

Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotzk

Special thanks to Revach L'Neshama for the content

His whole life he waged a war for the truth - the external and internal truth. This was the essence of Rav Menachem Mendel Morgenstern, better known as the Kotzker Rebbe. He was born in 5547/1787 and lived at a time when Chasiddus was making great inroads into the mainstream of Jewish society.

He left no *seforim*, no tales of miracles, and no biography. His lone legacy is his short sharp sayings that he became famous for to the world outside of Kotzk. He did not seek honor, fortune, or fame. He sought to raise Chasiddus to a movement for the elite. He longed to bring Chasiddus into a movement with truly inspired Avodas Hashem and intense Torah learning as its cornerstone.

When the Kotzker was asked why he did not want to write a *sefer*, he said that in Kotzk people work hard all week long. The only time to read his *sefer* would be on Friday night after the meal. At that time, however, a person is tired from the entire week and will lay down on the couch with the *sefer*. He will shortly thereafter fall asleep without reading anything and the *sefer* will fall on the floor. "So why should I write a *sefer* whose only use will be to lie on the floor in shame?" Such was the Kotzker truth.

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Halacha Challenge

Calm Thoughts

In the last issue, we continued discussing the halachos of thoughts on Shabbos, and saw that it's prohibited to think about weekday activities if such thoughts cause a person to become worried or burdened by them. In this issue, we will explore a case where such thoughts don't cause a person to worry or become burdened by them.



Mr. Fienberg is a photographer for the city's newspaper. This Friday was a busy day for Mr. Fienberg - he took pictures of the annual car show that was taking place in the city.

"I still need to take more pictures on Sunday - the last day of the show," thought Mr. Fienberg. "But, at least, most of the project is complete!"

On Shabbos, Mr. Fienberg would occasionally think in his mind about the models of cars that would be good to photograph on Sunday. Even though those thoughts did not disturb him, Mr. Fienberg was debating in his mind whether or not he should try not to have those thoughts in his mind.

Q. May Mr. Fienberg think about the photos that he will take on Sunday?

DEDICATIONS

- Dedicated to Shmuel Leib for continued success in his Avodas Hashem. Happy Birthday!

Special thanks to kehillas **Beis Tefillah Yonah Avraham**



Help: In the last issue, we saw the following words of the Midrash Mechilta¹ -

ששית ימים תעבוד ועשית כל מלאכתך. וכי איפשר לו לאדם לעשות כל מלאכתו בששת ימים?! אלא שבות כאלו כל מלאכתך עשויה.

[The verse says:] “Labor for six days and do all of your melacha.” How is it possible for a person to do all of his melacha in six days?! Rather, [that verse is saying:] You should rest [on Shabbos in such manner] as if all of your melacha is completed.

As quoted by the Beis Yosef, based on this Midrash, Rabbeinu Yonah teaches that it is forbidden for a person to think about his weekday activities (i.e., involved activities, such as work, business, projects, financial dealings, etc.) if his mind becomes burdened by them or if they cause him to have worry². The Mishna Berura references the Beis Yosef above and writes that a person needs to be careful not to think about his weekday activities if his mind becomes burdened by them, or if they cause him to worry³.

In our challenge, however, the thoughts about weekday activities are not causing the person to worry or be overburdened by them. Having said that, to help us solve the challenge, we need to look at the second part of the Midrash Mechilta that we quoted above:

ד"א: שבות ממחשבת עבודה; ואומר "אם תשיב משבת רגליך וגו'" ואומר "אז תתענג על השם"

Alternatively, the verse is saying: “Rest from thinking about work.” Thus, the verse [in sefer Yeshayahu 58:13] says: “If you will stop on Shabbos, on My sacred day from pursuing your weekday needs, and [if you will] call Shabbos: ‘a delight’, and [call] the sacred day of Hashem: ‘honored’...Then, you will take pleasure in [being close to] Hashem...”

Menucha's Answer*: He may. However, due to *oneg* Shabbos, it's a *mitzva* not to think about this at all, and imagine that his photo report of the car show is finished.

Explanation: Based on the words of the Tur, the Shulchan Aruch writes the following: כל ממשום עונג שבת, מצוה שלא יחשוב בהם כלל ויהא בעיניו כאילו כל - מלאכתו עשויה. *“Thinking about one’s [weekday] activities is permitted. Nevertheless, due to oneg Shabbos, it’s mitzva not to think about them at all. And it should appear to him as if all of his tasks are completed.”*⁴ Based on what we’ve learned previously (see the Help section), this *halacha* appears to be referring to thoughts which don’t overburden a person and don’t cause him to worry.

1. מדרש מכילתא פרשת יתרו (ז) 2. בית יוסף א"ח ריש סי' שו 3. מ"ב סי' שו ס"ק לח 4. שו"ע א"ח סי' שו סע' ח

* Note: Menucha's answer is for Torah learning purposes only and not as a *halachic* ruling.

עֲשֵׂה צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט נִבְחַר לָהּ מִזִּבְחַת. -- מִשְׁלֵי כ"א: ג

Mishlei



Performing charity and justice is preferred by Hashem to a sacrifice. -- Mishlei 21:3

The beginning of this week's parsha tells us to do charity and justice. The verse above from the sefer Mishlei shows just how great charity and justice truly are: they are greater than sacrifices.

The Midrash Rabba explains in what way charity and justice are greater than sacrifices:

הקרבנות אין מכפרין אלא לשווג, והצדקה והדינין מכפרים בין לשווג בין למזיד (מדרש דברים רבה שופטים פרשה ה סימן ג)

The sacrifices atone only for sins done unintentionally, while charity and [just] judgments atone for sins done unintentionally and intentionally. (Midrash Devorim Rabba, Shoftim, parsha 5, siman 3)

Riddles



When the Beis HaMikdash will be rebuilt במהרה בימינו, you will see me there. How do I look, you ask? Well, the best characteristic that describes me is that I am black.

How do people feel about me, you want to know? Those who understand, are happy when they look at me and describe me as “beautiful.”

Last week's Riddle

Reuven heard his brother Levi say a special addition to the Bircas Hamazon. “Hmm...” - said Reuven to his sister Miriam - “Most people don’t say that addition today.” “Right,” - replied Miriam – “and they hope that they will never have to!” Which addition to Bircas Hamazon did Levi say?

Answer

Ya'aleh Veyavo for Yom Kippur. If a sick person needs to eat on Yom Kippur, he adds the *Ya'aleh Veyavo* insertion to the Bircas Hamazon and mentions Yom Kippur.