

FEELING PROUD

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

PROUD TO BE DIFFERENT

Though pride is usually a negative trait, when it concerns serving Hashem, it is praiseworthy. One should be proud of his achievements and aspire to further heights. Yehoshafat the king of the Yidden is praised for taking pride in the ways of Hashem, and Chazal say that one should thank Hashem for placing him amongst those who learn torah. This type of pride does not detract from humility, rather causes the person to rejoice in good virtues, while enjoying and caring for the honor of his peers.

This pride helps one stand strong in face of wrongdoings and evildoers. A person should act proudly even if he will be suspected of arrogance. However, in physical matters, he should concede to others, beyond the basic requirements.

Similarly, the Baal Shem Tov explained that Yidden should use their pride for torah matters and their humility for worldly matters.

(ארחות צדיקים שער הגאווה, כש"ט אות ח)

On numerous occasions, the Rebbe emphasized that the way a Yid gains respect in the eyes of others is by showing unwavering commitment to one's standards. There were some who thought that by bending their standards, they would be accepted and well liked, but the outcome was the opposite. When the others involved saw that the Yid felt inferior, they treated him as such.

The Rebbe pointed out this message from the words of the *meraglim*, "We were like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and so (therefore) we were in their eyes (of the goyim)."

(שיחו"ק תשל"ח ח"ג ע' 215, לקו"ש חכ"ג ע' 479)

Living in communist Russia, the children of chassidim were distinct from their neighbors. Their clothes were refined and properly covered them, and their tzitzis showed from under their clothes, even in the summer heat. An expression of *yiras shamayim* and 'eidelkiet' could be seen on their faces, especially with their long *peiyos* which extended down their cheeks.

Even during play, the difference was noticeable. They would not take part in any wild activities and stood on the side with dignity. Their *derech erez* led the way. In shul, they would stand near their fathers, davening slowly from a siddur. Many were jealous that their children were different, and would wonder aloud: "How did these come to behave as such? These *kleineh yiddelach!*"

When the boys were ridiculed for their *peiyos* and tzitzis, they were not ashamed, nor did they respond, for they knew the vast difference between them, and they looked at others with pity and sympathy.

(דברי הימים גורקאוו ע' עה)

Exiting, after having Yechidus with the Rebbe Rashab, Reb Zalman Duchman met the Frieddiker Rebbe standing in the courtyard. Seeing him, the Frieddiker Rebbe called him and inquired what the Rebbe Rashab had told him. Reb Zalman related that he had been told to travel to Warsaw. At this point, the Frieddiker Rebbe had a long talk with Reb Zalman, encouraging him not to be influenced by his surroundings and to act just as he did when in Lubavitch. "Look at the Chinese," said the Frieddiker Rebbe, "They walk around here the same way they do in their homeland, because they know that at home everyone dresses as they do..."

(לשמע און ע' 123)

Once upon entering yechidus, the chossid Reb Zalman Gurary found the Frieddiker Rebbe looking downcast. The Frieddiker Rebbe told him that he is upset because he does not see enough yiddish pride amongst his chassidim. Reb Zalman responded, "How can that be? In all other circles, they speak highly of the pride of the Lubavitcher chassidim." The Frieddiker Rebbe's face lit up and he said, "Is that so?" Later Reb Zalman found out that this had greatly uplifted the Rebbe's spirits.

(מפי השמועה)

During the communist regime, a group of American Rabbis traveled to Russia, to bring encouragement and support to Yidden living there. Arriving in Moscow, the delegates met the locals and prided themselves with their worldliness, such as their ability to play ball etc. The Russian Yidden were not impressed: "We have soccer players here as well, and for that, we do not need a group to come from America."

Two years later, a group of Yidden from Eretz Yisroel traveled there, on a similar mission. They were dressed in the modern fashion, trying not to appear too yiddishe, and boasted of their sports and drama. The Russian Yidden were shocked, "We are here, going on *mesiras nefesh* to observe torah and mitzvos, and the yidden in *Eretz Hakodesh* are investing their efforts in worldly culture". They parted, uninspired and rather discouraged.

In a disappointing letter to a member of the second group, the Rebbe laments the lack of Yiddishe pride amongst the general youth: "It is imperative that the youth walk the streets as noticeable Yidden, so that they are clearly recognized as very frum. When questioned how they spend their time, the obvious response should be, 'With learning torah and keeping mitzvos, and a little work on the side to earn a parnoso.' Their energy should be devoted towards that which is unique to the Yidden, and not such matters about which goyim are also excited about."

(אגרות קודש ח"ט ע' קיה)

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NOT ASHAMED

The Friediker Rebbe bemoaned: "In the past, one would be embarrassed to say that he is acting 'worldly' and following everyone else. Today, it has become an excuse. When questioned about a behavior, he justifies himself, 'Everyone does it!'...."

On another occasion, he said: "Recently, people have begun feeling ashamed. From who is there to be ashamed? From some 'clothing on a post'? This embarrassment has actually caused many to compromise their *yiddishkeit*, leaving 'pieces' by the barber and the tailor... We need not be ashamed of them; they should be ashamed of us."

(סה"ש תש"ב ע' 126, 120, 92)

Once, while standing before Izgadar, the king of Persia, the Amora Huna bar Nassan, was wearing his gartel too high. Noticing this, the king reached over and personally moved it to its place and said to him, "You belong to a royal and holy nation, and you must look regal." Huna bar Nassan shared this story with Ameimar, to which he replied, "With you, it was fulfilled that which is written, 'Kings will be your servants.'"

The Rebbe explains that a Yid must feel strong with the torah and not be fazed by the nations around him, and then even kings will come to his aid.

