

ניצוצי אור Sparks of Light

בס"ד



No. 66

פרשת בא תשע"ו

Personal Kindness (1)

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Gemilus Chassadim

Chazal say that there is a *mitzva* even greater than *tzedaka*; doing kind deeds, *gemilus chassadim*, is greater than *tzedaka*, and in three ways.

Firstly, *tzedaka* is done with money only, while *gemilus chassadim* is done with ones money and *guf*; burying the dead, bringing joy to a *chassan* and *kalla*, or escorting a departing friend etc. Secondly, *tzedaka* is for the needy, while *gemilus chassadim* can be done for any person. Thirdly, *tzedaka* is given only to the living, while *gemilus chassadim* is also towards those who have passed on.

The value of kindness is measured according to the goodness of heart and effort invested in it. When one prepares food or delivers clothing to the poor, he is devoting thought and care for another.

(סוכה מ"ט ע"ב)

HaShem said: All the kindness that you perform is more precious to Me than the *korbanos* that *Shlomo HaMelech* offered before Me.

Rebbi Yochanan ben Zakai and **Rebbi Yehoshua** were leaving *Yerushalayim* together, and passed the destroyed *Beis Hamikdash*. **Rebbi Yehoshua** bemoaned the absence of a place of *kapara* (forgiveness) for the Jewish people. **Rebbi Yochanan** told him, "Do not despair! For we still have equal opportunity for *kapara* – via our acts of *gemilus chassadim*."

(ילקוט הושע תקכ"ב, אדר"נ פ"ד)

The *tzaddik* **Reb Mordechai** had heard the following teaching from the **Baal Shem Tov**: A *neshama* may descend to This World for seventy or eighty years – solely to do another Jew a favor; *begashmius* and even more so *beruchnius*.

(היום יום ה' אייר)

In the year 1699 (תס"ט), when the **Baal Shem Tov** was only eleven years old, he joined the group of hidden *tzaddikim*

(*nistarim*). Three years later, in the year 1702 (תע"ב), the **Baal Shem Tov** impressed upon them the importance of helping Jews *begashmius*, even where it would not lead to an influence *beruchnius*.

Fifteen years later, seeing the great benefit which this approach brought, the *nistar* **Reb Mordechai** placed his hands upon the **Baal Shem Tov**'s head and said, "Tavo *alecha bracha* (תע"ב)! May *brachos* come upon you for your *ahavas Yisroel*!"

(אג"ק רי"צ ח"ד ע' רצא, לקו"ש ח"א ע' 261)

The *Torah* commands us to follow the ways of *HaShem*. **Chazal** explain that just as *HaShem* clothed the naked, visited the sick and buried the dead, so should we.

(סוטה יד ע"א)

The Necessity for Kindness

The **Rayatz of Lubavitch** related: "One morning, while on vacation in *Alivka* with my father, the *Rashab*, I awoke at 3:00 am and sat down to learn. I noticed that my father had woken up even earlier and was busy preparing for davening. At 6:00 am, he invited me to come with him for a walk. As we were walking, he said to me, 'When one rises in the morning, learns and then *davens*, something is accomplished, but without the opportunity of actually doing a kindness for another Jew, the day is 'dry.' One needs to daven to *HaShem* that He send a Jew for whom one can do an act of kindness – though one should daven that he not stumble upon unworthy people."

Later that day, two Jews from *Rudnia* came to my father to ask him to do a personal favor for them. My father called me and said, "You see, if one desires truthfully, *HaShem* helps him."

(סה"ש תרצ"ט ע' 339, בבא קמא טז ע"ב)

A well-to-do *chossid*, by the name of **Reb Zalke Persitz**, once told the **Rebbe Rayatz**:

"It is now 25 years since I became a *chossid*! In the year 1897 (תרנ"ז) the *Rashab* told me

at *yechidus*, 'Just as a Jew must put on *tefillin* every day, he must spend fifteen minutes a day thinking about himself, and whom he can help *beruchnius* or even *begashmius*.' I asked the *Rebbe*, 'Rebbe, how is this possible?' To which he replied, 'For this one must have a *mashpia*,' and the *Rebbe* suggested *Reb Zalman Arsher*.

"From then on, every day, I would record in a diary the act of kindness I had done that day, and on a day when I could not find someone with whom to do a favor, I would go to *shul* and spend time with *Reb Zalman*."

(סה"ש תש"ד ע' 61)

The **Baal Shem Tov** explained the words of **Chazal**, "*Torah* learning which is not accompanied by work – will become invalid." A person's learning must bring him to help another Jew, otherwise his learning is deficient.

Helping another Jew is described here as "work". Just as a businessman does not wait at home for others to approach him, but opens his store in a busy location, hangs a sign and tries his best to convince others of his product, so, too, a Jew must actively pursue opportunities to help another Jew.

(סה"ש ת"ש ע' 115, לקו"ש ח"א ע' 260)

Consider This

Which is greater to help another *Yid* *begashmius* or *beruchnius*? Why?

Why does one need special assistance from above to help another?

How does having a *mashpia* help?

Sparks of Greatness

Reb Yekusiel Leipler

Reb Yekusiel Leipler, a salt merchant from Liepli, was of the great *chassidim* of the **Baal HaTanya**. He was a *baal midos* and great *baal hispaalus* (full of life). Though a simple man by nature, he even found it difficult to learn *Chumash* with *Rashi*, he toiled tremendously until his understanding developed, and he could comprehend profound topics of *Torah*.

