

למודי משה

וירא - גליון פ"ז

'Avrohom woke up in the morning and went to the place where he had previously stood with Hashem" (*Bereishis 19:27*)

Insights into Halachah

Walking in front of someone who is davening

This week's *sedra* is the first *sedra* from which the Gemara brings a proof that the *Avos* davened. The Gemara in *Berachos* (26b) brings a *machlokes* as to what the *mekor* for davening three *tefillos* a day is. One opinion is that the three *tefillos* we daven every day were fixed in place of the *korbanos*, a second opinion is, that the three *tefillos* were instituted by the *Avos*. The Gemara then continues to demonstrate which *tefillos* were fixed, by which one of the *Avos*. The Gemara says Avrohom fixed *Shacharis* as it says: **וישכם אברהם בבקר אל המקום אשר עמד שם** – "Avrohom got up in the morning and went to the place where he originally stood" and **אין עמידה אלא תפילה שנאמר ויעמד** – "and standing means nothing other than *tefillah*, like we find by Pinchos where it says "And Pinchos stood up and davened". Therefore, this week is an appropriate week to talk about a halachah to do with *tefillah*.

The Gemara in *Berachos* (27a) is discussing if one is allowed to daven *Maariv* early on Friday afternoon and the Gemara relates: **רב איקלע לבי גניבא וצלי של שבת בערב שבת והוה מצלי רבי ירמיה בר אבא לאחורי דרב וסיים רב ולא פסקיה לצלותיה דרבי ירמיה שמע מינה תלת שמע מינה** – "Rav happened by the house of Geniva, and he davened the Shabbos davening on the *erev* Shabbos before nightfall. Rabbi Yirmiyah bar Abba was davening behind Rav, and Rav finished his *tefillah* but did not take three steps back and interrupt the *tefillah* of Rabbi Yirmiyah. We can derive from this incident three *halachos*: 1) One may daven the *tefillos* of Shabbos on *erev* Shabbos before nightfall 2) A *talmid* may daven behind his Rebbe 3) It's prohibited to pass before those who are davening."

The Gemara continues, that the final thing we derived is a **מסייע ליה לרבי יהושע בן לוי דאמר רבי יהושע בן לוי אסור לעבור כנגד המתפללין** – "A support to the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, as Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: It is prohibited to pass before those who are davening."

The above halachah is brought down in *Shulchan Aruch* (102:4): **אסור לעבור כנגד המתפללים בתוך ד' אמות ודוקא לפנייהם אבל בצדיהם מותר** – "It's forbidden to walk within four *amos* of one who is davening, however, one is allowed to walk past and stand within four *amos* to the side of one who is davening".

Why can't one walk in front of one who is davening?

The *Mishnah Berurah* brings down two reasons. Firstly, he brings the opinion of most *meforshim* who learn that the reason is, if you walk past someone who is davening, you disturb his concentration. Nowadays, people have very tenuous levels of concentration, and if you walk past someone davening it disturbs him. According to this reason, even if one is davening *krias shema*, you shouldn't walk in front of him.

Then the *Mishnah Berurah* brings the reason of the *Chayei Adom*. The *Chayei Adom* learns, that you shouldn't walk in front of one who is davening, in order that you don't make a *hefsek* [interruption] between the one who is davening and the Shechinah. If two people are standing and talking to each other, it's impolite to walk in-between them, if you have to, you say excuse me and then walk past. If someone is talking to someone important you probably won't even say "excuse me" and you will just wait. How much more so, if someone is talking to the Ribbono Shel Olam, it's rude and a lack of *derech erez* to walk in-between them.

A slightly different reason may emerge from the *Levush* (102:4), who writes that it is forbidden to pass in front of somebody davening *shemonah esrei*, since the one passing in front of him will go between him and the wall he is davening in front of. He explains that it is permitted to pass by the side of somebody davening. The concept of davening specifically in front of a wall is learnt from the Gemara in *Berachos* (5b), and is *paskened* by the *Shulchan Aruch* (90:21). However, the *Eliyahu Rabbah* understands that the *Levush* means that the prohibition is because of the distraction, therefore, it comes out that the *Levush* is just giving the first reason.

The *Tzitz Eliezer* (9:8) explains that because of the problem of interfering between the person davening and the wall in front of him, *Chazal* forbade passing in front of anybody davening *shemonah esrei*, even when there is no wall before him. However, he also writes, as a possibility, that according to the *Levush* the prohibition only applies when passing between the person davening and the wall.

