

The Weekly Farbrengens


MERKAZ ANASH
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THE FINAL STRETCH (II)

THE FOOTSTEPS OF MOSHIACH

Why do Chazal tell us of the anticipated troubles of *ikvesa diMeshicha*? The Rebbe explains that obviously this is not to dishearten us, but to urge us to counter them by increasing our good deeds.

(ת"מ תשמ"ה ח"ה ע' 2764)

The Alter Rebbe contrasts the spiritual struggles of the earlier generations with the struggles of our times. In earlier times, people were usually completely good or completely evil. Having lofty *neshamos*, they could attain a fear of *HaShem* by simply considering His greatness for a short moment. Those who did sin, did so as an outright choice, to strengthen their evil side, and thus they were really evil.

In our times, most people are mediocre: not particularly good but not particularly bad. This is so because the *neshamos* today – in the era of *ikvesa diMeshicha* – stem from the level of *Elokus* which is called the “heel,” and thus they have a much more difficult time overcoming evil.

(תורה אור מא, א)

AMPLIFIED VALUE

Reb Chayim Vital once asked his Rebbe, the AriZal: “Why do you say that I am so great, if even an ordinary person in the earlier generations was a *tzaddik* or a *chossid*, and I don’t reach his ankles?”

The AriZal replied: “The greatness of a *neshama* is not measured by a person’s actions alone, but in accordance with the generation in which he lives. A small deed in this generation is equivalent to many great *mitzvos* in earlier generations, since in this generation the *kelipa* musters infinitely more strength than in earlier times.”

(שער הגלגולים הקדמה לח ע' קנו)

In this *maamar*, the Friediker Rebbe clearly describes the challenge – and the privilege – of living as a Yid in our days:

The Yidden at the time of the *Beis HaMikdash* recognized *Elokus* in a revealed manner, and took it for granted. A man would make his way up to Yerushalayim and leave his door unlocked, and would return to find a snake wrapped around his door handle, protecting his home. During *golus*, however, the nature of one’s worldly environment is felt more intensely. Yidden are in a low state and are ridiculed

for their Torah and *avoda*. They are crushed by *parnasa* and other worries that block their minds and hearts from being receptive to wisdom and inspiration. Thus they observe *mitzvos* without enthusiasm, and this in turn leads to a general decline in their *Yiddishkeit*.

Golus is geared for our benefit. When in our era we overcome these difficulties and learn Torah, fulfill *mitzvos*, and conduct ourselves with love towards a fellow Yid, we become much closer to *HaShem* than those who lived in better times. The darkness of *golus* makes the light of our *avoda* brighter. The earlier generations served *HaShem* with their minds and hearts – an enjoyable experience, whereas the *avoda* demanded of us today is the less pleasurable yoke of *kabbalas ol* and *mesirus nefesh*.

(ס"מ קונטרסים ח"א ע' 104 ואילך)

CONSIDER

Whose *avoda* is loftier: that of the earlier generations or ours? Which is greater?

Why is it so important to recognize that we live in the final moments of *golus*? How will this realization affect us?

CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN

At a *farbrengen* in תרצ"ט (1939), the Friediker Rebbe provided us with a strategy with which to overcome the difficult challenges that accompany the final stage of *golus*:

“We are in the midst of a battle, and we have to climb a tall mountain. The paths leading up are unfamiliar. Many of the climbers stumble and fall, but many others clamber up as far as the final stretch, the final *daled amos*. However, the strength that they had at the outset is weakening. At this point, they must summon every last bit of energy. Now that they are only *daled amos* away from the summit, everything is precious – every stalk of grass, every twig, every pebble that they can somehow use to help them struggle ahead. Light is crucial – to enable them to see

those objects that can help them progress. Especially if they are not fully equipped, they must forge ahead with *mesirus nefesh*.

“We are nearing the tip of the mountain. *Moshiach* is close. A person with a superior level of spiritual sensitivity can – spiritually – hear and catch sight of his approaching presence. We must navigate the final stretch by cherishing every positive activity, and we must illuminate the steep upward path by learning Torah and teaching it to others.

“Just as at the very end of a wakeful night weariness sets in with a vengeance and threatens to overwhelm us, today, as the dark night of *golus* draws to an end, the *am haaratzus* in even basic *halacha* is tremendous. Giving *tzedaka* is a very worthy *mitzva*, but in addition every individual must ensure that no day passes without at least half an hour of learning. This is the way to remain awake and not to miss out on greeting the forthcoming ‘light of the day.’”

