



A UNIQUE IMAGE (II)

Continuing the Tradition

At the time when the *tzaddik* Reb Mendel established himself in Rimanov, the Yiddishe townsmen had begun dressing in *goyishe* styles. The *tzaddik* fought against this with *mesirus nefesh*, and laid down detailed regulations so that the dress of the Yidden should separate them from the *goyim*. He recorded his rules in the community register, the *pinkas* of the *kehilla*, and promised that those who would abide by them would be *bensched* with all the *brachos* of the Torah.

(עטרת מנחם ע' 11)

Taking a walk in a village he was visiting, the *tzaddik* Reb Boruch of Gorlitz heard wailing and crying, so he instructed his *meshares* to find out what was going on. He soon reported that a *goyishe* girl was crying because her father was punishing her.

"Go check why she is being punished," the Rebbe prompted.

Returning to the scene, the *meshares* learned that the girl was being beaten for having worn a certain hat. The father was screaming and rebuking: "Such attire, which your mother and grandmother would have never worn, *you will not wear!*"

When the Rebbe heard the details, he was very moved and took a lesson from this: If a *goy*, who has not received the Torah, has such feeling for the importance of preserving his tradition, how much more should Yiddishe women and girls, who *have* received the Torah, feel this way and dress in the same spirit as their parents and grandparents did.

(ברכת שלמה ע' 2 ערך בגדים)

The *hanhala* of Tomchei Temimim in Lubavitch were very particular about the clothing that the *bochurim* wore. Those lacking the appropriate garb would be given on arrival: a distinctive hat, a long jacket, a large *tallis katan* and a pair of shoes. Years later, the Yiddishe image was apparent in their children, who looked different from other boys their age, by their refined clothing and *eidelkeit*.

(רשימו"ד ח"ג ע' רמג, דברי הימים גורקאוו ע' עה)

Battling Decrees

In the year תר"ד (1844), the Russian government passed a decree which forbade the customary Yiddishe way of dress, and sought to force the Yidden to change to more modern attire and to cut off their long *peyos*. This was brought about through the intervention of the *maskilim*, who wanted Yidden to assimilate among the *goyim*, but the Yidden responded with unwavering resistance and made every effort to annul the fearful decree.

At first, the government offered the option of paying a tax for the Yiddishe *levush*, knowing that the Yidden would not change so quickly, and indeed many Yidden chose to pay the tax rather than dress like the *goyim* around them. However, some could not afford to pay.

The *shayle* was asked of all the *gedolei* Yisroel of the time: "What is one obligated to do?" Some *rabbonim* said that every Yid must prepare himself for actual *mesirus nefesh*, for this was an instance of *gzeiras hashmad*, a direct effort to take them away from Yiddisheit. Others, including the *Tzemach Tzedek*, held that in this case the Yidden were not obligated to give their life, since the intention of the government was merely to have all citizens dress alike. A third group held that although *mesirus nefesh* was not required, one was obligated to do all he could, even paying any sum of money or fleeing to another country.

The police in each town went straight to work, mercilessly beating all those caught transgressing the decree, and publicly shaming the men and women who were found wearing their Yiddishe *levush*. When their efforts were unsuccessful, the police in some cities left the Yidden alone, while in other places they continued harassing them for many years.

(ע"פ היכל הבעש"ט גליון י"ב ועוד)

When the above decree was imposed upon the Yidden in Poland, the Gerer Rebbe, the *Chiddushei HaRim*, paskened that it was necessary to have *mesirus nefesh* for this. As time passed, the police realized that most Yidden were not following the decree, so getting tired of using violence, they became lax in their enforcement. Unable to tolerate this, the *maskilim* reported to the Russian commissioner

in charge that some officers were not fulfilling their duties properly, insinuating that this was surely because of bribes that they had received from wealthy chassidim. They added that the best course of action would be to force the Gerer Rebbe to instruct the Yidden to follow the decree, and to stipulate that if he refused, he would be imprisoned.

