

## If you this thing... then you will be able to endure, and this entire people, as well, shall arrive at its destination in peace. (18:23)

Yisro intimated to Moshe *Rabbeinu* that, by following his advice, the people would be confident that they would be judged justly. They would, thus, be at peace, content with the rulings that had been administered. The words, *yavo b'shalom*, "shall arrive at its destination in peace," is a phrase which is used in connection with the deceased. We say: *lech b'shalom*, "go in peace;" *tanuach b'shalom*, "rest in peace," and *v'saamod l'goralcha l'ketz ha'yamim*, "and arise for your reward at the End of Days." When speaking to the living, wishing them well, we say, *lech l'shalom*, "go to peace." Why does the Torah change its style?

*Horav Yashar* quotes the **Chafetz Chaim** who posits that anyone who has money in his possession that does not belong to him – whether he stole it or owes it to someone – cannot possibly reach *Olam Habba*, the World to Come. He must return to this world reincarnated, until he somehow returns the money that he owes.

*Horav Shlomo Levinstein, Shlita*, relates an incredible story that took place concerning **Horav Meir Premishlaner, zl**. The holy *Chassidic* Master once spent *Shabbos* at the home of one of his wealthy *chassidim*, who had apportioned an entire wing of his palatial home for the *Rebbe*. That Friday afternoon, after *chatzos*, midday, the *chasid* came to the *Rebbe* and asked, "*Rebbe*, is there anything I can do? Whatever the *Rebbe* asks, I will be happy to do."

The *Rebbe* replied, "I noticed that you have a number of horses and cows in your stable. Could you possibly give me a horse as a gift?"

"With the greatest pleasure," the *Chasid* responded.

"If so, I would like the black horse," the *Rebbe* stated.

"The *Rebbe* specifically wants that black one?" the *Chasid* asked.

"Yes. Is there a problem?" the *Rebbe* asked.

"Well, possibly. This horse works like ten horses. He is quick getting the job done and is waiting for more work. It is a great loss to give up that horse."

"I specifically want that horse," the *Rebbe* said. "If you have difficulty parting with that horse, fine, but I am not interested in any other horse."

"*Rebbe*, please," the *Chasid* pleaded. "Any other horse would be no problem. It is just that this

horse is very special.”

The *Rebbe* thought for a moment. “I am sure you have many promissory notes which attest to people owing you money. Can I have one of these documents?” the *Rebbe* asked.

“Surely, *Rebbe*, anything and I will be most honored to give the *Rebbe* a document.”

The *Chasid* immediately called for a servant to bring the document box containing all of the debts. The *Rebbe* rummaged through the box and, after a moment, raised up a certain document and said, “I want this one!”

Once again, the wealthy *Chasid* asked, “The *Rebbe* specifically wants this one?”

“Yes. This is the one I want. Is there a problem?” the *Rebbe* asked.

“This is a lost document. The man who owed me the money passed away and his sons deny the loan and refuse to pay. The *Rebbe* would do well taking another document.”

The *Rebbe* insisted on taking that document. He was not willing to exchange it for another one.

“Well, if this is what the *Rebbe* wants, it is his, and I am most happy to give this document to the *Rebbe* as a gift.” the *Chasid* said.

“Are you giving it to me willingly, without any second thoughts?” the *rebbe* asked.

“Certainly. It belongs to the *Rebbe*.”

“*Rav Meir Premishlaner* made a *kinyan*, actively acquiring the document into his possession and said to the *Chasid*, “Now the debt owed to you is instead owed to me. Correct?”

“Yes. The debt now is owed to the *Rebbe*. It is no longer mine.”

“If so,” said the *Rebbe*, “I write off the loan. The deceased no longer owes any money. The loan is absolved.”

Five minutes went by, and the *Chasid*’s stable hand came running in and said, “The black horse just died suddenly. One minute it was standing there. The next, it was dead!”

The *Chasid* realized that he had been punished by Heaven for refusing to give the horse to the *Rebbe*. He immediately turned to the holy sage and begged his forgiveness for his insolence.

The *Rebbe* calmed him down, “It had nothing to do with you. The man who owed you the money

passed away before he could pay you back. In Heaven, however, one is not permitted to receive his reward in *Olam Habba*, World to Come, until his obligations in this world have been settled. Since he owed you money, it was decreed that he should return to this world reincarnated as a horse, where he would work for you, without reward, of course. Thus, he would pay back his loan.

“Your black horse worked so hard, because he was the *gilgul*, reincarnation, of the fellow who owed you money. He wanted to pay back the loan as quickly as possible. When I came to your house, I noticed how hard the horse was working and took pity on him. This is why I wanted the horse. Had you given him to me right away, it would have been considered to be the absolution of the loan. You refused, so I was compelled to ask for that loan. Once I received it as a gift and wrote it off, the horse had fulfilled his function in this world and could now return to his eternal repose.”

The *Chafetz Chaim* underscores the significance of not retaining in one's possession funds that are not his. While, at times, many of us are compelled to borrow from another for economic reasons, paying back the loan should always be our first priority. It goes without saying that, if one has money in his possession that had been appropriated unethically, he should return it immediately.

We now understand why Yisro employed a *lashon*, vernacular, which is usually reserved for speaking to – and concerning – the deceased. Yisro was intimating that, if justice prevails as the result of competent and honest judges, the litigants who are involved will ultimately find their eternal repose without issue. Monetary issues will be dealt with by men of sterling character. Thus, no one will be “left behind” due to monetary issues.