

ניצוצי אור Sparks of Light

בס"ד



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פרשת וארא תשע"ו

Recognizing the Enemy (2)

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Always on Guard

The **Rebbe Reb Nochum of Chernobyl** lived in acute poverty. A *chossid* once brought him a gift of 300 golden rubles, a massive sum in those days. The *Rebbe's Gabbai*, who oversaw the needs of the home, was overjoyed that the heavy debts of the *Chassidus* would finally be paid up. When this wealthy *chossid* left Reb Nochum's room, tens of other *chassidim* were waiting their turn, until they stopped in order to *daven Maariv*. After *Maariv* the *Tzaddik* closeted himself in his room for a while, then suddenly opened the door, asking to see one of the *chassidim* who had been at *yechidus* earlier. The *chossid* was located brought to the *Rebbe*, conferred with him & then left. Meanwhile the *tzaddik* continued receiving *chassidim* late into the night.

After all the *chassidim* had left, the *gabbai* entered the *Rebbe's* room to request some money, having already listed the amount he would pay each creditor. Reb Nochum opened the drawer in which he kept the money that had been given for his personal use, and the *gabbai* was stunned to see only a few silver and copper coins remaining, and no sign of the 300 rubles. The *tzaddik* told him to take all the coins, a total of 100 rubles, but the *gabbai* remained rooted to his place, downcast but unable to say a thing. The *tzaddik* asked him why he looked so sad? After all, HaShem had sent them money. At this point, the *gabbai* was no longer able to contain himself and asked about the 300 rubles.

The *Rebbe* replied, "When I received the money I wondered why I had merited such a sum. When one of the *chassidim* told me about his utter lack of funds for tuition, rent, and his daughter's wedding, it dawned on me that HaShem had given me the special *zechus* of supporting this *Yid*. In fact, the amount he needed totaled the exact amount that I had received. After I had decided to give the 300 rubles to this *chossid*, another thought came to my mind: 'Why give so much money to one person, when it can be divided between six families?'

"Faced with the dilemma of these two options, I closed myself in my room. After

thinking it through, I came to the conclusion that the second idea, to divide the money among a number of families, did not come from the *yetzer tov*, for it would have entered my mind immediately. Only after I had thought of the *mitzva*, did the counter "*Mitvah*" come along to trick me." Reb Nochum concluded, "I fulfilled the advice of the *yetzer tov* and gave the *chossid* the entire 300 rubles."

From this we see how important is discernment, always knowing from where a thought is coming from. This can be acquired only by working on oneself.

(סה"ש תש"ג ע' 67)

Cleverly Countering

Shlomo HaMelech writes that one should use clever strategies when waging war against the *yetzer hara*. Some record this as a *mitzva midivrei kabbala*, an obligation derived from *Nach*.

(משלי כ"ד, ו', ס' חרדים פל"ה אות ב', ברכות י"ז ע"א ורש"י)

In this spirit, **Chazal** teach us to always use all kinds of sly tactics in order to attain a fear of HaShem.

Dovid HaMelech said to HaShem, "*Ribbono shel Olam!* Every morning upon awakening, I plan aloud, 'Today I will visit some place or someone's home,' and then I would direct my feet to the *beis midrash*, thereby tricking the *yetzer hara* and not allowing him to distract me."

(ברכות י"ז ע"א, רש"י, בן יהוידע, ילקוט תהלים תת"צ)

Reb Naftali of Ropshitz, was known for his quick wit.

One day his *Rebbe*, the **Chozeh of Lublin**, challenged him: "Isn't it written in the *Torah* that one should be simple and straightforward ('*tamim*') in his *avodas HaShem*?"

The *talmid* replied, "To reach the level of *temimus*, one must first have wisdom, as our *chachomim* instructed – to be clever in *yiras Shamayim*."

