

# ניצוצי אור Sparks of Light

בס"ד



No. 63

פרשת ויחי תשע"ו

## Toiling in Torah (2)

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### Toiling for Everyone

When the **Maharash of Lubavitch** was *bar-mitzva* age, he was once called in by his father, the **Tzemach Tzedek**, to be tested on *Mesechta Menachos*, which he was then learning. After asking a number of questions, and receiving satisfactory responses, the **Tzemach Tzedek** pointed to a specific *sugya* and asked his son if he had toiled to understand it. The **Maharash**, who had a phenomenal mind, answered that he had not toiled at all, for he had understood everything without effort. The **Tzemach Tzedek** sighed and countered, "But how can one learn without toiling?"

Hearing this, the **Maharash** decided to begin putting effort in his learning, and worked so extremely hard that blood stains began to appear on his forehead. Seeing this, the **Tzemach Tzedek** called him in and directed him how to continue his learning. Later the **Maharash** recalled, "From then on, I would toil in learning with the precisely correct measure of effort, just as one sets a clock..."

(רשימות היומן ע' שע"ז בשילוב תר"מ ח"ה ע' 49)

When **Reb Dovber of Lubavitch** delivered a *maamar* of *Chassidus*, he would wear a *kolok*, a type of *shtreimel* with a pointed centerpiece. Unlike his father, the **Baal HaTanya**, while speaking he would sit in one place and not move about, yet even so, he would perspire immensely from great concentration, to the point that perspiration would drip from the point of his *shtreimel*.

(שיחור"ק תשמ"א ח"א ע' 98)

### For Its Own Sake

Although the **AriZal** had a phenomenal mind and no worldly worries, for his father-in-law supported him, he would toil intensely when learning *Torah*, even when the concept at hand was not particularly profound.

His *talmid*, **Reb Chaim Vital**, described this as follows: "I saw my *Rebbe*, when involved

with *halacha*, strengthen himself like a lion, to the point of sweating. I asked him why he put in so much effort, and he told me that the purpose of learning something in depth is to break the *kelipos*, which are the difficulties that come up regarding the *halachos* being learned."

The *kelipos* that the **AriZal** dealt with were obviously not very strong; nevertheless, in order to break them, he toiled greatly when learning *Torah*. From this we can understand the importance for all Jews, who are not at his level, to toil in *Torah*.

(שער המצוות פ' ואתחנן, התועדויות תשמ"ג ח"ב ע' 869)

When the **Baal HaTanya** was five years old, the gates of *Torah* opened for him, and he easily grasped even the most difficult matters. He later related to his grandson, the **Tzemach Tzedek**, "This caused me great distress, since I was unable to toil in *Torah*. Only at the age of fifteen, when my purpose in this world was revealed to me, was I calmed."

(סה"ש תש"ה ע' 131)

Once the **Baal HaTanya** called his grandson the **Tzemach Tzedek** and offered to grant him a gift – a blessing for an understanding of *Torah*. The **Tzemach Tzedek** declined the offer, saying that he wanted to acquire *Torah* through toil. He later regretted this, for whatever levels of *Torah* he could have received as a gift from the *Alter Rebbe*, there would always be additional levels to toil for.

(לקו"ש חט"ו ע' 81)

### Choosing to Toil

Two businessmen with a financial dispute traveled to the city of the *gaon*, **Reb Meshulam Igra**, to ask that he act as their arbitrator. **Reb Meshulam** heard them out and asked that they return in a few days, during which he would look into the matter.

However, since they felt they needed an immediate reply, they decided to return

home and ask their local *rov* to help them. After hearing their claims he stepped into his study, and within a few minutes returned with a response that satisfied them both. Greatly impressed, they told their townsmen how within a few minutes, their own *rov* had supplied a fine solution to a complicated halachic issue that even the great *gaon*, **Reb Meshulam Igra**, had been unable to supply.

Some time later, finding themselves in **Reb Meshulam's** town, they decided to ask him what he would have *paskened* regarding their past dilemma. Surprised that his reply was exactly the same, they told him how their *rov* had given this verdict after only a few minutes. Amazed, **Reb Meshulam** exclaimed that if there was such a great *gaon* alive, he wanted to learn *Torah* from him.

He made the journey and asked the *rov* to tell him whether he had reached the conclusion himself or if someone had helped him. The *rov* replied, "When those two men came and presented their problem, I realized that I did not know the answer, so I went into my room and cried and *davened* to *HaShem*. I asked that He open my eyes and enable me to give a correct reply according to *Torah*, thus preventing a *chillul HaShem* [thinking that their *Rov* is insufficiently learned if he cannot resolve their issue]. I merited to receive clarity from *HaShem* and was able to immediately find the correct answer."

Hearing this, **Reb Meshulam** responded, "I, too, know how to daven and cry. Nevertheless, halachic conclusions should be reached by toiling in *Torah*..."

(היא שיחת)

## Consider This

Is toiling in *Torah* a means to a better understanding or is it an end for itself?

## Sparks of Greatness

### Reb Shmelke of Nikolsburg

**Reb Shmuel Shmelke Hurvitz of Nikolsburg** was one of the outstanding *talmidim* of the **Mezritcher Maggid**. He and his brother **Reb Pinchas** (the "*Ba'al Haflaah*") were significantly responsible for the spreading of *Chassidus*. Many famous *chassidishe Rebbes* were his *talmidim*. He was the *rov* of Nikolsburg (current day Mikulov in Moravia, Czech Republic), and he wrote a number of *seforim* on *Torah* and on *Shulchan Aruch*. Reb Shmelke passed away 1st of *Iyar*, 1778 (תקל"ח).

