

Perspectives

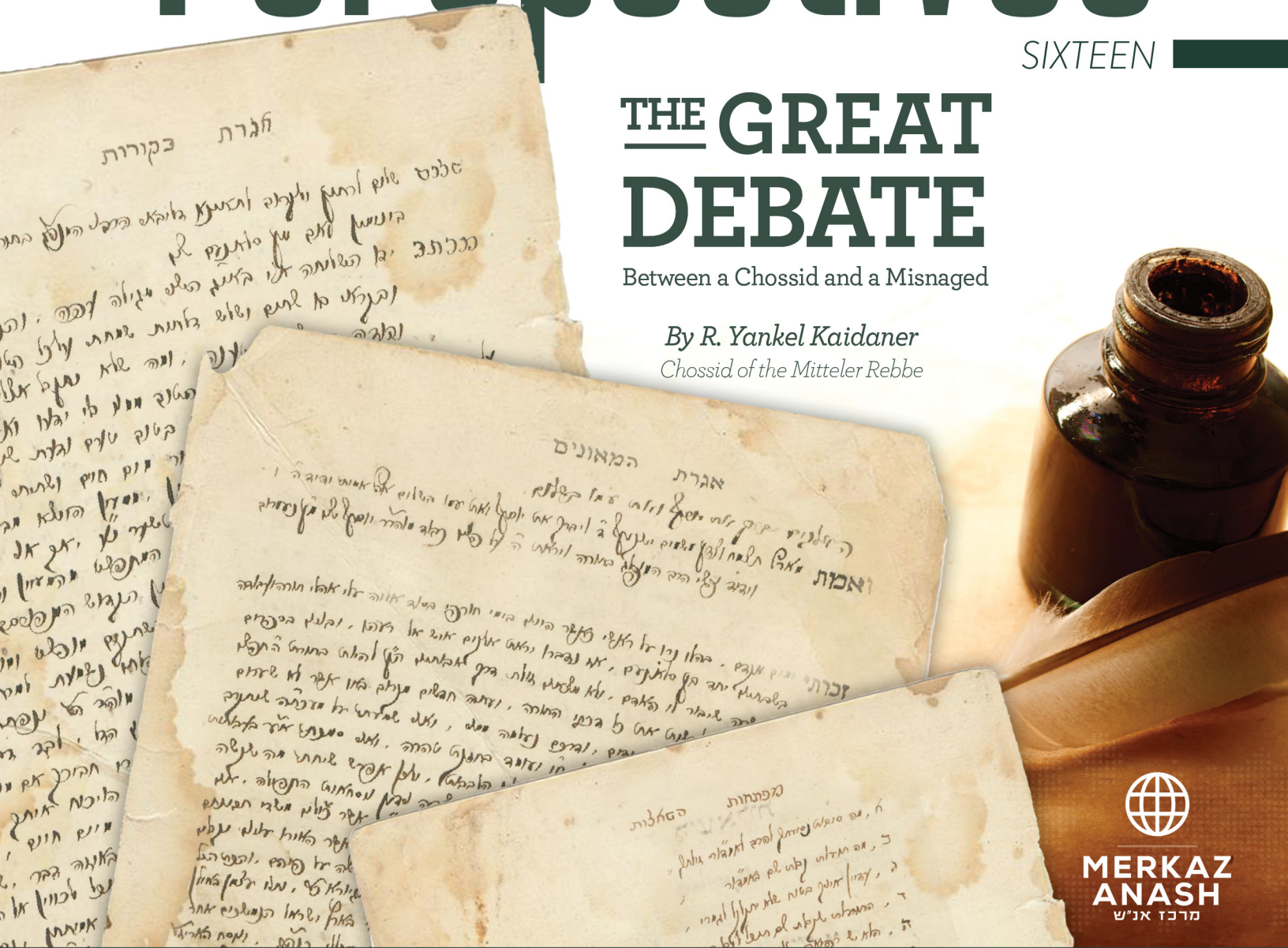
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SIXTEEN

THE GREAT DEBATE

Between a Chossid and a Misnaged

By R. Yankel Kaidaner
Chossid of the Mittlerer Rebbe



MERKAZ ANASH
מרכז אנ"ש

TO LIVE WITH CHASSIDUS

Farbrengen with Harav Yosef Heller

LIGHT, LIFE AND SELFLESSNESS

Rabbi Mendel Rubin

CHASSIDIC PRINCIPLES IN EDUCATION

Rabbi Hershel Fogelman



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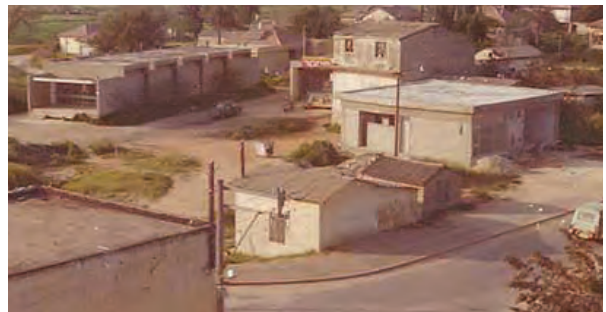
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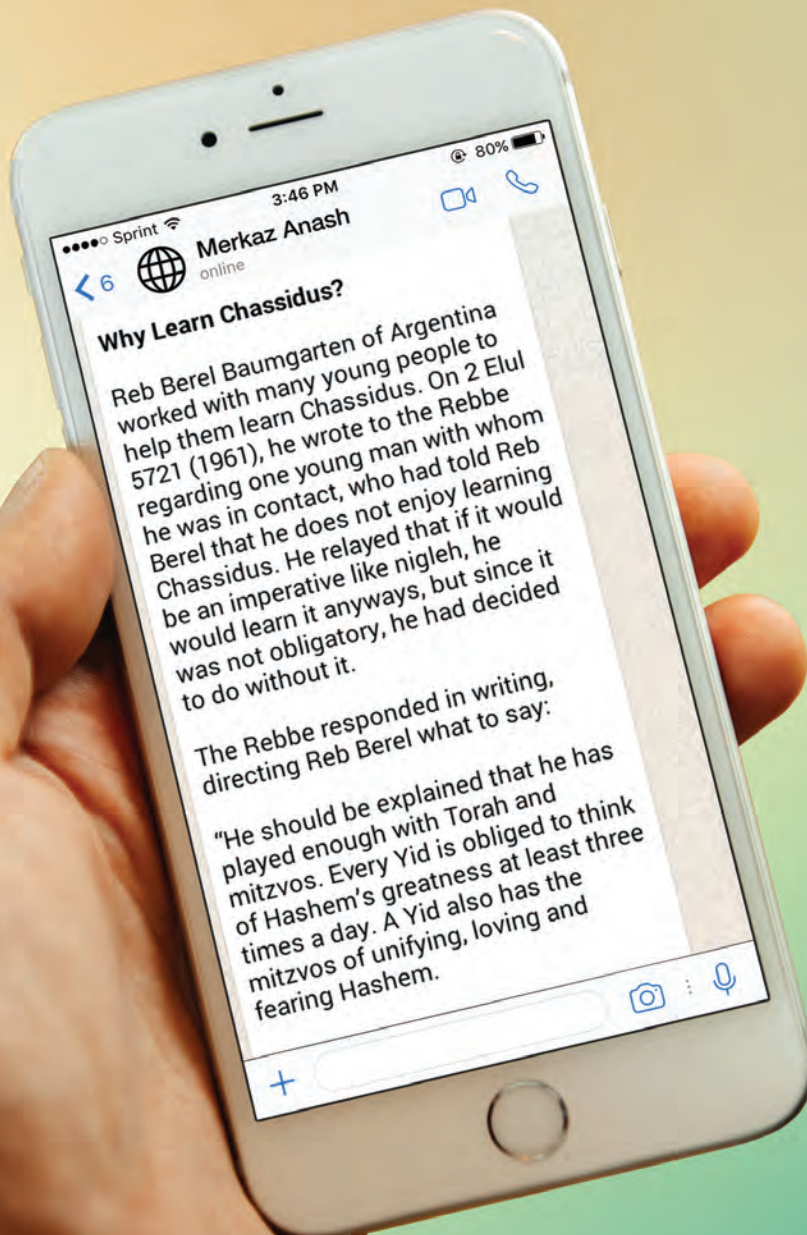
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*Chassidus isn't just a study:
It's a way of life.*

"On this day, as the Alter Rebbe stands before HaShem, asking that we and our children be strong physically and spiritually, **everyone should give tzedakah to the mosdos that follow the path of the Alter Rebbe.**"

- The Friediker Rebbe

Merkaz Anash was formed in answer to the big question of today: How do we ensure that we, and our children, continue to carry forth the torch of Chassidus? The answer we'd like to suggest is not just by studying more chassidus.

Chassidus isn't just a topic of study: It's a way of life.

And traditionally, this "way of life" was made real at *farbrengens*. Chassidim sat together to discuss, debate, and share how Chassidus was to be made into more than just words on paper, how it was to become the fire of our hearts, the light of our souls.

Our goal in creating Perspectives was simple: to recreate the local *farbrengen*, into a global phenomenon.

We bring you insightful ideas from leading *mashpiim* and everyday chassidim alike. We choose topics that are relevant and messages that are thought-provoking, to provide authentic Chassidus for today's chassidim.



This Yud Tes Kislev, Merkaz Anash turns to you to for help to promote the values of Chassidus - through the *farbrengen* in your community, and with our global community. Starting Erev Yud Tes Kislev, Motzaei Shabbos at 7 pm, we will *bez"H* raise \$30K to help cover the costs of the work we do.

Go to MerkazAnash.com/yourpart and make Chassidus shine for thousands.



May we succeed in our mission and have a year come alive with Chassidus for ourselves and our families.

לשנה טובה בלימוד החסידות ובדרכי החסידות תכתבו ותחתמו!!

Rabbi Shimon Hellinger
Founder and General Editor

FOREWORD

Is the Message Getting Across?



***FIRED WITH ENTHUSIASM** to fulfill the Rebbe's shlichus to spread Yiddishkeit in his city, a certain chossid felt hampered by his inability to speak English well. If only he could speak the language properly, he reasoned, he could make a greater impact on his listeners. He wrote to the Rebbe asking whether he should begin taking English lessons.*

In a letter from 11 Tammuz 5711 (1951), the Rebbe advises against always "carrying the trough to the horse," trying to bring Torah and mitzvos closer to the masses, and instead contended:

"It's time that the horse come to the trough."

These children saw a show and were amused. In their entertained state, they could not grasp a meaningful message.

AT FIRST GLANCE, the Rebbe's advice is difficult to understand. What's wrong with bringing Torah and *mitzvos* closer to the people? Isn't *shlichus* about doing just that?

Perhaps the implication is this: There is a risk when trying to make your message **too** accessible.

When looking for creative ways to convey an idea, one might mistakenly assume that the medium used is inconsequential.

If a school wants to teach its students the importance of being sensitive to another person's feelings, teachers may arrange a funny skit about how it hurts to be teased. The children laugh and are amused by the whole thing, and may even be able to go home and repeat the given mantra on sensitivity. But would anyone say that they became more sensitive? These children saw a show and were amused. In their entertained state, they could not grasp a meaningful message.



We must be mindful of the media we use to transmit our thoughts and make sure they aren't warping our message along the way. Gimmicks are great at getting a fact to stick – for example how much you can save by switching to a given car insurance company – but they aren't very good at transmitting the depth of a value or an idea. The meaning is often lost in the overpowering medium, and the *medium* ends up dominating the entire picture.

Technological communication is generally a poor conductor of profound values. It demands the message to be chopped, squeezed, and sped up to match its ever-increasing pace.

A pop-style ballad is not a very effective tool for heightening a person's sensitivities, even if its lyrics speak of the beauty and bliss of *Elokus*. The kind of religious experience that *chassidim* of old years pondered at length, cannot be communicated in a fast-paced tempo.

The point then is this: It's not just important *what* you tell them, but also *how* you tell it. Compelling our students to encounter *Yiddishkeit* and Chassidus in their natural setting allows them to appreciate the message in its entirety.

The Rebbe wasn't suggesting that there is anything wrong with the English language per se. However, in attempting to communicate in "their language," the *shliach's* "voice" would be altered.

True, the situation often demands us to take the Torah to our listeners – especially for practical *mitzvos*, where "doing" is the main point – but there must always be an awareness of the compromise in spirit whenever we "carry the trough" to them.

Sometimes we must, for the sake of our students, put down the trough.

Rabbi Shimon Hellinger

General Editor

A pop-style ballad is not a very effective tool for heightening a person's sensitivities, even if its lyrics speak of the beauty and bliss of Elokus.

PURE LIGHT



THE REBBE'S PERSPECTIVE

Sicha of 23 Kislev 5740 (1979)

Likutei Sichos vol. 20, p. 439



Education demands creative techniques and solutions. It happens sometimes that we are stuck with an educational dilemma, and are inclined to employ a tried-and-true solution designed by secular educators.

How important is it that every element of a child's education be uniquely Jewish? Is there really a difference between Jewish educational methods and the general ones? Besides, what difference will it make to the unknowing child?

LESSONS FOR LIFE

The oppression of the Greeks and the Hellenists consisted of driving the Jews to be similar to other nations *R"L*, by eliminating the inherent division between the Jewish people and society at large. This oppression became an outlook in education: to raise a child to become like the surrounding gentile society.

For this reason, the Greek method of oppression poses a far greater threat to the continuity of the Jewish nation than a decree forbidding Torah study and fulfillment of *mitzvos*. A decree prohibiting religious observance is temporary and short-lived, and as soon as the decree is annulled, Jews subsequently return to studying Torah and observing the *mitzvos*.

However, when Jews are persuaded by society to assimilate, and they raise their children contrary to Torah, this yields consequences long after the oppression has abated. Children retain the lessons they were taught in their youth, even after growing old.

It is not relevant to the child what his educator's motivations were. It could have been because the

educator was pressured to educate him in that way. Regardless, the education he received will influence him and set him on that path for life.

DETAILS MATTER

The catalyst to such a condition is neglecting a "*klaynikeit*," a minute deviation from the traditional Torah path. Oftentimes, in the attempt to illuminate a child's life, one may consider using "oil" touched by *goyishkeit*. He claims, "What difference does it make which oil one uses? This oil also gives off light which is indiscernible from the light of pure oil."

This is the beginning which eventually leads to cancelling the distinction between Jews and gentile society. When we educate a child with an unfitting education, by using illumination that comes from an impure source, then not only does it not illuminate and show the child the true path, it actually causes the child to become a Hellenist *R"L*.

"What difference does it make which oil one uses? This oil also gives off light which is indiscernible from the light of pure oil."



He will remain a Jew, and he has no choice about it, since even a Jew who sins remains Jewish. However, he *does* have a choice whether to choose spiritual life or the opposite, *R”L*...

This is one of Chanukah’s lessons: When illuminating a Jewish home and Jewish children we must ensure that we are using pure Jewish light. Such light can only come from pure oil which has not been touched by *goyishkeit*.

IN SUMMARY

- *Worthy secular ideals often appear similar to Jewish ones. Yet, a casual alteration of the Torah path could result in producing a straying child R”L.*
- *Faulty values are far more harmful than oppressive decrees. While the latter is more restrictive to mitzva observance, its life is limited and eventually one is free to observe the Torah in full. Faulty values, however, set a child on a wrong path indefinitely.*
- *It is irrelevant to a child what motivated the educator to choose that method. In the outcome, the child remains with whichever lesson he was taught. P*

With a deep sense of loss we mourn the passing of
a venerable and inimitable chossid

REB MEILECH A"H ZWIEBEL

Mashpia in Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim of Morristown, NJ for over 50 years

where he patiently guided thousands of students
through the inner corridors of Chassidus

חבל על דאבדין ולא משתכחין

We hope to share some of Reb Meilech's wisdom
in the coming issues of Perspectives

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ג' מנחם אב תשע"ו

To Live with CHASSIDUS

A Yud Tes Kislev Farbrengen with
HARAV YOSEF HELLER

HOW HAVE I CHANGED?

When he heard those words, he was stunned and argued, “Are we already on the level of Pnimius HaTorah? We are involved in such lowly matters!”

The *Rabbeim* tell us that one of the most important aspects of Yud Tes Kislev is to improve our *darkei haChassidus* and study of *Chassidus* – every person knows which part of him or herself needs improvement.

I was once sitting in the *shul* in my hometown over than 40 years ago, where *Yidden* were saying *L’chaim*, and Reb Chaim Tashkenter of blessed memory said, “*L’chaim*, we should merit *Pnimius HaTorah!*”

Sitting there, was someone of a different sect of Chassidus: a very learned person and a great chossid who had suffered much in life. When he heard those words, he was stunned and argued, “Are we already on the level of *Pnimius HaTorah?* We are involved in such lowly matters!” He continued, “When a person is stuck in filth, all he wants is to be taken out. Don’t tell me about *Pnimius Hatorah!*”

The resolution to this exchange is that particularly when the darkness is greater there needs to be more light. Though a little bit of light dispels much



darkness, the darker it is the more light is required, as mentioned in many *sichos* and *maamorim*.

The problem is that we have been learning *Chassidus* for many years without much change. We learn *Chassidus* in the morning, then we *daven* and eat breakfast, and we forget about it until we continue the *maamar* the next morning.

We justify ourselves by thinking that we can never know how we would have been without *Chassidus*, there are hidden benefits, it affects the person at his core, and so forth. However, these reasons only suffice for the benefit of the doubt. But, on Yud Tes Kislev, when we make an honest *cheshbon hanefesh* about what *Chassidus* means for us, we are left with a serious dilemma.

THE LIGHT OF MY SOUL

There is a human tendency to demand of ourselves more than we can do, thereby causing us to do nothing at all. For example, when considering



*Harav Yosef Heller is
Rov and Rosh Kolel in
Crown Heights, NY*

Chassidus and Yud Tes Kislev are dubbed, “Ohr v’chayus nafsheinu,” the light and life of our soul. What does that mean for us? What is the light and life of our soul?

“*Vahavta l’rei’acha kamocho*” one may conclude that he must have the same bank account as his neighbor, and that every dollar earned must be shared. Since that is impossible, he ignores the *mitzva* entirely. By incorrectly interpreting the *possuk*, he demands too much of himself and ends up not doing anything.

Chassidus and Yud Tes Kislev are dubbed, “*Ohr v’chayus nafsheinu*,” the light and life of our soul.

What does that mean for us? What is the light and life of our soul?

We each know where our energy lies, what our passions are and what we’re interested in. Of course, we believe in the real meaning of “*ohr v’chayus*,” but how does that relate to us? Let’s not fool ourselves, we are American boys and we enjoy eating pizza; the extent of our *Chassidus* is that the pizza should have a Lubavitcher *hechsher*... We therefore conclude that “*ohr v’chayus nafsheinu*” and other ideas of Yud Tes Kislev weren’t intended for us.

Reb Aizik Homlier was elated that because of Yud Tes Kislev we know about Hashem. To the Alter Rebbe it didn’t matter whether he was in or out of jail. In fact, he even had special “Shabbos clothes,” since he pulled out a thread from his handkerchief and used it to lift up his long socks. Material discomfort was insignificant to the Rebbe. So, Reb Aizik Homlier explained, the true gain was that we know Hashem more as a result of *Chassidus*, “*laHashem hayeshua*.”

But what does it mean to rejoice in knowing Hashem? In a practical sense for average people?

A REALISTIC CHASSIDUS

A *bochur* once challenged me, “I’m not interested in what is happening before the *tzimtzum*, why are we learning these subjects? Why do we learn about how the light is encapsulated in its source, and the three levels within that itself? How is relevant to me?”

This *bochur* clearly expressed what many others were afraid to bring up.

Another type of *bochur* is even afraid to consider such a heretical question, and he convinces himself that learning *Chassidus* refines him. But he isn’t satisfied, since he looks at himself and sees that he hasn’t become refined. He therefore concludes that his problem is that he hasn’t learned enough *Chassidus*. So, he starts learning more *Chassidus* and still no change. He then thinks it must be because he doesn’t *daven* properly. Why? Because he doesn’t want to. But, if he’s learning *Chassidus*, and *Chassidus* makes a person more refined, why doesn’t he have any interest in *davening*?