(זבחים יט ע"א, לקו"ש חכ"ד ע' 175)

The Amora Rav Yehudah and Batti bar Tuvi were once sitting before the Persian king Shvur Malkah when a fruit was brought before them. The king grabbed an unkosher knife and cut a slice for Batti. Then, he took the knife and stabbed it in hard earth to kasher it, and cut another slice for Rav Yehudah. Surprised that the king didn't do so for him, Batti asked the king, "Am I not a Yid?!" The king responded, "With Rav Yehudah, I am sure that he will not eat from it, no matter the consequence. You will eat it, out of fear of me."

The Rebbe explains that when a goy sees how a Yid is firm in his observance of mitzvos, he considers it an honor to personally serve the Yid with his needs.

(לקו"ש חיי"ט ע' 31)

The Rebbe once told someone in Yechidus: "The fact that Rabbis in America do not have beards, and Yidden flee a community when goyim move nearby, and that land in Eretz Yisroel is being given away, are all rooted in the same problem: the inferiority complex the Yidden have to goyim. If only the yiddishe pride would be strong, all these issues would be resolved."

(משבחי רבי ע' 173)

In one letter, the Rebbe stressed that since Yidden are a minority and are in danger of being influenced by their surroundings, effort must always be made to retain the yiddishe character. This is done by emphasizing the positive yiddishe traits and overlooking the common ground with the goyim around us.

The Rebbe bemoans the behavior of some Rabbis, who use goyishe sources as proof of an idea, even when the idea exists in yiddishe sources. They imagine that this will impress the listeners, demonstrating that they are well versed in the secular literature and culture.

In a similar manner, at events supporting yiddishe organizations, emphasis should be placed on preserving yiddishe values, instead of bringing a goyishe personality as a speaker or honored guest.

(היכל מנחם ח"ג ע' צד)

The Rebbe said: "There are some who make every effort to hide their meticulousness of mitzvos out of fear that they will be dubbed a '*farfrumter*' (one who is overly frum). Instead, one should do it publicly and disregard any scoffers."

The Rebbe related: The chossid of the Alter Rebbe, Reb Mordechai Liepler, was firm in his observance of mitzvos, thanks to his pride. When his yetzer hora would try to incite him to do something wrong, he would stand up tall and shout, "I?! The chossid of the Alter Rebbe,

the wealthy *lamdon* and *maskil* (learns chassidus in-depth) should perform an *aveira*?! That is not befitting for me!"

The Rebbe added that every Yid can have this pride. When a Yid thinks of his great ancestors, that he stood at Har Sinai and was given the torah, and that the entire world was created for him – he will feel that it is unbecoming for him to lower himself even a bit.

(תו"מ ח"ה ע' 231, ח"י ע' 58)

On one occasion, the Rebbe expressed surprise how a Yid could possibly feel inferior to goyishe lifestyle and culture: "You are from a nation that Hashem chose from all other nations, and are ashamed of them?! While their ancestors were cannibals, the Yidden had received the torah and were following its moral ways, and only later did the goyim begin following its way! Why should the Yid be ashamed to lead the rest of the world by the light of the torah?"

(שיחוק קתשל"ח ח"ג ע' 170)

IGNORING SCOFFERS

Yehudah ben Teima said: "Be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a deer, and strong as a lion, to carry out the will of your Father in heaven." 'Bold as a leopard' means not to be embarrassed by people who mock his service of Hashem. Yet, he should not respond to them with brazen words, so that he does acquire a brazen nature.

(אבות ה,כ, שווע"ר מהדור"ס ס"א ע' ג)

The Rebbe pointed out that the beginning of the entire *Shulchan Aruch* is, "*Al yeivosh mipnei hamal'igim*," do not be embarrassed of scoffers, for this is the base for observing all of *Shulchan Aruch*. Being that it is recorded in *Shulchan Aruch*, it has the status of an obligatory *halacha*.

(אג"ק ח"ו ע' שמ ועוד, לקו"ש חכ"א ע' 287)

The Friediker Rebbe writes: In the end of *galus*, before Moshiach comes, there are many who disturb and ridicule those who fear Hashem. This is very challenging, particularly when the scoffers are people whose only interest is to indulge in worldly pleasures, and they mock great chachomim. However, Hashem gives the power to prevail over them, even more than during the times of the *Beis Hamikdash*.

(סה"מ תש"ט ע' 118)

The Rebbe said: "Due to the weakness of the *neshamos* in our generation, Hashem has given us only one small test – to withstand ridicule. People today are afraid of being laughed at. Actually, what do you care if a fool will laugh at you? It should only confirm that whatever you've been doing is right, for they don't laugh at fools..."

On the other hand, the Rebbe noted that since it can be quite a challenge, it is prefaced at the very beginning of the entire *Shulchan Aruch*.

(שיחוק קתשל"ח ח"א ע' 295, התוועדויות תשמ"ח ח"א ע' 287)

In the year תש"ב, one of the young chassidim served as a Rov in a small community. At his post, he strived to improve the yiddishkeit there, but he was met with resistance. Some of the Yidden there did not appreciate his efforts and constantly ridiculed him. This had a strong effect on the young chossid, and he even considered leaving his position.

When the Friediker Rebbe got word of this, he sent him a letter of encouragement in which he wrote: "I am surprised that you are being affected by the opinions of the people. You must bear in mind that 'there will always be poor amongst us', people who are 'poor' in torah and good *middos* and will brazenly try to disturb good things. You must not be affected by their words, just as one riding in a fancy carriage would ignore shouts of crazies. Take it as a sign that you are doing good work, and the truth will prevail."

(אג"ק ריי"צ ח"ו ע' צה)

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