

The Weekly Farbrengens



למען ישמעו • יוגש תשפ"ו • 859
EDITOR - RABBI SHIMON HELLINGER

RELIVING THE PAST (II)

THE VALUE OF STORIES

Sent by the Tzemach Tzedek to Ruzhin to take care of a public matter, the chossid and gaon Reb Aizik Homiler used the opportunity to observe the ways of the Ruzhiner chassidim and of their Rebbe, the tzaddik Reb Yisroel. At that time, two chassidim came to Ruzhin to receive the Rebbe's *haskama* for *seforim* they had written. One was filled with *chiddushei Torah* and the other recounted *sippurim* of *tzaddikim* and notable chassidim. The Rebbe instructed that part of each *sefer* be read aloud. After sitting in *dveikus* for some time, he proceeded to praise the telling of *sippurei tzaddikim*, an activity in this world that arouses echoes in the chambers of *tzaddikim* in *Olam HaBa*, and then delivered a *pilpul* on some of the *chiddushei Torah* that appeared in the first *sefer*. Having done that, he instructed his *gabbai* to write *haskamos* for the *seforim*, first for the *sippurim* and then for the *chiddushim*.

Reb Aizik was impressed with the *tzaddik's pilpul* on the second *sefer*, but was puzzled by the precedence he had given to the *sippurei tzaddikim*. A few days later, at a *Rosh Chodesh seuda*, the *tzaddik* suddenly said, "This *gaon* is surprised at the priority I gave to the *sippurim*. In fact, this was addressed long ago by *Rashi*, who asks why the Torah begins with the story of the *Avos*, before listing the *mitzvos*. This is because the *sippurim* tell us about the greatness of *HaShem's* involvement in the world."

Turning to Reb Aizik, he concluded, "I followed the same order the Torah used."

(א"ק מוהרי"צ ח"ו ע' עו)

The Rambam writes that speaking highly of the noble qualities of *tzaddikim* is beneficial, for it encourages one's listeners to want to follow their ways. *Rabbeinu Yonah* writes that by praising righteous *tzaddikim* one is praising *HaShem*, and doing so also brings out the good within the speaker.

(פיהמ"ש אבות ט.ז, שערי תשובה שער ג')

SIPPURIM FOR EVERYONE

The Frieddiker Rebbe related: It was a *Shabbos* afternoon in תרנ"ו (1896). After my father finished

davening, he went to the home of his mother, Rebbetzin Rivkah, to make *Kiddush*. There, my father asked his mother, "Do you recall how the picture of the Alter Rebbe was brought to the Tzemach Tzedek and what he said about it?"

"Sure," she replied, "I remember it clearly."

My father then asked her to tell it to me, so that I would hear it from a first source. My grandmother readily agreed, and turning to me she said, "Come at a calmer time and I will tell it to you."

She then added, "At one *Seder* I heard my father-in-law, the Tzemach Tzedek, say: '*Mitzva lesaper biyetzias Mitzrayim*' - by telling *sippurim* we can get out of *Mitzrayim*. '*Ve'afilu kulanu chachomim u'nevonim veyodim*' - even a person who is a true *Chabadnik* (meaning a chossid steeped in the insights of *Chassidus*) is obligated to tell *chassidische sippurim*, for these will take him out of his *Mitzrayim* (that is, out of his *ruchniyusdike* limitations)."

My grandmother concluded, "Since then, I make a point of recounting *sippurim* only when I'm completely focused."

(התמים ח"ב ע' 760)

CONSIDER

Are stories a means to an end
or an end themselves?

Why can't the same benefits
be acquired through learning
Chassidus?

In the year תרס"ג (1903), the Rebbe Rashab told his son, the Frieddiker Rebbe, "For a long time I have been complaining at the *Ohel* of my father, the Rebbe Maharash, about my lack of participation in *chassidische farbrengens*, as a result of spending my time catering to the cause and *avoda* of *Chassidus*. I asked to receive this as a gift, and my father agreed. From then on, I began to hear *sippurim* at nighttime visions."

Later on, the Frieddiker Rebbe said, "From that time on, I heard numerous stories from my father, the Rebbe Rashab, but I wouldn't ask where he had heard them or when he had heard them."

(סה"ש תש"ה ע' 24)

SPECIAL STORIES

Before the Alter Rebbe relayed a *Torah* of the Baal Shem Tov, he would say, "The words of *Torah* from 'the Zeide' (as he called the Baal Shem Tov) are a *segula* to increase one's understanding and *yiras Shamayim*, and the stories of 'the Zeide' are a *segula* for long life and abundant *parnasa*."

When the Tzemach Tzedek's daughter once fell ill with high fever, he suggested that someone read her stories of the Baal Shem Tov, for they are a superb *segula* to heal fever.

(לקוטי דיבורים ח"א ע' 508, רשימו"ד החדש ע' 135)

The Rebbe Maharash once said: "People say that relating a story of the Baal Shem Tov on *Motzaei Shabbos* is a *segula* for *parnasa*. The truth is that these three points are not necessarily so - *lav davka*. It does not necessarily have to be about the Baal Shem Tov - it can be about any *tzaddik*; and it is not only applicable on *Motzaei Shabbos* - it can be at any time; and the *segula* is not only for *parnasa* - but for all good things as well."

