone; I will make him a helper corresponding to him” (*Bereishis* 2:18). Thus, the creation of Chavah, the first woman, was a complimentary creation that perfects the Ten Utterances. Indeed, in the *sheva brachos*, seven nuptial blessings, two blessings conclude with the words, *yotzeir ha’adam*, the creation of man. One is for Adam, and one is for Chavah. We wonder why the syntax of the tenth utterance differs from that of the first nine. Hashem begins with (sort of) a preface: “It is not good that man be alone.” Why did Hashem not present a similar preface to the previous creations, such as, “It is not good that darkness be in the world,” etc. Each of the creations could have been preceded with a reason for their creation. The only one that stands out is the creation of woman. Why is this?

Rav Povarsky explains that *yetzirah Chavah*, the creation of the first woman (and, subsequently, all of womanhood), completed the creation of Adam. From the standpoint of the creation of humans, Chavah was not a new creation. She, too, was a human being, no different from Adam, but her creation comprised the *hashlamah*, conclusion/completing, of Adam. This creation occurred when Adam betrothed and married her. She then became his wife, his *eizer k’negdo*. At this point, Adam completed himself. Hashem served as the agent who facilitated their union by creating Chavah. In the tenth utterance, in the last aspect of Creation, Adam “partnered” with Hashem, as he completed the last component in Creation.

We understand now why Hashem prefixed the tenth utterance with the words, *lo tov*, while the others did not have a prefix. Any creation which Hashem performed by Himself does not require a “reason” prior to its creation. The last act of Creation, which allowed for Adam’s participation, required an explanation, so that Adam could understand its reason and purpose. With this in mind, we have a deeper appreciation of the spiritual link between two souls in matrimony. As husband and wife unite through marriage, the husband becomes complete, his creation having achieved its full perfection. A simple, physical merging of two units/people would not generate such spiritual unity. Thus, husband and wife would be deprived of their oneness.

ועיני לאה רכות

And the eyes of Leah were soft. (29:17)

Why were Leah’s eyes soft? *Chazal* (*Bava Basra* 123) explain that Leah heard the conversation of people who would talk among themselves. “Rivkah had two sons; her brother, Lavan, had two daughters. The older daughter is (apparently) promised to the older son, and the younger daughter to the younger son.” Leah asked concerning the nature of the older son’s endeavors. (Obviously, if she were destined to marry him, it would be nice to know what type of life she was destined to have.) The response was: “The older son is an evil, base person, a thief who preys on the innocent.” When she asked about the younger son, the reply was: *Ish tam yosheiv ohalim*; “A simple, wholesome man abiding in tents.” When she heard this, she wept copiously until her eyelashes separated.

Horav Nosson Wachtfogel, zl, derives from here a lesson concerning the enormous power of tears. It is well-known that prayers have an amazing effect on achieving one’s goals. Hashem listens to sincere prayer. We now see that tears (prayer with tears) have an even greater effect, such that it is possible to abrogate a decree. Leah *Imeinu* was well aware that forty days prior to her birth a Heavenly decree had announced who her designated spouse would be. How could she possibly change that decree? She was supposed to fall to Eisav, an eventuality that she dreaded. She did not give up hope. What was her secret “weapon”? How could she hope to extirpate what had been decreed prior to her birth? Tears. With tears, one is able to achieve what prayer alone cannot.

Chazal (*Berachos* 32) state: “From the day that the *Bais Hamikdash* was destroyed, the gates of prayer have been closed. Although the gates of prayer are no longer open, the gates of tears are not closed.” While the depth of *Chazal’s* statement obviously requires deeper clarification, one thing is clear: Through the vehicle of tears, one is able to penetrate Divine sanctuaries which otherwise are not accessible through prayer. Leah did not simply cry once, twice; she cried incessantly, until her eyelashes fell off! Her tears supported her fervent prayer until, finally, Hashem accepted her plea to be free of the curse of becoming Eisav’s mate. He removed her from Eisav’s domain and placed her in the domain of the *Avos ha’kedoshim*, holy Patriarchs. Thus, she not only became a Matriarch, she became the progenitress of six *Shevatim*, tribes, of *Klal Yisrael*. She achieved all of this through her tears.