How come people are so lenient with the above?

Not walking in front of one who is davening seems to be a clear Gemara and is *paskened* in *Shulchan Aruch*, yet so many people seem not to be so worried about doing it, do they have anything to rely on?

The *Biur Halachah* brings a *Maamar Mordechai* which already gives us some room to be lenient. The *Maamar Mordechai* writes, that the reason behind the above *din* is because it disturbs one's concentration, therefore, it should come out, that if one is covering his face with a *tallis* there is no problem to walk in front of him. Since his face is covered, he won't see you walk in front of him and so he won't get disturbed.

He brings a *rayah* to the above from *siman* 128, where there is a halachah that one isn't allowed to look at a Kohen's hand when he says *birchas* Kohanim, as the Shechinah rests upon them. What does the Kohen do to ensure he doesn't see the Shechinah? He covers his hands with a *tallis*. We see that if one covers his hands with a *tallis* and he looks at the *tallis*, there is no problem. So too, by us, if one is davening and he is covered with his *tallis*, there is nothing wrong with walking past him.

There is another halachah, that a Kohen who has a blemish that attracts attention i.e. funny shaped hands, isn't allowed to *duchen*. The *din* is, if he covers the *blemish* with a *tallis* he can *duchen*. We see again that covering with a *tallis* helps.

The above *eitsah* [solution] however, isn't so practical, as how many people cover their faces completely with a *tallis*, and even if they do, it's only by *Shacharis*, not by *Mincha* and *Maariv*. Moreover, the *Biur Halachah* points out, this only applies according to those who learn the reason not to walk in front of someone is in order not to disturb, according to the *Chayei Adom* who learns that the reason is in order not to interrupt between the one davening and the Shechinah then it won't help. Therefore, we are back to square one, why aren't people careful?

The Eshel Avrohom brings three things to rely on

1) If the person davening *shemonah esrei* is in front of a *shtender* or a table, then there is no problem in walking in front of him. The *Eshel Avrohom* views the *shtender* as a *mehitza* and therefore there is no problem to walk past. (Although the *Eshel Avrohom* understands that a *shtender* helps, the *Mishnah Berurah* (102:2) quoting the *Chayei Adam* says it doesn't.)

2) If the person davening closes his eyes. This reason only fits if you learn the reason not to walk in front of someone davening *shemonah esrei* is to do with disturbing his *kavonah*.

3) The issue of walking in front of one who is davening, is only if he is davening the main parts of *shemonah esrei*, if however, he is busy requesting his own personal *bakoshos* [requests] then there is no problem. When one is davening, perhaps he is busy davening for his own personal *bakoshos* perhaps he isn't, since the issue of walking in front of one who is davening is only *derabonon*, we say *sofek derabonon lekulah*, therefore, we take on he is probably saying his own personal *bakoshos* and so there is no problem to walk in front of him.

The Tzitz Eliezer

The *Tzitz Eliezer* (9:8) goes a step further and says, most *poskim* understand that the halachah of not walking in front of one who is davening is because he will get disturbed. If one however doesn't have *kavonah* to start with, there is no problem of disturbing him. The *Tzitz Eliezer* says, very few people have proper *kavonah* today, and certainly someone who comes late to davening and stands in the aisles doesn't have proper *kavonah*, therefore, the chances are that a person standing at the back of *Shul* isn't concentrating and if one needs to walk past such a person there is no problem.

The *Tzitz Eliezer* then brings an *Orchos Chaim* who says very similar, he says, the one davening might have *kavonah* and might not, however, most people who have *kavonah* have their eyes closed, and those with their eyes open are the ones who don't have *kavonah*. Consequently, it's ok to walk past one who is davening, as either his eyes will be closed and so he won't be disturbed, and if his eyes are open and he gets disturbed there is no problem, as one who davens with his eyes open most probably isn't concentrating, and one is allowed to walk in front of one who isn't concentrating.

The *Tzitz Eliezer* then brings a *Maharsham* who says another reason to be *meikel* [lenient] with walking in front of one who is davening. He says, the people who daven at the back of *Shul* and in the aisles, are davening in a place where they shouldn't really be, they have no right to be there, therefore, there is no halachah which says one shouldn't walk in front of them. He says, it's comparable to a *kever* [grave] which is dug in the middle of a public footpath. Normally a *kever* acquires the place it was dug and one isn't allowed to move it, if however, one digs a *kever* in the middle of a public footpath it doesn't and the *kever* can be moved.

