

ניצוצי אור Sparks of Light

בס"ד



No. 23

פרשת כי תשא תשע"ה

Hearing Good

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Unceasing Sound Waves

One of the first *chassidim* who came to Lubavitch after the **Mitteler Rebbe of Lubavitch** settled there in 1813 (תקע"ג) was the eminent Rov of Babroisk, **Reb Hillel Paritcher**. The Mitteler Rebbe had instructed his *chassidim* that whenever they were traveling home, they should stay over in every town through which they passed, and repeat a *maamar* that they had recently heard.

Once, when Reb Hillel was about to return home, he asked the Rebbe what he should do about this directive, because the villagers whom he would meet on his way were simple folk who could not grasp the abstract concepts of *Chassidus*.

The Rebbe went into deep thought for a moment and then assured him, *Di neshama hert* – “The teachings of *Chassidus* are heard by the *neshama*, which is identical in everyone. Those words then trickle down into the body and give the listener the strength to fulfill the 248 *mitzvos-aseh*, and to abstain from transgressing the 365 *mitzvos lo-sa'aseh*.”

(אג"ק הרי"צ ח"ג ע' שלא, היום יום כד אדר א')

Upon seeing his younger colleague, Rebbe Yehoshua ben Chananya, the tanna Rebbe Dosa exclaimed, “I remember that when he was infant, his mother would take him in his carriage to the *beis midrash* so that his ears would absorb the words of Torah!”

(תלמוד ירושלמי יבמות פ"א ה"ו)

The **Lubavitcher Rebbe** often mentioned that mothers used to rock their little ones to sleep with rhyming lullabies of *Yiddishe* content, such as “*Torah is the best sechorah (merchandise)*.” The Rebbe said, “Some people think that it makes no difference what one sings to a young child, since anyway he does not understand. The truth is that everything that enters a child's ears affects his *neshama* in the years ahead.” A mother must therefore not only know about the importance of Torah: she should sing about it to her child.

(שיחיו"ק תשל"ט ח"א ע' 616, תשל"ז ח"א ע' 112)

Hearing Only Good

Rabbeinu Yonah writes that just as speaking indecently harms a *Yid's neshama*, so too listening

to indecent talk tarnishes one's *neshama*. The **Shaloh** writes that a child who hears *goyishe* songs will develop a negative nature.

(ס' היראה לרבינו יונה, [שבת נט ע"א], משנ"ב ס' תקס שעה"צ כה)

The **Tzemach Tzedek of Lubavitch** said, “The bell in Petersburg brought forgetfulness upon me.” Until he visited Petersburg in the year 1843 (תר"ג), he forgot nothing, but hearing the church bells caused him to forget.

(לקוטי סיפורים ע' קלח)

Imagine the surprise of the *talmid* who entered the home of the **Chasam Sofer** and found him with his fingers in his ears.

He stood perplexed until the Chasam Sofer asked him, “Is it still chiming?”

He then understood that his mentor wanted to avoid hearing the sound of the bells.

(קדושת עיניים ע' 331)

The *tzaddik*, **Reb Nachman of Breslov**, said that hearing a *rasha* speak has a negative influence on the listener.

(לקוטי עצות דיבור סק"ח)

Protecting Oneself

HaShem created man's fingertips narrow enough to enable him to obstruct his ears from hearing improper things. The soft earlobe was created for the same purpose.

(כתובות ח ע"ב)

Unlike the other senses, hearing does not require the cooperation of the listener. One will hear a nearby conversation unless he makes an effort to avoid hearing it.

(התועודיות תשמ"ח ח"ד ע' 15)

Reb Shlomo Leib of Linchna, a *chossid* of the **Chozeh of Lublin** and the **Yid HaKadosh of Pshischa**, made every effort not to listen to idle talk, and for his part, he was careful to speak only when necessary. When he was young, he rented a room together with some others in the home of

a tailor, but would always return there only after they had already gone to sleep.

