

The Weekly Farbrengen



למען ישמענו • ואתחנן תשפ"ו • 889
EDITOR - RABBI SHIMON HELLINGER

WIELDING WORDS (I)

WORKING WONDERS

Chazal say that even the *bracha* of an ordinary person should not be considered insignificant, for Dovid HaMelech and Daniel, no less, were *bensched* by ordinary people and the *bracha* bore fruit. When Dovid HaMelech bought the land for the Beis HaMikdosh from a *goyishe* farmer, the farmer *bensched* him that the plague inflicting the Yidden should stop, and his *bracha* was fulfilled. Similarly, Daniel was *bensched* by King Daryavesh (Darius) that *HaShem* should protect him from the lions in the den, and so it came to be.

(מגילה טו ע"א)

Chassidim of Reb Mendel Horodoker, among them the Alter Rebbe, once sat together and *chazered* the Torah that they had recently heard from their Rebbe. After reviewing it numerous times, they discussed related matters in *kedusha*, and one of them brought out some *masheke*.

A chossid present, who had been suffering from a sickness for which the doctors had not found a cure, wept and asked those present to *bensch* him with a *refua shleima*. Some of the others queried: "Do we have the power to give a *bracha*?" Some even rebuked him for believing in simple chassidim like themselves, for *brachos*, they held, are only in the power of *tzaddikim*. Without relenting, the chossid continued to plead from the depths of his heart. Thinking there was nothing they could do, his friends began singing *niggunim*, in the hope that this would calm him.

"Shal" the Alter Rebbe called out. The *niggunim* stopped abruptly, and the chossid too fell silent. "My brothers and friends, have you forgotten the message that came down from *Shamayim* to the *Chevraya Kaddisha*? (That is, the Holy Brotherhood, as the *talmidim* of the *Maggid* were known.) That which a *farbrengen* can accomplish, even Malach Michael cannot accomplish."

The Alter Rebbe explained that when *HaShem* sees Yidden *bensching* each other lovingly, He fulfills their requests immediately. The chassidim were aroused, and with brotherly love they *bensched* their fellow chossid with a *refua shleima*.

(אנ"ק מהור"י צ"ח ע"ת י"ב)

In Lieple there lived a well-to-do chossid of the *Tzemach Tzedek*, who would learn Chassidus in depth, *daven* at great length and would be among the first attendees at all *chassidishe farbrengens*. At one point, however, he

reconsidered the hours he spent at *farbrengens*. "They don't allow me to learn Chassidus in depth," he mused to himself. He decided to continue contributing towards the expenses of the *farbrengens*, but rather than attend, to stay home and learn Chassidus.

As time passed, one misfortune after another befell him. His business declined, his *shalom bayis* was disturbed, and members of his family fell ill with various illnesses. He realized that these were not mere coincidences, and went to seek the counsel of the *Tzemach Tzedek*. Pouring out his troubled heart to the Rebbe, he wondered why he was encountering so much hardship. "Tell me about your daily conduct," the Rebbe said.

The chossid described his everyday routine, mentioning also his decision to forgo the *farbrengens* in order to use the time more efficiently for learning.

"That is the reason for all your difficulties," said the Rebbe. "Participating in a *chassidishe farbrengen* is very beneficial. When chassidim gather together, say *LeChayim*, and wish one another *Lechayim tovim uleshalom*, they are in fact showering vital *brachos* upon each other. *Lechayim*, life, contains the *bracha* for physical health; *tovim*, goodness, implies wealth, and *uleshalom*, peace, indicates harmony in the home. By avoiding the *farbrengen*, you are forgoing these *brachos*."

(רשימות דברים ח"א ע' קל"ח, וע"ש להנוסח 'לחיים ולברכה')

CONSIDER

What is so powerful about a bracha: the words themselves or the good intentions behind them?

How can an unintended negative comment have such repercussions?

THE MISFORTUNE OF NEGATIVITY

Chazal say that "a covenant has been made with the lips" – the speech of a person has the power to make things happen. A person should not predict something bad, for then he is giving power to Satan.

The Torah forbids cursing another Yid. One reason is that speech has such a lofty source that it has the power to affect even outside occurrences. This power is heightened by the level of the person speaking.

(מועד קטן יח ע"א, ס' החינוך מצוה רלא, ראשית חכמה שעה"ק פ"ג)

Once, the *amora* Shmuel went to console his brother Pinchas who had lost a child. Seeing that his fingernails had grown long, Shmuel encouraged him to trim them. Pinchas responded, "If you would lose a family member, would you still belittle this act of mourning?"

