

# ניצוצי אור Sparks of Light

בס"ד



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פרשת משפטים תשע"ו

## Reliving the Past (2)

Rabbi Shimon Hellinger, Editor

### The Focus of the Story

Once, after returning from the *kever* of the **Baal Shem Tov**, the *Tzaddik* **Reb Mendele of Rimanov** was beeming; "the *Baal Shem Tov* appeared to me". When word of this reached the *tzaddik*, the **Degel Machane Efrayim**, he was disturbed. Reb Mendele heard about the *Degel's* distress & set out to put his mind at ease.

When he arrived, the *Degel*, without inviting him to sit, turned to him and asked, "Where am I now?" (ie: in his thoughts) Reb Mendele said, "In *Yerushalayim*."

"And now?" the *Degel* asked again;

"In the *Beis HaMikdosh*" came the response.

Impressed enough, the *Degel* asked if he had truly seen the *Baal Shem Tov*. When Reb Mendele confirmed that he had, he asked him to relate precisely what the *Baal Shem Tov* had said, and was told: "He is disturbed that people primarily recount stories of his miracles, & not those in which his *yiras Shamayim* can also be learned from."

Hearing these words, the *Degel Machane Efrayim* invited Reb Mendele to sit down at his side.

(ילקוט חדש ע' קעח)

### Authentic Stories

Children should be told stories from *Tanach* and *Chazal*, and true stories of *tzaddikim*, and not *להבדיל* fairytales.

Every story should have a lesson of goodness and *kedusha*. Telling a story without a purpose is not a Jewish thing.

(שיחור"ק תשמ"א ח"א ע' 246, תו"מ ח"ל ע' 52)

### Accuracy in transmitting "Chassidishe stories"

**HaRav Shlomo Yosef Zevin** authored a rich collection of chassidic stories arranged

according to the *parshiyos* and *Yomim Tovim*.

Upon receiving his book, the **Lubavitcher Rebbe zy"א** penned him a lengthy reply about his responsibility to retell only stories from trustworthy sources.

"In our confused generation in particular, the *Rebbe* continued, we must be exceedingly careful to transmit a story with precise details, not leaving room for possible misunderstandings. *Leidar* the circulation of inaccurate chassidic stories in recent times, leads many to false conclusions about *Chassidus*. Such stories sometimes imply that the hero of the story conducted himself **חס ושלום** contrary to *halacha* or *lifnim mishuras hadin*. Usually, by correcting some detail, the difficulty would fall away."

To highlight his points the *Rebbe* pointed out two such stories in HaRav Zevin's book:

The first is a story about how the *tzaddik*, **Reb Aharon Leib of Premishlan**, was reprimanded by **Reb Elimelech of Lyzhensk** for not wanting to learn *Torah* from **Eliyahu HaNavi**. Reb Aharon Leib excused himself by saying that he wished to toil in *Torah*. This implies, said the *Rebbe*, that *Eliyahu* came to the other *tzaddikim* to spare them this effort, since they did not wish to toil in the study of *Torah*. The truth, the *Rebbe* explained, is that those *tzaddikim* also toiled; however, they wanted to save their efforts for more advanced levels of study, beyond what *Eliyahu HaNavi* would have taught them.

The second is a story of a *Yid*, who dreamt that his father, shortly after his passing, ordered him to convert **ר"ל**. When the dream repeated itself several times, he visited *Reb Zusha of Anipoli* who instructed him to open the grave, since there was surely a *tzeilem* inside. They followed his instructions and found some coins with crosses that had mistakenly fallen inside during the burial. Now, concludes the *Rebbe*, since it is forbidden to open a grave,

it must be that the coins were in the vicinity of the grave, and not in the grave itself.

(אג"ק ח"א ע' רסח, הסיפורים בסיפוח זיון ע' 372, (118)

### Special Stories

Before the **Baal HaTanya** relayed *divrei Torah* from the *Baal Shem Tov*, he would say, "The words of *Torah* from 'the *Zeide*' (as he called the *Baal Shem Tov*) are a *segula* to increase one's understanding, and in achieving true *yiras Shamayim*."

