

## May the angel who redeems me from all evil bless the lads, and may my name be declared upon them, and the names of my forefathers, Avraham and Yitzchak. (48:16)

Why does Yaakov mention his own name before he mentions his father and grandfather? Why does he not demonstrate the *mitzvah* of *Kibud Av*, honoring one's father? *Horav Dovid Feinstein, Shlita*, suggests a practical reason for this omission: Yaakov was saying that his grandsons should be a source of such *nachas* that not only should I be pleased, but even my forefathers will be filled with *nachas*. *Kol Yehudah* suggests that Yaakov was referring to the attributes represented by each of the Patriarchs. Avraham *Avinu* devoted himself to the *middah* of *chesed*. He reached out with kindness to an entire world. He was the epitome of altruism. Yitzchak *Avinu* symbolized the concept of *avodah*, service to Hashem, through prayer and devotion. Yaakov *Avinu* was the symbol of *Torah*. Together, the *Avos* represent *Torah*, *avodah* and *gemilus chasadim*, which are the three attributes which support and maintain the world.

We now understand why Yaakov placed his name prior to that of his father and grandfather. He blessed his grandsons that they should merit to grow in *Torah*. It should be their prime focus and direct their lives. Afterwards, once they would have become suffused with *Torah*, he mentioned "*v'sheim avosai*," and the names of my forefathers. They could then focus on *avodah* and *gemilus chasadim*. One will attain the attributes of *avodah* and *chesed* from *Torah*; from the *chesed* and *avodah*, one does not necessarily achieve involvement in *Torah*.

Along similar lines, this writer once heard the following from his *rebbe*, **Horav Chaim Mordechai Katz, zl** regarding the *Mishnah* in *Peah 1:1*, in which the *Torah* enumerates those *mitzvos* which illustrate that a person eats his fruit in this world, but the principle endures till *Olam Habah*: Honoring one's parents; acts of loving kindness; attendance at the synagogue; opening one's home to wayfarers; visiting the sick; marrying off a young woman; attending to the needs of the deceased; prayer; establishing harmony among people and husband and wife. Those are the social *mitzvos* that engender incredible reward. The *Mishnah* closes with the statement, "*V'talmud Torah k'neged kulam*," "And the study of *Torah* is opposite /greater than all of them." This *Mishnah* seems to imply that while social *mitzvos* are certainly important, they do not replace *Torah* study. Study retains primacy over all other *mitzvos*. The text, however, does not support this interpretation. The words "*k'neged kulam*" should be translated as "opposite them." Instead we are translating it as "goes above them."

*Horav Katz* explained that the *Mishnah* teaches us an important lesson. Every endeavor which a Jew takes upon himself to perform, regardless of its purpose, must be "stood up" opposite the *Torah* and reviewed: Does it meet the *Torah's halachic* criteria of right and wrong? While these *mitzvos* are noble and virtuous, they must follow the standards and guidelines set forth by the *Torah* -- or they can be transformed into a negative endeavor. Establishing a *shul* is truly a wonderful undertaking, but one must address the appropriateness of the time and place of this

*mitzvah*. Performing an act of altruism does not grant one license to do as he pleases. Everything we do must be addressed by the *Torah* or the act loses its credibility.