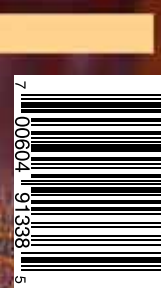


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Perspectives

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CONVERSATIONS WITH REB YOEL

Rabbi Shimon Hellinger

MATZOS IN SAMARKAND

Rabbi Hillel Zaltzman

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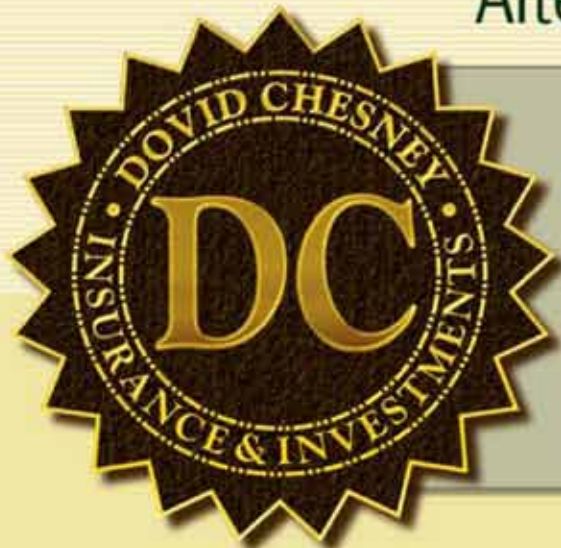


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Rabbi Shimon Hellinger
Director

Rabbi Mendel Schtroks
Administrator

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Mrs. Basya Yabel
Editors

Rabbi Schneur Zalman Rabin
Reviewer

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Design

Yaakov Hellinger
Public Relations

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Rabbi Shraga Dovid Homnick
Transcription

Rabbi Shmuel Pevzner
Vaad Hamosifin

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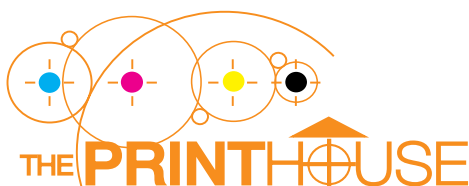
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- FOREWORD -

Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, chief Rabbi of Yerushalayim during the years of the British Mandate, was known for his opposition of Zionism. Like other *gedolei yisroel* of his time, he maintained that the modern Zionist Movement was the antithesis of Torah centered Judaism, and opposed its political movement.

When a local sheikh heard of this, he thought he found the perfect partner. He too, strongly opposed to the Zionists, and worked ardently to put an end to their activities. Along with a group of Arabs, he payed a visit to the home of the old sage, hoping to join forces against their common enemy.

However, Reb Yosef Chaim quickly made it clear that they had no common ground. "You oppose Zionism because of its Jewish nature; I oppose it because of its anti-Jewish nature."

■ ■ ■

Torah values are not at odds with secular values by happenchance—which leaves a possibility for a chance junction—but are built on opposite foundations. The worldly and human goal is about developing and promoting one's own will. Torah is built upon submission of one's own will to Hashem's will.

Chassidus in particular is opposed to society's worldview. It calls for a thorough submission and unification of the Self to Hashem, and its total dissolve into His infinite light. The human perspective can only, by it's very definition, have it's best interests in mind. Since their basis's are *inherently* opposed, it is only normal for their demands to diverge.

Even when Torah and human logic both call for the same action, they are still inherently different.

For example: There are situations when a *Rov* will instruct someone to relax their halachic standards for the sake of their well being. Likewise, a psychologist may tell their patient to relax excessive religious standards to improve their mental health.

Beside for the fact that their definition of "excessive" may differ, their underlying motivations are diametrically opposed. The priority of the secular doctor is human health and happiness, and a religious practice which does not enhance the patient's "quality of life" should be eliminated.

By contrast, the priority of the *Rov*, or any religious Jew for that matter, is the will of Hashem. Now, Hashem does not demand self-sacrifice on a daily basis. On the contrary, His Torah He guides us in how to live a good and meaningful life, and is best fulfilled when we are happy and healthy. The Jew, understanding this, is willing to suffer discomfort and even self-sacrifice for Him when it is necessary.

