



## Pushing Ahead

Rabbi Yosef Dovid Rothbart, Rabbinic Administrator

ופתח התיבה בצדה תשים (בראשית ו, טז)

Over the summer I saw someone trying to train their kid to ride a bike. Besides the helmet which sported a cage to protect the face, the nervous child was wearing all types of pads over various parts of his body to protect him from getting hurt when the inevitable happened. As I watched, I tried to remember what it was like when my friends and I were taught how to ride. We were protected only by typical basic bicycle helmets. There were no cages and certainly no pads – instead we had band-aids. But we persevered despite the initial struggle. And eventually we were able to fly down the street without hands as well as anybody else.

We were able to accomplish this because we badly wanted to learn. We watched the older kids racing around on their bikes and we dreamed and pushed to get there, notwithstanding our scraped knees and sore palms.

This is not an isolated incident, but really a paradigm for all of life. The *Mechilta* teaches us that “All beginnings are challenging” – כל-התחלות קשות, but one must not despair. Instead a person should recognize that this is merely the beginning and forge ahead until the training wheels come off and he is comfortable driving an 18 speeder.

Perhaps this could be an additional understanding to the *Gemara's* (*Tamid* 32a) definition of who is wise. הרואה את הנוול (one who sees the future) – One who sees the newborn. A person who watches a child develop sees how the newborn begins weak and helpless but soon learns to sit and then crawl, until the newborn eventually develops into a being who can change the world. This only happens because the infant did not get discouraged by the challenges involved in learning the necessary skills for each stage. Indeed, with each failed attempt the infant strengthened its muscles

which ultimately gave it the ability to become independent.

The Noam Elimelech understands ופתח התיבה בצדה תשים – And the opening of the *teiva* shall be put in its side to be hinting to the path that a person who wishes to enter the world of sanctity must travel. The world was created with the letter (*teiva*) “*Hei*”. Towards the top of (בצדה תשים) this letter, this *teiva*, there is a small opening (*pesach*) reserved for people who wish to transcend the physical world and enjoy a spiritual existence far above the corporal pleasures that bottom of the *Hei* dangles in front of him. Such a person has to make the grueling climb to the top of the *Hei* and push through the small gap on the left side located just below its roof.

Such a journey requires tremendous grit. The 90 degree vertical ascent brings a person to an opening which is too small to access. After the exhausting climb, he will need to garner whatever resources he has left and charge again and again at the miniscule aperture until he is given Heavenly assistance to widen the opening and break through to the top of the *Hei*.

Like the building of the *teiva* of Noach, this arduous journey may take a person 120 years. And along the way, like Noach, he may have to contend with people who discourage him and threaten. But if he truly desires to reach the opening, and forges ahead despite the initial struggle, when *Hashem* finally gives him the ability to propel himself through the gap, like Noach, he will find himself sailing with *Hashem* above the raging waters of physicality that overwhelm all those who opted not to attempt the climb into the “*teiva*”.

# Heavenly Payment

Until about eighty years ago, it was considered acceptable for young recently married *talmidei chachomim* to leave their homes and travel to another city in order to focus solely on growing in Torah. They would choose a city which boasted of having a *yeshiva* and join the ranks of those who wished to dedicate their time immersed in the sacred words that have been analyzed for so many generations. So it was not seen as outrageous when Rav Aharon Rata, who later became known for his holiness and *sefarim*, chose to follow this path.

After his marriage, Rav Aharon left his wife and traveled to the *yeshiva* of the *Ma'asei Hamelech*, Rav Yeshaya Zilberstein located in the town of Waitzen. His father-in-law, who had agreed to support the young couple, would send him money each month so that he would be able to learn without any distractions. The money would be used to pay for his food and lodgings while he studied, away from his family.

This arrangement worked well for a while until one month came and went without any envelope from his hometown. The money that Rav Aharon had was spent and he quickly found himself without a single coin in his possession. It would not be long before the hotel would refuse to offer him any more credit and he would be sent out to find another place to board. The normal practice for someone in such a situation was that the penniless *bachur* would eat by one of the many wealthier people who happily opened up their homes to help *Torah* students who were unable to afford the price of food.

But this was not an option for Rav Aharon. He refused to be reliant on another person's gifts. Instead, he would turn to the One who supported him from when he was conceived until that point. Deep in thought, he silently walked alone to the woods that surrounded the city and turned his eyes heavenward. He pleaded with his Creator to assist him so that he could remain in Waitzen without resorting to visiting a different home each day in order to eat.

He stood conversing with Hashem for a while before he finished his *tefilla* and turned to go back to the city. Rav Aharon looked down as he walked, his mind very far from the trees and leaves that surrounded him. Despite this, he did not overlook the wallet which lay partly concealed by leaves directly in front of him. He opened the wallet and counted out the exact amount that he needed for

the upcoming month. He thanked *Hashem* and returned to his learning.