It once happened that the *beis midrash* closed earlier than usual, and as Reb Shlomo neared his boarding home, he noticed that the tailor was still wide awake and was sitting and chatting with his friends. True to his principle, he kept at a distance, but due to the freezing temperature, he walked to and fro to keep himself warm. This did not help much, but he refused to go inside, though he knew this might cost him his life. With the help of HaShem, the lamp suddenly went out, and the renters retired for the night. Only then did Reb Shlomo go inside.

“From then on, in order to avoid such a situation again,” he later said, “I learned to give myself a forewarning, by honing my listening abilities and being able to hear whispering even at a distance.”

(סיפורי חסידים זוין תורה ע' 488)

When a certain *chossid* complained that he was having doubts in *emunah*, the Lubavitcher Rebbe instructed him to discontinue setting his clock by the chimes of the local church.

(כפר חב"ד ע' 672 ע' 20)

The **Rashab** of Lubavitch once mentioned that he had lost his hearing in one ear. Seeking the cause of the problem, some of the *chassidim* recalled that the previous Shabbos, the conversation of people in the adjoining room had disturbed him while he was delivering a *maamar* of *Chassidus*. He had therefore weakened his sense of hearing in the ear closest to that disturbance.

(תו"מ ח"ז ע' 156, התועודיות תשמ"ח ח"ד ע' 15 הע' 65)

Consider This

How can hearing words of Torah affect a person if he doesn't understand them at all?

Sparks of Greatness

Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk - כ"א אדר

Reb Elimelech was one of the greatest *talmidim* of the **Mezritcher Maggid**, and after his *Rebbe's* *histalkus*, he became responsible for the dissemination of *Chassidus* in Poland. He was a brother of the famous **Reb Zusha of Anipoly**, and together they were known as "the holy brothers". He wrote the famous sefer "**Noam Elimelech**" and was known to be one of the greatest *Chasidic Rebbe's* of his time, with thousands of people flocking to see him and learn from his ways. Many of his disciples became *Rebbe's* in their own right, his primary successor being the *Chozeh* of Lublin. He passed away in Lizhensk on the 21st of *Adar* 1787 (תקמ"ז).

The **Baal HaTanya** once met with a *Rov* who was an opponent of *Chassidus* who asked him, "I have a sefer '*Noam Elimelech*' which as I have discovered, has been written by a *chossid*, a disciple of the *Maggid* of *Mezritch* and I have put it under a bench. What can you tell me something about its author?"

The **Baal HaTanya** replied, "Even if you would put the *tzaddik* of *Lizhensk* himself under your bench, he would be silent and not say a word. Such was his humility!"

(בית רבי ע' ס)

It is known that the brothers **Reb Elimelech** and **Reb Zusha** took upon themselves to go into *golus* (self inflicted exile) for a long period of time. They wandered by foot from village to village, dressed in simple rags, with no one knowing who they were. During the course of their travels, whenever they would come to the town of *Ludmir*, they would stay by *Reb Aharon*, a great but poor man.

Years later, when **Reb Elimelech** and **Reb Zushe** had already become famous, they traveled again to *Ludmir*. This time, they travel by wagon and accompanied by an entourage of *chassidim*.

On their way, one of the wealthy townsmen traveled out to greet them and invite them to stay in his home. The brothers told him to return to *Ludmir* and they would make their way there on their own.

When they arrived, they went as usual to the home of the poor *Reb Aharon*. The rich man came running and complained, "Why did you not accept my offer?" They replied, "We are the same people who used to come here, and we do not want to change our place of stay. The only difference is that now we have come with a horse and buggy and therefore, you want us to stay with you. You know what, take the horse and buggy; let them stay with you..."

Library Sparks

This week's Torah portion, *Ki Tisa*, contains an interesting exchange between *Moses* and *G-d*. "Show me, I pray, Your glory," asks *Moses*. *G-d* replies, "You cannot see My face...you will see My back, but My face shall not be seen."