People tend to dismiss these thoughts by thinking that the main thing is that they’re learning *Chassidus*. In truth, it is incorrect; we must talk openly, clearly and practically about these issues amongst ourselves



A bochur once challenged me, “I’m not interested in what is happening before the tzimtzum, why are we learning these subjects?”

and to our children. We must discover how to incorporate *Chassidus* into our daily lives, and how to learn *Chassidus* on a personal level so that it affects our day-to-day living.

The relevance of *Chassidus* must be clear and comprehensible in a way that the animal soul can understand it as well. The animal soul has an entirely different language than the G-dly soul, and we must ensure that it understands the significance of Yud Tes Kislev, what it means that there’s a G-d in the world, and what it means for me in my daily life.

A person thinks to himself: “I’m not at the level of practicing *iskafya* (withholding oneself) over my desires. Can I still connect with *Chassidus* in a personal way? What does ‘living with *Chassidus*’ mean for someone like me who wants to enjoy good food, to have a nice car and a house and to go on vacation? Does *darkei haChassidus* mean to change entirely and become a great chossid? I’m not up to it and can’t connect with that.”

PURSUING TRUTH

In the letter *Kotointi*, which the Alter Rebbe wrote after returning from prison, he instructs his chassidim to deal humbly with those who opposed them. He writes, “They are to subdue their spirit and heart before everyone according to the attribute of truth of Yaakov (*midas emes l’yaakov*) with humility and a soft answer that turns away anger, and with a restrained spirit.”

Concerning this letter, the Rebbe Maharash once said, that if the Alter Rebbe had not mentioned the necessity for “truth” he would have had fifty-thousand more chassidim.

What is the crucial difference whether *emes* is mentioned or not?

Without those words, it would mean that the Alter Rebbe is instructing us to outwardly bend before opposition, speaking respectfully and not saying anything harsh. This would, of course, be a tremendous feat, since the Alter Rebbe was referring

People tend to dismiss these thoughts by thinking that the main thing is that they’re learning Chassidus. In truth, it is incorrect.

The Rebbe Maharash once said, that if the Alter Rebbe had not mentioned the necessity for “truth” he would have had fifty-thousand more chassidim.



to those who had informed on him and rejoiced at his imprisonment! Yet, the Alter Rebbe did not accede to good conduct alone and added that it must be done with true intent.

Many people were realistic; they concluded that these ideas were too lofty and they ought to find another *rebbe* who would make demands which they were capable of attaining. Thus, the mention of *emes* pushed away fifty-thousand potential chassidim.

However, we are left with a dilemma. Since we know that we aren't of the caliber of *emes*, what then are we doing here? Rationalizations that we *want* to be at that level or that we're connected to the Rebbe who is at the level are just fine measures of self-comfort.

THE FOUNDATION OF LIVING WITH CHASSIDUS

Kotointi marked the beginning of a new era in the spreading of *Chassidus*; this letter is the foundation of how *Chassidus* is relevant to our lives.

Yaakov *Avinu* said to Hashem, “I have become small from all the kindnesses and from all the truth that *You* have rendered”; he recognized that everything that occurred to him – including the suffering at the hands of Elifaz, Lavan and Esav – was kindness and that it all came from Hashem.

The Alter Rebbe demands of us to emulate the ways of our forefathers, as Chazal require us to ask ourselves, “When will my actions – *ma'asai* - reach those of my forefathers?” They don't say that one's Torah or *mitzvos* must be comparable to those of our forefathers, but rather the “actions” – meaning our daily conduct.

A *Yid* must recognize that Hashem runs the world. It's not hard and it doesn't take a lot of time or energy; it just requires thought.

When you go to buy new shoelaces and you walk the one block to the store, think Who gave you money for the laces, Who created them, and Who put the energy in your hand to get them. It doesn't cost anything and you don't need to change yourself at all; you don't have to wage any battles against the *yetzer harah*. You can't think about it the entire time? Think about it for part of the way, but at least think about it for a little bit. Think there is a G-d in this world, and live with Hashem.

LIVING WITH MOSHIACH

In 5752 (1992), during the last Simchas Torah that we heard from the Rebbe, the Rebbe spoke about what it means to know Hashem and to live with Moshiach:

“At the time of Moshiach, Hashem will reveal Himself so that all will know that there is nothing but Hashem. A parallel conduct is required in the life service a Jew – to recognize and be aware that in all his actions that there is nothing but Hashem...

“This relates especially to Jewish children (called “*meshichai*”) who must be educated in a way that they are entirely permeated by the idea of Moshiach, so that when one sees a Jewish child they will see Moshiach, meaning that the child’s entire being expresses *ein od milvado* – there is nothing but Hashem!”

What does this mean practically for regular American chassidim? How can we see on a child “that his entire being is Moshiach”?

When a child sees how his father is conscious of Hashem’s presence, he too begins to live with

Hashem. He hears his father say that the money he earned and what he will buy with it is Hashem’s doing. He observes that when someone bothers his father, he doesn’t get upset or fight back, since he recognizes that everything that happens is from Hashem. If rain comes through the roof or there isn’t enough money to pay a bill he remains collected, since this too is Hashem’s doing and Hashem does no evil.

Such a child comes to know that whatever happens is Hashem’s problem, and he must only do what he can. Since Hashem created him, and in this specific fashion, he doesn’t demand more than what he can do, and Hashem will take care of him. As a child, he naturally reflects this attitude in a greater and purer way.



What does this mean practically for regular American chassidim? How can we see on a child “that his entire being is Moshiach”?

*People tend to think
that they can only
daven in a shul while
wearing talis and
tefillin. A Yid must
know that he can daven
no matter where he is.*

People thought that man does and Hashem helps, but the Alter Rebbe demonstrated in Tanya how it is all from Hashem. As the Rebbe told someone in *yechidus*: “Hashem doesn’t ‘help,’ He does everything!”

Even if we’re not at the level to be silent when we have a leak or are in debt, we can reflect on how it ought to be. We should start with something that isn’t a struggle, such as thinking how the products we buy are being given to us by Hashem. Once we become “comfortable” with Hashem and closer to him, and thinking about Him becomes easier, we’ll be able to think about Him even when we’re uncomfortable.

(People generally assume that a small problem is a small headache and a big problem is a big headache. In fact, the opposite is true. A small problem, for which we have a solution, is a headache, since we are required to deal with it, but a big problem for which we have no solution is no headache at all, since we are obviously not expected by Hashem to do anything.)

This is the basic meaning of recognizing that there is a G-d in the world. A person who thinks this way will naturally be careful in “*sur meira*” and “*asei tov*,” and be a proper Jew.



*That man does and Hashem helps, but as the Rebbe told someone in yechidus:
“Hashem doesn’t ‘help,’ He does everything!”*

This mode of *emes* is attainable at every stage in life for even the simplest Jew. Of course, the application and depth of truth differs between levels, and we can’t compare ourselves to the great chassidim of the Alter Rebbe. However, we can aspire to be sincere and thorough in our level of *avodas Hashem* and our degree of recognition of Hashem’s presence.

CONNECTING ANYWHERE

About Yaakov *Avinu* the Torah says, “*Vayifga bamakom,*” and he prayed “at that place.” A person must *daven* in whatever “place” he finds himself.

People tend to think that they can only *daven* in a *shul* while wearing *talis* and *tefillin*. A *Yid* must know that he can *daven* no matter where he is. While waiting in line in a store or at the bank, you may as well turn to Hashem! *Daven* that He give you health, money, and success with what you are doing. The benefit of such a practice is twofold: Firstly, you are connecting with Hashem, and secondly, you will never feel that something is lacking since Hashem is the one who provides for your needs.

Connecting to Hashem is the heart of *davening*. As the Alter Rebbe filled out in the questionnaire about *Chassidus* that he was given in prison, that the main aspect of *davening* is connecting to Hashem, and which *nusach* one recites is of less importance. He repeats this several times, “This is the main part, all else is secondary.” Chassidim devoted their lives to internalizing the connection with Hashem made through *davening*.

Although it may be difficult, turning to Hashem at all times improves one’s quality of life.

■

HUMBLED BY CHASSIDUS

In the last section of *Tanya*, the Alter Rebbe requests of his chassidim to divide the Shas among themselves and to recite *Tehillim*. Learning *Gemara* isn’t enough; it is necessary to compliment it with *Tehillim*. But, in truth, we see many Jews who learn Shas and recite *Tehillim* and it doesn’t seem like they are learning Torah solely for the sake of Heaven.

Chazal say, “From learning Torah for ulterior motives (*mitoich shelo lishmah*), one will come to learning for the sake of Heaven.” It is imperative that one first recognize that he isn’t learning Torah for the sake of Heaven, for otherwise he thinks that he’s a perfect Jew who doesn’t need to improve. Specifically through this *recognition* that he is studying for ulterior motives will he eventually come to study for the proper reason.

How does one recognize which intentions are for the sake of Heaven and which are not? Through studying *Chassidus*. This will lead him to become humble, thereby giving meaning (*toich*) to his previous Torah study, which will make him into a proper receptacle. It is then guaranteed that “the G-dliness within it will bring him back to good.”

To truly learn *lishma* is a tremendous level, and the Alter Rebbe says in a *maamar* (*Haketzarim*, p. 52-53) that only a fool convinces himself that he go straight to learning *lishma*. But to contemplate what *lishma* means and to desire to study *lishma*, every person is capable. It is an *avoda* and a worthy accomplishment on its own.

When it comes to *avodas Hashem*, envy is a positive trait. A *chassidische* interpretation explains that the *shvatim* were envious of Yosef’s righteousness and were not sinful in that.

We must not envy an activist, community leader, or even an outstanding Torah scholar, since they were given exceptional gifts from Above which we were

We teach all sorts of things, we teach about many wonderful chumros and minhagim, but we must not forget to teach them that there is an Eibershter!

not, which is an indication that we have a different *avoda*. However, a *chassidische Yid* – who lives with Hashem, is always joyful and goes about his life without fanfare – is someone who we can observe, emulate and be envious of. We should point him out to our children so that they too know what it means to live like a chossid.

DON'T FORGET THE EIBERSHTER!

I once read a diary of a chossid who was riding the train in Russia. At that time, one could sometimes ride the train for an entire week straight to reach his destination at the other side of the country. He figured that instead of sitting alone, he would search for a Jew on the long train, and so he walked from car to car searching for a Jew. Suddenly, he noticed someone laying on the bench, entirely covered in a blanket. For some reason he sensed something, so he lifted the blanket and saw that it was Reb Gershon Ber “*Hagadol*” Paharer (an esteemed chossid and *shadar* of the Rebbe Maharash and the Rebbe Rashab) lying under the blanket and pondering *Chassidus*.

Reb Gershon Ber opened his eyes and saw a *chassidische yungerman* standing before him. He exclaimed, “*Yungerman, yungerman!* You must educate your children that there is an *Eibershter* in the world!” And he went back to thinking *Chassidus*.

We teach all sorts of things, we teach about many wonderful *chumros* and *minhagim*, but we must not forget to teach them that there is an *Eibershter*! This is the most fundamental concept. All the other things will be learned over time, but this must be inculcated

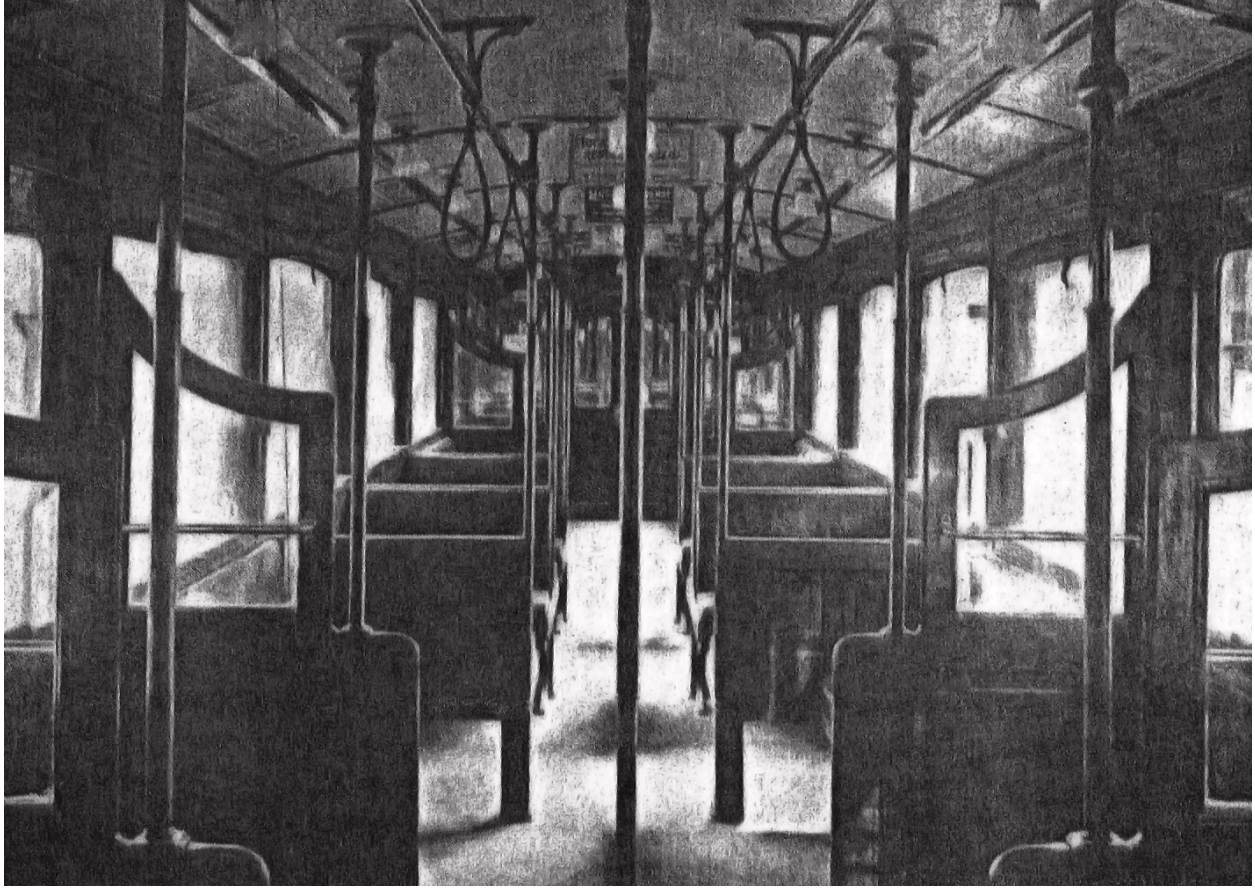
from a very young age. Only in such a manner will our children be spiritually healthy.

I saw a letter that a young *bochur* wrote to both the Rebbe and to the Steipler *Gaon*, and I saw both responses. He wrote that he was attending a *yeshiva ktanah* in Eretz Yisroel and was not successful, and he was placed in a lower class.

The Steipler replied with a reasonable and correct answer. He explained that Torah study is different than other academia and success doesn't depend on intelligence. Torah is G-dly and therefore true success depends on his *yiras Shamayim* and good deeds. He should therefore focus on improving his studies and not despair.

The Rebbe gave a similar answer but with a preface (paraphrased): “I don't understand the issue. **You** want to succeed because **you** decided that this is something **you** want. You must recognize that you're a vessel through which G-dliness is revealed, and exactly as Hashem created you, that is exactly how His will is fulfilled.”

This is the message we must tell our children. To tell a child that he must know the material and get good grades on his tests, and that if he passes he will be rewarded and if not he will be punished, is not a Jewish kind of education. Of course, a child who knows the material deserves a prize, but to focus just on that is a *goyishe* education. A Jewish education is to tell him first, “You are a vessel through which G-dliness enters the world.” It's not a difficult task and it doesn't cost anything, it only requires thought.



SMALLER IS BETTER

The crux of Chassidus is “*kotointi*” – to be small and humble.

Yaakov Avinu said, “*Kotointi mikol hachassadim,*” I have become small from all the kindnesses and from all the truth. It’s written in *seforim* that Yaakov was saying that the greatest of all kindnesses is that he is small, for that too is a kindness from Hashem. The *bitul* that a Jew has comes from Hashem, since a human being cannot be selfless without Divine assistance, and it is the greatest kindness and truth.

In the letter of *Kotointi*, the Alter Rebbe pleads with his chassidim to be humble like Yaakov, and to truly regard themselves as remnants that are of no use.

One of the Alter Rebbe’s leading chassidim was asked what he had learned after spending a year with his Rebbe. He replied that his “answer” remained the same, it was his question that changed. And he explained:

“Before I went to the Alter Rebbe I was bothered by this question: ‘Since I learn so much Torah – and every word of Torah is equal to all 613 *mitzvos* (*v’talmud Torah kneged kulam*) – how will Hashem

To tell a child that he must know the material and get good grades on his tests, and that if he passes he will be rewarded and if not he will be punished, is not a Jewish kind of education.



When an American Jew dons his red tie in honor of Shabbos, then his tie is holy and contains Hashem's signature of truth.

create a large enough reward for me?' and I would tell myself that 'Hashem is Al-mighty and He can certainly manage it.'

"After learning under the Alter Rebbe my question changed. Now I think to myself, 'How can Hashem tolerate such a lowly individual as myself,' and the answer remains the same, 'Hashem is Al-mighty and He can certainly manage it.'"

In other words, the first thing that he learned from the Alter Rebbe was how to truly humble oneself.

One doesn't need to be of great stature to understand and appreciate humility. Every person, irrespective of age or standing, can realize the ideal way to live, and wish that they were holding there.

THE SIGNATURE OF TRUTH

When a person does something truthfully and sincerely, even the simplest activity, it has Hashem's signature, since Hashem's signature is truth.

When an American Jew dons his red tie in honor of Shabbos, and he stands in front of the mirror to straighten it, but does so sincerely for Shabbos, then his tie is holy and truthful and contains Hashem's signature of truth.

On the other hand, a person can be doing great activities, but if he does them insincerely and with personal interests, they're missing *kedusha*. *Yeshus* is *kelipa*, and a *mitzva* which is motivated by *yeshus* is rooted in *kelipa*.

This doesn't mean that one should *ch"v* abstain from performing a *mitzva* if he's not sincere, since action is what matters most. However, if there is

We need to draw people to the light of Chassidus, to open their eyes to G-dliness. We must ensure that the Elokus and holiness within it are properly expressed.

someone else who can perform the *mitzva* just as well, then let him do it, and you can go do another *mitzva* where you don't have personal interest.

A Jew once told me that if only the Rebbe would have had more *chitzoniyus* and done some *rebbishe shtick*, he would have attracted the entire *frum* world. He's probably right, however that would be insincere and not "*midas emes l'yaakov*."

Emes is not an added quality; it is the basis of our entire *avoda*.



SHARING THE WELLSPRINGS

The Rebbe repeatedly quoted the dictum "*Yafutzu maynosecha chutza*" as an instruction to spread the wellsprings of *Chassidus* outwards.

One can draw *Yidden* closer to *Yiddishkeit* through eloquent lectures, tasty Shabbos meals, a beautiful *shul*, or an entertaining concert. While these tools are effective and doing so is praiseworthy, they are not our ultimate goal. We need to draw people to the light of *Chassidus*, to open their eyes to G-dliness.

We must teach *Chassidus* in a way that it is perceived as a revelation of G-dliness. A listener who isn't familiar with *Chassidus* is likely to perceive a *maamar* or *sicha* as a *geshmake "vort"* or a nice *pshat* in Rashi. When speaking in a *shul*, most people will only hear and enjoy the idea that is shared, rather than the holiness that it contains. We must ensure that the *Elokus* and holiness within it are properly expressed.

This doesn't mean that we must repeat the idea in the exact words that the Rebbe said it. If the individual isn't in a position to hear the Rebbe's words, we must be sure to share them in a way that he too can understand it.

Many people have misunderstood what Chabad is about. They think that we're just another organization that teaches Torah and *Yiddishkeit*, and the Rebbe is a *tzadik* who *davens*, learns and gives *brachos*. They fail to recognize the inherent G-dliness in *Chassidus* because no one showed it to them.

Likewise, they should be taught how a Rebbe isn't simply a great *talmid chacham* or a very righteous person – which the average *Yid* imagines as someone who learns all night or goes to a cold *mikva* – but a G-dly person who sees G-dliness in everything.

