

Fascinating INSIGHTS

י"ט אלול תשפ"א
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Quitting Quandary

On the morning R' Dessler decided to quit smoking he called a student into his office and told him, “I have come to realize that smoking is unhealthy. So as of today I have stopped.” After that student left, he called in another student telling him the same thing. This repeated itself five times until a boy told R' Dessler that the word spread that the Mashgiach (referring to R' Dessler) had quit smoking and there is therefore no need to call any more students. R' Dessler smiled and said, “I’m not calling in each of you to inform you. I’m doing this in

order to make it impossible for me to ever start again. The next time I have an urge to break my resolution, I will think ‘I called many students and told them that I would quit smoking. How humiliating will it be if I start again?’”

We can apply this tactic if we desire to lose weight, start a learning seder, exercising and the like. Bind yourself to what you want to do by telling others of your plan.

In this way we can grasp בלב איש ישיהנה, when there is a worry in one’s heart, he should tell it to others.¹ This can be interpreted as if you have a concern and therefore want to make a resolution, then tell it to others so you will then be bound by it.

Swim and Sway

The analogy is given of one who is drowning in the sea where as long as his head is above water, he will survive. The same is with פרנסה, livelihood, which is associated with the sea,² as the worries and burdens are comparable to the waves of the sea. We need to guard and lift our heads above water.

In this fashion, the Moditzer Rebbe explains כי תשא also means to lift. It can therefore be understood that we need to raise our minds to the פקודי ה', orders of Hashem, so that even if we are busy with פרנסה, our head isn’t.³ That is, our thoughts are with Hashem. This is just as it says יגיע כפיך כי תאכל, the labor of your hands, as it doesn’t say ראש, the head.⁴ Once we do this we can follow the dictum גופא אזיל, the body will follow the head.⁵

The Steipler⁶ once interrupted his learning in order to fix an appliance although his grandson offered

¹ Yoma 75a.

² As it says (Pesachim 118a) סוף קשין מזונותיו...סוף, man’s sustenance is as difficult as the splitting of the סוף.

³ Divrei Yisrael, Shemos 30:12. See Tehillim 19:9. R’ Yechezkal of Kuzmir explained גדול הנהגה מיגיע כפו יותר מירא שמים (Brachos 8a)- one who works with his hands while his mind is with Hashem is greater than a ירא שמים.

⁴ Tehillim 128:2. There are those that even when they work their mind is on spirituality while there are those that even when they are learning their mind is on work. We must realize that we are where our thoughts are!

⁵ Eruvin 41a

⁶ In 1965, Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski visited Bnei Brak and requested that he be permitted to take a picture of R’ Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky, the Steipler Gaon. After sharing a story about how R’ Meir Shapiro of Lublin convinced R’ Yosef Rosen, the Rogatchover Gaon, to allow him to take a picture so that future generations would know what “a true Jew should look like,” the Steipler consented and let a picture be taken. Incidentally, the relationship that R’ Dr. Abraham Twerski had with the Steipler came about due to the following. R’ Twerski’s grandfather was the Rebbe in the city of Hornostaiopil where the Steipler’s childless parents lived. The Rebbe gave them a bracha to have children, and the Steipler was born as a result of that

to fix it. The Steipler refused the offer since while he fixes it, he can think in learning whereas the Steipler was afraid if his grandson would interrupt his learning to fix it, he wouldn't be able to think in learning while fixing.⁷

We are taught that one is obligated to teach his son a *אומנות*, craft and some say he is obligated even to teach him how to swim in water.⁸ The Avnei Nazer⁹ (1838-1910) explains that just as when one swims although his body is in the water his head isn't, the same should be with *פרנסה*. We need to have proper Emuna that all our business dealings are from Hashem with exact precision.

Horror or Happiness

It says *אלול, ראש אריה* שאג מי לא ירא, when the lion roars who is not scared.¹⁰ Encoded in the term *אריה* is

bracha. This led to the forging of the relationship between these two great people.

⁷ Although the following may not apply to us, it is still noteworthy. We know that if a father sees his son learning Torah, the father will do what he can to prevent any disturbance. R' Yitzchak Zev Soleveitchik, known as the Griz, would daven Mincha a different time every day, which as a result would also change his eating time. This disturbed his son, R' Dovid Soleveitchik, who would serve his father food. R' Dovid approached his father about this since it disturbed his learning every day due to the lack of a consistent schedule. The Griz told his son that his father, R' Chaim Soleveitchik, would send him on all sorts of errands when he was young. He didn't let him learn undisturbed. This was in spite of the fact that it was errands that his father could easily send other people to do. Why did he do this? In order to train the young R' Yitzchak Zev to learn Torah even while engaged in other activities.

⁸ Kidushin 29a.

