

The Weekly Farbrengens



לחמן ישמעו • כי תבוא תשע"ט • 532
EDITOR - RABBI SHIMON HELLINGER

REMEMBERING HIM (I)

HIDE-AND-SEEK

The chossid Reb Mendel Gurary was once traveling by train to his hometown, Kremenchug. The trip was days long and he was desperate for company, so he set about searching the cars for a Yid with whom he could converse. After some time, he spotted a figure in the corner wrapped in a blanket. Sensing that this was what he was looking for, Reb Mendel approached the figure and lifted the blanket. Sure enough, inside was the eminent chossid Reb Gershon Ber Paharer HaGadol, the *talmid* of Reb Hillel Paritcher. He was awake, but deep in thought, meditating on some concept in *Chassidus*.

Reb Gershon opened his eyes and exclaimed to the chossid in front of him, "Yungerman, yungerman! Remember to tell your children that *Hu levado ve'ein zulaso* - There is nothing else but *HaShem*."

(מפי חסידים, חסידים הראשונים ח"ב ע' 41)

As a young child, Reb Avrohom HaMalach, son of the Mezritcher Maggid, once played hide-and-seek with a friend. After some time Reb Avrohom came complaining to his father that he hid, but his friend did not come to look for him at all.

Hearing his child's words, the Maggid wept and said, "*HaShem*, too, complains that He hides from his children, but they don't look for Him. His real intention is that they should search for Him, and then they will surely find Him. Even when they merely *begin* searching for Him, He helps them and eases their search."

(לקוטי סיפורים פרלוב (חדש) ע' נז)

The Torah commands us to cleave to *HaShem*. How do we do that? The Sifrei explains that by learning *agгада* we come to recognize "the One who spoke and the world came into being."

(שוע"ר סי' קנ"ו ס"ד)

ALL DAY LONG

At the opening of the *Shulchan Aruch* the Rama writes:

"I hold *HaShem* before me at all times" is a major principle in the Torah and amongst the virtues of the righteous who walk before *HaShem*. For a person's way of sitting, moving and dealing while he is alone at home are not like when he is before a great king, and his speech and free expression are not as when he is with his household members like when he is in a royal audience. All the more so when one takes to heart that the Great King, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, Whose glory fills the earth, is standing over him and watching his actions, he will immediately acquire fear and submission in dread of *HaShem*, and will be ashamed of Him constantly.

(רמ"א או"ח סי' א' ס"א)

CONSIDER

Why is awareness of *HaShem's* presence such an important principle in Yiddishkeit?
If *HaShem* wants us to find Him, why does He hide at all?

In a letter of detailed instructions for *avoda*, the Alter Rebbe writes:

Always remember the Creator, as it is written, *Shivisi HaShem lenegdi tamid* - "I hold *HaShem* before me at all times." Forgetting about Him even for a brief moment should be viewed as a sin. Thus the Baal Shem Tov interpreted the *possuk* in *Tehillim*, "Praiseworthy is the man on whose account *HaShem* does not consider a sin," to mean, "Praiseworthy is the man for whom not considering *HaShem* at all times he views as a sin."

(אג"ק אדה"ז ע' שעד)

The father of Reb Menachem Mendel of Kosov was a *talmid* of the Baal Shem Tov by the name of Reb Kopel Shivisi. This is how he acquired his interesting name:

Reb Kopel was an extremely honest businessman. Before weighing goods, Reb Kopel would say "*Shivisi HaShem lenegdi tamid*," and remind himself of *HaShem's* presence. At the *yerid*, the regional fair, the *goyishe* merchants would trust him to weigh their goods. Whenever he would not show up the merchants would say, "If *Shivisi* isn't here, the *yerid* won't prosper".

From these words, the Baal Shem Tov derived a lesson in *avodas HaShem*: When a person is not sufficiently aware of *HaShem's* presence ("*shivisi*"), he cannot serve *HaShem* properly in his day-to-day life.

(אהלי צדיקים ע' סד, כתבי ר"י שו"ב אות ס', ליקוטי סיפורי התועדויות ע' 253)

CONSTANT REMINDER

The Czar once decreed that round hats without a brim may not be worn. The Alter Rebbe then said: "*Kelipa* is trying to block out the obligation, *Se'u marom eineichem* - 'Raise your eyes to the heavens,' as it is known that looking up at the sky is a *segula* for *yiras Shamayim*. Now therefore there must begin a new *avoda* - to turn the front-brimmed *kazirak* to the side."

(רשימת היומן ע' תנג)

The Baal Shem Tov taught that a person who is always conscious of *HaShem* can receive practical guidance every day from what he learned that morning, for *HaShem* thereby guides him to reach the correct conclusions. However, if his awareness of *HaShem* is sporadic, he does not merit this special insight. Lacking the heavenly guidance, he may not encounter (for example) the food and clothes with the sparks of *kedusha* designated for him to elevate.