When he first came to the *Baal HaTanya*, Reb Yekusiel heard a *maamar* about the *nefesh habahamis*, the animalistic soul, and the left ventricle of the heart where it resides. He climbed up to the second floor window, where he found the *Baal HaTanya* wearing **Rabbeinu Tam's** *teffilin*, and he cried out, "*Rebbe!* Cut out my left side! I can't deal with him!" The *Baal HaTanya* responded, "It is written *'ve'ata mechayeh es*

kulam', and You, *HaShem*, give life to all..."

From that moment onward, Reb Yekusiel became a different person. His heart was aroused with emotion and his *neshama* shined with the ability to see Hashemlines as a person sees something physical.

This 'shine' of his *neshama* (which he would refer to as "the *chossid*") would come and go, and his *avoda* would vary greatly depending on the current expression of his *neshama*. If while walking down the street, his would suddenly start to 'shine,' he would start to dance, exclaiming, "*Chossid prishol*, the *chossid* has come!" Once while standing in the Borisov post office, waiting to have something done, his *neshama* began to shine, and he broke out in dance with the post office clerk...

Library Sparks

This week's *Torah* portion, *Bo*, speaks of the last three plagues visited on Egypt, and of the Jewish People's long-awaited departure from there. It begins with *Hashem's* command to Moshe that he go to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to warn him of the impending plague of locusts. *Hashem*, however, states that Pharaoh will not heed the warning: "For I have hardened his heart...in order that you tell in the ears of your son and your son's son that which I have wrought in Egypt."

We learn from this that the locusts did not come as a punishment for Pharaoh's refusal to heed the warning; *Hashem* had hardened his heart so that he would be unable to agree to free the Jews. But if such is the case, isn't it unjust for *Hashem* to punish Pharaoh with a plague, when *Hashem* Himself prevented him from acceding to Moshe's demand?

Our commentators explain that during the first five plagues Pharaoh had free will to decide his actions, and he could have permitted the Jews to leave. It was only after Pharaoh demonstrated his wickedness and rebelled against *Hashem*--"Who is *Hashem* that I should listen to His voice?"--that his free will was taken away. This punishment clearly fit the crime: Pharaoh questioned *Hashem's* authority and boasted of his own might, so he was shown that he did not even have the power to make his own decisions. Pharaoh was thus fully subjugated to the will of *Hashem*.

Furthermore, Pharaoh's behavior during the plague of locusts underscored his impotence. When even his servants begged him to free the Jews--"Let the people go so that they can serve their *Hashem*.

Do you not yet know that Egypt is lost?"--Pharaoh immediately agreed and declared to Moshe and Aaron, "Go worship your *Hashem*." But at that very instant *Hashem* hardened his heart and Pharaoh was forced to renege on his promise.

Even with this explanation we are still left with a philosophical problem. Why did Moshe and Aaron have to go through the motions of issuing a formal warning if they knew that there was no chance that Pharaoh would agree to their request?

It is explained in the book of *Tanya*, the central work of *Chasidic* philosophy, that even a person who is so sunken into evil ways and so deplorable that "he is not provided with a means to do *teshuva* (repent)," even he can overcome and find his way back to righteousness. Even the most corrupt and abominable sinner can return to *Hashem*.

If Pharaoh, totally self-centered, wicked and deprived of his free will could have prevented the final plagues from befalling his nation by exerting supreme effort to overcome the hardening of his heart, how much more so is it possible for every Jew to overcome his negative character traits and do *teshuva*.

A Jew's *G-dly* soul is termed "a *cheilek* of *Hashem*; *mamosh*," and is in his possession always, for the Jewish soul remains faithful to *Hashem* even if the body commits a sin. A Jew always has the power to do *teshuva*, to return to *Hashem* and live in harmony with his true essence. *Hashem* awaits the return of every single Jew, who can only sin externally, as his internal nature is untouched and holy.

Halacha Sparks

Shabbos

Lawnmower Rental

Rabbi Chaim Hillel Raskin

My Jewish neighbor, who is not shomer Shabbos, asked to borrow my lawnmower for the weekend. May I lend it to him if I know he will use it on Shabbos?

Besides with the issues involved in having one's tools used for *melacha* on *Shabbos* (even by a non-Jew), there are additional issues when sharing them with a Jew:

(1) *Lifnei Iveir* and *Mesayeia*

There is a *Torah* prohibition to enable someone to transgress where they would otherwise have been unable to (*lifnei iveir*). If they have other ways to transgress it is nevertheless forbidden *midraban* to assist them (*mesayeia*). These prohibitions apply even to one who willingly chooses to transgress.

When there is a possibility that the Jew won't use the lawnmower on *Shabbos*, it is permissible to lend or rent it on *Erev Shabbos* (especially since the owner does not want it used it on *Shabbos*).

(2) *Chilul Hashem*

If the borrower clearly expresses his intention to use it on *Shabbos*, assisting him constitutes a *Chilul Hashem* and is forbidden. Similarly, leaving a shul parking lot open on *Shabbos* constitutes a *Chilul Hashem* (an open defiance of *Hashem's* instructions) and is forbidden even if left open from before *Shabbos*.

Although when both of the above guidelines are met it is permissible to lend the tool to a *mechalel Shabbos*, nevertheless some *poskim* write that one should refrain from enabling *Chilul Shabbos* even in a permissible manner.

Since the details are complex, each person should consult his *Rov* with his specific details.

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