(ע"פ ס"ה"ש תרצ"ט ע' 316)

In this pointed letter, the Rebbe alerts *Anash* in Eretz Yisroel to their urgent, historic responsibility:

“Whether we like it or not, we are the successors of the Chabad chassidim of all previous generations, starting from the eminent chassidim of the Alter Rebbe. They all paved the way for us and left us to deal with only the *pachim ketanim*, the minor remaining tasks in *avoda*. On the other hand, it is our responsibility to complete the final *beirurim*, to enable the latent *ruchniyus* of the world to surface, and to draw down the revelation of *Moshiach* into our physical world.

“Even a brief reflection upon this should cause one to tremble with awe, realizing that all the awesome revelations in the era of *Moshiach* that are found in the teachings of Chazal, especially as they are illuminated in *Chassidus*, are dependent on our *avoda* now. Yet despite all that, people simply fool around and are preoccupied with their own personal matters...

“Time now is precious, every moment of time. It would be a waste of your time and of mine to devote any further correspondence to debating and discussing who did not show someone else the kind of respect that was expected, or who is greater than whom in Torah, *avoda* and *gemilus chassadim*. I don’t know if anyone can gain any benefit at all from such deliberations...”

(אג"ק ח"ה ע' רפ"א)

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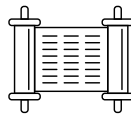
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GOOD NEWS.



ENGAGING IN RISKY ACTIVITIES

What types of dangers am I obligated to avoid and what risks may I take?

The Torah cautions us to be exceedingly careful to guard our life and to avoid and remove any potentially fatal elements.1 Additionally, Chazal forbade many activities that can be fatal - such as drinking water that might be contaminated, walking next to a shaky wall, or crossing a shaky bridge - and transgressing warrants makas mardus.2 One may not rely on a miracle since the person's merits will be reexamined and even if he deserves, it will reduce his merits.3

How risky is considered dangerous? Is it forbidden to engage in any activity that can be fatal?

On the one hand, Halacha requires concern for even a remote danger to life, ignoring the standard measuring sticks of majority, status quo, and great doubt (rov, chazaka, and sefek sefeika).4 On the other hand, we don't find a prohibition to drive a car, for example, although people do die from accidents.

One yardstick for minimal danger is how the masses view it. The Gemara teaches that if people commonly ignore the remote danger involved with a specific activity (dasha bo rabim), others may follow suit and rely on Hashem's protection. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach applied a similar criterion to what danger warrants chilul Shabbos--something that people view as dangerous.5

We recite hagomel after arriving safely from a voyage, but why may one travel in a dangerous manner to begin with? Acharonim explain that the trip is considered safe, as the danger is irregular. Furthermore, there is no specific risky moment rather the length of the entire trip together accumulates to a slight risk of danger. In addition, special allowance is given for tasks required for normal living, such as business trips and certain risks taken by laborers.6

When measuring risk, it is important to keep in mind that an otherwise safe food or activity can be dangerous in a certain amount or quantity, and up to that point it isn't dangerous. For example, eating a limited amount of unhealthy food is not considered "dangerous," but at a point, it can be.

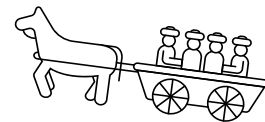
Koheles says, "One who observes a mitzva will know no evil." Yet, it is difficult to determine which dangers are included in this allowance - as Chazal prohibit passing through raging waters to meet his Rav - and some limit the protection to one who thinks purely about the mitzva with no ulterior motives.7

The Mishna teaches that one mustn't interrupt Shmoneh Esrei when a snake is wrapped around one's heel, since the majority of snakes don't kill.8 Whenever the danger is remote, one may rely on the mitzva protection.9 Likewise, poskim say that Tehillim's statement "Hashem guards the fools," which is applied by poskim to different kinds of dangers,10 can only be relied upon in situations of remote risk.11

All the above is from the individual's standpoint, however, community leaders are required to exercise an extra level of precaution since they are responsible for the community as a whole, where the accumulative risk is higher.12

