



לזכות
 ישראל בן שטערנא שרה,
 דבורה לאה בת שטערנא שרה
 ומשפחתם שיחיו
 להצלחה בשליחות
 ולחיזוק ההתקשרות לכ"ק אדמו"ר

Did You Ask Permission?

Reb Nochum of Chernobyl was engrossed in his studies in the court of the Mezritcher Maggid, when an elderly gentleman approached him.

“Reb Nochum,” he began softly, “Your learning is very precious in heaven and it has created an angel. I am that angel and I would like to learn Torah with you.”

“I will ask my Rebbe, the Maggid,” he replied. “I do not do anything without receiving his permission.”

Reb Nochum dutifully described the encounter to the Maggid who then asked, “Did you hear or learn anything from him?”

“No,” answered Reb Nochum.

“Very well then, you should know he is not a

holy angel but rather from the forces of impurity.”

Reb Nochum had no inkling that the elderly, innocent looking man was not pure and holy. It was his ingrained approach that nothing is done without asking permission first.

From where did he receive this iron clad rule that saved his soul?

He answered this question with a story from his childhood:

“My mother passed away when I was still quite young and so for most of my life I grew up with an adopted mother who had children of her own. At mealtimes it was abundantly clear that she would serve her own biological children larger portions than I received. I

became accustomed to this and accepted it as a part of life.

“One day I came home from *cheder* feeling hungry so I went into the kitchen to get something to eat. On the stove I saw that my stepmother had prepared a large dish but she was not in the kitchen to serve me. Not wanting to wait around, I took a portion by myself, making sure it was the same smaller amount that I usually received.

“When she came back home and saw what I had done, she slapped me for my behavior. In my defense, I let her know that I took the smaller amount.

“‘True,’ she said, ‘but you did it without asking and that itself is an offense. We

don’t do anything without asking!’

Reb Nochum concluded: “That slap and lesson stuck with me my whole life and actually saved me from the danger of learning with an angel of the *sitra achara*.”

Reb Shmuel Levitin once related this story in front of the Frierdiker Rebbe, and the Frierdiker Rebbe remarked that the food he tasted was sour cream (“זויער-מילך”).

The fact that Reb Nochum had to receive that slap was an incident of *hashgacha pratis*, in order to save him from listening to the forces of evil decades later. **1**

(Adapted from *Shmuos V’Sippurim vol. 1, p. 22*)