What is so special about tears? *Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl*, explains that tears are the sweat of the soul. Tears emanate from the heart. They are authentic. Real tears cannot be simulated. Prayer that is accompanied by tears has greater efficacy, because it has greater authenticity.

Throughout the annals of history, we have heard of *gedolei Yisrael*, Torah leaders, who have achieved their pinnacle of achievement due to their profuse weeping. Their copious tears ascended Heavenward and made the difference. The *Chafetz Chaim, zl*, had an old worn-out *siddur*, an inheritance from his saintly mother, which he cherished and held close. He often declared that whatever “little” he had achieved in his life was all *b’zchus*, in the merit, of this *siddur*. His mother had prayed constantly from this *siddur*. Her prayers were accompanied by her sincere weeping. For what did she pray? – Neither for honor, nor for wealth; she beseeched the Almighty that her young son grow into a *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar, a G-d-fearing, ethically correct, Torah Jew. Her tears made the difference, and we -- in fact, the entire Jewish world -- are their beneficiaries.

ויפגעו בו מלאכי אלקים

And the Angels of G-d met him. (32:2)

The word *va’yifga* connotes an unexpected encounter. When the angels encountered Yaakov *Avinu*, it was an unusual experience for them. As *Horav S. R. Hirsch, zl*, explains, Yaakov *Avinu* was the first of the *Avos*, Patriarchs, who merited to have *mitaso sheleimah*, that all of his children were righteous and followed in his ways of serving Hashem. Even after living for twenty years in the home of the evil Lavan, they emerged spiritually unscathed. The level that Yaakov achieved was incredible for the angels to behold. It was a momentous experience for them to see such a family on earth (amid physicality and materialism) emerge so spiritually pure.

How did this happen? How does one succeed in imbuing his family with such G-dliness? How does one (so to speak) bring Hashem “down” into his home, into his life? The answer lies at the very beginning of the *parsha*, when Yaakov had an otherworldly experience, *Vayifga ba’makom*; “And he encountered the place” (ibid. 28:11). It was in this place that our Patriarch had his famous dream, in which “he met the Divine.” This *vayifga* was his momentous experience; in which he encountered Hashem in this world. In order to imbue one’s home/life/family with G-dliness, he must see/experience G-d in his life, in this world. He must sense that Hashem is everywhere, a part of everything that happens concerning him and around him. When one feels Hashem/*vayifga ba’makom*, then one can bring Heaven “down” into his life, so that *vayifgeu bo malachei Elokim*.

Bringing Heaven down to earth, imbuing one’s earthly endeavor with Heavenly meaning and focus, is what defines the *tzaddik*, righteous person. The *tzaddik* sees Hashem in every aspect of his life. The *tzaddik*, however, is a human being like the rest of us, but, as the root of the word *tzaddik* implies (derived from *tzedek*, just/correct), the *tzaddik* acts exactly as his Creator wants him to act. A *tzaddik* embodies Hashem’s paramount conception of the human being. While the *tzaddik* does everything that the human being does, he does it on a more elevated plane, a Divine level. To the *tzaddik*, everything has purpose; everything has meaning: that purpose

and meaning are linked to Hashem. Thus, everything that the *tzaddik* does allows him a greater connection to Hashem.

We find that even the term *tzaddik* is enhanced with the added appellation, *tamim*. Noach is characterized as a *tzaddik*, which is enhanced with the added appellation of *tamim*. Noach is characterized as a *tzaddik tamim*, which is (at first glance) translated as a wholesome/complete *tzaddik*. The commentators, each in his own inimitable manner, offer their own understanding of these terms, breaking them up into two levels, or standards, of ethical/moral commitment. *Ibn Ezra* and *Sforno* say *tzaddik* applies to action and *tamim* to thought. *Ramban* opines that *tamim* defines righteousness, i.e., complete in righteousness. *Rabbeinu Bachya* defined *tzaddik* as a person who is careful with other people's property; one who distances himself from any vestige of thievery or impropriety. *Tamim* is defined as *shalem b'chol midosav*, one who is perfect in all of his character traits. A *tamim* is ethically flawless in his demeanor. His ethics are impeccable, all rendered so by his commitment to Heavenly standards.

Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, relates the story of an English lawyer, a Jew by birth, but one who knew very little of his religious heritage. He was the paragon of integrity and ethicality. He defended a businessman who, he discovered later, was irreputable, a scoundrel who had fooled him. The judge in the case felt that somehow the lawyer was also involved, and he sought to have him disbarred. The lawyer did not know what to do. His only error was in defending a thief. He turned to his good friend, a deeply-religious Jew, who advised him to pray to Hashem for salvation.

The lawyer refused to pray. Apparently, earlier, at one point in his life, he had promised Hashem that he would never again ask Him for anything. He told his friend the incredible story of his "promise to Hashem." He had reason to be in Australia for a high profile case. Since it would take some time to resolve the case, he took his seven-year old daughter with him for company.

One day, the young girl suddenly developed a high fever. This was the lawyer's only child, and he immediately brought her to a respected physician. After running a number of tests, the doctor rendered his grim diagnosis: the girl was succumbing to an infection that was invading her body. She had very little time to live. When the lawyer heard the news, he broke down. He did not know where to turn. He remembered that the last time he had been in *shul* was many years earlier, at his *bar mitzvah*. He went in search of a *shul* where he could pour out his heart to Hashem.

The lawyer walked for hours until he came to the *frum*, observant, Jewish neighborhood. He saw what appeared to be a *shul*, and he entered. As it was midday, the *shul* was empty of congregants; so the lawyer had the sanctuary to himself. He approached the *Aron Kodesh* and began to cry bitterly. "Please Hashem, I make only this one request. I promise I will 'never' bother you again. Please let my little girl survive. She is all I have!" He stayed a while, crying his heart out until he was spent. Upon returning to the hospital to visit his daughter, he was greeted by the doctor, who exclaimed, "Your daughter has opened her eyes!" It was clearly a miracle, which the lawyer attributed to his fervent plea to Hashem.

"Do you understand why I cannot pray to Hashem? I gave my word that I would never ask Him again for anything. How can I go back on my word?" The Torah scholar explained that Hashem looks forward to sincere prayer, and this would not be considered breaking his word. He listened. He prayed to Hashem. The Almighty listened, and he was found innocent, and he was able to continue practicing law.

Rav Sholom concluded the story with the following inspirational words, "We see from here how Hashem causes events to occur for the purpose of bringing those who are sincere and wholesome in their faith closer to Him. Imagine how much He will do for someone who is also G-d-fearing and fully committed to Torah and *mitzvah* observance."

Ethical perfection often demands that one be a *vatran*, acquiescent and compliant. A demanding person will never achieve *temimus*. This is demonstrated by the following story (which appeared on these pages a while

ago). A wealthy young widow became ill and was called to her eternal rest. As she lay on her deathbed, she spoke to her only daughter, who was then of marriageable age, "I am leaving you my entire fortune on the condition that you visit the *Rosh Yeshivah* of a certain *yeshivah* and ask for his very best student as a husband. This money is only on the condition (obviously, it was contingent that the boy and girl would be attracted to one another) that you marry the best *bochur* in that *yeshivah*."

The daughter adhered to her late mother's behest, and, after speaking with the *Rosh Yeshivah*, met with his suggested match for her. The relationship went well; they liked one another, and, before long, they were engaged. All was good and well until a few weeks prior to the designated wedding day, the *kallah*, bride, heard rumors that, indeed, an even better student was in the *yeshivah*. She should have trusted the *Rosh Yeshivah*, but this is how rumors wreak havoc on people's lives – especially the gullible and unassuming. The *kallah* became distressed, and the *chassan*, groom, not wanting to cause her any added anxiety, "suggested" to her that she would best be served by following her emotions and looking into the other young man. They parted on good terms. The *kallah* arranged to meet the other "best" student, and a match made in Heaven achieved fruition. The young couple was married. The ex went back to learning in the *yeshivah* where he once again achieved "best student" status. Everyone was happy.

