

THE CHASSIDISHE BUSINESSMAN

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לימוד הדבר תורה לזכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי ש"י בן רבקה לגאולה קרובה מן המיצר אל המרחב

SERVING HASHEM

A chossid whose parnassa was earned from managing a tavern traveled to the tzaddik Reb Arye Leib, the Shpoler Zeide, to pour out his heart. He was afraid that he might become coarsened (גראב) from his constant contact with the coarse customers who frequented his tavern. The Shpoler Zeide smiled and said, "It seems that you want do fulfill your purpose as a Yid by being given a sack full of gold, being seated in a clean and splendid palace, dressed in silken garments with a shtreimel on your head, and being surrounded with shelves filled with sefarim... and then you will be able to serve Hashem with davening and learning from a clear, pure mind. But if Hashem wants individuals to serve Him without any distractions, for that he has hundreds of thousands of malochim! The real delight that He finds in this world comes from those who are surrounded with obstacles and hardships, that they feel confined in a gutter, and despite this they think about Hashem and anxiously yearn for the moment when they will be able to say just a few words to Him. No malach can experience this longing!"

Concluding, the Shpoler Zeide said, "Do not complain regarding your livelihood. On the contrary, thank Hashem for having given you the privilege of serving Him in this manner!"

(סיפורי חסידים זוין מועדים ע' 380)

Chazal say: Great is one who is sustained from his own efforts, as the possuk says, "he is praiseworthy in this world and the next." Chazal state that a person should not say, "I am of respectable ancestry and it is unbefitting for me to humiliate myself and do work," for Hashem has preceded him in work, creating the world.

(ברכות ה ע"א, זהר חדש ח"א ט ע"א)

The Ball Shem Tov explained that working in business can be similar to learning torah and even greater. For everything in the world was created for Hashem's glory, and when it is used in the way described by the torah, one is serving Hashem.

A man once came to the Baal Shem Tov complaining about some oxen that he lost, and he asked the Baal Shem Tov to tell him where they were. The Baal Shem Tov opened a Zohar, looked inside, and told him that his oxen were in the market city of Breslau. The Baal Shem Tov later explained that Chazal say that there is a 'great light' hidden in the torah through which one can see across the world, and those who learn torah properly can see everything with it.

The Rebbe derived a lesson from this story: There are those who separate between torah and worldly matters, saying that the Zohar is a holy part of torah, while the ox is an ox, and Breslau is a market city... This is a mistake, for Hashem is everywhere, even in the most

lowly things. So too, the ox is a spark of kedusha which had a special purpose and brought the yid to the Baal Shem Tov.

(מאור עינים, שבת, שיהו"ק תשל"ד ח"ב ע' 451)

During the seudas shlishis of Shabbos, the chassidim of Reb Yitzchak Aizik of Zhidachov would sit in an awed silence as the tzaddik sang moving niggunim and expounded divrei Torah. A profound yearning for teshuva and ruchniyus would engulf them, so that the morning following one such shabbos, none of the businessman who had come wanted to leave. In the state in which he left them, it did not occur to them that they should now be returning to their mundane affairs.

Not knowing this, the tzaddik asked his sons why no one has left yet. They went to investigate, and were told, "Only yesterday our Rebbe has made all the things of this world so unworthy in our eyes, that we are ashamed to face him with our problems about our animals and our businesses."

Hearing this, the tzaddik smiled and related that a similar occurrence had once happened with the tzaddik Reb Menachem Mendel of Rimanov, and he had told his chassidim, "Shabbos is one thing; weekdays are something different. Let the businessmen return to their homes and engage honestly in their commerce." Reb Yitzchak Aizik then quoted the words of Tehillim, "והארץ לה' והארץ, נתן לבני אדם", The heavens are to Hashem, but the earth He has given to man (to labor). Hearing this message from their Rebbe, each chassid folded up his tallis, packed his bags, and returned home to his daily affairs.

(סיפורי חסידים זוין מועדים ע' 166)

The great chossid Reb Hillel Paritcher served as a Mashpia for the Yiddishe agricultural settlements founded by the Mitteler Rebbe. He once related how he had heard the Mitteler Rebbe describe their significance: "Picture the Yishuv'niks (colonists) standing in the field dressed in their yarmulkas and taleisim ktanim, planting the earth and lifting their eyes heavenward and hoping to Hashem..." Visualizing this is what motivated Reb Hillel to become their Mashpia.

