

The Weekly *Farbrengens*


MERKAZ ANASH
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THRILLED TO ACTION (III)

A SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

Before the Baal Shem Tov became known, he served as a *shochet* in a little village. When it was time to reveal himself, he left his post and a different *shochet* filled his place.

Soon after, one of the locals sent a chicken to the new *shochet* with a *goyishe* servant. The *goy* returned with the live chicken and told his master: "Yisrolik would sharpen his knife with his flowing tears; this fellow just sharpens his knife with water from a jug. Should I give the chicken to be slaughtered by such a man?!"

(שמור"ס ח"ג ע' 148)

One year during the first *Seder*, *Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka*, the wife of the *Tzemach Tzedek*, came running in to the home of her father, the *Mitteler Rebbe*. While they were performing the *Seder* at home, her husband had drifted off into a trance of ecstasy, had fallen off his chair, and was lying under the table in a state of *klos hanefesh*. The *Mitteler Rebbe* was unfazed and assured her, "Never mind; he will crawl out."

Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka returned home, only to find her husband in the same position. She ran back to father, who this time instructed some *chassidim* who had entered to tell the *Tzemach Tzedek* in his name that he should regain consciousness. They went along with *Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka*, but as they entered the house, the *Tzemach Tzedek* stood up and resumed his position at the table.

(למען ידעו ע' 315)

A FLAMING FIRE

It was during the lifetime of the *Mitteler Rebbe*, when the *Tzemach Tzedek* sat at a *farbrengen* with some of his father-in-law's *chassidim* and related:

Once, the Baal Shem Tov was about to gather with his *talmidim*. They knew that the Baal Shem

Tov loved light, because of its connection to the inner secret, the Source of light, yet they had only one candle.

When the Baal Shem Tov entered he said, "Yidden need light. My task is to provide them with light." The *talmidim* excused themselves,

CONSIDER

Why did the goy think that the chicken must be slaughtered amidst tears? Was he right?

How is the impact of Chassidus affected by sipping coffee while learning?

saying that they could only get their hand on that one candle. The Baal Shem Tov instructed them to break off the icicles that hung from the roof, and to kindle them. They did as the Baal Shem Tov instructed, and the icicles burned.

Concluding the story, the *Tzemach Tzedek* added with *dveikus*, "With the students of the Baal Shem Tov, icicles burned; with today's *chassidim*, everything is dark and frigid."

When the Rebbe Rashab recalled this episode, he noted, "My grandfather, the *Tzemach Tzedek*, uncovered in his *chassidim* the 'eternally burning fire' of the *neshama*."

(אוצר סיפורי חב"ד ח"יז ע' 214)

In a fiery *sicha* addressed to the *bochurim* of *Tomchei Temimim*, at the *farbrengen* of *Simchas Torah* תרס"א (1900), the Rebbe Rashab outlined the final battles against the opposition to Torah in our times:

Chazal tell us that the coming of *Moshiach* will be preceded by awesome birthpangs, both physical and spiritual.

Temimim! The worldly attitudes, which are shared

even by some of those who observe Torah and *mitzvos*, are cold and smack of disbelief. Only a very fine line separates spiritual frigidity (*kfor*) from actual disbelief (*kfira*)... Since *HaShem* is "an all-consuming fire," our Torah study and *davening* should reflect the full flame of the Yiddishe heart, so that every aspect of our being proclaims the words of *HaShem*...

Indeed, this has always been the case: When immersed in his studies, a *chossid* would characteristically feel awe before the Giver of the Torah, Whose Presence he sensed within it. Likewise, when *davening*, the typical *chossid* would have an inner appreciation of the words, *da lifnei mi ata omed* — "Know before Whom you are standing." Some *shuls* have this sentence inscribed on the lectern, so that at least it will know before Whom it is standing... In *chassidic shuls* it is not written on the lectern: it is engraved in a *chossid's* mind and heart. And when a *chossid* would answer *Amen*, or *Amen, yehei shmei rabba*, or *Baruch hu uvaruch shmo* he sensed that it was a matter of cosmic significance...

