



Footsteps of Our Fathers
Chapter 5 Mishna 8
BLOWING STUFF UP
Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita

When I was a youngster, my father bought me a chemistry set. That's right my parents harboured a dream that their only son would one day become that most Jewish of American dreams, a doctor, and hence their investment in what can only be called a miniature laboratory. The thing had everything needed to blow up any small city, and its long test tubes certainly impressed all who saw them. There must have been about fifty different bottles of stuff, and all kinds of exotic bits and pieces to mix things. With the kit came a big book of "experiments", you know, chemical adventures one can do at home. There were pictures and diagrams, temperatures and safety notes, all this and more. The book was a cornucopia of fun things one could create with this new toy. Obviously being a Jewish child, I disregarded all the small print in the directions and only followed what I considered the important words. I was given a space in the basement for my new laboratory and soon set up a suitable table with a chair. My parents looked on with glee, as I started my very first discovery. I'm certain that in their eyes I was the next Nobel prize winner.

Now in those days these home bound chemistry sets were basically meant to inspire youngsters to seek more scientific knowledge in school. Instead, I believe it made a number of us completely chemistry phobic. This was because if you didn't follow the directions, you could seriously do damage. I melted a few spoons, dyed my shirt purple, and...what else? Oh yea, burnt a hole in the basement floor. However, the greatest fun I had with this kit was the smoke trick. It seems that if you mix certain chemicals together and warm them a bit, they give off a huge cloud of smoke. The stuff smells of rotten eggs and it gets all over the place. Wow! To a kid this was like Manna from heaven. I could make this huge smoke thingy and stink up the neighborhood, both at the same time. Of course, what was really happening was due to the chemical interaction of the two chemicals I was mixing. On their own they were okay, but put them together, add a little

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warmth and BANG! I admit that this little experiment was tried only once, after which my chemistry set seemed to have disappeared. I can't remember ever seeing it again, and all talk of a future Doctor Rubin was forgotten. I do remember vaguely some sort of petition going around the area having to do with wild pranksters blowing up the community with stink bombs, but I don't believe for one minute that I had anything to do with it.

One home truth I learnt from my dabbling with those test tubes, was that every action has a reaction. The world the Eibishter created is finely balanced, the physical and spiritual are meant to be a tapestry of perfection. When the wrong ingredients are mixed together, well things become a bit toxic. Our lives are like a huge chemistry set, when we mix things together, we can discover great potentials, both for the good or unfortunately for the bad.

This Mishna speaks of what can happen when we neglect the Holy balance that Hashem's creation needs.

"Seven kinds of punishment come upon the world for seven kinds of transgression. If some tithe and some do not, famine of drought ensues.... some go hungry and others have plenty....."

This cause and effect is spoken of by The Magid of Koznitz Ztl, who points out a Zohar that tells us that 'Tithes' allude to the fear of Hashem. Thus, our Mishna refers to those who sometimes fear Hashem and other times sadly not. Such a life style causes a break down in the flow of spiritual energy that feeds the world.

If we but open our hearts we can see how this Mishna is speaking to us directly. We live in a convoluted world, where 'famine of drought' (there is no greater drought than the thirst for spirituality) ensues. The world faces international famine, and all national leaders are scurrying about trying to find solutions. Dare I just point to this Mishna and remind the world's temporal leaders that they have forsaken G-d for the trinkets of modern advances.

"The sword comes upon the world for the delay of justice, for the perversion of justice and because of those that teach the Torah not in accordance with the halacha."

We Yieden should live with a constant awareness of how the chemistry of the creation is only through Hashem's Will. All justice flows from His Words. Our actions mean something. When we forget that it is the Eibishter that has created everything, then we tamper with the explosive potential of causing great harm.

In a world where spirituality is laughed at, it is ever more vital that as Hashem's children we hold fast to the formula for real life. Despite the worlds ridicule, we should glory in the gift of Hashem's bountiful love for us.

It isn't an easy path to walk, especially in these trying times, yet, it is our truth and the world depends on us.

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