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Rabbi Shimon Hellinger
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RELIVING THE PAST (1)

Connecting with the Past

The Torah urges us to remember the past and learn from it, and to learn from the older generation on how to conduct oneself.

(האזינו לב,ז)

The Frierdiker Rebbe writes: The *avoda* of learning from the ways of *talmidei chachomim* used to be accomplished at *chassidische farbrengens*, where *eltere chassidim* would relate *sippurim* (stories and recollections) about *tzaddikim* and *chassidim*. They would discuss the lesson to be learnt and arouse their listeners appropriately, ensuring that the arousal would be translated into action. Telling *sippurim* was therefore cherished by our Rebbeim and by other great *tzaddikim* of *Chassidus*.

On one occasion the Frierdiker Rebbe said: Remembering 'the days of old' was always precious to *chassidim*. Homes used to be saturated with *middos tovos* and *ahavas HaShem*, *ahavas haTorah* and *ahavas Yisroel*, and no matter whether people were rich or poor, their doors were always open for *chachomim*.

In the past, he added, *eltere chassidim* would speak on their own without being asked. This was not mere storytelling; rather, a way of life was shared.

(אג"ק מוהרי"צ ח"ו ע' עה, לקוטי דיבורים ח"א ע' 234)

In the year תש"ב (1942), the Frierdiker Rebbe once said, "Today, when the present in unpleasant, we must live with the past."

The *meshpia* Reb Shmuel Levitin asked, "Is this the same as learning from the past?"

The Frierdiker Rebbe replied, "This is something different – to live with the past means to relive an incident which has once been experienced. The *chossid* Reb Dovid Tzvi Chein once cried out, 'Oy Rebbe!' and fainted. When roused, he related that he had recalled a certain *yechidus* with the *Tzemach Tzedek*."

The Frierdiker Rebbe concluded, "If a negative experience impacts a person, surely so with a positive experience."

(סה"ש תש"ב ע' 92)

The Focus of the Story

Once, after returning from the *kever* of the

Baal Shem Tov, the *tzaddik* Reb Mendele of Rimanov prided himself – the Baal Shem Tov had appeared to him. When word about this reached the *tzaddik* known as *Degel Machane Efrayim*, he was disturbed by it. Reb Mendele therefore set out to make a reconciliation.

When he arrived, the *Degel Machane Efrayim*, without inviting him to sit, turned to him and asked, "Where am I now?"

Referring to where the *tzaddik* was then situated in his thoughts, Reb Mendele said, "In Yerushalayim."

"And now?" the *Degel Machane Efrayim* continued to ask.

"In the *Beis HaMikdosh*."

Impressed, the *Degel Machane Efrayim* then asked if he had truly seen the Baal Shem Tov. When Reb Mendele confirmed that he had, he inquired about what the Baal Shem Tov had said, and was told: "He is disturbed that people only recount his miracle stories and not the stories of *yiras Shamayim* from which lessons can be learned."

Hearing these words, the *Degel Machane Efrayim* invited Reb Mendele to sit down at his side.

(ילקוט חדש ע' קעח)

Understanding the Lesson

The Frierdiker Rebbe said, "All matters of *Chassidus* are reached through hard work. Even a *chassidische* story requires toiling to derive the lesson in understanding and *avoda*."

(לקו"ד ח"ב ע' 706)

The *Tzemach Tzedek* would often send *yungeleit* to the esteemed *chossid* Reb Hillel Paritcher to be directed in the ways of *Chassidus*. Reb Hillel would entrust the guidance of each newly-arrived *yungerman* to two senior *yungeleit*, who in addition to explaining the basics of *Chassidus*, would most importantly tell them *sippurim* about the Rebbeim and about *chassidim* of former generations. In fact, they would retell each story several times until it penetrated the *yungerman* and he knew its details perfectly. They would then ask what lessons – in correcting one's *middos*, in *yiras Shamayim* and in *hashgacha peratis* – could be learned from the story. They would urge the *yungerman* to toil, as

one does in serious study, in order to discover the lesson, and they would help him in this. Finally, they would tell him what lessons they had been told by their own *madrich*, Reb Hillel.