1. שו"ע חו"מ סי' תכ"ז ס"ו וס"ח. שו"ע ד"י דיני שמירת הגוף ונפש ס"ג.
2. שו"ע חו"מ הל' שמירת גוף ונפש ה"ד-ו. וראה שו"ת בצל החכמה ח"ד סי' קל"ח (שמורת' רק סכנה לזמן ממושך).
3. ראה גמ' ברכות נ"ה ע"א, תענית כ ע"ב. שבת לב ע"א. ושוע"ר או"ח סי' קנ"ו ס"ט.
4. ראה שו"ת אבקת רוכל סי' ר"ג ופמ"ג או"ח סי' ד מ"ז סק"י ונ"א סק"ב.
5. גמ' שבת דף ע"ב. מנחת שלמה ח"ב סי' ל"ז. וש"כ פ"ב סק"ב.
6. שו"ת שם אריה יו"ד סי' כ"ז.
7. קהלת ח.ה. שדי חמד מע' כל קמ"א, שו"ע אדה"ז סי' תר"ב ס"ח וס"ט.
8. ברכות דף ל"ג ע"א, רש"י שם.
9. קובץ שיעורים פסחים אות לב.
10. תהלים קטז, ו. וראה ב"י אה"ע סי' ט'. רק מקרים מפורשים - ראה שו"ת חיים שאל סי' נ"ט, שו"ת חלקי' ח"ד סי' י"ב. מורחב - ראה שו"ת בן פורת ח"ב סי' י"א. בא"ח ש"ב פר' פנחס ד"ה אמרו שממעט מזכויותי.
11. שו"ת משנה ח"ה סי' רל"ד.
12. ראה שו"ת בנין ציון סי' קל"ז. וראה ס' הלכה ורפואה הל"ג ע"ר.
13. שו"ע חו"מ הל' שמירת גוף ונפש ה"ג, שו"ת מהר"ל סי' נ'.

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



R. AVREMKE ZHEBINER

R. Avrohom HaLevi Landau, known as R. Avremke Zhebiner, was a chossid of the Tzemach Tzedek and the Rebbe Maharash. He was a grandson of R. Zalman Kurenitzer, who was the leading chossid of the city of Kurenitz and was of the great chassidim of the Alter Rebbe. At first, R. Avremke was in business in Kurenitz and was quite a gvir. When things changed and he lost his fortune, the Rebbe Maharash appointed him to be the rov of the city Zhebin.

early each morning to lament the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. R. Groinem asked his mashpia R. Avremke if he knew any chassidim who did this. R. Avremke replied that there are chassidim who do it, but they are particular not to let others know about it.

R. Groinem took it as referring to R. Avremke himself.

(רשימו"ד ח"א ע' רס"ג)

Once, a kernel of wheat was found in a room that had been cleaned for Pesach, and R. Avrohom cried about it bitterly.

(זכרונות סבא ע' מז)

R. Avremke was once asked why he chose to be the rabbi of such a small town as Zhebin, when he could have been a rabbi of a much more respectable city.

In earlier times, it was hard to get large amounts of wheat for matza that was guarded from the time of harvest (shmura). The common practice was to eat shmura matza only at the sederim, and the rest of Pesach people would eat handmade matza that was made with non-shmura wheat.

R. Avremke replied, "If I was interested in taking a position of rabbi, a more respectable community would have been my choice. But to me, the honor and power of a rabbinic position is undesirable, and so the smaller the community, the better."

(זכרונות סבא ע' מז)

When it was suggested to R. Avremke that he undertake the stringency of eating shmura for all of Pesach, he replied that he hadn't yet reached that level.

R. Groinem once came to know an esteemed individual who rose

(הלקח והליבוב ח"ב ע' ר"ה)

A Moment with The Rebbe



THE MITZVA OF TZEDAKA

Tzedaka is seen by many as a fundraising tool, but the Rebbe treated it with the value of a mitzva in its own right. Indeed, at every given opportunity, whether if someone had come to meet the Rebbe or whether passing children on the way in and out of shul, the Rebbe would make a person a shliach for tzedaka.

written by a bochur in 770, Thursday, 29 Shevat 5744 (1984):

As the Rebbe left for the Ohel, he distributed coins to the children for tzedaka. In the midst of the distribution, the Rebbe turned to a boy who stood nearby and motioned for him to approach to receive tzedaka.

Beginning in 5746 (1986), the Rebbe handed out dollars every Sunday, thus personally performing this mitzva an incredible number of times.

When the boy apologized, saying that he was already bar mitzva, the Rebbe smiled broadly and replied, "I am after the age of bar mitzva as well, and I nevertheless give tzedaka."

The following is an excerpt of a diary

(A Chassidisher Derher - Terumah 5771)