

# ניצוצי אור Sparks of Light

בס"ד



No. 8

פרשת תולדות תשע"ה

## Revering the Torah (II)

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### Defending their Honor

Chazal teach that a *talmid chacham* is called "Shabbos," for just as *Shabbos* is removed from the weekday and its worldly activities, so too a *talmid chacham* is a person who is removed from the material activities of this world and is dedicated to *ruchniyus*.

(זוהר ח"ג כט, א)

The Baal Shem Tov was once told of a *Yid* who desecrated *Shabbos*. In response, the Baal Shem Tov said that he himself had a share in the *aveira*, since he had once made use of a *talmid chacham*, and this had led to that *Yid's* actual *chillul Shabbos*.

(רב ייבי כב, כח)

It was a tense time: the Russian government was about to decree that all *rabbonim* must learn Russian. A meeting of *rabbonim* and *maskilim* was held in Petersburg, in which the Rashab of Lubavitch and Reb Chayim Brisker participated. During Reb Chayim's speech, some *maskilim* began to ridicule what he was saying. The Rashab wrote something on a note, handed it to his *chossid*, Reb Mendel Chein, the Rov of Niezhin, and left. After the speech they opened the note to find out why the Rebbe had left, and read that he could not take part in a meeting at which the words of *gedolei Yisroel* are ridiculed. Hearing this, all the *rabbonim* stood up and left as well.

(קדושת הדיבור ח"ג ע' 128)

### Speaking Up

It was the custom of the *tzaddik*, Reb Chayim ben Atar, who is known as Or HaChayim HaKadosh, to distribute meat to poor *talmidei chachomim* in honor of *Shabbos*. One week a plague broke out amongst the cattle, and as a result, all the animals in town were found after *shechita* to be *treif*. Only the calf that was shechted for the *tzaddik* was kosher *limehadrin*. When one of the wealthy townsmen heard about this, he rushed to Reb

Chayim's house, hoping to get some meat in honor of *Shabbos*. He offered an enormous price for a piece, yet was told, "This is not a butcher shop. The meat is reserved for poor *talmidei chachomim*."

While they were speaking, one of Reb Chayim's regular "customers" walked in. Upset, the rich man exclaimed: "Eh... You call this a *talmid chacham*?"

Reb Chayim ignored his comment and gave the visitor his portion. The rich man realized the futility of his endeavor and left, furious. That night, the Or HaChayim HaKadosh had a dream in which he was told from *Shomayim* that since he had not protested against the embarrassment of a *talmid chacham*, he would have to go into *golus* for a full year. He immediately packed his few belongings and set out on a long and arduous trek, traveling from one place to another, making sure never to sleep two nights in the same place. He often went to sleep hungry, yet he accepted his pain with love and davened to HaShem to forgive him for his sin.

On *erev Shabbos Parshas Bechukosai* the *tzaddik* found himself on the outskirts of a city. Sitting down on a stone to rest his weak body, he reflected on the first *posuk* of the *parsha*, which begins with the words, *Im bechukosai seileichu*. As he then continued walking towards the city, still in *dveikus*, he conceived forty-two original insights on this *posuk*. When he finally reached the shul, the *shammes* asked this needy stranger to be his guest for *Shabbos*. At the conclusion of the Friday night *seuda*, the *shammes* told him of the local *minhag* to visit the *rov* at his home, and together they set out, joining the throngs already gathered, all eagerly waiting to hear *divrei Torah* from the *rov*.

At the head of the long table, with eyes closed, sat the *rov*, enraptured in a state of *dveikus*. After a few moments he awoke, quietly shared fourteen insights on the above *posuk*, and concluded, "These *peirushim* I just heard in *Shomayim*, cited in the name of the holy *tzaddik*, Reb Chayim ben Atar."

"Chayim ben Atar!" the unknown guest corrected him loudly.

All eyes turned to see: Who could have the *chutzpa* to dishonor the Or HaChayim? The *shammes*, feeling responsible for his guest, begged them to leave the poor man alone. At the daytime meal, the *rov* expounded a second set of fourteen *peirushim*, explaining again that he had heard these in *Shomayim* in the name of the holy *tzaddik*, Reb Chayim ben Atar. The same scenario repeated itself. Again the guest called out, "Chayim ben Atar!" This irritated the townsmen even more. Before *shaalshudes*, the *shammes* warned his guest to behave properly. However, the scene repeated itself a third time, and Reb Chayim was locked in a room where he was to stay until fitting measures would be decided upon.

That night, a violent storm swept through the city, and the townspeople frantically rushed to ask the *rov* for its cause. The *rov* was told from *Shomayim* that on *Shabbos*, *gehinom* closes, and it reopens on *motzoei Shabbos* when the Or HaChayim HaKadosh makes *Havdala*. And since the *tzaddik* is currently locked in a room and thus cannot make *Havdala*, there is a great uproar Above. That was what was causing such a harrowing storm below. Hearing this, the townsmen immediately released their holy guest from his confinement. Reb Chayim understood that his *teshuva* had been accepted in *Shomayim*, took his knapsack, and made his way back to his hometown.

