

The Weekly Farbrengens

MERKAZ ANASH
מרכז אנאש

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EDITOR - RABBI SHIMON HELLINGER

CHARACTER CHANGE (I)

THE BIG CHALLENGE

Rav Saadia Gaon taught: The main reason man was created in this world was - to break his natural negative middos.

(כתר שם טוב סימן כ"ד)

A chossid from Beshenkovitch once asked the Mittler Rebbe for a brocho to be able to do avoda. He added, "I am not exactly sure what avoda entails, but since I have a strong desire not to do it, I understand that it must be something really good..."

(סה"ש ת"ש ע' 106)

The Frierdiker Rebbe fondly described the elder chossid, Reb Hendel, as a man with a good heart and good middos that he had refined by toiling in the avoda of kabbolas ol. He recounted what Reb Hendel had once said at a farbrengen: "As long as a metzora still suffered from tzoraas, he would not visit the Beis HaMikdosh. So, too, a yungerman who has not yet been healed of his negative character traits is not allowed to go to Lubavitch and chas veshalom contaminate the heichal HaShem, where the Rebbe is.

"For ten years," continued Reb Hendel, "I studied Reishis Chochma, Chareidim, Shaarei Teshuva and Pokeiach Ivrim. I reviewed Iggeres HaTeshuva dozens of times, as well as chapters of Derech Chayim, in order to eradicate my negative middos and rid myself of the body's natural behaviors. Only then, with the approval of eltere chassidim, did I finally make my first trek to Lubavitch."

Relating this, the Frierdiker Rebbe concluded: "Listen, yungeleit, to what an elterer chossid is telling you about how he became a chossid! For ten years, a yungerman toils to attain middos tovos and during all that time he does not travel to Lubavitch, to the Tzemach Tzedek, because he is embarrassed to have the Rebbe see his ruchniyusdike essence. That is a proper preparation to becoming a chossid."

(לקוטי דיבורים ח"ב ע' 696)

The Frierdiker Rebbe once said: When one notices a negative trait in himself, this should bother him seriously, and he must make every effort to correct it. Yet this task should not depress him. On the contrary, it should bring him joy: he should rejoice that he has been granted the opportunity to correct his middos.

(סה"ש תרפ"ח ע' 26)

When the Rebbe Rashab observed good middos in his chassidim, his joy was visible, and when he noticed a negative trait, this would hurt him to the point of tears. He could have changed things by saying a few firm words, but he wanted the change to result from the avoda of the chassidim themselves.

(ס' המאמרים תשי"א ע' 246)

CONSIDER

Why is correcting one's character so important? And why is it so difficult?

Why can't we just focus on the positive and allow the negative to vanish on its own?

UNWANTED BAGGAGE

The Alter Rebbe writes that before introducing middos tovos, one must first remove all negative middos. By way of analogy: A king desires to have a beautiful palace built for him. For a start, the selected location must be cleared of all filth, and only then is it possible to begin constructing the palace and decorating it. Similarly, we cannot construct a dira betachtonim for HaShem unless we first clear ourselves of all negative middos.

(לקוטי תורה ג, לקו"ש ח"ב ע' 136)

At a farbrengen, the Frierdiker Rebbe said that nowadays Chassidus is not being used for what it was intended; instead, it is being used for tasks that should be tackled before one approaches Chassidus. The avoda of correcting one's middos and refraining from forbidden actions (sur meira), as well as the positive actions (aseh tov) of good middos and ahavas Yisroel, does not require the avoda of Chassidus: it must be done earlier.