Relating stories of 'the *Zeide*' are a *segula* for long life and abundant *parnasa*."

When the daughter of the *Tzemach Tzedek* once fell ill with high fever, he suggested that someone read her stories of the *Baal Shem Tov*, for "they are a superb *segula* to heal fever."

(לקוטי דיבורים ח"א ע' 508, רשימו"ד החדש ע' 135)

The **Maharash of Lubavitch** once said: "People say that relating a story of the *Baal Shem Tov* on *Motzaei Shabbos* is a *segula* for *parnasa*. The truth is that these three points are **לאו דוקא**:

1-It does not necessarily have to be about the *Baal Shem Tov*; it can be about any *tzaddik*!

2-it is not only applicable on *Motzaei Shabbos*; but at any & all times!

3- The *segula* is not only for *parnasa* – but for all good things as well."

(רשימו"ד החדש ע' 211, וראה שמו"ס ח"א ע' 4)

## Consider This

Why is it necessary to analyze and toil over a story? Why isn't it enough to become inspired?

## Sparks of Greatness

### Reb Mordechai Banet

**Reb Mordechai Banet** was one of the great *rabbanim* of the 18th century. He was a *talmid* of the **Noda Biyehuda** and **Reb Schmelke of Nikolsburg**, and later became the *dayan* and *Rosh Yeshiva* of Nikolsburg during the time of Reb Schmelke's tenure.

He was known for his extreme diligence in Torah and his abstinence from worldly pleasures. Reb Mordechai passed away on the 13th of Av, 1813 (תקפ"ט).

There was a widespread custom for the *rabbanim* to host a *minyan* in their homes, early in the morning, giving them the opportunity of utilizing their time to the fullest. Reb Mordechai, however, would not hear of this, as he wanted people to see the importance of coming to *shul*. Nothing would deter Reb Mordechai from coming to *shul* every day, even during very fierce weather conditions.

Reb Mordechai's efforts bore fruit as there was always a large crowd in *shul*.

Reb Mordechai was *niftar* in the town of Carlsbad, which he had visited for health purposes, and was buried in the nearby town of Lichtenshdut. When the people of Nikolsburg heard of the passing

of their beloved *Rov*, they wanted his *aron* to be transferred to the cemetery in Nikolsburg. This request soon became a demand, and grew into an intense controversy, eventually reaching the king himself, who deferred to the **Chasam Sofer** to decide.

Six months later the *Chasam Sofer* came out with his *psak*, ruling in favor of the Nikolsburg community.

Being that he had been up all night writing, at day break he fell asleep. While he slept, Reb Mordechai appeared to him in a dream, and expressed his consent for his body to be transferred to Nikolsburg. Reb Mordechai told the *Chasam Sofer* that it had been decreed that he temporarily be buried in Lichtenshdut because as a young man, he called off a proposal to marry the daughter of the *Rov*. To atone for this, it was decreed that Reb Mordechai be buried next to this same girl for the last six months.

The *Chasam Sofer* awoke in terror, and hurried to the cemetery to verify this. Sure enough that's where he found Reb Mordechai's kever; immediately adjacent to that of the *Rov's* daughter.

## Library Sparks

In last week's Torah portion, we read about the Revelation on Mount Sinai. This week, in *Mishpatim*, the text begins by delineating some of the many practical laws which the Torah contains. The first subject dealt with is, "If you buy a Hebrew servant." This pertains to a Jew who was sold into servitude by the courts in order to make restitution for stealing, or one who sells himself due to his great poverty.

At first glance, it seems odd that the Torah would begin with this subject first. After all, in the generation of Jews who left Egypt, there were no Hebrew servants! The *Benei Yisrael* were all very wealthy, having received many invaluable gifts of gold and silver from the Egyptians before they left, and from the great riches they gathered passing through the Red Sea. There were no poor people who had to sell themselves into slavery. And even if there were those who succumbed to the prohibition "Thou shalt not covet" and actually stole something, they were all sufficiently wealthy to be able to pay back, many times the value of the stolen object, as prescribed by Torah law. Why then does the Torah choose precisely this subject to begin the portion dealing with practical commandments, such as those governing man's relationship with his fellow man, the laws of offerings, festivals, and the like?

