REVERING THE TORAH (2)

AVOIDING DISRESPECT

R. Yehuda said that Yerushalayim was destroyed only because the Yidden were disrespectful to talmidei chachomim. Rav said that there is no remedy for the punishment awaiting a person who insults a talmid chacham and R. Elazar said that a person who does not show respect for a talmid chacham by rising in his presence will forget his Torah learning and will not live long.

The Mishna says that an apikores does not merit a share in Olam HaBa. The Gemara explains that the term apikores includes the following people: one who insults a talmid chacham; one who insults another in the presence of a talmid chacham; one who says, 'What benefit do the talmidei chachomim bring? All their learning is only for themselves!' – for he does not recognize that the ongoing existence of the world depends on the study of Torah; or one who says, 'What benefit are the rabbonin to us? Whatever they passen is clearly written in the Torah' – for he does not recognize the breadth of knowledge involved in paskening a shayle.

Why is even a person who is not particularly disrespectful also considered an apikores? As Rabbeinu Yona explains, that person's lack of respect shows that he is also lacking an appreciation for HaShem's Torah.

R. Papa once inadvertently referred to some chachomim as "those rabbonin" (instead of "our Rabbonim in that city") and then fasted as a kapara.

For many years, a certain chassid of the Alter Rebbe was not blessed with children. Whenever he asked for a bracha, the Alter Rebbe would respond that he was unable to help him. Once, however, after giving his usual response, he added the advice that he visit Reb Shlomo Karliner. That tzaddik would be able to help him.

When he arrived in Karlin, he was told to wait until the tzaddik traveled out of town and then to accompany him on his journey. A few days later, Reb Shlomo in fact left Karlin, and gave permission for anyone who had a request to join him on his trip.

As they passed through a certain town, the tzaddik told this chassid, "If you contribute money (and he named a large sum), you will merit having children." The chassid, not being a man of means, felt he could not fulfill that weighty request. Disappointed and saddened, he returned home.

Some time later, when he next visited Liozna, and the Alter Rebbe asked him what he had transpired, the chassid told him how he had refused to fulfill the tzaddik's formidable demand.

The Alter Rebbe said, "You once embarrassed a talmid chacham, and that is why you are childless. Since the talmid chacham has already passed away, you cannot ask him forgiveness, and according to the Gemara, 'One who embarrasses a talmid chacham must pay a significant sum of gold as an atonement.' Reb Shlomo traveled with you to the keverim of those poskim who hold that this kapara can be attained even after the talmid chacham has passed on. That is why he demanded so much money – but now it is too late."

The chassid protested, "I have never insulted a talmid chacham!"

The Alter Rebbe queried, "Didn't you once insult Reb Yissachar Dov, the rov of Lubavitch?" "Eh! Reb Yissachar Dov… I do not consider him a talmid chacham," said the chassid.

The Alter Rebbe responded, "Eliyahu HaNavi revealed himself to Reb Yissachar Dov every day – and you do not respect him as a talmid chacham? I cannot help you, nor can I forgive you for speaking of him dishonorably, for I was his talmid."

Every motzoa Shabbos, it was the custom of Reb Hillel Paritcher to partake of a chicken that had been shechted and prepared that night. Once, while visiting Kremenchug, Reb Hillel was hosted by Reb Yosef Tumarkin, the Chabad chossid. "Before the Frierdiker Rebbe went to Leningrad, he dispatched me to the Rogatchover Gaon, the leading rov of the city, to receive his permission, not wanting to cause him any disrespect. However, three chassidim, fired with misguided zeal for the Rebbe's honor, apparently said something to the Rogatchover that caused him to leave the city.

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The following painful episode was reported by Reb Shmuel Nimoitin, the chassid who served as the contact between the Frierdiker Rebbe and the Rogatchover Gaon. "Before the Frierdiker Rebbe went to Leningrad, he dispatched me to the Rogatchover Gaon, the leading rov of the city, to receive his permission, not wanting to cause him any disrespect. However, three chassidim, fired with misguided zeal for the Rebbe's honor, apparently said something to the Rogatchover that caused him to leave the city.

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"There was no shaye," she said. "He's probably not eating it because it was shechted by the Chabad chossid."

Her husband then asked Reb Hillel to explain his reasoning, so that he would know whether the shechet could be trusted. Reb Hillel assured him that there was nothing wrong with his shechita. However, since he had once heard him embarrassing a talmid chacham, he did not want to eat from his shechita. Reb Yosef asked how this could be corrected if the offended party had already passed away. Reb Hillel advised that the shechet should go with ten other men to that man's kever and ask for forgiveness. Once that was done, he would eat from his shechita.
Eating in the Street

Is it permissible to eat in a designated picnic area of a park?

There is a genre of halacha known as hilchos derech eretz which include the Torah’s expectations for behavior regarding mundane daily living, including eating, sleeping, talking etc. A facet of hilchos derech eretz is that it is axiomatic to Torah that one should not act in a manner that disrespects oneself.

The Gemara tells us that one who eats in the street degrades himself so much that he loses his credibility to serve as an eid (witness). This halacha is recorded in Shulchan Aruch.

While during the times of the Gemara this was considered degrading even by the general population, today it is common to see people eating in the street. Rav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach writes that although this has become common practice, it is still inappropriate and should not be done. The rule is that something deemed by Chazal as inappropriate should not be done, even when it becomes common practice.

The Talmud Yerushalmi cautions a talmid chochom to resolve this apparent contradiction the meforshim define exactly what the Bavli is referring to. Some say this only applies to one who eats while actually walking or one who regularly eats in the street. Others limit it only to those eating bread, while others say it only refers to a proper meal.

However, since the rationale behind not trusting one who eats in the street is because it is undignified, it does not include designated eating areas such as a picnic area.

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All through the year of the Tzemach Tzeddek's histalkus, people would not want to join his minyan, for immediately upon the start of his davening, Reb Chaim Shneur Zalman would begin singing and forget where he was, until he returned to himself a long while later.

He was spotted several times striding back and forth during Shmone Esrei, jubilant and dancing, his face alight. It was said about him, that he had ahava b’tanugim (bliss from closeness to Hashem).

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The ‘Beis Rebbe’ enumerates similarities between Reb Chaim Shneur Zalman and the Alter Rebbe: He was born during the first year following the Alter Rebbe's histalkus and named after him. He resided in Liadi for eleven years, like the Alter Rebbe had, and was niftar at age 66 during the month of Teves, like the Alter Rebbe.

The Best Chanukah Gelt

In the year 5744, the Rebbe began a campaign of printing Tanya’s in every city, town and village. The Rebbe explained that with every printing, kedusha is brought to that place. In addition, people will feel more of a connection, and will wish to learn from a sefer printed in their own city.

Harav Dovid Moshe Rosen served as the Chief Rabbi of communist Romania. In the year 5744, he suffered from many anti-Semitic attacks in the media, and he was afraid for his own personal safety. When he wrote to the Rebbe asking for a bracha, the Rebbe answered: “The zechus of printing the Tanya will protect you!”

Within a few days, the situation stabilized.

On the third night of Chanukah 5752, sixty two editions of the Tanya, which were printed throughout the former USSR, were brought in to the Rebbe’s room. Those present relate that the Rebbe was beaming, and his face was shining. The Rebbe said, “This is the best Chanukah gelt, the biggest Chanukah gelt a Yid could receive!”