



SERMON RESOURCE FOR SHLUCHIM

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Pushy Angels

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Emil W. Herman  who loved and supported Torah learning.

Vayetzei

Pushy Angels

There is a Jew from the Ukraine named Gennady Bogolubov. Mr. Bogolubov is no ordinary man. He's a billionaire. And he's one of Chabad's biggest supporters.

About three years ago, Mr. Bogolubov started something called the Bogolubov Simcha Fund. This is a special charity that gives every Chabad rabbi a respectable financial gift at the birth of a child, a Bar Mitzvah or a wedding in the family. Whenever any Chabad rabbi celebrates a family occasion, he gets a gift from the Simcha Fund.

So one year, Bogolubov spoke at the Shluchim Conference and he revealed that he gets albums filled with baby pictures every few months from the parents who received his gifts. Likewise does he get Bar Mitzvah albums and wedding albums. He said that in another 20 years, he'll be able to arrange a lot of shidduchim, since he has the biggest archive of available young people in Chabad...

Mr. Bogolubov also shared how his relationship with Chabad all began.

It was in 1995, and he was living in the city of Dnepropetrovsk. This is the city in which the Lubavitcher Rebbe was born and raised.

In those days, Bogolubov only knew that he was a Jew, and nothing more. However, he did notice that there was a man going around the streets of the town in unusual clothing. This was Rabbi Shmuel Kaminetzky, the Chabad rabbi to the city, who had recently just arrived.

A friend told him that there was a new rabbi in town, and the friend invited him to join him at the rabbi's home for a Friday-night Shabbos dinner.

At first, Bogolubov turned down the invitation politely. He thought to himself, "What could I get from the rabbi already? I have food, thank G-d, and everything else there won't interest me."

So a few weeks later, his friend told him again that the rabbi had invited him to come over with his family. So this time, he agreed, and he told his friend that before he comes with his family, he'd come over first by himself to check it out.

And so, one Friday night shortly after that, he came over—and he enjoyed it. The rabbi, obviously, invited him to come the next day to prayer services at the synagogue.

Now, Mr. Bogolubov thought that he'd come to the synagogue and see something spiritual. But when he showed up the next day, he noticed that in the back of the synagogue, in a back room, there was a kitchen in which there were people eating.

So he asked the rabbi, what's this all about? So the rabbi told him, it's a soup kitchen for people who have nowhere else to eat. "How do you know that they really need it?" Bogolubov asked. "Maybe they just want to get a meal for free?"

And here the rabbi uttered one sentence that changed Gennady Bogolubov's life.

He asked him: "Tell me—are you prepared to come here to ask for food to eat? Anyone who comes here to eat definitely needs it."

The very next day, Bogolubov came by and donated ten thousand dollars to help the hungry people.

And speaking at the Kinus, the Shluchim Convention, he ended his story with one very interesting statement. He said that while he could explain all the millions he gave after that, he still has no explanation for the ten thousand dollars that he gave at first.

Until that point, he said, he was accustomed to taking from others and lining his pockets—but that ten thousand dollars was the first time he taken something out of his own pocket and gave to others.

And this brings us to this week's Torah portion.

In our Parshah, we learn about how Yaakov Avinu, our Patriarch Jacob, left the city of Beersheva (which is in the south of modern-day Israel) and went on his way to Charan (which is somewhere in modern-day Syria). He ran away from home because his brother Eisav wanted to kills him.

Not only that, but he had to get married too—and his mother had decided that he needed to get married to someone from their family.

Only problem was, their family was off in faraway Charan. So off Yaakov went.

While on the road all alone, the sun set on Yaakov, and he needed to lie down to go to sleep in the middle of the road. He then had the famous Jacob's Dream—you know, the one in which he saw a ladder with angels going up and down.

Now, everyone may be familiar with Jacob's Dream. However, not everyone notices one particular detail in that dream.

The Torah verse tells us that as the angels were going up and down the ladder, first they went up, and then they came down. Now seemingly, the place for angels is in Heaven—and if so, they should have been coming down first and only then going up!

After all, man's place is on Earth. He first goes up the ladder and then comes down. But an angel from Heaven should first be coming down the ladder and only then going up!

And Rashi picks up on this question, and says: Yaakov had angels who went with him and who protected him wherever he went. And so, since he was about to leave the Holy Land, the angels which had protected him in the Holy Land went back up to Heaven and in their place came down new angels to protect him outside the Holy Land.

In other words, just like every state has its state troopers, and when you cross the border, the state troopers of the first state no longer have any jurisdiction over you and you enter the jurisdiction of the troopers of the second state, so too was it with Yaakov's angels: the angels of the Holy Land didn't have a "visa" for outside the Holy Land, so they had to stay behind, and the angels for outside the Holy Land took their places.

But what is this business of angels accompanying us? Where do they come from? And why?

The Rebbe explains in a talk that there are two types of angels. One is the permanent type, like the Angel Michael, whose mission is to protect the Jewish Nation. Michael is a very ancient angel who was created during the Six Days of Creation. And likewise is the Angel Gabriel, the angel of law and order. There is also Refoel, the Angel of Healing, who came to heal Avraham a few Torah portions ago, if you recall.

But the second kind of angel is the temporary angel—the kind that only exists for a short time.

And we might say that it is this kind of angel that protects every human being—that it is this kind of angel that is generated when we do a mitzvah. As the Midrash tells us, "Should a person do one mitzvah, G-d grants him one angel; if he does two mitzvos, G-d grants him two angels." And as the Mishnah in Pirkei Avos (Ethics of our Fathers) says: "One who does one mitzvah acquires one advocate" (4:11), which commentator Bartenura explains to mean, "an angel who advocates good."

What does all that mean? It means that every mitzvah that a person does generates a spiritual force that we describe as an angel, and it is this force, this angel, that drives the person to do yet another mitzvah. We might even say that this is the meaning of the teaching in Pirkei Avos, "mitzvah goreres mitzvah"—one mitzvah drags a mitzvah in its wake.

In other words, the angel created by the first mitzvah doesn't want to be lonely, and it is this angel that encourages the person to do yet another mitzvah. And this, my friends, is the reason why a Jew might sometimes do a mitzvah even if he or she has no rational reason to do that mitzvah—the reason is that the angel generated by the first mitzvah is pushing the Jew to do another mitzvah.

So what can we learn from this?

While Yaakov Avinu, our Patriarch Jacob, was able to see angels, we don't have the merit to see them. But none of us are ever alone! Each person has a whole host of surrounding angels who stand guard wherever you go. So don't scare them away.

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