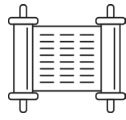
Chassidus should be studied with intense involvement; it should be taken to heart. It is not meant to be treated with the casualness of those *chassidim* who sip coffee or chicory on *Shabbos* morning while looking inside a *Torah Or* or *Likkutei Torah*...

Not that these *chassidische baalei-batim* are at fault. The blame lies with their environment, which is so cold that *mitzvos* are commonly fulfilled by rote. They are surrounded by people whose Torah study is cold; their *davening* is cold; their singing is cold; even their dancing is cold. Immersed in a sea of ice, their spiritual life is so frozen that even the *chassidic* pulse beats faintly.

Chassidus should be studied with vitality — not with commotion but with inner vigor, so that not only does the *chossid* feel alive when immersed in the G-dly concept that he has studied, but the concept is *alive within him*.

(לקו"ד ח"ד ס"ע 1578, היום יום ט"ז שבט)





SNACKING ON SEEDS

What bracha do I make on watermelon or pumpkin seeds?

The bracha on vegetables and produce grown from the earth is *borei pri ha'adama*. Fruit of the tree has added importance, so Chazal removed it from the general category of earth-grown produce and established for it the specific bracha of *borei pri ha'etz*.¹

Edible fruit shells and peels — e.g., orange peels — also deserve the special bracha of *ha'etz*, according to some opinions.² Others argue that since they are secondary to the actual fruit and not special, their bracha is *ha'adama*, like other earth-grown produce. In practice, we recite *ha'adama* since that is the general bracha that certainly covers them. If one has already said *ha'etz*, he should not recite another bracha of *ha'adama*.³

Fruit seeds that are sweet and commonly eaten share the status of fruit (*ha'etz*). If they are bitter and unfit for eating, they don't deserve any bracha. If they are sweetened externally, their bracha would be *shehakol*.⁴

When it comes to edible vegetable seeds — e.g., pumpkin seeds — the question arises whether the vegetable was planted with the primary intention also for its seeds, in which case the bracha is *ha'adama* like the vegetable, or are the seeds a mere byproduct, in which case its bracha is *shehakol*.

Some *acharonim* follow the majority of that species of fruit or vegetable, which is typically not for the seeds, and the bracha would be *shehakol*.⁵ However, some contemporary *poskim* note that commercially marketed watermelon and pumpkin seeds are produced from watermelons and pumpkins planted for this specific purpose, and their bracha should therefore be *ha'adama*. Still, homemade seeds, or seeds not grown for this purpose, would remain *shehakol*.⁶

Sunflower seeds are *ha'adama*. Even though they are often planted for their oil, this is only the case with a specific variety. Besides, the oil is considered secondary to the seeds and not the primary focus.⁷

The bracha *acharona* on these seeds is always *borei nefashos*. Yet, it is only said after eating a *kezayis* within the timeframe of *kdei achilas pras* (see issue 303), which is often not the case when snacking on these seeds.⁸

1. שוע"ר או"ח סי' ר"ב ס"א.
2. תוס' ברכות דף ל"ו ד"ה והלכתא.
3. שוע"ר או"ח סי' ר"ב ס"ט.
4. שוע"ר סי' ר"ב ס"ח.
5. אוצה"ב על נ"ג. וראה קצוה"ש סי' מ"ט סק"ח שכתב על גרעיני דלעת.
6. שברכתם שהכל אבל שוב זה היה דווקא אז.
7. ראה שערי ברכה רשימת האוכלים גרעיני אבטיח הע' מ"ח.
8. ראה אור לציון ח"ב פי"ד סק"י.
9. וזאת הברכה שם הע' מ"ט.

