



DEDICATED BY ISAAC AND EDIE GROSS L'ILUI
NISHMAS **לֵאנָה בַּת מִשָּׁה** ON HER YARTZHEIT

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BEREISHIS – BE CAREFUL NOT TO FOOL YOURSELF

A man walked into a restaurant and ordered a whole pizza for himself. The server asked, “Should I cut it into four slices or eight?”

“Four,” the man responded, “I’m on a diet.”

President Abraham Lincoln was reputed to have said, “You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.” Although mostly accurate, there is one exception: unless one proactively analyzes their life, one can fool themselves all the time. As such, let’s examine what we can do not to fall into the dangerous trap of self-deception.

This week’s Parsha, Bereishis, discusses how both of Adam’s sons, Kayin and Hevel, brought offerings to Hashem. Hevel’s offering was accepted while Kayin’s was rejected. Kayin decided to bring an offering of inferior-quality goods. Kayin got depressed, and Hashem came to tell him (Bereishis 4:6): “*Why are you annoyed, and why has your countenance fallen?*” **Rav Chaim of Brisk** expresses surprise at Hashem’s question, if it was clear that Kayin was distressed because he was rejected. As such, why did G-d ask the obvious?

The answer is that, in truth, Hashem was not asking Kayin why he was depressed. Rather, the Holy One was asking a different question: “Kayin, what is the main reason for your anger? Is it because your sacrifice was not accepted - or because your brother’s offering was accepted?” We can ask another question: Was Kayin in touch with what was driving him, or was he deceiving himself? The difference in despondency for his own situation versus sadness generated from feelings of jealousy is humongous. Instead of looking inward and realizing that his justification that Hashem does not need anything (so let’s give Him the cheapest stuff) was way off base, he felt slighted in what became the first deadly example of sibling rivalry. This is what happens when one is not honest with themselves and does not have the right guidance to help them along.

This mistake happens repeatedly. In next week’s Parsha, Noach, we learn about the era of the *Mabul* (Flood), and the Sages suggest a deeper malady associated with the rampant thievery. The Midrash reports that many thieves would descend on their victim together, but each of them would take only a small quantity of goods to insure their individual exemption from prosecution. The thieves would repeat this repeatedly. The result was that although they had become enriched, the thieves could rationalize that they had not really done anything wrong, for no court was demanding they stand trial. The self-delusion led to a complete degeneration of society and its ultimate destruction.

We must eliminate the blind spots that lead us astray. **Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser** (who shares this insight) relates the following story. At the 34th National Dinner of Agudas Israel, **Rav Eliezer Silver**, ZT”L, a tireless fighter for the rescue of European Jewry, was presented with an award. The plaque was unprecedentedly ornate, with beautiful French artwork, delicate parchment, and was encased in a gold-plated frame. Yet, Rav Silver knew only of his service to the Jewish people, as the performance of the Mitzvah in its purest form. He wanted to do his work entirely for the sake of serving Hashem. Thus, a few months later, the hotel staff found the plaque in the back of the room where the dinner had taken place. Rav Silver chose not to take the plaque home for fear that his service would not be wholehearted. It remains in the Agudas Israel archives to this day.

To stop deceiving ourselves, we need to surround ourselves with proper mentors and true friends, and we can call on them to ask for advice, and they can call us out when we’re off base. We also need to pay attention to defensive feelings or emotional reactions. These triggers often signal a point where our mind is protecting an illusion. This starts with even a small window of time devoted daily to thinking about our decisions, and more time for that on Shabbos Kodesh.



HALACHIC HONEYCOMBS BY RABBI MOSHE KLEIN **BEREISHIS: BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY**

This week’s Parsha introduces us to the first Mitzvah in the Torah, the commandment to have children. The Pasuk (Bereishis 1:28) states: “*Hashem blessed them, and Hashem said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the sky and all the living creatures that crawl on the earth.’*” This Mitzvah of Pru U’Rvu is found in the **Shulchan Aruch** (Even Ha’ezer). Let’s mention a few short Halachos and then present a deep question posed and answered by the **Minchas Chinuch** and **HaRav Moshe Feinstein**, ZT”L.

