

HEARING GOOD

Unceasing Sound Waves

One of the first chassidim who came to Lubavitch after the Mitteler Rebbe settled there in תקע"ג (1813) was the eminent chossid, Reb Hillel Paritcher. The Mitteler Rebbe had instructed his chassidim that whenever they were traveling home, they should stay over in every town through which they passed, and *chazer a maamar* that they had recently heard.

Once, when Reb Hillel was about to return home, he asked the Rebbe what he should do about this directive, because the villagers whom he would meet on his way were simple folk who could not grasp the abstract concepts of *Chassidus*.

The Rebbe went into deep thought for a moment and then assured him, *Di neshama hert* – "The teachings of *Chassidus* are heard by the *neschama*, which is identical in everyone. Those words then trickle down into the body and give the listener the strength to fulfill the 248 *mitzvos-aseh*, and to abstain from transgressing the 365 *mitzvos lo-sa'aseh*."

(אג"ק הרי"צ ח"ג ע' שלא, היום יום כד אדר א')

Upon seeing his younger colleague, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya, the *tanna* Rabbi Dosa exclaimed, "I remember that when he was an infant, his mother would take him in his carriage to the *beis midrash* so that his ears would absorb the words of Torah!"

(תלמוד ירושלמי במכות פ"א ה"ו)

The Rebbe often mentioned that mothers used to rock their little ones to sleep with rhyming lullabies of Yiddishe content, such as "*Torah iz di beste sechorah*" (Torah is the best merchandise).

The Rebbe said, "Some people think that it makes no difference what one sings to a young child, since anyway he does not understand. The truth is that everything that enters a child's ears affects his *neschama* in the years ahead." A mother must therefore not only know about the importance of Torah: she should sing about it to her child.

(שיח"ק תשל"ט ח"א ע' 616, תשל"ז ח"א ע' 112)

Hearing Only Good

Rabbeinu Yonah writes that just as speaking indecently harms a Yid's *neschama*, so too listening to indecent talk tarnishes one's *neschama*. The Shaloh writes that a child who hears *goyishe* songs will develop a negative nature.

(ס' היראה לרבינו יונה, [שבת נט ע"א], משנ"ב ס' תקס שעה"צ כה)

The *Tzemach Tzedek* said, "The bell in Petersburg brought forgetfulness upon me." Until he visited Petersburg in the year תר"ג (1843), he forgot nothing, but hearing the church bells caused him to forget.

(לקוטי סיפורים ע' קלה)

Imagine the surprise of the *talmid* who entered the home of the *Chasam Sofer* and found him with his fingers in his ears. He stood perplexed until the *Chasam Sofer* asked him, "Is it still chiming?"

He then understood that his mentor wanted to avoid hearing the sound of the bells.

(קדושת עיניים ע' 331)

Reb Nachman of Breslov, said that hearing a *rasha* speak has a negative influence on the listener.

(לקוטי עצות דיבור סק"ח)

When a certain chossid complained that he was having doubts in *emunah*, the Rebbe instructed him to discontinue setting his clock by the chimes of the local church.

(כפר חב"ד ד"ד 672 ע' 20)

Protecting Oneself

HaShem created man's fingertips narrow enough to enable him to obstruct his ears from hearing improper things. The soft earlobe was created for the same purpose.

(כתובות ח ע"ב)

The Rebbe points out that unlike the other senses, hearing does not require the cooperation of the listener. One will hear a nearby conversation

unless he makes an effort to avoid hearing it.

(תו"מ תשמ"ח ח"ד ע' 15)

Reb Shlomo Leib of Linchna, a student of the Chozeh of Lublin and the Yid HaKadosh of Pshischa, made every effort not to listen to unsuitable talk, and for his part, he was careful to speak only when necessary. When he was young, he rented a room together with some others in the home of a tailor, but would always return there only after they had already gone to sleep.

It once happened that the *beis midrash* closed earlier than usual, and as Reb Shlomo neared his boarding home, he noticed that the tailor was still wide awake and was sitting and joking with his friends. True to his principle, he kept at a distance, but due to the freezing temperature, he walked to and fro to keep himself warm. This did not help much, but he refused to go inside, though he knew this might cost him his life. With the help of *HaShem*, the lamp suddenly went out, and the renters retired for the night. Only then did Reb Shlomo go inside.

