

# ניצוצי אור Sparks of Light

בס"ד



No. 58

פרשת ויצא תשע"ו

## Fear of Heaven (2)

Rabbi Shimon Hellinger, Editor

### Exceptional Awe

The greatness of the **Baal Shem Tov**, related the **Toldos Yaakov Yosef**, didn't lie in his *hanhagos* steeped in great miracles as it were, but rather in his being extraordinarily steeped in *yiras Shomayim*.

He relates that once, for example, the Baal Shem Tov was traveling and the time for *Mincha* had arrived. They had no water with them for *netilas yadayim*. The Baal Shem Tov cried out, "*Ribbono shel Olam!* What am I worth, and what is my life worth, if I don't have water to wash my hands before *Mincha*?"

(רשימות דברים חלק ב' עמ' לא)

Racing down a steep mountain, the horses pulling the wagon of the **Chidushei HaRim** suddenly broke into a gallop, and then raced uncontrollably, nearly toppling into the abyss. The face of the *tzaddik* showed no trace of fear or tensity. Surprised, the *chassidim* asked him how he was managing to maintain such self-control at that time. The *Rebbe* answered: To someone in constant fear of his Creator, there is no difference between traveling on a level plain and racing ominously down a steep mountain...

(שיח שרפי קודש ח"א תנא)

In the last year of his life, the **Sfas Emes** suffered from an illness which had no known cure. Except for his arms, his body was paralyzed and per the doctors, the same was true of some of his internal organs. Once, during an examination, one of the doctors asked the *tzaddik* to raise his hands and he complied.

"Higher than your head" said the doctor,

"This I am incapable of doing," said the **Sfas Emes**. "The *Zohar* forbids one to raise his arms higher than his head, for this is where the *Shechina* rests."

(סיפ"ח זוין מועדים ע' 201)

### Living in Awe

During the First World War, the **Rashab of Lubavitch** escaped to Rostov, and moved into an apartment above a high ranking tyrannical Russian officer. The *Rebbe's* family lived in constant fear that any mishap would cause the officer to explode and harm them.

When *Pesach* arrived, the regular pots, including the samovar, had to be *kashered*. This the *Rebbe* and the *Rebbitzin* did personally. Seeing how much water the *Rebbe* was pouring, the *Rebbitzin* remarked, "Does such amounts of water have to be poured, overflowing on the floor when it's clearly going to rain down on the downstairs neighbor?" The *Rebbe* *Rashab* replied, "So you're afraid of the one below, the one above you are not?"

(שמועות וסיפורים ח"א עמ' 155)

Even as a young child, the **Rashab** was filled with *yiras Shomayim*. One *Shabbos*, when he was about six years old, he shelled three nuts to eat, only later finding out that the *Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch HaRav* forbade it. He was so perturbed by this that he started to cry.

After his passing, his **Rebbetzin Shterna Sara**, spoke of her husband's *yiras Shomayim*. "If his *tallis katan* would get crumpled while he was asleep, he would wake up and straighten it out- to make sure that it wouldn't *chas veshalom* be covering less than the correct size- which he couldn't countenance asleep, even for a moment."

(רשימות היומן ע' רעט, שמועות וסיפורים ח"א ע' 172)

At his son's *bris*, the **Tzemach Tzedek** shared some of the private *maamorim* that his grandfather, the **Baal HaTanya** had shared with him. One of them was a *vort* from the **Baal Shem Tov** – that the ultimate *yerei Shomayim* is one who is in complete control of his body.

The great *rov* and *chossid* **Reb Hillel Paritcher** was such a person: he would fall asleep when he discerned it was time to sleep, and would wake up the moment it was time to wake up. He was particular not to ride in a wagon over a bridge, and would step down from the wagon and walk across on foot. Once he was sleeping in the wagon, but as they approached a bridge he woke up.

(סה"ש תרצ"ז ע' 242)

This same **Reb Hillel Paritcher** was once delayed in exiting the *mikveh*, so his *shamash* went to check after him. In the dressing room he found *Reb Hillel's* clothing, but *Reb Hillel* was nowhere to be found. Finally he found him immersed in the *mikveh*.

*Reb Hillel* never removed his *yarmulke*, even in the *mikveh*. He would dip his head and leave the *yarmulke* to float on the water, and would then raise his head directly under it. In that way, he did not uncover his head for even a moment. This time, when he was ready to come out of the water, he didn't find his *yarmulke* where he had left it, and since his head would've been uncovered when he surfaced, he waited under the water until his *shamosh* arrived.

(שמו"ס ח"א ע' 268)

### Awesomely Motivated

The **Yid HaKadosh of Pshis'cha** would travel with the *tzaddik* **Reb Dovid of Lelov** to learn from his ways. In one village, *Reb Dovid* entered a home and spent a long time there, while his *talmid* waited outside. When *Reb Dovid* finally came out, he explained, "I found a man at home doing his work while his son abused him for being lazy. The son said, 'You are so lazy that if I didn't fear HaShem I would kill you!' When I heard such words I stayed on: I simply couldn't leave the presence of a man with such *yiras Shomayim*!"

(סיפ"ח זוין תורה ע' 515)

The **Alter Rebbe** made a point of using the services of a *sofer* called **Reb Reuven of Yanovitch**. A certain individual, unhappy with *Reb Reuven's zechus*, told the *Alter Rebbe* that the *sofer* was mixing something into the ink to make the letters shine. The *Alter Rebbe* replied, "I know that *Reb Reuven* mixes something into his ink – *yiras Shomayim*!"