If we shared that with the world, it would be a true *hafotzas hamayonos*.

We must spread the light of *Chassidus* not only with *Yidden* who haven't heard of it, but also within our own family and community. We must pay attention to how the message is shared, and ensure that the *Elokus* within it is clearly exposed. Otherwise, it's a nice *vort*, but the point is missing.

BRINGING IT DOWN

This mistake is common with young *bochurim*. A *bochur* in *yeshiva* may learn both *nigla* and *Chassidus* but he doesn't appreciate the difference between them. He learns the *maamar*, takes a test on it, and he moves on. He views the *maamar* as an intellectual matter, instead of a spiritual one.

When he gets older and matures, he eventually comes to recognize what the *maamar* is really saying. But in his youth he views it as nothing more than a good question and answer. It is our responsibility to bring *Chassidus* down to a level that a young *bochur* and even a child can understand it.

Spreading the wellsprings means to "sell" G-dliness. The Rebbe would often say that people are thirsty for G-dliness because they possess a G-dly soul that is naturally touched by G-dliness. Just as the animal



R. Sender Menkin with his grandchildren the Wilshansky brothers

I heard from older chassidim that amongst chassidim, even the most intellectual subjects were studied for the sake of action. Even the great intellectuals of Chassidus, “maskilim,” had this goal in mind.

soul is drawn to tasty food, the G-dly soul is drawn to G-dliness – when exposed to it. If a *Yid* is not inspired, it is an indication that the G-dliness hasn't yet reached him, since by nature his soul is attracted to it. Even when teaching it right, we must make sure to find suitable wording for our target audience, since not everyone understands things the same way. The listeners may think they grasp the message when they really don't.

I once observed the esteemed chossid R. Sender Menkin learn a chapter of Tanya with a learned fellow who wasn't a chossid. When they concluded, the fellow exclaimed, “Ah, what a good *vort!*” The fellow wasn't familiar with the nature of Chassidus, he thought he was learning a question and answer.

R. Mendel Vechter shared with me that before he came to Lubavitch he had learned *Likutei Torah* with a teacher, and he understood the introduction, the three questions and the answer. He understood how

the answer fit with the *posuk* upon which the *maamar* was based, and he observed that *Likutei Torah* was more at length than other *seforim*. When he began to study with R. Yoel Kahan, he realized that there was much more depth in the *maamar* than some questions and answers; there's a whole world there.

[During one of his travels, R. Itche *der masmid* repeated a *maamar* in a local shul. When he concluded, one person got up and recited a *kaddish drabanan* as some do after learning *Mishnayos*. R. Itche was very disappointed. Instead of seeking to internalize the *maamar's* message, the man treated it as just another *shiur*.]

If we learn with someone and don't share the depth and G-dliness it contains, we haven't shared the *sicha* or *maamar* with them at all. Of course, we must continue teaching *Chassidus*, but we must do it in a way that opens his or her eyes to *Elokus*.

LIVING IT IN PRACTICE

Everything has to have a practical application. The Mishna says that one must not have more wisdom than actions, *chochmaso merubah mimaisav*. The problem is not only in having too few actions, but also having too much wisdom, since Hashem doesn't want His wisdom to go to waste.

In a letter to a chossid, the Alter Rebbe instructs him to study certain sections of *Eitz Chaim* contingent on making it relevant so that it increases his *yiras Shamayim*. I looked up that section of *Eitz Chaim* and found that it discusses various *Sheimos* and *Partzufim* (names and spiritual "faces"), this chossid was able to derive *yiras Shamayim* from it. How much more so for all of *Chassidus*.

I heard from older chassidim that amongst chassidim, even the most intellectual subjects were studied for the sake of action. Even the great intellectuals of *Chassidus*, "*maskilim*," had this goal in mind.

May we merit to appreciate what we have and to apply it in our lives.

L'chaim! **P**

Many people have misunderstood what Chabad is about. They think that we're just another organization that teaches Torah and Yiddishkeit, and the Rebbe is a tzadik who davens, learns and gives brachos.



R. Yoel Kahn with R. Mendel Vechter



Not

like a ton of

BRICKS

RABBI BINYOMIN COHEN

THE MARRIAGE of Yitzchok Dovid Groner and Devorah Konikov took place in Brooklyn, New York on the 7th Ellul 5706 (Sept. 3rd, 1946). The young couple settled in Providence, Rhode Island, returning to New York six weeks later to spend the Yomtov of Succos in the home of Rabbi Groner's parents.

It was from there that the recently-wed Yitzchok emerged on Chol Hamoed (the intermediary days of) Succos to make his way to the Rebbe's Shul at 770 Eastern Parkway. His parents' home, in common with those of most Lubavitch families of that era, was situated at quite a distance from Eastern Parkway. However, a young and energetic Rabbi Groner was not one to be daunted by the prospect of a long walk. Thus, half an hour later he strode confidently into the Shul at 770, ready to put on his Tallis and start davening.

He may have considered himself ready, but someone else had other ideas. Rabbi Mordechai Mentlik was the Rosh Yeshiva of the Lubavitch Yeshiva and Rabbi Groner's mentor. A quiet and soft-spoken

man, he was nevertheless passionately committed to ensuring that his disciples avoided anything which smacked of compromise or second-best with regard to all matters spiritual.

The issue at hand concerned the appropriate manner of dress on Chol Hamoed.

The Mishnah (Avos 3, 11) says: המבזה את המועדות אין לו חלק לעולם הבא – One who scorns (or despises) the Festivals has no portion in the World-to-come.

What sort of behaviour is considered as scorning the Festivals? Rashi explains that the Mishnah is referring to a person who treats the days of Chol Hamoed as if they were ordinary weekdays. We could infer from this that one who wears the same clothes on Chol Hamoed as he would wear on any other weekday could be considered to be despising the Yomtov. Therefore, say the Halachic authorities, a person should take care on Chol Hamoed to wear clothes which are at least somewhat better than his normal weekday attire.

None of this, however, creates an obligation to wear one's Shabbos clothes. While it is true that many



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Rabbi Yitzchok Dovid Groner in the 1940's



Rabbi Mordechai Mentlik

Jews choose to honor Chol Hamoed by wearing their Shabbos garb, this cannot in itself change the Halachic position. What is optional, and even praiseworthy, does not become obligatory, and the Shabbos clothes may safely be reserved for the days of Shabbos and actual Yomtov.

Rabbi Groner, when relating this incident, emphasized that he was at the time wearing a very smart and presentable suit. There could be no suggestion of his having ignored the honor due to Chol Hamoed since he would never wear such a suit on an ordinary weekday. True that he was not wearing the long black *sirtuk* which was customarily worn in Lubavitch on Shabbos, and which he himself had worn for the first time at his wedding six weeks earlier, but that was a matter of individual choice and hence of no great concern.

Rabbi Mentlik apparently thought otherwise. As Yitzchok marched into the Shul at 770, the Rosh Yeshivah raised his eyes to behold his pupil standing tall and self-confident before him. Displeased with what he saw, he quietly uttered an extremely brief rebuke. “Yitzchok”, he said, “המבזה...” (One who scorns...) i.e. he quoted the first word of the above Mishnah.

Yitzchok neither sought nor needed any explanation of the quote. He understood immediately what his teacher meant to say. If Rabbi Mentlik would have wished to hand him a full-length lambasting he would have said, “How come, Yitzchok, that you are not wearing your Shabbos clothes? Is this the way you dress on Chol Hamoed? I can see that you are wearing a fancy suit, but do you think that just because you got married you should compromise on these matters? You will start off with this, and who knows what you will end up with. I am very disappointed with you, Yitzchok. Is this my reward for teaching you for so many years?”

Fortunately, Rabbi Mentlik was not interested in indulging in a tirade. He merely quoted the first word of the Mishnah, and Yitzchok understood him perfectly.

The teacher had stated his view, but the fact was that the majority of Halachic opinions are undeniably

There is nothing more likely to alienate a person than a lengthy diatribe detailing all of his misdeeds.

lenient in this matter. Rabbi Groner was well aware of this and could easily have just smiled and started davening, as if nothing had been said. He was not, after all, a little boy who needed his teacher to note and criticize his every move. He was now married and independent. The Yeshivah was a thing of the past, and, grateful as he was to Rabbi Mentlik for all that he had taught him, he would almost certainly prefer from now on to have some breathing space of his own.

That is all about how he could have reacted. What actually transpired was that he unhesitatingly accepted his teacher's rebuke. He turned around immediately and went straight back to his father's home in order to change into his Shabbos clothes.

WHEN RABBI GRONER told us, some fifty years later, the above story, he thought that he was telling us mainly about his Rosh Yeshivah's deference to even the smallest details of Halacha. Personally, I found his complete and unquestioning acceptance of his teacher's reprimand to be of much greater significance.

Similarly, I would venture to suggest that this acceptance was a direct result of the manner in which the criticism was delivered, i.e. brief, focused, and free of any element of destructive personal attack.

There is nothing more likely to alienate a person than a lengthy diatribe detailing all of his misdeeds. The fact that he knows that what is being said is true, by no means guarantees his humble acceptance of the point being made. On the contrary, recognizing the truth means being forced to admit that the other person has a far more realistic and less complimentary view

of me than that which I have until now presented to myself. He has, in effect, severely dented my self-image, something which many people would bitterly resent.

Thus, the more comprehensive the rebuke, the greater the antagonism which it is likely to arouse. As long as the basic message will be understood, the less said the better. Misdeeds do indeed need to be pointed out, but why should it be necessary to destroy their perpetrator in the process? Well-meaning mentors are not always the most perceptive judges of human nature and sometimes stumble in this area. In Rabbi Mentlik's case, however, his fierce devotion to Halacha and Minhag was coupled with an equally firm commitment to maintaining the self-respect and dignity of his pupils. Little wonder that his reprimand achieved complete acceptance and cooperation.

Chazal say: די לחכימא ברמיזא - for a wise person, a hint is sufficient.

When criticism is delivered in the form of a hint, there is an implication that the one being addressed has been judged as wise enough to appreciate the point being made without needing to have it spelled out to him. The implied compliment could often help to soften the sting of the accompanying censure, and do much to ensure a positive and productive outcome.

A ONE-WORD REBUKE may be commendably brief, but it is surely a greater accomplishment to effect a change without saying anything at all. I had an opportunity to witness the



flawless execution of such an operation some fifty years ago.

At that time, the village of Kfar Chabad in Eretz Yisroel consisted of approximately one hundred families. Most of these were Chabad Chassidim who had left Soviet Russia some fifteen to twenty years earlier. Directly adjoining the Kfar was another village called Tochelet, made up of about fifty families, some from Morocco, some from Yemen and some from Roumania. All the families in both villages were religious, but not surprisingly, the Chassidim tended to be more stringent in several areas of observance. In addition, the fact that Kfar Chabad was home to a permanent Yeshivah Gedolah of nearly two hundred Talmidim, who came from all over the world, helped to reinforce a more fervent religious atmosphere. This, in contrast with their neighbours in Tochelet, who enjoyed no such support.

The two villages faced each other from opposite sides of a central square. In one corner of the square, on the Tochelet side, stood a tiny barber's shop where Yitzchok B., a Moroccan immigrant, gave haircuts to the inhabitants of both villages as well as to the Talmidim of the Yeshivah. Thus it was that one hot summer's day I slowly made my way to Yitzchok's shop.

Pushing open the door and walking inside, I saw that Yitzchok was busy giving an older person a haircut. On one of the three chairs lined up against the wall sat a boy, whose whole appearance and manner of dress

proclaimed that he came from one of the Chassidic families of the Kfar. He was about eleven years old and sat patiently awaiting his turn.

Sitting down on the empty chair next to him, I noticed, to my great surprise that he had a newspaper spread out on his lap. A further glance confirmed that the paper was Ma'ariv – one of the most popular dailies available – and that our young friend was busily devouring the contents of the sports pages and their accompanying illustrations.

To say that I was surprised would be an understatement, but allow me to explain why.

Despite many Jews who live in Chutz L'Aretz (the Diaspora) having a somewhat permissive attitude to non-Jewish or secular newspapers, the situation is very different in Eretz Yisroel. There the divide between religious and non-religious is both sharp and pronounced, not merely spiritually, but also socially and politically. Consequently, the larger religious groupings publish their own daily newspapers, thereby enabling their members to stay abreast of current affairs, without being simultaneously confronted by material which they find unacceptable. Thus, in your typical chareidi settlement or village the only newspaper sold will be something like Hamodia, published by Agudas Israel, which reflects the views of the typical member of such a community.

Ma'ariv, or any other secular newspaper, does not represent the opinions of such people, and would therefore not be encouraged by the majority. It would



The village of Kfar Chabad

be difficult to discover a Ma'ariv in any public venue and it would be viewed, to a certain extent, as a threat to the ethos of that particular settlement.

Kfar Chabad was no exception. Strictly religious, they nevertheless did not always see eye to eye with the policies of Agudas Israel. Thus the newspaper of choice for most of the population was the daily She'arim published by Poalei Agudas Israel. Ma'ariv and similar publications were neither welcome nor widespread.

Back in Yitzchok's barber shop, I wondered what on earth was going on. Maybe in Tochelet it was easier to find a Ma'ariv than in Kfar Chabad. Every barber's shop in the world has a supply of reading material for those who have to wait their turn, and somehow or other part of that material was not entirely suitable. That could all explain how the paper came to be here. What, however, could justify a Chassidic boy's sitting and eagerly consuming material which his parents would not want him to even see? Clearly, the fact that he had no access to anything of this nature in his own home, created a type of forbidden fruit, which is always more of a temptation. However, even such a craving could be indulged in more discreetly. Did this boy not realize that this was no way for a young Chosid to behave in public?

I was at a loss as to what I should do. I had several valid reasons for saying nothing. Firstly, I didn't even know the boy personally or to which family he belonged. Secondly, my broken Ivrit was going to make it very difficult to communicate any type of meaningful message. Thirdly, he might just tell me to get lost and mind my own business. After all, was I his teacher or his father?

*Did this boy not realize
that this was no way
for a young Chosid to
behave in public?*

Feeling incapable of saying or doing anything, I sat there in increasing discomfort and agitation, whilst my younger neighbor, blissfully unaware of my feelings, continued to avidly lap-up all of the latest happenings in a world far from his own.

Suddenly, the door of the barber's shop opened and in walked Reb Refoel Nachman (Folye) Kahn, one of the leading elder Chassidim of the Kfar. Reb Refoel was known as a Chosid who had displayed *mesiras nefesh* for Torah, Yiddishkeit and other Chassidim whilst in the Soviet Union. Rewarded with three years of exile in Siberia in recognition of his very cooperative attitude, he continued to persist in doing everything possible to maintain his total commitment to the observance of *mitzvos*, even when this meant endangering his life. Despite his considerable spiritual stature, his experiences had left him considerably weakened physically. This

plus his advancing age made it difficult for him to play an active role in the upbringing of the younger generation of Chassidim in the Kfar.

As Reb Refoel walked in, I couldn't help wondering how he was going to react to the sight of the young Chosid engrossed in the Ma'ariv. The N.K.V.D. and Soviet atheists pose one type of problem. They may threaten your life, but at least you know with whom and what you are dealing. As long as you are resolute and determined to fight, Hashem will help you win the battle. When, however, the problem is much closer to home and within the youth of one's own community, a different approach is surely required. How indeed would this venerable Chosid bridge the sixty-year gap between himself and a generation which had been brought up in an environment posing challenges of which he had little experience?



Reb Refoel Nachman (Folye) Kahn

*The negative had been consumed by
the positive. No wonder he was smiling.
The wordless rebuke had worked to perfection.*

I need not have worried. Reb Refoel glanced at the boy and realized immediately what was happening. He said not a word, but just sat down in the empty chair next to the boy. Smiling, he stretched out his hand and removed the newspaper from the startled boy. Having folded the paper and placed it under himself on the seat of his chair, he turned back, still smiling, to the boy.

“Tell me,” he said in Yiddish, “which Gemara are you learning in Cheder?”

The boy, slowly realizing that nothing was going to happen to him, replied “Bava Metzia”.

“Good”, said Reb Refoel, “let’s see how well you know it”. He then proceeded to orally test the boy on all that he had learned, until Yitzchok B., having

by now finished with the previous customer, called on the now-smiling boy to sit in the chair and have his haircut.

I had just witnessed a lesson in how to deliver a painless rebuke. The one who delivered the censure was smiling and didn’t say a word. Similarly, the one who was on the receiving end knew perfectly well why the paper had been removed so firmly and resolutely, but was nevertheless totally unresentful. He knew that he shouldn’t have been reading it in the first place, so taking it away from him made the point adequately. More important was to give him the chance to show how well he knew his Gemara. The negative had been consumed by the positive. No wonder he was smiling. The wordless rebuke had worked to perfection.

OF COURSE, in neither of the above stories would the one-word, or totally silent, reprimand have had any chance of success unless the person to whom it was directed was suitably prepared to receive it.

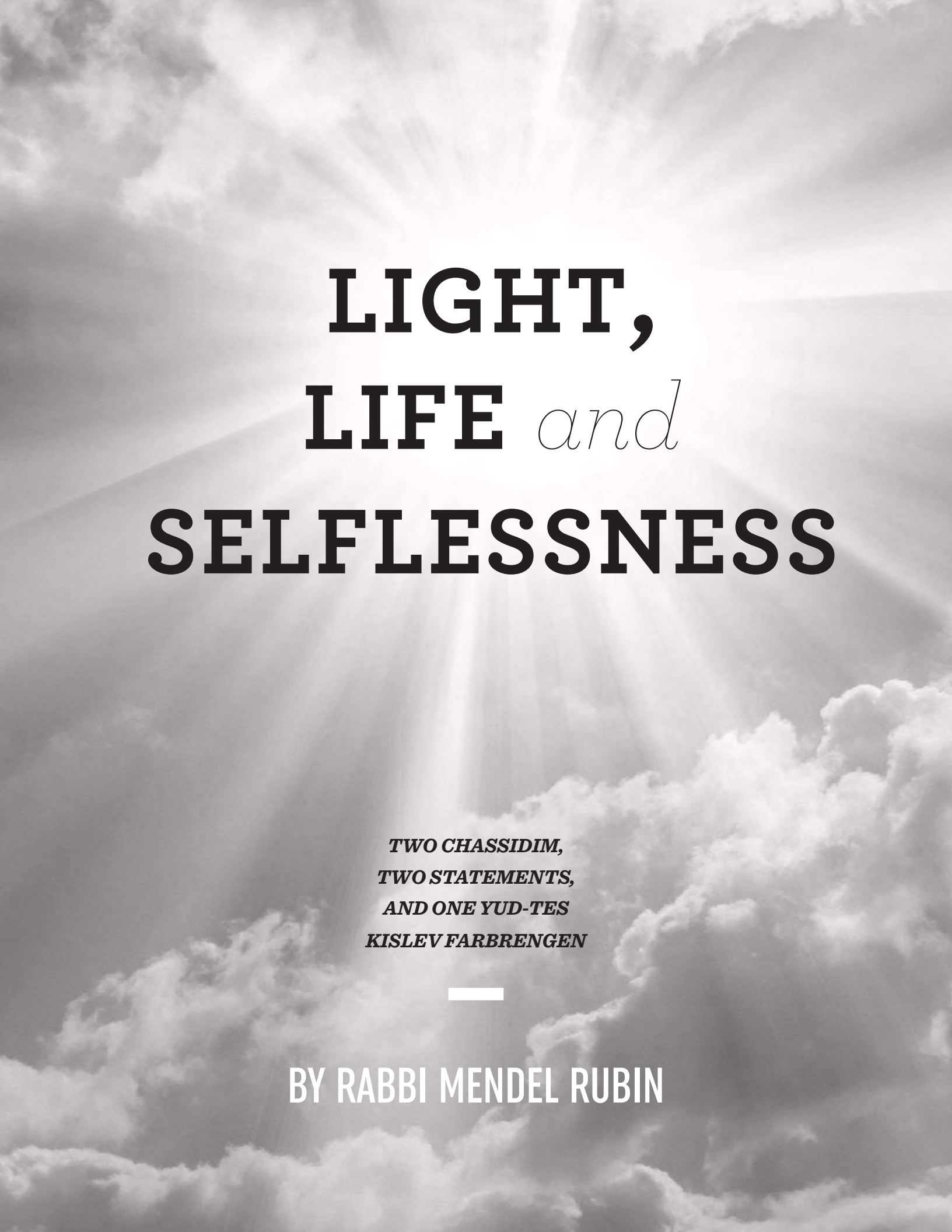
Rabbi Groner was fully aware of the necessity to be dressed appropriately for Chol Hamoed and was therefore able to respond positively to correction and guidance in this area. Similarly, the young boy knew perfectly well that his head was supposed to be in the Gemara rather than a newspaper, so no words of explanation were really needed.