Soon after, Shmuel lost a family member, and when Pinchas came to visit, Shmuel said with frustration, "Do you not realize the power of words?!"

(מועד קטן יח ע"א)

Yehuda, the son of Rabbi Chiya and son-in-law of Rabbi Yannai, would learn all week in *yeshiva*, returning home on Friday night. As he approached his home, a pillar of fire could be seen leading the way. One week he was so engrossed in his learning that he stayed longer than usual, so his father-in-law said in jest, "Who knows if he is still alive?"

His words had an effect and the son-in-law passed away.

(כתובות טב ע"ב)

It is *parkened* in the *Shulchan Aruch* that one must be very careful with what he says. One should not jokingly comment about a living person, "If he would be alive, he surely would be here already," for this can *ch"v* harm that person.

(שו"ע אדה"ז הל' שמירת הגוף והנפש סי"ב)

R. Yehuda HaChossid writes: One should not say to someone behaving inappropriately, "You are acting like a *galach*," for this may cause this to actualize in this person or one of his descendants.

(ס' חסידים ס' תעט)

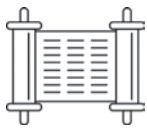
Even when reciting a *possuk* or *mishna* which includes a negative statement, one should change the wording so that it will not imply a curse.

Thus we learn that Rav Kahana sat before Rav Yehuda and repeated the words of the *mishna*, "May *HaShem* smite you." Rav Yehuda instructed him, "Say 'smite him' instead, and do not curse me."

(שבועות לו ע"א)

ומסיימים בטוב





ASSISTED SUICIDE

May a doctor end the life of a patient who is suffering and wishes to die?

Euthanasia ('good death' in Greek) is the practice of ending a life to spare the person pain and suffering. It was accepted in the ancient world by those who saw no purpose in a life of hardship. The Torah, by contrast, teaches that every moment of life is a gift entrusted to us by Hashem, of infinite and immeasurable worth, and not ours to give away.¹

Killing someone carries the death penalty even if the victim was a *goses*, already on the edge of death.² Even the suffering itself may be a kindness from Hashem, sent to cleanse the person of their sins.³ When R' Chanina ben Tradyon was being burned alive, he refused to open his mouth and breathe in the flames to die faster, unwilling to do anything to shorten the life Hashem had given him.⁴ While some early *poskim* suggested that poisoning is categorized as *grama* (indirect murder), the halacha is that it's outright murder.⁵

What about for a non-Jew? There is debate about whether a non-Jew who ends a suffering Jew's life follows the same or different standards.⁶ If a non-Jew wishes to be euthanized under laws that permit it, some *poskim* consider a Jew's assistance as an accomplice to murder and a chillul Hashem, while others permit limited involvement, such as a hospital administrator signing off forms.⁷

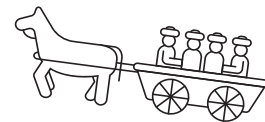
Taking one's own life is treated with the same severity. Such a person is buried apart from others, is not mourned, and kaddish is said for him for the full twelve months.⁸ Yet this status applies only to a clear and deliberate act, excluding a minor, one who was not of sound mind, or one who acted out of duress or fear of a worse death.⁹ Some wished to extend this same leniency to one driven by suffering, but the *poskim* do not accept it in practice.¹⁰

The Gemara relates that as Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi lay dying in great pain, his maidservant saw that the tefillos of the chachomim were holding back his passing, and she interrupted them so that his soul could depart.¹¹ From here, the Rama rules that while one may not do anything to hasten death, one may remove an impediment that is delaying the soul's departure. These distinctions are subtle, and a competent rov must be consulted in practice.¹²

7. המחמירים: הרב י"ד פרימר, הלכה ורפואה תשמ"ה, עמ' רצא ואילך; ראה מאמר הרב א' נבנצל, אסיא ד, תשמ"ג, עמ' 260. המתירים: שו"ת תשובות והנהגות ח"ג סי' שסח.
8. שו"ע יו"ד סי' שמה ס"א. וראה גשר החיים פכ"ה אות ב. ולענין אמירת קדיש כל י"ב חודש, ראה חת"ס אבה"ע ח"א סי' סט, ולהעיר מאג"ק ח"ד ע' קמ. ומנגד ראה ציץ אליעזר ח"ה אבה"ע סי' ב. ציור החיים פסקה רצד, ס' מעולם ועד עולם פנ"ד.
9. ראה שו"ע יו"ד סי' שמה ס"ג. וראה גשר החיים פכ"ה אות ג. נטעי גבריאל הל' אבלות ח"א פמ"ג.
10. ראה גשר החיים שם סק"מ מה שדוחה המובא בשם ה"בשמים ראש".
11. כתובות קד ע"א.
12. רמ"א יו"ד סי' שלט ס"א. וראה נשמת אברהם יו"ד סי' שלט בארובה.

