

Good Shabbos Everyone. It states in the verse in this week's parsha, "And you shall be guiltless before Hashem and Yisroel." (BaMidbar 32:22) From these words, our Sages teach us that a Jew must always be sure that his actions are understood as proper by the people who observe them. (Yoma 38a) In other words, a Jew should not act in a way which may cause others to suspect him of wrongdoing. For example, one who is gravely ill heaven forbid, would be allowed to eat on Yom Kippur. However, such a person should eat privately so as not to raise the suspicion of others who may not know that he is gravely ill. Thus, such a person should not sit out on his front porch and eat on Yom Kippur.

Rabbi Yisrael Sekula, the late Sadavner Rav, was a man of great Torah scholarship, warmth, kindness, and personal integrity. He went to great lengths to avoid any hint of wrong-doing, both between man and Hashem, and man and his fellow. For many years, he was the mashgiach (kashrus supervisor) of a very successful Pesach hand-matzah bakery.

It was well known that the Sadavner Rav employed the strictest standards in making sure that the matzos were kosher for Pesach beyond any doubt. After many years, the bakery was put up for sale, and the Sadavner Rav decided to purchase it. It was assumed that he would remain as mashgiach (kosher supervisor;) he was universally respected as a talmid chacham - a Torah Scholar who could be relied upon. It seemed unnecessary to place the bakery under someone else's supervision.

The Sadavner Rav disagreed. "I am now running a business," he reasoned. "A businessman should not be deciding matters of Halachah in his own place of business." He, therefore, arranged for the renowned posek, Rabbi Moshe Bick, to serve as the bakery's mashgiach.

Toward the end of his long life, the Sadavner Rav suffered a stroke and was severely incapacitated. It was his custom to "shlag kaparos" before Yom Kippur at a place only a block away from his home. In his last year, this short trip was a very strenuous journey. It took one -half hour for his sons to bring him down one flight of stairs. But the Rav was insistent; he would go to do the mitzvah as in years past, only this time in a wheelchair.

By the time the Rav arrived at his destination, accompanied by his distinguished sons, there stood a long line of people waiting to purchase birds for the kaparos ritual. The Rav's sons knew that their father was in no condition to sit and wait on line for the hour or so it would take until his turn came. They suggested to their father that he allow them to wheel him to the front of the line. Surely, they reasoned, everyone would gladly allow an obviously ill person to go ahead of him.

The Sadavner Rav told his sons, "These people came ahead of me. I have no right to go ahead of them and make them wait that much longer. It is not worth it to do the mitzvah if this will cause a single Jew — even a child — any aggravation. I will wait my turn." The Rav's son, concerned that the strain was already taking its toll on him, responded that they were positive that no one would be upset. The ailing Rav then replied, "If I am to go ahead of them, you must wheel me down the line slowly and allow me to ask permission of each person and apologize for inconveniencing him."

So, with a tube in his throat which made mere speaking a strain, the Sadavner Rav apologetically asked each person, including children, permission to go ahead.

When the Rav had completed the ritual, he said to his sons, "These people granted permission only for me to go ahead of them. You, however, were not given any such permission.

The world-renowned posek Rabbi Yosef Sholom Elyashev (who passed away yesterday at the age of 102), of Jerusalem, was granted a fitting partner in life. Rebbetzin Chaya Sheina Elyashev, daughter of the renowned tzaddik Rabbi Aryeh Levin, dedicated herself to the Torah study of her husband and children and to acts of kindness. R' Elyashev sets aside one hour a day to allow anyone to visit him in his small Meah Shearim apartment and ask questions in Halachah.

People are admitted into his study on a first-come, first-served basis. On a visit to Eretz Yisrael, Rabbi Nosson Scherman sought to ask R' Elyashev a halachic question. As R' Scherman waited his turn, along with a number of others, Rebbetzin Elyashev appeared. She went over to each person in the room and said, "I must ask the Rav something. Excuse me for going in ahead of you." Only after saying this to each person individually did Rebbetzin Elyashev enter her husband's study. (from Shabbos Stories, p. 195, R. Shimon Finkelman) **Good Shabbos Everyone.**