

The Weekly *Farbrengens*

MERKAZ ANASH
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SENSITIVE SIGHT (I)

SAFEGUARDING ONESELF

The Torah commands us, *velo sosuru acharei levavchem ve'acharei eineichem*: do not follow your heart and eyes, for the eye sees, the heart desires, and the body then commits wrongdoings.

(שלח טו, לט, רש"י שם)

Yeshayahu HaNavi praises one "who closes his eyes from seeing evil" and promises that he will be protected, that he will lack no sustenance, that his children will grow up properly, and that he will merit seeing the glory of the King.

As an example of the above, *Chazal* speak of a person who does not gaze at the women laundering clothes by the river. When there is an alternative route, he is obligated to take it, and earns no special praise for doing so (for otherwise he would be transgressing.) Yeshayahu HaNavi is speaking of a person who must take the original route, yet forces himself, with great difficulty to turn his eyes away.

(ישעיהו לג, טו-יז, בבא בתרא נ"ז ע"ב, שו"ע אהע"ז סי' כ"א ס"א)

At a *farbrengen* in Riga, the Friediker Rebbe once said: "There are times when one should not go out in the streets. If one must go out, he should set hours when he will not go, and take the least populated roads when he does."

(סה"ש תרפ"ט ע' 60)

Someone once asked the Rebbe what to do when doing *mitvzo'im* in places that require caution regarding what can be seen there. The Rebbe replied, "When someone thinks words of Torah while going on *mitvzo'im*, the Rebbe accompanies him and protects him from all negative influences."

However, to another who told the Rebbe that he felt that doing *mitvzo'im* in such places was causing him damage *beruchniyus*, the Rebbe advised him not to go there.

(סיפורים חסידיים ח"א ע' 164)

The revered *mashpia*, Reb Mendel Futerfas, was exceptionally particular to shield his eyesight, even in his old age. When a gathering was held in Kfar Chabad for a mixed group of soldiers, Reb Mendel sat at the head table, unobtrusively looking down the entire time.

(מפי הרד"מ שי' דרוקמן)

CONSIDER

Why did only the Rebbe Maharash think of wearing opaque glasses?

What lesson did the talmid of the Baal Shem Tov learn?

USING FORESIGHT

The Rebbe Maharash often had to travel to various health resorts. On one such trip, he met one of the *gedolei hamussar*, who also required this visit for his health. One of the procedures was washing oneself in the remedial mineral springs. Two lines of chairs, one for men and the other for women, were set up opposite each other for the people who were waiting their turn.

Sitting on line, the *rov* was greatly disturbed that he was facing immodestly dressed women, and wondered how the Rebbe Maharash, wearing his glasses, was able to sit there undisturbed. The Rebbe later showed him how he had come with opaque glasses, and so he was spared from seeing any immodesty.

(רשימת דברים ח"ג ע' קמ"ו, וראה כע"ז בלקו"ס ע' קנ ולשמע אוזן ע' 76)

During the time that the Rebbe resided in Paris, he was very careful to protect his eyesight.

The vintage *chossid*, HaRav Shmaryahu Sosonkin, related: "One, day, while I was walking down the street in Paris, I passed the Rebbe who was holding a fully opened newspaper in front of him. When the Rebbe noticed me, he commented, 'Nu, it's impossible to walk in the streets of Paris with open eyes...'"

Chassidim once peeked into the newspaper and noticed that it was years old.

(ימי מלך ח"א ע' 465, ח"ג ע' 21)

TAKING CONTROL

A *talmid* of the Baal Shem Tov once requested his Rebbe's advice on how to guard his eyes from seeing evil. The Baal Shem Tov advised him to travel to a particular town and stay at the home of a certain individual. There he would learn how to conduct himself properly. Arriving at his destination, the *talmid* was surprised to find that his host was a simple, unsophisticated dock worker.

Some days later, while alone in his host's home, he noticed a window high up near the ceiling. Being very curious, he placed one table atop another, piled a third above those two, and climbed up. Moving aside the curtain to look out, he was shocked to see some neighbors behaving inappropriately.

When his host returned, the *talmid* remarked: "I'm surprised at you! How can you live near such bad neighbors?" - and related what he had seen through the window.

The host replied, "The question is on your behavior! I've been living here for twenty years and have never considered checking to see what my neighbors are doing. You're here for only a couple of days, yet you couldn't restrain yourself from climbing up to look..."

(רשימות דברים ח"א ע' ד')

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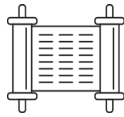
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SEFIRA FOR BAR MITZVA BOY

If a boy becomes *bar mitzva* during *sefira*, can he continue counting with a *bracha*?

If someone misses one of the days of *Sefiras ha'omer*, they continue counting the subsequent nights without a *bracha*. The reason is that some Rishonim consider all 49 days as one long *mitzva*, and one who missed one night has lost the *mitzva* completely. Although the halacha doesn't follow that view, we refrain from saying the *bracha* out of doubt.¹

However, there are obvious difficulties with this explanation: If it's one long *mitzva*, why is there a *bracha* every night? And why aren't we worried we may forget a later day thus rendering our previous *brachos* in vain?

The Rebbe therefore explains this view like this: Each night is certainly an independent *mitzva*, yet part of the completeness ("temimos") of counting requires a succession of all previous days. If one of the previous days is missing, the continuum is broken. A boy who becomes *bar mitzva* during *sefira* and counted all the previous days as a *katan* "has" the previous days and he can now continue counting. Thus, he can fulfill the next night's *mitzva* with a *bracha*.²

But of what value is the "count" from before *bar mitzva* when it wasn't a *mitzva* for him? Although a child has a *mitzva d'rabanan* of *chinuch*, this kind of *mitzva* is a personal obligation (*gavra*) and does not relate to the *mitzva* object (*cheftza*) as does an adult's *mitzva*. How then can a child's counting make the days into "counted days"?

