



נעימות החיים
Ne'imas HaChaim Project
In memory of Naama Markovits A"H
לע"נ נעמה חנה ע"ה ב"ר יהודה איסר נ"י



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Lesson #3: Don't Push

(Prepared by Yisroel Meir David)

In the infamous Nazi concentration camps, the women had to sleep in horribly cramped and dreadful conditions. Groups of two or three woman slept on wooden boards, which were stacked one on top of the other. In one barrack there happened to be a "luxury" - a thin and small mattress that had somehow remained. The women took turns sleeping on it, looking forward to their turn that came once every two months.

Miriam, a girl of about twenty, was eagerly awaiting her upcoming chance with much anticipation. She was exhausted from the daily backbreaking labor. On the night of her turn, however, an obstacle developed. A few women in the barrack approached her and told her about an older woman who was on the verge of death. They wanted to know if she would give up her spot since she was younger and a bit stronger. At first Miriam was very upset, so what if she was younger, was she not a person too? After much deliberation and after extracting much inner strength, she gave up her spot for the older woman. She's dying, Miriam thought, at least maybe her last night in this dreaded place will be one of a little more comfort.

Miriam crawled on to her normal slab of wood and fell asleep. In the middle of the night there was a great commotion in the barrack. Apparently some of the Nazis outside had become drunk and for amusement's sake had started shooting through the open window of the barrack. The woman at the window, the one on the mattress, was killed instantly. Miriam could not believe it. By not pushing to maintain her spot she had saved her life!

People tend to push, whether physically or verbally, when they feel that something that is coming to them is being blocked from their reach. It is certainly disturbing to see someone push others out of their way in order to attain what is clearly not due to them, such as a the bully pushing his way to the front of an already formed line. It is also disturbing to see someone push in order to attain what is rightfully theirs, as our value system dictates that it is better to forego the expected privilege or right rather than to exhibit behaviors of frustration and self centeredness.

When an obstacle develops, we must try to find a way to avoid the obstacle rather than push it to the side. Sometimes that is not possible, and in such a case we should still refrain from pushing even if it requires giving up even that which is rightfully deserved.

So frowned upon is the one who pushes that the family of Eily HaKohen were punished for all generations due to the bullying tactics employed by Eily's children. Let us work on ourselves to find the pleasant way to interact with others when it comes to obstacles that are placed in our path by trying to circumvent such obstacles and, if necessary, to forego what we were seeking rather than pushing others to achieve our goals.