



Shadows

Shadows. Every physical object has one.

Depending on the time of day (i.e., the sun's location in the sky) the very same object's shadow will be short and fat or tall and thin. Since your shadow is always with you, it is a built-in compass, as long as you're not in a forest or a city of skyscrapers.

It's also a ready-made source of outdoor fun for kids - remember trying to stand on your friend's shadow?

The Baal Shem Tov comments on the verse in Psalms, "G-d is your shadow at your right hand," that G-d has implanted a spiritual dynamic into the universe: Just as the movement of a person's body is reflected and magnified in his shadow, every step of our conduct in this world likewise arouses spiritual forces of incomparable power.

Every action we take in this physical world, every mitzva we do, has a reaction and ramification in the spiritual worlds.

But this concept of our conduct in this world impacting the spiritual worlds is not limited to physical actions. It also includes even our words (and thoughts) as illustrated by the following anecdote:

Once, while in the Baal Shem Tov's shul, two villagers were arguing. One shouted at the other that he would tear him to pieces like a fish. The Baal Shem Tov told his disciples to hold one another's hands, and to stand near him with their eyes closed. Then he placed his holy hands on the shoulders of the two disciples next to him, completing the circle. Suddenly the disciples began shouting in great terror: They had seen that fellow actually dismembering his disputant!

This incident shows clearly that every potential has an effect - either in physical form or on a spiritual plane that can be perceived only with higher and more refined senses.

With these teachings in mind, it might actually be a compliment to say of someone, "He's afraid of his shadow." If that "fear" is actually cautiousness toward his words and actions, fearing that they might have negative ramifications, then we would all do well to be afraid of our shadows.

But, lest one think that only our actions and our words create shadows, think again. For, in the words of the Previous Rebbe, "Thought is potent." Even our thoughts can effect the world. Thought knows no bounds; no partition can stand in its way; at all times it reaches its required destination.

We see an example of this from the story of Job, when his friends felt his plight despite their distance from him. People who are connected, friends or family, can often feel when someone is thinking about them. And if the thought is a warm one, one that shows concern for the person's situation, it can have lasting benefits. It can, according to Chasidic teachings, actually help a person spiritually and even materially.

And we all thought that a shadow was just an image cast on a surface by a body intercepting light!

(from <http://www.lchaimweekly.org/>)

"So they [Moshe and Aharon] said, 'The Elokim of the Ivrim / Hebrews happened upon us . . .'"

Why did Moshe Rabbeinu refer to Bnei Yisrael as "Ivrim" when he spoke to Pharaoh for the first time? Midrash Rabbah answers: Because they crossed ("Avru") the Yam Suf. [Until here from the Midrash]

R' Eliyahu E. Dessler shlita (Mashgiach Ruchani of the Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak; not to be confused with his cousin and namesake, the Michtav M'Eliyahu) asks the obvious question: But they had not yet crossed the Yam Suf! Also, R' Dessler asks: Our Sages teach that a person's or thing's name is meant to describe his/her/its essence. How is crossing the Yam Suf the essence of the Jewish People? If not for this Midrash, we would have thought that crossing the Yam Suf was an incidental event in our history; we were cornered at the Red Sea, so Hashem had to rescue us!

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R' Dessler answers: The first person to bear the title "Ivri" was our Patriarch Avraham (Bereishit 14:13). Midrashim offer several reasons for this title, including that, figuratively, the whole world stood on one side ("Ever"), and Avraham stood on the other side ("Ever"). Certainly, writes R' Dessler, Avraham appeared to the untrained eye to be walking on the same earth as everyone else. The reality, however, is that Avraham walked in a different world—a world where, for instance, a person can be thrown into a burning furnace and emerge unscathed, as Avraham was in his youth. Simply put, though Avraham walked on this earth, he did not live under the laws of nature that govern affairs in this world.

As a nation, Avraham's descendants also exist outside of the laws of nature, R' Dessler continues. One of the outstanding proofs of this is the splitting of the Yam Suf, allowing Bnei Yisrael to walk through the sea on dry land as the Egyptians drowned. (Iy"H, we will elaborate upon this point when we reach Parashat Beshalach.) This was Moshe Rabbeinu's message to Pharaoh at their first meeting: You are not picking a fight with ordinary people, but rather with people who live on a different plane than you do, people who are Ivrim, who will cross the Yam Suf. Although Bnei Yisrael had not yet crossed the sea, the characteristic that made that crossing possible—being aloof from the laws of nature—was inborn, inherited from our Patriarch Avraham. (Sha'arei Ha'zmanim: Yom Kippur p.312)

(by Rabbi Shlomo Katz from Project Genesis at www.torah.org)



We are resuming the very popular
'The Rav's Friday Night Hashkafa Q&A Shiur for Men'

This season's first Shiur will take place **next** Friday night, January 12, 2024 (Parshat Vaera) at 8:00 p.m. and will be held at the home of **Mr. & Mrs. Moshe Berry**, 2307 Baythorne Court. Questions can be submitted in advance to rabbikaplan@chabadmd.com and/or to Larry Ziffer at lziffer@cranefdn.org or Howard Kaplon at hkaplon@towson.edu.