The first Halacha the Shulchan Aruch states is that a man is obligated to marry a woman to do the Mitzvah of being fruitful and multiplying. Anyone who doesn’t attempt to do so is as if he spilled blood and is causing the Shechinah (Divine Presence) to depart from Klal Yisrael. We see how important and obligatory this Mitzvah is. One crucial side note is that this chiyuv is on men and not on women. Of course, the **Ran** (on Kiddushin 15) writes that a woman will get reward for the Mitzvah; yet, the Mitzvah is incumbent on men (see Yevamos 65b, which elaborates on this point).

The Shulchan Aruch (Halacha 5) states that one who has a son, and a daughter has fulfilled their Mitzvah so long as those children are able to have more kids. Even though he fulfills the Mitzvah, the Rambam (Hilchos of Marriage 15:16): “*One is bound by a Rabbinic commandment not to refrain from being fruitful and multiplying as long as he is physically potent. For anyone who adds a soul to the Jewish people, it’s as if he built an entire world.*” The organization named Bonei Olam comes from this Rambam, but according to him, even if one doesn’t struggle to have children, every child is a world (even if it’s the 12th child).

Another interesting Halacha is regarding one who was a goy (gentile) who had a son and a daughter, and then converted – did they fulfill the Mitzvah, or must they have more children? The Shulchan Aruch (Halacha 7) states that a convert’s children count for the Mitzvah of having kids. Now, let us clarify: is the Mitzvah the Hechsher Mitzvah (preparation for it), or is it the actual having of children? →

HALACHA HONEYCOMBS BY **(CONCLUSION FROM P. 1)**

The Minchas Chinuch cites that the Shulchan Aruch rules that if someone had a child who passed away (and that child didn't have their own children), the Mitzvah wasn't fulfilled. He adds that the intimate act of procreation is not the Mitzvah; rather, it is the having of the children. This differs from shaking a Lulav, where once a person shakes it, the Mitzvah is complete. This means, according to Minchas Chinuch, if someone tries to have children but is not zoche (does not merit) to have them, they did not fulfill the Mitzvah. They are an oneis (in a forced situation), but regardless, the Mitzvah is not to their credit.

However, the Dibros Moshe (Rav Moshe Feinstein) presents a totally different way to look at it. He says that the Mitzvah is not having kids but in trying to have children. As such, if one has a son and a daughter, they are now exempt from trying. In other words, the Mitzvah is realized in the hechsher (preparation) and not in the actualization.

In Rav Moshe's opinion, "One must say that whatever one can do to have kids is the Mitzvah. One who tried to have children but did not actually have them, still fulfilled the Mitzvah of *"Pirya V'Rivya."* He adds that we're told that Yehoshua Bin Nun fulfilled all the Mitzvos of the Torah, even though he had no sons.

Rav Moshe holds that Hashem would not give Mitzvos to people when the outcome is undefined (such as having kids). Therefore, one who tried to have kids but didn't has fulfilled the Mitzvah like someone who had kids. If someone has a son and a daughter, then they are exempt from the Mitzvah, but it's not that they fulfilled the Mitzvah (they did that by trying). If those children pass away, then Rav Moshe holds that the exemption is now lifted.

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SUGARY SAYING OF THE WEEK **BY RABBI MENACHEM LOMNER**

"One who prepares for the next world is in a totally different mode."

The Torah (Bereishis 2:7) tells us that Hashem created man. The word "vayitzer" has two letters "yuds". Rashi (ibid.) points out that this spelling is different than the way vayitzer is spelled when it tells us Hashem created the animals (where it has one "yud"). This teaches us that a person has two creations: one here in this world and one for Olam Haba (Next World).