Then the next month arrived and the letter from his hometown did not. He realized that his father-in-law could no longer support him. And he found himself walking slowly back to the familiar trees that surrounded Waitzen. He returned to the same spot and after his prayer found a wallet containing the month's funds. This continued for several months.

It was the innkeeper who first noticed that something was not right. She was the one who delivered the letters to those who lived in her inn and realized that despite the lack of letters, Rav Aharon was never late on a payment. She knew he was not involved in business and sat in the *yeshiva* throughout the day. So where did he possess money to live in the hotel? Her curiosity aroused, she decided to investigate.

Her first stop was Rav Aharon, but Rabbi Aharon refused to divulge his secret benefactor. But she was not one who gave up easily.

She waited a week and tried again. Nothing changed. Rav Aharon refused to answer. But she was adamant. Every two or three weeks she approached Rav Aharon and asked what the source of the money was. Rav Aharon saw that unless he would tell the innkeeper she would continue to badger him. Feeling that he had no choice, he decided to reveal the source of the money so that he could avoid constantly arguing with her.

The next time she approached him, he explained that whenever he needed money he would simply walk to the forest and turn to his Omnipotent Father who would graciously grant him the amount that he required. The innkeeper accepted this and no longer questioned him.

And so the month ended and Rav Aharon found himself in his familiar spot. He finished his *tefilla* and returned towards the town searching the ground for the wallet. But this time it was not there. Once the secret was no longer hidden, the blessing would no longer be manifest.

Miracles are cloaked as much as possible in the natural phenomenon, and when the hostess was privy to the origin of the money, the miraculous payment no longer appeared.

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# Questions from the H.I.T. HOTLINE

## **Can I listen to a *shiur* after I have recited the *bracha* of *hamapil*?**

If your intention is to fall asleep while listening to the *shiur* then doing so would be permitted. If however your intention is to listen to the *shiur* and only after the *shiur* has ended to then go to sleep, then it is preferable to recite *bircas hamapil* after the *shiur* has ended.

## **I meant to pay my babysitter when I came home but then one of the kids started crying and she was unable to wait and left without me paying her. Did I transgress not paying a worker on time?**

The Shulchan Aruch (*Choshen Mishpat* 339, 6) writes that if a person does not pay his day worker before *shekiya*, he has transgressed the *issur bal talin* – delaying payment. However, this is only when the worker asked for his/her wages. If this was not done then, although one should still pay his worker that day (Ahavas Chesed I, 9, 11), the employer does not transgress the prohibition of *bal talin*. (The Chofetz Chaim does point out in *Nesiv Hachessed*

I, 9, 29 that if the employee comes to the employer and says that he is finished and due to his embarrassment does not ask for his wages, then this would be tantamount for asking for them).

However, in your case even if the babysitter did ask for her wages, it would seem that since she knew that you had wanted to pay her then and she left on her own, you would not transgress *bal talin*, since she could have waited and chose not to. This would be comparable to what the Chofetz Chaim wrote (*Nesiv Hachessed* I, 9, 31) regarding an employer who did not have money when his workers demanded their wages. If later on he does have access to money, he could simply inform them that he has their wages and he need not deliver it to them. So too here the babysitter should have waited for her wages and not left without them. And it is her responsibility to approach you.

**To have your question  
answered call**

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**[info@halachainstitute.com](mailto:info@halachainstitute.com)**





**In this week's *Parsha*, the raven refused to leave Noah. Here are some interesting facts about ravens.**

- Ravens are considered among the smartest birds in the world.
- If a raven knows another raven is watching it hide its food, it will pretend to put the food in one place while really hiding it in another. Since the other raven is smart too, this only works sometimes.
- In captivity, ravens can learn to talk better than some parrots.
- In an experiment performed by Dr. Jorg Massen of the University of Vienna, when two pieces of food were placed between just as many ravens, sometimes a fast-moving bird would eat both pieces before the other could get its share. Birds that had been on the receiving end of such bad behavior refused to cooperate with the offender again.

## RIDDLE



**What was Noah's second name?**

*Please send in your answers to [yrothbart@halachainstitute.com](mailto:yrothbart@halachainstitute.com). Any correct answer that is received by Tuesday will be entered into a raffle to win a \$10 gift certificate to Miriam's Judaica.*

**LAST WEEK'S RIDDLE: When is it possible to be called up for an *aliyah* when there is no *minyan* present in *shul*?**

**ANSWER: If there was a *minyan* at the beginning of *krias haTorah* and someone walked out, even though there is no longer a *minyan*, one can still be called up for an *aliyah*.**

Thank you to all those who sent in an answer to last week's riddle.

**WINNER OF LAST WEEK'S PRIZE: Avraham Meir Kulik**

Under the leadership of the Rabbonim of H.I.T.  
Rabbi Yacov Felder, Chairman

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