

REVERING THE TORAH (II)

Avoiding Disrespect

R. Yehuda said that Yerushalayim was destroyed only because the Yidden were disrespectful to *talmidei chachomim*. Rav said that there is no remedy for the punishment awaiting a person who insults a *talmid chacham*. And R. Elazar said that a person who doesn't show his respect for a *talmid chacham* by rising in his presence will forget his Torah learning and won't live long.

(שבת קי"ט ע"ב, קידושין ל"ג ע"ב)

The *Mishna* says that an *apikores* doesn't merit a share in *Olam HaBa*. The *Gemara* explains that the term *apikores* includes the following people: one who insults a *talmid chacham*; one who insults another in the presence of a *talmid chacham*; one who says, "What benefit do the *talmidei chachomim* bring? All their learning is only for themselves!" – for he doesn't admit that the ongoing existence of the world depends on the study of Torah; or one who says, "What benefit are the *rabbonim* to us? Whatever they *pasken* is clearly written in the Torah" – for he doesn't recognize the breadth of knowledge involved in *psakening* a *shaila*.

Why is even a person who is not particularly disrespectful also considered an *apikores*? As *Rabbeinu Yona* explains, that person's lack of respect shows that he is also lacking an appreciation for *HaShem's* Torah.

R. Papa once inadvertently referred to some *chachomim* as "those *rabbonim*" (instead of "our *Rebbs* in that city") and then fasted as a *kapara*.

(סנהדרין ז' ע"א וז"ט ע"ב ואילך, שערי תשובה ח"ג פ' קנה)

Every *motzaei Shabbos*, it was the custom of Reb Hillel Paritcher to partake of a chicken that had been *shechted* and prepared that night. Once, while visiting *Kremenchug*, he was hosted by Reb Yosef Tumarkin, the *av beis din*, and the *rebbeitzin* wanted to have a chicken prepared for him for *motzaei Shabbos*. Of the two *shochtim* in *Kremenchug*, Reb Hillel preferred the Polisher *chossid* over the Chabad *chossid*, so *Rebbeitzin* Tumarkin sent him the chicken. However, by that time he was not at home: he had already left to go and *shecht* for the following day. The *rebbeitzin* decided that since she had no choice, and since even her husband ate from the *shechita* of the Chabad *chossid*, she would send the chicken to him. Yet when they sat down for their *melaveh Malka* and were served chicken and soup, Reb Hillel did not touch it. Reb Yosef, his host, concluded that there must have

been some *shaila* with the chicken and asked his wife what it had been.

"There was no *shaila*," she said. "He's probably not eating it because it was *shechted* by the Chabad *chossid*."

Her husband then asked Reb Hillel to explain his reasoning, so that he would know whether the *shochet* could be trusted. Reb Hillel assured him that there was nothing wrong with his *shechita*. However, since he had once heard him embarrassing a *talmid chacham*, he didn't want to eat from his *shechita*. Reb Yosef asked how this could be corrected if the offended party had already passed away, and Reb Hillel advised that the *shochet* should go with ten other men to the *talmid chacham's kever* and ask for forgiveness. Once that was done, he would eat from his *shechita*.

(רשימות דברים [חדש] עמ' 246)

Severe Consequences

For many years, a certain *chossid* of the Alter Rebbe was not blessed with children. Whenever he asked for a *bracha*, the Alter Rebbe would respond that he was unable to help him. Once, however, after giving his usual response, he added the advice that he visit Reb Shlomo Karliner. That *tzaddik* would be able to help him.

When he arrived in Karlin, he was told to wait until the *tzaddik* traveled out of town and then to accompany him on his journey. A few days later, Reb Shlomo in fact left Karlin, and gave permission for anyone who had a request to join him on his trip.

As they passed through a certain town, the *tzaddik* told this *chossid*, "If you contribute money (and he named a large sum), you will merit having children." The *chossid*, not being a man of means, felt he could not fulfill that weighty request. Disappointed and saddened, he returned home.

Some time later, when he next visited Liozna, and the Alter Rebbe asked him what had transpired, the *chossid* told him how he had refused to fulfill the *tzaddik's* formidable demand.

The Alter Rebbe said, "You once embarrassed a *talmid chacham*, and that is why you are childless. Since the *talmid chacham* has already passed away, you cannot ask him forgiveness, and according to the *Gemara*, 'One who embarrasses a *talmid chacham* must pay a significant sum of gold as an

atonement.' Reb Shlomo traveled with you to the *kevarim* of those *poskim* who hold that this *kapara* can be attained even after the *talmid chacham* has passed on. That is why he demanded so much money – but now it is too late."

The *chossid* protested, "I have never insulted a *talmid chacham*!"

The Alter Rebbe queried, "Didn't you once insult Reb Yissachar Dov, the *rov* of Lubavitch?"