At midnight, the chief of police arrested the *Chiddushei HaRim* and brought him to the town hall, where high officials ordered him to issue their instructions to his chassidim. When he refused, and they threatened to shave off his beard, he replied: "Even if you do whatever it is in your power to do, I will not cause others to transgress." Realizing that words alone would not achieve anything, the officials imprisoned him in a cell together with tough criminals. The Rebbe's imprisonment spread like wildfire. The *tzaddik* Reb Menachem Mendel of Kotzk reassured the chassidim that there was nothing to worry about, for not only would the police not touch the *tzaddik's* beard and *peyos*, but in his *zechus*, the decree would be annulled.

Meanwhile, outside the town hall, tens of thousands of Yidden came to protest, and they were joined by a number of Polish citizens. Soon the commissioner heard about this and was warned that this might trigger a revolt. A delegation of reputable Yidden and some Polish nobles met with him and protested about the treatment being given to a man of such standing. He promised to free the Gerer Rebbe at once, and about a week later, the decree was repealed.

(סיפורי חסידים זוין תורה ע' 356)

CONSIDER THIS!

- Is the continuity of traditional *yiddishe* dress similar to *goyim* who uphold their tradition?
- Why would traditional *yiddishe* dress require *mesirus nefesh*?



A WAY OF LIFE

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

OUR HEROES

The Ramban



Rabbeinu Moshe Ben Nachman, known as the Ramban, was born in Gironde, France. He learned from Rabbi Yehuda Ben Yakar and Rabbi Nossan ben Meir. He was guided in *kabbala* by Rabbeinu Azriel and Rabbeinu Ezra of Gironde (aka Rabbeinu Ezra Hanavi – Tosfos Shvuos 25a). Aside for his unique greatness in Torah, the Ramban had vast knowledge of medicine and philosophy, which he used to make a living. He wrote a *pirush* on Chumash, Gemara, Rif, and other *seforim*. In his old age, the Ramban had to leave France and he settled in *Eretz Yisroel* where he passed away on the 11th of Nissan, ה'ל (1270).

In the days of the Ramban there was a Christian priest who was very renowned for his humility and unassuming personality. The Ramban decided to meet him. After the Ramban observed his conduct for some time, he made a meeting with him and asked, "I have a very big question to ask you. It says in our Torah that the most humble person ever to live was Moshe Rabbeinu, but I see that you are far more humble than Moshe, how could this be?" The priest said to him, "You know, this question bothers me as well." The Ramban replied, "If so, I have my answer already."

The Ramban had a *talmid* named Reb Avner. Unfortunately, Reb Avner strayed from the path of Torah and became a *meshumad* (apostate). He lived a life of fortune and became very powerful in the secular world. One Yom Kippur, he sent for his Rebbe, the Ramban. In the Ramban's presence, Avner slaughtered a pig, cooked it, and ate it. He then asked the Ramban how many times was he liable for the *'kareis'* punishment. The Ramban answered four. Avner said five. He wanted to argue but the Ramban gave him a sharp look that stopped him as he still had some awe for his Rebbe.

The Ramban asked him about his abandonment of *Yiddishkeit*. "You once taught that the Parsha of Ha'azinu contains everything in it; all of the *mitzvos* and occurrences in the world. I could not believe such a thing, and it turned me away." The Ramban said, "I do not retract my statement, you are in it too." The Ramban went to a corner and *davened* to be able to find Avner's name. He then recited the *possuk*, "אמרתִי אפאיהם אשביטה מאנוש זכרם" ("I had said I will scatter them, I will cause their memory to cease from man"), pointed out that the third letter of each word spells רַבִּי אַבְנֵר. Avner's face changed. He asked the Ramban if there is any way he could mend his past. The Ramban turned to leave and said, "You see what the *possuk* says." Avner took a boat without a sail or a sailor and went to sea, never to be seen again.

The Rebbe related this story (Shabbos Parshas Haazinu 5742) and pointed out that in the Torah he is referred to as **Reb Avner**. This is because it is certain that he will eventually do *teshuvah* and claim that title.

