

The Keruvim shall be with wings spread upward... with their faces toward one another; toward the Cover shall be the faces of the Keruvim. (25:20)

In his commentary to the Torah, the **Abarbanel** writes that the phrase, “The *Keruvim* shall be with wings and spread upward,” alludes to the idea that all Jews should be focused on Heaven. A person’s mind determines his goals and objectives. His thoughts should be motivated; his values should concentrate on spiritual growth. If one is stimulated towards nurturing his spiritual dimension, he can be certain that everything else in life that matters-- ethics, morals -- will develop on a positive note. When one’s values are distorted, the distortion takes its toll on everything else in his life, leaving him dissatisfied, depressed, floundering aimlessly in the wind, with nothing with which to anchor himself.

This is with regard to *bein adam la’Makom*, his relationship between man and G-d. Concerning his relationship with his fellow man, *bein adam l’chaveiro*, *Abarbanel* writes it should be “with their faces toward one another.” One’s concern should be about his fellow: “How can I help? What can I do? Is something bothering you?” When we gaze into the eyes/face of our friend, we notice a change. We perceive when things are not going as they should, when the smile is not there, indicating a change in his life.

Whether it concerns one’s relationship with G-d or his connection with his fellow man, it should always be, “towards the Cover shall be the faces of the *Keruvim*.” His guidance with regard to all aspects of life – both spiritual and physical/mundane - must be derived from the “Cover,” which alludes to the Torah kept in the *Aron*. With the Torah as our guide, we know that we are traveling on the straight and proven course charted for us by the One Who navigates our lives: Hashem.

Greatness is determined by one’s sensitivity to, and empathy for, his fellow Jew. One who thinks only of himself and his immediate family is neither great nor deserving of the crown of leadership. The *Gerrer Rebbe*, the *Lev Simchah*, related that he was present when the *Ostrovitzer Rebbe*, *zl*, met with *Horav Chaim Ozer Grodzenski*, *zl*. These were two of Europe’s preeminent Torah leaders. The *Lev Simchah* was himself a brilliant Torah scholar, who in *Eretz Yisrael* was *Rebbe* to thousands of *Chassidim*, as well as one of the Holy Land’s primary builders of Torah.

The *Ostrovitzer* asked *Rav Chaim Ozer* the following question: The *Talmud Makkos* 22b laments at the crudeness of people who stand up for a *Sefer Torah*, while failing to arise for a *gavra rabba*, great man – meaning a *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar, who is the living embodiment of a *Sefer Torah*. Essentially, he is a living *Sefer Torah*. One should surely pay him the proper respect by standing up when he goes by. The *Talmud* goes on to explain why a Torah scholar is referred to as a *gavra rabba*. The Torah writes that the punishment of *malkos*, lashes, should consist of forty lashes – *arbaim yakenu*. Yet, our sages have determined that the offender receives only thirty-nine. This is an indication of the power of the sages, who were able to reduce the Torah’s original

number by one lash.

The *Ostrovitzer* asked, “Why did the *Talmud* support its definition of *gavra rabba* from a *pasuk* in *Sefer Devarim*, when, in fact, there is an earlier instance which indicates the power of the sages. The Torah writes (*Sefer Vayikra*) that *Sefiras HaOmer* should be counted for fifty days, *tisperu chamishim yom*. Yet, the sages interpreted that we count only forty-nine days. Why wait for a proof from *Sefer Devarim*, if there is one readily available in *Sefer Vayikra*?”

The *Ostrovitzer* explained that *Chazal*, our sages, believed that a true *gavra rabba* is one who can lighten the physical punishment of a Jew by diminishing the lashes by one lash. A *gavra rabba* is one who eases the load of a fellow Jew.

Rabbi Binyamin Pruzansky (“Stories That Unite Our Hearts”) tells the story of a man who was sitting on the floor on *Tishah B’Av*, reciting *Kinnos*, Lamentations. He was very moved by the words, and he expressed his emotion with copious tears. Next to him on the floor sat a blind man. The blind man turned to his neighbor and asked, “Could you please walk me home?” The man who was saying *kinnos* halted his “emotion” and answered with a sharp, “Now? Of course not! Do you not ‘see’ that I am in the midst of weeping over the destruction of the *Bais Hamikdash*?”

The **Chernobler Rebbe, zl**, was sitting on the floor nearby and had witnessed the interchange. He rose up and approached the man who was so wrapped up in himself and his tears, telling him, “You are exempt from crying over the destruction of the *Bais Hamikdash*!”

“I am?” the man asked, “Why?”

“Because it would be better that you cry over your own *churban*, destruction. I think that your heart is in ruins, and it would be more worthwhile for you to cry over that.”