
Leo

Jay Liveson

Let's talk physics. The advantage
of a lever depends
on its length on opposite ends
of the fulcrum. Take
a 30 pound Torah scroll on a 20 inch roller,
counter this with a 6 inch handle
across the fulcrum—no leverage.
In fact, mechanical disadvantage.
This never bothered Leo, who,
through his seventies, maintained
his wrestler's arm strength.
Before his operation, he'd often
be honored with Hagbah—
lifting the Torah.
Young again with pride,
he'd grip the mahogany handles
tense powerful wrist muscles
lever it above his head.
He'd glory in holding it there
vertical, without a wobble,
exposing its calligraphed text
slowly, majestically
all his muscles pressing tight, up
from imagined mats, fighting
forgotten foes, the referee's count

as long as possible
before finally allowing it to rest
against his chest.
And there was a risk—drop the Torah,
we are warned, and
the congregation fasts. No fear
when it's Leo's turn. At least
before the operation.
Leo returned symptom free.
But his gait was a bit unsteady.
The shackling tubes
were long gone
leaving only raw suture sites
patches of numbness.
When he entered, eyes turned
Leo passed down the aisle
clasped warm enwrapping hands,
embraced relieved friends.
From the pulpit, relieved nods
that contrasted
with prayers offered weeks earlier
for his health.
There was a scrambling
of the ushering gabai.
What wouldn't we do for Leo?
Nothing was too good.
He was called to say
a special blessing
thanking God for survival.
No risk in that.

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