We must constantly examine our Torah values, and make sure that we haven't been misled by common culture. Particularly those values which have a counterpart in Western Society (happiness, family, relationships) should be thoroughly studied to determine in which light are they being pursued, the light of Torah and Chassidus or other foreign "enlightenment".

We hope that Perspective magazine contributes to this important end.

Rabbi Shimon Hellinger
General Editor



THE REBBE'S PERSPECTIVE

WHAT MOTIVATES US TO BUY LUXURIES BEYOND OUR STANDARDS? WHAT CAN A WOMAN DO TO GET HER HUSBAND TO LEARN MORE?

In this sicha from Simchas Torah, 5722¹ (1961) the Rebbe addresses these questions:

THE WOMAN'S ATTITUDE

The Rebbe Maharash lived very extravagantly, and he would buy his wife, Rebbetzin Rivka, fancy gifts and jewelry. Rebbetzin Rivka was active in *bachnosas kala*, and when she needed money she would often pawn her jewelry. The Rebbe Maharash would make inquiries as to where the Rebbetzin had pawned the jewelry and he would buy them back.

Similarly, when the Rebbe Maharash would invite the Rebbetzin to join him on his trips, she would usually reply that she would prefer to receive the travel expenses in cash, which she would distribute to *tzedaka*...

This approach should serve as a lesson for every Jewish woman, the *akeres habayis*, as to what her attitude should be towards luxuries.

There are wives who push their husbands to work harder so that they can have more jewelry and luxuries at home. Furthermore, they claim that without these luxuries they are deficient. Chazal said that "a man without a home is not a man," and those women convince themselves that the same is true of one who lacks fancy furniture, Heaven forfend...

In America—a land of bizarre innovations—not only does the *furniture* have to be extravagant, but even the *floor* needs to be covered in carpet so that you shouldn't see any bare wood, Heaven forfend.

1. Unedited – printed in Toras Menachem, Vol. 32, p. 153 and onwards.

WHAT WILL YOU GAIN?

In America—a land of bizarre innovations—not only does the furniture have to be extravagant, but even the floor needs to be covered in carpet so that you shouldn't see any bare wood, "*chas veshalom*". Not only that, but the carpet has to extend from wall to wall. And it shouldn't be from two pieces Heaven forbid; it must be one single piece of carpet, despite the fact that it costs a lot more.

At the end of the day we're talking about the floor that's trampled with feet. It does not benefit the mind or heart, but rather the feet. In truth, even they don't have any practical benefit from the carpet. No one benefits, it's just a matter of pride: that the wife can now show off to her neighbors and friends that in her house the carpet is made from one single piece!

For the sake of this pride, they spend large amounts of money that they could have given to *tzedaka*, and the husband is forced to toil harder and devote many more hours to work, when he could have been studying Torah, as required by *halacha*.

Unfortunately, this epidemic has also crept into *anash* homes, and also with some *chassidishe* ladies... when it comes to something shallow, like what her friend or neighbor will say, she loses herself completely.

"WHAT WILL THE NEIGHBORS SAY?"

Unfortunately, this epidemic has also crept into *anash* homes, and also with some *chassidishe* ladies, whose observance of Torah and *mitzvos* is impeccable and even according to Chassidic standards—beyond the letter of the law. And yet, when it comes to something shallow, like what her friend or neighbor will say, she loses herself completely.

The awareness that "*Ani nivreisi lshamesh es Koni*—I was only created to serve my Master" ought to make her feel that it doesn't really matter if she has a bit more carpet or a bit less carpet, because the main thing is that her husband can learn Torah. But when it comes to

actual practice, and she remembers about the neighbors and friends, she simply loses herself...

I asked a young man who came to see me, "What's your schedule for Torah study?" He replied, unashamedly and cold-bloodedly, that he has no time to learn because he is busy earning a living so that he can live comfortably.