When, however, a major difference of approach or understanding separates the mentor from his pupil, it is doubtful whether rebuke of any sort is appropriate. In such cases, explanation and

clarification are probably far more pertinent and productive.

In Tanya (Chapter 32) the Alter Rebbe indicates that the whole idea of rebuke is based on the assumption that the person being addressed is on the same page as the one speaking to him. If he is not, the reprimand will almost certainly fail to arouse anything other than a shrug of the shoulders coupled with a fair measure of resentment.

Rabbis Mentlik and Kahn were both educators who, very occasionally, criticised. If we will educate and enlighten we will also, where necessary, be able to rebuke. Our main focus and efforts should be invested in education (on all levels). This will, in the long run, almost invariably produce positive results. **P**



LIGHT,
LIFE *and*
SELFLESSNESS

***TWO CHASSIDIM,
TWO STATEMENTS,
AND ONE YUD-TE'S
KISLEV FARBRENGEN***

BY RABBI MENDEL RUBIN

Whenever I think of the Yud-Tes Kislev *farbrengens* of my formative years in *yeshivah*, two unforgettable statements come to mind, two pithy lines that were repeated by beloved teachers and relived by those who heard them each and every year.

An oft-repeated, predictable statement may seem to run against the grain of a *farbrengen*. After all, such gatherings are informal by design and definition. You can't speak at a *farbrengen* without thinking about it and preparing yourself for an honest exchange first. But neither can you make a formal delivery of a prepared speech. Real *farbrengens* spring from the heart, a fluid, flexible and authentic expression of true thoughts and feelings.

Yet these statements were different. They did not get stale with the passing years, but sprang forth anew, engaging the heart and mind each year with the same raw spirit, with energetic freshness and searching depth. For me and for any student who attended the same Chabad *yeshivah* in Brooklyn as I did, these simple statements of chassidic belief and their meaning became the central feature of the Yud-Tes Kislev experience. No matter where we live today, from Australia to Russia, or anywhere across America, these two Yud-Tes Kislev mottos remain etched in our minds.



The first of these is from the veteran chassid Reb Elya Chaim Roitblat, of blessed memory.

Legends swirled about Reb Elya Chaim. Rumor had it that he was among that special group of pious people who wore four pairs of *tefillin* in secret. A story circulated that the Rebbe assured a parent of

one of Reb Elya Chaim's students that since Elya Chaim was his teacher, he would certainly have fear of Heaven. Physically, he was a wisp of a man. But he was an individual of unwavering spirit. Even in the harshest days of winter, he'd determinedly make his way up icy sidewalks from one end of Crown Heights to the other to pray at the Rebbe's *minyan*, where he swayed to and fro, rhythmically saying the words of the prayer aloud, gently, softly and heartfelt. After retiring as a devoted teacher of young children, he assumed his post at the *yeshivah* for older students. He sat quietly and unassumingly at a desk near the entrance of the study hall, studying Likutei Torah, the classic collection of chassidic discourses by Alter Rebbe. We *yeshivah* students were never quite sure what his formal role was in the *yeshivah* faculty. But he was a living example of what a true chassid should look like, an idealized glimpse into the old days.

Once a year, Reb Elya Chaim came alive. On the eve of Yud-Tes Kislev, all the tables in the *yeshivah* were lined up in rows, covered with white tablecloths and filled with *farbrengen* foods, including the traditional Yud-Tes Kislev buckwheat kasha.

Each year, Reb Elya Chaim was the first speaker. Despite his small stature, he rose up and spoke dynamically, his cane in hand. And each and every year, he began with the same words, what might be described as a personal Yiddish liturgy, annually repeated almost verbatim, in a sweet singsong:

"Haynt iz Yud-Tes Kislev (Today is Yud-Tes Kislev). Vus iz Yud-Tes Kislev? (What is Yud-Tes Kislev?) The Rosh Hashanah of Chassidus. And what is Chassidus? Chassidus is nit ich (not I)!"

In other words, Chassidism is self-transcendence. Chassidism is selflessness.

Reb Elya Chaim always opened with these few words, and usually didn't say much more than that. He left



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Reb Elya Chaim Roitblat

for home soon after, while the night was still young and the *farbrengen* was just getting started.

My own children know these words well, and we repeat them in our home every year on Yud-Tes Kislev. Even my younger ones can repeat Reb Elya Chaim's words: "*Haynt iz Yud-Tes Kislev...*"



Later that same night, Reb Yisroel Friedman, may he live and be well, would *farbrenge* for hours. He continues to serve as the *rosh yeshivah* to this day, and *farbrengs* each year as he did then. He is a fiery, sharp-witted and richly expressive scholar. An individual who seamlessly combines the analytical precision of the Talmudist with the exuberant passion of chassidic life and learning, the entire month of Kislev is clearly a special time for him. There is a *niggun* segment that he often sings at *farbrengens* during

this month, a melancholy melody, with yearning and seeking throbbing in every note.

Reb Yisroel is a walking storehouse of Talmudic and chassidic knowledge, and with his quickness of spirit and razor-sharp mind, he is never without a novel insight at the tip of his tongue. Never at a loss for words, he flows seamlessly between the revealed and the concealed parts of Torah, weaving in and out, with poignant anecdotes and swift flashes of humor thrown in at every turn. But on Yud-Tes Kislev he sticks to the same topic every year, always repeating the same five Hebrew words, and expounding on them for hours on end:

"Ohr vechayus nafsheinu nitan lanu—[On this day of Yud-Tes Kislev,] the light and life of our souls were given to us."

These five Hebrew words are a quote from the same Yud-Tes Kislev letter in which the Rebbe Rashab proclaimed this day the Rosh Hashanah of Chassidus.

Have we absorbed and internalized the light, life and soul of Chassidus? Have we made it ours, and how? What have we done, and what are we continuing to do to make Chassidus our own?



Reb Yisroel Friedman

Late into the night, Reb Yisroel would unpack the immense significance of these words. *Light. Life. Soul.* Each of these words represents entire worlds of meaning, and Reb Yisroel drew on all the richness of his knowledge and his colorful personality to communicate that meaning to us. With animated warmth, zest and humor, he emphasized his points with pithy chassidic stories and sayings, quoting extensively from a vast repertoire of chassidic discourses.

But ultimately he placed the primary emphasis on the last two words, *nitan lanu*—on this day, the light and life of our souls was *given to us!* For Reb Yisroel, this statement wasn't simply cause for celebration. This was a statement of personal responsibility and obligation, a statement that demanded penetrating introspection, a statement that required us to ask ourselves hard, soul-searching questions: Have we absorbed and internalized the light, life and soul of Chassidus? Have we made it ours, and how? What have we done, and what are we continuing to do to make Chassidus our own?



I was intrigued and inspired by the paradoxical juxtaposition of these two mottos on the same night. "It's not about me," declares Reb Elya Chaim of Chassidus, yet Reb Yisroel insists that we must personally internalize it, we must apply it to our lives, we must make Chassidus our own.

These are no mere slogans. Each spoke his own truth. These were deeply personal statements, inner rallying cries, simultaneously expressing and re-intensifying the essence of who they each were as people, and their individual *avodah* (life's work) as chassidim. For both Reb Elya Chaim and Reb Yisroel respectively, these words bared their souls.

Taken together, these two statements reflect a complex dialectic between the self and selflessness, which lies at the heart of the Chabad path of inner work and service of Gd. The need to strike a balance between these extremes was famously expressed by Hillel: "If I am not for myself, who is for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I?" But Chabad Chassidus takes this concept much further, both in its extremes and in its beautiful synthesis, with tremendous depth and personal application.

The very acronym of Chabad connects the faculty of *chochmah*, which apprehends the all-effacing spark of Gd's infinite transcendence, with the meaningful internalization and tangible life application of *daas*. Likewise, one of the best known facets of contemporary Chabad is *shlichus*, which is based on the fundamental teaching of the Rebbe that it is through dedicating ourselves entirely to a higher purpose that we can ultimately fulfill our full potential as individuals.

Nit ich! Chassidism is about selflessness. And at the very same time, *nitan lanu!* It is that selflessness that gives us the very life and light of our souls. **P**



The

GREAT DEBATE



A conversation about Chassidus during its early years

PART ONE



AN OVERVIEW¹

THE GREAT DEBATE,

known in Hebrew as *Vikucha Raba*, was first published in 5618 (1858) as a polemical discussion on the validity of Chassidus, and due to its popularity, was reprinted many times since.

This debate between two scholarly friends – a *chossid* and a *misnaged* (an opponent to Chassidus) – touches upon many central questions regarding Chassidus: What is Chassidus about? Why is it necessary? Why the need for a Rebbe? Why do chassidim invest so much time in preparing for *davening*? Why do so many people oppose Chassidus?

AN OUTLINE

The supposed debate is said to have transpired between two childhood friends, R. Binyomin Zev of Slonim, a student of the Vilna Gaon, and R. Yosef of Nemirov, a follower of R. Mendel Yitzchok of Berditchev. The two had studied together in Lithuania, and at some point R. Yosef became a chossid. His old friend writes to him for explanations on certain chassidic practices which he found objectionable.

In his first letter, R. Binyomin Zev focuses on halachic objections, such as changing the *nusach* of *davening*, not wearing *tefillin* on *Chol Hamoed*, and putting on *tefillin* that follow the view of Rabbeinu Tam. In his reply, R. Yosef addresses each of the arguments and upholds the practices of Chassidus and *Kabbala* based on wide-ranging sources from Gemara and *halacha*.

In a second round, R. Binyomin Zev raises more fundamental question on the ideology and *hashkafa* of Chassidus. He records a conversation that he held with a chossid in his town and exactly what the chossid responded. [According to one version, this chossid is a follower of Reb Chaim Chaikel of Amdur, a student of the Mezritcher Maggid.]

In a further letter, R. Yosef offers his thoughts on the chossid's explanations – sometimes affirming and sometimes critiquing. This final letter has a distinctly Chabad twist to it, and many of his objections to the chossid's reasoning can be attributed to a difference in philosophy between general Chassidus and Chabad Chassidus.

PRINTS AND AUTHORSHIP

There are many indications that the debate never actually occurred, and it is only presented in that format for literary appeal, like the *Kuzari* did for Jewish fundamentals and the *Shomer Emunim* for *Kabbala*. Such a style allows the champion of an unfamiliar path to present its merits and respond to popular questions and challenges, particularly when working in a hostile environment.²

Due to its controversial content and engaging style, the booklet became very popular and was printed multiple times in various cities. It was first printed in 5618 (1858) in Königsberg under the name *Metzoref Ha'avoda – The Refinement of G-dly Service*, and in 5624 (1864), it was printed in Zhitomir under the title *Vikucha Raba – The Great Debate*.

Since the material was presented as an authentic debate between people, the name of an author is not mentioned. However, on the cover to *Sipurim Noraim*, a collection of stories of early chassidic masters, we are told that its author R. Yaakov Kaidaner was also the author of *Metzoref Ha'avoda / Vikucha Raba*.³

R. YAAKOV KAIDANER

R. Yaakov Bachrach was born in Kaidan (Kėdainiai), Lithuania, an ancient town in the Kovno region, and upon marrying a woman from the nearby town of Vilkomir (Ukmergė), he settled there. He then joined the *yeshiva* in Volozhin, where he heard the *rosh yeshiva* R. Chaim speak highly of the Alter Rebbe's Torah scholarship. From Volozhin he traveled to the Mittlerer Rebbe in Lubavitch and became his outstanding chossid.⁴

After receiving the Rebbe's promise that he wouldn't be harmed when he returns to his father-in-law's home, he returned to Vilkomir. Despite the great antagonism from other townsmen, his father-in-law protected him, refusing to take a side in the dispute over the validity of Chassidus.

R. Yaakov authored a commentary on Tanya and *Sipurim Noraim*, firsthand accounts of the Chabad Rebbeim and stories of other rebbes that he heard from people involved. During the Rebbe's *sheva brachos*, the Friediker Rebbe gave him a copy of *Sipurim Noraim* and said that it is trustworthy.⁵

VERSIONS AND DISCREPANCIES

Besides the change in name in the different prints, the booklet underwent many changes in language and content – both omissions and additions. Some of the major discrepancies between *Metzaref Ha'avoda* and *Vikucha Raba* include:

(1) *Vikucha Raba* tells us the names of the two debaters and that the chossid was a student of Reb Mendel Yitzchok of Berditchev, while *Metzaref Ha'avoda* makes no mention of it.

(2) *Metzaref Ha'avoda* has three additional questions which discuss the opposition to Chassidus.

(3) *Vikucha Raba* doesn't identify the affiliation of the chossid who lived in Slonim, while *Metzaref Ha'avoda* lists him as an Amdur chossid.

(4) In the final response, *Vikucha Raba* records R. Yosef as disputing many of the [Amdur] chossid's points, and writes that the chossid lacks a thorough understanding of Chassidus. Whereas in *Metzaref Ha'avoda*, R. Yosef is full of praise for the chossid's answers and has nothing to add.⁶

Chassidic historians have been hard-pressed for a sound explanation on the reason for these changes.

In his seminal article on the topic, R. Chaim Dovid Tiffenbrun argues that the two versions are

inherently different. *Metzaref Ha'avoda* defends the position of the general chassidic community, and though it incorporates selections from Tanya and other Chabad sources, it does not depict the unique approach of Chabad. *Vikucha Raba*, however, is intended to take the debate to a new level and introduce the profundity of Chassidus Chabad. Thus, the three protagonists in *Vikucha Raba* represent three positions on Chassidus: A *misnagid*, a general chossid, and a Chabad chossid.

While this explains the final letter of critique and the omission of the general chossid's affiliation (3 and 4), it doesn't explain the reason for the other two changes and countless other edits throughout the document. Some of those revisions could perhaps be attributed to overall improvements for the second printing.

In this translation, we have combined the two version in one for a smooth read, and have marked the additions from *Metzaref Ha'avoda* by placing them in square brackets.

Special thanks to Rabbi Nochum Grunwald for providing us with photographs of the handwritten booklet.

TIMELY RELEVANCE

Besides its historical significance, the conversation is also relevant for chassidim today. While we may not need to be persuaded of the validity of Chassidus, we can develop a deeper appreciation for what we already have.

Many chassidic practices are accepted as standard without realization of their revolutionary histories. From the questions and answers, we learn how they were practiced before Chassidus was revealed, and why Chassidus sought to change that.

The discussion also helps to clarify the essentials of *darkei haChassidus*. With the layers of *minhagim*

and good practices that were uncovered throughout the generations, it can be difficult to determine its principal tenets. In this debate, from the early days of Chassidus, original principles are challenged and explained.

It should be noted that while some of the concepts explained therein may seem rudimentary to a chossid, this was not necessarily so at the time it was written. The writer had to piece together small passages in scattered *maamorim* to form a comprehensive image of Chassidus and to provide answers to his opponent's questions.

Endnotes

1 Most this background is based on an article by R. Chaim Dovid Tiffenbrun in *Heichal Habaal Shem Tov*, Vol. 33, p. 213.

2 R. Tiffenbrun proves this from the fact that the letters are dated in 5546 (1786), yet: (a) "R. Yosef" quotes extensively from *Tanya* which was printed in 5557 (1797) (it wasn't even in manuscript form until after 5552 (1792)), *Shulchan Aruch* that was printed in 5557 (1797), and *Biurei Hazohar* which was printed in 5574 (1814). (b) The Amdur chossid claims to have studied in the Volozhin *yeshiva* which was only established in 5576 (1816), (c) "R. Binyomin Zev" questions certain "chassidic practices" which are actually unique Chabad customs (such as not reciting a *bracha* on the head *tefillin*, omitting the *bracha* of *Yiru Eineinu* in *maairiv* and other changes to the *davening*) which were only widely publicized with the printing of the Alter Rebbe's *Siddur* in 5563 (1803). He also quotes *Nefesh Hachaim* by R. Chaim of Volozhin which was printed in 5580 (1820).

3 *Beis Rebbi*, the classic account of the first three Chabad Rebbes and their leading students, records (p. 106) R. Yaakov Kaidaner as having found an earlier manuscript and having added to it. However, R. Tiffenbrun doubts that possibility, since major portions of the text couldn't have been written much earlier.

4 Beis Rebbi claims that before coming to the Mittlerer Rebbe, he was a chossid of R. Aharon of Strashalie, the Alter Rebbe's prime student who had his own following.

5 Reshimas Hayoman, p. 376.

6 Instead he quotes an article which he had once written regarding chassidic stories – which is word for word of the introduction to *Sipurim Noraim*, see below.



THE GREAT DEBATE

Translated by Rabbi Shaya Bernstien

May Hashem increase blessings and peace upon you from on High. May He increase knowledge, understanding, and life.

To my dear friend, who is proficient in Torah and who possesses fear of Heaven, HaRav Yosef of Nemerov.

I received your sacred handwriting and esteemed reply, and I read it with extra affection, recalling our lasting friendship from long ago. I saw the light hidden within it, which shone upon me and illuminated my face. I found in it what I desired, namely, your vindication of the Arizal and his *nusach*, and your words were lucid.

I therefore placed my eyes upon your words, reading them yet a second time and then a third. They emboldened me; they gladdened my heart, revived my soul, and broadened my mind. You revealed the Torah's opinion; you took apart [my questions] and then rebuilt [with answers] that reach the skies, and you elucidated the matters in which I had erred.

[As I read your reply,] I stood in shock, dumbstruck by the awesome vision of the added spirit of wisdom found within you. Portals of light have been revealed to you, more than what I had perceived within you when we were together in the past. I concluded that you have discovered a fountain of living water and drunk from its flow, but alas, I do not know where this source of wisdom can be found. How strong are the just words of peace and truth!

However, instead of peace I have been beset by bitterness, and comfort has been concealed from my eyes. The path [of the Gra] has been hidden, and I am

unable to fathom his qualities and justify his words. I did not merit to ask him to explain his opinion, because I found that the light darkened in his abode and that his mind was unsettled, for his strength left him before he passed away.

I therefore directed my heart and resolved to travel to you, so I could converse with you in person. However, all my household members and relatives pressured me incessantly and prevented me from doing so. I therefore turned my heart to search for a man with a spirit of wisdom from the "group,"¹ with whom I could speak in person, discovering what he possesses.

Then, I discovered a man in my town, a learned and trustworthy Jew, who had been by the Rebbe [in Amdur].² I summoned him and asked him to tell me about his astonishing ways, without holding anything back.

He replied, "I don't want to debate, since all these actions are tiring, and it will not enter your ears for it runs against your habit."

I told him, "I have decided to abandon my habit at the decision of my intellect."

He said, "If you truly and sincerely desire this, then I will not withhold the good from you. However, I request this: do not ask me based on rumors – for most of them are lies. Also, don't ask about individual conduct – because their responsibilities are not mine. I will only respond on general inquiries."

"Very well," I said, "I agree to that."

He agreed to converse with me in a manner of debate, and to answer all my questions. I spoke with him and my ears heard reasonable words – words that guard man from trying illness and heal existing afflictions.

However, some of his words did not settle with me. Yet I did not reject them, since they are new to me and I wasn't raised with those ideas. I am therefore obligated to consider them thoroughly until I can find logical basis for all of them.

I will now set out before you our debate, as well as those matters that I am uncertain about. By virtue of our old relationship, I ask that you guide me to the truth and sort through the fellow's words, indicating whether they are correct without crookedness, and explain all that is hidden.

1. WHAT PROMPTED YOU TO VISIT THE REBBE?

I ASKED HIM:

What value did you see in traveling to the Rebbe that everyone else in our city didn't see?

