

DYNAMIC DEVOTION (I)

Warmth and Passion

The Baal Shem Tov and his *talmidim* were once traveling during the winter and while passing over a frozen river, they noticed peasants carving out crosses in the ice. The Baal Sham Tov gave orders to stop the wagon and he stood for a while and watched the peasants at work. The students were astonished at why their Rebbe would stop for such a scene and one of them mustered the courage to ask for an explanation.

The Baal Shem Tov explained that everything that a person sees or hears should serve as a lesson in his or her service of *HaShem*. Now, the peasants were able to carve out their *avoda zara* in the river only because it had frozen. The lesson: *Kedusha* must be approached with warmth and vigor.

(ת"ו מ' חל"ה ע' 129, סיני מ"ח ע' פג)

It was a bitterly cold night, but the soldier in the Czar's army did not leave his guard post. He stood there without moving, to the point that his feet froze. When his superiors told this to the Czar, they were sure that he would reward the soldier for his outstanding dedication. Instead, the czar ordered that he be whipped twenty-five lashes and explained, "The oath that a soldier makes to serve the Czar faithfully ought to warm him and prevent him from freezing".

The *chossid* Reb Nechemia of Dubrovna witnessed the whipping and later said: "This experience invigorated my *avodas HaShem* for twenty-five years. We too took an oath at Har Sinai, and it must warm us forever..."

(שמו"ס ח"ג מעשה קלט, ארבע חסידים ע' 107)

A Difference of Life and Death

The Rashbatz would tell the following *mashal*:

There was once a king who had a beautiful bird and would play with it constantly. At one point, the bird broke one of its feet, yet the king still

cherished it. Soon after, the bird broke her second foot and her feathers fell off, but the king still loved it.

One day the bird died. The king was so distressed that he became sick. The doctors diagnosed the king with having a great desire for something and if this desire would be fulfilled, he would regain his health. Everyone knew it was the missing bird, but what could be done? Finally a plan was devised. Professional craftsman were brought in who designed a bird made out of gold with feathers, eyes, feet and all. Its beauty surpassed the old dead bird by far. Now they were sure that the king would recover. But not only did the king not play with it, he didn't even pay any attention to it. When asked for an explanation, the king said: "The previous bird may not have been so beautiful, but it was *alive*. This one, with all its beauty, is lifeless..."

(שמועות וסיפורים ח"א ע' 272)

Reb Menashe of Iliya was a strongminded person and was not swayed by public opinion. When he heard about the conflict about *chassidim*, some people saying they were great and holy while others were saying the opposite, he decided to travel to Liozna to see for himself. When he returned, he was asked what he saw. He replied: "I saw that they are living souls, whereas you are all lifeless souls."

(שמועות וסיפורים ח"ג ע' 236)

The Friediker Rebbe writes in a letter:

"I am surprised by the frigidity of some of *Anash* with regard to themselves, as well as towards others. It earlier times every one of *Anash*, no matter of what level, knew his mission and responsibility as a *chossid* - to himself, to others and to the whole of *Chassidus*. The simple wagon drivers of Schedrin and Nevel would listen to the words of *Chassidus* repeated by *chassidim* when traveling to Lubavitch, and when resting by the inns on the way. Despite their level of understanding they did it with a *chayus* just like the *chayus* of those who were knowledgeable in Torah and *Chassidus*, and at

times with an even greater *chayus*.

"In those days a *chossid* was warm and warmed up others. But what of today? The *chossid* is cold himself, and thereby makes others cold, and as a result *chas veshalom* it is as if the wellspring of *Chassidus* is dried up."

(אג"ק ח"ה ע' ט)

What are You Passionate About?

The *makos* in Mitzrayim were not simply a punishment, but a process of refinement. In the first *maka* cool water was replaced with warm life-sustaining blood, since in order to leave Mitzrayim, literally and in everyday life, we must develop a passion for holy matters.

One may ask: Why must I be passionate about *kedusha*? Isn't it enough that I drop my passion for negative things?

A person must realize that it is impossible to be passionless. If one is impassionate about *kedusha* he will automatically gravitate to negativity. This is why the *yetzer hara* invests so much energy that a person should not be excited by *Elokus*.

(לקו"ש ח"א ע' 121 ואילך)

The Rebbe also notes that true warmth and passion exist only in the realm of *kedusha*. *Kelipa* is essentially of a cold nature, and was given an artificial passion just so that man would have free choice.

(לקו"ש ח"א ע' 123)

CONSIDER THIS!

- Isn't it equally possible to draw holy images on the ice?
- Is the value of holy passion because it detracts from negative excitement or is it valuable in its own right?

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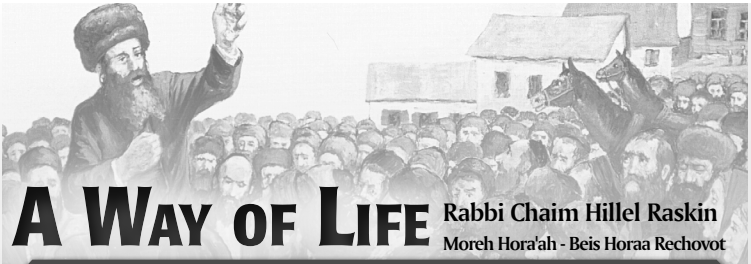
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A WAY OF LIFE Rabbi Chaim Hillel Raskin Moreh Hora'ah - Beis Hora'ah Rechovot

Exercising before Davening My doctor told me that for my health I must exercise every morning. May I do so in the morning before davening?