"From then on, in order to avoid such a situation again," he later said, "I learned to give myself a forewarning, by honing my listening abilities and being able to hear whispering even at a distance."

(סיפורי חסידים זוין תורה ע' 488)

The Rebbe Rashab once mentioned that he had lost his hearing in one ear. Seeking the cause of the problem, some of the chassidim recalled that the previous *Shabbos*, the conversation of people in the adjoining room had disturbed him while he was delivering a *maamar* of *Chassidus*. He had therefore weakened his sense of hearing in the ear closest to that disturbance.

(תו"מ ח"ז ע' 156, תו"מ תשמ"ח ח"ד ע' 51 הע' 65)

CONSIDER THIS!

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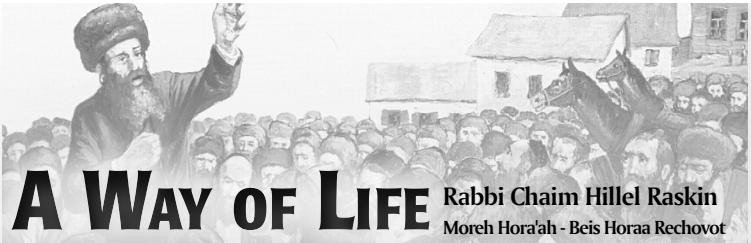
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OUR HEROES

Reb Nechemya of Dubrovna



The *gaon* Reb Nechemya Birech Halevi of Dubrovna was the son-in-law of Reb Chaim Avraham, the Alter Rebbe's son, and was one of the Alter Rebbe's outstanding chassidim. He earned his livelihood from a factory of *talesim* that he owned. He authored *Sheilos Uteshuvos Divrei Nechemya*, as well as glosses on Gemara (printed in the back of the Vilna shas) and on the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch. He passed away on his birthday, Tu Bishvat תרי"ב (1852).



Once, the *rov* of Dubrovna asked Reb Nechemya to deliver a *teshuvah* (responsa) he had written to the renowned Reb Efrayim Zalman Margolis. After reviewing it, Reb Nechemya added some thoughts of his own and signed, "Reb Nechemya the manufacturer." Upon receiving the letter, Reb Efrayim Zalman asked, "Are all the manufacturers in Russia so learned?"



A *rov* once met Reb Nechemya after talking with him in learning he said, "I see you are a great *gaon*, why are you not famous among the 'lomidim'?"

Reb Nechemya replied with a *meshal*: A *seforim* seller once entered the home of a great *rov* and was surprised to see the walls lined with many and rare *seforim*. The seller asked the *rov*, "Why is it that I have a tenth of the *seforim* that you have, yet everyone knows about my *seforim*, while you have so many more *seforim*, but no one knows of them?" To which the *rov* replied, "Your *seforim* are for the world and therefore they are famous, but my *seforim* are for myself"...



Once Reb Nechemya saw a soldier in the Russian army being whipped for having let his feet freeze while standing on guard duty. The soldier complained, "What have I done wrong? It was freezing outside!" He was told, "If you would remember the oath you have taken, to serve the king with all your might, this oath would have warmed you." It is said that from this event, Reb Nechemya had *chayus* for 25 years in his *avoda*, thinking of the warmth he should have as of a result of the oath he had taken before entering this world.

Backing Out on a Deal

I commissioned a *sofer* to write a pair of *tefillin* for my son, and later I found a better one. Can I back out from my commitment?