The Rebbe explains that the *mitzva* to count these days provides the ability for these days to be "counted" even by someone who isn't obligated. Thus, a *katan* who counted them "has" them for his subsequent count. And we have our *golus* count for when Moshiach comes in the middle of *Sefiras ha'omer* and the *chiyuv* transitions from *d'rabanan* to *d'oraisa*. A convert, however, is like a newborn, and cannot rely on his previous count.³

From another angle, since a *bar mitzva* boy has an immediate obligation *min haTorah* to fulfill *mitzvos*, that obligation very possibly includes preparations that are necessary even before his *bar mitzva* (such as learning the *halachos*, or buying a *lulav* if he will turn thirteen the first day of *Sukkos*). Thus, a child who turns thirteen on *Shushan Purim* that falls on *Shabbos*, must hear the *megilah* read on Friday – before *bar mitzva* – so that he'll have fulfilled it when he turns thirteen on *Shabbos*. Likewise, since the child will be obligated *min haTorah* to count when he turns *bar mitzva*, this obligation extends even earlier, to ensure he has the required "days" to continue this *mitzva* as an adult.⁴

1. שו"ע א"ח סי' תפ"ט ס"ח ונ"כ שם. 3. לקו"ש חכ"ו ע' 75.
 2. וראה שו"ע ר"ש סכ"ג-ג. 4. לקו"ש חל"ח ע' 10.
 2. לקו"ש ח"א ע' 271.

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

Our Heroes



R. AVRAHAM CHAIM ROSENBAUM

Born in the town of Pleshnitz in 5600, R. Avraham Chaim Rosenbaum was a *yoshev* in the *chatzer* of the Tzemach Tzedek, and a *chossid* of the Rebbe Maharash and Rebbe Rashab. The leader of the *chassidische* community in Pleshnitz, he was arrested for helping young men avoid the Russian army draft and sentenced to three years in prison. Forced to flee Russia after his release, he moved to America in 5655 and worked as a diamond merchant. R. Avraham Chaim was one of the first *chassidim* to arrive in America, and he led the Chabad *chassidim* in New York and in New Haven. His life story and the *chidushim* in *nigleh*, *Chassidus*, *dikduk*, and other areas that he wrote while in prison were published in *Toldos Avraham Chaim*. He passed away on the first day of *Chanukah*, 5675, and is buried in New York.

R. Avraham Chaim once recalled:

"While I was in the Rebbe's *chatzer* in Lubavitch one morning, I noticed the chimney-cleaner's ladder leaning against his house. That gave me an idea. I realized that by climbing it I would be able to peer into the Rebbe's room and watch him *daven*!

"It was after *Shachris*. The Rebbe was sitting in his *tallis* and *tefillin* and lovingly reading *Tehillim*. When he came to the *posuk* in *kapitel lamed-tes* that begins *Hoidi'eini HaShem*, he sang it to a particularly sweet tune, which he repeated several times.

"I was perched up there delighting in my ploy, enjoying my good fortune at observing the

Rebbe at such a moment, when a stern voice surprised me. It was the Rebbetzin: 'What?! No embarrassment?! Have you never before seen a *Yid daven*?!'

"Terrified, I escaped immediately, but that *niggun* I will never forget." [That *niggun* is known until today.]

While in Lubavitch, R. Avraham Chaim acquired the Tzemach Tzedek's *tallis*. This is how it came about:

R. Maddil, the Tzemach Tzedek's *shadar* (fundraising emissary), one day complained to the Rebbe that his *tallis* was torn. He was embarrassed to appear before *Anash* to ask for money while wearing such a *tallis*, but he could not afford a new one. The Rebbe promptly offered him his own *tallis*, in which he had *davened* that morning.

With the *tallis* in hand he left the Rebbe's room – and met R. Avraham Chaim. Seeing an opportunity not to be missed, R. Avraham Chaim offered to buy him a new *tallis*, plus twenty-five rubles, instead of the Rebbe's old one. R. Maddil agreed. R. Avraham Chaim was able to identify the *tallis*, having seen it at that morning's *Shachris*, and was ecstatic his entire life at owning the treasure.

However, he was always afraid to wear it. In fact, he wore it only once, for *Kol Nidrei*. He originally planned to be buried in that *tallis*, but as his time drew near, he sent it to the Rebbe Rashab, saying that he "was afraid to appear above in a *tallis* not belonging to him."

A Moment with The Rebbe



APOLOGY ACCEPTED

At one *Shabbos farbrengen* in the summer of 5747 (1987), the Rebbe expressed deep anguish from the fact that *bochurim* had gotten involved in local Crown Heights disputes.

That *Motzaei Shabbos*, Reb Gershon Mendel Garelik of Milan *farbrenge*d in 770, and earnestly admonished the *bochurim* for the pain they had caused the Rebbe. He encouraged them to recite *Kerias Shema She'al Hamita* earnestly, take upon themselves good resolutions, and write a letter of apology to the Rebbe.

One *bochur* was very taken by his words. He

would eat his *Shabbos* meals at the home of relatives in Crown Heights and would routinely debate local affairs with them at the *seuda*. The Rebbe's *sicha*, and the *chassidische farbrengen* that followed, touched a raw nerve.

That night this *bochur* recited *Kerias Shema* with heartfelt sobbing, and then he penned a letter to the Rebbe asking for forgiveness.

That very day he received a response. The Rebbe wrote that his remorse was accepted and his deeds forgiven.

(*Tifenbrun Teshurah*)