We're speaking here about a man who has a full beard, who studied in *Tomchei Temimim*, and who lived in Russia when it was risky to be a frum *Yid*. And yet when he comes into what he himself refers to as *yechidus*, which is a time when the essence (*yechidab*) of two

souls converge, he says unashamedly that he has no time to learn because he is busy making money so that he can live in luxury!

And when I give out *mashkeh* on *Simchas Torah* to those who agree to add in the study of *Chassidus*, this same young man is more than eager to push himself to the front...

ENCOURAGING THE MEN-FOLK

I don't want to speak about the matter any further, because there's no point bemoaning the past. From now onwards, let's hope that Hashem will give everybody a substantial income, and they will make all their material lives consistent with Torah values.

And let's hope that a wife's powerful influence on her husband will be used in the future to the opposite effect. Instead of pressuring the husband to earn more money, let her encourage him to study more Torah: not sufficing with *Chitas*, but learning at length, as explained in the Alter Rebbe's *Hilchos Talmud Torah*...

Since everything needs to be made crystal clear, the lesson from all the above is as follows: Lubavitcher ladies and girls have a duty to urge their husbands, children, fathers and brothers to learn a lot of Torah. Wives should encourage their husbands to spend less time making money, so that they can study more. Let them say, "I will live without a lot of luxury, so long as you are able to fulfill the obligation resting on you, as it is written in *balacha*."

That resolution alone will inspire Hashem to bless you with substantial wealth in a manner that will not disturb the observance of Torah and *mitzvos*, and on the contrary, the wealth itself will be a vessel for *Elokus*.

I asked a young man who came to see me, "What's your schedule for Torah study?" He replied unashamedly that he has no time to learn because he is busy earning a living so that he can live comfortably.

IN SUMMARY

- In order to impress neighbors and friends, people spend lots of money to buy fancy furniture. For this purpose, men often work long hours and compromise their Torah study.
- Women should encourage their husbands to work less and spend more time learning. This will bring them the type of wealth that will help them observe Torah and *mitzvos*.

CONVERSATIONS WITH REB YOEL

Rabbi Shimon Hellinger

Arguably the foremost Chassidic scholar of our times, **Reb Yoel Kahn** remains an elusive figure for many. While his impact on chassidic thought is ubiquitous, little is known of his more personal views on life.

Besides being a trove of *Chassidus* and the Rebbe's teachings, Reb Yoel preserves and applies the long tradition of wholesome, Chassidic outlook and values.

In recent years I have had the privilege of spending many hours in candid conversation with Reb Yoel, which resulted in the making of **The Chassidus Perspective**. Offering us a glimpse into his surprisingly dynamic personality, these conversations show us a Reb Yoel who, despite being steeped in the academic side of Chassidus, has a sharp and practical look into everyday life.

Presented below is a selection of these discussions.

As Chazal say, "Even the mundane talk of *talmidei chachomim* requires in-depth study."

SENSITIVITY TO ANOTHER

I recently spoke to someone about asking forgiveness for something that he had done. He responded, "This was not customary among Chassidim." I told him that this is a great foolishness. *Shulchan Aruch* speaks of

the obligation to be careful with the respect of another and to ask forgiveness when having slighted them. Not doing so is quite the opposite of Chassidic practice.

At *farbrengens* back in Russia Chassidim would reprimand each other because they were open

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to be able to continue teaching Chassidus and the Rebbe's teachings

with each other and knew that the other person would not be offended at all. If it happened that they did offend the other person, they absolutely asked forgiveness.

Reb Shmuel [Levitin] spent time in Nevel where Reb Meir Simcha Chein lived. On Erev Yom Kippur Reb Shmuel approached Reb Meir Simcha and asked for forgiveness. Reb Meir Simcha appeared puzzled, so Reb Shmuel explained, "If I offended you then I must ask forgiveness. If I did not offend you then I definitely must ask for your forgiveness for not being open with you..."

Of course they never attacked each other personally.

