

CELLULAR KAVANNA

To whom exactly is he talking this man with the cellular phone? Standing next to the Western Wall, is he talking to God? He doesn't need a cellular phone for that. He is standing within earshot of God at the Wall, for heaven's sake. To a friend or a business associate? To his wife? None of these can wait? He needs to talk on a cellular phone while he is standing at the Kotel?

Is it so urgent, this conversation? It can't wait, this communication? This black-hatted man talking into his cellular phone at the Kotel, telling someone at the other end that he will be a half-hour late because there is much traffic around the Kotel—what would he have done last year before he owned this cellular phone? He would have been a half-hour late because there was so much traffic around the Kotel, and neither his life nor the affairs of mankind would have been affected.

This bearded, black-suited man at the Kotel talking earnestly into his cellular phone: why does he not daven, or recite *tehillim*, or just contemplate the Wall, or just think about where he is and let the place quietly penetrate his being? Why must he talk to his friend or his associate or his wife for so long a time, why must he pace back and forth before the Wall, apologizing for being late, reminding his listener to meet him on the corner of Yafo and Strauss near the camera shop at 4:30 instead of 4:00 and to remember to bring the package—all the time oblivious to the reality of where he is now standing?

This man at the Kotel informs his listener that right now he cannot talk any more, he is joining a *minyan* for *minha*. He folds up his cellular phone, slips it into his pocket, and begins *ashrei*. He sways powerfully to and fro, back and forth, opens his palms outward as he recites *pote'ah et yadekha*, bows deeply as he recites the *amida*, answers *amen* earnestly during the repetition, closes his eyes as he recites the *kedusha*, recites "who has not made us like the nations of the earth" with fervor, and responds *yehei shemei rabba* with passion.

As *minha* comes to an end and the last *kaddish* is recited, he slips his hand into his pocket. At the final *amen* he pulls out his phone and dials his friend or associate or wife and tells him/her that he has just finished *minha* and will be leaving the Kotel in a few moments, and please remember to bring the package.

As he prepares to leave, he glances at his watch, swiftly approaches

the Wall, leans forward, lowers his head, places his hand on the stones and kisses the Wall fervently. Out of respect to the Wall he does not turn his back to it as he leaves. He makes his exit from the immediate Kotel area, pulls the phone out of his pocket, and dials. "I am leaving now. See you in a few minutes."

The bus fills up and winds its way into town. At 4:31 the bus arrives at the corner of Yafo and Strauss. He alights from the bus and walks briskly to the camera shop. It is 4:35. No one is there waiting for him. He pulls out his phone and dials. "You're coming? Oh yes, I see you now."

The person approaches. "I see you didn't forget the package. Thank you very much. How much is it?"

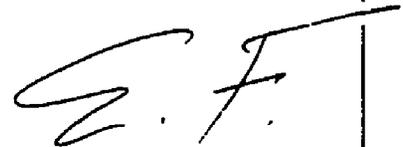
"Right now we won't talk money. I want you should try it out for a few days, then we'll talk money. I tell you, you will love this one. First of all, it has a very strong reception. You can send and receive calls even from New York. And clear? Clear like a bell. Better yet, it also has a fax on it, to send and to receive. You can also send and receive email, and it connects to your computer. And it has an address book and a reminder notebook—the absolute latest thing on the market. Top of the top of the top of the line. And you can do all that with just one finger, so no matter what you are doing, no matter where you are, you can be in touch with the whole world, and the whole world can be in touch with you."

"Sounds wonderful. Fine. I will talk to you in a few days. Thank you."

He presses one button on the new phone. "Hello? I am using the new phone. It is great. With one finger I can be in touch with the whole world. And clear like a bell. I am on the way home and will be there in a few minutes. But first I want to grab in a *ma'ariv*."

In the little shul on Yafo he recites *borekhu* with zeal, sways powerfully back and forth, to and fro, bows deeply as he recites the *amida*, answers *amen* earnestly during the *kaddish*, recites "who has not made us like the nations of the earth" with fervor, and responds *yehei shemei rabba* with passion.

As *ma'ariv* comes to an end and the last *kaddish* is recited, he slips his hand into his pocket and fingers the phone. At the final *amen* he pulls it out and looks at it admiringly. He can think of no one to call. He heads for home.



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