

The Weekly Farbrengens



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EDITOR - RABBI SHIMON HELLINGER

A DISTINCT NATION

LIVING DISTINCT

The Torah instructs us to be holy nation, living distinct from the nations that surround us. We must not mingle with them or mimic their ways for we may become influenced by their lifestyles. Instead we should focus on our unique mission of Torah and mitzvos.

(ס' החינוך מצוה רסב)

At the age of fourteen, Reb Boruch, the Alter Rebbe's father, lost his parents. He traveled from town to town for three years until he arrived in Liozna, where he was employed to guard an orchard that two Yidden held on lease from the local *poritz*. Young Boruch enjoyed the peace and quiet and would spend his time *davening* and *learning*, without anyone detecting his greatness in Torah and *avoda*. At harvest time he would help his employers, Reb Avraham and Reb Ezriel, and their families and other workers who would gather and pack the fruits. The workers, including the *goyim*, were impressed by him, for he was well-built, handsome, had a sweet voice and spoke a fluent Polish.

One day, the *poritz* visited the orchard with his family and, noticing Baruch's capabilities, engaged him in a discussion. They were amazed to hear his rich language. Baruch felt very uncomfortable with all the attention he was receiving. The next day, the *poritz* and his family returned specifically to speak with him, and after their discussion, invited him to visit their estate. However, Boruch declined their invitation.

One evening, while alone in the orchard, Boruch was unexpectedly visited by the son of the *poritz*. "Good evening," said the young visitor. "My father would like to invite you to spend the night with us, for we know how lonely it is out here."

Boruch knew that this visit would not bring good results, so he told him that he could not leave the orchard unattended. The visitor left but returned shortly with two men accompanied by huge watch dogs, saying, "Here, they'll take care of the job while you're gone."

Boruch was stuck. Personally, he had no qualms refusing the offer of the *poritz*, but he knew that a refusal could cause the *poritz* to pour out his wrath on the Yidden of Liozna. He therefore decided to accept the invitation, but resolved not display any fear and to present himself with Yiddish pride, in the spirit of the Torah.

He was welcomed at the castle with great friendship,

which greatly displeased him, and he took the first opportunity to show his confidence by refusing to remove his hat. He explained in fluent Polish that a Yid is required to constantly feel *HaShem's* presence and hence cannot go bareheaded. The *poritz* and his family were deeply impressed by the self-assurance and boldness of a simple Yiddish watchman, especially since they were used to seeing Yidden trembling and behaving subserviently. In fact, the *poritz* showed such respect for his young guest that he covered his own head with his hat. Boruch entered into a deep discussion about the value of Yiddish *minhagim*, and emphasized the unfairness of using one's supremacy to interfere with another's beliefs and way of life. He displayed his wisdom and knowledge and explained many *psukim* and *maamarei Chazal*, all in fluent Polish, meanwhile contrasting the two worlds – the *goyishe* world of materialism and the Yiddish world of *ruchniyus*.

CONSIDER

*Why was Reb Boruch
concerned about interacting
with the poritz and his family?
Did he really think that he
would be influenced?*

*Why will living distinctly
create a kidush HaShem and
not the opposite?*

The *poritz* thirstily drank all that Baruch said, but his children were unhappy with the direction the conversation had taken; they preferred lighter talk, so they decided to visit the orchard themselves the following day, just to schmooze. Foreseeing the possible danger in this friendship, Baruch was vexed, and tried to think of a solution to get out of it. Meanwhile, he was invited to the dining-room that had been set up with dozens of delicacies, and although the food was kosher, he decided to eat nothing in order not to strengthen their relationship. Fortunately, he

did not need to excuse himself, for at that moment the youngest child of the *poritz* burnt himself with hot water, and the whole family ran to help with the emergency. Baruch took the opportunity to slip away and return to the orchard. That night he could not sleep. What would he do if the children of the *poritz* came the next day to speak with him?