(לקו"ס פרלוב ע' נ"ח)

## Consider This

Why are fear of Heaven and fear of worldly fears conflicting? Can one not be afraid of more than one being?

What is praiseworthy about the man who didn't murder because of *yiras Shamayim*?

## Sparks of Greatness

### Reb Chaim Falagi

**Reb Chaim Falagi** was a rov and a *mekubal* in Izmir, Turkey, about 150 years ago. He is the author of some 80 *seforim* on many subjects, *Tanach*, *Gemora*, *shailas u'tshuvos*, *kabbalah*, and more. He was recognized by the sultan as the "*Chacham Bashi*" (chief rabbi) and was given great respect by the general population, especially at his passing. He passed away on the 17th of *Shvat* 1868 (תרכ"ח) and is buried in Izmir.

Reb Chaim spent most of his energy and authority to improve education in his community, especially for the children of *Aniyim*.

He instituted "compulsory education,"

that a father may not take his son out of the *Talmud Torah* before the child knew at least the order of *tefillos* and reading. Craftsmen were only able to employ apprentices who had graduated with the satisfaction of the inspectors appointed for this. Before his death, he set up a *vaad* to supervise the town educational institutions.

In addition, Rabbi Chaim ruled that the tax imposed on meat ("*Hagavilah*") was to be used primarily to finance the education of the poor, and for and the establishment and upkeep of educational institutions in the city. He did all this despite the fact that there were some community leaders who opposed it.

## Library Sparks

The accounts of our ancestors found in the *Torah* are not merely chronicles of Jewish history. Every part of the *Torah* teaches an important lesson about G-d, and conduct a *horaa* in our *avoda*.

This week's *Torah Parsha*, speaks of Yakov's departure from Israel to Charan. In Charan he worked for his Uncle Lavan for 20 years, married Rachel and Leah, and established the Twelve Tribes. *Vayeitzei* also recounts his return from Charan to the Holy Land.

Jewish mysticism explains the difference between Yakov's departure to Charan and his triumphant return. After setting out on his journey, Yakov merited a personal revelation from G-d ("*And behold, the L-rd stood above him*"). The *Torah* describes the circumstances: "And he reached a certain place"--Yakov had to be in a particular place in order to receive the revelation, and then it was only in the form of a dream. Yet we find 20 years later, when Yakov was returning from Charan, "angels of G-d met him there"--the angels, and Hashem Himself (as explained in the *Zohar*), actively went out to seek him. Furthermore, this time Yakov was fully awake, not dreaming.

We learn from Yakov's 20-year sojourn in Charan how much can be accomplished by a "descent"-- by putting one's physical efforts into bringing holiness into the world. Every Jew must likewise "descend" into his

own "Charan"--where he must wrestle with his own version of "Lavan the Aramean," and emerge victorious, after successfully elevating the sparks of holiness hidden in the physical world.

This is no easy task, and it requires much study and preparation. Before setting out into the world, a Jew must first ready himself in "the Holy Land," which symbolizes the highest level of holiness. Before a Jew can positively influence his surroundings, he must be sufficiently educated and knowledgeable in *Torah*. Before Yakov left Israel for Charan, he prepared himself by learning in the yeshiva of Eber for 14 years. Every Jew must likewise prepare himself by dedicating a time in his life where *Torah* study is his sole occupation. This underscores the importance of a good Jewish education in general, and the necessity of beginning a child's Jewish education even before he is ready for formal schooling in particular.

The theme of preparing oneself before embarking on life's journey also expresses itself in a Jew's daily life. A Jew does not rely solely on his own power and talents, but rather, begins his day by praying and asking for Hashem's help in carrying out his mission in this world.

By preparing ourselves properly before attending to our daily concerns, we are assured of success in both the spiritual and physical realms.

## Halacha Sparks

### Touching Exposed Areas of Children

Rabbi Chaim Hillel Raskin

**Must one wash his hands after touching body parts of a baby or child, which adults usually keep covered but children usually do not?**

*Halacha* states that if one touched a part of one's body that is usually covered ("*mekomos hamechusim*"), one must wash his hands<sup>1</sup>.

The reason for this is because it is common for those areas to have sweat<sup>2</sup>. The definition of *mekomos hamechusim* are those body parts which are usually covered and are therefore more sweaty<sup>3</sup>. This applies even if one touched a child in an area which the child usually has covered<sup>4</sup>.

Since the concern is for sweat it follows that one would not need to wash one's hands after touching parts of the child's body which are not usually covered, even if an adult usually covers those parts<sup>5</sup>.

Since the parts of the body that are left uncovered vary according to the age of the child, the *halachos* of the requirement to wash one's hands after touching those places will vary as a result<sup>6</sup>.

1. שו"ע הרב מהדו"ק סי' ד סעי' יח.

2. שו"ע הרב סי' צב סעי' ז.

3. ראה ספר זה השלחן ח"ב סי' ד סעי' כא עיי"ש.

4. כף החיים סי' קסד או"ק יד.

5. הליכות שלמה פ"כ אות טז; שו"ת אור לציון ח"ב בהלכות הקצרות פמ"ד אות ו [ומה שצ"ע שם לשו"ע הרב צ"ע כוונתו דאירי התם בנגיעת קטן במאכל ולא במבוגר שנגע בקטן]; וכן הובא בשם הגר"ש אלישיב בספר הקטן והליכותיו ח"א פ"ו הע' יא, וע"ע שו"ת: אז נדברו ח"ה סי' מה, מנח"י ח"ג סי' כו, ח"ד סי' קי"ד, ויען יוסף ח"א סי' ד.

6. הליכות שלמה שם.

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