The above *heter* is known as "*boh bigvulo*", he came into your borders, you have a right to be there and he doesn't, therefore, we don't need to worry about him. This *heter* however, only works if someone is standing in the aisles or at the back of *Shul*, if however, one is in the middle of a row and davening where one should then we need to come onto the other *heterim* of, the *shtender* making a *mehitza*, closed eyes, or that most people don't have *kavonah*, however, it would seem best that one simply doesn't move and waits.

Boh bigvuloi

The aforementioned concept of “boh bigvuloi” leads us onto another *shailah*. The *Shulchan Aruch* (102:5) *paskens*, if one has finished *shemonah esrei* and is ready to take three steps back however there is someone davening behind him, it’s *ossur* to take three steps back and he has to wait until the person behind him has finished, even if the person davening behind him started after him. The *Mishnah Berurah* speaks out, even if the one davening behind started afterwards he isn’t considered “boh bigvuloi” and on the contrary, if the one in front takes three steps back, he is going in to the *gevul* of the person behind him.

The diagonal question

The *Tur* (102) writes that it is only prohibited to walk in front of the person davening, but not to pass by on the side of him, the *Shulchan Aruch* (102:4) *paskens* like the above. However, it is not clear if one may pass a person davening, if he is at a diagonal, is this considered the sides, and therefore permitted, or is this in front of him, and forbidden?

The *Magen Avraham* (102:6) is stringent on this point, and writes that diagonally in front is considered in front of the person davening. The *Eliyahu Rabbah*, however, is lenient and writes that it is permitted to pass diagonally in front of a person davening. The *Mishnah Berurah* notes both opinions and writes that under extenuating circumstances one can be lenient based on the *Eliyahu Rabbah*. The *Aruch HaShulchan* (102:11) writes more broadly that one may be lenient in this matter.

The *Eshel Avraham* adds, that even for those who are stringent in passing diagonally next to somebody davening, somebody taking three steps back at the end of his *shemonah esrei* may be lenient and pass diagonally in front of the person davening behind him.

Passing for a mitzvah

The *Eshel Avraham* *paskens*, that it is permitted for a Kohen to pass in front of somebody davening in order to wash his hands before *duchening* as it is permitted to pass by somebody davening in order to perform a *mitzvah*

Rav Elyashiv (see *Daled Amos Shel Tefillah* Vol. 1, *Biurim* Chap. 7, 1:3) also is very lenient with the above and is supported by the general custom (see *Haberachah Hameshuleshes* 4:19). The *Minchas Yitzchak* (8:10) however writes, that one should pass diagonally in front of the person davening (rather than directly in front of him), which as we have seen involves a *machlokes* [dispute] and is permitted where there is a need.

Concerning something that is a *minhag*, but not a full mitzvah, such as the washing of Kohanim’s hands by Leviyim, Rabbi Mordechai Potash (*Daled Amos Shel Tefillah* p. 61) writes that one should not pass in front of somebody davening.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Paksher (*Haberachah Hameshuleshes* p. 174) writes that the principal mitzvah of washing hands is incumbent on the Kohen rather than the Levi, therefore, even where there is no other Levi to wash the Kohen’s hands, the Levi may not cross in front of somebody davening and the Kohen should wash his own hands.

Yet, where the Levi will not be passing directly in front of somebody davening, but only crossing at a diagonal, it seems that this will be enough of a need for leniency.

What happens if the *chazon* is ready to start *chazoras hashatz* but someone is davening behind him?

What happens if a *chazon* and the *Rov* have finished *shemonah esrei*, and the *chazon* is ready to start *chazoras hashatz*, however, he can’t as there is someone davening behind him and so he can’t take three steps back. One of the worst crimes a *chazon* can commit is not starting *chazoras hashatz* straight away, what should the *chazon* do in such a case?