(רשימו"ד החדש ע' 211, וראה שמו"ס ח"א ע' 4)

Rebbetzin Rivkah related: "In תר"ט (1849), when I was newly married, my father-in-law, the Tzemach Tzedek, called in all his daughters-in-law who lived in Lubavitch and instructed them to gather every *Motzaei Shabbos* and relate a *sippur* of the holy Baal Shem Tov. We asked whether it was enough to just mention the Baal Shem Tov's name. My father-in-law replied, 'Definitely - a story!'

After that, every *Motzaei Shabbos*, one of the daughters-in-law would visit the Tzemach Tzedek, where she would hear a story of the Baal Shem Tov, and this she would then share with the rest of us."

(סה"ש ת"ש ע' 173)

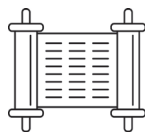
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STUDYING FOR AN EXAM

Is it permissible to study for a test on Shabbos?

Chazal prohibited preparing on Shabbos for after Shabbos (*hachana*), even when both the activity and its result involve things that are otherwise permitted on Shabbos. Classic examples include rolling the Sefer Torah for a future reading, washing dishes that will not be needed again on Shabbos, or bringing a bottle of wine from the cellar specifically for *havdala*.¹

A preparation is allowed when it serves a genuine current Shabbos need, even if it also happens to prepare for after Shabbos. For example, making one's bed on Shabbos morning is permitted if one will spend time in that room on Shabbos and the made bed enhances the room's tidiness. Similarly, clearing the table after the Shabbos day meal is permitted if the table will be needed later on Shabbos, or if the messy appearance of the room is bothersome.²

Studying for a test in *limudei kodesh* is permitted because the learning itself fulfills the *mitzva* of Torah study, a present Shabbos need, and the knowledge gained is an immediate benefit, even though it also helps for the test.³ However, explicitly stating that one is learning now to do well on a post-Shabbos exam is problematic, since it's verbalizing a weekday-oriented intention on Shabbos.⁴

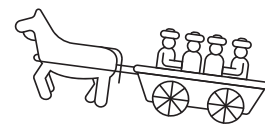
Studying secular subjects for the sole purpose of passing a test with no interest in the material itself is a weekday-oriented preparation that constitutes *hachana*. But if one is also inherently interested in the knowledge, it would be categorized as an immediate benefit.⁵

The Alter Rebbe cites an opinion that forbids reading any secular wisdom on Shabbos under the rabbinic decree against *shtarei hedyotot* ("ordinary documents"), a category of weekday-type writings whose reading is restricted. He then records the common practice to rely on the more lenient view that allows reading books of wisdom and medical knowledge, because such works will not be confused with ordinary business documents.⁶

At the same time, the Alter Rebbe emphasizes that Shabbos and Yom Tov were given to the Jewish people primarily so that they could dedicate these days to Torah study.⁷

1. ראה שו"ע אורח סי' תק"ג ס"ג.
2. ראה שו"ע אורח סי' ש"ב ס"ז. ש"כ ח"א מהר"ח פכ"ח ספ"ז.
3. ראה ש"כ ח"א מהר"ח פכ"ח סצ"ב.
4. ראה שו"ע אורח סי' ר"צ ס"ו.
5. ראה ש"כ שם הע' קע"ח והע' רכ.
6. ראה פסק"ת סיר"צ הע' 27 (ושם שאול)
7. זה שו"ע מננו עול וטירדא בשבת ע"י שמתקדם בלימוד הצריך לדעת ה"ל כלצורך שבת וצ"ע.
8. שו"ע אורח סי' ש"ז סל"א. ובמשנ"ב שם ס"ק ס"ה שירא שמים יחמור.
9. שו"ע אורח סי' ר"צ ס"ה.

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



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 *chassidishe 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 *chassidishe 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

לזכר נשמת מרת חוה לאה בת ר' שמשון הכהן ע"ה



LIKE A MOTHER TO HER CHILDREN

Chanukah by the Rebbe was about spreading light, as indicated by lighting of the menorah at night time and its placement near the door.

In 5734 (1973), the Rebbe instituted Mivtza Chanukah, encouraging *chassidim* to go out and share the light of Chanukah with fellow Yidden. Indeed, that year, dozens of *bochurim* and *yungeleit* took to the streets and they inspired thousands of Yidden to celebrate Chanukah by lighting the menorah.

Towards the end of Chanukah, the Rebbe announced that he would distribute Chanukah Gelt to all those who went out on *mivtzoim*. Each participant would receive one dollar from the Rebbe.

Reb Yaakov Yehuda Hecht had been very active in organizing the *mivtzoim*. When his turn came to receive a dollar, the Rebbe said to him, "Truthfully, you deserve more than one dollar. But when a mother gives to her children, she gives them all the same amount..."