

Words Spoken at home of the Late
Charles Plottel

Source: Avot, Chapter 2

בוא ת'אמר ששם צרכים -- וי' פבוב חסד חסד
ע'ק בשם, ואם ח'י נ'שכח, ושוב י'ש א'ח'ז א'פ'י
מ'ח'ל'ק

(1) The first dictum does not merely require that we factually honor our fellow men. It makes a much greater demand upon us: That our whole attitude towards our fellow men be thoroughly benevolent, that the honor of others be "dear" or "beloved" to us. The ח'ל'ק demands not only social utility, but a spiritual-psychological transformation of our whole approach to other human beings.

(2) The second part of his advice is more than an admonition not to lose our temper quickly. Had that been his intention, he would have used the idiom ק'ש'ח'ס'א. ח'י implies satisfaction, a feeling of achievement. There are people who, when they lose their temper, feel a sense of relief and release, as if they had purged themselves of an unpleasant burden of resentment and hostility. Their anger, once vented, makes them feel ח'י. The ח'ל'ק demands not only that we exercise restraint in losing temper, but that if we should nevertheless turn irate, that we should regret this lapse of self-control rather than to submit to this deceptive feeling of psychological cleansing.

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(3) To repent one day before death means to spend one's life in the constant introspection and self-criticism, in the attempt to improve as long as we are given the gift of life.

Mr. Plottel, as a gentle, benevolent and God-fearing man, lived his life as if he were always returning to his Source. All his days were spend as if he were going to "Shul" -- just as he died on the way home from Shul on Sunday night...

He passed away on a significant day in his life: the yahrzeit of his mother. In a sense, this coincidence simbolized his affiliation with his past, his integration with the family and religious heritage. He was a man deeply loyal to tradition, to the Masoret, symbolized by his mother.

It is altogether fitting that his children after him continue the next link in the goden chain.