- The Gemara enumerates several activities which a person may not perform before *davening shachris*: (1) Set out on a journey which he can take later. (2) Go out of one's way to greet a friend or use the term "shalom." (3) Work or take care of his needs. (4) Eat (except for health or to enable one to *daven*).²
- One reason for this prohibition is that tending to personal needs before *davening* is an act of arrogance, since only after taking care of himself does he turn to Hashem to help him.³ Another reason is that he may become carried away with his activity and miss the time for *davening* (this reason applies to other *tefilos* as well and has many details).⁴
- The prohibition sets in from the time when one is allowed to *daven*. Some *poskim* set this at *alos hashachar* (dawn) since at a time of need one may *daven shachris* then. Other *poskim* delay this prohibition until *neitz hachama* (daybreak) since *lechatchilah* one should not *daven* until then.⁵ The Alter Rebbe sides with the first opinion.⁶
- Some⁷ contemporary *poskim* write that if exercising in the morning will energize a person and give him more strength, he may exercise before *davening*, since this is not a matter of personal needs, but rather he is doing it for health.⁸ This allowance is only if he won't have time to do it after *davening*,⁹ and he should recite *brachos* and *shema* beforehand.¹⁰
- Parenthetically, this *heter* is only when one is certain he will that he will be able to *daven shmoneh esreh* before the time of *davening* (*zman tefillah*) passes.¹¹

1. מסכת ברכות דף י"ב ודף י"ד ע"א וכן ראה שו"ת סימן פ"ט לפרטי הדינים האלה.
2. ראה שולחן מנחם ח"א סי' מ"ה.
3. ראה שו"ת פ"ט ס"ג-ה'.
4. ראה שו"ת סי' פ"ט ס"ז ח'.
5. ראה שו"ת בדי הארון סי' א' וצ"ע.
6. שו"ת שם.
7. וראה ספר יוסף דעת ברכות עמ' רכ"א.
8. שליקט פוסקים מחמרים ומקילים בנודו"ד.
9. תפילה כהלכה פרק ו' סכ"ג. ובנספחים עמ' תק"ו.
10. שו"ת רבבות אפרים ח"ה סל"ט.
11. עשה לך רב ח"ד סו"ס כ"ו (וראה משנ"ב סימן פ"ט ס"ק ל"ו, שו"ת שם סס"ג וס"ד "ואינו נכון", ותה"ד סי' י"ח). אבל בתפילה כהלכה הנ"ל לא הצריך.

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

OUR HEROES

Reb Yisroel Nevler



Reb Yisroel Levin was born in the year 5645 (1885) in the *chassidische* town of Nevel. He studied for many years in Lubavitch and became a *lamdan*, as well as a great *maskil* in *Chassidus*. After his marriage to the daughter of Reb Mordechai Pevzner, he settled in the city of Klimovitch. The Friediker Rebbe advised that he should be accepted as a *melamed* in order for "the children to know what a *chassidische melamed* is." Reb Yisroel was arrested twice for teaching Torah to children and each time was held in prison for many months. During World War II, he fled to Tashkent where he continued to teach Torah, infused with *chassidische* stories. He escaped Russia after the war but fell ill shortly after. He passed away on 9 Iyar 5709 (1949).

Reb Yisroel once overheard someone telling his friend about a certain *halacha* where the Alter Rebbe writes in *Shulchan Aruch* that a *baal nefesh* should be *machmir* on himself. The friend responded, "I'm not a *baal nefesh*." Reb Yisroel entered the conversation asking, "If you're not a *baal nefesh*, then what are you? A '*baal nefesh*' is a *Yid* who possesses a *neschama*. Someone without a *neschama* is called a '*baal guf*.'"

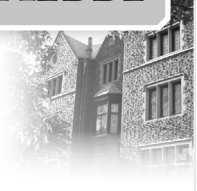
(רשימות דברים חדש ע' 98)

In Elul 5698 (1938), Reb Yisroel was arrested by the NKVD and was held in prison for over a year, enduring painful interrogations. Friends of the family suggested to Reb Yisroel's wife to send their little daughter to the communist schools, hopefully resulting in his release or a reduction of his sentence. The little girl began attending the school and a short time later Reb Yisroel was indeed released and he returned home.

The following morning he noticed his daughter carrying a knapsack and heading for the door. He inquired as to where she was going, and the little girl responded, "To school. Friends told mother that if I go to school you might be freed and that's exactly what happened!" Reb Yisroel replied firmly, "If this is the condition that warranted my release, I would rather stay in prison!"

A MOMENT WITH THE REBBE

The Rebbe's Fantasy



The tension between the *frum* and secular groups in *Eretz Yisroel* was at its peak. *Frum Yidden* were hounded, many others were leaving Torah *Yiddishkeit*, and animosity was rampant. It was in this setting that the Rebbe called for spreading *Yiddishkeit* "behind enemy lines" — in the *kibbutzim* themselves.

Arvei Chabad (Evenings with Chabad) were introduced, where *yungerlait* would sing *chassidische niggunim* and share words of *Chassidus*. Many times they would be refused entry, but cracks began to show.

It was during this time that the Rebbe said to the celebrated author Harav Eliyohu Kitov, "If I would have ten *yungerlait*, I would penetrate the borders of Hashomer Hatzair (the most anti-religious *kibbutz*). I would show them the beauty of *Yiddishkeit*, and they would come running in the masses."

Harav Kitov exclaimed, "Lubavitcher Rebbe! You have fantasies! They burn everything there..."

With time, invitations from *kibbutzim* from around the country began coming in, and soon enough there weren't enough *yungerlait* to provide for all of the calls. Indeed, today's tremendous explosion in *teshuvah* is the fantasy realized.

לזכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי שי' בן רבקה

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