

# ניצוצי אור Sparks of Light

בס"ד



No. 54

פרשת לך לך תשע"ו

## Dealing Honestly (2)

Rabbi Shimon Hellinger, Editor

### Making a Kiddush HaShem

**Chazal** explain that *mitzva* to love HaShem requires that a *Yid* should act in a way that makes Him beloved by others. When a person learns *Torah* and deals honestly in business, people will say, "How great is he who learns *Torah*; how wonderful are his ways! Woe to one who does not learn *Torah*! They promise that "we as well will commence learning and teaching our children *Torah* as well." But when (*chas veshalom*) a person who learns *Torah* does not act honestly, people will say the opposite, causing a *chillul HaShem*.

(יומא פו ע"א)

The *tanna*, **Rebbi Shimon ben Shetach**, used to sell flax, which he would carry from place to place. Seeking to ease his work, his *talmidim* went off to the marketplace and bought him a donkey from an Arab merchant. On their way home they noticed that he had accidentally left a valuable jewel hanging on the donkey's neck. Excitedly, they hurried to **Rebbi Shimon** and told him that HaShem had sent a *bracha* and he would no longer have to work.

**Rebbi Shimon** asked, "Did the owner know about it?" "No," they replied.

"If so," he told them, "you must return it immediately, for he sold you a donkey and not a jewel."

When the goy received the gem, he exclaimed, "Blessed is the G-d of **Rebbi Shimon ben Shetach**!"

(דברים רבה ג, ג, בשילוב ירושלמי בבא מציעא פ"ב ה"ה)

Although **Lavan** tricked **Yaakov Avinu** countless times, **Yaakov Avinu** remained honest with him, never taking anything he was not entitled to. He watched over **Lavan's** sheep in the sweltering heat and bitter cold, and replaced any lost sheep even when the he was entirely faultless.

(ויצא לא, לב-מ)

### At All Costs

**Alexander the Great** once visited the **King of Katzia** to observe that country's laws and customs. Just then, two citizens were admitted to have their judgment rendered by the king.

"My master, the King!" called out the plaintiff.

"I bought a desolate piece of land from this man here, dug it up, and discovered a buried treasure. So I told him to take the treasure; I bought a ruin, not a treasure!"

"Just as you are afraid of being punished for stealing, so am I!" responded the other. "I sold the ruin to you, including everything in it, from the depths of the earth, until the sky!"

The king asked one man if he had a son, and the other, if he had a daughter. He advised that their children get married and the treasure be given to the new couple. **Alexander** looked on in amazement.

"Didn't I judge well?" queried the King of **Katzia**. "Sure!" replied **Alexander the Great**. "But if I had been the arbitrator, I would have killed them both, and taken the treasure for the kingdom's coffers..."

The King of **Katzia** then asked, "Does the sun shine in your country?" "Yes," replied **Alexander**.

"Does it rain?" He nodded affirmatively.

"Do you have animals?" "Yes," he said.

"Well, then," declared the King of **Katzia**, "the sun shines and the rain falls in the merit of those animals."

(ויקרא רבה כז, א)

When he was a lad of fourteen, **Reb Baruch**, the **Baal HaTanya's** father, left his hometown, **Vitebsk**, and traveled through many villages. Arriving in **Dobromysl**, he settled down to learn in the *beis medrash*. One day, a man came over to him and introduced himself, "My name is **Eliezer Reuven**, and I have a metal shop on the outskirts of town. I live nearby, and I could use some help, so if you would care for such a job, I would provide you with food and drink and a place to sleep."

**Baruch** was overjoyed, for this was exactly the type of set up he wanted. He was even prepared to do the hardest labor, so long as he would earn his own piece of bread, without relying on *tzedaka*. **Reb Baruch** specifically asked to be paid with money- as opposed to free rent and board- so he would not have to eat and sleep in the homes of strangers.

He worked conscientiously at the shop throughout the day, and in the evening, he would go to the *beis medrash* to learn. The more he observed **Eliezer Reuven**, the more did he respect him, for all day, as he stood hammering

the red-hot iron, he would recite *Tehillim* by heart, *kapitel* after *kapitel*.

The smith's customers were peasants from the surrounding villages, who would bring their wagons, tools & metallics, to be repaired. **Baruch** noticed the exceptional honesty and devotion with which **Eliezer Reuven** treated his customers, never overcharging them even a fraction of a cent. One day **Baruch** noticed something which made a deep impression on him. A peasant from a nearby village had brought his horse to the smith for shoeing and at the same time he brought the wheel of his wagon to be fixed. Another peasant had brought his horse to have four new shoes put on. When the time came to ask for the money, **Eliezer Reuven** mistakenly charged the second peasant the amount he should have charged the first one, overcharging him six *groshen*.