(כש"ט סי' קצו)

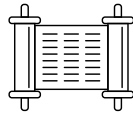


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CORRECTING THIEVERY

I once took an umbrella without permission, but I don't know whose it was. How can I do *teshuva*?

The Alter Rebbe writes in Igeres Hateshuva that the primary component of *teshuva* is abstaining from sin (*azivas hachet*), meaning the resolve to never again transgress this or any other sin.¹

While the *mitzva* of *teshuva* is completely fulfilled with one's return to Hashem, if one has stolen from another person, it must be returned—besides the primary *mitzva* of returning the stolen object (or in certain instances its value) "*v'heishiv es hagzeila*"²—also to demonstrate his *teshuva*, for until then we don't know whether he has truly done *teshuva*.³ If the stolen item doesn't exist anymore, then he must compensate its value.

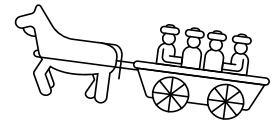
In order to make it easier for thieves to do *teshuva*, Chazal established that if a thief—whose living was such—comes forward **on his own** to do *teshuva* and compensate the value of items he stole **and no longer has**, one should forgive him and not accept money from him, in order to help him make the decision to mend his ways, even if the thief is well off (as Chazal didn't differentiate). Yet, this doesn't apply to stolen real estate.⁴

Chazal aren't pleased with someone who accepts the money.⁵ However, if the one who was robbed owes money to others, he should accept the money, for his *midas chassidus* doesn't overrule the obligation to pay back his debtors.⁶ Similarly, if the thief insists that he wishes to return the money in order to achieve complete atonement, one may accept it from him.⁷

If one doesn't know from whom he stole, he should donate the money towards communal needs (e.g. for the upkeep of an *eruv*, *shul* or *mikva*), with the hope of benefitting also the one he stole from.⁸ Since in this case there is no one to forgive his debt, he is therefore obligated to pay back.⁹ Still, this is not considered a full-fledged return.¹⁰

Poskim write that one should include in his will that some money should be left for communal needs, as many people have stolen during their lifetime and often doesn't even know from whom, thus this *tzedaka* will bring atonement.¹¹

If one borrowed money and doesn't know from whom, the obligation to give it towards communal needs doesn't apply, as the money did not come to him in a forbidden manner.¹²



REB BORUCH SHOLOM KAHN

Reb Boruch Sholom was born around the year 5630 (1870). His parents were both from Chabad families, and he visited the Rebbe Rashab quite often. He married in 5656 (1896) and later settled in Warsaw where he did business. During World War I he moved to Moscow, and he would host the Rebbe Rashab and the Frierdiker Rebbe when they visited the city. He regularly assisted in fundraising for Tomchei Temimim, and gave a lot of *tzedaka* himself. He passed away on 13 Shvat 5693 (1933).

Whenever the Frierdiker Rebbe would ask him for something, Reb Boruch Sholom would do it in the best possible manner. Once, the Frierdiker Rebbe asked him to purchase a set of mattresses for his parents (the Rebbe Rashab and Rebbetzin Shterna Sara). Reb Boruch Sholom went to the biggest store he knew and requested the best mattresses. Whatever they showed him, he asked for better ones until they said that they had prepared two mattresses for Czar Nikolai, and if he wished they could give those to him and prepare other ones for

the czar. Only then did he ascertain that he had obtained the best. He purchased the mattresses and sent them to the Rebbe.

(לב הארי ע' 24)

At a *farbrengen* in Rostov, the Rebbe Rashab announced that he needed funds for his holy activities. He took a sum of money, placed it in an envelope and proclaimed, "Whoever will give a sum like the amount in the envelope, will receive this money." The chassidim present began to offer different amounts until Reb Boruch Sholom said, "I will give ten times the amount in the envelope!" The Rebbe Rashab gave him the envelope with the money saying, "This is for you." When he opened it he found two hundred ruble. He excused himself to the Rebbe and confessed that he didn't have all the money he promised with him at that time. The Rebbe calmed him and said, "I trust you. You will send the money soon." And so it was.

(לב הארי ע' 28)

A Moment with The Rebbe



THE FLOWER GARDEN

Rebbetzin Chavah Hecht relates:

Years ago, the concept of a *mechitza* was not yet accepted in America, even among *frum Yidden*.

Once in *yechidus*, the Rebbe said to me, "I hear your sister is getting married. It would be worthwhile to ensure that there be a *mechitza* at her *chassuna*."

I found it difficult to tell my sister what to do, but I told the Rebbe that in Montreal they made a *mechitza* out of woven flowers.

The Rebbe said, "Nu..."

"But it's so expensive," I argued, still uncomfortable with the idea of mixing into my sister's business.

The Rebbe committed to pay for it. Ultimately, my sister agreed and of course we didn't take any money from the Rebbe. All the guests remember the beautiful wedding, with its *Yiddishe chein*. It felt like a flower garden.

(Sipur Ishi, page 126)

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