



FEAR OF HEAVEN (1)

In Awe of HaShem

In *Tanya*, the Alter Rebbe writes that everyone can have awe for *HaShem* by observing the tremendous *bittul* that the heavenly spheres have, just as a visitor to a palace is struck by the tremendous awe that overpowers mighty ministers in the presence of their king.

The revered *mashpia* in Lubavitch, Reb Groinem, would illustrate this with a story that was well known at the time:

A Yiddische contractor was hired to build a fort for the Russian government. When it was completed, Czar Nicholas came to inspect it in person, and praised the Yid for his good work.

Two weeks later the Yid received an invitation to meet the Czar in Petersburg. Dread fell upon the poor fellow. Had they found something faulty with his work?

When he arrived at the palace and showed the guards his invitation, they allowed him to enter. In the waiting room, he watched as a famous general entered the same room with trepidation, and then he too felt fearful. Soon the king's doorkeeper came out and told the general that it was his turn to enter. The general began shaking from fear, so the Yid, too, began to shake. Hour after hour, officers and dignitaries entered in awe, while each time the Yid sat in his place and trembled afresh.

After the last of the visitors had left, the doorkeeper came out and told the Yid he could now return home in peace. Since at the time that the Czar inspected the fort the Yid had been too relaxed, he had now been invited in order to see how one ought to feel when approaching the presence of the king...

(תניא ספמ"ב, רשימו"ד חדש ע' 266)

What is *yiras Shomayim*?

In *Tanya* the Alter Rebbe explains that *yiras Shomayim* is, not a fear of punishment, but an awe that one should have for *HaShem*.

The most basic fear ("*yirah tataah*"), which is within reach of every person, comes from a

realization that *HaShem* is watching his every move. Just as one would not want to be seen by another person when doing something wrong, so too one will abstain from wrongdoing when he feels that *HaShem* always sees him.

A higher form of this fear results when a person recognizes the greatness of *HaShem*. When one contemplates how *HaShem* gives life and fills the entire universe, he will be in such awe of *HaShem* that he will be afraid to rebel against Him.

A higher level of fear ("*yirah ila'ah*") attainable only by very great people is the recognition that *HaShem* creates this world every moment, and so the person has no true existence besides for Him. This leads the person to feel totally naught before *HaShem*, and surely not transgress his orders.

(תניא ספמ"א-מ"ג)

Simple Awe

The Frieddiker Rebbe related: "In earlier times, even the simplest Yidden had a *yiras Shomayim* that you could feel. Before making a *bracha* they would carefully clean their hands. Once, as a child, I was making a toy boat in the garden, when I heard a gardener say the *bracha Shehakol* with such feeling that I trembled."

The Frieddiker Rebbe added that he was not referring to profound *yiras Shomayim* that grows out of a deep understanding, but rather a simple fear of Heaven. This expresses itself not only in abstaining from wrong and doing good, but also in a *hiddur mitzvah*.

(סד"ש תש"ג ע' 119)

Chazal say that a person should consider these three points and he will abstain from doing wrong: there is an 'eye' above that sees everything he does, there is an ear that hears everything he says and all his actions are recorded in the heavenly chronicles.

(אבות פ"ב מ"א)

When Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai lay on his sickbed, his *talmidim* came to visit him. When

they asked him for a *bracha* he said, "*Yehi ratzon* that the fear of *HaShem* be upon you like the fear of a human being."

The *talmidim* were surprised, "Is that it?!"

"*Halevai!* If only that!" he told them, "For when a person is about to commit an *aveira* he makes sure that no one will spot him. If only he would fear *HaShem* the same way, you would be spared from many sins."

(ברכות כח ע"ב ורש"י)

Acquiring Awe

The Frieddiker Rebbe once spoke of the nature of *yiras Shomayim*. Once, at a party, a certain baron portrayed to his fellow noblemen the awesome atmosphere in the king's palace. He described how all the servants in their various ranks stood in dread of the king. And as the baron described this in great detail, he was so overwhelmed that he fainted.

When they succeeded in waking him, they asked: "Were you ever in the king's palace, and did you experience this fear?"

"No," he replied, "I was never even near the palace."

"How then do you know all these details?" they probed.

"My brother was a guard for the king," the baron explained.

The Frieddiker Rebbe concluded from this experience of a man who had never seen the king, that when a Yid contemplates the greatness of *HaShem* and His kingdom, he will be filled with awe.

(רשימו"ד חדש ע' 195)

CONSIDER THIS!

- What is the person with *yiras Shomayim* afraid of?
- Is *yiras Shomayim* a means to an end or an end for itself?

