

# HIDE FROM YOURSELF

*by Shlomo Katz*

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**Edited by Shlomo Katz**

**Contributing Editor: Daniel Dadusc**

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Today's Learning:

Rosh Hashanah 4:2-3

Orach Chaim 319:8-10

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Nedarim 52

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Bava Kamma 9

R' Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik z"l (the "Bet Halevi"; 1820- 1892) was related by marriage to the famed nationalist and literary figure, Peretz Smolenskin a"h (1840-1885). Once, R' Soloveitchik was visiting Warsaw, and learning that Smolenskin was hospitalized there, he announced his intention to visit his relative.

One of R' Soloveitchik's followers attempted to dissuade the rabbi from visiting Smolenskin, who was a leading figure in the Haskalah / "Enlightenment" movement, which was antagonistic to the traditional yeshivot of Eastern Europe. R' Soloveitchik would not be dissuaded, and he explained:

"The Torah says [in this week's parashah - 22:1], 'You shall not see the ox of your brother or his sheep or goat cast off [i.e., lost], and hide yourself from them; you shall surely return them to your brother.'

The gemara derives from the wording of the verse that, in fact, there are exceptions to the obligation to return a lost object.

"However, in Yishayah (58:7) we read, 'From your flesh you shall not hide.' In that case, the gemara never says that there are exceptions, that there are instances when a person may hide from his own flesh. Therefore, I must visit my relative."

A related idea, also from this week's parashah: A scholarly chassid in Yerushalayim of a century ago had a son who was non-religious. At some point, some of Yerushalayim's zealots began to oppress this chassid because he refused to sever his relationship with his son. Upon hearing this, R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld (leader of the Neturei Karta; died 1933) said, "The Torah obligates a hunter to send away the mother bird before taking the eggs. Ordinarily, it is difficult to trap a swift bird, but when it is sitting in its eggs, which it loves, it becomes vulnerable. The Torah forbids us from taking advantage of that vulnerability." (Otzrot Tzaddikei U'geonei Ha'dorot p. 567-568)

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*"When you will go out to war against your enemies, and He will deliver them, Hashem, your G-d, into your hands . . . and you will see among the captivity a beautiful woman and you will desire her . . ." (21:10)*

R' Avraham Weinberg z"l (the "Yesod Ha'avodah"; see page 4) interpreted this allegorically as follows:

When you will go out to war against your enemies, how will you merit that He (Hashem) deliver the enemies to you? Only if Hashem, your G-d, is in your hands, i.e., if your deeds reflect a recognition of G-d. And, if you act properly, you will see that the neshamah / soul which is a captive within you is beautiful, and you will desire to bring that neshamah pleasure. (Quoted in Torat Avot p.125)

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*"If you build a new house, you shall make a railing for your roof . . ." (22:8)*

R' Shalom Noach Brazovsky z"l (the "Slonimer Rebbe"; see page 4) asks: Why is the mitzvah to build a railing given in the context of a new house and a roof? In fact, the mitzvah applies in equal measure to an old house and to any place from which a person could fall and be hurt!

He answers: The Torah wishes to teach us the following practical lesson. We read in Yishayah 55:7 (in the haftarah read on fast days), "Let the wicked one forsake his way." True and complete repentance does not involve merely "patching" oneself but rather abandoning one's old ways and rebuilding oneself from the ground up. When you do build a new house, build a fence around your roof - "your roof" is your head, and the fence is fear of G-d, which is the only means to protect your senses (most of which reside in the organs of your head) from "falling." (Nesivos Shalom)

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*"Remember what, to you, Amalek did on the way when you were leaving Egypt." (25:17)*

R' Moshe Midner z"l (see page 4) asks why the verse says, "to you, Amalek did," rather than the more natural "Amalek did to you"? Also, what is added by the word, "ba'derech" / "on the way"? He explains:

The specific form of impurity spread by Amalek is doubt regarding matters of faith. Amalek attacked us "on the way . . . leaving Egypt," i.e., they preached that all of the miracles of the Exodus were simply the "way" of the world, that is, they were natural occurrences. This is alluded to in our verse, which is phrased as it is in order to juxtapose the word "Amalek" to the word "on the way."

In this light we can understand why Moshe fought Amalek by lifting his hands above his head. This reminded Bnei Yisrael that there are things that are supernatural and above our understanding ("over our heads"). And, thus we read (Shmot 17:12- 13), "His hands were faith . . . and Yehoshua weakened Amalek." (Quoted in Torat Avot p.126)

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R' Moshe Paler of Kobrin z:l (early 19th century chassidic rebbe) related: R' Mordechai of Lechovitch z"l once entered an inn in the late summer, in the waning days of the Polish harvest season and the beginning of Elul. There he saw a group of peasants sitting over their drinks, and he heard one say to his friends, "You know, if you don't work hard this month, you will lack food all year."

R' Mordechai called to his chassidim, "Did you hear what he said?!"

