

Ascension after Death

We are taught that ברא טרעיה דאבמה, a son is the leg (extension) of his father (See Eruvin 70b, Kesubos 92a, Rashi). The Pachad Yitzchak (Igras Ukesavim 242) wonders why this term is used. Why isn't a son called the hand of his father?

There is a concept of a הולך and an עומד. A הולך is one who has the power to keep growing spiritually – like us in this world. The opposite of this is an עומד, which is stationary. For this reason a מלאך is called an עומד (Zecharya 3:7). Following are some other places we see this concept:

1) In the battle with Yaakov and the מלאך of Esav, it says ויגע בכף ידיו, in which the hip socket of Yaakov was dislocated (Breishis 32:26). This can also be taken to mean that Yaakov has the ability over a מלאך to be a הולך. This is where the מלאך of Esav hit, attempting to cause an inability of spiritual growth.

3) The parshiyos of ויקרא and תצא follow each other. One interpretation of this is that the Jews stopped growing, as in תצא. But not Moshe, as it says ויקרא, since he was a הולך.

After one dies, he no longer has the ability to be a הולך, and as Chazal expound on במותו חפשי that the dead are free from Torah and mitzvos (Shabbos 30a). This inability for the deceased to become greater applies only to himself. However, his son can elevate him. In the aforementioned Gemara, the term "leg" is used because the son has the ability to elevate his father even after his father has passed away—and the leg is the limb that makes one into a הולך.

This is hinted to in the words of Rabbi who said at the time of his death לבי אי צריך (Kesubos 103a), he wanted his children to instruct them concerning the arrangement of matters after his death. Another explanation is that when one is dying, לבי אי צריך, he needs his children, because they are now the hope for his future in Gan Eden.

The word בן is rooted in בנן, as a son builds and continues his father's existence after he passes away. On the yahrtzeit of his father, the Ridvaz (1845-1913) came to shul early for Mincha in Tzefas where he lived. He was asked why he was crying, since his father had lived until the age of 80 as well as having passed away more than 50 years prior. The Ridvaz then related the

following story to his congregation:

When I was young, my parents hired a מלמד, tutor, for me. My father was in the furnace business when suddenly there was a shortage of cement, hurting his livelihood and making it impossible for him to pay the tutor for three months. The tutor finally said, "If I don't get paid, I can't work."

Suddenly, a wealthy man, who needed a furnace for his daughter and new son-in-law, offered the large sum of six rubles for a furnace. My father discussed this with my mother and she agreed to his plan to dismantle their own furnace and then sell it for six rubles. In this way he could pay the tutor for the three previous and three coming months, as his fee was a ruble per month.

That month my family had no hot food and also had to shiver from the cold Russian winter since they had no heat. All this was so that I would have someone to learn with.

This morning it was cold and I wasn't feeling well. I was therefore thinking of having a minyan in my house for my father's yahrtzeit. Then I thought to myself, how could I, after having gone through a freezing winter because of what my father sacrificed.

R' Shlomo Ganzfried tells us there are many stories in Midrashim that show that by the son saying קדיש for his parents, they were saved from judgment. This is why we are accustomed to recite קדיש (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 26:1). The Biur Halacha states in regard to reciting קדיש on the yahrtzeit of parents that he brings נחת רוח to his parents, protects them and atones for their souls (Maamar Kaddishin, 132).

A man living in Yerushalayim was accustomed to reciting Kaddish in shul for his mother, who had passed away. Returning home from a wedding late one night, he fell into bed exhausted. As he turned off the light, he realized that he hadn't davened Maariv, thus missing the Kaddish for his mother. He dragged himself out of bed, got dressed, and headed to Zichron Moshe to find a minyan. That night the area was unusually deserted, with no people in sight. So he called a large taxi company and requested that six taxis be sent to the shul in Zichron Moshe. The response: "My friend, it's three o'clock in the morning! Do you think I have six taxis? I only have five!" The man told him to send the five taxis.

He then called another company and requested another five taxis to be sent, and was told "אתה משוגע – are you crazy? I only have four!" The four were sent.

Within twenty minutes, there was a procession of nine cabs parked outside the shul. One of the drivers asked why nine taxis were needed, as there was no wedding or bar mitzva going on. The man told all the drivers to turn their meters on and come inside. "We are going to pray the evening prayer together. I will pay each of you just as if you were driving me." Dusty yarmulkes emerged from the glove compartments of the taxis. Despite being fluent in Hebrew, the drivers had no idea how to daven, what and when to answer, when they should daven aloud, and when in silence. It took a while, but the Kaddish man showed them exactly what to do. They had a most incredible, moving tefila at 3:30 AM in Yerushalayim, concluding with the man reciting Kaddish for his mother.

After maariv, everyone went outside. The taxi meters read about 90 shekels each. The man pulled out his wallet to pay the drivers for their time. With a sheaf of bills in hand, he approached the first taxi driver in the line, who retorted, "My brother, do you honestly believe I would take money from you, who just gave me such an opportunity to help my fellow Jew say Kaddish?" The second driver said, "Do you know how long it is since I prayed? You want me to take money from you?" All nine drivers had similar reactions, and not one was willing to take money. They embraced and drove off to a new morning in the holy city of Yerushalayim.

Until when is one obligated in honoring his parents? The Zohar (Bechukosai 115b) says that one is obligated in honoring his parents even after they die! One does this by following the proper way and improving his actions. R' Alexander Ziskind (Yesod V'shoresh Hashema'avoda, p. 784) commands his children in his tzavaa that after he dies, to rectify their deeds in the ways of Hashem so that he himself shouldn't have tremendous pain and disgrace from them in the higher world.

What about if one has daughters? How can they continue the legacy of their parents? The Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (26:22) writes that the main thing is to go on the proper path and in this way one brings merit to their parents. This is even greater than saying קדיש.

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