Both peasants had already left when **Eliezer Reuven** realized his mistake. He was so upset about it that he immediately set off on foot to this peasant's village about three miles away, to give him back the tiny overcharged amount. **Baruch** was astounded. He had never seen such meticulousness on the part of an ordinary person. He asked the smith if he really thought it had been worthwhile to walk the six-mile distance for a matter of a mere six *groshen*.

**Eliezer Reuven** replied, "About the people who lived before the *mabul*, it is written that they were so corrupt that they were not even bothered when robbing from someone less than a little *prutah*. Would you really want me to behave even worse than the people of that wicked generation and rob a man of six *groshen*!?"

(ספר הזכרונות ח"א ע' 75)

## Consider This

Why is a *kiddush HaShem* specifically related to going beyond the requirements of *halacha*?

Is a *kiddush HaShem* more important than the loss of money, or will no loss be incurred?



## Sparks of Greatness

**Reb Avraham Yehoshua Heshel of Apta** was a famous *Rebbe*. He was a great *talmid* of **Reb Elimelech of Lizensk**, and served as *Rov* in four towns, including *Mezhibuzh*, but was known as the *Apter Rov*. He passed away on the 5th of *Nissan*, 1825 (תקפ"ה).

*Chassidim* relate that once, a man came to the *Apter Rov* and complained of his bad turn of fate. He was an oxen merchant and lost all his money in a bad business deal. The *tzaddik* gave a deep sigh, empathized with his pain, and gave him a *bracha* that he should once again be successful. The *tzaddik* then added in a sad tone, "You are speaking about oxen and business. You totally forget that a tragedy has befallen the Jewish people today. The *Korban Tomid* was not brought today in the *Beis Hamikdash*... We don't have a *Beis Hamikdash* at all... no *Kohanim*, no *Mizbeiach*, etc., but this does not seem to be bothering you..."

A simple man once came to the *Apter Rov* for a *bracha*. The man stood on the side and watched for a while as people came to the *Rebbe* each with their request. He went up to the *Rav* and simply said, "I think the *Rov* is a thief." The *Rov* asked him, "Why do you say so?" The man answered, "I see that people are

coming to you all day for a *bracha*. Each one has his own trouble, they come and leave a note with a '*Pidyon*' (sum of money), and this goes on for hours. How do you have the time to pray for all these people? It just not possible!"

The *Rov* explained: "When people come to me with various requests, every one of them touches my very heart. If a Jew is in trouble, it causes me pain as if I was pierced with a sword. Then I daven *Shmoneh Esrei* and I ask HaShem

'*refoeinu*' – 'heal me' from the pain from the *tzoros* of the people who have asked me to help. HaShem fulfills the requests of his people, thereby healing me as well."

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## Halacha Sparks

### Running before Davening

Rabbi Chaim Hillel Raskin

**My doctor told me that for my health I must exercise every morning. May I do so in the morning before davening?**

The *Gemara* enumerates several activities which a person may not perform before davening *shachris*: (1) Set out on a journey which he can take later. (2) Go out of one's way to greet a friend or use the term "*shalom*." (3) Work or take care of his needs. (4) Eat (except for health or to enable one to daven.)

One reason for this prohibition is that tending to personal needs before davening is an act of arrogance, since only after taking care of himself does he turn to Hashem to help him. Another reason is that he may become carried away with his activity and miss the time for *davening* (this reason applies to other *tefilos* as well and has many details).

The prohibition sets in from the time when one is allowed to daven. Some *poskim* set this at *alos hashachar* (dawn) since at a time of need one may daven *shachris* then. Other *poskim* delay this prohibition until *neitz hachama* (daybreak) since *lechatchilah* one should not daven until then. The *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* sides with the first opinion.

Some contemporary *poskim* write that if exercising in the morning will energize a person and give him more strength, he may exercise before davening, since this is not a matter of personal needs, but rather he is doing it for health. This allowance is only if he won't have time to do it after davening, and he should recite *brachos* and *shema* beforehand.

Parenthetically, this *heter* is only when one is certain he will that he will be able to daven *shmoneh esreh* before the time of *davening* (*zman tefillah*) passes.

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