

# ARVUS - COMMUNAL RESPONSIBILITY

by Joshua Kruger

## The Story

Sarah was thrilled to finally have her friend from across the street, Liya, come over to her house to play one afternoon. The two of them sat down at a small table along with their teddy bears and made a pretend tea party. They were having a great time pouring the pretend tea into little cups and helping their teddies partake in the fun.

Sarah's mom came into the room and smiled when she saw how nicely the girls had set up their table. A moment later she came back into the room with a little jug of chocolate milk. "Liya and Sarah, I'm so happy to see how nicely you are playing with each other. I thought you should use this chocolate milk for your party!"

The girls (and their teddy bears) were delighted! They carefully filled their cups with the chocolate milk.

Sarah recited the bracha and began to drink. Liya shyly looked at Sarah's mother and said quietly "Can you say the blessing for me? I really don't know the words to say." She held up her cup of chocolate milk and waited.

Sarah's mother quickly thought about the situation. If she was not going to drink chocolate milk herself then wouldn't it be a *bracha l'vatalah*?

## Discussion

**Q:** What is the connection between our story and the parasha?

**B:** *Parshas Bechukotai* teaches that if the Jewish people do not follow the Torah then they will be punished. One of the bad things that will happen is that we will "stumble over each other" (*Vayikra* 26:37). *Rashi* explains that when one Jew makes a mistake and commits an *aveira*, it causes problems for all Jews. Therefore, we all have a responsibility to help our fellow Jews follow the Torah. This is called *Arvus*. Sarah's mother has a responsibility to help Liya follow the Torah.

**Q:** Is Sarah's mother allowed to say the full bracha on the chocolate milk, for Liya's sake?

**A:** If a fellow Jew asks for our help to say the *bracha* for a *mitzvah* then we are allowed to say the *bracha* with *Hashem's* name, even though we ourselves are not performing the *mitzva*. However, the situation in our story is different because drinking chocolate milk is not a *mitzva* and it does not have

to be done. Therefore the concern about saying *Hashem's* name in vein becomes more problematic. In fact, the poskim rule that we are not allowed to make the *bracha* for someone when no *mitzvah* is involved. There is one exception though. If the person who needs help is a child and they will learn to make the *bracha* by themselves if they year an adult make the *bracha*, then then the adult can in fact make the full *bracha* with Hashem's name. So Sarah's mother can make the *bracha* for Liya (*Mishna Berura* 167:19).

### **Back to Our Story**

Sarah's mother slowly recited the bracha for Liya, and Liya carefully said the words with her. Liya smiled over her teacup of chocolate milk as she sipped it.

"Mommy, it's okay for you to say the bracha because it helps teach us, right?" asked Sarah

"That's right!" answered Mommy, "I'm allowed to help you and Liya with your brachos. It's a special rule for children. But, just in case you had any funny ideas, please remember that it is not the rule for any teddy bears, no matter how cute or thirsty they might be, okay?"

(Written by Josh and Tammy Kruger in collaboration with Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer of the Institute for Dayanim, and based on the following article by Rabbi Aryeh Citron:  
[http://m.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/892799/jewish/Responsibility-for-a-Fellows-Religious-Obligations.htm](http://m.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/892799/jewish/Responsibility-for-a-Fellows-Religious-Obligations.htm))