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

Our Heroes



R. NOCHUM YITZCHOK PINSON

R. Nochum Yitzchok Pinson was born in 5645 in Pahar, and was a *talmid* of Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim in Lubavitch. He lived in Starodub and Charkov, and was *moser nefesh* for Yiddishkeit and the chinuch of his children under Communist rule. He was arrested by the Communists in 5699, and passed away in a gulag in 5702.

Not blessed with success in business, R. Nochum Yitzchok struggled to put food on his table. Forced to work long hours and make frequent trips, his children's *chinuch* was being overlooked.

In his town, there was no *chassidische cheder*, and his children were educated in the spirit of the times. Torah study was supplemented with Russian language and secular studies, until the Torah became secondary. As people said then, "They anyway won't become *rabbonim*, so however much Torah they learn is fine..."

Though R. Nochum Yitzchok was greatly pained by their depraved *chinuch*, and more than once he interrupted their secular studies, he couldn't stop it. The prevailing culture was strong, and his relatives accused him of depriving his children of a living. He consoled himself that when his *parnassa* stabilizes he'll devote himself to his children's *chinuch*, but that time was not coming. During his business trips his children were left entirely without supervision, and they made bad friends.

Upon returning from one long trip, the severity of the situation hit him. He cried to himself, thinking, "What kind of life is it if my sons won't be faithful *temimim*?" But what could he do? He had no money, and the closest yeshiva was in Kharkov — 500 km away! He sold his gold watch

and some other items, and he told his wife that he will be taking their ten and twelve-year-old sons to *yeshiva*.

When the news reached his wife's family, they barged into his home and berated him, "Have you lost your mind? Where are you sending these young boys? Now, when the government is shutting down yeshivos, you must give them a general education so that they can be doctors or engineers, and be able to support you!"

But R. Nochum Yitzchok was adamant, and his wife also realized the urgency. With a heavy heart, she packed up food and clothing, and bid them a tearful goodbye.

After three whole days of traveling, they arrived in Kharkov. There they found the *yeshiva* staff panic-stricken, and none of the forty students were there. Having received advance notice of an inspection, the staff sent the students away, and finding nothing, the police left them alone. R. Nochum Yitzchok was at a loss of what to do next, but the resolve to give his children a *chassidische chinuch* did not allow him to give up so fast. He remained in Kharkov for two weeks, and after they had reestablished the yeshiva in a new location he deposited the boys with the *rosh yeshiva*.

Entering the yeshiva, a new world open up before the boys: tens of *bochurim* and boys devoted to Torah and *avodas Hashem*. The enthusiasm of the bochurim won them over, and in a short time, they became outstanding *temimim* and influenced their younger brothers and sister. The family became a shining example of Torah, avoda, and *tzedaka*, and R. Nochum Yitzchok's wish for *ehrlische* children materialized even better than he had imagined.

(ספר הזכרונות דברי הימים ע' צב ואילך)

A Moment with The Rebbe



GIVE ME A SMILE AS A PERSONAL GIFT

From the diary of Reb Shlomo Madanchick, Mayor of Kfar Chabad:

At our *yechidus*, the Rebbe bent over and conversed with our children Chani and Dini. The Rebbe gave my wife 18 dollars towards *mitvzoyim* and told her that she should be active as long as it isn't on the account of her primary role — motherhood.

As we were retreating to leave the room, the Rebbe looked at me and said, "Could I have you for another minute?"

My wife and children left, and the Rebbe began, "I didn't want to say a *chisaron* of yours in front of your wife, that's why I asked them to leave.

"You are lacking in *simcha*, and I see no justification. I know of all your hardships, and also those hardships of which you are not aware. But Hashem has given you the strength to overcome them. This affects your family, and as the mayor, the entire village and your contacts outside the village.

"Regarding the past — I'm not looking to rebuke. But from now on you must be joyful. And that means from this very moment."

The Rebbe smiled a broad beautiful smile, "Nu, give me a smile as a personal gift. Pinch your cheeks and be happy! Nu, as you stand here now!"

(*Hakatar Shel Chabad*, Page 274)