"Eh! Reb Yissachar Dov... I wouldn't consider him a *talmid chacham*," said the *chossid*.

The Alter Rebbe responded, "Eliyahu HaNavi revealed himself to Reb Yissachar Dov every day – and you do not respect him as a *talmid chacham*?! I can't help you, nor can I forgive you for speaking to him dishonorably, for I was his *talmid*."

(המשפיע ע' קכו)

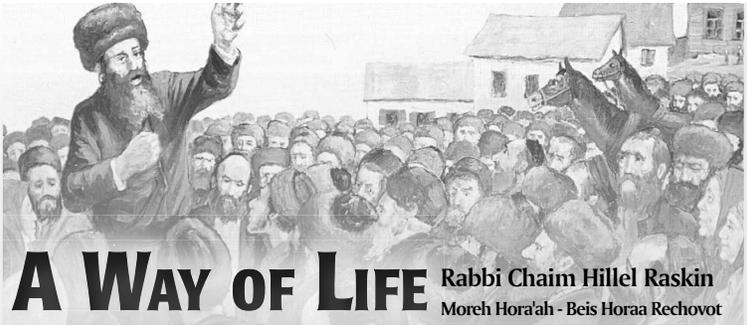
The following painful episode was reported by Reb Shmuel Nimoitin, the *chossid* who served as the contact between the Frierdiker Rebbe and the Rogatchover Gaon: "Before the Frierdiker Rebbe went to Leningrad, he dispatched me to the Rogatchover Gaon, the leading *rov* of the city, to receive his permission, not wanting to cause him any disrespect. However, three *chassidim*, fired with misguided zeal for the Rebbe's honor, apparently said something to the Rogatchover that caused him to leave the city.

"When the Frierdiker Rebbe heard about this, he told them to ask the Rogatchover for forgiveness. He warned them that they were playing with fire. One of them followed the Rebbe's strict instructions, and was forgiven. Of the other two, one passed away within the year. The other, who had been a *tamim* in Lubavitch and a well-reputed *chossid*, strayed from the path of *Yiddishkeit*. Although after ten years he did *teshuvah*, none of his offspring remained *frum*."

(הצפנת פענח במשנת הרבי עמ' ס"א, הרוגוצ'ובי עמ' 221)

CONSIDER THIS!

- What is so severe about disrespecting a *talmid chacham*: the shame caused or the underlying cause for the disrespect?
- How was the *chossid* expected to know that Reb Yissachar Dov saw Eliyahu HaNavi?



A WAY OF LIFE

Rabbi Chaim Hillel Raskin
Moreh Hora'ah - Beis Horaa Rechovot

Tefilas Haderech

What type of trip requires reciting *Tefilas Haderech*?

- If a person sets out on a trip of over one *parsa* (8,000 amos – 2.5 miles – 4 km) outside of a city, he recites *Tefilas Haderech*, since such an area is assumed to be a place of danger. If one enters a definite place of danger within that distance, he should recite the full *Tefilas Haderech* then as well.¹ If one travels a long distance while remaining within a *parsa* of inhabited areas, he does not recite *Tefilas Haderech*.²
- Some *poskim* hold that this “distance” is measured by the amount of time it would take to walk that distance. Thus, even if one travels by car one would only recite *Tefilas Haderech* if traveling for more than 72 minutes.³ However, many *poskim*, including the Alter Rebbe, hold that it is measured by actual distance no matter how long it takes.⁴
- Modern-day highways are paved and are safe of highway bandits and wild animals, and traveling them is an everyday occurrence.⁵ Yet, many *poskim* accept that *Tefilas Haderech* can also cover car accidents and is relevant today.⁶ The Rebbe extends it to traveling by plane since that too is a place of danger.⁷
- Some *rishonim* hold that *Tefilas Haderech* can only be recited within the first *parsa* outside of the departure city, yet after having left the city and its surroundings (*ibur ir – 70 amos, 105 ft*).⁸ *Lechatchila* one should do so, however if he didn't say it then he may recite it as long as he is more than a *parsa* from his destination.⁹
- What if one is on a road trip for several days? Some hold that one should recite *Tefilas Haderech* each day of the trip,¹⁰ while others write that this is on the condition that one slept properly at night (*shinas keva*).¹¹ The Alter Rebbe rules that only the first day requires a bracha, and on the additional days it should be recited without Hashem's name.¹²

