

The Weekly *Farbrengens*



537 • לחמן ישמעו • בראשית תש"פ
EDITOR - RABBI SHIMON HELLINGER

REMEMBERING HIM (II)

WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO?

It is the custom in many *shuls* to engrave on the *chazzan's shtender* the words "Da lifnei Mi atah omed," Know before Whom you stand. Why do *chassidische shuls* not post this reminder?

The Rebbe Rashab explained that *chassidim* would have this message engraved in their minds and hearts.

(ליקוטי דיבורים ע' תשצ)

The Rebbe reminded that realizing that we are speaking to *HaShem* is the basis of what *davening* is:

The basic concept of *davening* is to bear in mind that one stands before *HaShem*. This precedes other *kavanos* such as *pirush hamilos* and surely before contemplating *sefer histalshelus*. This is not a *chassidic* practice reserved for a great *chossid* or any *chossid* for that matter – this is a clear *halacha* in *Shulchan Aruch!*...

You entered *shul* to *daven*? Don't forget why you came: to *daven* to *HaShem*!

(תו"מ תשמ"ג ח"א ע' 144)

A certain unlettered *chossid* of the Alter Rebbe did not even know the plain meaning of much of the *davening*, yet he *davened* with intense *chayus* every day – *Shacharis, Mincha and Maariv*. It was obvious that his *davening* was genuine, and so earnest that it was as if he were wringing out his *neschama*. The other *chassidim* were puzzled.

When they questioned him he replied: "I only know that I heard a *vort* from the Rebbe on the statement, 'shamor vezachor bedibbur echad.' (The plain meaning of this phrase is that the two expressions regarding *Shabbos-zachor* and *shamor*—were both said by *HaShem* in the same utterance.) The Rebbe explained, "You should remember and watch over the *echad*, the oneness of *HaShem*, in every word."

Just imagine: For forty years he *davened* with

this *vort*, day and night, weekdays, *Shabbos*, and *Yom-Tov*. He didn't just hear the *vort*: he felt it. That's a *chossid*.

From this story, the Rebbe drew a lesson: Every individual, regardless of his knowledge of *Chassidus*, can *daven* at length, by contemplating the *Elokus* that enlivens every physical being.

(סה"ש תרצ"ו ע' 127, לקו"ש ח"ד ע' 224)

CONSIDER

Why can't *Da lifnei Mi atah omed* be both on the *shtender* and in our minds and hearts?

HIS TORAH

HaShem told the Yidden through Yirmeyahu HaNavi that *Eretz Yisroel* and the First *Beis HaMikdash* were destroyed "because they forsook my Torah." What exactly did they do? *Chazal* explain that the people of that time did not introduce their learning sessions by first saying *Birkas HaTorah*. But why should this omission cost us the *Beis HaMikdash* and *Eretz Yisroel*?

The Bach elaborates: Those great scholars studied Torah as a profound academic exercise, without intending to connect with the *kedusha* of the Torah and thereby to draw down the *Shechina*. That is why the land remained desolate, without the holiness of the *Shechina*.

In this spirit, the Rebbe reminds us that while Torah study of course requires a person to delve into its reasoning, he must first connect to the Giver of the Torah, and then he will be approaching his studies as he should.

(לקו"ש ח"ט ע' 3)

One day, between *Yom Kippur* and *Sukkos*, the *Mitteler Rebbe* and his son *Reb Nochum* went for a walk. Outside their home, they beheld around two hundred *chassidim* listening intently as a *yungerman chazer'd* the *maamorim* from *Shabbos Selichos* and *Rosh HaShana*, through the day after *Yom Kippur*. The *chassidim* were so absorbed in the *maamar* that they did not notice the Rebbe and his son.

The *Mitteler Rebbe* hid behind some trees, and asked *Reb Nochum* to see who was *chazering* and which *maamar* it was. When *Reb Nochum* returned, saying that the speaker was *Avrohom Sosnitzer*, the *Mitteler Rebbe* said, "My father once instructed me to tell *Avrohom Sosnitzer*, 'When one repeats profound *Chassidus* it is indeed sweet, but one must not forget about Whom one is speaking – *Ein Sof Boruch Hu*.'"

(לקו"ד ח"א ע' קצה)

IN THE HEAD

When during his arrest the Alter Rebbe was brought to the interrogator's office, he was wearing his *tefillin*. As he positioned them on his head, a sudden fear fell upon all those present.

The Alter Rebbe later explained: This is what the *Gemara* means when it says that the *possuk*, "the nations of the word will see that the name of *HaShem* is declared upon you and they will fear you" refers to the *tefillin shel rosh*.

Someone then asked why this didn't happen when so-and-so wore *tefillin*.

The Alter Rebbe replied, "The expression in the *Gemara* is not *tefillin she'al harosh* ('tefillin on the head') but rather *tefillin shebarosh* ('tefillin in the head'). When one wears *tefillin* in such a manner, they arouse a fear of Him."

(תו"מ חכ"ז ע' 229)

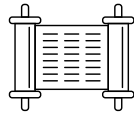


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MAYIM ACHARONIM

Should women be washing *mayim acharonim*?

Chazal instituted the obligation to wash one's fingers—from their tips until the first joint after the nail—prior to *bentching*, for hands soiled with the grime of food are unacceptable for reciting blessings and mentioning Hashem's Name. It would have been fitting to recite a *bracha* on this washing—as we do on the *mayim rishonim* before the meal—but since at present we don't perform the *mitzvah* in the complete manner as ordained by Chazal, which included using scented oil, we don't recite a *bracha*.