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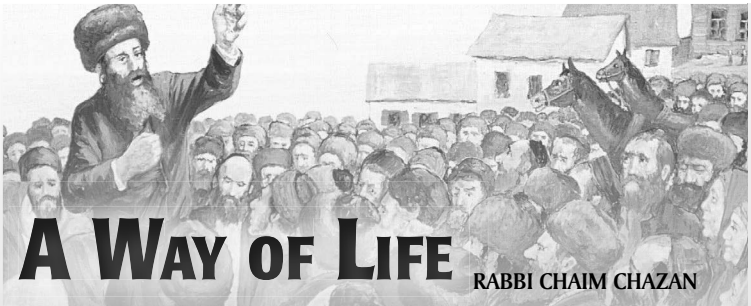
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A WAY OF LIFE

RABBI CHAIM CHAZAN

A Faulty Wedding Ring

A married woman discovered that her wedding band that she and her husband had always assumed to be gold was really brass. Did the *kiddushin* take effect so that they can be considered married according to *halacha*, or is the *kiddushin* void since the *kallah* was misled?

Although the *choson* gives the *kallah* a ring worth much more than a *prutah*, the *kallah* is *niskadesh* (betrothed) only with part of its value in the amount of a *prutah*¹. Indeed this is one of the reasons that the *kallah's* face is covered during the *chupah*, so that she should not see with what she is being *niskadesh*, in order to avoid her mistaking its value. The *rov* who conducts the marriage ceremony asks the witnesses whether the ring is worth a *prutah* (a minimal sum), in order for the *kallah* to be aware that she is being *niskadesh* (betrothed) merely with a *prutah*. Therefore, the fact that the ring is brass bears no significance on the part of the woman, because the brass ring is also worth a *prutah*.

However, there is another issue: The husband purchased the ring with the understanding that it was made of gold. Since he was tricked, the sale is void² and he was *mekadesh* with a ring that did not belong to him. This would seem to make the *kiddushin* invalid.

In truth however, since the seller owes the value of the ring to the husband, the ring is considered a *mashkon* (collateral) for the money owed until he returns the money. The *halacha* is that one can be *mekadesh* with a *mashkon*³, and thus the *kiddushin* would indeed take force⁴.

1. רמ"א אבה"ע סי' לא ס"ב. לאחר שהלה לא בתנאי התשלום), וכאן הרי הוא כמשכנו שלא בשעת הלואתו.
2. שו"ע חו"מ סי' רלג ס"א.
3. שו"ע אבה"ע סי' כח ס"ב, וברמ"א די"א דוקא במשכנו שלא בשעת הלואתו (שתפס המלוה מן הלוה
4. ספר והערב נא (לר"י זילברשטיין) ח"ב עמ' 213 ואילך.

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OUR HEROES

י"א אדר"ך

Avnei Nezer

Reb Avraham Borenshtein of Sochatchov is known among chassidim as the "Sochatchver" or the "Avnei Neizer." He was the son-in-law of the Kotzker Rebbe and known as one of the greatest *lamdanim* and *poskim* in Poland at the time. He was also a Rebbe with a great following of *Chassidim*. Reb Avraham passed away on the 11th of Adar Alef תר"ע (1910).



He would not let any of his Chasidim join his Pesach *seder*. When his Chasidim pleaded with him to let in at least some of them, he replied, "My *seder* is a simple one, just like yours. It's just that by the *seder* one must feel "free" (*cheirus*) and this is simply impossible when a *chossid* is in front of his Rebbe..."

A widow once came to the Avnei Nezer for a ruling on a particular matter. As she outlined the story of her woes, she burst into tears. "I am not fit to judge your case," the Rebbe told her. "Tears are also a form of bribery."

In his days, the *maskilim* began advancing their cause through writing Yiddish books disguised as Jewish history and stories. Between the lines, these books poked fun at old-fashioned *minhagim* and encouraged loose conduct. Many fell prey to these innocent looking books and were slowly led astray.

The Avnei Nezer wrote a strong letter stating that according to *halacha* it is forbidden to buy, sell or read these books. To those who claimed that they were compelled to sell them to earn a living, he writes that this is no excuse and HaShem can surely find them *parnassa* in a permissible manner. He concludes that though he doesn't consider himself the most worthy person to address the matter, however with *pikuach nefesh* one doesn't show honor, and every moment is a tremendous loss.

לזכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי שי' בן רבקה

A MOMENT WITH THE REBBE

The Beauty of the Mitzvah

As a rule, the Rebbe had very little to do with the *bochurim* in 770 before he accepted the *nesius*. But there were exceptions.

Reb Yaakov Yehudah Hecht a"h related:

"It was in the year 5702, or perhaps in 5703. The Rebbe noticed a newlywed *chosson* donning a *tallis* with a wool lining. The Rebbe approached him and asked, 'Why don't you have silk? Where is the beauty of the *mitzvah*? The *passuk* says, "Zeh keili ve'anvehu!" (This is my G-d, and I will glorify him).'

"From then on, all the *chassanim* would make sure to mend their *talleisim* with a silk lining. Mrs. Groner would do the mending, and the Rebbe would often direct *chassanim* to her."

(*Yemei Melech*, page 620)

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