



*Revealing the inner beauty of the Torah in a way that touches and inspires the Jewish soul*

## **DRIVERS EDUCATION COURSE FOR AVOIDING SPIRITUAL CRASHES**

By: Rabbi Yehoshua Binyamin Falk

As conceptualized by the futurists of the transportation industry, a synthesis between man's physical dexterity and his ingenuity is now being designed that will allow a far greater benefit for safety on the road. The next generation of cars is a case in point, as they will be able to act and react for the benefit of the drivers and in conjunction with them to help avoid or minimize collisions before they occur.

There has been slow but steady progress toward that end with some of the devices already available while others are still in the works. Many of us are familiar with "anti-lock brakes" that can stop the car without interfering with the driver's steering ability; "electronic stability controls" which permit recovery from a fast turn and back-up warning lights and sounds that help the driver steer clear of obstacles in the rear. But are we ready for the gadgets still on the drawing board like the device that warns the driver that the car is drifting out of its lane, or "adaptive cruise control" that allows for the maintenance of a safe distance between cars. Someday soon cars may be equipped with "intelligent cruise control" which will prevent rear-enders by slowing the car down before it gets too close. My favorite new device is called the "drowsy-driving monitor" which uses the number of eye blinks as a gauge of the driver's drowsiness. When a driver exceeds the norm, the system begins to call out "wake up - wake up". Another one of my favorites is called "adaptive headlights" which shine their beams according to the curves in the road.

When the first mass-produced automobile rolled off the assembly line more than 100 years ago, a deep and enduring bond between man and car was forged - a rather expensive attachment that persists to this day. First and foremost is the original outlay for the car itself, and then there is the ongoing gas, oil, tune-ups, repairs, insurance and parking expenses - yet based upon the vast numbers of cars on the roads, it would seem that these figures are not daunting. Owning a car for many, seems as much of a necessity as having a place to live and food on the table. The Sages inform us that everything that exists in the physical plane has its roots and its counterpart in the spiritual realm. Therefore let us see whether we can understand our connection with the modalities of transportation from a spiritual perspective. Let us first ask ourselves just what is the deeper purpose and symbolic meaning of a car. Its main function is to act as a convenient, efficient and speedy mode of transport. Therefore, it behooves to introspect into the spiritual meaning of travel and movement.

All of us daily have many opportunities to "travel spiritually from place to place", however, those places are located on a "map" of a "territory" we could call the "realm of the soul", whose form is defined through concepts of "Supernal pleasure and will". The "roads" traveled towards our "destination" are not only through prayer and contemplation through (Torah) The Five Books of Moses, but also through acts of chesed and acts of what we will call ("halachic determinism") guidance by supernal law. Indeed, "the academy of Eliyahu the prophet taught: 'One who studies Torah laws every day, has the assurance that he will inherit the world to come, as it is said, 'The ways of the world are His' - do not read - halichos - ways, but - halachos - laws." (Megillah 28b). Because we cannot use our earthly eyes to see or our limbs to "navigate" this "terrain", halacha for us becomes both the "road map and guide" regardless of whether our means of "travel" is through tefilla (prayer), learning Torah or acts of chesed (kindness). When the "esoteric vehicle" we are using is tefilla, halacha helps us to avoid "collisions" or minimize the impact of a "crash". How many times have we found ourselves "drifting from the lane" of (kavana) focused thought, or "accelerating" to such high speeds that we "skid off the text": If one forgot the seasonal (nusach) text change, the halacha "pulls" us out of that "spin". And if one does not remember whether they said an after bracha, there will be a halacha to help put us "back on track".

There are also minhagim (customs) that come to our aid, to help us stay alert and focused throughout the tefilla. Each kehila (congregation) has rich, inspiring customs that enhance the davening experience. Thus the (ba'al tefilla) leader of the prayer sets the "spiritual course" for the minyan making fine adjustments in the "speed" and tone of the nusach in



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accordance with the "road conditions" - meaning that is in consonance with that unique set of - "co-ordinates" - circumstances that exist for those people at that specific place and time.

Our Torah is the "G.P.S. - Global Positioning System" that keeps us "spiritually on course" and guides us safely past any "pitfalls" or "detours". Keeping our "windshields of discernment" clean and our "headlights of insight" on "beam", helps us to renew our experience of Torah, as our perfectly crafted manual and road map" which has been given to us to offer "guidance and direction" each day. The Creator has entrusted each of us to "sit behind the wheel" choosing our specific "speed and direction" in our personal flawlessly designed "vehicle" whose price is measured in effort, fueled with ahava (love), steered by yeria (fear of the Almighty) and lubricated with (chesed) acts of kindness. May we all merit to reach the "finish line" safely together.

Oh by the way, the insurance premium is pro-rated according to the level of our effort and due diligence.

May we all merit a safe successful journey as we enter the final stage of our transcendental "road" course through ups and downs and turns and spins of life!

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First publication: Hamodia Newspaper