HE REPLIED:

Everyone knows that healthy people don't look for cures since they don't need them. On the other hand, one who is ill but not lucid, who therefore doesn't appreciate his illness and insists that he is healthy, also doesn't look for a cure since he thinks that he is healthy. He will even attack those who try to cure him.

Only one who is ill and recognizes that he is ill, who feels the pain, will search by candlelight for a doctor, as indicated in our Sages' words, "The one who has aches is the one who goes to the doctor."³ Likewise, the Rambam writes⁴ that illness of the soul is similar to physical illness. People whose souls are weak crave harmful lifestyles, despising the good path or being lazy to follow in its way.

I have seen my poor state, I know the troubles of my soul, and my afflictions are constantly before me. I made an honest assessment and weighed my inner character traits, and I discovered that they lean away from good path. I then decided that I would not rest until I found a remedy for my wound.

When I heard that the Rebbe is an expert soul doctor, I immediately traveled to him with the hope that I would find healing for my illness.

The people of my city who did not travel are one of the two types that I mentioned: either their character traits are perfectly healthy and are inclined to purity, therefore having no need to heal them, or they are so ill that they lack understanding and do not sense their deficiencies, as the *posuk* says, "Why are you beaten and you still continue to rebel?"⁵

2. WERE YOU CURED?

I ASKED HIM:

Please tell me if you found a bandage and remedy for your illness by traveling to your Rebbe?

HE REPLIED:

I saw that it's a lengthy illness and cannot be cured in a short amount of time, for I have come to recognize that my inner character traits are intertwined – the good with the bad – and it will take a long time to separate them.

However, I did gain the benefit of stopping the illness from deteriorating further, so it doesn't become dangerous, G-d forbid. I located the cause of the illness, and by preventing the cause I can avert the effect.

3. WHAT DID YOU GAIN THERE?

I ASKED HIM:

You're talking in riddles and your words require elaboration – how indeed did you acquire this benefit in such a short time?

HE SHARED WITH ME HOW EVERYTHING STARTED:

When I arrived there I went to the Rebbe's *minyán* to *daven*, and heard the Rebbe's thunderous *davening* which shatters the hearts of its listeners. The hair on my flesh stiffened from the fiery sound - the likes of which I have never heard. My heart broke and could not find comfort, for I realized my ailment immensely, that all my *davening* was in a manner of *mitzvas anoshim melumada* (performed by rote) from lips outward and cold.

After *davening*, I went to the Rebbe's room and saw him glorious and awesome; his fear of G-d was like that of an angel.

I stayed for Shabbos and saw the Rebbe's pure and holy conduct and how he conducted his table, which was wondrous. [I also heard Torah words from his holy mouth that were precious and Godly, the Shechina was speaking through him; words like which I have never heard and which sat well with me.] I said to myself: It is true what I have heard, and that wasn't even a full representation. I benefited greatly from the light I had seen.

The impression remained fixed on my heart after I returned home. When I davened, I remembered the Rebbe's passion and the fiery words that I heard, and it warms my heart to the point of davening with excitement as well. When the feeling wears out, I return to the Rebbe."



4. HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT YOU WON'T RELAPSE?

I REMARKED:

You still haven't informed me of the cause of the illness that you uncovered of which you are so sure won't deteriorate further. How can you be certain when you have said yourself that the feeling wears out?⁶

HE ANSWERED:

I was informed of the cause of the slumber that befell me, and the sweet sleep from which no one had roused me.

I asked the Rebbe for advice on how to correct my negative character traits, as I know myself.

He replied, “You still haven’t shared with me your entire heart’s affliction, which is the source of all evil.”

I said, “My master, I swear that I have not withheld anything from you.”

The Rebbe responded, “This character trait even you do not recognize.”

I asked him, “What is it? And why do you say that I don’t know myself?”

He explained, “It is haughtiness. This character trait destroys both the sincere and the wicked. Our Sages teach that G-d says of one who is haughty, ‘He and I cannot reside together.’ The posuk says, ‘Since I do not have G-d within me, these evil things have befallen me,’ meaning that all evil traits originate

from this one, for such a person will never recognize his deficiencies. He will tell himself that all is well and that he is pure and straight; he will not listen to criticism and will remain with his error forever. He is called, ‘Lost in the land of Ashur (Assyria),’ for Ashur can also mean correct – those who are correct in their own eyes.⁷ Such a person is lost forever since he will not seek to correct his ways.

I said, “This can’t be true, G-d forbid, for I recognize my faults; about what then would I be haughty? And how could one notice this in himself?”

The Rebbe answered,⁸ “Man was created to rise above all other creations, as the posuk says ‘You shall rule over the fish of the sea and the fowl of the sky.’ We see this clearly when watching a child who has not matured, that he raises himself and reigns over whatever he sees with a stick. When he gets older, his character matures as well, and he rises even higher in his heart above others. Therefore, man cannot realize that he is being arrogant, for it has been ingrained in him since birth.

“Man is not aware of the atmosphere because he was formed in it and it is his life. Fish don’t sense the water since they were created in it and from it they get life.



Fish cannot handle air, and man cannot live in water. Likewise, man cannot notice his haughtiness until he comes across its opposite, such as when he is laughed at or disgraced, his heart aches him terribly and he cannot tolerate the humiliation, and from this he can deduce that his traits are contrary to humility. This is an accurate test as the *Chovos Halevavos* records in the chapter on equanimity.⁹

“A parable for this:¹⁰ a man who was born atop a mountain and never once went down will think that he is standing on flat ground. He will not believe that he is standing higher than everyone else until he begins to descend from the mountain and sees the great abyss; then he realizes that he was on a mountain top all along.

“The exact same is true with the individual; he does not recognize his own character traits because of his inborn nature, and he thinks that he’s standing on flat ground. Only once he lowers himself does he recognize it in retrospect.”

At first I accepted the Rebbe’s words intellectually, but they did not translate into feelings. But when I returned to my hometown, I became a fool and laughingstock, and anyone who saw me mocked me. I was subject to curses, which made me very angry. Then I experienced the Rebbe’s words, and I thanked Hashem for the Rebbe and his words of truth.

5. BOOKS OF MUSSAR CAN DO THE SAME JOB!

I ASKED HIM:

You did not need to travel to the Rebbe for that, for “does our city not have balm, nor doctors in it”¹¹? We have various books of soul-healing – Chovos Halevavos, Reishis Chochma, Shaloh – which offer remedies for

soul illness, and they write at length about humility and the negative impact of arrogance.

[Even to acquire passion in *davening*, there are meditations on the movement of the planets and similar ideas which can bring a person to excitement in *Chovos Halevavos’ Gate of Reflection* and in the writings of the Rambam and the Shaloh. What are you adding to their words?]

HE ANSWERED:

Everyone knows that for an external wound on the hand, leg or other revealed limb, one doesn’t need an expert doctor; there are many people who are proficient enough to heal him. However, regarding an unidentified internal illness, originating in the fine elements of some inner organ, even doctors won’t concur. They will each identify it differently and attribute the deterioration to something different, according to his estimation. This is why one must seek out an expert doctor who specializes in that illness and can be relied upon. For if the illness is misdiagnosed, the cures will not help, and will, in fact, cause more damage.

Similarly, regarding the illnesses of the soul, one needs an expert who can distinguish the intertwinement of each person’s good and bad character traits, since people vary in their composition of traits, depending on the blend of the “four elements” [fire, water, air, and earth] within him. One whose element of fire is strong is inclined to be haughtier, while someone whose strength is water will be drawn to pleasures, since water has the ability to bring pleasures as R. Chaim Vital writes.¹² The bad traits come from the negative parts of these “four elements”, [while the good ones come from the positive of these elements], for a Jew’s “natural soul” is comprised of good and bad.

That is why when the good and bad are mixed and need to be cured and refined, no one person is similar to the other. One whose natural element is haughty won't recognize his own haughtiness since his nature conceals it. Likewise, he won't recognize how he prides himself in doing *mitzvos*, and he won't realize the depravity of it. Whereas one whose nature isn't haughty won't fool himself as much and he will recognize his deficiencies.¹³

Someone whose natural trait is the element of earth will lean towards depression and stinginess but not haughtiness. He will recognize the haughtiness of another, but not his own deficiencies because they are concealed within him. He will be easy on himself when it comes to charity for Torah study and acts of kindness, and will find leniencies for himself without realizing the bad state that he is in.

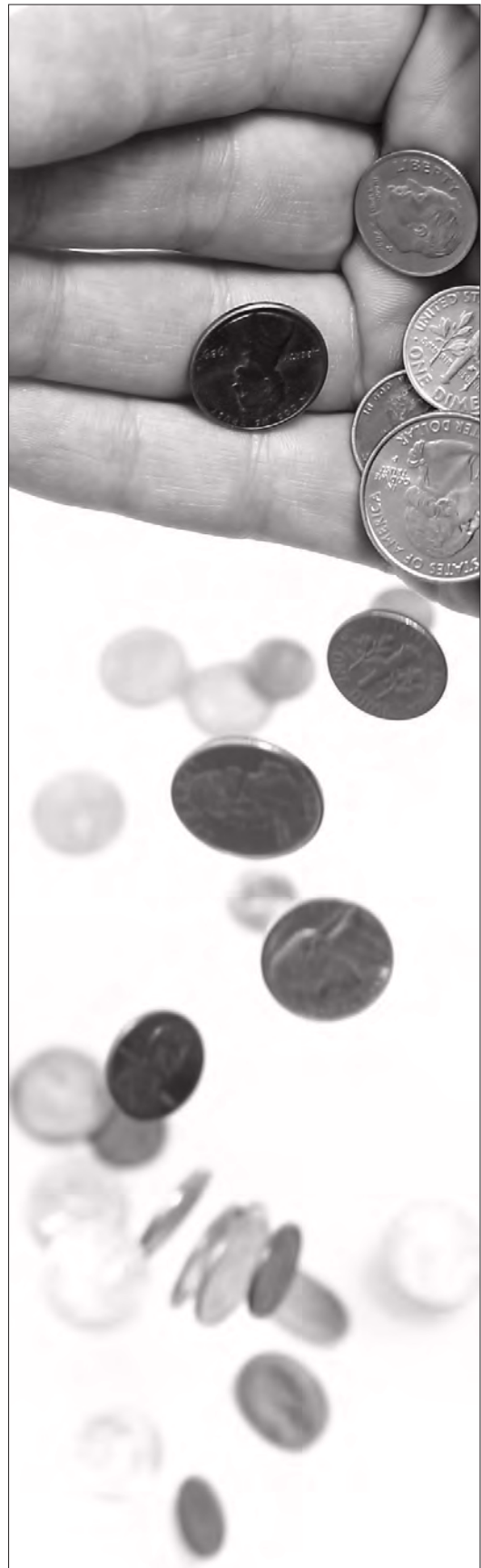
Therefore, a person must find an expert doctor who can identify inner disorders and the bad within the character traits. Just as it happened to me that I didn't believe that I had this ailment until I came to the Rebbe and he gave me the sign for it.

Only the righteous who despise evil, who chose good and transformed their traits to be used for pure matters, can identify the corrosion of a man's traits, even in the smallest nuance. What one sees written in holy books regarding the detriment of having negative personal traits will not aid such a person, since his error stands in that he won't recognize the negativity within himself, and even if the trait is detrimental he will deny it, saying that he doesn't have it.

[Regarding your suggestion to acquire enthusiasm from books: One who hasn't seen true enthusiasm won't grasp its essence and will think that his false excitement is good, just as one who has never seen pure silver won't notice the impurities in the silver.

Besides for that, when one sees the face of a *tzaddik* he will feel in his soul an abundance of G-dly fear. As *Reishis Chochma* says (*Shaar Hakedusha*, Ch. 8), "To gaze on the face of his Rebbe is a *mitzva* and a *tikun* (repair) for the eyes, for by gazing he acquires for himself a ray of the holy soul which appears on his face, especially when greeting him on Shabbos and the holidays. Seeing the face of any *chacham* is a *tikun* for the eyes."

Indeed, my soul's eyes lit up, and my service of G-d was empowered after seeing his face.]



6. TORAH STUDY REPLACES THE NEED FOR CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

I ASKED HIM:

Isn't there an all-inclusive remedy – the Torah? As our Sages teach, “One whose head ails him should engage in Torah,”¹⁴ and they said, “Sacrifices won't bring him atonement, but Torah will,”¹⁵ and “Torah protects and saves.”¹⁶

One who is occupied with Torah all day, doesn't need works of *mussar* (Jewish ethics) at all. As I heard regarding the Gra (R. Eliyahu of Vilna), his students once requested that he teach them works of *mussar*, and he answered lightly, “A child is only hit so that he go to school, but once he goes there is no need to hit him. Likewise, works of *mussar* reprimand a person regarding Torah study, but one who studies all day doesn't need to be reprimanded.” I heard this explicitly from his student R. Saadya.

HE ANSWERED:

Your testimony is very faithful, however, I am surprised at how the Gra exaggerated the power of study and said that one doesn't need works of *mussar* to break the heart, when “the inclination of man's heart is only bad.”¹⁷ Our Sages have taught that care must be taken so that “one should not read and study Talmud, and then defy his parents and teachers.”¹⁸ It is thus evident that even after studying one can behave inappropriately.

Our Sages have also taught (on the *posuk*, “And the faith of your times shall be the strength of salvations, wisdom and knowledge; fear of Hashem, that is his treasure”): “‘Faith’ refers to the book of *Zera'im* (agricultural laws)... and still, ‘fear of Hashem, that is his treasure’ – if one has fear of Hashem then all is well, otherwise it is not. This akin to a large measure of wheat that must have a small measure of preserving earth.”¹⁹

Even the Torah that he studied will not ascent upwards,²⁰ as the Zohar teaches,²¹ “Torah that is studied without fear and love of Hashem will not fly heavenward,” and it will remain below. This is also what they have taught on the *posuk*,²² “What gain has man in all his toil that he toils under the sun?” “Even the toil of Torah, when done for personal honor, is of no gain.” This also what our Sages taught,²³ “Fortunate is the one who arrives here with his studies in hand,” meaning that it was not left below on earth.

Torah that is studied for personal reasons does not protect and save its learner from sin, as the *Ohr Hachaim* writes in *Parshas Bechukosai*.²⁴ Therefore the Torah did not protect Doeg and Achisofel²⁵ from sinning, for one who flawed his soul cannot have the Divine light rest upon him in the place of that flaw. He can only draw down Divine light by repenting first, as it says, “Great is repentance that brings healing to the world.”

To use a parable from bodily illness: If one's limb degenerated due to lack of blood flow – which is the life source – to that region, then the body's vitality cannot reach that limb. It must be healed with medication to remove the illness, and afterwards with light foods to help its energy return. The same is true of a flaw in the soul – which like a flaw in a cup that cannot contain

liquid where it is broken²⁶ – the Divine light cannot reside where there is a flaw, except through *teshuva*. Torah alone cannot repair the flaw, since the Divine light does not reside in this person's Torah.

This is why the Torah is called “bread,” as it says, “Come partake of my bread,” and “Your Torah is in my innards.” Bread satisfies the heart, and one who doesn't eat will feel weak, since food connects the soul to the body; yet, it won't strengthen someone who is already ill, and on the contrary, food can be harmful to him.

Likewise, Torah strengthens the soul,²⁷ and for the one who doesn't study Torah – even if he has love and fear of Heaven – his soul will not have the energy to shine. This is like how the one who eats sweet fruits but not bread will feel weak since “bread sustains the heart of man.” So too, Torah strengthens the soul, but it cannot bring the soul back to the state it was in before the blemish occurred. On the contrary, “If he is unworthy, the Torah he study itself becomes for him a deathly poison,”²⁸ G-d forbid.

This is what they have said, “One whose head ails him should engage in Torah,” meaning, someone who is weak and his soul lacks energy, but has not yet fallen so low to become ill, will be strengthened by the Torah.

Now, who is bold enough to say that he is bare of sin and his actions are pure, to the point that he doesn't need works of *mussar* to soften his heart so that he regrets his actions and repents?

Our Sages taught that, “Sacrifices won't bring him atonement, but Torah will,” which seems to imply that Torah itself brings atonement. Know, that I have received from my teachers that the term “atonement” in rabbinic literature, for example, “Repentance pends and Yom Kippur atones,” or in the *posuk*, “It will be accepted for him, to atone for him,” does not mean a cleansing of the soul. Rather it means that he is forgiven by Hashem, so that there be pleasure Above from his Torah study and service, like an *olah* sacrifice which serves as a gift of appeasement after the sin has already been forgiven. So too, Torah that follows repentance and separation from sin appeases so that he be welcome before Hashem just as before he sinned, so that “Hashem sits and studies opposite him.”²⁹

7. YOUR STRINGENCIES ARE CONTRIVED BY YOUR YETZER HARA TO DISTRACT YOU

How difficult it is for me to accept your words, in which you have extended a sweeping prohibition on Torah study not for the sake of Heaven, when the Talmud permits it in several places.

For example, “Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: ‘One should always study Torah even not for its sake, for through studying not for its sake, he will come to study for its sake.’” Tosefos indicates that this contradicts what is written elsewhere, “One who studies not for its sake: it would have been better for him had he not been created.” Tosefos resolves the contradiction by explaining that the other text is speaking of one whose only intention is to debate, whereas our passage speaks of one whose interest is that he be called a rabbi.

This is indeed the case with most youngsters who study to be scholarly and amass knowledge, but studying for incorrect reasons leads to studying for correct reasons. However, if they were prohibited

from studying Torah for insincere purposes, they will never begin to study in youth and will remain bare of Torah and *mitzvos*, never coming to study sincerely.

I have heard from a great sage [R. Chaim of Volozhin] that it is the inducement of the evil inclination to prohibit insincere study or practice; the evil inclination is scrupulous in finding sin in the person's study, and thus he withholds the person from future study.³⁰

Similarly, in performing *mitzvos* and davening, he is particular to prepare himself at length until the timeframe for performing the *mitzva* passes. As I heard someone tell his friend, "The time for *mincha* has arrived," to which his friend responded, "Let's go see if there are stars out yet." They had completely forgotten the correct time for *mincha*.³¹

When one performs a *mitzva* at the incorrect time, even if he does so with all the correct meditations, it is as if he were to eat *matza* on Sukkos or take the *lulav* on Pesach.

HE SAID:

G-d forbid that I detract from or add to what our Sages said, for the words of the Zohar that I quoted are compatible with what Chazal teach. The Zohar writes, "Torah that is studied without a love and fear of G-d does not ascend upwards," meaning that it remains down here on Earth below the sun. Fear and love of Heaven are the wings that bring the Torah and *mitzvos* upwards. Just as without wings it is impossible to fly, so too Torah and *mitzvos* cannot fly without love and fear of G-d.

However, the Torah that one studied is not "tied up"³² (*assur*) by the forces of impurity. Such study is not complete evil like one who studies to provoke, rather he learns to become proficient in Torah and be called a rabbi. Therefore, when he later learns for the sake of Heaven with fear and love, he elevates even the Torah that he had learned previously which had remained below with these wings.

This is what our Sages intended when they said, "One should always study Torah even not for the sake of Heaven," for nothing will be banished eternally, G-d forbid – whether in this incarnation of the soul or another, and then the Torah that was learned not for the sake of Heaven will ascend.³³

However, Torah that was studied for the sake of provocation, which is totally evil, is bound (*assur*) by the forces of impurity. It can only be elevated by first repenting – thereby releasing it from its bondage – and then it can be elevated by studying for the sake of Heaven.

You say that most youngsters study to be scholarly, and this is indeed true. However, I am not speaking about youngsters who don't yet have the understanding to appreciate the value of Torah study. For them it is enough that they distance themselves from evil, and that they study to be learned and know the laws thoroughly, since "an ignoramus cannot be pious."³⁴

The fact that his motivation is to show off is not an issue given his level of understanding. When a child begins to study, he is given nuts and that is why he continues to study. When he grows older and his mind and heart develop, he appreciates more valuable items, such as nice clothing, so that he study, as the Rambam writes.³⁵ Likewise, as a youngster he studies to become a rabbi.

However, once he is learned and mature and appreciates the meaning of Torah study, a Torah scholar must forgo all bodily pleasures and study not for the sake of reward³⁶ – meaning anything desirable.

