



זכות  
 החתן הרה"ת ר' אבא שיחי נפרסטק  
 והכלה המהוללה מרת רחל תחיל גרינברג  
 לרגל חתונתם ביום י"ט טבת ה'תשע"ז  
 נדפס ע"י  
 הרה"ת ר' ברוך זוגתו מרת בריינדי שיחיו  
 נפרסטק  
 הרה"ת ר' ישראל זוגתו מרת חנה שיחיו  
 גרינברג



# To the Last Detail

*Seeing Hashgacha Pratis*

עבודת האדם ע"פ תורת החסידות, להרגיל את עצמו לראות ענין השגחה פרטית, איך כי בטובו ית' מחדש את העולם והנבראים בכל רגע בהשגחתו הפרטית, אשר זה אך זה הוא מציאות הנבראים חיותם וקיומם.

**A person's avoda according to Chassidus: To accustom himself to perceive *hashgacha pratis*, how Hashem, in His goodness, renews the universe and all creatures every moment with His particular Divine Providence, which constitutes—to the exclusion of all else—the reality, life-force and sustained existence of all creatures.**

(היום יום כט סיון)

## It's Not Casual

"It was the summer of 5656 (תרנ"ו)," the Friediker Rebbe relates. "I went for a walk with my father in the field; the produce was almost ripe.

"A soft wind blew while stalks of grain and grass moved about back-and-forth. My father said to me: 'Watch [a manifestation of] G-dliness right here! Every move of each and every one of these stalks and blades of grass was included in the master plan originating in the opening thought of Hashem (מחשבה הקדומה דא"ק). Each one was included in His broad examination [from the beginning] until the end of time. Hashem's divine providence orchestrates this all for a G-dly purpose.'

"As we walked, we continued into a forest, as I deeply contemplated the words I had just heard about *hashgacha pratis*. Being lost in thought, I passed by a tree and tore off a leaf. In common practice, I casually tore away pieces of the leaf and threw them to the ground as I walked.

"Seeing this, my father rebuked me: 'We have just spoken about *hashgacha pratis*. Yet without

much thought, you tore a leaf off the tree, held it in your hand, and played with it casually, scattering its pieces all over the place. How can one be so thoughtless about Hashem's creations? The leaf is a creation that the *Aibershter* made with a special purpose and it has a G-dly *chayus* in it. The leaf is comprised of a 'soul' and a 'body.' Why is the leaf's life less important than your own?

"...True, there is a great difference between the two of you. The leaf is part of *tzomei'ach* (plant life) and you are of *medaber* (humankind). Still, one must always remember that every creation has a G-dly purpose..."<sup>1</sup>

It was a bold lesson taught by the Rebbe Rashab on understanding and appreciating the meaning of a concept so synonymous with the Chassidic way of life: *hashgacha pratis*.

But let's start from the beginning.

## Creator and Director

The Torah teaches us that Hashem not only created the world, he continues to lead the world throughout all of time. Hashem is therefore referred to as *בורא העולם ומנהיגו*—the Creator of the world and its director, administering and orchestrating the goings-on of the world.

This is a basic tenet of Jewish belief. In the book of Yechezkiel, the *navi* decries those who think that *עזב ה' את הארץ*—Hashem has left the world and is no longer intimately involved with us. This is a thought process of non-Jews. But we Yidden believe in *hashgacha pratis*.<sup>2</sup>

Now, the extent of Hashem's providence varies according to different sources.

In his *sefer* *Moreh Hanevuchim*, the Rambam asserts that Hashem's *hashgacha pratis* is reserved for humankind only. Over the remaining three categories of creation, *domem* (inanimate), *tzomei'ach* (plant life), and *chai* (animal life), Hashem only watches with a more general manner (*hashgacha minnis*).

This was more or less the general consensus amongst most sources until the Baal Shem Tov, with some minor variations.<sup>3</sup>

With the teachings of Toras HaChassidus, the Baal Shem Tov revealed that Hashem's *hashgacha pratis* applies to every single detail of creation. Even the flutter of a leaf in the wind is part of the master plan of creation.

In the Frierdiker Rebbe's words:

"The Baal Shem Tov taught us the meaning of *hashgacha pratis*: Not only are all the detailed movements of each creation watched by Hashem's providence, and this [*hashgacha pratis*] is actually their very source of life, but every move of each individual creation has a place in the large story of the entire creation..."<sup>4</sup>

The Alter Rebbe took this concept one step further:

The story is told of the Mittler Rebbe, who was appointed by his father, the Alter Rebbe to guide and teach the younger Chassidim. He once saw two *yungeleit* conversing with one another on topics of Chassidus. When he asked what they were talking about, they responded that they were discussing the *chiddush* of the Baal Shem Tov on *hashgacha pratis*; that it applies not only to humankind but also to leaves fluttering in the wind.