All through the night he said *Tehillim* with tears. The next day he heard that the child had died, but he still felt restless, knowing that the other children of the *poritz* were likely to come despite the tragedy. He decided to unburden himself to Reb Avraham and tell him of his decision to leave the job. Reb Avraham accepted his request and that night he and Reb Ezriel took over the task of guarding the orchard. It transpired that Baruch's suspicions were justified, for later that evening the son and daughter of the *poritz* came to the orchard, and when they heard that he was no longer there, they went home disappointed. As for Baruch, he received his wages from the partners and was now able to return to the *beis midrash* to immerse himself in *davening* and *learning*.

(ספר הזכרונות מוהרי"צ ח"א פ' יא-יג)

A NATION APART

The Baal Shem Tov once went to the *mikveh* in a place that was populated by non-Jewish people. On his way back, after *toiveling*, he was concerned that a *goy* may touch him. While he was walking, he overheard one gentile tell another, "Be careful not to touch this contaminated Jew."

His grandson, the author of *Degel Machaneh Ephraim* explained that this is the meaning of the *possuk*, "*Hein am l'vadad yishkon*" – "They are a nation that dwells apart." The Yidden do not mingle with the *goyim* because (as that *possuk* continues), "*uvagoyim lo yischashov*" – "they are not counted among the nations," that is to say, the Yidden are not esteemed in the eyes of the *goyim*. And paradoxically, this is for the Yid's benefit!

(על התורה ועל העבודה)

On numerous occasions the Rebbe emphasized that standing apart from the *goyim* in all areas of conduct will not cause the *goyim* to dislike the Yidden (as some Yidden over history had believed); on the contrary, it will elicit their respect and admiration, seeing how the Yidden live distinct and true to their tradition.

(לדוגמא: ת"מ יושבי ח"ה ע' 2994)



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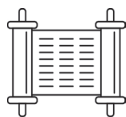
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MEZUZAH ON A WALK-IN CLOSET

Does a walk-in closet need a mezuzah?

The mitzva of mezuzah applies to each doorway in one's home that leads to a room used for dwelling ("bayis"). One of the criteria for this halachic status is a minimum area of four-by-four *amos*, which the Rosh explains as a square of four-by-four.

The Rambam adds the obligation applies even if the room is rectangular or round, and this is quoted in Shulchan Aruch.¹ Some understand the Rambam to include rooms of other proportions, even if narrower than four *amos*, provided the total area equals 16 square *amos* (e.g., a rectangle of two by six *amos*, so long as it's one area, not projections or L-shaped extensions).²

However, others question this understanding of the Rambam, explaining that all he meant was that the room need not be a perfect square, as long as it can hold a square of four-by-four *amos*.³ In Hilchos Eruvin, the Alter Rebbe rules that an actual square of four-by-four *amos* is necessary (and refers to Hilchos Mezuzah).⁴

Usable shelf space is included in the measured area, but unusable space taken up by a furnace or boiler, for instance, needn't be counted.⁵

While the Shulchan Aruch exempts rooms smaller than the *shiur*, some *acharonim* argue this applies only to lived-in rooms that aren't functional below minimum size. Closets, however, serve their purpose regardless of size and remain obligated.⁶

Rabbi Akiva Eiger argues that while the entrance to a small walk-in closet is exempt, it is nevertheless obligated as an entrance back into the bedroom. Thus, he rules, a mezuzah should be placed on the right side going from the closet to the room.⁷

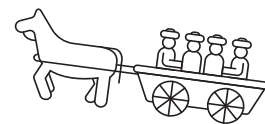
In practice, one is not obligated to place a mezuzah on a walk-in closet less than the *shiur*, yet there is room to be *mehader* to place one on the right side exiting the closet.⁸

Even the *hiddur* applies only when normal use requires fully entering the room. But if the closet's use involves only reaching in, it's definitely not considered an "entrance" (even if one occasionally enters to clean or retrieve dropped items).

1. יו"ד סי' רפ"ו סי' ג.
2. ש"ך יו"ד סי' רפ"ו כ"ג.
3. ט"ז סי' תרל"ד סק"ב.
4. שו"ע א"ח סי' שס"ו ס"ה.
5. ובשו"ג שם.
6. ראה הדיון בחובת הד"ר פ"ד הע' כב.
7. פת"ש סי' רפ"ו סק"א בשם ס'.
8. פסק הרב העלער שליט"א.

