FEELING PROUD (II)

A CHOSSID’S PRIDE

Reb Mordechai Liepler, a prominent chossid of the Alter Rebbe, was firm in his observance of mitzvos, thanks to his pride. When his Yetzer HaRa would try to incite him to do something wrong, he would stand up tall and shout, “!’ - the chossid of the Alter Rebbe, the wealthy lamdan and maskil (who learns Chassidus in depth), should do an avera?! That is not befitting for me!”

The Rebbe adds that every Yid can have this pride. When a Yid thinks of his great ancestors, recalls that he stood at Har Sinai and was given the Torah, and that the entire world was created for him – he will feel that it is unbecoming for him to lower himself even in the slightest.

After a yechidus with the Rebbe Rashab, Reb Zalman Duchman went out to the courtyard, where the Frierdiker Rebbe asked him what the Rebbe Rashab had told him. Reb Zalman related that he had been instructed to travel to Warsaw. In response, the Frierdiker Rebbe encouraged him at length not to be influenced by his surroundings and to act just as he did when in Lubavitch.

“Look at the Chinese,” said the Frierdiker Rebbe. “They walk around here in the same way they do in their homeland, because they know that at home everyone dresses as they do...”

The chossid Reb Meir Gurkov records in his memoirs:

Living in communist Russia, the children of chassidim were distinct from their neighbors. Their clothes were refined and covered them properly, and their tzitzis showed from under their clothes, even in the summer heat. Yiras Shamayim and eidelkeit could be seen on their faces, especially with the long peyos that extended down their cheeks.

Even during play, the difference was noticeable. They would not take part in wild activities and stood on the side with dignity. Their derech eretz led the way. In shul, they would stand near their fathers, davening slowly from a Siddur. Many were envious because their children were different. They would wonder aloud: “How did these come to behave like this? These kleine yidelach!”

When boys were ridiculed for their peyos and tzitzis, they were not ashamed, nor did they respond, for they knew the vast difference between them and other children, and looked upon them with pity and sympathy.

CONSIDER

Did the Chinese people not care about what anyone thought of them? Or did they only care about a different society?

How does realizing the inferiority of those who ridicule us cause us not to be embarrassed?

Once, as he entered the room of the Frierdiker Rebbe for yechidus, the chossid Reb Zalman Gurary found him looking downcast. The Frierdiker Rebbe told him that he was upset because he did not see enough Yiddishe pride among his chassidim.

Reb Zalman responded, “How can that be? In all other circles, they speak highly of the pride of Lubavitcher chassidim.”

The Frierdiker Rebbe’s face lit up: “Is that so?”

Reb Zalman later found out that this had greatly uplifted the Rebbe’s spirits.

EMBARRASSED OF WHOM?

The Frierdiker Rebbe lamented: “In days gone by, a person would be embarrassed to say that he was acting in a ‘worldly’ manner, that he was simply following the crowd. Today, that has become an excuse. When questioned about a behavior, a person justifies himself by saying, ‘But everyone does it!’ “

On another occasion, the Frierdiker Rebbe said: “Recently, people have begun feeling embarrassed. Embarrassed – from whom? From some ‘clothing on a post’?! This embarrassment has actually caused many people to compromise their Yiddishkeit, so that they leave ‘pieces’ at the barbers and the tailors... We need not be embarrassed by them; they should be embarrassed by us.”

The Rebbe once expressed surprise as to how a Yid could possibly feel inferior, relative to the gayishe lifestyle and culture: “You are part of a nation that HaShem chose from among all other nations – and you are ashamed of them?! At the time when their ancestors were cannibals, the Yidden had received the Torah and were following its moral ways, and only later did the gayim begin following those ways! Why should a Yid be ashamed to lead the rest of the world by the light of the Torah?”

In the year 1941, one of the young chassidim served as a row in a small community. He strove to improve the observance of Yiddishkeit there, but he was met with resistance. Some of the local Yidden did not appreciate his efforts and constantly ridiculed him. This had such a strong effect on the young chossid that he even considered leaving his position.

When the Frierdiker Rebbe got word of this, he sent him a letter of encouragement in which he wrote: “I am surprised that you are being affected by the opinions of the people. You must bear in mind that ‘there will always be poor amongst us’, people who are ‘poor’ in Torah and good middos and will brazenly try to disturb good things. You must not be affected by their words, just as a person riding in a fancy carriage would ignore the shouts of crazies. Take it as a sign that you are doing good work, and the truth will prevail.”
HAVDALA IN THE NINE DAYS

What should I do about havdala during the Nine Days?

