



Nothing to Sneeze At

"A^{chool!}"

"La'briut (to your health) Chaim."

"Thank you, Avi. You are very considerate."

"Thank you, Chaim. In what way am I considerate?"

"After I sneezed, you gave me a blessing for good health."

"You deserve it, Chaim. Everyone should have good health, especially after they sneeze."

"Why?"

"Because there is a lot more to a sneeze than just hot air."

"Are you speaking about allergies?"

"No, I am speaking about mankind from the beginning of creation until Yaakov Avinu."

"That is a big subject, Avi - nothing to sneeze at."

"It is actually related to this week's parasha."

"Now you really have my curiosity going."

"The Torah states, that someone told Yosef that his father (Yaakov) was sick (Bereshis 48:1). This was an earth-shattering event, unprecedented in the entire history of mankind."

"What was so earth-shattering about being sick?"

"The Chizkuni zt"l informs us that Yaakov Avinu changed the way people die. From the beginning of creation, a man's sneeze would be his last breath. Wherever he was, whatever he was doing, when he sneezed, his *neshama* (soul) would leave his body - without warning."

"How abrupt."

"Exactly. Yaakov Avinu wanted to bless and admonish his children. The Torah Temima explains that one should admonish ones children shortly before one dies. Therefore, Yaakov asked for Hashem's mercy, to know his time of departure from this world. Hashem responded by making him sick, informing him that his death was imminent."

"I see. Yaakov Avinu was the first person in history to get sick."

"Precisely. The Torah Temima relates several *minhagim* (customs) regarding sneezing. Some people say *li'chaim u'li'shalom* (to life and peace) because the sneeze was considered a dangerous event. Rashi (Berachos 53a) explains that people

would say 'To your health' to the one who sneezed. The Yalkut states that a person is obligated to thank Hashem after he sneezes. The Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (61:5) advises saying a verse from this week's parasha, 'For Your salvation do I long, O Hashem!' (Bereshis 49:18)."

"Avi, this is all amazing. Who would have thought that a simple sneeze is so full of meaning?"

"Chaim, a sneeze is nothing to sneeze at."

Kinderlach . . .

Health is a wonderful gift from Hashem. Many people do not appreciate it until they become sick or injured to aleinu (may it not happen to us). Thank Hashem for everything. When we are healthy we can see, eat, sleep, breathe, walk, and hear properly. Good health is a pillar of avodas (service to) Hashem. As we say in the blessing "Asher Yatzar" . . . "(without a healthy body) . . . it would be impossible to survive and stand before You". Hashem gives us a wonderful reminder to appreciate our health . . . the simple sneeze. People would die when they sneezed. However, we sneeze and live! Therefore, every time we sneeze, we can thank Hashem for our life and our health. "La'briut!"



It Comes Back

"A^{vi}, do you want to come with me?"

"Where are you going, Abba?"

"To Saba and Savta's house."

"Sure, Abba. I love going to Saba and Savta's house. What are we going to do there?"

"Saba just bought a new bookshelf. I want to help him put it together and

arrange his books."

"That is so nice of you, Abba."

"It's the least that I can do, Avi."

"What do you mean, Abba?"

"My mother and father raised me from birth. They fed me, clothed me, educated me, and gave me practically everything that I have in life. Now I have an opportunity to pay back a little something by helping them. How can I pass it up?"

"Abba, it is a real honor to help you and Saba. We were learning about this very subject in our parashas hashavuah class."

"Really Avi. That is so interesting. Please tell me about it."

"The parasha begins by informing us that Yaakov lived in Mitzraim for seventeen years. The Chizkuni zt"l points out that this verse was written to praise Yosef."

"That sounds perplexing, Avi. How does Yaakov's presence in Mitzraim praise Yosef?"

"Because Yosef supported his father, Yaakov, for those seventeen years."

"That is real Kibbud Av (honoring your father)."

"The Chizkuni adds that Yaakov had fed Yosef for seventeen years, before he was sold. Yosef merited to support his father just as many years as his father had supported him."

"Yosef was very fortunate. Not everyone has such a zechus (merit)."

"Abba, may we all be blessed as he was."

Kinderlach . . .

Our parents are so good to us. They do everything for us. Every morsel of food that we eat, every stitch of clothing that we wear, comes from them. Where would we be without them? Nowhere. Therefore, when we see an opportunity to do something for them, we should jump. "Let me help you with your coat, Abba." "Can I pour you a drink, Abba?" "Let me carry your bag, Abba." Kinderlach, if we show enthusiasm in this mitzvah, perhaps Hashem will give us the same opportunity as Yosef. To help our parents as much as they helped us.

Parasha Questions

- Does the King's father have to honor his son? (Rashi 48:2)
- Why was Rachel buried outside of Beit Lechem? (Rashi 48:7)
- Which evil person was descended from Efraim? (Rashi 48:8)
- What were Yaakov's sword and bow? (Rashi 48:22)