On the other hand, animals have one creation only - this world. Olam Haba can't have the same creation because it is "a world of a difference"! When we do Mitzvos and prepare for the Next World, we step into a whole different creation. We are compared to malachim during our service of Hashem!

PARENTING PERSPECTIVES BY RABBI AKIVA SUTOFSKY **BEREISHIS – THE BALANCE OF A GREAT PARENT**

Everybody in the community knew Rabbi Moskowitz as an unbelievable *masmid* (diligent learner). He was someone who took his davening seriously, who was constantly working on himself, and who approached his relationship with Hashem with tremendous sincerity. Yet, there was something else people noticed about him, as well. For all his seriousness and growth in *ruchniyus*, Rabbi Moskowitz was also an incredibly present father. He could spend hours learning and then go to the park and have a catch with his son. He could daven with tremendous intensity and later take a long walk with his daughter on Shabbos and listen to everything going on in her life. He could be completely immersed in *Avodas Hashem* (Service of Hashem) and still find the time to take his younger son fishing.

One day, someone who davened with Rabbi Moskowitz approached him and asked him about it. "Where does that come from? How are you able to straddle both worlds?" he pressed. "On the one hand, you are constantly trying to grow, refine yourself, and become a greater servant of Hashem - but at the same time, you can put all of that aside and enter your children's world. You can play ball, go fishing, or just sit and listen. How do you do both?" Rabbi Moskowitz told him that he had once heard a beautiful explanation to a Pasuk in Bereishis in the name of **Rav Yisrael Salanter**, ZT"L, When the Torah describes the creation of Adam, it says: "Vayipach B'apav nishmas chaim" (Bereishis 2:7), Hashem breathed into him a living soul.

Rashi explains that Adam was created "*min hatachtonim u'min ha'elyonim* - from the lower worlds and from the upper worlds." Rav Yisrael Salanter explained that this is not merely a description of how man was created. It is a description of what a human being is supposed to become. A person must be *min ha'elyonim*. There is something within us that wants to be great.

We have the ability to work on ourselves, to refine ourselves, to be honest with ourselves, to overcome our weaknesses, and to strive to become greater Ovdei Hashem. However, we must never allow our pursuit of the elyonim to disconnect us from the tachtonim. We must remain *min hatachtonim* as well, people who live in this world with other human beings. People who can feel another person's pain. People who can enter someone else's world. People who care about what another person cares about and can become interested in what makes someone else happy. Rabbi Moskowitz explained, "That is what I try to remember as a father. I want to grow. I want to become a bigger person. I want to be an oveid Hashem - but none of that is a contradiction to sitting on the floor with my child, throwing a baseball around, listening to my daughter, or going fishing with my son. That, too, is part of who a person is supposed to be."

Rav Salanter expressed a similar idea regarding Moshe Rabbeinu. The Torah calls Moshe "*ish ha'Elokim* - a man of G-d" (Devarim 33:1). Chazal describe him as "*mechetzah ish, umechetzah Elokim* - half ish and half Elokim." Rav Salanter explained that when it came to Moshe Rabbeinu himself - to his own standards, his own growth, and his own avodas Hashem - he was Elokim. He demanded greatness from himself. He was fully spiritual and holy, but when it came to other people, he was an ish. When his brothers were suffering in Mitzrayim, the Torah tells us, "*Vayar b'sivlosam*" (Shemos 2:11), he went out and saw their burdens. He did not remain above them. He came down into their world. He saw them, felt them, and carried their pain. That is the balance of *min ha'elyonim u'min hatachtonim*. Perhaps that is one of the great challenges of parenting.

We want to be *elyonim*. We want to model seriousness, growth, Torah, Tefillah, character, and Avodas Hashem. We want our children to see parents who are striving for something higher. Nevertheless, our children also desperately need us to be *tachtonim*. They need us to come down into their world. To know what excites them. To listen to the stories that matter to them. To throw the ball. To take the walk. To hear about their friends. To laugh at what they find funny. To care about the things that, at this moment in their lives, feel enormous to them. For ourselves, we strive upward. For our children, we make sure we can also come down and meet them where they are. A great parent does not have to choose between being an Oveid Hashem and being deeply connected to his or her children.

