

If a man articulates a vow to Hashem regarding a valuation of human beings. (27:2)

Just as people may vow to contribute specific values of money to the *Bais Hamikdash*, so, too, may one vow to contribute the value of oneself or of another person. The word *erech* means valuation. Thus, one who contributes the *erech*, value, of a person, follows the Torah's guidelines concerning valuation. The Torah values people according to age and gender. The value of a Jew is measured in spiritual sanctity which we, as human beings, are unable to evaluate. Thus, the Torah gives specific guidelines with regard to equal values of Jews.

Noticeably, the *parsha* of *arachin*, evaluations, follows immediately after the Rebuke, which details the many curses that will accompany the Jewish people in the event their faith and trust in Hashem wanes, leading them to eventual apostasy. Is there a connection between the laws of *arachin* and the *Tochachah*? *Horav David Jungreis, zl, Av Bais Din* in Yerushalayim, gave the following practical insight.

The laws of evaluations apply only to a Jew. When a gentile desires to donate his personal value to the *Bais Hamikdash*, we will take his contribution, but not on the same value scale as a Jew. In other words, the value system which applies to Jews applies only to Jews. A gentile's value is commensurate with his personal, individual worth. If he is big and strong, or if he is a powerful person, obviously his value will be commensurate to his worth. If he is a wimp, likewise will be his value. A Jew's value is static, as prescribed by the Torah. Why is this? Should not a Jew who has been through a number of physical and emotional challenges have diminished value? Should not a Jew who is physically inept, weak, physically challenged, draw a lower price on the evaluation market?

No, explains *Rav Jungreis*. Regardless of a Jew's physical appearance or prowess, even if he could not fetch a decent price on the market of human value, the mere fact that he is a Jew grants him equal value with any other Jew. Why is this? Should a person who has been physically traumatized – and looks it -- have the same value as one who is a “perfect” specimen of humanity? Yes, because when a Jew experiences travail it does not diminish him. On the contrary, it purifies his soul and elevates it to a higher, more sublime status. We grow from our pain. Our troubles elevate us. A Jew does not declare, “What am I worth now that I have suffered so much?” Even if a Jew were to experience (*chas v'shalom*, Heaven forbid) every curse in the Rebuke, it will not lower his value one iota!

The *parsha* of *arachin* is meant to console us, to hearten us with the knowledge that a Jew's value does not decrease despite his suffering. Those of us who have merited to meet and know survivors of the European Holocaust can attest to this verity. A Jew does not decrease in value.