The Mittler Rebbe repeated the conversation over to his father, and the Alter Rebbe responded:

Not only is the fact that the leaf moves orchestrated *b'hashgacha pratis*, but even the cause and manner of its move; whether by the wind or by a person—this too is decided *b'hashgacha pratis*.

The Rebbe explains that the Alter Rebbe's addition to the concept of *hashgacha pratis* is very much in line with his approach to the teaching of Chassidus in general.

The Baal Shem Tov taught us how every person must serve Hashem; the Alter Rebbe taught us how every person *can* serve Hashem. Meaning, the Baal Shem Tov notified us of the concept of serving Hashem according to Chassidus, while the Alter Rebbe gave us the "tools"—the method with which to actually do it. Similarly, the Baal Shem Tov taught us that the concept of *hashgacha pratis* exists for all creations; the Alter Rebbe taught us that this applies even to the method and manner of their every move.<sup>5</sup>

In essence, the Rebbe explains, the Baal Shem Tov's opinion about *hashgacha pratis* is not uniquely his. It could be understood from even earlier sources; including the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah*!

In the first *halacha* of Rambam, he rules that the foundation of Yiddishkeit is to know that "Hashem creates all existences" ("הוא הממציא כל נמצא"). The Rambam writes that Hashem "creates," in the present-

tense. Obviously then, He follows each and every creation with *hashgacha pratis*.

What about the Rambam's writing in Moreh Hanevuchim?

The Mittlerer Rebbe already explains in his *sefer Derech Chayim* that the two do not contradict one another. There are various levels of *hashgacha pratis*; some more revealed while others are hidden and not necessarily noticeable. But Hashem's providence is over all of His creations in the same manner.<sup>6</sup>

## Every. Single. Thing.

Based on the premise that everything in the world is *b'hashgacha pratis*, the Rebbe often repeated the vort of the Baal Shem Tov that everything a Yid sees or hears must serve as a lesson in *avodas Hashem*.

This vort was first published in Hayom Yom (9 Iyar) and has since then been repeated by the Rebbe literally thousands of times!

### MORE THAN A THOUSAND TIMES!

Once, when speaking of an unfortunate situation in the Crown Heights neighborhood, the Rebbe expressed his dismay that people hadn't done anything about it, despite the fact that he had spoken about it before. The Rebbe exclaimed:

Chassidus tells us that there could be a thief at the opening of a tunnel about to commit a heinous sin, yet he davens to Hashem nonetheless. For the words don't affect his actions at all.

There are those at this farbrengen who heard us talk about the vort of the Baal Shem Tov, repeated not merely 101 times. It was repeated literally more than a thousand times over the years! The vort is that everything a Yid sees or hears must serve as a lesson in *avodas Hashem*.

You've heard us mention this before. You knew about the vort of the Baal Shem Tov even before it was mentioned at the farbrengen; by now you certainly heard it, after it was repeated at the farbrengens more than a thousand times. You must take it to heart and apply a lesson from the words spoken here; not for someone else but for you, yourself!

(*Shabbos parshas Shemos 5743*)

Indeed, this premise became known as the "cornerstone" of so much of the Rebbe's Torah. The fact that everything is *b'hashgacha pratis* therefore must serve a purpose in our *avodas Hashem*.

Wherever a person finds themselves is planned by Hashem, whatever situation one ends up in, and everything that happens there.

In Hayom Yom (3 Elul), the Rebbe explains that "one who believes in *hashgacha pratis* knows that מה' מצעדי גבר כווננו—man's steps are formed from Hashem. This specific *neshama* is assigned to refining and repairing some [lost] sparks of holiness in that specific place..." The Rebbe always advised people to look at the place where they were as a *shlichus* from Hashem, who put them there *b'hashgacha pratis* for a specific reason.

"Sometimes, a person can be discontent with the place he is in and look for another, better place," the Rebbe once said. "Remember that Hashem put you there with a special *shlichus*. There is no running away from Hashem (a lesson we learn from the story of Yonah)... You will have to fulfill the *shlichus* anyways; there is no need to look for a better place..."<sup>7</sup>

But based on the Baal Shem Tov's understanding of *hashgacha pratis*, we know that not only are major events of a person's life (like the place they live) *b'hashgacha pratis*; even the smallest details of the world are as well.