(תולדות אור החיים הקדוש)

### Consider This

What the purpose of defending the *rov's* honor? Will it influence the others?

## Sparks of Greatness

### Reb Volf Kitzes

Reb Ze'ev Volf Kitzes, a great *talmid* of the Baal Shem Tov, was known as a *gaon* in all areas of Torah. He often joined the Baal Shem Tov in his travels, and frequently represented his Rebbe in confrontations with the *misnagdim*. He passed away on the 12th of *Cheshvan* and is buried in the *ohel* of the Baal Shem Tov.

Reb Volf once joined the Baal Shem Tov for a meal, but did not eat from the meat which was served. He later explained that he had refrained because the meat had not been salted in the best manner, and he had chosen to be *machmir*.

The Baal HaTanya addresses the obvious question: How can it be that Reb Volf was more *machmir* than his own Rebbe? Was the Rebbe's behavior not good enough for him?

The Baal HaTanya explains that the reason

for all *chumros* which are beyond basic *halacha* are (not merely out of concern that perhaps it may not be kosher, rather) to separate the good from the bad (*birrurim*). The mixture of bad in good and the way to 'separate' them is dependent on the *ruchniyusdike* level of the particular individual. This is why in our generation we have many more *chumros* than there had been during the times of *Chazal*, since we are on a lower level than them. Similarly, Reb Volf, recognizing the greatness of the Baal Shem Tov, did not attempt to elevate that which only his Rebbe could.

The Baal HaTanya asserts that for this reason we can never learn a *halacha* from the conduct of a *tzaddik* in matters of *kashrus*, neither *lekulah* nor *lechumrah*.

(מאמרי אדמו"ר הזקן הקצרים ע' תקלא)

## Library Sparks

In *Parshas Toldos* we discuss the second generation of our patriarchs. Thus the *parsha* begins "These are the children of Yitzchak, the son of Avraham, Avraham begot Yitzchok." This very verse seems to be repetitive. For if Yitzchak is introduced as the son of Avraham, there is no need to state again that Avraham had Yitzchak!

Our sages therefore comment that the Torah teaches us that there was a striking resemblance between Avraham and Yitzchak. They were identical both physically and spiritually. Looking at Yitzchak you could tell that he was Avraham's son, and looking at Avraham you could tell that he was Yitzchak's father.

Physical similarity between children and parents is not uncommon. After all, children bear their parents' genes. It is different though when we talk about the spiritual and moral development of children. Sometimes they follow in their parents' footsteps, and sometimes, unfortunately, they do not. Spiritual resemblance, unlike its physical counterpart, does not come by itself. It takes a lot of effort on the parents' part to educate their children. They must provide them with knowledge and understanding. They must train them and infuse them with values. They must be role models.

Effort is also required from the children, they must be willing to learn and appreciate their parents' values and follow them. Parents are sometimes ashamed and embarrassed by their children's conduct, and children are sometimes uncomfortable with their parents' manners. This was not the case with Yitzchak. He identified himself as the son of Avraham, because he took pride in his father. Likewise, Avraham was identified as the father of Yitzchak, because he held him in high esteem and was proud of him.

It is quite common for people to hang photos of their ancestors on their walls. Many go through the effort to trace their roots and proudly show others their names, pictures, position and fame of their parents, grandparents etc. They feel very proud of them, and more-often-than-not justifiably so. Thus they go around proclaiming "I am the son of Avraham". The question remains however, would their ancestors proudly proclaim "I Avraham begot Yitzchak"? or would they rather remain silent?

The first verse of the *parsha* thus reminds and admonishes us that we should not treat casually the gift of noble ancestry, but strive to make them proud of us!

## Halacha Sparks

### Food under a Stroller

Rabbi Chaim Chazan

**Is it permissible to place food in a holding compartment underneath a stroller in which an infant is sleeping?**

Halacha forbids eating food that was left under a bed that someone slept on. The reason is because forces of impurity (*ruach ra'ah*) contaminate food left under a bed.

But in the case of a stroller poskim permit for various reasons:

There is an opinion amongst the poskim the food becomes contaminated only when one places it directly on the floor beneath the bed. Therefore in the compartment of a stroller where it is not directly on the floor it is permissible.

Other poskim explain that food under a child's bed is permissible. For there are those who say that food under the bed of a non-Jew is permitted, since the *klipos* desire to nourish from a source of *kedusha*, they attach themselves to Jews only. This is similar to the *tumah* on the hands upon waking, which is only subject to Jews. According to the Baal HaTanya, children are not subject to the *tumah* of *ruach ra'ah* upon waking (although it is commendable to wash *neggel vasser*). Accordingly the poskim who permit food left under the bed of non-Jew, would likewise permit by the case of a child.

Another reason to permit is the opinion brought in poskim that food only becomes contaminated when left beneath a proper bed that could be used by adults, which would clearly exclude a stroller.

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