The *Tzitz Eliezer* (7:23) brings a *Pekudas Elozor* who suggests the following *eitsah*. He says, the *chazon* should start *chazoras hashatz* without taking three steps back, and when he finishes *chazoras hashatz* he should take three steps back, and it will go on both his *shemonah esrei* and the *chazoras hashatz*. The truth is, the first *shemonah esrei* a *chazon* davens isn’t his real *shemonah esrei*, he just does it to get the davening clear for when he says it out loud, the real one is the *chazoras hashatz*, therefore in the above case, he should simply start *chazoras hashatz* without taking three steps back, and when he’s finished *chazoras hashatz* he should take three steps back and it will work for both *shemonah esrei*’s.

Is one allowed to stop standing with his feet together (עקירת רגליו) before taking three steps back?

If one has finished *shemonah esrei* and he is unable to take three steps back as someone is in the middle of davening behind him, and he wants to separate his feet and place them on a *shtender* or to just move around slightly, as it’s very difficult to stand in one place for such a long time (especially during davening on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur), is he allowed to separate his feet before taking three steps back?

I saw brought down from R’ Naftoli Kopshitz, that it’s obvious that one is allowed to, since he has finished davening he is no longer standing in front of Hashem (עומד לפני המלך), true he has to take three steps back in order to part from the king, however, since he has finished *shemonah esrei* he is no longer considered to be standing in front of Hashem. Similarly, it would seem obvious, that one is allowed to walk

in front of someone who has finished davening but hasn't yet taken three steps back because the person behind is still in the middle of davening, since he has finished davening he is no longer considered to be standing in front of Hashem.

R' Naftoli brings a *rayah* for the above. On Monday and Thursday the *chazon* separates his feet and carries the *sefer* Torah to the *bimah* before taking three steps back, as he only takes three steps back after *kaddish tiskabel*. Moreover, every day the *chazon* goes and sits down to say *tachanun* before taking three steps back, therefore, it must be that one is allowed to separate his feet before taking three steps back.

Sitting in the presence of one who is davening

The Gemara in *Berachos* (31b) brings the *din*, that it's forbidden to sit in the presence of one who is davening. The Gemara learns out the above *din* from Chana. Chana said to Eli, עמכה הנצבת עמכה – "I am the woman who was standing with you". Chana was standing because she was davening, but why was Eli standing? We see from here, that it's forbidden to sit in the presence of one who is davening, since Chana was davening Eli also had to stand.

The above is Rashi's *pshat* in the Gemara, *Tosfos* learns slightly different, *Tosfos* learns the word עמכה, should be written עמך without the extra *hay*, why is there an extra *hay*? The answer is, the *pasuk* is teaching us that within four *amos* of one davening one has to stand, more than four *amos*, however, i.e. five *amos* (*hay*) then it's ok to sit.

The above is brought down *l'halacha* and the *din* is one isn't allowed to sit down within four *amos* of someone who is davening.

Who has to stand?

Tosfos brings from the Geonim, that the *issur* to sit in the presence of one who is davening, is only if you are sitting there and doing nothing, if your busy saying *krias shema* etc. then there is no problem to remain sitting. If your doing nothing you need to stand because if you don't it gives off the impression that you don't believe in the G-d that the person near you is davening to, if however, you are busy davening etc. then you don't need to.

According to the above, if one is davening *Mincha* and he wants to say *tachanun* and the person next to him is still davening *shemonah esrei* there would be no problem to sit down (unless we say that standing and then sitting down is worse, then simply continuing to sit).

The *Tur paskens* that if one is davening he can continue to sit, if however he is learning, then he needs to stand. The *Beis Yosef* argues and says even if one is learning he can remain sitting as whether he is learning or davening it shows he is *mekabel oyl malchus* Shomayim, therefore, there is nothing wrong with sitting. According to the *Beis Yosef* we have to say, that Eli was neither davening or learning.

Chasam Sofer

The Chasam Sofer asks, if the halachah is that one isn't allowed to sit when someone is davening *shemona esrei* in his presence, what was Chana thinking when she came to daven next to the *godal hador*. Eli was sitting there happily and by coming to daven next to him she was forcing him to stand up, how could she do that?

The Chasam Sofer says this is why Eli concluded that she must be drunk (ויחשבה עלי לשכורה). The simple *pshat* would be that Eli saw her davening really loud and crying etc. and therefore, thought she must be drunk, based on the above the Chasam Sofer offers a new *pshat*, since Chana had the *chutzpah* to make Eli stand up, it must be she was drunk.

What was Chana thinking?