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

Our Heroes



R. MENACHEM TZVI RIVKIN

R. Menachem Tzvi Rivkin (5629-5708) was a chossid of the Rebbe Rashab and the Frierdiker Rebbe. Born in Plisa, near Vilna, R. Menachem Tzvi was the son-in-law of R. Eliyahu Leib Itigina of Kublich, who was a son-in-law of the chossid R. Shlomo of Chashnik. He served as Rov of Babinovich, a town near Lubavitch, and World War I forced him to move to Vilna, where served as a Rov for Anash and founded the local branch of Tomchei Temimim.

In 5683, R. Menachem Tzvi was appointed as a Rov in Manchester, and he was a leading Chabad figure in England. Some of R. Menachem Tzvi's *chidushim* are included in his father in law's sefer *Lev Eliyahu*, and other material remains in manuscript.

R. Menachem Tzvi's parents had great trouble with children, as all of their previous children died when they were young. His father, R. Yechiel Nosson, travelled to the Rebbe Maharash for a bracha, and the Rebbe gave him a silver earring that he should place on the child's ear as a *segula*. When the boy was born, they applied the earring to his right ear, and he wore it all his years as a Rov, until his passing at 79 years old.

R. Yitzchok Dubov, who succeeded him in Manchester, described him:

R. Menachem Tzvi was incredibly fluent in

Shas, in Navi (which he reviewed daily after davening), and he learned much Chassidus. He would daven at length with nigunim and tears from the depth of his heart, finishing at 2:00 PM every day, aside from Monday and Thursday when he sat on the Beis Din. He was particular to say the daily Tehillim with the *minyan* according to the instruction of the Frierdiker Rebbe, even though he personally was still before Shema (which he would recite in *tefillin*).

(כפר חב"ד גל' 915 ע' 54)

When R. Menachem Tzvi took up the *rabbonus* in Manchester, England, the community leaders demanded that he replace his Russian *kasket* with the customary English top hat. He so despised the modern style that he considered leaving the position over the issue, but the Frierdiker Rebbe instructed him to wear the hat. Now that it was an instruction from the Rebbe, he kept the hat on his head whenever he could.

One day in 5741, during the Nazi Blitz on England, R. Menachem Tzvi sat at home learning, when a bomb hit his home, causing part of the building to collapse. The door frame of his room was blasted off the wall and it landed on him. His hard top hat was crushed, but he was spared.

(כפר חב"ד גל' 974)

A Moment with The Rebbe

לזכר נשמת מרת חוה לאה בת ר' שמשון הכהן ע"ה



FOR THE ARABS

In previous generations, spreading *emuna* amongst the nations would have been dangerous, and therefore disseminating the Sheva Mitzvos Bnei Noach was not done. But in today's age, the Rebbe taught, there is no danger, and it is often seen positively, that we are caring for all nations. Therefore, we have a responsibility to reach out to all our non-Jewish business contacts, neighbors and fellow citizens to make them aware of their *mitzvos*.

"At the end of the Shavuot 5747 farbrengen," relates Reb Menachem Mendel Gluckowsky, "at *kos shel bracha*, after I received some wine, the Rebbe called me back and, with a smile on his face, handed me a bottle of *maskhe* and said, 'This is for the Arabs.'"

Puzzled, I looked at Rabbi Groner, the Rebbe's mazkir. But Rabbi Groner said nothing, and the Rebbe just continued smiling.

When I returned to Eretz Yisroel, I began to help Rabbi Yossi Gerlitzky of Tel Aviv, who was in the midst of a secret project of spreading the Sheva Mitzvos Bnei Noach. On the Rebbe's directive, Rabbi Gerlitzky had them translated into Arabic, and with the permission of the head of Arab education, was distributing them to fourth and fifth graders in the Arabic schools. Subsequently the project expanded, and I was involved in distributing literature to an Arabic school in Be'er Sheva and, eventually, all over Eretz Yisroel.