(לקוטי דיבורים ח"א ע' קצז)

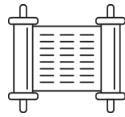
The farbrengens of the esteemed chossid Reb Peretz Chein were often spiced by his favorite mashal:

The chefs in the Czar's royal kitchen once prepared a lavish banquet for the visiting Kaiser William of Germany, the Czar's relative, and the highlight was to be a dish of stuffed and spiced calf intestines. Their efforts were so successful that the Kaiser asked for the recipe so that his own cooks at home would be able to serve him this extraordinary delicacy. The Czar duly ordered the head chef to write a detailed list of ingredients and instructions, and Kaiser William left Russia a happy man. As soon as he arrived home in Germany he handed the recipe to his chef, but when the kitchen doors opened and the carefully prepared dish was served to the eagerly waiting Kaiser, he cried out, "What a disgusting odor!" - and the platter was quickly removed from the table.

Bitterly disappointed, he wrote to the Czar demanding to know why his chefs could not produce the same delicacy, even though they had carefully followed the recipe. The Czar asked his chef to offer an explanation.

The chef thought for a moment and then burst out laughing: "What?! The German chefs didn't work it out themselves?! There was one step so obvious that I didn't even include it in my instructions: Before the intestines are stuffed and spiced, they must first be turned inside out and washed thoroughly..."

(רשימות דברים לר"י חזיריק)



FRIDAY MINCHA ON SHABBOS

Can I daven mincha Friday after lighting candles or after shkia?

By default, a woman's lighting of Shabbos candles is considered acceptance of Shabbos, and afterwards she may no longer daven Mincha or eat since it is the new day. She can stipulate that she isn't accepting Shabbos by lighting, if she accepts Shabbos within 10 minutes. The Alter Rebbe says rules that a woman shouldn't rely on a stipulation unless it's a time of need. Making this stipulation for the sake of davening mincha, or to drink afterwards when thirsty, is considered a legitimate need. (It seems that one can make such a stipulation once a year for the entire year.)¹

A man who lights candles doesn't automatically accept Shabbos by lighting, though it's best to stipulate this clearly, and he must accept Shabbos within 10 minutes.² Some hold that the obligation to accept Shabbos shortly after lighting applies only when lighting more than 30 minutes before shkiah, since otherwise the candles aren't clearly connected to Shabbos.³

A man who isn't lighting Shabbos candles should accept Shabbos shortly before shkia to fulfill the obligation to add onto Shabbos (tosefes Shabbos).⁴

May one daven mincha after having accepted tosefes Shabbos? Or after shkia when it's already bein hashmashos?

Some Acharonim hold that once one has accepted Shabbos, it is too late to daven Friday's mincha. Others argue that one can accept Shabbos with regards to melacha, but not in respect to mincha.

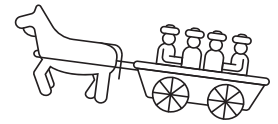
In practice, the Alter Rebbe writes in Seder Hachnasas Shabbos that one may daven mincha after shkia (although he must have already accepted tosefes Shabbos). The Alter Rebbe explains that since the times for davening are miderabanan, we are lenient to allow mincha in the doubtful time of bein hashmashos.⁵ If, however, one accepted the "essence of Shabbos" (itzumo shel yom) — by saying borchu or lighting candles — one may no longer daven mincha.

If the minyan will only daven after shkiah, some poskim hold that davening before shkia takes precedence even without a minyan.⁶ However, the Alter Rebbe seems to hold that davening after shkiah with a minyan would be preferable.

1. ראה שו"ע א"ח סי' רס"ג ס"ז וראה התה"ד סי' רס"ג סק"ח. וראה מג"א סק"ח. וקצוה"ש סי' ע"ו סק"א וסק"ז. וראה הליכות שלמה פי"ד. דבר הלכה אות ג' (בנוגע תוספת שבת). 2. ראה שו"ע שם. 3. ראה שו"ע שם קו"א ב' (לא לתר. . הצורך. 4. סדר הכנסת שבת סי' ח שערקונית אד"ז מתיך להתפלל אז מנחה בשעת הצורך. 5. שו"ע סי' רס"ג סק"ח. 6. שו"ע סי' רס"ג סק"ח.

