

The Weekly *Farbrenge*


MERKAZ ANASH
 מרכז אנאש
 693 • בראשית תשפ"ג • לחמן ישמעו
 EDITOR - RABBI SHIMON HELLINGER

WORKING THE WORLD (I)

GROWING FURTHER

On Simchas Torah in the year תרמ"ח (1887), when the Rebbe Rashab was honored with the first *hakafa*, he said that he was not yet ready. He called over a certain wholesaler and asked him to explain the nature of his business. The chossid explained that he brought merchandise from the big city and distributed it to the small retailers, and those who paid for the goods they had been given the previous time received a new batch on credit.

Hearing this, the Rebbe said, "After we have paid up our bill with the *avoda* of *chodesh* Elul, Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkos, *Simchas Beis HaShoeiva* and *Shemini Atzeres*, we can now go to *hakafos* and get new merchandise on *credit*." (The word *hakafa* also means credit.)

However, at the next year's *hakafos* the Rebbe Rashab added: "When a poor storekeeper accepts merchandise on credit, he is glad to be trusted, but his main concern is to profit. On Simchas Torah we rejoice about the credit – that is, the *kochos* we are given on trust – but the real rejoicing comes when we succeed in paying back the debt for the 'merchandise,' when we utilize what we have received for Torah and *mitzvos*."

(סה"ש תש"ה ע' 57, אנ"ק מוהר"י צ"ח ט"ע ש)

The Frierdiker Rebbe related: After the *seuda* on Simchas Torah, it was the *minhag* of my father, the Rebbe Rashab, to announce: "Now is the time for *veYaakov halach ledarko* ('and Yaakov took to the road'). After the *avoda* of Tishrei, *Yidden* hit the road and take the path of Torah and *mitzvos* throughout the entire year.

(אנ"ק מוהר"י צ"ח ט"ע קצ"ד)

The Frierdiker Rebbe said that at the annual fair we acquire merchandise, and when we go home we unpack it and use it throughout the whole year as needed. Similarly, during the month of Tishrei, every *Yid* is given *ruchniusdike* merchandise to provide for his needs during the whole year. However, one must open the packages, and do with the merchandise whatever is needed. It must be unpacked immediately, for otherwise it may fall apart or dry out, and sometimes the mice will

be impatient (*veln arein-chapn*) and nibble it...

(סה"ש תש"ז ע' 74, אנ"ק ח"ד ע' י"ח, לקו"ש ח"כ ע' 556)

The Rebbe explained: After the month of Tishrei, the *avoda* required is to draw *Yiddishkeit* and *kedusha* into the mundane activities of the year. All our activities, even eating, drinking and business, should be done in a *Yiddishe* way – eating with a *beracha*, thanking *HaShem* for the food, and doing business honestly, without intruding on another's livelihood.

(לקו"ש ח"ט ע' VII)

CONSIDER

What does it mean to “unpack” the *ruchniusdike* merchandise? And what does it mean that otherwise it will “fall apart,” “dry out” or “mice will nibble it”? Why did *HaShem* make us earn a livelihood through physical work: To elevate the world or to elicit a greater love for *Him*?

TAKING TO THE ROAD

A chossid who earned his *parnasa* by managing a tavern traveled to visit the *tzaddik*, Reb Arye Leib, better known as the Shpoler Zeide, to pour out his heart. He was afraid that his constant contact with the coarse customers who frequented his tavern might dull his spiritual sensitivity.

The Shpoler Zeide smiled and said, "It seems that you want to fulfill your purpose as a *Yid* by being presented with a sack full of gold, being seated in a clean and splendid palace, dressed in silken garments with a *shtreimel* on your head, and being surrounded by shelves filled with holy *sefarim*..., and then you will be able to serve *HaShem* by *davening*

and studying Torah with a clear, pure mind. But if *HaShem* wants individuals to serve Him without any distractions, for that He has countless myriads of *malochim!* The real delight that He finds in this world comes from those who are surrounded by obstacles and hardships and feel that they are confined in a gutter – and despite this they think about *HaShem* and anxiously yearn for the moment when they will be able to say just a few words to Him. No *malach* can experience such a longing!"