"I have grown accustomed to ("הסכנ הסכנת") searching for the *hashgacha pratis* in every opportunity," the Rebbe asserts in a letter to Mr. Shazar.<sup>8</sup>

Many of the Rebbe's farbrengens use this premise to learn a lesson in *avodas Hashem* from the day of the week, the day of the month, the *parsha* of the week, and why they all come together in that year's *k'vius*. "We know the *horaah* is there for us," the Rebbe explains. "Sometimes we need to look a little harder and we will find it."

The Rebbe would even learn a *horaah* from the page number of a *maamar* in Likutei Torah or a subject in Gemara, because it's all *b'hashgacha pratis*. "There were *gedolei Yisroel* who even looked at the number on the car of the train they used for travel and tried to connect that number with something good," the Rebbe says.<sup>9</sup>



## EVERYONE SEES

In Hayom Yom (7 Tishrei), the Mittlerer Rebbe's words are quoted about the advantage that businesspeople have over those who study Torah all day (יִושְׁבֵי אֶהָל); they can clearly see *Elokus* by experiencing *hashgacha pratis* in their everyday lives.

In a letter written on Chanukah 5721, the Rebbe adds that in our times, after Chassidus has been spread so widely, even those who study Torah all day see *hashgacha pratis* too.

(Igras Kodesh vol. 20 p. 87)

## Everyday Life

Recognizing *hashgacha pratis* at every step of our lives is an *avoda*, as quoted from Hayom Yom at the beginning of this article. But it also helps us live better, more productive, and more optimistic lives.

In a letter to an individual who was suffering from terrible depression, the Rebbe advises: "Contemplate and study the sources that teach us about *hashgacha pratis* until you know them by heart. It means in the literal sense that the Creator of the world watches over each and every individual down to the details of their lives. Obviously then, you need not worry about all those things you wrote about in your letter. There is certainly no place for thoughts about the opposite of life, *chas v'shalom*."

"Think about the fact that the Jewish soul is formed from beneath Hashem's holy throne and yet it is sent down here into a physical body in order to fulfil the mission of Torah and mitzvos here on earth... Thinking about this will help you appreciate the gift you've been given—the opportunity to fulfill Hashem's *shlichus* in this world by leading a Torah life..."<sup>10</sup>

## The Silver Lining

It was Shabbos Bereishis 5718. In those years, the small *zal* on the first floor of 770 served as the main shul. At times when the crowds were too big to be accommodated, davening and farbrengens were often held in the "*shalash*"—a temporary structure in the courtyard outside (later built to become the main shul).

On Shabbos morning, someone approached the Rebbe and asked where the day's davening would

take place, and the Rebbe said it should be in the courtyard. "Shabbos Bereishis has an effect on the entire year," the Rebbe later explained at the farbrengen. "I was hoping that the davening will be in a larger area and in broader spirit (בְּאוֹפֵן שֶׁל הַרְחָבָה), to bring about a broader spirit for the entire year.

"But I was told that we can't daven downstairs, because 'it's cold and dirty'"

The Rebbe explained that although the person certainly didn't have this in mind, there was a spiritual message he relayed *b'hashgacha pratis*.

"After all we've done throughout the month of Elul, *selichos*, Rosh Hashanah, Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, until Simchas Torah; [how] are we still told that things are cold and dirty—in the spiritual sense?"

With that, the Rebbe began to cry profusely, leaning his head on his hands while tears streamed from his holy eyes. It was a frightening sight to behold!

The Rebbe concluded:

"Everything in this world must have a good part to it as well. There are various levels of *hashgacha pratis*; some more evident and clear, while other levels are hidden. The fact that we are given this message by an open and clear *hashgacha pratis* is itself already somewhat of a consolation..."<sup>11</sup> **T**

## FURTHER READING:

Igras Kodesh vol. 1 p. 168

Likutei Sichos vol. 18 p. 196

1. Likutei Diburim vol. 1 p. 168
2. Yechezkiel 8:12; see Sefer Ha'rechim Chabad vol. 2 p. 277
3. See lengthy letter by the Rebbe analyzing the various opinions, Igras Kodesh vol. 1 p. 168
4. Sefer Hamaamarim 5696 p. 120, see Hayom Yom 28 Cheshvan
5. Shabbos parshas Vayetzei 5712
6. Derech Chayim Shaar Hateshuvah perek 9; see Hisvaaduyos 5745 vol. 3 p. 1835
7. Yom Simchas Torah 5715
8. Igras Kodesh vol. 15 p. 443; based on the possuk in Balak 22:30
9. Motzoei Zos Chanukah 5741
10. Igras Kodesh vol. 14 p. 201
11. Toras Menachem vol. 21 p. 134; Beis Chayenu (Heichal Menachem) p. 199