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

Our Heroes



R. ZALMAN CHAIKIN

R. Zalman Chaikin was a chossid of the Tzemach Tzedek, Rebbe Maharash, and Rebbe Rashab, and a talmid of R. Pesach Molostovker. A wealthy businessman and generous baal tzedakah, he lived in Podobranka where his brother, R. Yoel, was the Rov. R. Zalman was the Rebbe's great-grandfather—the father-in-law of R. Baruch Schneur Schneersohn (Rabash – R. Levik's father).

A wealthy man and a great baal tzaedaka, R. Zalman hospitality was truly exemplary.

In shul, he would sit near the oven among the beggars, so that the visiting paupers thought he was one of them. When one of them would mention that he's hungry, R' Zalman would tell him, "There's a man named Zalman Chaikin who serves meals to the poor, and I've eaten in his house."

After davening, he would take the poor to his home, open the cabinets, and serve them good food. The guests, who didn't know him, would sometimes demean him, "What an arrogant beggar without an ounce of respect! Look at how he just takes from the cabinets without permission..."

(רישומות דבריים חדש ע' 260)

During his Sheva Brachos, a farbrengen was held

in the Frieddiker Rebbe's new home with various chassidim, notably R. Zalman Chaikin. The farbrengen went all night long, and at 4 am, the chassidim wanted to go prepare for davening.

Sensing that they were rushing anxiously, R. Zalman shared with them a vort he had heard from his teacher, R. Pesach Molostovker, who heard it from the Mittlerer Rebbe: "Va'avadtem meheira, you should rid yourself of rushing, mei'al ha'aretz hatova, even from a good desire." While zerizus is a good midda, one must know when to use it.

He also told of a yungerman who the Mittlerer Rebbe bentched to be a "baalabus": to be organized and make use of life situations as a homeowner keeps and uses whatever he finds.

(סד"ש תרצ"ט ע' 236)

In his later years, when he entered yechidus, the Rebbe Rashab stood up for him and offered him to sit. R. Zalman insisted that he would only sit after the Rebbe sat down. When the Rebbe refused, R. Zalman had no choice but to sit first.

On one of his trips to the Rebbe Rashab, he was accompanied by his grandson R. Levik. The Rebbe Rashab stood up and asked R. Zalman for a bracha, but R. Zalman evaded it.

(תולדות לוי יצחק ח"א ע' 47, תשורה מאן, תש"פ)

A Moment with The Rebbe



THE FORGOTTEN CHILDREN

"I want to ask about the mitvzoyim," said Harav Eliyohu Shternbuch – presently the Av Beis Din of Antwerp – after a lengthy Talmudic discussion with the Rebbe. The Rebbe consented and leaned forward slightly with an attentive expression.

"The Chasam Sofer established an attitude of separation from the secularists, so why should one interact with them?"

"A clear distinction must be made between the maskilim who sought to lure others and today's ignorant masses," the Rebbe responded. "In America alone there are millions of Yidden, and less than half a million are observant. I racked my brain for a way to be mekarev them, until an idea came to me: the Torah rules that the performance of one mitzva brings another, so I therefore began a campaign to get a Yid to do a mitzva, and Hashem will then do His part. I am constantly looking for more ways..."

Suddenly a pained expression appeared on the Rebbe's face, and he began talking of a monastery in Wallonia, Belgium. "Do you know that there are Yidden there who were hidden as children during the Holocaust?"

When Harav Shternbuch said that he hadn't heard of that place, the Rebbe mentioned another monastery by name. "Yidden are being ordained as priests Rachmana litzlan – who is doing anything about it? The parents were murdered, and their dear son is entrapped in a church!"

After the Rebbe concluded with practical guidance on the issue, Harav Shternbuch, overcome with emotion, asked the Rebbe if he could write a kvitel. The Rebbe gave him a piece of paper and lent him a pen, and from then on became the address for the rov's questions on personal and communal matters.

(As told by his talmid Reb Dov Lisoer who was present at that yechidus)