Rabbi Akiva Sutofsky is a school therapist in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he also maintains a private practice working with parents and adolescents. With over 15 years of experience, he is the author of the popular book "Parenting with a Plan" and presents parenting workshops to communities throughout North America. All his articles are dedicated לעולמי נשמת יצחק אלימלך ז"ל בן עקיבא זאב הלוי

IF YOU HAVE ANY TOPICS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE THE SHALOM BAYIS AND PARENTING COLUMNISTS TO DISCUSS, PLEASE LET US KNOW!

DELICIOUS DVAR BY RABBI DOVID ORLOFSKY
BEREISHIS - WHY FINDING YOUR BASHERT IS HARD



It's interesting that when we make Sheva Brachos, we say that the groom and bride should have the simcha of Adam and Chava of Gan Eden. When there was only one man and only one woman, and in fact they were attached, and they're separated, you knew with certainty that is was the right Shidduch. There was the sense of clarity from Hashem that this person was the "intended". The two were meant to build the world, which is the bracha we give to every Chasan and Kallah who gets married. This is because every person is a miniature world.

However, while we try to have *Bitachon*, we don't know for sure like Adam and Chava knew. The **Ben Yehoyoda** (Gemara Kiddushin) gives us an unbelievable mashal (parable). He writes that there was a Rav of a large town who was brilliant. One day, he realized he was getting old, and he couldn't do the job properly. So, he decided to take a less demanding position in a small town. So, he asked permission, and they gave it. He sent out his resume to smaller communities who were thrilled to be able to have a Rav of this caliber to be their Rabbi. He took the position that he thought would be best for him and set a date to leave.

The new townspeople sent a wagon to come and pick him up. So, he was packed up and waiting, and the wagon comes to town. The wagon driver stopped in the town and asked for the Rav's address, as he was going to transfer him to the new town. The citizens protested: "You can't steal our Rav!" They rushed at the wagon, and the driver sped off in fear. Meanwhile, the Rav was sitting there, not realizing his ride was scared off. Eventually, he got a message from the new town that the wagon driver was shooed away.

So, he called in the elders of the city and said, "I thought you said it was okay for me to go, but the townspeople attacked the wagon. I want you to promise me that you're going to let the wagon come in undisturbed." So, the wagon driver came in nervously, and as he was driving down the road, and by each side of the street were yelling "thief!" at him. The driver made it to the Rav this time and then went to say goodbye to the elders of the town. "Why did you do this?" They replied, "This was a parting gift. When you show up in that next town, right now they're excited to have you, but when you *pasken* (rule) against somebody and they say, 'another town just wanted to get rid of him, and we got stuck with him!' Let them remember they had to work hard to get you," says the Ben Yehoyada.

We don't have a little "*shtempel*" because Adam and Chavah had *da'as* (true knowledge). They could see from one side of the world to the other. They understood everything with perfect clarity. Yet, when things start getting tough for us, we say to ourselves, "maybe, this isn't really my bashert." Or we think, "My parents didn't know what they were doing, and I was tricked." Or we believe that the shadchan lied to us. We should remember that we had to work hard to find our bashert." Hashem put us in a world because He wants us to get married and to build a world with His help.