You said, “The desire to only study for the sake of Heaven is the inducement of the evil inclination.” That argument itself requires proof, for perhaps it is an inducement of the evil inclination to be lax in studying not for the sake of Heaven, and to perform *mitzvos* by rote and without preparation. This becomes second nature so that one does not even identify it as a deficiency, and he doesn’t think he is lacking anything.

When one exerts himself to concentrate on performing a *mitzva* or studying Torah, and he accepts upon himself the yoke of *mitzvos*, he is fulfilling the primary work of the mind. If it is done without contemplation, then it is only his nature and habit, of which the evil inclination approves.

However, exertion is the very opposite of nature, and is known as “*iskafya sitra achara*” – subduing the “other side” (evil).³⁷ This is worthwhile even if as a result he will study less, since “better a little with intention than a lot without intention.”³⁸

Regarding what you said that they allow the time of *mincha* to pass as you have been told, I wonder if you really believe that, since such a thing is impossible except by a Jewish child that has been raised amongst gentiles, and is lacking even the most elementary education.³⁹

8. MANY WHO TRAVEL TO THE REBBE DON'T CHANGE!

I SAID:

Your words are true and forthright, but you do not have an audience amongst the Torah scholars who hold highly of themselves and view themselves as being filled with good, and do not recognize their shortcomings. Whereas for those who travel to the Rebbe and take his advice on how to refine their Torah study and service from all impurity, learning not to fool themselves: fortunate is their lot.

But I have seen many who have traveled to the Rebbe and didn’t benefit at all, and I didn’t notice any positive change in them. On the contrary, I saw how they felt superior to others and impudent to individuals greater than them.

HE REPLIED:

You do not question wisely, for our Sages have taught on the verse “I found one man out of a thousand,” that “One thousand students enter to study *Mikrah* (scripture): one hundred of them continue to study Mishnah; ten of them go on to study Gemara; and only one of those students can decide halachic rulings.” Now, if regarding the revealed parts of Torah only one student receives from his teacher accurately, surely in the hidden parts of Torah [matters of the heart] where it is difficult to receive wholeness and change one’s nature, certainly only very few can receive it fully. Despite this, every person gains somewhat.

Regarding what you say, “I didn’t notice any positive change in them,” the fact that you didn’t notice anything is not evidence, for what is hidden in one’s heart can only be perceived by Hashem and not by others. It is impossible that they did not gain some good trait, just as one does from giving charity, performing good deeds and other activities. [This is similar to the parable of our Sages of one who enters a perfume shop without applying perfume on his body: he will still acquire a pleasant scent just from having been there – *Midrash Mishlei* §13.]

Furthermore, is cleaving to Torah scholars insignificant in your eyes? Our Sages taught on the *posuk* “And to cleave to him”: “Is it possible for one to cleave to the Holy One blessed be His name? Rather one who cleaves to Torah scholars and allows them to enjoy his possessions is considered to have cleaved to the *Shechinah*.”

The reason for this is that a Torah scholar (*talmid chacham*) is someone who has within him the level of *Chochma Ila’á*, supernal wisdom, whose essence is nullification before G-dliness, to always cleave to the

Creator. Therefore, one who cleaves to this scholar can be drawn upwards to G-d through this connection.

I once heard a parable for this: When soldiers are at war and one of them falls ill, they don’t leave him behind, rather they carry him on their shoulders and take him with them. But if he dies, they leave him where he is.

Likewise, one who cleaves to Torah scholars, even if his soul is spiritually ill and is repulsed by G-dly food – like the nature of sick people who desire bad and bitter tasting food – he will not be left to fall entirely, and will be assisted in his ascent through [Heavenly sent] thoughts of repentance. However, one who is dead G-d forbid, meaning that he desires only pleasures and disconnects himself from Torah scholars, continues to descend downwards.

Our Sages advise us in various places to cleave to Torah scholars and to gather at the dust of their feet. Certainly those who supply the scholar’s needs are praiseworthy, replicating the Yissachar and Zevulun partnership, about which are Sages have taught on the *posuk*, “Rejoice Zevulun in your departure,” that Zevulun preceded Yissachar.⁴⁰ The Zohar calls them the “Pillars of Torah,” and lavishes praise about their reward.

Regarding what you said that they are impudent, I once heard a light thought from a Torah scholar that the evil inclination is known as an “old king,”⁴¹ and to be impudent to this old man one needs all the more audacity.

I said:

I don’t reject this, maybe you’re right and there is some positive change that isn’t noticeable to others.⁴²



9. WHY DO YOU RAISE YOUR VOICE DURING DAVENING?

I ASKED HIM:

Where does your tremendous excitement during davening come from, that causes you to exclaim aloud with passion? Since you said yourself that your heart has not been cleansed of all negativity, how was it transformed in such a short time that you reach a level of *dveikus*, cleaving to Hashem – a lofty level that is beyond your stature?

HE REPLIED:

The shouting doesn't come from excitement and passion as you thought, rather it is from distress and bitterness. During *davening* I see how far removed I am from G-dliness, how my animal soul hasn't budged from its attachment to earthly vanities, and that all the preparations and bitterness that I had before *davening* were to no avail.

My decision, which I imagined to be firm, had been to turn my feelings towards Hashem, and not to allow outside thoughts to interrupt me at all. But I discover that I am weak, and my heart is drawn to earthly vanities in thinking foreign thoughts. This is the reason for my crying out, as the *posuk* says, "and they cried out to Hashem in their distress."

I heard a parable for this about a fellow who sprouted an infection on his hand, and he had to get that finger amputated. It would be very painful, but he resolved

to endure the pain and have the finger amputated so that he be spared from danger. A few days later, he noticed that an element of the infection remained on his flesh, and it was growing and spreading further. From the depth of his heart he cried out loudly, "All the suffering and pain that I endured until now did not heal me, and now I must endure even more pain, and even then I don't know if it will be successful."

It is exactly the same here: After all the bitterness that I underwent before *davening* to free myself of my previous attachments with earthly vanities, I still see that I have remained a "root that produces hemlock and wormwood"⁴³ with my foreign attachments, and I will need to endure even more pain, and then perhaps Hashem will have mercy. If you had an understanding of the nature of *davening*, you would not have erred in this matter.

I said:

How correct are your words. It is true that one should cry out bitterly about this.

10. WHY DO YOU CRY WHEN YOU SHOULD BE JOYFUL?

I ASKED HIM:

You claim that the shouting during davening comes from sadness and not from joy. But the service of Hashem must be joyful, [as it says "Serve Hashem with joy."] All the books of mussar [the Zohar] forbid sadness even throughout the day, surely so during davening.⁴⁴

HE REPLIED:

If you would have served the *tzadikim* that I have seen, you would not have any doubts in this matter, but in truth it is a lengthy discussion.

In short I can tell you:⁴⁵ You are not proficiently fluent in Hebrew, because bitterness (*merirus*) is not the same as sadness (*atzvus*) in *Lashon Hakodesh*. They denote different feelings.

The word *atzvus* in the terminology of our Sages means contraction and tightening, as it says regarding measurements,⁴⁶ “A loose cubit and a tight cubit (*otzeves*),” meaning that it is measured in tight and close handbreadths.

Spiritually, this refers to one whose heart is obstructed like a stone and is not passionate at all. His “negative source” is earth which is dry and cold.⁴⁷

Now, just as the physical earth receives its energy from the other three sources, “spiritual earth” receives negative energy from all three of the “sources.” For example haughtiness comes from the negativity found within the “fire source,” and the desire for pleasures from the negativity within the “water source.” Since the depressed person’s heart is constrained without expressed passion, he is incapable of pushing away the foreign thoughts that enter his mind.⁴⁸ That is why our Sages, in books of *mussar*, cautioned us regarding depression more than any other negative trait.

However, one who is bitter has passion to be moved and feel bitter from the depths of his heart. It is with great anguish that he is distant from the G-dly light, and he distraught about it, until his soul has been “satiated” with bitterness, as it is written, “he has satisfied me with bitterness.”⁴⁹

After this bitterness he will attain joy, as it is written, “In all sadness there shall be gain.”⁵⁰ The gain here is that following the sadness he rejoices in studying Torah and *davening*, for he recognizes that notwithstanding his lowliness, Hashem dwells in his Torah and *mitzvos* as he performs them.

Our Sages taught, “One should not start to *daven* only when ‘heavy headed.’”⁵¹ Rashi explains that this means submission, which is bitterness that will crush his soul. On the other hand they said, “One should not start to *daven* while sad ... rather with joy of a

mitzva.” Our Sages have thus differentiated between *davening* while heavy headed and submissive, which is called bitterness, and *davening* while sad, even if it is regarding spiritual matters.

So long that one did not reflect on the greatness of the Al-mighty G-d to whom he has sinned, the sadness is an inducement of the evil inclination to cause him to stumble. The sadness comes from haughtiness that he doesn’t recognize his standing, and he is sad over the fact that he is not on the level of the pious and complete.⁵²

Rather, one should *daven* with submission, meaning by first appreciating G-d through contemplating His greatness, and by greatly subduing himself from the depth of his heart. The deeper his bitterness will be, the more G-dly joy he will have while *davening*. This then is the reason our Sages instructed us to begin *davening* with submission and bitterness, for they uproot one’s desire for earthly vanities.

When a person wants a medicine to be effective, he must first ingest a tonic to relieve his body of its waste, so that the medication will have the necessary effect. If he does not do so, the medication will be ineffective. So too, one cannot prepare to experience G-dliness in one’s self before uprooting his desire for foreign things through bitterness.

This is what our Sages have said, “One who wishes to accept the yoke of Heaven in its entirety, should first relieve himself and wash his hands.”⁵³ For just as one must relieve and cleanse his body from physical waste, so too one must relieve himself of spiritual waste by uprooting his desires.⁵⁴

“Washing the hands” refers to the cleansing of one’s character traits which are called “hands,”⁵⁵ since they hold the direction of every action, positive or negative, G-d forbid. One must cleanse his heart from any imperfection so that his heart is only drawn to Hashem. Character traits follow one’s desires, and when he uproots those desires his heart can then be purified.

I said:

My mind agrees with your words, for I have seen that when my desire was passionate about something I was unable to *daven*, but I didn’t know how to uproot my desire because I did not have the expertise [to distinguish between bitterness and depression].

11. CAN YOU TEACH ME KABBALAH?

I ASKED HIM:

I see that you *daven* at great length, and I can only rationalize it by saying that you daven with the *kavanos* (mystical meditations) of the Arizal, for those who daven with *kavanos* take a long time to meditate on the numerous Divine names for each word.

If you understand the *kavanos* recorded in the mystical writings, please share with me something that I can understand so that I may quench my thirst. I long to study the works of Kabbalah, however all the gates are closed before me. I have heard from those who study it that all their understanding is the literal meaning of the words, and I can't agree to learning without understanding.

I also heard that all of your Rebbe's Torah thoughts are about Kabbalah, so if there is understanding in these *kavanos*, teach me [the way to study the kabbalistic writings. If they can only be understood by people of great stature who grasp spiritual matters, perhaps you can strip some of the depth so I can understand something of it].

HE REPLIED:

I am not a fool like those people to concentrate on the number of G-d's names. One who doesn't understand the logical meaning of these *kavanos* is studying mathematics, not Kabbalah.

The word *kavana* refers to the inner desire of one's heart, as in "If his heart had intent he fulfilled the *mitzva*,"⁵⁶ "All things depend on the heart's intention,"⁵⁷ and "As long as he intended his heart towards Heaven." We see that our Sages associated intent with the heart.⁵⁸

Also in instances where the word *kavana* is used alone, Rashi explains that it means intent of the heart. For example, "*Mitzvos* require *kavana*" is explained by Rashi to mean that one should focus his heart on fulfilling the King's command. Likewise, the slaughter of sacrifices requires *kavana*, to exclude one who slaughters accidentally, without intent and with heart elsewhere, in which case the *shechita* is invalid [as if it was done on its own].⁵⁹

This is why meditating on G-d's names is known as *kavana*, since one must put his heart to it while thinking about it, as explained in *Pardes*.⁶⁰ However, if one does not understand their meaning it cannot be called *kavana*. Only those who are privy to the secrets of G-d and understand each name of G-d and its relation to that specific word based on an awareness of G-dliness, becoming inspired from it, may *daven* with these *kavanos*.

Indeed, it is not our practice to have these *kavanos*. Only *tzadikim* who are divorced and divested from materialism, therefore with the ability to divest the materialistic thinking of numbers and concentrate on their meaning, may *daven* with them. But we, the feeble minded, should suffice with saying the words from the depths of our hearts and with simple faith, and most importantly with joy, as I have heard that the joy of performing *mitzvos* contains all the *kavanos*. I thus do not have any knowledge of *kavanos* and Kabbalistic writings.

This that you have heard that all the Rebbe's Torah thoughts are on Kabbalah: It is true what you have been told, but that was only with the holy and G-dly Rebbe of Mezritch, may his merit protect us, whose students were masters of their generation, exceptionally holy and true geniuses, who did not require rebuke or advice in their G-dly service.

Therefore, he would teach them the secrets of Torah on Kabbalistic writings and the Zohar.

However, for those of lesser stature like ourselves, our Rebbe doesn't teach secrets of the Torah, only what is relevant for G-dly service to inspire our hearts for *davening* and *avoda*. I am unable to give you a taste of the hidden parts of Torah, for I have no business with that which is concealed.

The reason that I pray at length is, as I mentioned earlier, because it requires much effort on my part.⁶¹

The first is the labor of the flesh, to completely subdue the body and its faculties, through the outpouring of the soul, as the *posuk* says, "And I poured out my soul."⁶² Just as when pouring water on the ground, none of it remains as before (in the container), so too one should pour out his soul (completely) so that it doesn't remain in its former state of attachment to earthly vanities.⁶³

It is a difficult battle to remove all outside thoughts that disturb a person during *davening* more than any other time of the day, as the Zohar says, "The time of prayer is a time of war."⁶⁴ Likewise, the Midrash Raba in *Parshas Vayeira* states, "When one goes to lead the service, he is not told come and do it, rather come and approach (*krav*) to pray." The word "*krav*" also means war.

When a person comes to approach Hashem in *davening*, the opponent immediately positions

himself firmly against him to oppose and confuse him.⁶⁵ It is like the nature of warriors that when one side gets the upper hand, the other side strengthens himself even more. When he sees that his fate is determined and that he will fall into his enemy's hands, he puts his life forward to save himself and subdue his opponent.

Similarly, when a person toils during *davening*, the *sitra achara* (opposing side) sees that he wants to defeat it and take its power away so that it no longer has a hold on the person's body, since its entire life source is drawn from the negativity of the person.⁶⁶ It then puts its life forward to disturb him with foreign thoughts. For this one needs to toil tremendously and to shout with all of his energy. *Davening* is called *avoda*, service, and one is obligated to serve with all his energy until his mind is exhausted from all the toil, as the *Sefer Chareidim* writes.⁶⁷

[Those who *daven* quietly also subdue the *sitra achara*, but in a different way, as is known to those familiar with the Esoteric Wisdom.]⁶⁸

The second is the labor of the soul, to toil one's mind in its service of Hashem and His greatness, how all the worlds are nullified before Him and there is nothing else besides for Him. These thoughts should penetrate the depths of his heart. The constraint of the mind is a tremendous labor, as is known. This is the reason for the lengthiness of prayers by those who understand wisdom. **P**

Endnotes

1 i.e. the Chassidim, as they were called by their opponents.

2 *Metzoref Haavoda* singles out the chossid as being a student of R. Chaim Chaikel of Amdur.

3 Bava Kama 46b.

4 Hilchos Deios 2:1.

5 Yeshayahu 1:5.

6 In the Hebrew, נחיש, became old, which is similar to נש, sleeping. On that note he adds, "Sleep is called 'one sixtieth of death,' and you may slumber forever."

7 In *Likutei Torah*, *Rosh Hashana* 60a, and elsewhere, *Ashur* is translated as pleasure, referring to those who are steeped in material pleasures. The implication here is one who holds himself to be correct and perfect (תאוה).

8 *Maamarei Admu'r Hazaken Haketzarim*, *maamar* on "The Dominion of Man," p. 503.

9 See Gate 6, Chapter 7. See also *Tzavaas HaRivash* §2.

10 *Kesser Shem Tov*, Vol. 1, §238a.

11 Borrowed from Yirmiyahu 8:22.

12 *Shaar Hakedusha*, Vol. 1, Gate 1-2; *Eitz Chayim*, Gate 50, Ch. 2; *Tanya*, Ch. 1.

13 See a similar idea in *Torah Ohr* 19b.

14 *Eiruvin*, 54a.

15 *Rosh Hashanah*, 18a.

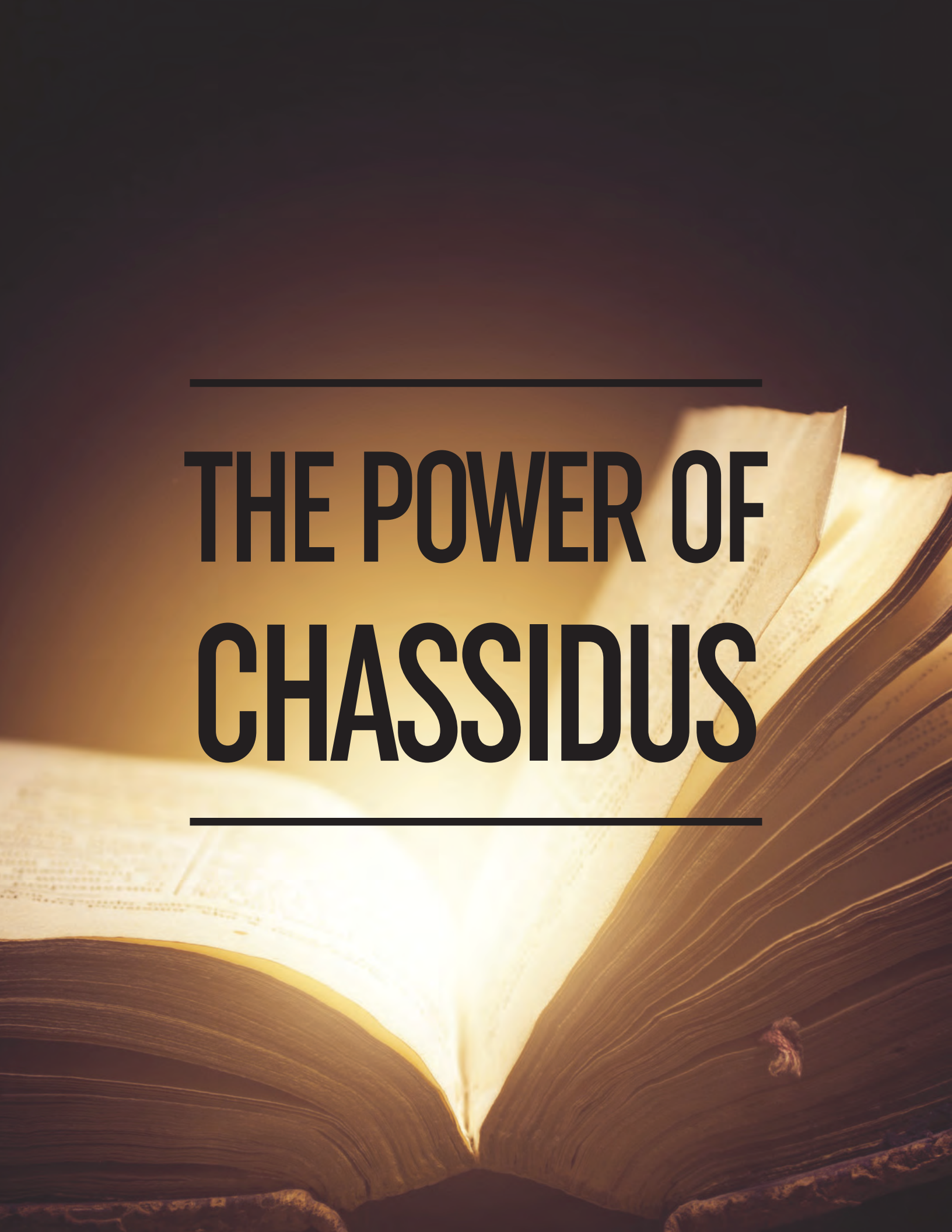
16 *Sukkah*, 21a.