On the first three *Shabbosim* of each newly-arrived *yungerman*, Reb Hillel would relate a *sippur* in addition to the *Chassidus* that he delivered. After the story they would sing *niggunim*, and then discuss the lessons to be taken in *avoda* of the heart and the mind.

Reb Hillel explained the reason for this procedure: "The beginning of *avoda* is '*Adam ki yakriv mikem*,' – a person has to offer something of himself to *HaShem*. However, in order to enable a person to know he is an *Adam* and how an *Adam* should conduct himself, the above *avoda*, in *Sefer Vayikra*, is preceded in the Torah by the *sippurim* of *Bereishis* and *Shmos*.

(אגרות קודש מוהרי"צ ח"ד ע' נ"א)

The Frierdiker Rebbe writes: When educating children, it is vital that they be given stories to read about the conduct of *tzaddikim*, which they can fully comprehend. Someone should ensure that they read them with full attention, and should test whether they were understood. They should also be trained to repeat them, slowly and in order. And after each *sippur*, its lesson in *yiras Shamayim* should be explained to them.

The Alter Rebbe explained that *sippurei tzaddikim* are an important supplement to learning Torah because they lead to *yiras Shamayim*. Hearing or reading *sippurim* encourages a person to upgrade his Torah learning and his *yiras Shamayim*, and lead him to serve *HaShem lishmah*, for His sake alone.

(אג"ק מוהרי"צ ח"ג ע' שיא, תו"מ תשמ"ו ח"ב ע' 431)

CONSIDER THIS!

- What's the difference between storytelling and sharing a way of life? And between learning from the past and living with it?
- Why is it necessary to analyze and toil over a *chassidische maisel*? Why isn't it enough to just tell it over and get inspired?

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A WAY OF LIFE

Rabbi Moshe Gourarie

Reflection in Halacha

Is seeing the reflection of something in a mirror or in water halachically considered "seeing"?

- The Gemara¹ records that the testimony of eidim who, at the beginning of the month, saw a reflection of the moon in water or glass, cannot be accepted to proclaim Rosh Chodesh. Based on this, R' Moshe Chagiz² tentatively suggests that if *eidim* witnessed via a mirror someone transgressing, their testimony would be invalid.
- The Chida³ explains the uncertainty, since perhaps only *eidus* of the moon is unacceptable through a mirror, since it may be the reflection they saw was not the moon at all. However when there is no room for doubt, vision through a mirror *per-se* is valid. Therefore some say⁴ that one may not recite *kidush levana* through a mirror, since he is possibly viewing a reflection of something else.
- R' Chaim Pontrimuly, a great *rov* in Turkey about 200 years ago, discusses⁵ if one may recite the *bracha* "shecholak mikvodoi" upon seeing a king via a mirror. He points out that according to the above Chida, it would seem that if one is sure that he saw the king, he would be able to recite the *bracha*. Others add⁶ that the same would apply to the *bracha* of "meshane habriyos," upon seeing a strange creature (see Lmaan Yishmeu 199).
- Later Achronim⁷ however challenge this comparison. *Eidus* is intended to verify that something happened; therefore, as long as the *eidim* have seen the happening in a clear manner, it has been verified. However, *birchos hore'iyah* were instituted to be recited upon seeing the king or the monkey, and seeing through a mirror is not considered seeing.
- R' Chaim Palagy (also of Turkey, about 150 years ago)⁸ raised a question concerning the *halacha*⁹ that one should not gaze at a rainbow for an extended period of time, does this also apply to gazing at the reflection of the rainbow in water. *Acharonim*¹⁰ caution that one should refrain from gazing at the rainbow's reflection, yet the *bracha* on the rainbow should only be recited upon seeing the actual rainbow¹¹.

The above is for discussion only. For 'halacha lemaaseh' one should consult his Rov.

