PALPABLE EXCITEMENT

The surging crowd pressed close to the table at which the Rebbe Rashab was seated. It was Simchas Torah of 5638 (1918), the Rebbe was farbrengen, and everyone wished to hear his words. The table, no longer able to bear the mounting pressure, collapsed.

Not wishing to disturb the Rebbe’s talk, the chassidim carefully lifted the splintered table piece by piece, and passed it hand over hand out of the room. Only when he concluded his talk did the Rebbe notice what had happened. He exclaimed in surprise: “Where is the table?”

“It will tell you a story,” he said. “Reb Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev had concluded his study of schetita and was preparing to slaughter his first hen. He took the bird in his left hand, and was preparing to carry the bag containing his tefillin, he was carrying the bag containing his tefillin, he was fire by an intense feeling of simcha shel mitzvah, like a child who has just been handed a toy. He jumped up and ran toward the messenger with all his strength.

The chassidisher tzaddik, Reb Yoel Kahan, was now the highest level of his neshama – the yechida – is now shining.” He added that although every Yid mayim shelanu.

WITH LOVE

The Torah speaks of four sons at the Seder, among them a rasha who asks, “What is this avoda for you?” The Talmud Yerushalmi interprets this to mean, “What is all this trouble that you are making us do every year?”

The Frierdiker Rebbe explains that the rasha may even fulfill all the laws of Pesach, yet he does them unwillingly, as a bother and a load. He thereby excludes himself from all the other Yidden who do all the mitzvos of Pesach and its preparations out of love.

CONSIDER

Does the excitement while doing a mitzvah result from fulfilling the will of HaShem or from the meaning of the particular mitzvah?

Why is he called a rasha for considering mitzvos to be a bother? What should he do if he's just not excited?

The Baal Shem Tov taught:

If a person is excited about doing a mitzvah, he should not let his yetzer hara convince him that fulfilling it will lead him to pride. Instead he should urge himself to perform it exuberantly, and this will help him do the mitzvah without personal interest. As Chazal assure us, “Mitoch shelo lishmah, ba lishmah” – by doing a mitzvah for the wrong motivation one will come to do it for its own good sake.

INEXTINGUISHABLE LOVE

In the course of the midday Sukkos meal, Reb Shmuel Abba of Zichlin was in the middle of delivering a learned discourse on the secret teachings of the Torah, when suddenly the sukka was drenched by a furious cloudburst. The tzaddik did not interrupt his train of thought. On the contrary, he became more and more inflamed by the sheer ecstasy of the holy words, until the sukka was almost covered with water.

Suddenly, he rose from his chair and cried out the words from Shir HaShirim that testify to the steadfastness of Bnei Yisroel's love of their Maker: Mayim rabim lo yuchlu lechabos es ha'ahava – “Turbulent waters will not be able to extinguish the love!”

At once the rain ceased. The clouds dispersed, and the sun shone again on the sukka of the tzaddik.

Every year before Pesach, the bochurim in Lubavitch would bake matzos in shifts. Each shift included ten bochurim who had the job of preparing the dough and overseeing the rolling and the baking of the matzos. For the drawing of mayim shelanu the entire group would go, for they all wanted to take part in the mitzvah.

Once, watching from his window, the Rebbe Rashab saw the group of Shimshon Vitebsker going to draw mayim shelanu. Shimshon went with such simcha shel mitzva that he sang a chassidisher niggun as he danced all the way to the river and back. The Rebbe called over his son, the Frierdiker Rebbe, and pointed this out to him, saying, “The highest level of his neshama – the yechida – is now shining.” He added that although every Yid has this level, the yechida of this bochur was now glowing because of his excitement as he drew and carried the mayim shelanu.

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MONEY CARDS ON SHABBOS

May I distribute printed “dollars” at a children’s program on Shabbos?

Chazal prohibited the verbal act of buying, selling or renting any object on Shabbos, even without mentioning a price and no transfer of money. Any transaction using wording that implies purchase or rental is prohibited. If one must obtain food for Shabbos from another person, he should not say “Sell me this-and-this,” but “Give me...” and then pay for it after Shabbos. The prohibitions related to acquisitions and business dealings on Shabbos are treated more strictly than other Rabbinic prohibitions because they are sourced in pesukim from Nach (divrei kabbalah).2

In areas where there is no issue of carrying, it is permissible to take food from a store on Shabbos (based on a prearrangement for compensation before or after Shabbos) as long as one doesn’t specify or measure out a specific measurement nor mention a specific price to the store owner (i.e. one may take a loaf of bread, but not verbalize that he owes $3 for it.). Similarly, the store owner may not record the amount of money owed by the purchaser with any form of system (e.g. cards, paper clips, although these systems are allowed for mitzva purposes such as keeping track of donations for aliyos). All he can do is make a reminder for who took something.4

One may purchase before Shabbos vouchers for food and then present them on Shabbos to the store owner to receive the food. Similarly, one may purchase a meal plan in a kosher restaurant and present the voucher on Shabbos to show that he is entitled to a Shabbos meal here. These cards or vouchers serve merely as a sign that he is entitled to certain things and are not considered money.5

The vouchers may not have monetary value written on them, or have a set monetary value (e.g. $5) that is then multiplied by the amount of vouchers he has. Instead, there should be a different type of voucher corresponding to each specific food or meal plan. The optimal method is to employ color coding instead of text so that it is dissimilar to business documents or notes (which are forbidden to be read on Shabbos).6

Distributing prize coupons at a mitzva-related program on Shabbos can be allowed since it is for the purpose of a mitzva. (Optimally they should be color coded, but allowed b’devea even with text or number of points.)

Making a calculation to determine who should receive which prize, just like any other calculation, is generally prohibited under minhag cheftsecha, (especially since there is also concern that he may come to decide to use for personal reasons).7

In conclusion, one may distribute prize cards by a children’s program for Torah and mitzvos purposes, and then tally who has the most points. This is permitted in order to encourage the children to do the mitzva (say teh illim or pesukim etc.).

A BALABOS CANNOT TELL RABNONIM WHAT TO DO

On Rosh Chodesh Iyar 5749 (1989), Vaad Rabbonei Chabad of Eretz Yisroel issued a psak din regarding a dispute between two mosdos. One side felt wronged, and turned to the mazkirus, who in turn instructed that the psak be put on hold.

A few hours later (Friday, 7 Iyar 5749), the Rebbe called in the secretaries and scolded them.

“He’s a balabos (layman), regardless who and where he is, has no right to withhold a psak din of rabbonim. This is true for every Yid, especially here!”

“It is unheard of that an askonim (communal activists) tell the rabbonim what to do. If they do so, they are opposing the rabbonim and opposing Torah.

“If someone takes issue with a psak, he could ask for a reasoning and await a response. But in the meantime, he must follow the psak.”

The Rebbe turned to one mazkir and asked him to telephone the rabbonim and clarify the matter. “The news is already out, so people will have what to talk about in shul on Shabbos. It is therefore urgent!”

(Hashkuras issue 1142)