

The Weekly Farbrenge



**MERKAZ
ANASH**
מרכז אנאש

למען ישמענו • חיי שרה תשפ"ג • 697
EDITOR - RABBI SHIMON HELLINGER

THE LUMINARIES OF HOMES (II)

HIGHLY REGARDED

Reb Nechemia Zalman of Shventzian was a student of Reb Michel of Opotzk, one of the prominent chassidim of the Alter Rebbe. He was a phenomenal genius both in *nigleh* and in *Chassidus*, and would often spend his time alone in deep thought.

Being exceptionally organized, he kept a strict schedule. Every morning at about three a.m., when the sky showed its first pale signs of day, both on weekdays and on *Shabbos*, he would meditate on *Chassidus* for six hours with his *tallis* over his shoulder, and then *daven* for another six hours. It was then time either to go home to eat and rest, or to *daven Mincha* and *Maariv* and then go home, depending on the season.

He would make a yearly trip to Lubavitch around Shavuot time, and would stay for five or six weeks. On the first day of Shavuot, when the visiting *rabbonim* were invited to the table of the *Tzemach Tzedek* to hear exclusive stories of the Rebbeim and to discuss Torah thoughts with the Rebbe, Reb Nechemia Zalman was seated up front and would amaze the other guests with his novel Torah insights.

On the outskirts of Lubavitch, on a hill off to the left, there was a little pine forest, in the middle of which stood a booth made of branches. At the foot of the hill flowed a brook about six feet wide, and deep enough to reach a person's waist. Throughout his stay in Lubavitch, Reb Nechemia Zalman made this hut his home. Every night, after sleeping and reciting *Tikkun Chatzos* in the township, he would head out to the forest, where he would *toivel* in the river and prepare for *davening*. After *davening* he would eat something, rest for an hour, learn, *daven Mincha*, and return to town.

Yet though he chose to spend most of his day there in solitude, he returned to the Rebbe's courtyard every evening for the "*yechidus* dance." Traditionally, whenever a chossid exited *yechidus*, his fellow chassidim would join him as he danced in joy over his great merit to have been in the Rebbe's presence, while others clapped their hands to the

rhythm of the *niggun*. And though by nature Reb Nechemia Zalman was a loner, he eagerly looked forward day after day to witnessing this comradely celebration of the superiority of Mind over Matter, the superiority of the soul over the body.

The Rebbe Maharash once related how he himself would stealthily visit the forest to peek between the cracks of that hut. He wanted to observe Reb Nechemia Zalman's face as he meditated upon topics in *Chassidus*, his eyes closed and his face aflame, and seemingly detached from bodily concerns and indeed from This World.

CONSIDER

Why couldn't Reb Yosef Hillel have the same influence of yiras Shomayim on older students?

When is mesirus nefesh for personal benefit and when is it not?

At a *yechidus* in תרל"ח (1878), the Rebbe Maharash told his son, the Rebbe Rashab:

"The purpose of the descent of a *neshama* in this world is not to be satisfied with only elevating the individual himself, but also to impact another person. Reb Nechemia Zalman was exceptionally great, but his *avoda* was the *avoda* of an individual and did not draw anyone along with him. The ultimate purpose of the *neshama* in This World is accomplished by chassidim like Reb Yosef Hillel, the *melamed* who taught little children in Druye, and like Reb Shmuel Chaim, the *rov* of Lutzin.

"Reb Yosef Hillel the *melamed* was a student of the elder chassidim in Druye, whom the Alter Rebbe taught that the ultimate goal of a chassid is to share with others the spirit of *avoda*, the correction of *middos* and *ahavas Yisroel*. This schooling influenced Reb Yosef Hillel so deeply that although he was a talented *lamdan*, and could have taught older

students, which also would have brought him a greater income, he chose to teach young children – so that he could implant in their hearts a love for Torah and *yiras Shamayim*. In the course of the last fifty years he raised great numbers of G-d-fearing students.

"What Reb Yosef Hillel implanted in their young hearts cannot be uprooted, or even weakened, by all the winds in the world. This is the ultimate purpose of the descent of a *neshama* – to see to it that a Yid should live his life according to the will of *HaShem*.

"The town of Lutzin was made up primarily of coarse people, who were engrossed in *machlokes*, *rechilus*, jealousy and other bad *middos*. They would slander one another and make each other miserable.

"In תרל"ז (1867) they asked me to send them a *rov*, so I sent them Reb Shmuel Chaim, the *melamed* in Tcharei. Reb Shmuel Chaim had exceptional *middos* and loved everyone. While in his hometown, he had guided the *chassidische yungeleit* with great success.

"When he arrived in Lutzin he was perturbed by the lowly state of the people there. Yet unfazed, he immediately got to work, to drive out whatever was negative and to introduce light. And within a few years of patient *mesirus nefesh* he transformed the town.

"Aside from the fact that the *mesirus nefesh* of Reb Yosef Hillel and Reb Shmuel Chaim impacted a multitude of people, their *mesirus nefesh* was truly elevated, since it was not for their personal benefit. And this is the vessel for the *bracha* of the Alter Rebbe – that chassidim should be successful in their Torah and *avoda*."

The Frierdiker Rebbe records the above in a letter to teachers and he concludes:

The lesson from this is that aside from the responsibility to teach his students, every teacher must educate and guide them in *yiras Shamayim*, *middos tovos* and *derech erez*. The responsibility for their future lies on his shoulders, and their future depends on his personal conduct.