⁹ He was a descendent of the Rema and the Shach. The Avnei Nazer's health was weak and frail from his childhood and he especially suffered from lung problems. Once when he fell dangerously ill, the doctors forbade him from exerting his mind in Torah study. But the Kotzker Rebbe gave him a blessing for longevity, which was fulfilled as he lived until the age of 71. In his teens, he became a close student of the Kotzker Rebbe, who chose him as his son-in-law when he married in 1853. They resided in Kotzk for seven years, until the Kotzker Rebbe's death. During that time, it was known that the Avnei Nazer slept only two hours each day and dedicated the rest of his waking hours to Torah learning. His only son (he also had one daughter)- the Shem Mishmuel- was born in Kotzk in 1857. He later became a Chassid of the Chidushai Harim (his uncle) and R' Chanoch of Alexander. The Avnei Nazer was a Rav, an Av Beis Din as well as founding a Yeshiva. In his introduction to his Sefer- Iglai Tal- he noted that he dedicated all his energies to teaching Torah to his students, leaving the publication of his Chidushim to his old age. When R' Chanoch of Alexander died in 1870, the Avnei Nazer agreed to serve as a Rebbe on the condition that his regular Shiurim and learning schedule wouldn't be interrupted. He was one of the era's leading Poskim. While others relied on his ruling completely, in some cases he himself wrote that one shouldn't rely on his ruling unless another Posek was found who ruled the same way. His *שו"ת אבני נזר* was published posthumously in 7 volumes by his son and grandson. The lectures he delivered on Shabbos were printed after the Holocaust in the Sefer Naos Deshe together with the Torah thoughts of his successors.

¹⁰ Amos 3:8. *Shelah, Mesachta Rosh Hashana*. The term *ימים נוראים* simple means Awesome Days, referring to Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. An alternate explanation is that it is days of

הושענה רבה, *יום כפור*, *השנה*, as these are the days of the lion. Who is not scared during these days of *אלול* and *תשרי*. An allusion to this is *את א' אלקיך תירא* as *את* refers to *אלול* and *תשרי*. These are days specifically of *יראה*.

The Gemara¹² tells us that on Rosh Hashana נפקדה Sarah, Rachel and Chana were remembered by Hashem and it was decreed they would have children. This means on Rosh Hashana we have the qualities of their offspring—Yitzchak, Yosef and Shmuel—that of *יראה*.

Where do we see that Yitzchak, Yosef and Shmuel are associated with *יראה*? Yitzchak: Yitzchak's trait is that of *דין*, *יראה*. Yosef: We are taught in the same Gemara where it says נפקדה שרה רחל וחנה that Yosef was released from prison on Rosh Hashana מלכות, kingship. *מלכות* is of course connected to *יראה*, as it says this in reference to a king.¹³ Additionally, a king puts fear into the people as we are instructed to Daven for the welfare of the government because if not for people's fear of it, each person would swallow his fellow alive.¹⁴ On Rosh Hashana we say *מלכות*. So we see the connection of *מלכות* to *יראה*. Shmuel: Shmuel also has this quality as he is the one who anointed Dovid as king.¹⁵

The Sefas Emes points out the hidden letters of the word *דין* (that is *יד, נון*)—as Rosh Hashana is *יום* (דלת, יוד, נון)—has the same equivalent as *מלכות*, 496 because the source of *יראה* is in *דין*.

Fear of Hashem brings true happiness as in *אשרי* עבדו את ה' וגילו ברעדה אדם מפחד תמיד, praiseworthy is the man who always fears.¹⁶ Now we can understand why it says *עבדו את ה' וגילו ברעדה*, serve Hashem with awe and rejoice with trembling,¹⁷ as these two are not a contradiction. Similarly, it states in Tanna Dvei Eliyahu¹⁸ שמחתי מתוך יראתי, I am happy amidst fear. This also gives us an appreciation of why the name *יצחק*—who embodies *יראה*—is rooted in *צחוק*, laughter, happiness. Let us take advantage of the opportunity when we ask for fear of Hashem—*ובכן תן פחדך*.¹⁹

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander ztz"l for close to five years. He received semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz"l. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of the books, *Fascinating Insights* and *Incredible Insights* in addition to being the host of *The Fascinating Insights Podcast*. His writings, some of which have been translated into Hebrew, German and French, inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. He lives with his wife and family in Kiryat Yearim (where the Aron was for 20 years [Shmuel 1, 7:1,2]) where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

Yirah, meaning days where we can acquire Yiras Shamayim, as this is what permeates the atmosphere at that juncture.

¹¹ Devarim 6:13.

¹² Rosh Hashana 10b-11a.

¹³ Devarim 17:19.

¹⁴ Avos 3:2.

¹⁵ Shmuel 1, 16:13.

¹⁶ Mishlei 28:14.

¹⁷ Tehillim 2:11.

¹⁸ Chapter 3.

¹⁹ This phrase also excludes false fear, the fear of humans.