Dr. Steven and Mrs. Chaya Deutsch are sponsoring Kiddush this Shabbat in memory of Steven's father, **Shmuel ben Menachem**, on the occasion of his 61st yearzeit.



Yahrzeits This Week:

Avraham Rosenblum 28 Tevet - Monday night / Tuesday for mother Ita Bluma bas Moshe

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DAVENING AND SHIURIM SCHEDULE

Friday, 1/5 — 24 Tevet

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Candles — 4:39 p.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:40 p.m.

Shabbat, 1/6 — 25 Tevet

Shacharit — 9:00 a.m.
Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:47 a.m.
Minchah — 4:25 p.m.
Shiur — after Minchah
Ma'ariv — 5:42 p.m.

Sunday, 1/7 — 26 Tevet

Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:45 p.m.

Monday, 1/8 — 27 Tevet

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:45 p.m.

Tuesday, 1/9 — 28 Tevet

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:45 p.m.

Wednesday, 1/10 — 29 Tevet

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:45 p.m.

Thursday — Rosh Chodesh Shevat, 1/11 — 1 Shevat

Shacharit — 6:40 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:45 p.m.

Friday, 1/12 — 2 Shevat

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Candles — 4:45 p.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:45 p.m.

Dear Mispallelim,

I'm not in Baltimore this Shabbos but nevertheless I want to share a thought with you. Below is a copy of my weekly Blog that I write for my supporters. I think you will appreciate it as well, particularly since unfortunately there is some controversy concerning the proper Torah attitude towards the IDF.

RSK

A few years ago, a well-known Jewish orthodox businessman, Shlomo Rechnitz, came across four hundred US soldiers in an airport in Shannon, Ireland. The soldiers were lounging around and munching on some meager army rations. Rechnitz spoke with the commanding officer and subsequently gifted each soldier \$50 to buy a proper meal at an airport restaurant of their choosing. This is just one unique expression of what has become more commonplace lately: people, upon seeing a soldier in uniform, thanking them for their service. This is a complete turnaround from the post-Vietnam War era when many chose to shun soldiers.

In Israel today, this sense of gratitude toward soldiers is on super steroids. The stories of people from the US and certainly from Israel doing extraordinary things for soldiers are legion and historic; they deserve to be recorded for posterity. For example, right here in Potomac, our own Brian Berman spent an entire month in Israel buying up hundreds of thousands of dollars of supplies and delivering them personally to soldiers at their bases. One Israeli set up an entire laundromat on a flatbed truck and drove it around to army camps where it was desperately needed without charging anything for the service. A restaurateur made his entire operation super Kosher so that he could provide free meals to every soldier.

The list is endless.

True, such appreciation is entirely warranted since the soldiers are protecting our people from harm. Nevertheless, I want to suggest that this attitude is also motivated by a deep sense of respect for what a soldier represents.

The true definition of a soldier is not simply the one offered in the dictionary, "one who joins a military force," it is one who is prepared to make the supreme sacrifice and give his life in the defense of his/her people. It is this principle that places the soldier categorically above all others. In our religious terminology, soldiers who lose their lives in defense of the country are called "holy ones" because this supreme sacrifice is considered to be the greatest religious achievement possible.

Let me share a story with you. A woman who lived in Eilat, Israel, shared with the Rebbe that one of the hardships of living in Eilat is that it is her custom to visit the graves of holy rabbis a few times each year to pray, but it is a very long drive from Eilat to the middle of the country. The Rebbe immediately responded, "I'm sure that there is a military cemetery in Eilat where soldiers who fell defending Israel are buried; go there to pray."

In the Torah, the Jewish people, as they are leaving Egypt, are called "the army of God" (Exodus). This is surprising since, from a military perspective, they were anything but an army. The significance of this designation is that Almighty God was empowering them with the same level of commitment and dedication to the mission that God was setting forth for them as that which characterizes a soldier.

This power is the secret of our more than three millennia of survival. Every Jew, regardless of their level of education, knowledge, or observance, has embedded in their souls a true spiritual soldier with the full ability to make the ultimate sacrifice for God and His Torah.

What we need to do is to reveal even just a little bit of this awesome power in our own day-to-day lives.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Shmuel Kaplan