(דור דעה ע' רל"ז, סה"ש תרצ"ו ע' 223)

Towards the end of one of **Reb Dovid of Lelov's** regular fasts, he was on the road and felt an unusual extreme thirst. Suddenly, noticing a spring of cool bubbling water, his thirst intensified to the point that he felt compelled to break his fast and drink. He stood still for a moment to consider the matter and found an inner strength to squelch the thirst.

Continuing on his way, he felt a great rush of joy, having succeeded in subjugating his *yetzer hara*! Soon however he began thinking to himself, that joy is not coming from the *yetzer tov*, but from the *yetzer hara*. He's trying to get me to be filled with pride!" To avoid falling into the trap, Reb Dovid returned to the spring and drank his fill.

(סיפורי חסידים זוין תורה ע' 527)

Reb Yitzchok of Vorki awoke in middle of the night feeling a desire to take a pinch of snuff. While in bed, he was unable to reach the box and debated with himself whether to get up for it or not. If he rose to get it, he would be giving the *yetzer hara* the opportunity of being able to convince him to fulfill his desires. Yet, if he would not get out of bed, he would still be giving into his *yetzer hara* by falling prey to laziness, a trait he might later possibly apply when serving HaShem. After weighing this, he decided: "I will get up and get the box, but I will not fulfill my desire to smell it."

(ילקוט ספורים)

Consider This

How can a positive inspiration be *lehefech hatov*? How can we identify it when it is presented with holy reasoning?

Sparks of Greatness

Reb Menachem Mendel Horodoker

Reb Menachem Mendel Horodoker (also known as **Reb Mendel Vitebsker**) was a lead student of the **Baal Shem Tov** and **Maggid of Mezritch**. After the passing of the *Maggid*, he took on the leadership for the *chassidim* of White Russia, until, together with a large group of *chassidim*, he moved to *Eretz Yisroel*. He authored *Pri Ha'aretz* and other *seforim*. He passed away in *Tverya* on the 2nd of *Iyar* 1788 (תקמ"ח) and is buried there.

Two years after the *Maggid* appointed him to spread *Chassidus* in Russia, Reb Mendel went to visit the *Maggid*. As he entered the *Rebbe's* room, he was asked, "What did you achieve with the Russian Jews?" Rabbi Mendel replied, "I found their clothes torn and hearts complete, and I worked on making their clothes complete and their hearts torn."

(Meaning, he came in contact with poor Jews who did not earn a living, hence

the torn clothes, yet their hearts were complete, for they were unaware of their true purpose. Reb Mendel helped them increase their wealth, and cause their hearts to tear from the work of repairing their spiritual lives).

Reb Mendel once refused to begin *hakafos*, saying that he saw one hundred meaning in *Atah Hareisa*, which he had yet to achieve.

His student, the **Baal HaTanya**, then told him: A person can never stand in the place where his eyes reach, for when he arrives at that point he view will extend much further. Similarly, even if Reb Mendel would reach the levels described in those *pirushim*, he would see many more that he did not reach, and so on forever.

This convinced Reb Mendel, and he began *hakafos*.

Library Sparks

Seven of the ten plagues that were visited upon the Egyptians are described in this week's *Torah* reading, *Vaeira*. The purpose of these plagues was, as *Hashem* told Moshe: "So that you will be able to tell your children and grandchildren how I have made sport from Egypt, performing miraculous signs there."

Pharaoh is identified with his stubborn boasts, "I do not know *Hashem*," and "the river is mine and I have fashioned it," denying *Hashem's* influence in our world and replacing it with a belief in self and man's power.

The fundamental purpose of the plagues was to negate this approach, to manifest G-dliness openly so that all could see, and in doing so, to break the pride of Pharaoh and his nation.

Hashem persisted in this endeavor until "Egypt [knew] that I am *Hashem*," and Pharaoh's pride was crushed. Ultimately Pharaoh came to Moshe in his nightclothes, entreating *Hashem's* mercy.

