



RELIVING THE PAST (II)

The Value of Stories

Sent by the *Tzemach Tzedek* to Ruzhin to take care of a public matter, the chossid and *gaon* Reb Aizik Homiler used the opportunity to observe the ways of the Ruzhiner chassidim and of their Rebbe, the *tzaddik* Reb Yisroel. At that time, two chassidim came to Ruzhin to receive the Rebbe's *haskama* for *seforim* they had written. One was filled with *chiddushei Torah* and the other recounted *sippurim* of *tzaddikim* and notable chassidim. The Rebbe instructed that part of each *sefer* be read aloud. After sitting in *dveikus* for some time, he proceeded to praise the telling of *sippurei tzaddikim*, an activity in this world that arouses echoes in the chambers of *tzaddikim* in *Olam HaBa*, and then delivered a *pilpul* on some of the *chiddushei Torah* that appeared in the first *sefer*. Having done that, he instructed his *gabbai* to write *haskamos* for the *seforim*, first for the *sippurim* and then for the *chiddushim*.

Reb Aizik was impressed with the *tzaddik's pilpul* on the second *sefer*, but was puzzled by the precedence he had given to the *sippurei tzaddikim*. A few days later, at a *Rosh Chodesh seuda*, the *tzaddik* suddenly said, "This *gaon* is surprised at the priority I gave to the *sippurim*. In fact, this was addressed long ago by *Rashi*, who asks why the Torah begins with the story of the *Avos*, before listing the *mitzvos*. This is because the *sippurim* tell us about the greatness of *HaShem's* involvement in the world."

Turning to Reb Aizik, he concluded, "I followed the same order the Torah used."

(אג"ק מוהרי"צ ח"ו ע' עו)

The Rambam writes that speaking highly of the noble qualities of *tzaddikim* is beneficial, for it encourages one's listeners to want to follow their ways. *Rabbeinu Yonah* writes that by praising righteous *tzaddikim* one is praising *HaShem*, and doing so also brings out the good within the speaker.

(פיהמ"ש אבות א,טז, שערי תשובה שער ג')

Sippurim for Everyone

The Frierdiker Rebbe related: "It was a *Shabbos*

afternoon in תרנ"ו (1896). After my father finished *davening*, he went to the home of his mother, *Rebbetzin Rivkah*, to make *Kiddush*. There, my father asked his mother, "Do you recall how the picture of the Alter Rebbe was brought to the *Tzemach Tzedek* and what he said about it?"

"Sure," she replied, "I remember it clearly."

My father then asked her to tell it to me, so that I would hear it from a first source. My grandmother readily agreed, and turning to me she said, "Come at a calmer time and I will tell it to you."

She then added, "At one *Seder* I heard my father-in-law, the *Tzemach Tzedek*, say: '*Mitzva lesaper biyetzias Mitzrayim*' – by telling *sippurim* we can get out of *Mitzrayim*. '*Ve'afilu kulanu chachomim u'nevonim veyodim*' – even a person who is a true *Chabadnik* (meaning a chossid steeped in the insights of *Chassidus*) is obligated to tell *chassidische sippurim*, for these will take him out of his *Mitzrayim* (that is, out of his *ruchniyusdike* limitations)."

My grandmother concluded, "Since then, I make a point of recounting *sippurim* only when I'm completely focused."

(התמים ח"ב ע' 760)

In the year תרס"ג (1903), the Rebbe *Rashab* told his son, the *Frierdiker Rebbe*, "For a long time I have been complaining at the *Ohel* of my father, the Rebbe *Maharash*, about my lack of participation in *chassidische farbrengens*, as a result of spending my time catering to the cause and *avoda* of *Chassidus*. I asked to receive this as a gift, and my father agreed. From then on, I began to hear *sippurim* at nighttime visions."

Later on, the *Frierdiker Rebbe* said, "From that time on, I heard numerous stories from my father, the Rebbe *Rashab*, but I wouldn't ask where he had heard them or when he had heard them."

