



## 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 מצווה רכב)

The *halacha* is that one cannot join a *goy* in an *eruv chatzeiros* (courtyard *eruv*), rather he must rent the *goy's* space from him. Chazal instituted this to make it difficult for the Yid, thereby compelling the Yid to move away from that courtyard so that he will not learn from his *goyishe* ways.

Likewise, the *chachomim* did not allow people to take interest when lending money to a *goy* so that Yidden will not spend time with him and learn from his conduct.

Similarly, Chazal forbade a Yid to eat a *goy's* bread and cooked foods so that he would not socialize with him at the dinner table and then (*chas veshalom*) come to transgress.

(עירובין סב ע"א, שוע"ר ס"ו שפ"ס, בבא מציעא ע"א ע"א,

ע"ז לו ע"ב ואילין)

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 Yiddishe 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 Yiddishe 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 Yiddishe *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 Yiddishe world of *ruchniyus*.

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 *goyim*. On his way back, after *toiveling*, he was afraid that a *goy* might touch him, *chas veshalom*. While he was walking, he overheard one *goy* tell another, "Be careful not to touch this contaminated Yid."

His grandson, the author of *Degel Machaneh Ephraim* explained that this is the meaning of the *possuk*, "*Hein am Ivadad 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 good of the Yid!

(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 illicit their respect and admiration, seeing how the Yidden live distinct and true to their tradition.

(לדוגמא: תורת מנחם תשמ"ח ח"ה עמוד 4992)

### CONSIDER THIS!

- 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?

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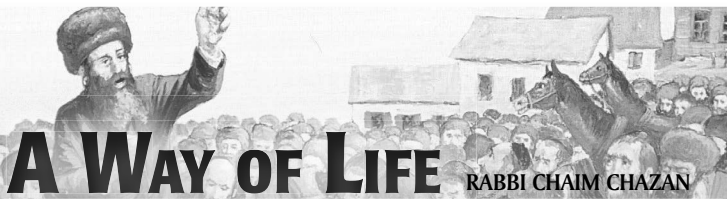
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# A WAY OF LIFE

RABBI CHAIM CHAZAN

## Illegal Deals

Reuven made a deal with a pauper called Shimon that he will reveal to him the name of an unknown philanthropist Levi who gives a substantial sum to every fundraiser who approaches him. However, Reuven stipulated that he will only share that information on the condition that Shimon will give him half of the money that he receives from Levi. Shimon accepted the condition. Is Shimon obligated to keep his word and give half of the money to Reuven?

If Shimon claims he never meant it sincerely and only agreed in order to trick Reuven into revealing the name, he is not obligated to keep his word. This is based on the principle known as "*meshateh ani boch*" – since it is not the norm to sell the name of a philanthropist, Shimon can claim he was fooling around, and he would then be exempt from paying. However, Shimon can only claim "*meshateh ani boch*" when, at the time, he actually meant to fool Reuven, but not when he intended to sincerely accept Reuven's condition.

Yet, in truth even if he sincerely accepted the condition and made a formal *kinyan*, he will nevertheless be exempt from paying. The reason: this case is an example of a '*halachic vicious cycle*' in which case an obligation cannot take force, and the money therefore remains in Reuven's hands.

Let us explain:

There is no question that had Levi known of the deal between Reuven and Shimon he would not have given Shimon that amount of money, for his intention was to assist the poor man and not the well-to-do Reuven. Therefore, had Shimon asked a *shaila* by a *rov* whether he may solicit from Levi with the intention of giving half to Reuven, the *rov* would forbid it, since "*anan sahad*" (– lit. "we are witnesses," meaning that the *Beis Din* are 'witnesses' to the obvious fact) that Levi would have never agreed to give the money under these circumstances.

The result would then be that Reuven would have gained nothing from the deal, since Shimon would be prohibited from soliciting the money at all. Hence, Shimon need not give anything to Reuven. For if Shimon must give the money to Reuven, then retroactively Shimon was not permitted to solicit the money, this would obligate him to return the money to Levi. Once he does that, his obligation to Reuven would cease to exist. If in turn the obligation to Reuven is no longer binding he may then solicit.