Eli was the *godal hador*, and if Eli is sitting down he surely isn't wasting his time, either he was davening, learning or busy with *ruach hakodesh* and so he wouldn't need to stand up and since there is an *inyan* to daven in the presence of a *tzadik* she went to daven near him.

***Divrei Torah* for the Shabbos Table**

Where is the source for the fact that *hachnosas orchim* is a *segulah* for having children?

“Behold there were three men standing near him. As soon as he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them and, bowing down to the ground...please take a little bit of water bathe your feet and recline under the tree...” (*Bereishis* 18:2-4).

Avrohom excelled in the mitzvah of *hachnosas orchim* [hosting guests]. Three days after he gave himself a *bris milah* at the age of 99, Hashem did not want Avrohom to burden himself with taking care of guests, so He brought a powerful heatwave that deterred all travellers on that day. Still, the weak Avrohom's greatest concern was that the unusually hot weather would deny him the merit of welcoming guests, so he decided to sit at the entrance of his tent in the hopes that he might spy a stray traveller. When Hashem saw Avrohom suffering over his lack of guests, He sent three *malochim* in the guise of people. Rejoicing at this improbable turn of events, the elderly and frail Avrohom ran to personally invite them to his home and proceeded to serve them a lavish and abundant feast.

Rav Yissocher Frand recounts a powerful story regarding the importance of the mitzvah of *hachnosas orchim*. One morning in Toronto, a local man noticed a visiting *meshulach* and invited him to his home for breakfast. He asked the fundraiser about his itinerary, to which he responded that he intended to spend most of the day circulating around Toronto, after which he would move on to his next destination that evening.

The local man begged the *meshulach* to change his plans and to instead sleep in his house that night. The collector resisted, explaining that his time was extremely limited and he could not afford to spend another night in Toronto. However, the host persisted and told the collector that if he stayed with him that evening, he would give him a larger check than he would ever receive in the next city, an offer to which the fundraiser acquiesced. The following morning, the host gave his guest an extremely generous check as he had promised, jotted down his contact information, and sent him on his way.

A year later, the host in Toronto called the *meshulach* and informed him that he would be making a bris for his newborn son the following week, and that he would be sending an airplane ticket so that the collector could fly in for the occasion and serve as *sandek*. The *meshulach* was speechless. He barely knew the man and couldn't fathom why he wanted to fly him in and honour him as *sandek*. Nevertheless, the host was determined, and the incredulous fundraiser ultimately agreed to come in for the occasion.

After the *bris* was over, the new father called over the collector to explain his actions. He said that he had been married for many years, but had not been blessed with children. He shared his plight with Rav Avrohom Yaakov Pam, who advised him that the mitzvah of *hachnosas orchim* is a *segulah* (action that can change one's fortunes) for having children. A short while later, the man's wife was going to the *mikvah*, so he desperately wanted to fulfill the mitzvah of hosting guests that night. When he came to *Shul* and saw the *meshulach*, he saw his opportunity and prevailed upon him to sleep in his house that evening. As Rav Pam had told him, the host's wife became pregnant that month, and that is why he insisted that the collector attend the bris that he helped make possible and be honoured as *sandek*. While this is certainly a fascinating story, from where did Rav Pam get this *segulah*?

In *tefillas geshem* (the *tefillah* for rain that is said on Shemini Atzeres), we invoke the water-related virtues of our righteous ancestors and beseech Hashem to grant us water in their merits. The stanza pertaining to Yitzchok begins, זכור הנוולד בבשורת יקח נא מעט מים – “Remember the one who was born with the tidings of, ‘Let some water be brought.’” Avrohom and Sorah were married for many years without children, yet after they hosted the *malochim* with tremendous self-sacrifice, their guests immediately informed them that at this time the following year, they would have a son. Rav Frand suggests that this may be the source for Rav Pam's advice that just as the barren Avrohom and Sorah were blessed with the news of Yitzchok's birth through their *hachnosas orchim*, so too would the merit of the hospitality of the couple in Toronto enable them to have a long-awaited child of their own.

An important lesson in *hachnosas orchim*

יקח נא מעט מים ורחצו רגליכם והשענו תחת העץ - “Please take a bit of water, wash your feet, rest under the tree, and I will give you a little bread” (*Bereishis* 18:4).

We would think that the person who epitomized welcoming guests into his home would speak differently. Rather than promising a bit of water and a little bread and offering them rest under the tree, we would have expected that Avrohom would invite them directly into his house, promise them a nice meal, and put them up in the finest accommodations.

