

The Weekly Farbrengens


MERKAZ ANASH
 מרכז אנאש
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 EDITOR - RABBI SHIMON HELLINGER

SIMPLE FAITH

RELYING ON HASHEM

It had been a long, long ride, and Reb Mendel of Bar, who was traveling together with the Baal Shem Tov, felt really thirsty.

The Baal Shem Tov told him, "If you will have true *bitachon* in *HaShem*, you will definitely find water."

Shortly afterwards a *goy* approached them and asked if they had seen horses roaming around, for he had lost his horses three days earlier and had been desperately searching for them. They replied in the negative and then asked him if he had some water.

"Sure I have!" the *goy* answered, and he gave Reb Mendel a drink.

Reb Mendel asked the Baal Shem Tov, "If the purpose of the *goy's* wanderings was just for my sake, to relieve me of my thirst, why did he have to travel for three days?"

The Baal Shem Tov replied, "Actually, *HaShem* prepared him earlier, in case you would exhibit true *bitachon*, because then your desire would have been granted immediately!"

(סיפורי חסידים זוין תורה ע' 379)

Faithful to the instructions he had received from *Shamayim*, the Baal Shem Tov once invited a group of his *talmidim* to accompany him in a wagon to a certain town, so that they could learn the *middah* of *bitachon*. The local innkeeper was pleased to see them and welcomed them graciously. The next morning, while they were *davening*, a police officer walked in with a stick in hand, banged the table three times and left. The *talmidim*, baffled, froze in their places, but their host remained as cheerful as he had been before. Half an hour later the same man returned, banged the table three times, and left.

When the Baal Shem Tov asked the innkeeper to explain these strange events, he said, "This is a warning. He's reminding me to bring the rental payment to the *poritz*. It is repeated three times, and if I do not bring the money at that point, my family and I will be thrown into the dungeon."

Hearing this, the Baal Shem Tov told him, "Judging from your calmness, you have the money ready, so why don't you go and pay your rent? We will await

your return, and then we will be able to take our places at your table peacefully."

The innkeeper answered, "Truthfully, at the moment I don't have a single coin, but *HaShem* will surely not forsake me. He will provide the money. Let us eat without haste, because three hours still remain to the time limit."

They ate together unhurriedly, and the innkeeper's face disclosed no sign of his dangerous plight. At the end of the meal, the officer strode in for the third time and once again banged on the table, but the innkeeper, unruffled, remained calmly in his place. After *benching* with *kavana*, the innkeeper went off to get dressed in his *Shabbos* clothing. When he rejoined them and announced that he would now go pay and his dues, the Baal Shem Tov asked him again if he had the money he needed.

Shaking his head, the host answered, "I haven't got a single penny yet, but I am sure *HaShem* will take care of me!"

CONSIDER

Where does one get such pure bitachon from?

He took his leave and the Baal Shem Tov and his *talmidim* went out to the porch overlooking the road that stretched out before them, to see him off as he set out on his mission by foot.

From the distance they saw a wagon driving towards the innkeeper, which slowed down as he exchanged a few words with the wagon driver. The wagon then continued on its way. After a few moments, its driver backtracked, called out to the innkeeper, and then handed him some money. The wagon then resumed its route towards the inn, where the curious onlookers asked the driver what had transpired.

"I had proposed a deal to the innkeeper," he said, "and offered to buy all the liquor he is due to make this winter, but he didn't agree to my price and continued on his way. Seeing his stubbornness, but knowing his honesty, I decided to give him the amount he had asked for. He then excused himself and hurried ahead, explaining that he was on his

way to pay his rent."

The Baal Shem Tov turned to his *talmidim* and said, "Look how powerful is the *middah* of *bitachon*!"

(סיפורי חסידים זוין תורה ע' 379)

COMPLETE TRUST

The *tzaddik*, Reb Noach of Lechovitch, shared the following story with his *chassidim*:

Hirshke, a simple *Yid*, earned his *parnasa* by selling merchandise in the market. Before daybreak he would go out to the countryside to meet the *goyish* farmers before they arrived in town, and bargain with them over their goods.

One day a visiting *maggid* came to town and spoke of the intrinsic value of living with *bitachon*, and explained that no man ever earns a *kopke* more than what *HaShem* has ordained for him. Hirshke took those words to heart. On the following market day he decided not to rush out early to try and reach the farmers before his competitors did. His anxious wife, seeing him lying in bed, urged him to get up. He told her what he had heard from the *maggid*, concluding that whatever *HaShem* had planned for him, he would be able to buy at home. She did her eloquent best to convince him otherwise, but Hirshke refused to leave the house.

A while later, when they heard the other buyers outside clinching their deals with the *goyim*, she pleaded with him again, but to no avail. Then one of the farmers called out, "We're not selling any more stuff until Hirshke shows up!"

The *goyim* began banging on his shutters, shouting for him to get up. Hirshke got dressed, brought the farmers inside and bought everything at a discounted rate without having to bargain. From that day on, he never had to leave his house, for the *goyim* would come to him, and he made a respectable *parnasa* till the end of his days.

Reb Noach finished the story and added, "This worked for him, because he was a simple fellow whose faith was whole and uncomplicated. It wouldn't be the same for someone else who tried to upgrade his *bitachon* by adding the sophistication of reason...."

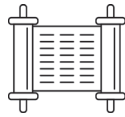
(סיפורי חסידים זוין תורה ע' 381)


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SECULAR DATES

Is there a problem with using the secular date on an invitation?

In discussing Jewish dates, there are three different counts: the month, the year, and the day of the week.