In other words: If Shimon is obligated to pay Reuven, then he is prohibited to benefit from the information to solicit from Levi. Once it is forbidden for Shimon to solicit, he is not benefiting from Reuven's information and does not owe him anything. If he doesn't owe Reuven then he may solicit, but if he solicits he will owe Reuven which will forbid him to solicit, and the circle continues indefinitely.

In summary: Since it is impossible to resolve this issue, the money remains in the hands of Reuven, with no obligation to pay out any money.

Another point: Had Shimon been obligated to pay Reuven for the information, he would be prohibited from soliciting from Levi, which would render the information worthless. Therefore, Shimon may use this information which is of value to *him* based on the principle of "*zeh nehneh vezeh lo chaser*" – one is exempt from paying for benefit in a situation that the other party loses nothing. For example if someone used someone else's property of a type that is not generally rented to others, he is exempt from paying, since he took nothing from the owner.

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

## OUR HEROES

ז' חשוון

## Reb Meir Shapira



Reb Yehuda Meir Shapira was one of the greatest *rabbanim* and *rashei yeshiva* to have lived before the war. He was an incredible visionary and activist who made an imprint which lasts to this day. Reb Meir was a Tchortkover chosid, and he founded the *yeshiva* "Chachmei Lublin" and initiated the "Daf Hayomi" system. He was highly regarded by our *Rabbeim* and he attended the Rebbe's *chasuna*. The Rebbe once said about him, "Reb Meir Shapira is *epes andersh* (something special)." He passed away at the age of 46 on the 7<sup>th</sup> of Cheshvan, תרצ"ד (1933).

When asked about the difference between his *chassidische yeshiva* and the *litvishe yeshivos* that existed then, Reb Meir replied, "The difference is in the *bochurim*." He then related, "There were once two *bochurim*, a *misnaged* and a *chosid*, learning together, when they came upon the Gemoro in Sukkah (28a) which tells how birds flying over Yonoson ben Uziel, while he was immersed in Torah, would be burned from the force of his study. The two *bochurim* sank into deep thought. They then shared their thoughts: the *chosid* marveled at the immense *kedusha* of Yonasan ben Uziel, while the *misnaged* tried to work out whether or not Yonoson was obligated to pay compensation to the owner of the bird..."

Reb Meir would say: "What is the difference between a *shochet* and a *melamed*? Even in the smallest community, before a *shochet* is accepted, he is checked thoroughly and painstakingly. Has he received authorization from a *rov*? Is he skilled? Is he pious? And after confirming all this, he is placed in charge of animals and fowl. A *melamed*, on the other hand is responsible for the *neshamos* of Yiddische children, yet he is not checked by a *rov* at all! Anyone who wishes to assume the title '*melamed*' can enter the business himself..."

Reb Meir Shapira would travel worldwide to fundraise money for the Yeshivah. While trying to recruit the interest of a potential sponsor, he told him that his Yeshivah would produce the *rabbonim* for the coming generation. The listener challenged, "Do you think that all your 300 students will become rabbonim?!" "No," Reb Meir Shapira answered, "three will become *rabbonim*. But the other 297 must attend Yeshivah in order to appreciate the value and stature of the *rov*!"

לזכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי שי' בן רבקה

## A MOMENT WITH THE REBBE

### Honest Buying

The Rebbe once asked of his *mazkir* Reb Yehudah Krinsky, to obtain for him a certain item. Reb Yudel went to a nearby store, where there was an existing account of *Merkos Leinyonei Chinuuch*, and bought it.

When Reb Yudel returned with the item, the Rebbe told him that he wished to pay for it himself, since it was for his personal use. When the Rebbe checked the receipt, he noted that the store had not charged any tax. Reb Yudel explained that since *Merkos* is a nonprofit organization, the account automatically deducts the taxes.

"But," the Rebbe insisted, "this item was for my personal use, not for the *mosaad*." Under the Rebbe's orders, Reb Yudel duly went back to the store, canceled the purchase, and paid for the item with tax, as the law requires.

לזכות שלום דובער בן בלומא גיטל

לזכות התמים משה זיב ושמוחה טובה פאר שיחיו לרגל בואם בקשרי שידוכין בשעטומצ'ז

לזכות הבחור הבר מצוה משה שי' סיימאן שידגל להיות חסיד, ירא שמים ולמדן