



Rebbe Baruch of Garelitz: Fine Distinction Between Truth and Falsehood

Rebbe Baruch of Garelitz was the fifth son of Rebbe Chaim of Sanz, the 'Diorei Chaim.' He was born in 5589 (1829) to his father, Rebbe Chaim, and his mother, Rachel Faigeh, the daughter of the 'Baruch Ta'am.' He served as a rabbi in Rodnick and Garelitz and after his father's passing, became a Chassidic Rebbe. He was known for his sharp intellect, quick wit and his acute sense of truth. Rebbe Baruch passed away on the first of Adar, 5666 (1906). His son, Rebbe Elisha, succeeded him as rabbi of Garelitz, but refused to assume the mantel of a Chassidic Rebbe.

Rebbe Baruch related a parable about his trait of truth and the difference between him and his brother, Rebbe Yechezkel of Shinwa: "If my big brother, Yechezkel, would see a huge mountain that is all bad, but would notice that inside it there is a good stone – he would make every effort in the world, with self sacrifice, to reach that good stone and bring it out of the mountain (even if the mountain was a million times greater than the stone – a million times more evil than good). I, on the other hand, if I see a mountain that is all good, but that has one small stone of bad – I will throw the entire mountain into the garbage."

The Difference Between Kosher and Pure

Even as a small child, Rebbe Baruch was known for his sharp sense of distinction between evil and good. He was a small and very gifted boy, with special, refined sensitivity, who would discern things that adults did not feel. There was a group of butchers in his town – ritual slaughterers and kosher meat marketers. One of them was aware of the special gift of the Rabbi's son, Rebbe Baruch. He asked him if he could help him choose the animals for slaughter. "Tell me which animal will be kosher and which will be unkosher," he requested of the small boy.

Before the animal is slaughtered, it is not possible to see if it will be kosher or not, as the kosher status depends upon the health of the animal's internal

organs. The butchers had to buy the animal at great expense, and only after it was slaughtered would they know if they would be able to market the meat as kosher – at a greater profit. This particular butcher saw that the young Rebbe Baruch had a special perception, and promised him a coin for every animal that he would observe before he would purchase it, and tell him if the animal would be kosher or not. Little Baruch, who was happy to be able to earn some money so that he would be able to give charity, began his new “job.” “This cow is kosher,” he would say, “and this cow is not kosher.” His predictions were always correct.

The butcher, who always knew which animal to buy, became a wealthy man. His colleagues finally asked him what his secret was. “How could it be that every animal that you choose is kosher?”

“The Rebbe’s young son tells me which animal is kosher and which is not,” he answered.

“This is not fair,” the butchers protested. “Why should you have ‘inside information?’” The butchers’ protests reached the Rebbe’s ears. He called his son and asked him how he knew which animal would be kosher. His son answered innocently, “It is not *ruach hakodesh* (holy spirit), but actually very simple. I look at how the animal walks in the street. An animal with its head raised in haughtiness is not kosher, while an animal that walks with its head down, modestly, is kosher.”

Lowly Spirit

This is a beautiful story about the innocent sense of a young boy – albeit a boy with a lofty and pure soul and a great measure of Heavenly help, as he was the son of a tzaddik. But we can also learn a lesson that is applicable to all: Someone who walks haughtily (as written in the Code of Jewish Law) – shows that something inside his soul is not right – that he is not spiritually healthy. A person who walks modestly, with his head down, is a sign of a kosher Jew. This is a very important story about Rebbe Baruch of Gurelitz.

There are other stories about the young Rebbe Baruch seeing angels. We usually do not see angels (perhaps there are children who do...). Rebbe Baruch described the angels as being large, reaching from earth to heaven. As in the story above, Rebbe Baruch could also distinguish between good angels, who come to help us perform mitzvahs and who safeguard us from transgressing – and destructive angels. How could he tell? In the same way. He said that if the angel walks slowly, modestly, it is clear that he is an angel that came from heaven to do good for someone, because he possesses

humility and lowliness. If, on the other hand, the angel conducts himself with strength and aggressiveness, and while walking he tears and breaks things, it is obvious that he is a destructive angel, a bad angel.

How can we understand Rebbe Boruch's saying that he would be willing to throw out an entire mountain of good just because of one small point of bad? There are different types of tzaddikim, as is explained in the Tanya. One of the main ways that the perfection of the tzaddik is tested is in his absolute hatred for evil. When it looks like something is almost completely good, but it does contain a small amount of evil – this point of evil is a sign that the good is not true and absolute. As the Tanya explains, a non-consummate tzaddik still has some bad. He is a "tzaddik who has bad," and this is not what God desires. Rebbe Baruch was a consummate tzaddik. Even when everything looked good – if there was a drop of evil mixed in, he did not need and would not want the item at all.

There are many stories about *maggids* and angels who revealed themselves to people, taught them Torah and disclosed secrets to them. The distinction between a *maggid* who belongs on the side of holiness or God forbid, to the Other Side is along the same lines. Even if this *maggid* reveals many true, wondrous secrets to the person, if there is one small point of falsehood or evil, (a false revelation or a directive that conflicts with Torah and its mitzvahs) – that is proof that all of this *maggid's* revelations must be rejected, and that he is completely on the other side.

We can connect Rebbe Baruch's strong stance on complete truth to the stories of his ability to make fine distinctions. A person who is stringent about the pure truth, without any point of falsehood, even as a child can naturally distinguish between good and evil, a kosher animal and a non-kosher animal, and a good angel and an angel of destruction. Maimonides, who explains that all the traits in the Torah require walking down the middle path, determines that any hint of pride must be completely negated. Truth must be pure of any adulteration of falsehood. The greatest falsehood is pride. Thus, Moses ("Moses and his Torah are truth"¹) is also the "most humble man on the face of the earth."²

¹ *Sanhedrin* 110b.

² Numbers 12:3.