

## Chesed-Shel-Emes

Chesed-Shel-Emes is the description given to those involved in the Mitzvah of burying the dead. This name is derived from this week's Parsha, when Jacob summons his son Joseph to his bedside and requests: "You shall perform with me kindness and truth (Chesed V'Emes), please do not bury me in Egypt" [B'reishis (Genesis), 47:29].

Rashi's explanation is the most common one given as to why this particular area of kindness is truer than others. He explains that this is one chesed that can never be reciprocated since the recipient is dead. Another well-known explanation given is that of the Ksav Sofer who explains that a decision guided by kindness alone would have suggested burial in Egypt where Jacob's family would be able to visit and pray at his grave and he could be a source of comfort to his progeny during the years of their bondage. However, truth demanded that he be taken to Israel for his burial.

Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetsky, Zt"l, in a conversation we had in Florida a few years before his passing, expanded on this idea, making it quite relevant to our world. He pointed out that most people are seeking to give respect and be kind to their loved ones when they pass on. However, because they are not guided by truth (Emes), they make all kinds of choices that are, in the view of our Torah, which is Toras Emes, the very antithesis of respect and kindness. Included in this category are decisions to cremate, embalm, bury in a mausoleum, delay burial, view the body, etc.

This Parsha is therefore a very opportune time to educate our people regarding all the various laws that lead to K'vura K'Halacha.

Death, burial plans and all such sobering topics are the perfect segue into many basic concepts such as: 1) Olam Habah. 2) Reward & Punishment. 3) T'Chiyas Hameisim. 4) What happens to the soul when we die? 5) Why not cremation? Everyone in the Jewish community who is knowledgeable in these matters should be encouraged to reach out to extended family, neighbors, co-workers, friends, etc. While it requires sensitivity as well as knowledge to discuss these matters, a great deal of good can come out of such intervention, before a crisis arises and the time to discuss this may have passed. This is the greatest Chesed-Shel-Emes, to be able to enhance another's eternity. Reb Yaakov believed this to be a modern-day equivalent of Mais Mitzvah.

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