Rav Nissan Alpert explains that many times we are hesitant to take guests into our house. Our excuse is that we really cannot do them justice. We cannot serve a meal that is appropriate for them. “We are having leftovers tonight.” “We cannot serve tuna fish to the guests!” “We cannot give them the accommodations that they deserve.” “I would rather not invite guests at all than invite them and not give them the honour that they deserve.”

We learn just the opposite from Avrohom Avinu. Proper *hachnosas orchim* is to invite the guests when they “show up”. Let them eat rice krispies — a bit of water, a little bread — but invite them in. The lesson Avrohom is teaching us regarding *hachnosas orchim* is to always be ready to have guests. People do not need sumptuous meals. They do not need meals akin to the meal of Shlomo in his heyday. People are even happy with tuna fish. They do not need more. They do not want more.

Rabbi Alpert said that his father used to say “One should never PREPARE for company; but one should always BE PREPARED for company.” The quintessential host tells us to have the company. Even if we cannot provide them with our “knock-out” recipes, have the company, nevertheless.

Leaving the outside world outside

וישלחו האנשים את ידם ויביאו את לוט אליהם הביתה ואת הדלת – “But the men stretched out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door” (19:10)

This week's *sedra* contains the destruction of the wicked city of Sodom and its people as punishment for their evildoing, in particular for their staunch opposition to doing kindness for others. As evidence of this hostility, the Torah records that when the townspeople found out that Lot was hosting two foreigners, they surrounded his house and demanded that he send the men out to them. Lot went outside to plea with the mob on behalf of his guests who remained safely indoors, but they mocked his entreaties and pressed against him as they sought to break down his door.

The guests, who were in reality *malochim* in the guise of humans, rescued Lot by pulling him inside and closing the door behind him, at which point they struck the assembled group with blindness, which made it impossible for them to find the entrance. If the *malochim* were planning to render the crowd blind and prevent them from even locating the door, why did they need to securely close it behind Lot?

Rav Yisroel Reisman points out that we find a similar phenomenon in this week's *Haftarah*, which discusses miracles that Elisha performed for the widow of the *Novi Ovadiah*. When she complained to him about her dire financial plight, he instructed her to borrow empty vessels from her neighbours, **close**

the door behind her, and miraculously fill them up with oil that she could sell to pay her debts and sustain her family (*Melochim* 2 4:1-7). Why did Elisha stress that she must close her door before doing so?

The *Malbim* explains that Elisha understood that if the influence of the outside world entered her home, it would sever her access to the heavenly channels of blessing and prevent the miracle from taking place. For this reason, it was also necessary to close the door of Lot's house, not to keep out the blind attackers who could not find it regardless, but to prevent the spiritual stench that permeated the streets of Sodom from infiltrating his home and rendering it unfit for salvation.

Along these lines, somebody once told the *Baal HaTanya* that when a great *chasidische* Rebbe was informed that Moshiach had arrived in Yerushalayim, he opened his window, put his head outside, and replied, "It's not true. I don't sense the air of Moshiach." The *Baal HaTanya* questioned why the Rebbe needed to stick his head out the window to determine the veracity of the rumour. He explained that the Rebbe's study was so holy that the atmosphere of Moshiach constantly pervaded it, so he was compelled to put his head outside to assess the situation there.

Rav Reisman adds that this message is extremely relevant to our generation. In the times of Lot and Elisha, it was at least possible to keep outside influences away by closing one's door, but with today's wireless technology, no number of doors and locks can keep the values of secular culture out of our living rooms and worse, our *Shuls* and *Botai Midroshim*.

It has tragically become common to see people interrupting their learning and davening to check the latest messages and updates on their phones, oblivious to the disrespect they display by introducing the impurities of the outside world into our most sacred places and demonstrating that they value these time-wasting trivialities more than the infinite reward for engaging in spiritual pursuits. Let us resolve to learn from Lot and Elisha that the key to bringing holiness and blessing into our lives is our commitment to leaving the morals and influences of the outside world outside, where they belong.