Speaking unkindly towards another started occurring mostly in the times of the Frierdiker Rebbe. Then it was seen as bad *midos*; today some people believe that it is part of Chassidic conduct.

Some claim that the obligation to treat another with care is simply a G-dly instruction and not out of courtesy or decency. After all, they say, the world is in truth nothing. The Rebbe strongly discounts this claim. Hashem demands that care must be in a manner which is geared towards the recipient of our kindness. [Likutei Sichos Vol. 7 Vayikra 3]

Chazal say, "The heretics said there is no world but this one" (*ein olam ela echad*). Reb Shoiel Brook would read it, "There is no world" "but One"

since there is nothing but Hashem. The heretics used this as a ploy to do as they please.

Sensitivity towards another person is not only required by the *avoda* of Chassidus [a personal duty], but also by its *haskala* [intellectual conviction].

Korach's claim that "the entire camp is holy," appears to be the ultimate *achdus*, but actually led

to the greatest divide amongst the Jewish people. Moshe said, "morning [will come] and we will know," as Rashi explains, this means that "Hashem has set divisions in His world." Hashem created different creations with different purposes. *Achdus* can only be possible, when the unique purpose of creation is embraced. Opposites like night and day do not merge into "one day."

The Ramban and Rabbeinu Bechaye

point out that the importance of maintaining a healthy division is reason for the prohibition of *kilayim* [cross-breeding] and *shatnez*. Different categories must be kept separate.

The Rebbe explains that the same is true regarding personal property, and the Rebbe highlights this point from the *halacha* that one may not squander to *tzedaka* more than a fifth of one's property. Why should a person not be allowed to use his money as he pleases?

At *farbrengens* back in Russia Chassidim would reprimand each other because they were open with each other and knew that the other person would not be offended at all. If it happened that they did offend the other person, they absolutely asked forgiveness.



Reb Shmuel Levitin

The Rebbe explains: Every object was created with a purpose. A person's money was given to be used for one's own needs *l'sheim Shamayim* [for the sake of serving Hashem]. Just like a person may not harm his own body, he may not squander his money.

Chassidus explains that *daas tachton*, the perception that G-dliness enlivens the world with all its distinct categories, as opposed to the perception where the world is inherently non-existent, is a truth due to Hashem's plan.

It is thus understood how careful one must be with another person's money and his dignity, for these limits are set by Hashem's plan.

■ ■ ■

UPGRADING VALUES

In order to have a meaningful impact on a person, it is often necessary to deprogram his previous perspective.

During the time of the Alter Rebbe, Chassidim would introduce the light of Chassidus to sincere young men who they felt were capable of appreciating it.

A Chassid had set his eye on one such young man and awaited the proper moment to approach him. Erev Yom Kippur this young man gathered in shul with townsfolk to hear a stirring lecture before *Kol Nidrei*. The *maggid* (preacher) told of a king and queen who only were blessed with a daughter in their old age, and raised her with the best care and education. On the day of her gala wedding the young woman suddenly fell deathly ill. The *maggid* spoke in a sad tone and everyone wept.

The Chassid seized the moment. He approached the gifted young man and gently lifting the talis covering his face, and said to him, "Why are you crying? What do you care if this non-Jewish princess dies?" The Chassid walked off.

After Yom Kippur the young man asked the Chassid to teach him the real meaning of the holy day, and after the explanation retorted: "This is all nice, but why did you have to ruin my inspiration?" "The only way to open you to the lens of Chassidus," replied the Chassid, "was only after you completely discarded your old set of values."

(In stark contrast to parables told by *maggidim*, Chassidus employs a parable for the sole purpose of highlighting a point. Traditional lecturers tell stories filled with intricate details only to derive a lesson at the end. A person can become so consumed with the storyline that its point gets entirely forgotten.

The above *maschal* surely had a deeper message. Though, the Chassid showed that the

disconnected storyline in contrast to the meaning imparted was equivalent to being inspired by the dying princess.)

■ ■ ■

WHAT WILL BE GAINED?