Six months passed, and the *Rosh Yeshivah* of a preeminent *yeshivah* in Yerushalayim visited the *yeshivah* where this "best" student was learning and asked his *Rosh Yeshivah* for his best student. He was searching for a young man whom he could groom to one day assume his position as *Rosh Yeshivah*. The suitable choice was, of course, our original *chassan*, who, by now, in addition to his scholarship, had developed an enviable reputation for his extraordinary *middos* and high ethical standards. A position such as this was the dream of every *yeshivah* student. It is a level to which everyone aspires. Yet, when the position was presented to the student, he demurred. At first, he refused to give a reason for his refusal, but, after some prodding by his *Rosh Yeshivah*, he relented and explained why he had said no.

The student was well-aware that this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, but he felt that he could not treat his original *kallah*, who was now happily married to the "best" student whom she made sure became her husband, in this manner. How would she feel when she discovered that the young man whom she had passed over had just become a respected *Rosh Yeshivah* of a distinguished *yeshivah*? She would begin to question her husband's scholarship: Perhaps she should have stayed with her first *chassan*; should she forfeit her mother's inheritance?

The bachur explained, "I could not allow this to occur. I could not hurt this girl. Thus, I was *mevater*, graciously refused, the position. Better I should not be a *Rosh Yeshivah* than aggrieve my original *kallah*."

We now have what I feel is an insight into the meaning of *tamim*.

Va'ani Tefillah

שמע קולנו ד' אלקינו – Shema koleinu Hashem Elokeinu. Hear our voices, Hashem, our G-d.

When we pray to Hashem and ask Him to respond to our plea, we are asking Him to effect a change concerning a standing decree. Hashem's decisions are not arbitrary. Every decree is determined by Heavenly wisdom; thus, it is correct and true. Whatever Hashem does is right. If so, how can we persuade Him to change His mind (so to speak)? *Horav Yitzchak Kirzner, zl*, explains that prayer changes us – the supplicant – not Hashem, Who is immutable. Through prayer, we become closer with Hashem. *Horav Chaim Volozhiner, zl*, teaches that once we become closer to Hashem, blessing inevitably follows. The reason for this transformation is that when we come closer to Hashem, we become different. By recognizing Hashem's Presence within our lives, a change occurs within us – a change which enables Hashem's blessing to flow to us. .

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Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

Rav Shlomo Aviner Shlit"a

Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a day. Here's a sample:
One Cigarette a Day

Q: Is it true that smoking one cigarette a day is healthy?

A: No. This is the evil inclination trying to seduce you.

Tooth Which Fell Out on Shabbat

Q: Is a tooth which fell out on Shabbat considered Muktzeh?

A: Yes. But if it is in one's hand in a permissible fashion, i.e. it fell out into a person's mouth and he removed it with his hand, then it is permissible to place it wherever he wants, similar to a fruit peel (See Mishnah Berurah 506:29. Orchot Shabbat Volume 2, p. 101).

Tzahal Soldier, His Wife and Danger

Q: I am a married soldier. They sent me to the Gaza border. My wife said that she is totally against me entering into Gaza. What should I do?

A: 1. We do not know the future, but at this juncture, if Tzahal enters Gaza, it will only be a minimal entry and the danger will not be greater than on any other front. 2. The Rambam writes that when a soldier enters a war, he should not fear, and he should not think about his wife and children (Hilchot Melachim, end of Chapter 7). This is logical, since he starts to fear, he will not be able to do anything. 3. If your officer is willing to grant you an exemption, you are allowed not to enter. 4. According to the Halachah, if you do enter, you are permitted to hide this from your wife in order not to cause her distress, which is called lying for the sake of peace. Be strong and courageous!

Cell Phone in Shul

Q: Is it permissible to enter a Shul with a cell phone?

A: Yes. On condition that it is turned off and one does not use it there.

Yosef's Coffin during Plague of Blood

Q: Why didn't Yosef's coffin fill up with blood in the Nile during the plague of blood in Egypt?