Reb Shmelke once said, "When I was by the *Maggid* of Mezritch, I came to understand that a *chossid* is one who always worries about the troubles of *Yidden* and does not only fill his life with *Torah* and davening, but also with *tzeddaka* and *gemilas chassodim* to the rich and

poor."

Reb Shmelke was once in Cracow when a poor woman came to him weeping, "*Rebbe*, this is my only child," she pointed to a baby in her hands, "and he is very ill." Reb Shmelke took a cloth, wrapped something in it, and told her to give it to the *rov*, **Reb Yitzchak Landau**. When she handed it to the *rov*, he unwrapped the cloth and found a gold coin inside.

At first, the *rov* looked on, bewildered, without comprehending what Reb Shmelke was alluding to, then it dawned on him that there was a famous children's doctor, a professor, who charged a gold coin for consultations. Obviously the woman could not afford to pay such a sum. Handing the coin to her, he said, "Take this and go to the specialist."

## Library Sparks

With this week's *Torah* portion, *Vayechi*, we conclude *Sefer Bereishis*. "So Yosef died, being one hundred and ten years old...and he was put into a coffin in Egypt" is its final verse.

This conclusion to the entire *Sefer* is somewhat surprising, in light of the principle that "one should always end on a positive note." Why couldn't *Sefer Bereishis* have concluded a few verses back, when we learn that Yosef lived a long life and merited to see grandchildren and great-grandchildren?

Why couldn't the description of Yosef's death have waited until the *Sefer Shemos*?

We must therefore conclude that Yosef's passing is somehow related to the theme of *Sefer Bereishis* itself.

The primary difference between *Sefer Bereishis* and the other four Books of *Moshe Rabbeinu* is that *Sefer Bereishis* relates the early history of our Forefathers and the twelve tribes -- the preparation for our existence as a distinct nation -- whereas the other four books contain a narrative of our history as a people.

*Sefer Bereishis* begins with an account of the creation of the world.

The Sage, Rabbi Yitzchak, explained that although the *Torah* should have begun with a practical *mitzva*, *Hashem* chose to commence with the Creation to refute the arguments of the Gentiles, who would one day claim that the Jews had stolen the land of Israel from the seven nations who lived there prior to its conquest.

To counter their assertion, the Jews will say, "The entire world belongs to *Hashem*; He created it and divided it as He saw fit. It was His will to give it to them [the seven nations], and

it was His will to take it from them and give it to us."

Surely *Hashem* did not change the entire order of His *Torah* just to supply an answer to the arguments of the Gentiles. The comments of Rabbi Yitzchak must therefore contain a more fundamental teaching for the Jewish people as a whole.

The nations of the world are already cognizant of the Jew's uniqueness and his special mission. Their claim, however, is that precisely because Jews are different, they should limit themselves to the spiritual service of *Hashem* and not tie themselves down to a physical land.

Because Jews are a nation like no other, they have no right to claim ownership of a homeland. To the non-Jew, the spiritual and physical realms are incongruous and incompatible.

"The entire world belongs to *Hashem*," the Jew responds -- the worldly as well as the spiritual realm.

Both require sanctification through the light of holiness -- the sacred mission of the Jewish people.

With this concept *Sefer Bereishis* begins, and on this note it concludes. Yosef's coffin remained in Egypt in order to give strength and inspiration to the Children of Israel in their Egyptian exile. The power of Yosef is symbolic of the ability of the Jewish people to overcome even the most difficult of obstacles, imbuing even the coarsest of physical matter with holiness and bringing the full and complete Redemption.

## Halacha Sparks

### Organizing Toys

Rabbi Chaim Hillel Raskin

#### How do I avoid *borer* when selecting toys on *Shabbos*?

The prohibition of *borer* is to separate two or more items that are mixed together, by removing the undesirable object or, in some situations, even by selecting the desirable object.<sup>1</sup> *Borer* isn't limited to food, and it applies to any mixture of items.<sup>2</sup> Selecting a preferred piece from many of the same type is permitted. For example, if one wants all the pieces of fish on a tray to be of uniform size or appearance, it is permitted to either select the desirable piece or to remove the undesirable one.<sup>3</sup>

Three conditions are needed to permit selecting on *Shabbos*: (1) Selecting the good from the bad. (2) Selecting by hand, not using a special sorting device (i.e. strainer). (3) For immediate use, not to prepare for later (one may select game pieces to play, but one may not separate the pieces when putting them away, since it isn't for immediate use).<sup>4</sup>

Selecting cutlery to set the *Shabbos* table is permitted shortly before meal time, which some *poskim* set this as the time when the men leave *shul*.<sup>5</sup> However, some *poskim* point out that if one wants to have the *Shabbos* table set for the house to look *shabbosdik*, it is permissible to set it up even earlier, since the pleasure from the setting is immediate. Of course, this is only applicable if people will be in the room for the time that follows.<sup>6</sup>

It is only considered selecting when the various items are mixed together, however if they are lying apart but near each other (food on a tray or toys on the floor), there is no problem of *borer*. The rule of thumb is that if they are apart to a degree that no effort is needed to select one of them, it is not considered a mixture.

Thus, some *poskim* suggest that one can grab a pile of mixed toys or clothes and throw it into the air, causing them to land apart from each other, and then put them each away without sorting them.<sup>7</sup> Others doubt this ruling since throwing the pile into the air is simply the beginning of the *borer* process (some therefore allow it only if one person throws and another picks them up).<sup>8</sup>

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