On another occasion, R' Moshe of Kobrin said: The real time to do teshuvah is the month of Elul, for when Rosh Hashanah comes, we are obligated to crown G-d as our King. By then, we must be ready to accept Him totally (without interference from lingering sin). (Quoted in Torat Avot p. 123-124)

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## **R' Shalom Noach Brazovsky z"l**

(The "Slonimer Rebbe")

This past week marked thirty days since the passing on the 7th of Av of R' Shalom Noach Brazovsky, the Slonimer Rebbe. Through his voluminous writings, R' Brazovsky was among the most influential of contemporary chassidic rebbes, and his impact was felt among chassidim and non-chassidim alike. A leading Lithuanian (i.e., non-chassidic) rosh yeshiva in Israel reportedly referred to R' Brazovsky's work Nesivos Shalom as the "Mesillat Yeshtarim of our times." (Mesillat Yeshtarim is a classic mussar work written in the 18th century.)

R' Brazovsky was born on 14 Av 5671 / August 8, 1911 in Baranovichi (today in Belarus), where his father, R' Moshe Avraham, was the Rosh Hakahal" / president of the Jewish community. Baranovichi is best known to many as the home of R' Elchonon Wasserman and his yeshiva, but it was also the home of the Slonimer Rebbe, R' Avraham Weinberg, and his famed yeshiva, Toras Chessed. (R'

Weinberg, known as the "Bais Avraham," was a great-grandson and namesake of the first Slonimer Rebbe, known as the "Yesod Ha'avodah." R' Brazovsky's mother was a granddaughter of R' Hillel, a brother of the "Yesod Ha'avodah.")

The future R' Brazovsky studied in Yeshivas Toras Chessed under its rosh yeshiva, R' Avraham Shmuel Hirshovitz (a grandson of R' Eliezer Gordon of Telz), and its mashgiach, R' Moshe Midner (a grandson of the "Yesod Ha'avodah" and a student of R' Chaim "Brisker" Soloveitchik). With such leaders, the Slonimer yeshiva was virtually unique in combining Talmudic studies in the Lithuanian style with traditional chassidic teachings.

In approximately 1930, the Bais Avraham appointed R' Brazovsky to commit to writing (after Shabbat, of course) the Torah lessons which he (the Rebbe) delivered every Shabbat. These notes later became the book Bais Avraham. Shortly before his own passing in 1933, the Bais Avraham recommended to his cousin, R' Avraham Weinberg of Teveryah (Tiberias) that he take R' Brazovsky as a son-in-law. (Teveryah was home to many Slonimer chassidim, including R' Avraham's brother, the father of R' Yaakov Weinberg, the late rosh yeshiva of Ner Israel, and R' Noach Weinberg shlita, founder of Aish Hatorah.)

In 1940, R' Brazovsky was appointed rosh yeshiva of the Lubavitcher yeshiva Achai Temimim in Tel Aviv. On Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan 5702 / October 21, 1941, he opened the Slonimer yeshiva in Yerushalayim with five students. As had been the case in Baranovichi, the yeshiva offered traditional chassidic teachings alongside Talmudic lectures using the Lithuanian style of analysis. R' Brazovsky also could be found sitting with the students for hours on end, especially on Friday night, teaching them the traditional Slonimer melodies.

R' Brazovsky's yeshiva served as the kernel for the rebirth of Slonimer chassidut after the group's near destruction in the Holocaust. The last pre-war Slonimer Rebbe, R' Shlomo David Yehoshua Weinberg, was killed in 1944, and for ten years, no successor was named. In 1954, R' Brazovsky's father-in-law agreed to assume the mantle of the Rebbe. (His teachings are collected -- again, by R' Brazovsky -- in the work Birkat Avraham, and he is known by that name.)

With the exception of the Yesod Ha'avodah, none of the Slonimer Rebbes or their predecessors, the rebbes of Lechovitch (Lyakhovichi) and Kobrin, committed their teachings to writing. As part of his effort to rejuvenate Slonimer chassidut, R' Brazovsky was responsible for collecting the oral traditions ascribed to these leaders in works such as Divrei Shmuel and Torat Avot (in addition to the works already mentioned). R' Brazovsky also authored many volumes of his own teachings, including the seven-volume Nesivos Shalom and many smaller works on educational issues, marital harmony and other issues. One distinguishing feature of those works is R' Brazovsky's practice of deriving practical moral and ethical teachings from verses using traditional chassidic methods of interpretation.

R' Brazovsky served as the Slonimer Rebbe from his father-in-law's death on 12 Sivan 5741 / 1981.

He is succeeded by his son, R' Shmuel. (Sources: Hamodia, August 18, 2000, p. 24; Marbitzei Torah Me'olam Ha'chassidut Vol. I, p. 177; *ibid*, Vol. III, p. 167)

*Sponsored by Dr. and Mrs. Irving Katz in memory of father Moshe Aharon ben Menashe Reiss a"h*

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