A: This is a very good question, but one should first ask why it did not fill up with water all year long. It seems that it was sealed tight. Additionally, after the plague ended, the blood disappeared. Therefore, even if blood did enter the coffin, after the plague ended it also disappeared.

Learning Arabic

Q: Is it permissible to learn Arabic?

A: Hebrew is our language. It is permissible to learn another language for a job.

Talit for Bat Mitzvah

Q: I own a Judaica store. Is it permissible for me to sell a Talit for a Bat Mitzvah?

A: Certainly not.. But you should avoid doing so with wisdom (Similarly, in Shut Shevet Ha-Kehati [5:5], it is written that it is forbidden to sell Tefillin to a woman).

Signs of Redemption

Q: Do the Charedim agree that when Eretz Yisrael yields her fruit bountifully it is a sign that the Redemption is coming?

A: Certainly! It is an explicit Gemara, Sanhedrin 98a, and we are not Karaites. And a friend told me in the name of Ha-Rav Avraham Greniman Shlit"a that the Chazon Ish told his father, Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Shemaryahu Greniman ztz"l, Rosh Kollel Chazon Ish, that the reason he made Aliyah (in the year 5693) was on account of Eretz Yisrael beginning to grow her fruit, as it says in the Prophet Yechezkel (36:8): "But you, O mountains of Israel,

shall yield your produce and bear your fruit for My people Israel, for their return is near".

Immersing in Desert

Q: Where did the women immerse during the forty years in the desert?

A: There were small lakes, large puddles and natural springs

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In honor of Yaakov Avinu's contractual dealings with his father-in-law, I present:

Paying Workers on Time – The Mitzvah of “bal talin”

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

In parshas Ki Seitzei, the Torah instructs, “Beyomo sitein secharo ve’lo sa’avor alav hashemesh – On that day [the day the work was completed] you should pay his wage, and the sun shall not set [without him receiving payment]” (Devarim 24:15). The Torah mentions two mitzvos; a positive mitzvah (mitzvas aseh) and a negative mitzvah (mitzvas lo sa’aseh) to guarantee that a worker is paid before sunset of the day that he performed his job. Thus, someone who pays his worker on time fulfills a positive mitzvah, whereas if he neglects to pay him on time and the worker demands payment, he has transgressed a lo sa’aseh.

The Torah gives us a definition of “on time” – before sunset. This mitzvah is mentioned in parshas Kedoshim as well. However, there the Torah presents the mitzvah somewhat differently: Lo salin pe’ulas sachir it’cha ad boker, “The wages of a worker shall not remain with you until morning” (Vayikra 19:13). Here, the Torah requires that the worker be paid before morning, implying that one has the entire night to pay him, rather than being responsible to pay him before the day is over. The two verses appear to be contradictory, one implying that I must pay my worker before sunset, the other implying that I have until morning.

Chazal resolve this conflict by explaining that there are indeed two deadlines, the end of the day and the end of the night, but that the two pesukim discuss different cases. The pasuk in Ki Seitzei discusses a worker whose job finished during the day or precisely at the end of the night. Such a worker must be paid before the following sunset, which is the first deadline that arrives after he completed his job. However, the pasuk in Kedoshim refers to a worker who completed his job at the end of the day or during the night. Such a worker must be paid by morning.

Thus, the two verses together teach that there are two payment deadlines, one at sunset and the other at daybreak. One is obligated to pay his worker before the next deadline that occurs after the job is completed. If the work was completed before the end of the day, he must be paid by sunset. If the work was completed at night, he must be paid before daybreak (Bava Metzia 111a, quoting the amora, Rav). It should be noted that one violates the lo sa’aseh only in a case where the worker demanded payment and the owner refused to pay. Furthermore, as we will note, there is no violation if it is understood or prearranged that payment will be delayed.

WHAT TYPE OF WORK IS INCLUDED IN THIS MITZVAH?