1. ר"ה כ"ד ע"א.
2. הלכות קטנות ח"ב סי' פ"ב.
3. ברכי יוסף חו"מ סי' ל"ה.
4. שו"ת דבר שמואל סי' רמ"ב; שו"ת שבות יעקב ח"ב סי' קכ"ו ועוד.
5. פתח הדביר או"ח סי' רכ"ד ס"י.
6. סי' חשוך חמד על סנהדרין ע' תקנ"ד.
7. שו"ת בצל החכמה ח"ב סי' י"ח, וע"ש
8. רוח חיים או"ח סי' רכ"ט אות ב'. וראה גם בהשמות שבסוף הספר.
9. שו"ע או"ח סי' רכ"ט סעיף א'.
10. ילקוט הגרשוני סי' רכ"ט אות א'.
11. וע"ע בשו"ת בצל החכמה שם.

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OUR HEROES

Reb Menachem Mendel Horodoker



Reb Menachem Mendel Horodoker (also known as Reb Mendel Vitebsker) was a great *talmid* of the Baal Shem Tov and Maggid of Mezritch. Initially charged by the Maggid with the task of spreading Chassidus in Russia, Reb Mendel later accepted leadership of the chassidim in White Russia after the Maggid's passing. A short while later, Reb Mendel relocated to Eretz Yisroel, accompanied by a large group of chassidim. Author of the *sefer* "Pri Haaretz" amongst others, Reb Mendel passed away in Tverya on the second of Iyar, תקמ"ח (1788), and is buried there.

Two years after the Maggid appointed Reb Mendel to spread Chassidus in Russia, Reb Mendel visited the Maggid. In Yechidus, the Maggid asked, "What did you achieve with the Yidden of Russia?" Rabbi Mendel replied, "I found their clothes torn and hearts complete; I worked on making their clothes complete and their hearts torn."

(The poverty stricken Yidden in Russian struggled to properly plan their activities and make a living, hence the torn clothes. Yet their hearts were complete, unaware of their true purpose. Reb Mendel helped them significantly increase their wealth, and cause their hearts to tear from the work of repairing their spiritual lives).

After the Maggid passed away, a letter arrived for Reb Mendel relaying the news. His *talmidim* decided it would be best to give Reb Mendel the letter after he lit *Shabbos licht* (as he lit the *licht* himself). Reb Mendel read the letter and said nothing. Shabbos continued as usual, with no noticeable changes in Reb Mendel's mood or behavior. On Motzoei Shabbos, immediately after *havdala*, Reb Mendel fell in a faint...

One Simchas Torah, Reb Mendel lamented to the Alter Rebbe, his prodigy, that he knew one hundred *pirushim* on "Atah hareisa", each describing a unique level of *avoda*. Having yet to achieve these levels, he did not want to recite the *psukim*. The Alter Rebbe responded, "A person can never stand in the place where his eyes reach. When he arrives at that point, his view will extend even further. Similarly, even if the Rebbe reached all the levels described in these *pirushim*, the Rebbe would see new levels to reach."

Reb Mendel accepted the answer, and began reciting the *psukim*.

לזכות הורי בריסקי ליום הולדתם בשנת הצלחה בגו"ר

A MOMENT WITH THE REBBE

A Yid Just Like Any Other

From its very inception, our *Rebbeim* foresaw Zionism as a threat to *yiddishkeit*.

HaRav Bentziyon Wilhelm related an anecdote to the Rebbe that he heard from his father, Reb Chaim Dovid, who in turn heard it from a *Satmarer Rosh Yeshivah* in Williamsburg:

"When the Rebbe went to be *menachem ovel* the Satmarer Rebbe, Reb Yolish Teitelbaum, in 5714, the Satmarer Rebbe was very impressed by the Rebbe. After the Rebbe left, the Satmarer Rebbe told his chassidim, 'He is no less *kanoi* (zealous) than us, merely in a different manner.'"

Hearing the story, the Rebbe commented to Reb Bentziyon, "Indeed, we are against Zionism, but not against Zionists. A Zionist is a *Yid* just like any other, and we have to be *mekarev* him."

לזכות השליח שלום דובער בן לובה