

Chayus

A Shabbos Stimulus

THE EDA AND DAVID SCHOTTENSTEIN EDITION

In Loving Memory of Itta bas Yosef Mordechai ז"ל and Tzvi Daniel ben David ז"ל Ainsworth

Dedicated by David & Eda Schottenstein

הקהל

Hakhel

A Gathering of Peace

Moshe then commanded them, saying, "At the end of every seven years, at the time of the Year of Shemitah, on the Festival of Sukkos..."

The Shemitah year causes harmony and "Hakhel" (assembly). This is accomplished because it is forbidden for a land owner to plant and grow produce for themselves on their land during the Shemitah year, nor may they take ownership of the produce that grows on it (on its own), as they usually would. Rather, the poor may eat from what ever grows.

This, without a doubt, causes harmony. For all disagreements stem from a trait of [selfishness] "what's mine is mine," [ultimately leading the per-

son to claim] "it is all mine." This [trait] is not so [prevalent] in the seventh year [for during this year, everyone is entitled to all produce, "what's mine is yours"] ... So [too] on Sukkos, everyone leaves their permanent dwelling to a temporary dwelling and sits in his 'Sukkah of peace.'

Accordingly, on the first day of Chol Hamoed (the intermediate days of the holiday) Sukkos, the king was commanded to make a tangible indication of this peace, namely, the Hakhel gathering.

Kli Yakar on Devarim 31:12

סיפור חסידי

Once Upon a Chasid

By Yanki Tauber

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Who's Boss

Judges and law-enforcers you shall place at all your city gates (Devarim 16:18)

On the personal level, "your gates" refers to the seven sensory gates of the small city, that is the human body, i.e., its seven points of contact with the outside world. A person should appoint mental "judges and law-enforcers" over his eyes, ears, nostrils and mouth, to judge, weigh and filter the desirable and constructive stimuli from the negative and destructive ones.

Rabbi Shabtai Hakohen (the "Shach")

A chassid once came to Rabbi DovBer, the 'Maggid' of Mezeritch. "Rebbe," he said, "there is something I do not comprehend. When the Almighty commands us to do something or forbids a certain act, I understand. No matter how difficult it may be, no matter how strongly my heart craves the forbidden course, I can do what G-d desires or refrain from

doing what is against His will. After all, man has free choice and by force of will he can decide on a course of action and stick to it, no matter what. The same is true with speech. Though somewhat more difficult to control, I accept that it is within my power to decide which words will leave my mouth and which will not.

"But what I fail to understand are those precepts

which govern matters of the heart; for example, when the Torah forbids us to even entertain a thought that is destructive and wrong. What is one to do when such thoughts enter his mind of their own accord? Can a person control his thoughts?"

Instead of answering the chassid's question, Rabbi DovBer dispatched him to the hamlet of Zhitomir. "Go visit my disciple, Rabbi Zev" he said. "Only he can answer your question."

The trip was made in the dead of winter. For weeks the chassid made his way along the roads which wound their way through the snow-laden forests of White Russia.

Midnight had long come and gone when the weary traveller arrived at Rabbi Zev's doorstep. Much to his pleasant surprise, the windows of the scholar's study where alight. Indeed, Rabbi Zev's was the only lighted window in the village. Through a chink in the shutters the visitor could see Rabbi Zev bent over his books.

But his knock brought no response. He waited awhile, then tried once more, harder. Still, he was completely ignored. The cold was beginning to infiltrate his bones. As the night wore on, the scene which unfolded was as incredible as it was true: the visitor, with nowhere else to turn, kept pounding upon the frozen planks of Rabbi Zev's door; the rabbi, a scant few steps away, continued to study by his fire-side, seemingly oblivious to the pleas which echoed through the sub-zero night.

It was almost morning when Rabbi Zev rose from

his seat, opened the door, and warmly greeted his visitor. He sat him by the fire, prepared for him a hot glass of tea, and asked after the health of their Rebbe. He then led his guest—still speechless with cold and incredulity—to the best room in the house to rest his weary bones.

The warm welcome did not abate the next morning, nor the one after. Rabbi Zev was the most solicitous of hosts, attending to the needs of his guest in a most exemplary manner. The visitor, too, was a model guest, considerate and respectful of the elder scholar. If any misgivings about the midnight 'welcome' accorded him still lingered in his heart, he kept them to himself.

After enjoying the superb hospitality of Rabbi Zev for several days, the visitor had sufficiently recovered from his journey and apprehension to put forth his query. "The purpose of my visit," he said to his host one evening, "is to ask you a question. Actually, our Rebbe sent me to you, saying that only you could answer me to my satisfaction."

The visitor proceeded to outline his problem as he had expressed it earlier to the Maggid. When he had finished, Reb Zev said: "Tell me, my friend, is a man any less a master of his own self than he is of his home?"

"You see, I gave you my answer on the very night you arrived. In my home, I am the boss. Whomever I wish to admit—I allow in; whomever I do not wish to admit—I do not."