MILK'N'HONEY FROM JERUSALEM BY RAV JONATHAN TAUB
BEREISHIS – PREIDA: CONNECTED AT THE SOURCE

Preidah is normally understood to be a physical separation. For example, when one leaves someone, it is a Preidah. When a person is about to move away, his friends make a Seudas Preidah. However, this understanding misses the point. The first time we encounter Preidah between people is when Lot leaves Avraham. The Torah says (Bereishis 13:8-9): "*Abram said to Lot, 'Let there be no strife between you and me, between my herders and yours, for we are, after all, kin. Is not the whole land before you? Let us separate: if you go north, I will go south; and if you go south, I will go north.'*"

Rashi (ibid. 13:9) explains: "*Wherever you settle down, I will not go far from you, and I will stand by you as a shield and as a helper.*" Ultimately, indeed, he (Lot) was really in need of him, as it is said (ibid., 14:14): "*And Abram heard that his brother was taken captive.*" There's a physical separation, but very much connected. The first Preidah in the Torah is in our parsha (ibid. 2:10): "*A river issues from Eden to water the garden, and it then divides and becomes four branches.*" Although the four rivers diverge, they are connected at the source.

Preida means that even though we may be going apart, we are still bound at the source. Perhaps the clearest proof of this idea is found in the laws of the Arba Minim. The Mishnah (Sukkah 3:1) deals with which types of Lulav are kosher and which are invalid. Part of the Mishnah states: "*If the top of the lulav was severed or if the palm leaves were severed from the spine of the lulav, it is unfit. If its leaves, although still attached, were spread, and are no longer completely joined to the spine, it is fit.*" Rashi (on the Gemara) explains severed means from the central rib, and they are held together only by a binding; for the sheath - known as "*ashkuba*" - does not constitute a proper connection.

Another meaning of the word Predeal is one of a pair of doves. The Gemara (Zevachim 65a) states: The Sages taught a baraisa regarding the Pasuk about a burnt offering of a bird: "And the Kohen shall bring it to the altar, and pinch off its head, and make it smoke on the altar" (Vayikra 1:15). What is the meaning when the Pasuk states: "And the priest shall bring it to the altar? Since it is stated in the preceding Pasuk: "And if his offering to Hashem be a burnt offering of birds, then he shall bring his offering of doves, or of pigeons" (ibid. 1:14), one might have thought that one who donates a bird as an offering may not donate fewer than two birds. Therefore, the Pasuk states: "And the priest shall bring it," indicating that one may bring even one bird to be sacrificed on the altar. Why is one of a pair of doves called a Preidah?

The Midrash Rabbah (1:17) states: "*Just as this dove, from the time she recognizes her husband, does not exchange him for another, so Israel, from the time they recognized Hashem, did not exchange him for another. Even if the dove flies far away, it is still connected to its mate.*" This requires a certain tenacity, perhaps even obstinacy. From birds to animals. Which animal has the reputation for obstinacy? The Preidah – the mule! In fact, when I checked my Thesaurus for synonyms for the word "obstinacy," one of the options was "mulishness." In relationships, too, it requires determination, sometimes even a stubbornness, to maintain the connection.

As a teacher, I can attest that it's easy to despair and give up on a student. One of the greatest teachers of all time taught a student the same material 400 times, and then, when he realized that the student had been distracted, was willing to do it again, another 400 times. The number 400 is the gematria of the letter with the biggest numerical value and is often used in the Gemara and Midrash to convey an exceedingly large number. That is persistence in maintaining the connection to the extreme. What was his name? Rabbi Preidah!!!

SUGAR RUSH ON 613 MITZVOS BY R' ELI REIT
MITZVAH # 230 – HANGING PEOPLE WHO WERE EXECUTED

Some of those who are executed are supposed to be hanged on a wooden stick that is stuck in the ground, as the Pasuk (Devarim 21:22) says, "*You shall hang him on a tree*". According to one opinion, this was only done to someone whose sin was cursing Hashem and to someone who worshipped idols. Another opinion is that it is for everyone who was executed by stoning. When hanging, the hands are put on top of each other. The hanging is done right before sunset, and then the person is immediately removed. He is then buried with the wood that he was hanged from and the stone that was used to kill him. This way, the dignity of the one who was executed is protected, as the reminders of his death are removed.