And the evidence of *Hashem's* influence in the world was not for Pharaoh alone. The miracles of the exodus serve

as testimony of *Hashem's* control of the natural order for subsequent generations as well. In Egypt, even Pharaoh had no choice but to acknowledge G-dliness. At other times, *Hashem's* influence may not be as evident, but it is always *Hashem* who is ordering our world and our destiny.

Nature itself is no more than a recurring series of miracles. For is there a reason why the sun should rise or the grass should grow?

But beyond the natural order, there is a G-dly hand directing our lives. Nothing happens by chance. Instead, in a way in which only His infinite wisdom can fully comprehend, *Hashem* is guiding our lives and working miracles on our behalf.

This is one of the lessons of our *Torah* portion and the miracles of the plagues: to probe beneath the surface and become conscious of the involvement of *Hashem* in our daily lives. The only difference between the plagues in Egypt and our present situation is the degree in which *Hashem's* hand is overtly manifest, but the presence - and the working - of that hand always remains the same.

Halacha Sparks

Baby Rattle

Rabbi Chaim Hillel Raskin

May I shake a rattle to calm a baby on Shabbos?

Chazal prohibited playing music with instruments on *Shabbos*¹ in case one may come to fix or adjust them. *Poskim* discuss whether instruments such as a rattle which are not intended for music, but can generate a musical sound or beat, are included in this prohibition.²

Some say that since a baby rattle is intended to make noise to get the baby's attention, not to play music, it is permissible to rattle (as long as one does not create a beat). Likewise, ringing a [mechanical] doorbell is permissible since one does not intend to create music.³ Others argue that although normal knocking on a door is permissible, the prohibition against making music extends to all noisemaking items, even ones that aren't specifically musical. The custom is to follow the latter opinion except when necessary for a sick person or a *mitzvah* purpose.⁴

Some consider the rattle *muktza* since it may not be used.⁵ However, others point out that since many *poskim* do permit using it, although we have a *minhag* to be stringent, we cannot deem it a forbidden object.⁶

In the laws of *Shabbos*, young children's needs are treated like those of a mildly sick person.⁷ Thus, if a child is crying strongly and the rattle can calm him down, one may give the rattle to the child to play with,⁸ or even shake the rattle oneself (preferably with a *shinui*).⁹

1. עירובין ק"ד ע"א, שו"ע סי' של"ח ס"א.

2. ראה שו"ע הרב סי' של"ח ס"א.

3. ראה ילקו"י שבת כרך ה' סי' של"ח ס"ב ובהערה שם. שו"ת אור לציון ח"ב פכ"ז ת' ט.

4. שו"ע הרב שם וראה גם סי' של"ט ס"ב (אלא שי"ל ששם משמיע קול שירה).

5. ביה"ל סי' של"ח ד"ה אסור מביא שהפרמ"ג הסתפק. וראה ס' אשרי האיש או"ח ח"ב פ"ז סכ"ז שהוא כלי שמלאו. וראה ארחות שבת מילואים לפ"ט אות ד' מש"כ מהירושלמי.

6. ע"פ לבוש סי' שח סמ"ט בנוגע למכבדות. ולהעיר שבשו"ע הרב שם סעי' פ"ז החמיר (אלא שעדיין י"לע האם זה רק להאוסרים או גם להמחמירים מצד המנהג, ונראה להחמיר א"כ משתמש בו להרגעת התינוק שאז מותר להשתמש בכלי שמלאכתו לאיסור לצורך גופו).

7. ע"פ שו"ע או"ח סי' ש"כ ח סי"ז שו"ע סכ"ב. וראה אשרי האיש שם פ"ו סכ"ו עד גיל שלוש ולפעמים גם יותר.

8. ע"פ הגהות מקור חיים סי' של"ט ס"ג. וראה שו"ע הרב סי' של"ח סוס"א.

9. ראה שש"כ פט"ז הערה י"א שו"ת באר משה ח"ו סי' כ"ח (וראה שו"ע הרב סי' ש"כ ח סי"ט - אלא שיש מקום לומר שכאן ל"צ שינוי שזהו משמעות הדין בסי' של"ח ס"א).

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