The Dripping Hat

Be wholesome ('tamim') *with G-d* (Devarim 18:13)

To be 'tamim' with G-d means: Walk with Him with simplicity and without guile. Do not seek to manipulate the future; rather, accept whatever He brings upon you wholeheartedly. Then, He will be with you and you will reap the rewards of His apportionment.

Rashi's commentary

When Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi was released from his imprisonment in 1798, there was great rejoicing and celebration. At one of the farbrengens at the Rebbe's synagogue in Li'ozna, the celebrating chassidim invented a most unique dance: a barrel of vodka was set up in the center of the room, with a dipper at its side; as each chassid passed the barrel, he dipped in for a l'chayim. Round and round swirled the dancers, dip, dip, dip, went the dipper.

Soon the predictable happened: the hat of one of the dancing chassidim took a nose-dive into the bar-

rel. Rabbi Schneur Zalman himself fished out the hat, replaced it on the young man's head, and quoted: "A hat of salvation upon his head." That year, the young chassid became extremely wealthy.

One year later, when the celebration and the dance were repeated, an enterprising young chassid decided to try the hat trick himself. As he passed the barrel, he nonchalantly flipped his hat into its spirited contents. The Rebbe rewarded him with nary a glance...

Torah Without Ego

The Mishna teaches: “He who walks along the path while learning Torah and pauses from his learning to remark ‘how lovely is this tree; how lovely is this furrow’—the Torah considers it as if he had forfeited his life” (Avot 3:7). Why should the consequence for mere distraction be so dire?

“Pauses in his learning” (מפסיק ממשנתו) can be interpreted as “removes himself [from G-d], through his learning.” The Mishna describes an individual who strolls down the path of Torah but fails to connect to G-d and, quite the opposite, removes himself from G-d by using Torah to inflate his own ego. The egotistical scholar marvels at his accomplishments in Torah learning and declares “how lovely is this tree”—for “man is a tree of the field” (Devarim 20:19)—and “how lovely is this furrow”—for the verse states “plow for yourselves a furrow” (Yirmiyahu 4:3).

The Torah considers this attitude a mortal sin.

Par. 442

Lots of Light

Our Sages state that the *beis hamikdash* parallels the entire physical world. Accordingly, its *menorah* alludes to the luminaries: the sun and the moon. At the start of Creation, the moon was as bright as the sun, and the sun was sevenfold its present strength. The world was lit up even at night, and correspondingly, the *menorah* in the *beis hamikdash* burned by day and by night. The *menorah*’s seven lamps represent the sevenfold light of the sun.

In the era of redemption, the universe will return to its original state, as it is stated, “*And the light of the moon shall be like the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold*” (Yeshayah 30:26).

Tzemach Dovid

Who’s Your Leader and King?

The Context:

Appointing a Jewish king is a fundamental mitzvah in the process of entering the Land of Israel and establishing a functioning society. Yet, when the Jewish people asked the prophet Shmuel to “set up for us a king to judge us like all the nations” (Shmuel I, 8:5), G-d was dismayed at the request, seeing it as an indication of their disloyalty to Him, “they have

rejected Me from reigning over them” (Ibid.:7). Nevertheless, G-d fulfilled their request and instructed Shmuel to appoint Shaul as Israel’s first king.

The Question:

If appointing a king is a central mitzvah, why was G-d disappointed in the people’s request? And if their request was improper, why did G-d fulfill it?

The Explanation:

Chassidus explains that a king can serve two different functions:

At the most basic level, a king ensures law and order. The threat of the king's power curbs the worst impulses of the population and reigns in any potential violence and corruption.

But when the populace is more refined and has sufficient self-restraint to govern their own disputes and affairs, a king serves a loftier purpose—he imparts to them a higher level of Divine awareness and awe than they are capable of reaching on their own.

Shmuel wanted the people to attain a basic level of fear of Heaven on their own, and to desire a king so that they can reach for loftier levels of awe. Yet their request for a “king to judge us like all the nations,” indicated that they lacked that basic level of self-restraint and fear of heaven, and needed a king like all other nations, to instill law and order in their society. Thus, Shmuel, and G-d, were disappointed at the people's lack of submission to G-d.

Nonetheless, G-d heeded their request because

they still needed a king to serve that basic, first function of ensuring peace and morality.

The Lesson:

Although we do not currently have a king, we do have the imperative to “appoint a teacher” for ourselves (*Pirkei Avos* 1:6), and, today, the “rabbis are our kings” (*Gittin*, end of ch. 5). Thus, we can apply the standards for appointing a king to our personal responsibility of finding a mentor for ourselves.

It is common for people to assume that they do not need a mentor to guide them in the basic, elementary decisions in life, and to help them fulfill their basic spiritual obligations; thinking that they can decide these things on their own. Yet, the narrative of Shmuel's appointment of a king shows us that even if we have not reached a loftier level of Divine awareness, we still must appoint a “king” to ensure basic law and order in our personal lives. Thus, it is precisely when we are lacking in basic awe of Heaven that we must actively search for a mentor who can guide us in our spiritual lives.

Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 24, p. 104ff.

מורה שיעור לחת"ת ורמב"ם לשבת

Shabbos Chitas / Rambam Guide

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