(אג"ק אדהר"י"צ ח"ח ע' 497)

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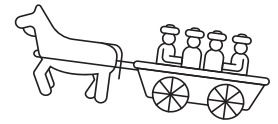
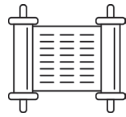


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SERVING AS A GUARANTOR

Is it praiseworthy to serve as a guarantor for another Jew's loan?

In halacha, there are three categories of guarantors (arev) who serve as backup for the borrower of a loan: (1) Arev - after unsuccessfully trying to collect the debt from the borrower, the lender can collect from the arev; (2) Arev kablan - the lender can choose to approach the arev first; (3) Arev shlof dutz - he takes full responsibility for the loan and is considered in place of the borrower in all respects.

Chazal discourage one from serving as an arev, warning of the bad things that befall an arev, and encouraging one to distance himself from taking it on. 'Rashi understands this as referring specifically to the third category who takes total responsibility for a loan that isn't his. But the Rambam writes that a talmid chacham's way is not to serve as an arev in general, and Acharonim write that one should stay away from any type of arvus unless one is ready to part with this money.

The obvious question is what's wrong with doing a favor and helping someone out? In fact, Rishonim note that being an arev is almost like lending the person money, and the Maharsha calls it gemilus chassadim. This is true whether the person needs the money for personal needs or to sustain or expand his business.

Some answer that the problem is when one accepts responsibility without knowing the true situation of the borrower. He overestimates the borrower's likelihood of repayment and ends up needing to pay for the loan without being ready for it. This leads to animosity between him and the borrower over the hardship he underwent.

Likewise, some explain that the mitzva is only when one recognizes the borrower as completely honest. If his honesty isn't certain, there is no obligation of gemilus chassadim to lend him. The Peleh Yoetz says that one should only serve as an arev if he takes a collateral from the borrower.

The Alter Rebbe writes that since one should keep true to his word and even his thoughts in monetary matters, if one told his friend that he would serve as his arev, he should keep his word. Yet, if he discovers that the borrower is struggling and he might not be able to pay up, he may retract.

- 1. יבמות ק"ט ע"א וע"ב, רעה אחר רעה תבוא על ערבי שלציון.
2. ראה רש"י יבמות שם ד"ה של ציון.
3. ראה רמב"ם דעות פ"ה ס"י"ג ומתנות עניים פ"ז ה"ט. צוואה מחיים אות ז'.
4. ב"ק ס"ק" מהר"ח פלאגי. רמב"ם - הערה י"ח ומסיים וצ"ע.

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

R. ABBA TSHASHNIKER

R. Abba Tshashniker (born ca. 5570) saw the Mittlerer Rebbe in his youth, and was a Chasid of Tzemach Tzedek, Rebbe Maharash, and Rebbe Rashab. Originally a melamed in Tshashnik, he later settled in Lubavitch, and he was one of the elder Chassidim that the Frierdiker Rebbe mentions as having made a deep impression on him in his youth, with his stories and conduct.

The Frierdiker Rebbe related:

Almost every day on my way home from cheder, as well as during my free time on Friday and Shabbos, I would visit R. Hendel and R. Abba Tshashniker who lived in the house down the hill.

The two chassidim, while both dedicated baalei avoda, were very different. R. Abba was a deep baal havana who would delve into the unity of Hashem's name and creation of the world. He would learn six hours consecutively in one spot, daven shachris for five hours, mincha for 1.5 hours, and mairiv for several hours. His avoda was always with himself, not with others.

R. Hendel, in contrast, was a heartfelt person, who would often say that love of Hashem, the Torah and Yidden, is the thread that connects Elokus with the Yidden and the world.

(ספר השיחות תש"ח ע' 190, ה'ת"ש ע' 104)

When a member of his family would fall ill, R. Abba would not call for a doctor, and would instead give money to the tzedaka of R. Meir Baal Haness. He would begin with one kopeck and add until he gave one silver ruble. If the person did not get better, he would start again from one kopeck and add.

When the Tzemach Tzedek was told of this, he said, "That is a path for R. Abba. For the rest of us, however, we just follow what the Torah says that a doctor was given the ability to heal."

(רשימות דברים חדש ע' 255)

R. Abba's son lived in Philadelphia, and in 5701 he visited the Frierdiker Rebbe in 770. During the farbrengen, R. Abba's son called out, "Lchaim! I will still live longer." The Frierdiker Rebbe gave him a puzzled look, and the elderly man explained, "When I was a youngster, my father took me to see the Rebbe Maharash and complained that I wasn't behaving well. The Rebbe replied, 'When he gets older, he'll get better.'

"Well," concluded the son, "I still haven't gotten better, so I will no doubt live longer!" The Frierdiker Rebbe laughed heartily at his words.

(ניצוצי אור)

A Moment with The Rebbe



A SHLICHUS DIRECTIVE

Reb Yisroel Shmotkin relates:

After I got married in 5728 (1968), I wrote to the Rebbe that I wish to go out on shlichus. Over the next few months, I spoke with Harav Chodakov, checked out the various options, and finally settled on Wisconsin. The Rebbe blessed the move, not before making certain that it has the full consent of my wife.

The night before our departure, Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan 5729, we merited a yechidus. In our note, amongst our various requests, I also asked for a general directive

regarding shlichus. The Rebbe addressed the questions with these words:

"Generally speaking, the inyan of a tomim is limud haTorah. Therefore, you should set up study sessions in nigleh and in Chassidus, preferably with a chavrusa, but if that isn't possible then on your own."

Then the Rebbe added, "Since you are going to do communal work, I don't mean that you should dedicate all your time to Torah learning. But you must have a kvius itim."

(Techayeinu Issue 8)