(סה"ש תש"ה ע' 24)

Special Stories

Before the Alter Rebbe relayed a *Torah* of the

Baal Shem Tov, he would say, "The words of *Torah* from 'the *Zeide*' (as he called the *Baal Shem Tov*) are a *segula* to increase one's understanding and *yiras Shamayim*, and the stories of 'the *Zeide*' are a *segula* for long life and abundant *parnasa*."

When the *Tzemach Tzedek's* daughter once fell ill with high fever, he suggested that someone read her stories of the *Baal Shem Tov*, for they are a superb *segula* to heal fever.

(לקוטי דיבורים ח"א ע' 508, רשימו"ד החדש ע' 135)

The Rebbe *Maharash* once said: "People say that relating a story of the *Baal Shem Tov* on *Motzaei Shabbos* is a *segula* for *parnasa*. The truth is that these three points are not necessarily so – *lav davka*. It does not necessarily have to be about the *Baal Shem Tov* – it can be about any *tzaddik*; and it is not only applicable on *Motzaei Shabbos* – it can be at any time; and the *segula* is not only for *parnasa* – but for all good things as well."

(רשימו"ד החדש ע' 211, וראה שמו"ס ח"א ע' 4)

Rebbetzin Rivkah related: (1849) תר"ט "In, when I was newly married, my father-in-law, the *Tzemach Tzedek*, called in all his daughters-in-law who lived in *Lubavitch* and instructed them to gather every *Motzaei Shabbos* and relate a *sippur* of the holy *Baal Shem Tov*. We asked whether it was enough to just mention the *Baal Shem Tov's* name. My father-in-law replied, 'Definitely – a story!'

After that, every *Motzaei Shabbos*, one of the daughters-in-law would visit the *Tzemach Tzedek*, where she would hear a story of the *Baal Shem Tov*, and this she would then share with the rest of us."

(סה"ש ת"ש ע' 173)

CONSIDER THIS!

- Are stories a means to an end or an end themselves?
- Why can't the same benefits be acquired through learning *Chassidus*?



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A WAY OF LIFE

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

Bracha Before Tefilas Haderech

Someone told me that I must eat something and recite an after bracha before reciting Tefilas Haderech. Is this true?

- Chazal say that a bracha must open with the words "baruch ata," praising Hashem. In a series of brachos, the second bracha is covered by the baruch ata of the first bracha (such as the brachos of Shmoneh Esrei or "Ahavas Olam" in Birchos Krias Shema). Thus, a bracha lacking a baruch ata must be appended to another bracha.
- Rishonim are divided whether this rule applies to birkos hoda'a – blessings of thanks, such as "Elokai Neshama" (thanking Hashem for returning our neshama),¹ and supplications, such as Tefilas Haderech.² There is a further dispute within the stringent opinion whether it is an obligation or a hiddur.³ The Alter Rebbe writes that one should try to satisfy the stringent opinion and recite "Elokai Neshama" immediately after "Asher Yatzar" without interruption,⁴ and recite some bracha before Tefilas Haderech.⁵
- What type of bracha should the first bracha be? Some require a bracha with a concluding baruch ata (i.e. Asher Yatzar or Al Hamichya). Others accept a short bracha, provided that it is not a bracha on food or smell be since eating or smelling will constitute a hefsek. Others yet hold that any bracha is fine.⁶ The Alter Rebbe's seems to side with the first opinion.⁷
- In his siddur by Tefilas Haderech the Alter Rebbe does not mention this practice. Furthermore, a story is recorded of how the Alter Rebbe once discussed the matter with his chassidim and concluded that Tefilas Haderech is an independent bracha and does not need to be appended to another.⁸ Similarly, when the Rebbe was offered a food to make a bracha before Tefilas Haderech, the Rebbe replied that it was unnecessary.⁹