17 *Bereishis* 8:21; 6:5.

18 *Berachos*, 17a.

- 19 *Shabbos*, 31a.
- 20 See *Tanya*, Ch. 40.
- 21 *Tikunei Zohar*, *Tikun* 10 (25b).
- 22 *Zohar*, 223b.
- 23 *Bava Basra*, 10b.
- 24 26:7.
- 25 Outstanding Torah scholars in the days of Dovid HaMelech, who became jealous of Dovid and sinned – Sanhedrin 106b.
- 26 See *Likutei Torah*, Yom Kippur, 68c: “A flaw is a hole with something missing.”
- 27 *Tanya*, Ch. 5.
- 28 *Yoma*, 72b.
- 29 *Tana Devei Eliyahu Raba*, beginning of ch. 18. *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Eicha*, §1034.
- 30 See at length in *Nefesh Hachaim* by R. Chaim of Volozhin, *perakim*, ch. 2 and onwards; Gate 4, ch. 2 and onwards.
- 31 See *Nefesh Hachaim* (*Perakim*, ch. 8) where he employs this example in hyperbole, but not as an actual occurrence.
- 32 See *Tanya*, ch. 7, that the term *assur*, used to denote something forbidden, literally means “tied up,” for that which is forbidden is bound by the forces of impurity so that it can never ascend to Heaven.
- 33 *Tanya*, end of ch. 39.
- 34 *Avos*, 2:5.
- 35 Commentary to Mishnayos, Sanhedrin, introduction to ch. 11 (“*Cheilek*”). The later stage of studying to be honored as a rabbi is also mentioned by the Rambam.
- 36 *Avos*, 1:3.
- 37 *Zohar*, 128b; explained in *Tanya*, ch. 27.
- 38 *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chaim*, 1:4.
- 39 See *Shvuos*, 5a.
- 40 Although Yissachar studied Torah and Zevulun pursued business, Zevulun is mentioned first in the *possuk* since it was through his support that Yissachar could study undisturbed – *Bereishis Raba* 99:9.
- 41 *Koheles* 4:13; *Koheles Raba* ad loc.
- 42 At this point, the *Metzoref Haavoda* includes two lengthy discussions on why Chassidus was revealed in our times and how even those who originally opposed Chassidus came to appreciate it. To be published in the future *bez”H*.
- 43 *Devarim*, 29:17.
- 44 See *Brachos* 31a: “One should not start to *daven* ... rather with joy of a *mitzva*.”
- 45 The following is based on *Tanya*, Ch. 31.
- 46 See *Eruvin* 3b.
- 47 There are four sources for the negative character traits: earth, fire, water and air. Each one generates traits similar to its makeup – see *Tanya*, end of Ch. 1.
- 48 *Tanya*, beginning of Ch. 26.
- 49 *Eicha* 3:15.
- 50 *Mishlei* 14:23.
- 51 *Brachos* 31a.
- 52 Meaning, that if he did not contemplate G-dliness and become humbled beforehand, the only sadness he could have is one of haughtiness at not being complete. Only through contemplation and submission is it possible to have the beneficial bitterness which breeds G-dly joy.
- 53 *Brachos* 14b.
- 54 See *Torah Ohr*, *Shemos*, 61d.
- 55 See “*Pasach Eliyahu*” (Erev Shabbos prayers from the introduction to *Tikunei Zohar*): “*Chessed* is the right hand, *gevurah* is the left.”
- 56 *Brachos* 13a.
- 57 *Megilah* 20a.
- 58 See *Reshimos* 172, §10 from the Frierdiker Rebbe *farbrengen* on 12 *Tammuz*, 5692: *Kavana* is similar to “and a window (*vechavein*) he opened for him,” meaning a window to shine from the mind to the heart and from the heart to the mind. This is also why our Sages said, “If he intended his heart,” when it should have said “his thought,” to indicate that he shined from his mind to his heart.
- 59 *Zevachim* 47a; *Rambam*, *Hilchos Pesulei Hamukdashin*, 1:3.
- 60 Gate Thirty Two, Ch. 3. See also Gate Twenty Two, Ch. 2.
- 61 Regarding to two forms of toiling, see *Tanya*, Ch. 30, 42.
- 62 Chana, regarding her davening – *Shmuel* I 1:15.
- 63 See *Shaarei Teshuva* of the Mitteler Rebbe, 33c.
- 64 Vol. 1, 240b; Vol. 3, 243a; *Likutei Torah*, beginning of *parshas Ki Teitzei*.
- 65 *Tanya*, Ch. 28.
- 66 See *Iggeres HaTeshuva*, Ch. 6.
- 67 *Mitzvos of the Land*, Ch. 4.
- 68 This addition in the *Metzoref Ha'avoda* seems to be addressing the practice of Chabad chassidim not to shout in *davening*.

THE POWER OF CHASSIDUS



RABBI SHOLOM BER AVTZON

REB MEIR BLIZINSKY, a noted chossid known for his ability to articulate the profound teachings of *Chassidus* in simple terms, gave many well attended *shiurim* in *Chassidus* in Tel Aviv. One Shabbos morning, an elderly and obviously non-observant Jew entered the *shul*, sat down at the table and listened intently to the lesson being taught. When it was over, he asked what time the lesson would begin next week, stood up, left the *shul* and removed his *yarmulkah*.

The same thing happened the following week. However, at the end of the third week's lesson, he turned to the person whom he happened to be sitting next to and asked him a question concerning the topic that had been taught at the *shiur*. The person answered to the best of his ability, but his explanation did not satisfy the inquirer, who subsequently voiced his dissatisfaction and left.

The man was offended and loudly criticized the newcomer to his friends. "That man doesn't even stay for *shacharis*. He is obviously not religious and *he* is telling *me*, someone who has been studying *Chassidus* for quite a few years, that *I* don't know what I am talking about. Some nerve!"

Reb Meir heard the man's anger and realized it was his responsibility to make sure the situation did not deteriorate. Approaching the offended individual, he said, "Next week we will change places. I will sit in your usual place so that if he comes again, he will pester me with his questions and leave you alone."

Sure enough, the following week the elderly man entered and took his usual place. When the lesson was over, he turned to Reb Meir, who was now sitting next to him, and asked a question.

Reb Meir patiently answered it, using words and definitions that would help a newcomer to *Chassidus* to understand the Chassidic concept. This time the gentleman said, "That is a thought worth contemplating."

Reb Meir and the man then introduced themselves. Reb Meir was shocked – the newcomer was one of the leaders of the *Shomer Hatzuiv*,



Reb Meir Blizinsky



Reb Meir leading a farbrengen together with Reb Mendel Futerfas

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the most non-religious and anti-religious Zionists in *Eretz Yisroel*. He was also a close confidant of Prime Minister Ben-Gurion, and here he was coming to learn *Chassidus* and asking questions. Without divulging his thoughts, Reb Meir said, “You are welcome to come again.”

Over the next few weeks Reb Meir came to appreciate his new student’s thoughtful questions and insights. He was obviously an intellectual of the highest caliber, and a deep thinker who was developing a keen understanding of *Chassidus*, even though he was presently not observant. So, at the end of the following week’s class Reb Meir said to him, “If you want, we can learn privately. This way you can learn *Chassidus* in an orderly fashion. We will begin by discussing some of the fundamental aspects and then develop and expand upon them.”

The new student eagerly accepted this proposition and thanked Reb Meir for his thoughtfulness. They decided that the best time for both of them would be early Shabbos morning at 6:00 a.m. in Reb Meir’s house, before Reb Meir gave his regular *shiur* to the public in the *shul* at 9:00 a.m.

On Shabbos morning the newcomer arrived, listened and asked a few probing questions. Reb Meir, who was blessed with the power of speech and was a master of clarity, answered them all in a manner the man understood. Yet, wasn’t changing his conduct at all. On one occasion,

Reb Meir gently broached the topic of his student's observance. "You now understand the significance of fulfilling a mitzvah in actuality. So why don't you begin observing just one mitzvah?"

when Reb Meir stepped out for a minute, the man quickly smoked a cigarette before Reb Meir returned. Once, after weeks and months had passed, Reb Meir gently broached the topic of his student's observance. "You now understand the significance of fulfilling a *mitzvah* in actuality. So why don't you begin observing just one *mitzvah*?" The man didn't respond, and he didn't change his lifestyle.

Reb Meir didn't know what to do. On the one hand, as long as the Jew was coming to learn and was demonstrating an interest in learning, who knew how it might influence him? However, the man wasn't growing at all or becoming observant in any way. Maybe he should stop these private lessons and utilize the time in a more productive way.

Not knowing what to do, Reb Meir decided to ask the Rebbe, noting in the letter he wrote who the student



Reb Meir at the chasuna of a student.

This week when I went to my favorite restaurant, I had a startling thought – maybe I should try the kosher one across the street.

was. The Rebbe replied, “You should continue learning with this individual as before. In addition, be careful to make sure not to mention to him in any way whatsoever that he should observe any *mitzvah*.”

Receiving this clear answer, Reb Meir continued the lessons, making sure not to say anything that could be interpreted as a request for him to undertake the observance of a *mitzvah*. A few months later, after the conclusion of the lesson, the man turned to Reb Meir and asked, “How does one write a letter to the Rebbe?” Seeing Reb Meir’s puzzled face and his bewilderment, the man said, “I don’t think anyone besides the Rebbe, including you my dear friend, can respond and answer this question of mine.

“As you know by now, I am a renowned professor and writer for a non-religious newspaper. I enjoy studying various philosophies and have studied many over the years. I said to myself, you have studied many heathen philosophies, why not study those associated with Judaism? So I decided to study Chassidic philosophy and that is how I came to the *shul* around a year ago. However, before I began, I made a firm decision: This study, just as all my previous studies, would remain

academic and would not influence or interfere with my way of life. I am not religious and will remain as such. There was no way that my intellectual pursuit was going to change my life style.

“After your mentioning that I should begin doing a *mitzvah*, I decided that the next time you mentioned it would be the last. I would no longer come to study with you, even though I really enjoy it as an intellectual exercise. You obviously understood that yourself and thankfully never brought it up again.

“The problem now is, notwithstanding this firm decision of mine, I feel that it is beginning to affect me. While I have not begun to observe any *mitzvahs*, when I do something the Torah prohibits, I have begun to feel a little uncomfortable. This week when I went to my favorite restaurant, I had a startling thought – maybe I should try the kosher one across the street. Since I never had these doubts and feelings before, it must be a consequence of our study.

“So now I am asking the Rebbe to guide me on an intellectual level and help me in this journey. What should I do? Should I begin observing commandments? That would be proof that my



conduct throughout my entire life until now was false and wrong! Should I stop our learning? That would be an admission of defeat that I could not stand up to the truth.”

We don't know exactly what he wrote in the letter, nor do we have a copy of the Rebbe's response to him. However, we do know that he became a *shomer Torah u'mitzvos*.



When relating this story, the *mashpia* Reb Yoel Kahan concluded:

“This man made a firm resolution that his study of *Chassidus* would not affect him. Yet, since he studied in earnest, his resolve melted. And he was inspired to the point that he found the courage to change his whole way of life.

“How much more so for us, who want to be inspired and uplifted by *Chassidus*. Without question, if we learn it properly, it will affect us. The only requisite is that we learn *Chassidus* wholeheartedly.” **P**

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Chassidic
PRINCIPLES

— IN —

EDUCATION

BY RABBI HERSHEL FOGELMAN

ONE OF THE INTERESTING ASPECTS of Chassidus is the development of a terminology which in itself already provides even the uninitiated with a glimpse into the metaphysical world, intriguing enough to arouse speculation for further probing.

The reason for this, I believe, is because the terms used are, on the one hand, simple everyday descriptive examples. On the other hand, they contain the entire scope of deep scholastic concepts dealing with worlds beyond human reach, so that both the scholar, as well as the beginner, can correlate the real beyond with his own reality. Another remarkable contribution of chassidic thought is the ability to relate phenomenal ideas which originally pertain to Divine attributes, heavenly sphere, the process of creation, etc., to issues and matters of everyday life which concern one's self and one's fellow man in all situations of human behavior.

One of the crucial issues of the day, particularly in our Jewish world, is *chinuch*, commonly referred to as Jewish education, but which in reality means Jewish development.

I have chosen a few chassidic terms which I feel can be applied by the *mechanech* – teacher of those heavenly souls we call pupils.

Let us begin:

OROS BEKAILIM

Oros bekailim – lights in vessels. Perhaps the simplest example is looking at the light of the sun through dark sunglasses. In the realm of the higher world it is explained as follows: The Infinite light of G-d, which is the source of all existence, had to be channeled into vessels which are in essence limited, in order to have a finite world created.

For this to take place, all the authorities of Kabala, as well as the masters of Chassidic philosophy, speak of the concealment and condensing of this light

One of the crucial issues of the day, particularly in our Jewish world, is chinuch, commonly referred to as Jewish education, but which in reality means Jewish development.



Rabbi Hershel Fogelman, 5681-5773 (1921-2013), was a boy in yeshivas Torah VaDaas in Brooklyn, when he met the chassidim R. Shmuel Levitin, R. Avrohom Paris and R. Yisroel Jacobson and was introduced to Chassidus. Upon the establishment of the Tomchei Temimim yeshiva in 770 he became one of its first students. In 5706 (1946), he was sent by the Friediker Rebbe to lead the Achei Temimim school in Worcester, MA, which he did for over 60 years.

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In his eagerness to transmit the Torah to a child, the mechanech may many times impart ideas and concepts without preparing the fragile keli-vessel of the pupil.

through the process of *tzimtzum*, contraction, so as to allow for that amount and that quality of Divine light which would enable the *kailim*-vessels to receive it without being broken or rendered inactive. For example: *chochma*, the spark of Infinite wisdom, needs a receptacle, a *keli*, a channel through which to flow in order for us humans to be able to operate with wisdom in our own lowly limited world. Should there be more light than the *keli*-receptacle is able to receive, the vessel would be broken and the process required for the creation of wisdom would not take place. Hence, it requires the capacity to measure the right amount, etc. for the desired results. As a matter of fact, everything in creation is a combination of *or*-Infinite light with *keli*, the particular physical vessel, such as the rock, the plant, the bug, the brain, etc.

The Rebbe has, in many of his *Sichos Kodesh*, spoken of the idea that a matter exists just so on earth because it derives from its counterpart in the higher worlds. Therefore, without elaborating anymore, let us proceed to our pupils, the children, the *kailim*, the vessels who must receive the *or*, the Infinite light of Torah through the *mechanech*-teacher.

It is here that the crucial process begins. In his eagerness to transmit the Torah to a child, the *mechanech* may many times impart ideas and concepts without preparing the fragile *keli*-vessel of the pupil. He may not measure the child's capacity, and while the pupil has not yet been prepared properly, the teacher already is, good-naturedly, forcing Infinite light into a limited vessel. Out of eagerness or perhaps laziness the teacher has not attempted, through preparation, to conceal or condense the light or stimulate the thinking process of the undeveloped mind and the net result is utter confusion. Even so simple an approach as used by

the famous sage, Raba, in the Gemoro, who always opened his lesson with a remark which caused his students to laugh, is considered in the Talmud an important pedagogical step. Or it may be in reverse: a *mechanech* so underestimates his students' *kailim*-vessels, that he deprives them of the light needed for their educational development.

All this applies as well to a rabbi teaching or preaching to his adult congregation, or a *shliach* of the Rebbe on a mission, who is not mindful of this concept. Every educator should therefore be cognizant that when he is teaching it is a process of *oros bekailim*.

ETZEM AND HISPASHTUS

Etzem and *hispashtus* – *or* and *ma'or* – essence and reflection.

As an introduction: *Yisroel kadma laTorah* – Jews preceded the Torah in creation. This is based on the Midrash which speaks of the seven things that came into being before our Universe, among them Torah and the souls of Jews. In its discussion and conclusion, the Midrash proves that the souls appeared first and the Torah afterwards.

Chassidus, in defining this in its deeper sense, uses the example of a father and his offspring, whereby the child is the very essence of the father. On the other hand is the example of the light of the sun: even though light emanates from the sun and without it there could be no light, nevertheless, that light is merely a ray of the sun, not the sun essence itself.

In a similar sense Jews are called "*Bonim atem laHashem Elokeichem* – you are children to G-d, your G-d," as the Alter Rebbe explains in Tanya, a portion of G-d Himself, while about the Torah it is said,



“*Ki ner mitzva veTorah or* – for the *mitzva* is a candle and the Torah is light.” Therefore, the Jew is *Etzem*, essence; the Torah is a ray of G-d. The objective is to unite the *neshama*-essence with its Source through Torah. The primary objective, however, is the *neshama*, which is first in Creation.

On a teacher and child relationship let us substitute the pupil for the *Etzem*, essence, and the subject being taught for the ray, the light. The question is which comes first. Obviously, the pupil-soul is first. Many teachers, however, are class and group conscious, thereby (a) losing sight of the individual pupils, and (b) all preparation and methods by the teacher are geared to the subject matter at hand. The primary concern of a *mechanech*, however, must be first and foremost *Yisroel kadma laTorah*. The pupil is first, and all methods and gimmicks must be directed to arousing and awakening the dormant potential of the student. Naturally, the imparting of the subject is the objective, but in the final analysis it is the pupil who is all-important.

Or it may be in reverse: a mechanech so underestimates his students' kailim-vessels, that he deprives them of the light needed for their educational development.

*The Baal Shem Tov
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The distinction in the approach can readily be seen in observing a teacher who views the class as an entity, or the teacher, who, upon entering a room can, with his discerning and sensitive eye, see the receptivity or the lack thereof of the individual pupils. The difference is obvious; one is concerned with the subject, the other with the pupil. One may use all his energy to cover as much material as possible, apportioning so much for each day and evaluating the results by saying to himself that the class covered so much today, this week, month, year, etc. The other measures his success by the amount each pupil *received* and not by the portion he *taught*.

One of the great early chassidic luminaries, the Rebbe Reb Klonimos Kalmon, author of the *sefer Moer Veshomesh*, makes a very dramatic point in commenting on the sentence in Koheles, “*Bni heezohair asos seforim harbei*,” which in its simple interpretation is translated, “My son, beware of authoring many books.” The word *heezohair*, which means “beware,” also denotes enlightenment in Hebrew, and he goes on to explain that it is this which distinguished the disciples of the Baal Shem Tov from some of the great Torah scholars of that time. The Baal Shem Tov and the chassidic *tzadikim* wrote *seforim* and *chidushim* (Torah innovations) on Jewish hearts, while others wrote on paper. King Solomon therefore says as follows, “My son, *enlighten*, instead of writing many books.”



The difference is obvious; one is concerned with the subject, the other with the pupil.

The objective of a teacher is to teach the individual child, to make sure that the pupil personally clearly understands and absorbs the knowledge. It must become an integral part of the student. Even a teacher with a large class must be mindful of the individual student on a one-to-one basis.

In other words, just as in creation the souls preceded the Torah, so too here on Earth, in the classroom, the students' abilities and personalities should be given priority in effecting a successful educational system.

THOUGHT, SPEECH, AND ACTION

Machshava, dibur, maaseh – thought, speech and action and their interrelationship is a favorite subject that is extensively explored in the works of Chabad chassidic literature. Every idea has a development process. In the world of thought we are conscious of the idea; the words or description of the idea, although they are present, are in a subdued latent position. The person is too excited about the thought to be concerned about the thought language at the moment.

The next step is the ability to put the thought into coherent speech so that it can be understood by another person. At this point descriptive words and structural phrases are already important. The lack of ability on the part of anyone to articulate indicates a deficiency in basic understanding.

The third rung on the ladder of understanding is *maaseh* – action. This can take many forms, whether it is putting the idea into written words in clear

language so that the reader can contemplate it properly, or if it is in the realm of mechanical skill, to actually construct something, paint a picture on canvas or enact a thought on stage. In each case an idea has descended into the world of the very tangible.