Notarizing a Questionable Will

May a lawyer notarize a will in which the signee asks to be cremated?

- The Torah says *lifnei iver lo sitein michshol*, "you should not place a stumbling block before a blind man." Chazal explain that this *possuk* forbids causing someone to stumble over a prohibition which he cannot otherwise transgress.
- Even if he can solicit someone else to commit the transgression, it is nevertheless forbidden *midrabanan* to assist another to transgress (*mesaye'a yedei ovrei aveira*).¹ For example,² one may not aid in arranging a loan with *ribis*, forbidden interest, even though the borrower could go elsewhere, since he is helping him transgress.
- Some say³ that the prohibition of *mesayeia* is to stop the person from sinning. Since there is no obligation to stop someone who is careless about transgressing (*mumar*) from sinning, there is also no prohibition to enable him to sin. Others expound further that the reason behind the prohibition of *mesayeia* is to stop the person from sinning, If however the person will transgress anyway since he is careless about transgressing (even if he is not a *mumar*) and is able to transgress on his own, there is no loss in assisting him.⁴ By contrast, the Alter Rebbe argues that it is forbidden to assist anyone to transgress.⁵
- Cremating a *Yiddishe* body is a transgression of a *mitzvas asei* and a *mitzvas lo saaseh* and is a denial of *techiyas hameisim*.⁶ *Kaddish* is not recited for one who chooses to be cremated.⁷ It is therefore forbidden to enable a person to create a will that includes cremation. Given the seriousness of this transgression even one who generally follows the lenient opinions should be stringent.⁸

1. שבת ג' ע"א ד"ה בבא.
 2. שוע"ר הל' רבית ס"ג, וראה שם שהסופר ועדים עוברים מה"ת.
 3. ש"ך יו"ד סי' קנ"א ס"ק ו'. אך בכלל צע"ג מי נחשב היום למומר שאינו תינוק שנשבה, וראה שו"ע יו"ד סו"ס קנ"ט.
 4. דגול מרבבה דה"א אם הוא מומר לאותו דבר, דסו"ס לא יוכל למנעו מלעבור. אך
 5. בחת"ס דבמומר לתיאבון לא אמרינן כן. ועיי"ן צ"צ פס"ד עמ' תח שמסתפק בזה.
 6. א"ח סי' שמ"ז ס"ג, וראה גליון מהרש"א ביו"ד שם. ובפתי"ש יו"ד שם סק"ג מהח"ו"י, עיי"ש בארוכה.
 7. בית יצחק יו"ד קנה.
 8. דרכי חסד מהרב אושפ"ע מ"ג. כן אמר לי הגר"ז גולדברג שליט"א.

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

A MOMENT WITH THE REBBE

Nurturing Emunah in Am Yisroel

Reb Yosef Menachem, the son of the famous *mekubal* Harav Moshe Yair Weinstock, relates:

"I knew a certain butcher from Brownsville, whose brother was *niftar*. The brother's son strayed *r"l* and became very estranged from *yiddishkeit*. One day, the orphaned son became engaged to a girl with similar leanings.

"When his nephew asked him to come to his wedding, the butcher adamantly refused, on principal. The nephew pressed his uncle to come, accusing him of not having any *rachmonus* on an orphan. Eventually, the butcher agreed to participate in the wedding, on condition that the *chossan* receives a *brocha* from the Lubavitcher Rebbe before his marriage.

At his *yechidus*, the Rebbe said, "One cannot get married like this. Attend a *yeshiva* for six months, and then proceed with the *chassunah*."

After much convincing the young man agreed but was worried that his *kallah* would not consent to such an arrangement. "Don't worry," the Rebbe assured him, "I'd like to speak with your *kallah* too..."

After spending time with the Rebbe, she agreed and also made great changes in her life. Today, this couple has established a beautiful *yiddishe* home as a result of the Rebbe's personal attention.

ליכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי שי' בן רבקה

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