1. שו"ת הרא"ש כלל א' סימן ד' סב"ל שצריכים להסמיך אלקי נשמה.
2. מוהר"ם מרוטנבורג ה"ד בטור סי' ק"י. וראה תשב"ץ קטן אות רמ"ג ופרישה סק"ח (לעולם).
3. ראה שו"ת מהרי"ל החדשות א'. ומלשון אדה"ז סי' ק"י ס"ז משמע שאינו אלא הידור.
4. שו"ת סי' ו' ס"ז.
5. שו"ת סי' ק"י ס"ז.
6. כך נהג החת"ס, ראה משנ"ב סי' ר"ט סק"ח. ועיין בפסק"ת סי' ק"י סק"ז.
7. שו"ת סי' ק"י ס"ז.
8. ספה"ש תש"א ע' 148.
9. ראה יומן בנאות דשא ע' 47 וע' 84 (מען דארף נישט").

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OUR HEROES

Maharil of Yanovitch



Reb Yehuda Leib (Maharil), born around 5509 (1749) to Reb Boruch and Rivkah, was the younger brother of the Alter Rebbe. He was the first systematic transcriber of the Alter Rebbe's *maamorim*, and transcribed most of the *maamorim* of *Torah Or* and *Lekutei Torah*. When young men came to learn in Liozhna, the Maharil arranged for them to be tested and set-up for their material needs, in addition to his role of generally overseeing them in learning and conduct. Toward the end of his life he lived in the city of Yanovitch and served as the *rov* there. He passed away in approximately the year 5586 (1826). Many of his responsa were printed in the *sefer Sheiris Yehudah*.

In the year 5524 (1764) when the Alter Rebbe was eighteen years old, his brother the Maharil suggested that he travel to Mezritch, contending, "To learn, you know. *Chassidus* however, you do not know at all." With the help of his wife, Rebbetzin Sterna, the Alter Rebbe purchased a horse and wagon and set off for Mezritch together with the Maharil. When they arrived in Orsha along the way, the horse died. The Alter Rebbe discerned that the reason for this was because the Maharil did not get his wife's wholehearted consent for the trip. He told his brother, "It seems you do not need to travel. Return home and I will continue alone. Whatever I will receive, I will share with you."

(לקו"ד ח"ג ע' 966, בית רבי פ"ב)

Chassidim once asked Maharil, the Alter Rebbe's brother: What was the *zechus* by virtue of which his parents were blessed with four sons who were Torah giants? Maharil told them that it was probably due to the *yiras Shamayim* and the passionate love of Torah of his mother, Rebbetzin Rivka. He illustrated this with the following story:

"My father, Reb Baruch, once traveled on a business trip and brought back an expensive coat as a gift for my mother. Our *melamed's* wife became so envious that she began nagging him to give her gifts as well. This distressed him, and his usual enthusiasm faded. Noticing this, my mother questioned him and he told her of his troubles. Without hesitation, she took out her coat and gave it to the *melamed*, saying, 'Give this to your wife, and continue to teach my sons with enthusiasm.'"

(רשימו"ד חדש ע' 198)

A MOMENT WITH THE REBBE

Take Over the World with Yiddishkeit!

The atmosphere in 770 was festive as the *shluchim* from across America gathered for the fourth Kinnus Hashluchim in 5747 (1986). The Rebbe's holy countenance glowed as he walked into 770 for *davening*, reviewing his troops and *sheping nachas* from their work.

The official opening of the *kinnus* was the Shabbos *farbrengen*, remembered by all present. The *sichos* were powerful, and the joyous *nigunim* were strongly encouraged by the Rebbe's hand motions. The electricity in the air was tangible.

The zenith was reached during the third *sicha*. The Rebbe spoke with passion: "There was never a time like ours, when the world could be peacefully conquered with Torah and *Yiddishkeit*. There are thousands of children and adults, even here in Brooklyn, New York, without a *Yiddishe* education..."

"We therefore have to call on every *Yid*, especially to the products of Tomchei Temimim, whom the Rebbeim educated with *mesiras nefesh*, to serve in the battle to bring Moshiach: 'Become *shluchim!* Take over the world with *Yiddishkeit!*'"