In Tanya, the Alter Rebbe teaches us how this process applies in the life of a Jew who, through intensive study of the Torah, is unified with the thought of G-d; by expressing the Torah in speech – as we read in the Shema, “and you should talk of them,” or in prayer, etc. – the Jew is united with G-d through the vocal system. Finally, in the observance of the action – *mitzvos* (such as *teflin, tzitzis, mezuzah, lulav, tzedakah, matzah*) – we even elevate the world of the mundane to the Infinite unity of Hashem. Thus, every facet of human expression becomes a vehicle through which the total person, body and soul, is immersed in the heavenly source. Whatever it may be, every human development must pass through the stages of *machshava, dibur* and *maaseh* – thought, speech and action.

I have found that many teachers at times eliminate one or more of these fundamentals. Did you ever observe a teacher explaining a lesson in Hebrew grammar, or the reason for G-d testing Avrohom, or perhaps teaching children how to make a *brocha*, and then immediately proceed to the next subject without determining whether the first was clearly understood on these three levels? The dedicated teacher would, in each case, ascertain through discussion, as well as question and answer, whether the subject was clearly absorbed. He would ask the pupils to stop and think for a moment – thought. He would then have the

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student explain the lesson in his own words or review it verbally, which is an important principle in Jewish studies – speech. Thirdly, a good *mechanech* would, depending on the level of the child, have him write it down, draw a picture, enact it, or develop a project which would require some form of construction – *maaseh*, action.

In the final analysis, the absence of one or more of these fundamentals, due in most cases to teachers who lack imagination or are outright lazy, takes its toll. Fortunately, there are pupils who, despite the gap of either thought, speech or action, somehow manage, if only by the grace of G-d, to come out unharmed. Think, however, of the many innocent youngsters who may become educationally crippled. Therefore, every lesson, in order to be assured of success, must have the child himself pass through the process of thought, speech and action. After a lesson is completed or while preparing it, the teacher must ask himself, “Have I included the elements of *machshava*, *dibur* and *maaseh* in this lesson? Are the pupils thinking, speaking, and doing the lesson?”

HISKAL'LUS HAMIDOS

The blending of characteristics. In chemically mixing items there is a method of developing a compound or solution whereby each chemical also takes on the characteristics of the other, so much so that in the end process, the elements are inseparable, complementing and enforcing each other. Pertaining to the heavenly sphere discussed in Kabala and Chassidus, reference is made to *Olam Hatohu*, the World of Disorder, in which each characteristic of the seven heavenly emanations was so independent

of the others that one could not tolerate or blend with any other attribute. As a result, (planned) chaos was dominant because the *midos* conflicted with each other, so to speak.

Let us take, for example, *chesed* (kindness) and *gevurah* (severe discipline) on a human level. If one is overcome by the *midah* of *chesed*, he will extend his kindness indiscriminately to everyone and everything to the extent that the *midah* is in control of the person. He cannot tolerate the severe discipline which limits his kindness to the more deserving, or refrain from extending it to an area where the *chesed* would cause disaster. Parents, for example, who cannot say “no” because of misguided *chesed* are a case in point. On the other hand, in the case of *gevurah*, strong discipline, one measures the recipient in need of kindness with a very critical eye. A reason will always be found by such an individual why a particular person should not deserve kindness, and who almost always holds the disciplinary view that the kindness is not suited in his case, etc.

In the order of the creation leading to our world, *Olam Hatohu*, the chaotic world with its spheres of independent characteristics, preceded *Olam Hatikun*, the world of homogeneous interrelationship. The purpose of creation is naturally unity, in which the *midos'* characteristics enforce each other. An excellent example is the statement by Shlomo Hamelech, “He who withholds the rod hates his son.” In his natural kindness to bring his son to a level of improvement, the father admonishes his son. He is applying *gevurah*, severe discipline. He is motivated, however, by *chesed*, kindness. It is a combination of the two characteristics which brings about the improvement of the child, who is later received with

love and appreciation by his father. Should the father, however, strike the son out of pure anger, “*gevurah*,” the results may be disastrous. This is also true of the blending of all other *midos*.

In the relationship of Hashem with the children of Israel throughout history we find this principle constantly. As a matter of fact, the different names of G-d are used throughout the Torah in this frame of reference. *K-l* refers to *chesed*, kindness. The name *Yud Kei Vov Kei* is *rachamim*, mercy; the name of *Elokim* is *gevurah*, strict judgement, etc. The Torah refers to G-d many times using two names combined, indicating a blending of two *midos*.

A teacher in a classroom must blend his approach, combining *chesed* with *gevurah* in such a way that a reprimand is not misconstrued as an act of cruelty. The pupil must be able to sense in the manner of the teacher that his discipline is kindness. If the pupil does not feel this, then even if the teacher intended it to be so, there is evidently an ingredient of *Olam*

Fortunately, there are pupils who, despite the gap of either thought, speech or action, somehow manage, if only by the grace of G-d, to come out unharmed.





R. David Chanzin

Hatikun missing in the *mechanech*. The same holds true for a pat on the back which should be received as true affection, not a license for misbehavior. It would be wise for *mechanchim* to study the interpretation of all the *midos* and see how they can apply this in the conduct of the class.

I would like to conclude with an observation that *hiskal'us hamidos*, the blending of characteristics,

applies also in the relationship between adults thrown together by the *Hashgocho* who are themselves blessed with different attributes. This is especially true of an entire faculty upon whose shoulders rests the success or G-d forbid failure of an educational institution. The challenge, in such a case, is how to develop a unified compound which will serve as a blessing for all the individuals, as well as the institution.

The pupil must be able to sense in the manner of the teacher that his discipline is kindness.

A letter written by the Previous Rebbe of blessed memory to a community where a number of Lubavitcher *Talmidim-Tmimim* lived, two weeks before the *histalkus*, *Yud Shvat*, 5710, illustrates this point strikingly. This letter is the last public letter written to chassidim printed in the last *maamar* of *Basi Legani*, with an introduction by the Rebbe with a comment that this letter to a few *tmimim* was inserted in accordance with the expressed request of the Previous Rebbe. I recall that when we came from the funeral and everyone was sitting in 770, some of the older chassidim commented that this letter has the overtones of a *tzavo'ah* – a will.



My Honored Dear Ones...

Peace and Blessing:

In every city where one of the *tmimim* resides it is expected that his radiance and good influence shall be felt in the life of the Jews, collectively and individually throughout the city, reinforcing the study of the Torah, observance of *mitzvos*, kosher education of children, and good ethical behavior.

Most certainly one could expect such activity and in even greater measure in an area where a number of *tmimim* are present, if only they will communicate with each other, and each one, individually and all together, will fulfill his function and the mission of their souls, which is the reason they were brought there by Divine order.

One of the distinctions between *Olam Hatohu*, the World of Chaos, and *Olam Hatikun*, the World of Homogeneous Relationship, is that in the World of *Tohu*, each Divine attribute existed as a separate entity and could not blend with its opposite.

Quite to the contrary, however, in the World of *Tikun*, each *midah* can not only tolerate the opposite characteristic, but blends with it to the extent that each one complements the other.

The Divine intent is in *Tikun* – homogeneous relationship, and through it the world exists.

The Alter Rebbe trained the chassidim that they should always relate with affection and unity to each other, literally as one body, which means that although each limb differs from the next in essence, and fulfills a separate function, nevertheless all are bound together and aid each other.

Then and then only, with the Infinite kindness of Hashem, Blessed be He, is the body healthy and suited to carrying out its duties as befits a wholesome person.

Based on this, I would like to request of my dear friends to contrive a plan how they can together become actively involved in stimulating and strengthening conditions in the city where they reside. Also in the surrounding communities, where it is necessary to visit from time to time, without requesting any funds, but only for the sole purpose of awakening them in matters of invigorating their Judaism.

Hashem *Yisborach* shall help them and bless them and their households, bringing about their success in all their needs, collectively and individually, blessing them materially and spiritually. **P**



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SNAPSHOTS

[12 SHORT STORIES ON THE IMPACT OF CHASSIDUS]

IN CONNECTION WITH YUD TES KISLEV – ROSH HASHANAH OF CHASSIDUS

ONE

WHY LEARN CHASSIDUS?

Reb Berel Baumgarten of Argentina worked with many young people to help them learn Chassidus. On 2 Elul 5721 (1961), he wrote to the Rebbe regarding one young man with whom he was in contact, who had told Reb Berel that he does not enjoy learning Chassidus. He relayed that if it would be an imperative like *nigleh*, he would learn it anyways, but since it was not obligatory, he had decided to do without it.

The Rebbe responded in writing, directing Reb Berel what to say:

“He should be explained that he has played enough with Torah and *mitzvos*. Every *Yid* is obliged to think

of Hashem’s greatness at least three times a day. A *Yid* also has the *mitzvos* of unifying, loving and fearing Hashem.

“Unlike in loftier generations, these *mitzvos* can now only be performed through study and contemplation. If he does not learn Chassidus, tens of years could pass without him fulfilling these *mitzvos* even once.

“And concerning the lack of enjoyment from the learning,” the Rebbe concluded, “*mitzvos* were not given for our pleasure.”

(Tadfis mitoch Sefer Hatoldos Reb Berel Baumgarten, Iyar 5766, p. 46)

TWO

A SERIOUS STUDY

Reb Leibel Groner relates:

Prior to the first visit of the Toldos Aharon Rebbe of Yerushalayim in 5719 (1959), the Rebbe told me to be present in the room during the *yechidus*. At first I did not understand the reason.

During the *yechidus*, the Rebbe asked him if the *bochurim* learn Chassidus in his *yeshiva*. He replied, “Certainly.” The Rebbe asked which *sefer*, and he answered that every *bochur* learns whichever Chassidus he prefers.

Although the Rebbe accorded him great respect, the Rebbe stated his opinion firmly: “Just as in *nigleh* there is a structured learning, so must there be in Chassidus. It could be the Noam Elimelech, the Sfas Emes, or the Shomrei Emunim of Toldos Aharon, but it has to be structured.”

After the *yechidus*, the Rebbe told me to write it up, so it could be preserved. The Rebbe elaborated, “In every *chassidische yeshiva*, there must be a serious study of Chassidus, even if only for half-an-hour. The Baal Shem Tov heard from Moshiach that this is the key to his coming; how can we ignore it?!”



THREE

THE PREREQUISITE FOR DAVENING

During the Toldos Aharon Rebbe’s visit in 5721 (1961), a heated discussion ensued between the Rebbe and his guest. The Rebbe insisted that a *Yid* must prepare for *davening* by learning Chassidus, while the Toldos Aharon Rebbe maintained that having the simple *kavana* suffices.

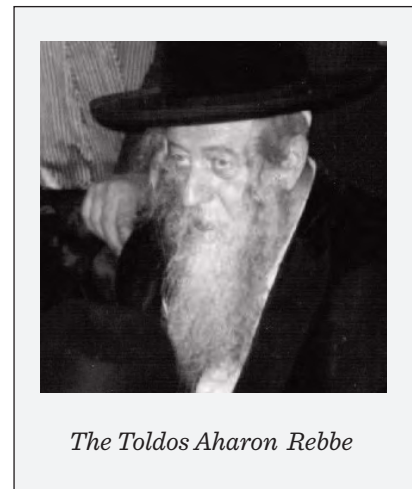
During the course of the conversation the Rebbe expounded, “*Davening* must be with all of one’s limbs. This obviously does not only refer to the physical limbs, but also to the various facets of the person’s character: his intellect and emotions.

“Now,” continued the Rebbe, “if a person does not understand the depth of his *tefilla*, he is utilizing only a shallow part of his mind, thereby relinquishing its depth. *Davening* must be with every facet of a *Yid*’s being, including that depth.

“The only way to achieve this would be by learning and contemplating the inner meaning of the *tefilla*, through the study of Chassidus.

“It does not have to be Chabad Chassidus,” the Rebbe concluded, “but Chassidus it must be.”

(*Toras Menachem*, vol. 30, page 319)



The Toldos Aharon Rebbe

FOUR

STOLEN WATERS ARE SWEETER

When the current Belzer Rebbe was in *yechidus* with the Rebbe, 4 Adar 5741 (1981), the Rebbe inquired why the Belzer Chassidus had not been published. The Belzer Rebbe explained that Belzer tradition opposes the printing of rebbeim's *droshos* and writings.

The Rebbe became very serious. "*Halacha* dictates that if a sick person feels he needs medication, the patient's wishes are fulfilled even if doctors dispute the need. Only the patient himself can most accurately diagnose his own condition. *Am Yisroel* is crying for Chassidus. It is improper to withhold it from them."

The Belzer Rebbe complied. Despite Belzer tradition, Belzer Chassidus was published.

On another occasion, when the Rachevstrivker Rebbe had *yechidus* in Shevat of 5737 (1977), the Rebbe asked the Rachevstrivker to publish the Chassidus of his ancestors, the Chernobyler rebbeim. To his response that tradition frowns on this, the Rebbe replied, "*Aderabah!* This will only strengthen the learning of their Chassidus; stolen waters are always sweeter!"

Am Yisroel is crying for Chassidus. It is improper to withhold it from them.



Reb Chatzkel Besser

FIVE

100-PERCENT OF THE REMEDY

"I have been *davening* in 770 for more than a year, and I see the Lubavitcher Chassidim. I also come from a *chassidische* home of *Rodomske* chassidim. However, at home, while we learned the *Rodomske Tiferes Shlomo*, we also opened other *seforim* like *Noam Elimelech*. So why is it that the Lubavitchers study only Chabad Chassidus?"

This question was posed to the Rebbe by Reb Chatzkel Besser, vice president of Agudas Yisroel of America. The Rebbe's answer included a *moshol* from current events:

"Some years ago, Dr. Fleming's discovery of penicillin shook the medical world with its power to kill bacteria. In order not to harm the body, it was at first given in a low dosage. However, as the bacteria began resisting the penicillin, more had to be given. And later, more was added.

"Similarly with Chassidus. The Arizal taught some *pnimius HaTorah*, but the Baal Shem Tov's teachings included a larger dosage, due the needs of the generation. However, the worldly bacteria has begun resisting to that too. Now, we need the Alter Rebbe's potent Chassidus, which utilizes 100-percent of the remedy."

“Chassidus is for everyone,” the Rebbe would always say, “even for small children.”

Whenever the Rebbe would speak at Tzivos Hashem rallies, the *sichos* would always be designed for the young in their language. Nevertheless, they contained messages culled from the depths of Chassidus thought.

Reb Zusha Posner, *mashpia* of Tomchei Temimim Lod, relates:

“There was a teacher of nine and ten year olds boys who was in *yechidus*. The Rebbe told him that he should teach his pupils about *gadlus haBoreh* – the greatness of Hashem.

“The *melamed* was befuddled. ‘Gadlus haBoreh? How will these children understand?!’ he exclaimed.

“The Rebbe answered with a smile, ‘If Hashem has managed to be *metzamtzem* (condense) Himself so much that we are able to realize His greatness, surely He could be *metzamtzem* Himself just a little bit more so that a child will comprehend.’”

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comprehend.



Reb Mendel Dubrawsky, *shliach* to Dallas, Texas, relates the following personal story:

“I was turning fourteen and I went to the Rebbe for my birthday. In those days, we were only allowed to have a *yechidus* if we brought a detailed report from our teachers with us, which we had to hand to the Rebbe at the beginning of the *yechidus*. The Rebbe would look over the report and only then begin to speak.

“On my report, my teacher wrote that I was doing well in *nigleh* but that I did not have a *geshmak* in Chassidus.

“As soon as I walked in, I handed the Rebbe the report. The Rebbe read quickly, and within seconds reached the part about Chassidus. The Rebbe looked up, straight at me, and said, ‘*Ich farshtei nit, vi ken men nit hoben a gishmak in Chassidus?*’ (I don’t understand, how one could not have enjoyment while learning Chassidus?)

“Those words penetrated my heart and changed me forever.”



After reciting a *maamar* at the Yud Kislev *farbrengen* of 5722 (1961), the Rebbe began telling stories of the Mittlerer Rebbe. “During the times of the Mittlerer Rebbe, there was an outpouring of Chassidus. It happened sometimes that he recited Chassidus three times on one Shabbos, sometimes at four in the morning!”

“The lesson is clear,” the Rebbe continued. “One could study Chassidus three times a day, in the middle of the night, at four in the morning too...”

And then the Rebbe began saying a second *maamar*.

As the *farbrengen* continued, the Rebbe suddenly began preparing for third *maamar*! This is how the renowned *maamar* of *Padah Besholom 5722* came about.

Indeed, three *maamorim* on one Shabbos...

(*Toras Menachem*, Vol. 32, page 249)



Reb Meilach Tzvibel

The Rebbe looked surprised, and responded, “Es ken nit zain!”

NINE IT CAN'T BE!

The Rebbe urged chassidim to think about the Chassidus they learned and to make a routine out of this practice.

Reb Meilach Tzvibel A”H related the following instances of the Rebbe’s involvement in this realm:

A *bochur* I knew asked the Rebbe for direction in his *avodas Hashem*. The Rebbe guided him to spend time contemplating on the Chassidus he learned that day, before he begins *davening*. Additionally, the Rebbe instructed him to recap “the *nekudah*” (a focused summary) of the idea before he begins *Birchos Krias Shema*.

Another *bochur*, who was diligent in his *avodas hatefila*, told the Rebbe that he spends ten minutes every day thinking over a chassidic concept, but he was frustrated since “he didn’t see any results”. The Rebbe looked surprised, and responded, “*Es ken nit zain!*” (It can’t be!)

When the *mashpia* Reb Shlomo Chaim Kesselman was in *yechidus*, he reported that there was a *bochur* in Kfar Chabad who spent half-an-hour a day thinking Chassidus. The Rebbe lifted both hands in the air, expressing his delight.

(As heard from Reb Meilach)

TEN TO THINK CHASSIDUS

“A chossid must set aside time, at least once a week, to detach himself from his surroundings, to forget about the world, to forget about himself, and to contemplate an *inyan* in Chassidus,” the Rebbe demanded at the *Acharon Shel Pesach* 5744 (1984) *farbrengen*. “Not for any purpose, such as to repeat it in public or to publish it, just purely as a purpose unto itself.”

Reb Nachman Sudak A”H shared what he heard from the Rebbe at his first *yechidus*. The Rebbe guided him to think about the Chassidus he was involved in at the time, namely something he had learned that morning or the past week.

This was a deviation from what he was doing until then: to think over a specific *maamar* many times, irrespective of what he was learning then.

“I think the Rebbe was telling me that thinking Chassidus which is in the recesses of my mind doesn’t compare to something that’s fresh. Its impact on me will be more real,” Reb Nachman concluded.

(Main Nachman, page 3)



Reb Nachman Sudak



Reb Shmuel Levitin

ELEVEN

THE DOORS ARE OPEN

During one *yechidus* of the *hanholas hayeshiva*, on 5 Teves 5725 (1964), the *mashpia* Reb Shmuel Levitin reported that *bochurim* were active in *hafotza*, hoping the Rebbe would derive *nachas* from it.

The Rebbe replied, “This is a way comfort me?! Since 5715 the doors are open for Moshiach, through *hafotzas hamayonos*, yet there is a lack of vessels!”

Reb Shmuel didn’t give up. “Hundreds of *yungelait* stand at the Rebbe’s *farbrengens*!”

“If these two hundred *yungelait* would leave the *farbrengen* and spread Chassidus,” the Rebbe responded, “Moshiach would certainly already have arrived! This is feasible, since today there are no true opponents to Chassidus; one simply must learn Chassidus himself and disseminate it *chutzah*...”

“The *niggun* ‘*Uforatzto*’ spread some years ago, but there is still work. The doors opened ten years ago - and they are still open!”

(Otzar Hachassidim NY, page 230)

“If these two hundred yungelait would leave the farbrengen and spread Chassidus,” the Rebbe responded, “Moshiach would certainly already have arrived!”

TWELVE

WHAT WILL BRING MOSHIACH?

When the Rebbe celebrated his 25th anniversary, he shared his personal *simchah* with the chassidim.

Referring to his marriage to the Frierdiker Rebbe’s daughter, the Rebbe said to the assembled, “This is the day that connected you to me and me to you; together we will toil to bring about the true and complete *geulah*.”

As the *farbrengen* came to a close, one of the elder chassidim rose and cried out, “We ask for a *bracha* that the Rebbe lead us towards Moshiach!”

The Rebbe responded, “Everyone can and must learn Chassidus – that’s how we will bring Moshiach!”

(Toras Menachem, Vol. 10, page 207) **P**

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