

ניצוצי אור Sparks of Light

בס"ד



No. 42

פרשת דברים תשע"ה

Awaiting the Geulah (2)

Rabbi Shimon Hellinger, Editor

At Any Moment

Soon after the **Baal HaTanya** had passed away, his grandson the **Tzemach Tzeddek** overheard a few *chassidim* lamenting the sorry *ruchniyus'dike* situation they now found themselves in. "Only Hashem knows when *Moshiach* will finally come" they sighed.

Entering the room the *Rebbe* said, "This is the language of *Bilaam*: 'I see it, but not now; I behold it, but it is not near.' "Yidden, must hope for *Moshiach's* arrival every single moment"

"I heard from my grandfather, that his teacher the **Mezritcher Maggid** was able to cause even a newborn child to experience the loftiest levels of *yiras Hashem*. His *Rebbe*, the **Baal Shem Tov**, could have even enthused an inanimate object. Why did they not do so and then, with the whole world aware of Hashem's presence, *Moshiach* would have come? Because Hashem did not yet want this. And if the arrival of *Moshiach* is dependent on Hashem's will, why would the passing of our *Rebbe*, my grandfather, change that? When the time comes, and Hashem wills it, *Moshiach* will surely appear."

(סיפור"ח זוין תורה ע' 439)

Expecting his Arrival

A grandchild of **Reb Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev** was engaged to marry a grandchild of the *Baal HaTanya*. When *Reb Levi Yitzchok* was shown a draft of the invitation, indicating that the *chassuna* was due to take place in *Zhlobin*, he tore it up and instructed that the wording be changed to read, "The *chassuna* will take place *im yirtze HaShem* in *Yerushalayim Ir HaKodesh*, in the *Beis HaMikdash*, may it be speedily rebuilt. However, if (*chas*

veshalom) *Moshiach Tzidkeinu* will not yet be here, then the *chassuna* will take place in *Zhlobin*."

(באר החסידות)

There was once a *Yid* who ran an inn that he rented from the local *poritz*, paying him ten rubles at the beginning of every year. One year the *Yid* fell ill and sent his son to renew the contract and pay the *poritz* for the coming year. The son decided to ask for a five-year contract at a cheaper rate of thirty rubles, thus saving his father twenty. The *poritz* was so happy to receive the advance payment that he agreed. Full of excitement, the young man returned home and told his father of the great deal he had made.

"Fool!" screamed the father. "You paid the extra twenty rubles for nothing! *Moshiach* is coming right away, and we'll all go to *Eretz Yisroel*. So the money you've paid for the next four years was all wasted!"

(ומביא גואל ע' 124)

Before **Reb Simcha Bunem of Pshischa** went to sleep, he would always place his *tallis* and *tefillin* next to his bed. One of his close *talmidim* asked about this practice and he explained, "Since we await the coming of *Moshiach* at any moment, it is possible that while I am resting, the good news of his arrival will suddenly be heard. I want to be ready to go immediately with him to *Eretz HaKodesh* and not have to remain in this bitter *golus* for one extra moment. I don't mind disowning all my assets, but my *tallis* and *tefillin* I must take. So I make sure to keep them close by."

(שיח שרפי קודש)

Mordechai Yafeh, the **Levush**, writes that he had always wondered: Why don't we read *Eicha* on *Tisha BeAv* from a *megilla* of parchment, like *Megillas Ester*? He answered that since we are constantly waiting for these days of mourning to be transformed into days of joy and *Yomim-Tovim*, writing a parchment *megilla* would give the impression that we are *chas veshalom* giving up hope.

(לבוש סימן תקנ"ט ע"א)

As a *yeshiva-bochur* in *Pressburg*, **Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld**, later the *Rov* of *Yerushalayim*, once overheard a woman asking her friend what she had made that day for supper.

"Squash," the other replied.

"And for tomorrow?" The woman questioned further.

"*Chas veshalom!* Don't speak like that. If, *chas veshalom*, *Moshiach* doesn't come by tomorrow, then I'll make lentils..."

(בדור תהפוכות)

Consider This

Were the chimes of the **Chozeh's** clock actually different? Why didn't anyone else "hear" the "*Moshiach* chimes"?

What does it mean to "expect" *Moshiach*? Should everyone write *Yerushalayim* in their *chassunah* invitations, avoid making advanced business deals and keep their *tallis* and *tefillin* near their bed?

The great *gaon* and *Tzadik* **Reb**

Sparks of Greatness

״ג מנחם אב - The Megaleh Amukos

Reb Nasan Nata Shapira is known by the name of his sefer, the **“Megaleh Amukos.”** He was a great *tzaddik* and *mekubal*, known for his extreme purity and holiness. His *matzeivah* records that it was said of him that he would encounter *Eliyahu Hanavi* face to face. He was a *rosh yeshiva* in Cracow and thousands came to learn from him and be blessed by him, and many miracle stories are attributed to him. Besides for the *“Megaleh Amukos,”* he wrote another fifteen *seforim* on *Gemara* and *Poskim*. He passed away on the 13th of Av in the year ה'שצ"ג (1633).

When **Reb Mordechai Margolis**, the *rosh yeshiva* of Cracow, passed away, there were various possible candidates for the position. The obvious option was the *Megaleh Amukos*, but since he was only thirty two years old there were some community members who were hesitant to elect him. The factor that contributed greatly to his eventual election was an episode that transpired on *Yom Kippur* night. At the close of the davening, the *gabbai* announced that the community is honoring Reb Nasan Nata with *“Adon Olam.”* The *tzaddik* himself immediately rejoined, “There is also a need for the *“Adon Olam”* (the Master of the world) to be honored by the community...” Realizing his wit and wisdom, he was

immediately appointed as the *rosh yeshiva*.