The section of the Jewish servant, more than any other commandment, illustrates the effect the Revelation on Mount Sinai had on this world. With this *mitzva*, more so than with others, we see a direct cause and effect between sin and punishment. If a Jewish slave does not desire to be freed after six years

of servitude, his punishment is "and his master should bore his ear through with an awl."

*Rashi* explains that this ear, which heard the prohibition uttered on Mount Sinai against stealing, committed it anyway, deserves to be bored through. This ear, which heard G-d declare that the Jewish people are His servants alone-yet wants to remain a slave to a human master- deserves to be pierced.

In many instances of Torah law, we do not find such a direct cause and effect between an *aveira* and its rectification. For example, the Torah promises that the reward for honoring one's parents is longevity, but we don't always perceive this connection. Similarly, punishments may also seem to have little connection to the sin committed. However, the penalty for a Jewish slave who refuses to be set free is one instance in which the punishment is an obvious consequence of the *aveira*.

When the Torah was given it enabled the spiritual and physical world to influence each other. Prior to this, the spiritual and material were sealed off from one another-each realm remaining isolated and distinct. The Jewish slave is an example to illustrate this innovation, for his spiritual defect found a physical expression, one which could be seen by all. Furthermore, Chassidic philosophy explains that the Jewish bondsman also symbolizes man's obligation to subjugate his baser instincts and desires in the service of Hashem. After the Torah was given, the road to spirituality is paved by our properly utilizing physical reality in the service of holiness.

## Halacha Sparks

### Phone Call during Shmoneh Esreh

Rabbi Chaim Hillel Raskin

**If my cell phone rings during Shmoneh Esreh or my child starts to cry, what should I do?**

*Shmoneh esreh* should be recited with total concentration. Therefore, before davening one must proactively choose a place and scenario where there will be no disruptions (e.g. away from public thoroughfare).<sup>1</sup> Thus, it is halachically required to silence or power-down a cell phone before beginning to daven.<sup>2</sup>

If, for whatever reason, a person is disturbed during davening, he may stop and alleviate the situation so that he can continue davening undisturbed:

If a person's cell phone rings he may silence it, and even turn it off, to ensure that no one will be disturbed further.<sup>3</sup>

If a *sefer* falls on the floor and it disturbs his concentration, he may pick it up between the *brachos*.<sup>4</sup>

If one's *tallis* falls off and is still partially on him, he may put back on. If it fell off completely (even if he still holding it in his hand), he may not put it back until after *Shmoneh Esreh*. If not having a *tallis* disturbs his concentration he may put it back on between *brachos*.<sup>5</sup>

If a child is crying or otherwise disturbing he may signal to the child to be quiet, or, if necessary, walk to another room.<sup>6</sup>

If the *siddur* is missing a page or he has a question about davening (i.e. what to say or if he should repeat) he may walk to get another *siddur* or check the *halacha* in *Shulchan Aruch*. If one cannot verify the *halacha* on his own he may even ask someone else<sup>7</sup> (preferably by motioning or writing<sup>8</sup>).

1. ראה שו"ע הרב או"ח סי' צ"ה ס"ד, סי' צ"ו, וסי' צ"ח.
2. ראה מלכות כהנים שער בירורי הלכה סימן ו'.
3. תפילה הכוללת פ"ב ספ"ו. וראה שו"ע הרב סי' צ"ו ס"ג וסי' ק"ד ס"ב.
4. שו"ע הרב סי' צ"ו ס"ג.
5. שו"ע הרב סי' צ"ד וסי' מ"ח.
6. תפילה הכוללת פ"ב ספ"ו.
7. משנ"ב סי' ק"ד סק"ב, תפילה הכוללת פ"ב ס"צ.
8. ראה שו"ע הרב סי' ק"ד ס"ב, סי' קס"ו ס"א, וסי' ר"ע ס"ו.

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