1. יומא פה ע"א. רמב"ם הל' חובל ומזיק פ"ה ה"א.
2. שו"ע חו"מ סי' תכ ס"א. שו"ע"ר חו"מ הל' נזקי גוף ונפש ס"ד. וראה מנחת שלמה ח"א סי' צא אות כד.
3. רמב"ם הל' רוצח ושמירת נפש פ"ב ה"ו.
4. הרב ח"ד הלוי, תחומין ב, תשמ"א, עמ' 297 ואילך. וראה הכתב והקבלה בראשית ט, ה. שהביא מקור מהפסוק נגד המתת חסד אפילו שכנעשה לטובת החולה הסובל יסורים קשים.
5. עבודה זרה יח ע"א.
6. הרב י"ד פרימר, הלכה ורפואה ד, תשמ"ה, עמ' רצא ואילך, שדחה תשובת הגאונים בתרא"י סי' מה.
7. שו"ת אגרות משה חו"מ ח"ב סי' עג אות ג. אך ראה שם סי' עד אות ב. שמשמע קצת אחרת. וי"ל. וראה עוד אג"מ יו"ד ח"ב סי' קעד ענף ג. ומנגד הרב ש"ב רנר, תורה שבעל פה יח, תשל"ו, עמ' לח ואילך.

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



R. DOVID MEIR RABINOWITZ

R. Dovid Meir Rabinowitz (5623-5703) was a chossid of the Rebbe Rashab and Frierdiker Rebbe. In his youth, he was a talmid of R. Peretz Chein and his son R. Dovid Tzvi (Radatz) Chein, the Rabbonim of Chernigov. In 5656 (1896), he moved to the United States and served as a Rov in Boston for almost 50 years.

One of the early Lubavitcher Chassidim in America, R. Dovid Meir raised money for the Frierdiker Rebbe's *mosdos* in Poland, Eretz Yisrael, and later in the U.S. He merited a very close relationship with the Frierdiker Rebbe, and he received many lengthy letters from him about Lubavitch financial affairs, the Frierdiker Rebbe's personal health, and matters of *askanus* in the U.S. R. Dovid Meir's son Asher was a well-connected lawyer, and the father and son played a key role in obtaining the visa for the Rebbe to come to America during the war.

While visiting the Frierdiker Rebbe in Otvoztz in the summer of 5696, R. Dovid Meir visited the local branch of Tomchei Temimim. R. Yuda Eber described the scene in a letter:

"Last week, we were visited by R. Dovid Meir, his son Peretz and some other guests from America. Without exaggeration, when he entered the *zal* and saw it filled with 70 senior bochurim learning, he sat down in faint from great emotion. For some time, he could not even get a word out of his mouth. He then visited the younger classes and spent some time there.

"At the goodbye gathering, he stood up and literally began shouting at us, 'Batlanim that you are! Why are you silent? Do you appreciate the value of these gems here? I never imagined that today there is a Tomchei Temimim yeshiva at such a level!'"

(תולדות חב"ד בפולין ע' 171)

A Moment with The Rebbe



L'CHAIM ON COCA COLA

R' Shaul Jubani related:

One day during my *kevutza* year of 5736, we were notified that we would enter *yechidus* with the Rebbe. Filled with excitement, I walked in and recited Shehecheyanu slowly, with my Yemenite pronunciation and tune. The Rebbe smiled and answered "Amen" loudly.

"You are from the Yemenite bochurim from Lod?" the Rebbe asked, still smiling. Throughout the *yechidus*, the Rebbe smiled often and encouraged me to speak freely.

I had written in my note that I did not feel comfortable at yeshiva farbrengens, since I didn't like *masheke*

and felt pressured by others to drink.

"What drink do you like?" the Rebbe asked gently.

"Coca Cola Taam Hachaim (the taste of life)!" I responded innocently, quoting their popular slogan.

The Rebbe laughed heartily and said, "Say l'chaim over Coca-Cola, and don't get upset by what they tell you. If someone tells you to say l'chaim over *masheke*, tell them, in my name, that I told you to say l'chaim over Coca-Cola."

The Rebbe then opened his drawer and offered me several dollar bills. "You are a bochur in yeshiva and have no money to buy Coca-Cola."

לכבוד יום הולדת של

חיה' בוניא בת לאה פרידה

לבריאות וברכה בכל המצטרך בגשמיות וברוחניות

ולזכות בנותיהם שיתברכו בכל מכל כל