The *Chasam Sofer* had a custom to frequently learn from the sefer *“Megaleh Amukos.”* Once, an important guest came to visit, and when he saw the *Chasam Sofer* learning the sefer, he expressed his appreciation for the sefer.

“Let me tell you a story,” said the *Chasam Sofer*. “The Russian czar would often stroll in the royal gardens of Petersburg, and according to the law, no visitors were allowed in the gardens during this time. Once, a simple *melamed* from a small town came to visit the garden, ignorant of the above mentioned regulation. As he was walking, he met up with none other than the czar himself! The czar sternly inquired, “Who are you and what do you do?” The *Yid*, not knowing to whom he was speaking to, said his name, origin and source of income and then asked, “And what is your occupation, sir?”

“I?” asked the czar, “Why, I am the czar who rules over the entire Russian empire!” The *melamed* shrugged his shoulders, “Alright, this too is a good way of making a living...”

“So too,” the *Chasam Sofer* concluded, “Who are we to give an opinion about this holy sefer?”

Library Sparks

This week's Torah portion begins the fifth book of the Torah, *Devarim* (Deuteronomy). The Book of *Devarim* is also called *Mishne Torah*, meaning “Repetition of the Torah”; Moshe began to repeat the Torah to the Jewish people on the first day of the Hebrew month *Shevat*.

The timing of the Repetition of the Torah was especially significant for the Jewish people in that it served to prepare them for their entry into the Promised Land. During their years of wandering in the desert, all their needs -- food, water, clothing and shelter -- were miraculously provided for them by G-d.

Now the Jews were on the verge of leaving this place where for years they had had no material cares. They were about to settle in a land and a way of life which necessitated tilling, sowing, reaping and all the other mundane preoccupations of life. It was now that they were exposed to the Repetition of the Torah, for they needed an additional and special measure of spiritual re-invigoration and inspiration, so that they would not become materialistic and debased in the material world that lay ahead.

Even more so, the whole purpose of their coming into the Land was to instill holiness, to elevate and make more spiritual the material aspects of daily life -- thereby transforming the material into the spiritual. This would be accomplished through the

study of the Torah, worship of G-d, performance of His Divine precepts, giving charity and doing acts of loving kindness.

The Divine purpose of our entry into the Holy Land -- to elevate the environment and transform the material into the spiritual -- is the very same purpose that every individual Jew has in his performance of day-to-day activities.

The **Baal HaTanya** explained: “The material things of Jews are spiritual; G-d gives us material things, that we may transform them into spiritual.” G-d grants the Jew his livelihood and he, in turn, utilizes the money for *mitzvos* in general and for the support of Torah-study in particular. In this way, one truly converts the material (money and worldly possessions) into the spiritual.

Transformation of the material to the spiritual can be achieved by other means, also. One can elevate and refine one's professional environment by setting a personal example of Torah-guided honesty and good conduct.

In all matters of sanctity, one must go from strength to strength, constantly increasing in holiness. In this way, the blessing of “prosperity through charity” becomes realized, with G-d giving material blessings in a growing measure, enabling us to create more, and still more, spirituality, at a reciprocal pace.

Halacha Sparks

Discontinuing a Positive Practice

Rabbi Chaim Chazan

I attend a daily *daf yomi shiur* and now I would like to switch to join a *halacha shiur* instead. Must I be *matir neder*?

According to *halacha*, a working man who only has a few hours a day to learn should rather learn *halacha* over *Gemara*¹.

One who accepts upon himself to do a *mitzva* or learn a specific subject, (some say even just in his own mind), and did not explicitly say *bli neder*, it becomes a *neder* (oath) and he is obligated to fulfill it². Likewise, an ongoing practice in any area of *Yiddishkeit*, and becomes like a *neder* and in order to discontinue it one must be *matir neder*³. (There are many details to this *din* and a *rov* must be consulted for practical guidance.) Therefore at first glance it would seem that in order to switch his *shiur* he would have to be *matir neder*⁴.

However, in the case of a *shiur* there are two aspects to the ongoing practice: a) attending a *shiur* at a specific time. b) The subject being learnt. The subject being learnt is not the significant aspect of the practice, because the *mitzva* is the learning regardless of the topic. On the contrary, the rule is that a person should learn what he has an interest in. Only where one explicitly accepts a specific subject would the subject be considered a *neder*⁵.

Moreover, since it is common for people to switch the subject of their study, it's considered as if it was explicitly stated at the outset that one is undertaking to learn *bli neder*⁶.

1. שו"ע הרב סי' קנה ס"א, ומפורש יותר במשנ"ב שם ס"ק ג.
2. שו"ע יו"ד סי' ריג ס"ד.
3. שם סי' ריד ס"א. ובשו"ע הרב סי' רמט ס"ג, תסח סי' ז.
4. שו"ת יחזקאל דעת ח"ו סי' נב, והתיר לשנות השיעור מגמרא להלכה בלי להתיר הנדר מטעם דמצוה יותר ללמוד הלכה. אבל ראה המצווין בהערה הבאה שחולק עליו שאין כאן נדר כלל ללמוד גמ' דוקא.
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