To commemorate the absence of nesachim (wine poured into a channel on the mitzbeach), we refrain from drinking wine and grape juice during the Nine Days.1

What about wine which is needed for a mitzva? On Shabbos, all poskim agree that one may drink wine, since one may not mourn openly on Shabbos.2 It seems that one may not mourn openly on Shabbos.3 However, regarding havdala there is a machlokes: R. Yosef Karo holds that it is permissible since one drinks it for a mitzva, and not for personal joy;4 the Rama holds that one should preferably give it to a child to drink.5 (Note: at a ceremony that requires wine – such as havdala, bris, and not for personal joy;6 the Rama holds that it is permissible since one drinks it for a mitzva.)

How old should the child be? On one hand, the child must be old enough that he is required by chinuch to recite brachos, while on the other hand, he cannot be mature enough to appreciate the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, for then he will be barred from drinking wine during the Nine Days. Poskim set this age bracket at 5-9 years of age. The child need only drink his own cheekful (melo lugnav – approx. 1.5 oz.), though it’s preferable that he drink a revi’is (2.9 oz.) so that he can recite a bracha acharona.6

In the absence of such a child, some prefer an older child who is under bar mitzva since he is still less obligated than an adult;7 others write that such a child is the same as an adult and the adult should therefore drink it. Another opinion says that one should recite havdala over another beverage (e.g. beer).8 It seems that the Rebbe sided with the first opinion.9 In accordance with the custom that women do not drink from havdala wine, one should not give the wine to a girl.10

REB HILLEL PARITCHER

Reb Hillel Paritcher is one of the most well-known chassidim of all time, the symbol of an oved, and a hallowed gaon and tzaddik. Reb Hillel was a chassid of the Mitteler Rebbe and the Tzemach Tzedek, and was appointed by the Mitteler Rebbe as mashpiya for the Yidden living in the colonies. Reb Hillel reared many young chassidim according to the ways of Chassidus, and even taught and wrote unique teachings of Chassidus, some of which are printed in the sefer “Pelah Harimon.” Reb Hillel passed away on the 11th of Av, 5624 (1864).

Reb Hillel travelled to Lubavitch twice a year, for Chanukah and Shavuos. One year after Chanukah, the middle of the month was approaching and the moon had not been seen. Reb Hillel mentioned his concerns of missing kiddush levana to the Tzemach Tzedek. The Rebbe assured him that there will be a levana. Reb Hillel went to farbrengen joyously with the chassidim about the Rebbe’s promise that the levana will be seen. In middle of the farbrengen someone burst in and announced, “There is a levana!” Reb Hillel saw the partially hidden levana and said, “This is not what the Rebbe meant. If the Rebbe said there will be a levana, he meant a nice one.” He returned to the farbrengen. A few hours later, a completely unobstructed levana appeared.

Reb Hillel later told the other chassidim, “Believe me, in my youth I would have been able to bear passing a month without kiddush levana, but now I would not be able to bear it.” (Reb Groinem, the mashpiya in Lubavitch, would say that if Reb Hillel said “believe me” you could believe him…)

In his later years, the Tzemach Tzedek did not say Chassidus regularly. Once, a group of new chassidim came to Lubavitch and were disappointed that the Tzemach Tzedek was not saying maamarim. They complained to the Tzemach Tzedek that they came to hear Chassidus. The Rebbe told them they should go to Reb Hillel and he would teach them Chassidus. The chassidim complained, “A kli sheini cannot cook.” (A borrowed term from Hilchos Shabbos, implying that learning Chassidus from Reb Hillel would not have the same “cooking effect” as hearing it directly from the source, the Rebbe himself.) The Rebbe replied, “But it is yad soledes bo.” (Another borrowed term implying that the Chassidus of Reb Hillel was still boiling hot and would have an effect.)

Reb Hillel taught them the beginning of Tanya, and he prefaced it by saying, “Tanya discusses a Beinoni and a Tzaddik. A Beinoni is one who is of this world since he is constantly challenged by the world around him. A Tzaddik is divested from this world (he is higher than this world and it has no affect on him). A Rebbe, however, is a greater level. He is divested from this world, yet is able to be in the world at the same time (he can live an ordinary lifestyle, though in truth he is totally above it all).”

CHAVRUSA ARRANGEMENT

An American bochur went into yechidus in Cheshvan 5711 (1950), and told the Rebbe in plain English that he wants to have a connection with him. The Rebbe answered him that he should begin with the basics: to learn Chumash with Rashi and some Ein Yaakov.

The Rebbe then suggested, “Set up a chavrusa with [the bochur] Elie Gross in the sichos of my father-in-law. This will help you know the Rebbe, and understand the darkei hachassidim. You could tell Elie that I suggested it.

“When you feel you want to progress to the next level, come in again and I will direct you. But there is no rush.”

Sometime later, this bochur and Elie were sitting in the zal, engaged in their Sefer Hashchos study. Suddenly, the Rebbe walked in and noticed them. The Rebbe approached, peered into the learning material, and awarded them with a heartwarming smile.