1. ברכות ל' ע"א, שו"ע ר"א ח"א ס' קצ"ט, ושם שראוי היה לברך גם בתוך העיר אלא שאין לנו לתקן תקנות חדשות (וראה יומן בנאות דשא שרינו בירך בנסעו לגן ישראל אחר שעבר את ה"טאפן-ז"י בירדש").
 2. לקו"ש ח"ב ע' 152.
 3. רש"י ברכות ל' ע"א ד"ה עד פרסה, וראה שו"ע ר"ש שם ס"ו ע' אמה ושיריים סמוך לעיר ה"ה כתוך לעיר.
 4. ומשם יכול לאומרה בלא ברכה – שו"ע ר"ש שם ס"ח.
 5. ט"ז ס"י ק"י סק"ה, וכ"מ שו"ע ר"ש שם.
 6. רדב"ז הו"ד בשע"ת ס' ק"י.
 7. כן הכריע הפר"ח סק"ה. וכן נהג אדמו"ר הרשב"ב אפילו לכמה חודשים – ראה אג"ק ח"כ ע' פ"ב.
 8. ראה שו"ת זכרון יהודה או"ח ס' מ"ב שברכת בנסיעה שפחות משעה ורבע לברך בלא שם ומלכות וראה יחו"ד ח"ב ס' כ"ו.
 9. שו"ע ר"ש שם שתולה באם המקום סכנה.
 10. ראה פסק"ת ס' ק"י ס"ב בארוכה ראה תהל"ד ריש ס' ק"י שמתפק הדוך וראה ס' מעדני שלמה פ' תפלת הדוך שהגרש"א לא בירך מת"א לירושלים כיון שאין ב' פרסאות בלי ישוב, ובנסיעות ארוכות בא"י בירך בלי שם.

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OUR HEROES

Reb Michel Opotzker



Reb Yechiel Michel Opotzker (Opotzk was the name of a small roadside village) was an outstanding chossid of the Alter Rebbe. He had a tremendously deep mind and was a diligent *masmid*. He possessed a thorough knowledge of *Talmud Bavli* and *Yerushalmi*, the *Poskim* and their sources in the *Rambam* and *Rashba* and *Sifrei Kabbala*. Reb Michel was known to be a *ba'al madreiga* who had *ruach hakodesh* and *giluy Eliyahu*. He was the teacher of the chossid Rashbatz.

When Rashbatz traveled to the Tzemach Tzedek, Reb Michel gave him a sealed PaN and warned him not to read it. On the way, Rashbatz could not resist and he opened the envelope: the PaN inside was blank on both sides...

He arrived in Lubavitch early Friday morning after having walked about 20 kilometers from the nearby town of Rudnia. Entering the Beis Medrash he found chassidim of all ages learning, as they would do all Thursday night, and he quickly fell asleep. Soon, Reb Chaim Ber the *meshares* entered the Beis Medrash and asked, "Who arrived from Reb Michel Opotzker?" Rashbatz was sound asleep and no one else knew from where he had come. Reb Chaim Ber left, but returned a short while later. On the fourth attempt, Rashbatz woke up and came forward. Reb Chaim Ber told him that he was immediately to go with him to the Tzemach Tzedek. Rashbatz was hesitant to go before going to the *mikvah*, but he did not have a choice.

Upon entering the Tzemach Tzedek's room he froze in shock and could not move a limb. The Tzemach Tzedek rebuked him (for opening the PaN), "A young man must follow orders!" The Tzemach Tzedek stuck his hand in Rashbatz's jacket pocket, took out the PaN, and began reading it... Stunned, Rashbatz remained frozen in his place, until Reb Chaim Ber carried him out of the room.

(רשימת היומן ע' שעח)

After four years of traveling to the Mittlerer Rebbe, Reb Michel discontinued, saying that he could not handle the tremendous light that the Rebbe gave off. About the Mittlerer Rebbe he said that he could not stand with him under one roof, and about the Tzemach Tzedek he said that he could not even enter his four *amos*. He explained, "The Alter Rebbe would reveal but at the same time limit the revelation. They cannot contain their great light."

(רשימת היומן ע' רנא, התמים חוברת א' ע' עו)

A MOMENT WITH THE REBBE

I Found It Useful

Although the publication of all Torah literature was encouraged and demanded, indexes and encyclopedias were of particular interest to the Rebbe.

Despite expressing disappointment with its secular sounding name (*see Toras Menachem 5745, p. 1609*), the Rebbe penned numerous letters directing and supporting the work of the multi-volume Encyclopedia Talmudis. The Rebbe personally worked on the *Sdei Chemed* (a ten volume halachic encyclopedia by Sefardi Rov of Chevron *HaRav* Chaim Chizkiyahu Medini), pioneered the indexing and cross-referencing of Chassidus, and directed the publishing of the *Sefer Ho'erekim*.

The Rebbe once explained why our generation needs indexes, while our grandparents did without them: "Since we live in an era of impatience, the necessity is obvious." (*Heichal Menachem, Vol. 1, p. 75*)

In a fascinating letter, the Rebbe writes of his own work on the *mafteichos* (indexes) of Chassidus: "I saw great benefit come from my indexes, not just for others, but for myself as well." (*Likutei Sichos, Vol. 16, p. 548*)