Traditionally, Yidden only used Torah months to mark dates, and many pointed to the Torah's instruction to choose Nissan as the "first of months" as an injunction not to use another count. Based on this and concerns of association with *avoda zara*, some *poskim* opposed using the secular date at all.¹

Yet, most *poskim* accepted that there is no prohibition to refer to the secular date when necessary. The Rebbe lists the Rama, Chasam Sofer, and R' Akiva Eiger as having referred to the secular date,² and notes the accepted custom among frum Yidden in America to use it when needed. Indeed, the Rebbe dated checks and signed certain English letters that included the English date.³

When a yeshiva bochur dated his letter with the secular date, the Rebbe expressed great surprise at this, noting that the very same day, he recited the Shir Shel Yom where he counted the days of the week in a manner that brings to mind the holiness of Shabbos.⁴

Although Yidden have used various counts for the year — including a count to secular monarchs — the current secular count counts from Yoshke's birth.⁵ While some are particular to use only the last two digits or add *l'misparam* ("to their count"), the accepted custom is to use it when needed (some explain since the count isn't accurate⁶).

However, it is preferable to preface the Yiddishe year when possible, to indicate that the secular year is not our primary count, and the abbreviations BC/AD should certainly not be used.⁷ When the Rebbe saw a secular date on *matzeivos* of Anash, he was very displeased and used strong words about it.⁸

While the Ramban instructs referring to days of the week by their count to Shabbos, this isn't the accepted practice.⁹ Yet, the Rebbe opposed highlighting Sunday as "the day off" (since it's only merit is due to Christianity). If necessary to schedule then, it could be simply noted as a day when children are home from school.¹⁰

1. מהר"ם ש"ק י"ד סי' קע"א. שו"ת פרי השדה ח"א סי' ג'. יש שהעדיפו מספר החדש ולא שמו, אבל לאידך, זה משנה את מנין החדשים מניסן - ראה תורת משה חת"ס פ' בא.
 2. ראה שו"ת רב"א סי' נ"א. אגרות סופרים ח"א ע' 93 וע' 104. שו"ת חת"ס אה"ע ח"א סי' מ"ג. וראה ס' כל בו על אבילות להרב גרינוולד ע' שפ"ח.
 3. ראה אגרות קודש ח"א ע' חכ.
 4. אג"ק ח"י ע' ק"ס. וראה העו"ב גל' תתכח ותלה.
 5. דרשות החת"ס ח"א צ"ג' ובהערה שם.
 6. ראה שו"ת יביע אומר ח"ג י"ד סי' ט שטועים הם בחשבון.
 7. ראה משמרת שלום הל' שמחות סי' פ"ד.
 8. ליקוטי סיפורי התוועדות (גרינגלאס) ע' 765.
 9. ראה אג"ק ח"ב ע' שסב "ומעולם לא ראיתי נזהרים מלומר או לכתוב זונטאג מאנטאג".
 10. כת"ק גליון כפ"ח 777.

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



REB MEIR REFOEL'S

Reb Meir Refoel's was a community leader in Vilna. In the peak of the sharp opposition against chassidim, he became a chossid of the Alter Rebbe through two personal *mofsim*.

up and handed Reb Meir a sum of money in the exact amount that he paid for the *tzitzis*. The Alter Rebbe explained that it was none other than *Eliyahu Hanavi* who had come to test him.

Once, during a business trip, Reb Meir noticed that one of his *tzitzis* became *possul*. He immediately told his driver to stop, so as not to carry on four *amos* without kosher *tzitzis*. For several hours, they waited on the side of the road, hoping that someone will pass by with an extra pair of *tzitzis* strings. Just before dusk, they noticed somebody. Reb Meir called for the man but his calling went unheard. He called louder until he was shouting. Finally the man turned towards him. "Do you have any *tzitzis* strings?" asked Reb Meir. "And if I would have," said the man, "do you think I am going to undo my entire bag just for a few strings?" Reb Meir bargained with the reluctant man until he offered all the money he was carrying. The man finally accepted and Reb Meir got the *tzitzis*.

The home of Reb Meir was always full of chassidim who would come to discuss *Chassidus* and *farbreng*. The *chassidische minyan* was in his house and any chossid who came to Vilna knew that he could find lodging in the home of Reb Meir.

Reb Meir hired and housed a *melamed* in his home to teach his children. The classroom and *shtible* were separated by only a thin wall. The *melamed*, though not a *chossid*, could not help himself from listening to the *Chassidus* that was being discussed on the other side of the wall. Reb Meir admonished him, "Why did you stop the teaching the children?!"

Try as he may, the *melamed* could not resist listening to the *Chassidus*. After a while he approached Reb Meir, "I beg you! Let me join your group. What is being spoken here is *mechayeh nefashos mamash* (it literally brings life)!"

Quite some time later, Reb Meir took a trip to visit the Alter Rebbe. As Reb Meir entered the *shul*, the Alter Rebbe stood

A Moment with The Rebbe



לזכות שניאור זלמן בן חוה לאה וכל משפחתו שיחיו לכל המצטרף בגשמייות ורוחניות

BETTER THAN NOT THINKING AT ALL!

Thinking Chassidus, in the Rebbe's world, is not a *hiddur mitzva*. Numerous times the Rebbe pointed out that contemplating Chassidus ideas is actually the most direct way of fulfilling the *psak* in Shulchan Aruch, that prior to davening one is obligated to think of the greatness of hashem.

simplicitly, and as a result may be compromising the full import of the Chassidus message.

The Rebbe answered that over time, and by thinking over the ideas enough times, "*vet dos veren eideler*" (it will become more refined).

A bochur once complained to the Rebbe, in a 24 Av 5732 *yechidus*, that his understanding of Chassidus concepts, and as a result his contemplation, is very crude. He takes everything

And regarding his present stage, the Rebbe said that his current thinking is "*besser fun nisht misbonen zain ingantzen* (better than not thinking at all)!"

(*Ovinu Roeinu p. 33*)