(סה"ש תש"ד ע' 83)

בעל עסק THE AVODA OF A

The Rebbe Maharash once told the chossid Reb Elyeh Abeler, a businessman and simple in learning, "I envy you! You travel to fairs, meet many people, and during business dealings, you inspire others to study Nigleh and Chassidus. This causes happiness above and Hashem rewards such 'business trade' with the brachos of children, health and sustenance. The larger the fair, the more

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work there is and the greater the parnasa earned."

(היום יום ט"ז אייר, וראה היום יום ד' ניסן)

The Frierdiker Rebbe said: The chassidische businessmen need to keep a Chumash and Tanya in their store and learn from them in their free time. Of course it is necessary to conduct business dealings, but afterwards a possuk should be learned, and this is what will bring success. The world, with physical streets and people who own stores and businesses, was created for this reason, so that we walk in the streets and think or say words of Torah, and so that we sit in a physical store and learn Torah.

(סה"ש תרצ"א ע' 156)

The Rebbe describes how a Yid must go about his business. The first thing in the morning must be the avodah of davening, followed by a session of learning, and only after being 'soaked' with ruchniyus can he, in a unenthusiastic manner, go to work. In addition, at work he must stand apart as a Yid, thinking or saying words of Torah and during dealing in business have the intention of serving Hashem.

(לקו"ש ח"ג ע' 792)

At a farbrengen, a chossid asked the Frierdiker Rebbe, "How is a businessman, who is busy during the day, able to daven at length like those who sit and learn and have the time to do so?" The Frierdiker Rebbe explained that a chassidische businessman must be like an איידעם אויף קעסט, a young man who is supported by his father-in-law. Being supported, he has no worries, and when his father-in-law hints to him that his help is needed, he lends a hand, but only after he finishes eating comfortably. Similarly, the chassidische businessman davens and learns at ease, and then he goes off to work...

(לקוטי דיבורים ח"א ע' 20)

In his early years, the Baal Shem Tov would travel amongst the yiddische towns, gather a crowd in the market and speak to them about Ahavas Yisroel. Once, he explained his message with a mashal:

There was a man named Reb Yaakov who was 'baki' (fluent) in Shas with Rashi and Tosfos 'baal peh' (by heart), and with intense concentration, he would learn by heart. Once while engrossed in a large tosfos, his young son interrupted him to relate a clever thought. Though the thought was not profound for Reb Yaakov's understanding and his learning, he nevertheless stopped to listen.

Similarly, Hashem is preoccupied with lofty matters, to the point that the malochim objected to His creating man who is involved with such mundane activity. Yet, when a yid rises in the morning and runs to daven with a minyan, and then throughout the day though he is busy and troubled, he drops his work and runs to shul to daven

mincha, then listens to a shiur in יעקב עין and later shares it with his family – Hashem then says to the malochim, "You malochim have no troubles! But man, who unwillingly has the burden of parnasa, still behaves as such...!" and so Hashem continues to pride himself before the malochim with the conduct of a Yid.

(תו"מ חכ"ג ע' 288)

LEARNING ON THE JOB

At a farbrengen, the Frierdiker Rebbe told one of his chassidim, a store owner, that he wants to make a covenant with him. The Rebbe asked him if he has a Tanya in his store and stipulated, "I do not mean a Tanya that sits without usage, rather one that is the focus of all comings and goings." The Frierdiker Rebbe added that if he will be involved in the sefer, the communist officials would not mix into his 'books.'

(סה"ש תרפ"ז ע' 116)

The chossid Reb Binyamin Kletzker had a wooden log business. Once while calculating his business earnings, he wrote out all the entries correctly but reaching the 'Total', he inadvertently filled in, "אין עווד", there is nothing besides Hashem. When he was asked how he can be involved with chassidus while doing business, he replied, "If while standing before Hashem, thoughts of the wooden logs can enter my mind, how much more so that pure and holy thoughts can enter my mind while dealing with logs..."

(אג"ק ח"ז ע' רג"ז)

Reb Shloma 'der Geler', a chossid of the Rebbe Rashab, worked as a builder's assistant, and both he and the builder would discuss chassidus while working. Once while building a wall, they were raptly involved in their chassidic discussion, and unintentionally enclosed Reb Shlomo on the opposite side of the wall! When they realized this, they had to break the wall and take him out.

(סיפורים חסידיים ח"א ע' 201)

The Frierdiker Rebbe writes that in previous times, they would refer to parnasa only as "חיונה", sustenance, unlike in America where they say one is "making a living" (implying that it is the essence of one's life).

(סה"ש תש"ד ע' 83)

One of the chassidim of stature of the Rebbe Rashab became very involved in the business of galoshes. Once the Rebbe Rashab commented to him, "I have seen feet in galoshes, but I have never seen a 'head in galoshes'..."

(לקוטי שיחות א ע' 224)

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