The Torah was very concerned that a worker be paid on time. This mitzvah applies not only to an employee, but also to a contractor hired to perform a specific job; he must be paid by the first deadline after the job is completed. It also applies to someone who works on the client’s item on his own premises, such as a repairman of small appliances, or people who do dry cleaning and tailoring. Payment on these items is due by the first deadline after the item is returned (Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat 339:6). Likewise, someone hired for a specific length of time must be paid by the first deadline after completion of employment. In all these situations, if the job is completed (or the item returned) during the day, the worker should be paid by sunset. If the job is completed by night, he should be paid by morning.

This mitzvah applies to all kinds of hired work, whether the worker is a contractor or an employee, permanent or temporary, poor or wealthy, adult or minor. Thus, by paying on the day we receive the service, we fulfill the mitzvah of beyomo sitein secharo, paying a worker on the day he completes a job, as well as fulfilling other mitzvos mentioned later in this article. The following is a partial list of workers included in this mitzvah: automobile and appliance repairmen, babysitters, dentists, dry cleaners, house cleaners, housing contractors, gardeners, lawyers, physicians, psychologists, rebbes, teachers and tutors.

EXAMPLE:

Shimon picked up his garment from the tailor, who asked him for payment. Shimon forgot to bring money to pay the tailor, and asked the tailor if he minds waiting a couple of days until Shimon would be back in the neighborhood. The tailor answered that his rent is due today, and he is short on funds. Shimon is obligated min haTorah to make a special trip to pay the tailor today. Of course, his reward for fulfilling the mitzvah is increased many times because of the inconvenience involved.

Similarly, one is required to pay the doctor on the day of the appointment, unless other provisions have been prearranged. If I hire a teenager to mow the lawn, I must pay him when he finishes the job. I should not delay payment to a later date because of my convenience.

The employee or hiree must be paid in cash (Tosafos, Bava Basra 92b; Shach Choshen Mishpat 336:4) or by check that he can readily convert into cash. One may not pay a worker or contractor with merchandise unless this was arranged in advance.

The employer has not fulfilled his mitzvah if he pays with a post-dated check or a check that cannot be cashed immediately (such as, if the bank is closed that day). Again, if the employee is told before he is hired that these are the arrangements, then there is no violation.

In keeping with the Torah's concept of protecting workers' rights, it is prohibited to call a repairman knowing that I have no money to pay him, without telling him that payment will be delayed (see Ahavas Chesed 1:10:12).

RENTALS

Bal talin also applies to rental arrangements. Thus, if I rent an appliance or an automobile, I must pay the rental fee by the sunset or daybreak after the rental is completed.

EXAMPLE:

Leah borrows a wedding dress from a gemach that charges a fee for dry cleaning and other expenses. When she returns the dress, she should pay the gemach before sunset or daybreak, whichever comes first.

SMALL WAGES AND SMALL EMPLOYEES

Even the delay of a wage less than a perutah is a violation of bal talin (Ritva, Bava Metzia 111b). As mentioned above, I am required to pay a minor on the day he performs a job for me. Thus, if I hire a child to run an errand for me, I must pay him that day (Ahavas Chesed 1:9:5). Furthermore, if I offer a young child a candy to do a job, I am required to give him the candy on the day he did the job.

EXAMPLE:

Reuven asked an eight-year-old to buy him an ice cream cone, offering the child to buy himself a cone at the same time. The grocery had only one cone left. If Reuven takes the cone for himself, he must make sure to buy the child a cone before sunset that day. (In this instance, it will not help Reuven if the child says that he does not mind, since a child cannot waive his legal rights.) Running a large business or being preoccupied is not a valid reason for not paying on time (Tosafos, Bava Metzia 111a s.v. Amar). Furthermore, arranging that someone else pay the workers or contractors does not exempt the owner from responsibility if the agent is remiss. This is because of a halachic principle that one may not assume that an agent carried out a Torah command on my behalf (see Nesiv Hachessed 1:10:25).

WHAT IF I DIDN'T REALIZE I WOULD BE EXPECTED TO PAY THAT DAY?

Unless there was a reason to assume that I was not expected to pay until later, I am responsible to pay the day the work is performed.