*Summary: We've been discussing how to be humble in our actions. The **Ramchal** said that there are four areas in which one can act with humility. The first is to generally behave in an unassuming manner (how one talks, walks, and sits), and the second is to tolerate insults with equanimity (the third and fourth are yet to come). He now brings two role models for this trait.*

The Ramchal writes: "Likewise, our sages told us about the great humility of Hillel saying: 'Our Rabbis taught: A man should always be humble like Hillel...' (Shabbos 30b)." (Mesilas Yesharim, Chapter 22)

There are several examples of Hillel's trademark humility brought in the Gemara. Hillel's gentleness and patience are illustrated in an anecdote that describes how two men made a bet on the question of whether Hillel could be made angry (which we discussed when the Ramchal taught us about anger in Chapter 11). Although these "bettors" questioned/tested Hillel and insulted his lineage, they were unsuccessful in their task. Another famous account (Shabbos 31a) tells us about a gentile who wanted to convert, and this individual stated that he would accept the Torah only if a rabbi would teach him the entire Torah while he, the prospective convert, stood on one foot.

First, he went to Shammai, who threw him out. The man did not give up and went to Hillel. Hillel accepted the challenge and said: "*What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That is the whole Torah; the rest is the explanation of this - go and study it!*" **Rashi** explains that when discussing Moshe Rabbeinu's trademark trait, the word used does not merely mean humble, but also tolerant. Moshe's equanimity in his interactions with others was an example of humility in outlook and tolerance in practice.

The Ramchal adds: "Likewise, Rabbi Avahu, despite his great humility, found that he had not yet reached the point where he may be fittingly called a humble person, as our Sages told: 'Rabbi Avahu said: 'At first I used to think that I was humble; but when I saw Rabbi Abba of Akko offer one explanation and his interpreter offer another [to the audience] and he was not bothered, I considered that I was not humble' (Sotah 40a)." (ibid. Chapter 22)

The Gemara there relates numerous instances of R' Avahu's extraordinary humility. These include foregoing the opportunity to lead the yeshiva so that another sage could attain the position and be able to repay his debts. Another example is when he overlooked certain insolent remarks of his "speaker". To explain: in times of the Gemara, a lecturer who spoke to a large audience was assisted by a "speaker." The lecturer sat and delivered his lecture in a relatively faint voice. The "speaker" then repeated it, projecting it loudly to the entire assemblage (as **Rashi** states). The speaker omitted R' Abba's explanation and replaced it with his own (see the Meiri).

The **Maharsha** asserts that if the speaker had substituted an improper explanation, R' Abba would not have allowed it to be said in his name. Rather, the speaker substituted an explanation that matched or even surpassed R' Abba's. Although he thereby delivered an affront to R' Abba by implicitly suggesting that he should be the one lecturing, R' Abba humbly let the matter pass. More to come next week, B'Ezras Hashem.

SHORT STORIES OF THE WEEK BY YONI SCHWARTZ

Rav Baruch Ber had a daughter who struggled for a considerable amount of time to find the right Shidduch. Finally, she got engaged, and not just to any person, but to an outstanding bachur, one of Rav Baruch Ber's talmidim. He was a genius and had amazing middos (traits). He was a very refined and mature person, and very caring. They both completely realized how amazing this Shidduch could be. At some point after the engagement, however, the young man realized that this was not the right match for him, and he decided to break it off. Rav Baruch Ber's daughter was absolutely heartbroken; she was crushed to her core. Rav Baruch Ber, as well, was absolutely broken to pieces.

This young man realized that things were just too awkward to continue as a talmid of Rav Baruch Ber's in his yeshiva. He figured the right thing to do would be to switch to another yeshiva. However, back in those days, to switch yeshivas, a person needed a letter from the Rosh Yeshiva. So, he had to get a letter from Rav Baruch Ber - a positive recommendation about him - so he could get accepted into another yeshiva. Writing such a letter was incredibly difficult for Rav Baruch Ber. He was deeply pained and was afraid that some of his negative emotions might come out in the writing. He genuinely struggled and had the courage and humility to honestly admit that. That is why he asked five different people to meticulously analyze the letter, to be certain that there was no hint of any negativity toward this bachur, and that his chances of getting accepted into another yeshiva would not be harmed even the slightest bit.