The Shpoler Zeide concluded, "Don't complain about your livelihood. On the contrary, thank *HaShem* for having given you the privilege of serving Him in this manner!"

(סיפורי חסידים זיין מועדים ע' 380)

Every *Shabbos*, during *seuda shlishis*, the chassidim of Reb Yitzchak Aizik of Zhidachov would sit in awed silence as the *tzaddik* sang moving *niggunim* and expounded lofty *divrei Torah*. So deeply were they engulfed by a profound yearning for *teshuva* and *ruchniyus*, that the morning following one such *Shabbos*, none of the visiting businessmen wanted to leave. It did not even occur to them that they should now be returning to their mundane affairs.

Not knowing this, the *tzaddik* asked his sons why no one had yet left. They went to investigate, and were told, "Only yesterday our Rebbe made all worldly things so unworthy in our eyes, that we are ashamed to face him with our problems about our farm animals and our businesses."

Hearing this, the *tzaddik* smiled and related that there had been a similar occurrence with the *tzaddik*, Reb Menachem Mendel of Riminov, who had then told his chassidim, "*Shabbos* is one thing; weekdays are something different. Let the businessmen return to their homes and engage honestly in their commerce."

Reb Yitzchak Aizik went on to quote the words of *Tehillim*: "The heavens belong to *HaShem*, but the earth He has given to man," that is, to labor. Hearing his message, each chassid folded up his *tallis*, packed his bags, and returned home to his daily affairs.

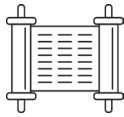
(סיפורי חסידים זיין מועדים ע' 166)


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FULFILLING PLEDGES

How soon after making a pledge am I obligated to pay it?

The posuk in Koheles teaches us that one should pay his tzedaka pledges (nedarim) without delay, and if not, it would be better not to pledge.1 The Gemara describes harsh punishments for one who does not keep his tzedaka commitments.2 It is brought in Sefer Chassidim that when one makes a neder to tzedaka, a malach is created who stands and waits for its fulfillment.3

When one would take a neder to bring a korbon, one would transgress a mitzvas aseif if he doesn't bring it at the first yom tov that passes. Once three regalim have passed, he transgresses a lav of "bal t'acher" (do not delay).

The Gemara says that one who delays a tzedaka pledge transgresses immediately since poor people are always available to receive it.4 Yet, Rishonim debate how to interpret this Gemara:

The Rashba holds that tzedaka is just like korbanos, and the lav is only transgressed once three regalim have passed. The Gemara just means that the mitzvas aseif is transgressed right away. The Ran, however, learns that one transgresses the lav as well if poor people are available to accept the tzedaka. The Rambam adds that even if no poor people are available at the moment, one should set aside the money for when they come. This is the ruling in Shulchan Aruch.5

When the neder was not pledged directly to the poor but to a tzedaka fund (as in common today), the Rama writes that it's sufficient to inform the gabbai that he can come get the money, and until he is ready to distribute the tzedaka and asks him for the money, one does not transgress.6

The obligation to pay tzedaka pledges and the prohibition to delay it applies also to pledges for the upkeep and repair of a shul. Therefore, one should set aside money right away so as not to transgress. Some poskim suggest making a stipulation along with the pledge that it shouldn't be subject to the prohibition of "bal t'acher."78

The Maharai Isserlin, also known as the "Terumas Hadeshin," would not break his fast on motzaei Yom Kippur until he paid up all of his obligations.9

1. קהלת פ"ה פ"ג-ד'. 2. ראה גמ' נדרים דף ט' ע"א ושבת סק"ה. וראה ערוה"ש שם ס"א. 3. סק"ה. 4. רמ"א יו"ד סי' רנ"ז ס"ג. ש"ך שם סק"ה. 5. ראה ספר המצוות לרמב"ם ל"ת קנ"ו. 6. דרך אמונה פ"ח סק"א. וראה יד מלכים ע' ל"ג. 7. ספר הדרת קדוש ע"ט. 8. רמב"ם מתנות עניים פ"ח ה"א. 9. ספר הדרת קדוש ע"ט.