- In *halacha*¹ the sale of an object is not completed with payment, but rather with an act of acquisition (*kinyan*). For small movable objects (*metaltelin*) the appropriate *kinyan* is for the buyer to lift the acquired object (*hagbaha*) or for the seller to lift an object belonging to the buyer as a form of exchange (*kinyan sudar*).²
- Before a *kinyan* is made both parties can retract from the sale. However, the one who backs out after payment must accept a frightening curse (declared by *beis din*), which states that the One who punished (*mi shepora*) the people of the *Mabul*, of *Sdom* and the *Mitzriyim*, will hold accountable the one who doesn't stand by his word.³
- However, in a case when one *commissioned* an order from a craftsman and backs out, he must pay for the lost time and effort,⁴ since he *damaged* the craftsman, albeit indirectly (*garmi*).⁵ If he backs out in middle, he pays for the partial damage.
- *Poskim* point out that if the craftsman can sell the product, he cannot force payment out of the one who ordered it.⁶ The obligation to sell it lays on the craftsmen since the item had not been sold to the prospective buyer. Only if he isn't successful (in a reasonable amount of time), he can collect the money from the one who ordered it. If he cannot get the full price, he may sell it for less and collect the difference from the original buyer.
- *Halacha* states that one who caused indirect damage as a result of duress (*ones*) is exempt. Therefore, if something completely unpredictable came up and the buyer cannot purchase the *tefillin*, he will be exempt from paying.⁷ (We don't consider him to have hired the *sofer* to work for him, in which case he must pay his employee regardless, but as a *buyer* who committed to buy completed *tefillin*.⁸)
- Even if the seller can receive the full price and incur no monetary loss, it is inappropriate to back out of one's word in monetary transactions. *Chazal* degrade such a practice and label such a person as untrustworthy.⁹

1. שו"ע חו"מ סי' קצ"ח ס"א.
 2. שו"ע חו"מ סי' קצ"ח ס"א, ר"ג ס"א. ולהעיר ישנם עוד קנינים, ואכמ"ל.
 3. שו"ע סי' ר"ד ס"ד.
 4. סמ"ע חו"מ סי' של"ג סק"ל ולהרחבה ראה משפטי חושן של"ג ביאורים אות קנ"ג ובצינונים שם.
 5. שו"ת הרא"ש ש כלל ק"ד סי' ו' שו"ע חו"מ סי' של"ג ס"ח.
 6. שו"ע סי' של"ג סמ"ע סק"ל וש"ך ס"ק מ"ב.
 7. משפטי הפועלים שם אות מ"ג (וראה ש"ך חו"מ סי' שפ"ו סק"א).
 8. נתי"מ סי' של"ג סקט"ו. (ולהעיר שפת"ח פ"י הע' ט' למד שיש שני חלקים בעבודת האומן וחלק של שכירת פועל וא"ז משמעות הנתה"מ. וראה משפטי הפועלים פט"ו ביאורים ב' שמוכיח שלא כמותו).
 9. ב"מ מ"ח ע"א. ראה חו"מ סי' ר"ד ס"ז וח' משפטי חושן של"ג הערה כ"ח שבנדו"ד אע"פ שהוא דבר שלא בא לעולם מ"מ לכו"ע נחשב כמחוסר אמנה.

לע"נ מרת ציפא אסתר בת ר' שלום דובער ע"ה

A MOMENT WITH THE REBBE

So Many Years with the Group...



"Through establishing a Tomchei Temimim *yeshiva* in Brunoy, France, similar to that of Lubavitch of old, *hafotzas hamayonos* has reached a new level," (*Vayeishev* 5752 (1991)). Thus the Rebbe summarized the present-day "French Revolution": the epitome of secular culture transformed.

Reb Chaim Mellul relates: "Reb Muleh Azimov brought us into the *yeshiva* under the direction of the *mashpia* Reb Nissan, and we in turn brought many friends.

"When the first contingent, known as 'the group,' traveled for Tishrei the first time, the Rebbe spoke to us very affectionately in French. He gave all eighteen of us one *hadass* for our *lulav*, and told us to keep it for after Yom Tov. Following the trip, we all received a Tanya and a twenty dollar note from the Rebbe.

"Before the 5732 (1971) trip, the Rebbe let us come on three conditions: that someone would be responsible to teach us during our stay, that we believe the trip would enhance our *avoda*, and that we would not go into debt as a result.

"In *yechidus* some years later, I asked the Rebbe to speak to me in French, because I was concerned I would miss some words in the Yiddish. The Rebbe looked surprised. He said, 'You have been so many years with 'the group,' and you are still not fluent in Yiddish?!'"

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