*Comment: In this week's parsha, Bereishis, the first human mistake ever is recorded. Perhaps we read this incident shortly after Yom Kippur to teach us that the goal is progress, not perfection; honestly admitting our mistakes and not never making any. A big mistake that people make is trying to completely get rid of their challenges and negative emotions - or worse, denying them - instead of learning to tolerate them better. As **Lord Jonathan Sacks**, ZT"L, once said, "Our weaknesses make us human. Wrestling with them makes us strong."*

BEREISHIS – FIRST MARRIAGE LESSON IN THE TORAH

In this week's parsha, we see how men and women were created differently. The Torah (Bereishis 2:7) says: "*And Hashem formed the man of soil from the earth.*" Then, it says (ibid. 2:22): "*And Hashem built the side that he had taken from the man into a woman.*" Men, created from the *ofor* (dirt), are inherently different from women, who were created from the *tzelah* (rib). Due to these intrinsic differences, a man's and a woman's desires in life will differ. A man, who was created from the dirt, is constantly fighting feelings of inferiority. He doesn't want to feel like dirt. Helping him find something, correcting him, instructing him how to get somewhere or do something is going to feel disrespectful to a man. It's going to hurt his feelings. He wants to feel smart; like he can conquer, and he can figure things out.

On the other hand, a woman who was created from the rib, is constantly fighting feelings of disconnect. She wants to feel loved, cherished, connected, and appreciated. Ignoring her efforts, not staying in touch with her, and not spending time with her is going to make a woman feel disconnected. Men and women speak, feel, reason, and understand life differently. It's hard for men and women who have such polar opposite drives to create an environment in their home where they both feel understood and accepted. So, taking what we know about our differences, how can we create an environment conducive to Shalom Bayis?

The answer is that, initially, we need to try to be *mevater* (foregoing). As it says in the Gemara (Rosh Hashana 17a): "*Anyone who forgoes his traits, his sins will be forgiven.*" Now, there are exceptional times when that is not healthy, and then it is important to create a safe space. What is SAFE SPACE? It is non-judgmental, emotionally responsive listening. When both spouses feel heard and are validated by their partner, it creates a peaceful home.

We want to encourage our spouses to recognize, validate, and express their feelings. When our spouse tells us something, we want to keep in mind our differences and listen empathetically. What we DON'T want is to deny their feelings by giving them unsolicited advice or telling them they shouldn't feel that way. This is a tricky process that's best learned. Why is this SO DIFFICULT?

The Gemara (Berachos 10a) relates a story about Rabbi Meir who lived near Jewish gangsters who were harassing him. Rabbi Meir prayed for heavenly mercy that they should die. His wife, Beruriah, pointed out the Pasuk (Tehillim 104:35) that says "sins should cease from the earth, and the wicked will be no more." She explained it doesn't say the wicked will cease from the earth, but rather the sins, because the wicked will have done Teshuva. Rabbi Meir listened to his wife, stopped praying for their demise, and instead started to pray that they do Teshuva, and indeed, they did repent.

This story illustrates how differently men and women think and feel. Sometimes, our spouse shares feelings that trigger negative emotions within us. Instead of getting upset, we can strive to put our own feelings aside so we can create a safe space for our spouse to express themselves. It certainly takes a lot of effort to accomplish this. It is not easy to calmly create a safe space, to hear our spouses' thought processes and feelings, and react with empathy when we don't deeply understand where they are coming from. Hashem should bless our efforts with success and bless our homes with an abundance of safe space and

*This week's edition is dedicated by **Moshe Chaim Guttman**, to a very special wife, **Rachel Zahava**, in honor of her milestone birthday. May she have happiness and good health until 120!*