לע"נ מרת ציפא אסתר בת ר' שלום דובער ע"ה



R. CHAIM YAAKOV RASHAL

R. Chaim Yaakov Rashal was born in Velizh, and later lived in Riga. He was a chossid of the Rebbe Maharash, and after the histalkus, when the Rebbe Rashab refused to officially accept the nesius, he travelled to Harav Yitzchak Dov Ber (Maharid) of Liadi. When the Rebbe Rashab later accepting the nesius in Lubavitch, R. Yaakov would travel to both Liadi and Lubavitch, and he was considered a mekushar (staunch follower) of the Rebbe Rashab.

R. Yaakov combined both Torah greatness and material wealth. A relative of the famous Berlin family of gevirim, R. Yaakov was a wealthy businessman himself, and was involved in the Rebbe Rashab's communal askanus. He was a generous baal tzedakah, and was a key benefactor of R. Chaim Chizkiyah Medini, author of the Sdei Chemed.

A great talmid chacham, R. Yaakov published chidushim in various Torah journals, and some of his chidushim are quoted in the Sdei Chemed. His important collection of kisvei yad (ancient manuscripts) is held today at the University of Manchester.

In 5658, the maskilim in Russia began advocating for the abolition of metzitza b'peh, which Halacha mandates after a bris milah. Arguing that it constituted a health risk to the babies, the maskilim attempted to have it abolished completely, or for it to be done through new methods - using a sponge or a tube.

R. Chaim Yaakov Rashal was one of the leading figures of the Chareidi camp opposing this change to tradition. He wrote articles in newspapers and journals responding to the anti-metzitza activists, and he corresponded with Rabbonim from around the world on the subject.

A large kuntres written by R. Chaim Yaakov was published together with the Sdei Chemed's Kuntres Hametzitza in 5662. In his kuntres, R. Chaim Yaakov goes through all of the relevant Halachic sources with tremendous bekius to show that metzitza is an integral element of bris milah, and that it should be done specifically in the traditional method. The opponents of metzitza b'peh had quoted teshuvos from some Rabbonim permitting the use of a suction tube for metzitza, but R. Chaim Yaakov showed that this was only allowed in extenuating circumstances, and cannot be the practice lechatchila.

R. Chaim Yaakov also carefully went through the relevant medical material to prove that traditional metzitza b'peh does not pose any health risk if done properly by healthy mohalim. His kuntres is one of the most important works on the subject and is quoted and discussed by all subsequent poskim dealing with the topic.

As is well known, the Rebbe Rashab had various unique practices in blowing shofar, and R. Yaakov Landau, who served as a rov in the Rebbe Rashab's home, expressed his wonder about them to R. Yaakov Rashal. R. Yaakov replied, "What difference does it make to you? The Rebbe is blowing so it's good, and to imitate the Rebbe is not our way."

In response to this anecdote, the Rebbe confirmed R. Yaakov Rashal's sentiment regarding the Rebbe's personal practices. However, those practices which are being motzi other listeners (such as the format of the shevarim), is something that others can learn from.

(אגרות קודש ח"כ ע' לט ובשו"ג)

A Moment with The Rebbe



THE SOUL OF HEALING

Between the sichos at the 5737 (1976) Simchas Torah farbrengen, the Rebbe spoke with Dr. Mordechai Shani, the director of the Sheba Medical Center, and invited him to a yechidus after yom tov.

At the yechidus, the Rebbe discussed the place of the soul as the source of a human being's strength. The stronger a person's connection is to his soul, the better he can cope with life. "Indeed," said the Rebbe, "the mitzva of bikur cholim (visiting the sick) is in order to help the sick person strengthen that connection to his soul."

The Rebbe then laid out a revolutionary approach to healing. "Every person has the responsibility to take care of their own health," the Rebbe said.

"Yes, doctors have a role to play, but the primary responsibility lies with the individual. Give a person the best doctor in the world, but someone who does not take care of himself, does not eat well, sleep enough, or exercise enough will impair his health."

When Dr. Shani repeats the Rebbe's words, he hardly conceals his excitement, "Today there is a push in medicine toward 'patient empowerment,' where we try to convince people that they must take responsibility for their health and not just rely on doctors. The Rebbe was speaking to me about this thirty years ago! Back then, when no one was thinking about the issue."