I asked Reb Yoel concerning a dispute amongst Chassidim of the Rebbe Maharash in Kremenchug which had recently been written about. Reb Yoel was disappointed that such information was being publicized, and shared the following *maschal*:

Every object was created with a purpose. A person's money was given to be used for one's own needs *l'sheim Shamayim* [for the sake of serving Hashem]. Just like a person may not harm his own body, he may not squander his money.

A man once opened a store where he charged less than what he paid for the items. The locals were very perplexed. When approached, he explains, "It's no big deal. I'm not losing that much."...

[In other words: If there is no gain in publicizing something, then even minimal damage isn't justified.]

LEARNING LIKUTEI TORAH

There are some lines in Likutei Torah that are difficult to understand. Chassidim of the past would just gloss them over, not understanding everything they read. The Rebbe's calling to learn the "*chassidishe parsha*" was not to finish the entire parsha each week. Only in 5725 did the Rebbe give such an instruction, and it was obviously only a temporary instruction (*hora'as sha'a*).

Someone commented that he heard that Chassidim in the past were fluent in Likutei Torah. Reb Yoel rejected this claim and said that only very few were fluent.

■ ■ ■

AN ESSENTIAL DESIRE

At times, a person loses excitement about a *taivah* because he has become so attached to it that he is no longer excited, as the Rebbe Rashab explains in Kuntres HaAvoda.

During the First World War the *yeshiva* Tomchei Temimim fled, and wherever they stayed, locals were enlisted to provide food for the *bochurim*. One donor provided them with duck meat as a treat (actually, the *bochurim* would have been much happier with some more bread), and some *bochurim* ate with obvious indulgence. Unimpressed with their excitement, the donor commented to the *mashgiach*.

The *mashgiach* explained that it is he, the donor, who is more attached to the food. The deciding moment is when the food is lacking; the *bochurim* will continue on fine, but the donor will have a hard time.

A similar distinction exists in *ruchniyus*. [A *tzaddik* may not be ecstatic towards *Elokus*, not because he is less attached to it, but because he is one with it.] The Alter Rebbe explains that Moshe



Rabbeinu had difficulty providing the Jews with "meat," referring to excitement in serving Hashem. Moshe was not excited over *Elokus*; he lived in total *bittul* and attachment to Hashem.

Chadakov commented, "It appears that to tie someone else is easier than to tie yourself." And it's very true.

■ ■ ■

EASIER TO "TIE SOMEONE ELSE"

On a rare occasion Reb Yoel corrected me gently, but then excused himself with the following story:

Once the Rebbe sent me on a *shlichus* together with R' Chadakov and R' Kazarnovsky to meet President Shazar who was visiting Washington, DC. This was my first time on a plane and I had no idea how to close the seat belt. R' Chadakov reached over and assisted me. Then, turning to close his own seat belt, he was unable to. R'

A person must also know how to copy the *pnimiyus* of what the Rebbe is doing, and not just to mimic the external practice.

MINHOGIM OF THE REBBE

I asked about reciting a *bracha* for half Hallel when *davening* with a *minyan*, there are those who recite a *bracha* based on one line in an unedited *sicha*:

Of course nothing can be deduced from an unedited *sicha*; however as far as the traditional *minbag* I

don't remember *minhagim*.

About learning *minhagim* from the Rebbe's practice:



Not every *minbag* which the Rebbe practiced publicly is a lesson for all. A distinction must be made between a *minbag* that the Rebbe happened to perform in the presence of others, and a *minbag* that the Rebbe did to make a statement. For example: During one Sukkos farbrengen it was pouring rain. The Rebbe made *Kiddush* quietly as usual, but he recited the bracha of "*leisheiv basukkah*" very loud for all to hear. It was clear that he wanted to teach that we make the bracha of "*leisheiv basukkah*" even when it's raining.

(On a side note: The Rebbe came out with his coat over his shoulders. Right before the *maamar*, he shook it off his shoulders. Apparently he didn't want to wear a coat while reciting a *maamar*.)

A person must also know how to copy the *pnimiyus* of what the Rebbe is doing, and not just to mimic the external practice.