EXAMPLE:

Mr. Siegal enters the doctor's office and sees a sign on the wall, "Payment is due when service is rendered." Mr. Siegal had assumed that he would pay when the bill arrives, and he has no money until his next payday. He should tell the receptionist of his inability to pay and request that the doctor be so informed before the appointment.

WHAT IF IT IS ASSUMED THAT THE WORKER IS PAID LATER?

The Gemara (Bava Metzia 111a) discusses the following situation and rules it halachically acceptable. The Jewish merchants of Sura hired workers and paid them at the end of the next market day, when the merchants had cash. Until market day, it was assumed that the merchants would use their available cash to purchase more merchandise (Ritva ad loc.), and the workers were always paid after market day. The Gemara states that these merchants did not violate bal talin, since it was assumed that the workers would not be paid until the following market day.

A contemporary analogy is when a business pays its workers on Tuesdays for the week's work or on the first of the month for the previous month. In these situations, there is no violation of bal talin, since this is the agreed arrangement.

WHAT IS THE HALACHA IF AN AGENT HIRED THE WORKERS?

The Gemara (Bava Metzia 110b) discusses a case where the foreman hired workers on behalf of the employer, notifying them that he is not responsible for their wages. Subsequently, the wages were delayed. The Gemara states that neither the foreman nor the employer violated bal talin. The foreman was not personally obligated to pay the workers, and the owner did not violate bal talin, because he did not hire the workers himself. Nevertheless, he is still required to pay them on time, if possible (Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat 339:7).

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I MAY NOT BE ABLE TO PAY ON THE DUE DATE?

To avoid violating any Torah mitzvos, the owner should tell the workers before they begin working that he is making a condition that they forgo their right to be paid on time (Nesiv Hachessed 1:10:24).

WHAT SHOULD THE OWNER DO IF HE WILL BE OUT OF TOWN ON PAYDAY?

The owner is responsible for having his workers paid on time. If he will be absent when his workers finish, he must make provisions to pay them on time (Ahavas Chesed 1:10:12).

EXAMPLE:

Mrs. Schwartz is taking her child to the doctor and has hired a babysitter to take care of her other young children until her teenaged daughter comes home at 4:00 p.m. Unless Mrs. Schwartz arranges otherwise, she must see that her babysitter is paid before sunset.

There are several ways Mrs. Schwartz can avoid violating the Torah's law. When hiring the sitter, Mrs. Schwartz can tell her that she is hiring her with the understanding that the sitter waives her right to be paid before the day ends. In this case, if Mrs. Schwartz fails to pay the sitter before sunset, she will not violate any prohibition, although she will have missed the opportunity to perform a mitzvah. Therefore, it is better if Mrs. Schwartz gives her teenaged daughter money to pay the sitter. This way Mrs. Schwartz has fulfilled the mitzvah of paying her worker on time. Optimally, Mrs. Schwartz should do both; that is, she should ask her sitter to waive her right, just in case the sitter is not paid on time, and arrange for her daughter to pay, so Mrs. Schwartz fulfills an extra mitzvah.

If the sitter did not waive her right to be paid before sunset, Mrs. Schwartz must check with her daughter later in the day to see that she did, indeed, pay the babysitter (see Nesiv Hachessed 1:10:25).

WHAT IF THE OWNER HAS NO MONEY WITH WHICH TO PAY?

Kalman Mandel's business is running into a cash-flow problem, and he is having difficulty paying his contractors. There are several shaylos he should ask his rav:

(1) Is he required to pay his contractors from his own personal money, or can he assume that, since his business is incorporated, he is obligated to pay them only from his business account?

(2) How much is the business required to liquidate to pay the contractors?

(3) How aggressively is the business required to collect its receivables?

(4) Is he required to sell merchandise at a lower price? At a loss?

Chofetz Chayim (Ahavas Chesed 1:9:7) rules that one is required to borrow money to pay one's workers on time, whereas Pischei Tshuva (339:8) and Graz rule that it is the correct thing to do (midas chassidus), but it is not required.

According to Biur Halacha (242:1), if one does not have enough money both to pay wages due on Friday and to make Shabbos, one is required to pay the wages, even if, as a result, he will not have money for Shabbos.