An additional reason for the obligation is the concern that in the course of the meal one may have touched strong salt that could cause blindness if one subsequently touches their eyes without washing. This second reason applies even to one who doesn't recite the *bentching* themselves and are *yotzei* instead from someone else.¹

If one doesn't have water, any type of liquid may be used, for they all remove filth. Wine shouldn't be used, due to its importance (unless there is nothing else at all.²) *Poskim* record a custom that when people are concerned of missing out on the *zimun*, they wash with *mashke*.³ Some *poskim* write not to use sea water, for it contains salt, and especially not water from the Dead Sea, for it contains the strong Sodomite salt.⁴

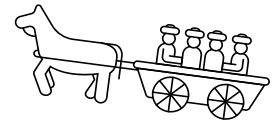
If one mistakenly *bentched* without washing *mayim acharonim*, one should wash afterwards.⁵ If one remembered in middle of *bentching*, one should stop to wash before continuing to *bentch*.⁶

Some aren't careful about *mayim acharonim* in the present age, since the strong salt of concern isn't commonly used, and people aren't as particular regarding food residue on their hands, thus it isn't anymore considered "filth." Still, the Alter Rebbe concludes that it is proper to be meticulous regarding *mayim acharonim*, and some explain this based on the *kabbalistic* aspects surrounding the obligation which apply no less in the present.⁷

Whether women are obligated in *mayim acharonim* in the present age is disputed amongst contemporary halachic authorities. While some hold they share the same obligation as men,⁸ others hold that they customarily don't wash, since today the primary obligation doesn't exist and it only has the status of a custom—one that women didn't accept upon themselves, and so is the custom.⁹ In any case, if their hands are actually dirty, they should clean them before *bentching*.

7. שו"ע ר"י סי' קפ"א ס"י, מג"א שם ע"פ המקובלים.
8. הגרש"ז א"ה ה"ד הליכות בת ישראל פ"ג הע"י א.
9. שו"ת שבה"ל ח"ד סי' כ"ג (וראה הליכות בת ישראל שם שכך היה המנהג הרווח באשכנז אפילו בבתי החרדים לדבר ה').

1. שו"ע ר"י א"ח סי' קפ"א ס"א.
2. בן איש חי פר' שלח ס"א.
3. קצוה"ש סי' מ"ג סק"ו.
4. שערי ברכה פ"ד הע"י י"ד.
5. משנ"ב א"ח סי' קפ"א סק"ב.
6. דאה שערי ברכה פ"ד הע"י י"א.



REB YONA POLTAVER

Reb Yona Kahn of Poltava came from a frum family, though they were not chassidim. As a young *bochur*, the local *shochet* Reb Pinye Rakshiker advised him to go learn in Lubavitch, where he studied diligently, especially the *maamorim* of the Rebbe Rashab. In 5696 (1936) he was appointed by the Frierdiker Rebbe (then in Riga) to be in charge of all the underground branches of Tomchei Temimim in Russia. Where each *bochur* should learn, the teachers, the fundraising — everything was on his shoulders. He was arrested on 19 Kislev 5708 (1947), and a short time later he passed away in prison.

When people would complain to Reb Yona that the children refuse to or are scared to learn Torah, he would reply adamantly, "The children are not to blame. Their fears are very well understood. We must say *Tehilim* from the depths of our hearts, crying and asking Hashem to plant the desire to learn Torah in their hearts." Reb Yona was a fine example of this: Reb Berke Chein needed Reb Yona's opinion about a matter and visited him in his home. He found him crying and saying *Tehilim*, and when he asked Reb Yona what had happened, he responded, "I just received a letter from a *cheder* stating

that the children stopped coming to learn, and possibly will not continue. That is why I'm saying *Tehilim*."

(כפר חב"ד גליון 550)

Reb Mendel Futterfas was very involved in arranging the rescue of Lubavitcher chassidim from Russia after World War II using forged Polish passports. He once related:

During the escape of Lubavitcher chassidim from Russia after the war, we were in the city Lvov and the work was very hard. Things were tense and I had no more strength left physically. In addition, I feared for my safety and the safety of my family. Because of the situation, I decided to leave with my family on the next train, together with the big group that was planned to depart to Poland. I turned to my good friend Reb Yona Kahn and told him about my thoughts and my decision. Reb Yona listened and then said, "Look me in the eyes, Mendele, look at my eyes very well. Does that mean that *mesirus nefesh* also has a limit?" His words pierced my heart.

Reb Mendel ended up sending his family out, and he himself remained in Russia for another 17 years.

(ר' מענדל ע' 238)

A Moment with The Rebbe



COLD AND DIRTY

During the 5710's (1950's), the Rebbe would often *daven* in the courtyard adjacent to 770. Before Shabbos Bereishis 5718 (1957), when the Rebbe suggested to the administration that the *davening* be held there, the caring *gabbai* argued that it was cold and dirty down there.

At the *farbrengen*, the Rebbe relayed the conversation, and suddenly began to cry.

"Everything is *b'hashgacha prat*, to teach us a lesson. Here we are, after all

the *yomim tovim*, and we are told that it is still *kalt un shmutzig* (cold and dirty)."

The Rebbe continued sobbing uncontrollably. "Elul, *slichos*, Rosh Hashanah, *Aseres Yemei Teshuva*, Yom Kippur, the four days before Sukkos, Sukkos, Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah. And it's still cold and dirty!

"The only comfort is the fact that we have such clear *hashgacha prat*. Usually the lesson isn't so easily attained. Here the lesson is so clear."

(Toras Menachem vol. 21, page 134)