The Torah is obviously speaking in symbolic terms. "Face" refers to a clear and unequivocal revelation of *G-d*-liness, in much the same way that an individual's face reveals his inner self; glimpsing a person's "back" reveals far less about the person. But what did *G-d* show *Moses*?

The great commentator, *Rashi*, explains that *G-d* showed *Moses* the knot of His *tefillin* (phylacteries). What kind of answer to *Moses'* petition was that?

In order to understand, we must first place the exchange in its proper context. *Moses* made this request after the Jews sinned by making the Golden Calf. After such a grave sin, how could they ever be forgiven? What possible merit did the Jews have for *G-d* to absolve them of idolatry? *Rashi* explains that *G-d's* answer was to teach *Moses* the proper way for a Jew to pray for Divine mercy.

Sin itself defies logic. How could it be that a Jew, a member of a nation described as "believers, the children of believers," should sin? How can a Jew, who believes in his innermost heart that *G-d* created the

world and continues to sustain it every minute of the day, denies this by transgressing *G-d's* will?

The answer is that all sin stems from forgetfulness. It is only when a Jew forgets the true nature of the world that he transgresses; when he forgets that *G-d* is the only absolute reality he strays from the right path. The minute a Jew is reminded of this, there is no room for sin and it ceases to exist.

This, then, is the significance of the knot of the *tefillin*. If sin is only the result of a Jew's forgetfulness, he need only be reminded of *G-d* and he will not transgress. This is accomplished by the *tallis* and *tzitzis* (ritual fringes), whose purpose is to remind the Jew of his task in life, as it states in the Torah, "And you shall see it, and remember." The *tefillin* serve the same purpose: "And it shall be as a remembrance between your eyes."

Most specifically, it is the knot of the *tefillin* which symbolizes this, as a knot serves both as a reminder (such as when one ties a knot around one's finger to remember something), and as a symbol of the binding knot between *G-d* and the Jewish people.

By showing *Moses* the knot of the *tefillin*, *G-d* was instructing him how to seek atonement, for if we always bear in mind that there is nothing but *G-d*, there is no room for sin.

Halacha Sparks

Avoiding Yichud

Rabbi Chaim Chazan

At times, I am at home alone with a cleaning lady. What can I do to avoid the prohibition of yichud? I also run into this problem when my fourteen year old brother babysits my three year old daughter.

The prohibition of *yichud* is an independent prohibition, which is transgressed by both a man and woman who are alone in a room together (boys over nine and girls over three are included). In some situations *yichud* is forbidden *min haTorah*.

The *halacha* is that if there is an open door ("*pesach posuach*") through which someone may realistically enter, there is no *issur yichud*. There are various ways to have a "*pesach posuach*":

Leaving the door to the street or shared yard or the main door of the apartment ajar, so that anyone may walk in, and all subsequent doors must be left wide open. However, an open door to the street only works for a single story house, but not for preventing *yichud* on the second floor. As mentioned, all this helps so long as there is a realistic possibility of someone entering without warning, at the hour in question.

If it usual for family members to enter the house (at this specific hour) without knocking, there is no *issur yichud*.

Alternatively, one can give his house key to a neighbor and inform them that they can enter without warning. At night (during the hours when people are usually sleeping), one must give the key to two neighbors. However, this will only work if the neighbors will, from time to time, actually enter without warning. One can also give the key to a female relative, with whom *yichud* is permitted, such as one's mother, sister or daughter.

Since the *halachos* of *yichud* are very complex, it is impossible to include all *halachicly* viable solutions within the constraints of a short article. It is thus an imperative to study all *hilchos yichud* and consult one's *rov* when in doubt.

קידושין פ"א ע"א, רמב"ם הל' אסור פכ"ב, טוש"ע אבה"ע סי' כ"ב ס"ט.

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Our new exciting shiurim program will be operating soon! Shiurim will be taking place weekly at our state of the of the art library for men. Lectures will be taking place for women as well on a variety interesting & important topics.