MAKING A KIDDUSH HASHEM

Chazal explain that the mitzvah to love HaShem requires that a Yid should act in a way that makes Him beloved by others. When a person learns Torah and deals honestly in business, people will say, “How great is he who learns Torah; how wonderful are his ways! Woe to one who does not learn Torah! We promise that we too will now learn and teach our children Torah as well.” But when (chas veshamayim) a person who learns Torah does not act honestly, people will say the opposite, causing a chillul HaShem.

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The Rebbe explained that dealing honestly means going even beyond the requirements of halacha. One should do so also when dealing with goyim, thus creating a kiddush HaShem.

The king asked one man if he had a son, and the other, if he had a daughter. He advised that their children get married and the treasure be given to the new couple. Alexander looked on in amazement.

"Didn't I judge well?" queried the King of Katzia. "Sure!" replied Alexander the Great. "But if I had been the arbitrator, I would have killed them both, and taken the treasure for the kingdom's coffers..."

The King of Katzia then asked, "Does the sun shine in your country?" "Yes," replied Alexander.

"Does it rain?" He nodded affirmatively.

"Do you have animals?" "Yes," he said.

"Well, then," declared the King of Katzia, "the sun shines and the rain falls in the merit of those animals."

When he was a lad of fourteen, Reb Baruch, the Alter Rebbe’s father, left his hometown, Vitebsk, and traveled through many villages. Arriving in Dobromysl, he settled down to learn in the beis medrash. One day, a man came over to him and introduced himself. "My name is Eliezer Reuven, and I have a smithy on the outskirts of town. I live nearby, and I could use some help, so if you would care for such a job, I would provide you with food and drink and a place to sleep."

Baruch was overjoyed, for this was exactly what he had wanted. He was prepared to do the hardest labor as long as he would earn his own piece of bread, without having to rely on anyone’s tzedaka, but asked to be paid with money, so he would not have to eat and sleep in the homes of strangers.

He worked conscientiously at the smithy throughout the day, and in the evening, he would go to the beis medrash to learn. And the more he observed Eliezer Reuven, the more he respected him, for all day, as he stood hammering the red-hot iron, he would recite Tehillim by heart, kapitel after kapitel.

The smith's customers were the peasants of the surrounding villages, who would bring their wagons and tools to be repaired. Baruch noticed the exceptional honesty and devotion with which Eliezer Reuven treated his customers, never overcharging them even a fraction of a cent. One day in particular, Baruch noticed something which made a deep impression on him. A peasant from a nearby village had brought his horse to the smith for shoeing and at the same time he brought the wheel of his wagon to be fixed. Another peasant had brought his horse to have four new shoes put on. When the time came to ask for the money, Eliezer Reuven mistakenly charged the second peasant the amount he should have charged the first one, overcharging him six groschen.

Both peasants had already left when Eliezer Reuven realized his mistake. He was so upset about it that he immediately set off on foot to this peasant’s village about three miles away, to give him back the tiny overcharged amount. Baruch was astounded. He had never seen such meticulousness on the part of an ordinary person. He asked the smith if he really thought it had been worthwhile to walk the six-mile distance for a matter of a mere six groschen.

Eliezer Reuven replied, "About the people who lived before the mabul, it is written that they were so corrupt that they were not even bothered when robbing from someone less than a little prutah. Would you really want me to behave even worse than the people of that wicked generation and rob a man of six groschen?"
LAST MINUTE SHABBOS

I forgot to turn on the hot water urn and it’s past shkia. Anything I can do?

On erev Shabbos, one must cease all melacha a little bit before sunset. After sunset, it is prohibited min haTorah to do any melacha since it may be considered night. Since, however, the time of bein hashmashos until tzais (three stars) has somewhat of a doubtful status, and is considered an “extension” of Shabbos, Chazal permit rabbinic Shabbos prohibitions to be waived during this time for mitzvah purposes, an urgent need, or a pressing Shabbos need even if not urgent.

One may move muktzas if needed, and one may place fully cooked food on the blech as long as there is no issue of bishul. One may tovel utensils if he has no other utensils for Shabbos or establish an eruv chatzeiros to permit carrying in a shared area (but not an eruv techumin which is like an acquisition).

A number of factors brought R. Zalman to Chassidus. One of them was as follows: R. Binyamin Kletzker, a great chossid of the Alter Rebbe, once visited R. Zalman’s town for Shabbos Zachor. As the parsha of Amalek was read from the Torah, Reb Zalman noticed strong emotions of hate and disgust on R. Binyamin’s face, something that he had never witnessed before. R. Binyamin’s davening also made a deep impression on him. After davening, he approached him and asked, “Could you tell me what evil Amalek caused you that you hate him so much?” R. Binyamin said, “Our Rebbe explained what Amalek is all about.” “Could I meet your Rebbe?” R. Zalman inquired. R. Binyamin sent a letter with Reb Zalman to R. Meir Refael’s asking him to accept the young man and send him to Liozna.

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The Alter Rebbe would recite Chassidus for the older and newer Chassidim separately, and was very particular that neither group should attend the other’s Chassidus. R. Zalman, already a seasoned chossid, wanted very much to attend the “yungeh Chassidus.” He asked his roommate in Liozna—a newer chossid—to notify him when he is called to a maamar so he could sneak in. That afternoon R. Zalman was napping, and when heard about the maamar, he rushed out without washing negel vasser. When the Alter Rebbe entered the room he fervently exclaimed, “What’s this? Without negel vasser?!?” R. Zalman quickly escaped.

Before his passing, R. Zalman said that he could account for every second of his life for the past seven years.

COULD WE TALK IN YIDDISH YET?

Harav Shlomo Giladi, rosh hakolel of Ohr Zorua of Rechovot, relates:

I was a bochur in 770 in 5725 (1965). As one of the seven kanim in niggel, our rosh yeshiva Harav Mentlik insisted that I deliver a pilpul. He brushed aside my protests that I didn’t speak Yiddish, and encouraged me to give the shiur in Ivrit.

As I was talking, I noticed some bochurim getting up from their places. At first, I thought that it was due to the language barrier, but later my friends told me that the Rebbe had come out of his room and was standing in the hallway, listening into the shiur. They all moved, so as not to block the Rebbe’s view.

I was of course honored that the Rebbe listened in. However, during my next yechidus, the Rebbe asked me, “Can we talk in Yiddish yet?”

Kuntres Divrei Rashag, Rechovot 5771)