Similarly, if sunset is approaching and the owner has not yet paid wages that are due today, he must attend to paying his workers, if they are demanding payment, even if the result is that he is unable to daven mincha.

As we have mentioned before, if the employee does not claim payment or states that he doesn't mind if the payment is delayed, the employer does not violate bal talin. Nevertheless, the employer should still attempt to pay on time, and he fulfills a mitzvah by doing so.

It is wrong for the owner to delay paying the worker, forcing him to repeatedly return for payment. These actions violate the mitzvah taught by the pasuk in Mishlei, "Al tomar le'rei'acha lech vashoov umachar etein ve'veish itach – Do not tell your neighbor 'Go and come back, I'll pay you tomorrow,' when you have [the money] with you" (Mishlei 3:28).

If the employer refuses to pay his worker altogether, he violates the prohibition of Lo sa'ashok es rei'acha, "Do not hold back payment due your neighbor" (Vayikra 19:13). If the employee or contractor is needy, the employer violates an additional prohibition, Lo sa'ashok sachir ani ve'veyon, "Do not hold back payment due to a poor or destitute person" (Devarim 24:14).

The Gemara (Bava Metzia 111a) counts a total of seven Biblical mitzvos involved in withholding wages, including gezel, stealing, as well as the above-mentioned mitzvos.

WHAT SHOULD THE OWNER DO IF HE IS SHORT ON MONEY?

What should the owner do when he does not have enough money to pay all his employees and contractors? The Chofetz Chayim discusses this exact shaylah in his sefer Ahavas Chesed. He rules that if some of the workers are poor, he should pay those workers first. If all or none of the workers are poor, he should divide the available funds among them equally.

MAY THE OWNER OFFER COMPENSATION FOR DELAYED PAYMENT?

The owner missed his deadline. Feeling bad, he considers compensating his workers by providing them with a bonus for their patience. Unfortunately, although he means well, the owner has now incurred a different prohibition, because this is considered as paying interest (ribis). Since he is obligated to pay his workers, the amount owed is a debt. The prohibition against interest applies to any debt, even if it did not originate as a loan. Therefore, an employer who delayed paying his workers or contractors cannot offer them compensation for the delay, nor can they charge him a late fee (Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 173:12; Rema ibid. 176:6).

Similarly, if the owner is tight on cash, he may not offer his workers, contractors or other creditors a bonus if they agree to wait for payment. This situation might entail a Torah prohibition of ribis (see Bris Yehudah pg. 451 fn 15). If necessary, he could arrange this with a heter iska, and a rav should be consulted.

THE CONTRACTOR IS OVERCHARGING ME. WILL I VIOLATE BAL TALIN IF I HOLD BACK PAYMENT?

When a person feels he is being overcharged, he usually considers withholding part of the payment until the matter is clarified. If indeed he is correct, this plan is not a problem. However, if he is mistaken and the contractor deserves, and demands payment for, the total amount, it means that he has violated bal talin by not paying the contractor on time. For this reason, the Chofetz Chayim suggests always negotiating a price with a contractor or repairman in advance.

SUGGESTION:

If the repairman is uncertain how much the work will cost, tell him before he starts that you are stipulating that he waive his right to be paid on time (see Graz Vol. 5 pg. 890 #18). This avoids violating the prohibition of bal talin should a dispute develop between the parties.

If this was not stipulated in advance, and a dispute develops, discuss with a rav or posek how to proceed. Bear in mind that if the worker is demanding payment and the contracting party is wrong, he might end up violating a serious Torah prohibition by not paying on time.

It is important that people become more familiar with the details of bal talin in order to conduct their business dealings according to halacha.

Unfortunately, not everyone realizes that they perform a mitzvah each time they pay their workers on time. Apparently, this is not a recent phenomenon. Over a hundred years ago, the Chofetz Chayim decried the fact that otherwise observant people were inattentive to the observance of this mitzvah. He attributed this to ignorance of its details. Hopefully, this article will spur people to learn more about this mitzvah and the great reward for being attentive about its observance.