In the parent's eye's a child always remains a child

ויאמר אברהם אל נערו שבו לכם פה עם החמור ואני והנער נלכה עד כה ונשתחוה ונשובה אליכם - Then Avrohom said to his servants, "You stay here with the ass. The boy and I will go up there; we will worship and we will return to you." (22:5)

In 1908, Rav Yehuda Leib Zirelson was appointed Rabbi of the town of Kishinev, the capital of present-day Moldova. Rav Yissocher Frand relates that although he was a pious and learned Torah scholar, his community was far removed from the major Torah centres in his time, and he was therefore unfamiliar with many of the leading Rabbis and religious developments of that generation.

Rav Zirelson used to correspond with Rav Moshe Nochum Yerushalmi, who was the Rabbi of Kalitz in Poland. In 1912, Rav Zirelson wrote to him that he heard that a number of Rabbis were planning to start an organization called Agudas Yisroel, and that one of the leaders of the group would be the Gerrer Rebbe, Rav Avrohom Mordechai Alter, who was known as the *Imrei Emes*.

Rav Zirelson was approached to support and participate in the nascent organization, but he had a dilemma: He had never heard of the Gerrer Rebbe! He therefore turned to Rav Yerushalmi to ask if he was familiar with him and if he could be relied upon, which shows just how out-of-touch his community was with the broader Jewish world.

Rav Yerushalmi responded that the *Imrei Emes* was a renowned *tzaddik* with thousands of followers and tremendous *siyata di'Shmaya*, and he could certainly be trusted to lead the budding organization effectively. To illustrate his claim, Rav Yerushalmi related that the Gerrer Rebbe's uncle lived in his town, and the Rebbe periodically came to visit him. Whenever he did so, he would pay a courtesy visit to the Rov of the town, Rav Yerushalmi.

During one of their meetings, Rav Yerushalmi presented a question that he had on the *Parsha*. The Torah (37:2) refers to Yosef as a נער – youth – even though he was 17 at the time. Rashi explains that this was done to allude to Yosef's immature behaviour, such as adjusting his hair and adorning his eyes so that he would look more handsome. However, the Torah also refers to Yitzchok as a נער, even though he was 37 at the time of the *akeidah* (Rashi 25:20). Given that Yitzchok acted his age, why is he described as a נער?

The *Imrei Emes* responded that Yitzchok is not called a נער by the Torah, but rather by his father Avrohom, because in a parent's eyes, a child always remains a child, no matter how young or old he may be. Yosef, on the other hand, is described as a נער by the Torah, and therefore Rashi interprets it as a reference to his juvenile conduct.

After the visit concluded, Rav Yerushalmi accompanied the Gerrer Rebbe out of his building. On their way, a 100-year-old widow who also lived in the building came over to request *berachah* from the Rebbe. She then called her 80-year-old son to come out, and she asked the Rebbe to also give a blessing "to my little one."

Rav Yerushalmi interpreted the fact that the *Imrei Emes's* insight to answer his question was immediately validated in front of his own eyes as a Heavenly indication that the answer was correct, and he used this incident to buttress his recommendation that Rav Zirelson should join Agudas Yisroel and support the Gerrer Rebbe's leadership.

The Tolner Rebbe asks on this answer of the Gerrer Rebbe one basic question: In the *akeida* we find a later *pasuk* in which a *maloch* from Shomayim calls out to Avrohom and also uses the term '*na-ar*': ויאמר אל תשלח ידך אל הנער - "Do not send forth your hand to the '*na-ar*'" (*Bereishis* 22:12). This was not a parent speaking. Why then does the Medrash ignore the Torah's use of the term *na-ar* by *akeidas* Yitzchok?

The Tolner Rebbe answers that *malochim* speak in the Name of Hashem and in Hashem's eyes, every Jew is like a child! כי נער ישראל! - "For Yisroel was a *na-ar* and I loved him..." (Hoshea 11:1); בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם - "Children are you to Hashem your G-d" (*Devorim* 14:1). Once we are like the sons of Hashem, it is understandable why we should always be thought of as a young lad (*na-ar*).

My weekly printing costs are currently amounting to around £25/₪120. I would very much appreciate donations towards the cost. If you or someone you know would like to sponsor a week as a *zechus* for something or *leiluy nishmas* someone, please contact me on the details below. *Tizku lemitzvos*

This *gilyon* was compiled by Moshe Harris. For any comments, dedications, donations or to subscribe email: limudaymoshe@gmail.com or call/text +447724840086 (UK) or 0585242543 (Eretz Yisrael).