There was once a chossid who on the first night of Rosh Hashana would watch to see how long the Frierdiker Rebbe would *daven*, and the following year he would *daven* for that length of time. He would proudly tell everyone how he *davened* "just like the Rebbe did"... The absurdity in this statement is obvious.

Similarly there was a chossid in Otvotzk, Poland, that would *daven* at length and would always finish a few minutes after Reb Itche *der masmid*. When Reb Itche left Otvotzk, our Rebbe (who was in Otvotzk then) commented, "It's a pity on that man. He now won't know when to finish his *davening*..."

They tell a story of a Rov who before lighting Chanukah *licht* gave instructions for a broom to be removed from the room. He didn't want his followers to think it appropriate to have a

broom in the room while lighting Chanukah *licht*. However, the story goes, since then the custom became to bring a broom into the room, and then remove it...

I asked about the Rebbe's practice of touching the *gartel* of the Sefer Torah to the Sefer Torah during *Kaddish* after *krias haTorah*, since I could not find a source for it.

Firstly, you cannot believe anything the Rebbe told someone in *yechidus*. Whatever the Rebbe wanted to publicize he wrote it or said it publicly.

We would have to know where to look, whether in Halacha or Kabbala. Regardless, until we know the reason for his practice there is no point in just mimicking what the Rebbe did.

The same is true for the Rebbe's practice to run his hand over his forehead and recite a line of Tanya before the *Kaddish* which is after Mishnayos. The Rebbe had a reason for doing so, but what connection does it have to us? Just to mimic the Rebbe?!

Some think that the Rebbe replaced long-established Lubavitch practices with new ones. There's no need for new ways. The old Torah and *mitzvos* are nice enough and they don't need improvement.

■ ■ ■

SECULAR STUDIES FOR GIRLS

I asked Reb Yoel whether it is appropriate for girls to learn secular studies. While they aren't obligated to study Torah, the Alter Rebbe writes in Tanya (ch. 8) that secular studies are a *kli* for the mind and should perhaps be considered harmful for women as well. Furthermore, there is a claim that the Rebbe gave instructions in *yechidus* that even girls should not study secular subjects.

Firstly, you cannot believe anything the Rebbe told someone in *yechidus*. Whatever the Rebbe wanted to publicize he wrote it or said it publicly. (To use a coarse analogy: Christianity and Islam were born from secret revelations; Yiddishkeit, l'havdil, was revealed publicly.)

Learning secular studies is not a prohibition. It is a *kleipas noga* for the mind which blocks a person from awareness of the unity of Hashem.

For this reason, when secular studies are learned for the sake of serving Hashem, it can be elevated to *kedusha*. As the Rebbe writes [*Igros Kodesh* Vol. 3 #495] that the status of the study depends on one's intention, rendering it a holy activity, a preparation for *kedusha*, or a preparation for a preparation.

Women were not taught to abstain from other forms of *kelipas noga* (food, clothing, etc.) in the same manner as men, since they are not expected to be steeped in *ruchnius* to the same degree as men.

Practically speaking, there is no other viable option. Not allowing women to study secular subjects will leave them feeling helpless and will create jealousy of secular women. That is not a healthy feeling.

This is somewhat similar to the permissibility for women today to study even those portions of Torah that are not at all relevant to them. Although

the Mishna prohibits it, nevertheless since in recent times it became necessary, it is permissible. (This is not to mean that their Torah study is not ideal, rather that this form of study was not what Chazal had in mind when they prohibited it.)

■ ■ ■

HOW TO REPEAT A MAAMAR

When reciting a *maamar* in public it should be said in a manner that the listeners can understand. The one speaking should look at the crowd and speak as he would speak publicly. I remember as a young child a letter arrived in Tel Aviv from the Frieddiker Rebbe with an instruction for the *bochurim* to recite *maamorim* publicly to develop their talent for public speaking. Of course, repeating a *maamar* as it is

written will not develop this talent.

There is nothing wrong with adding some explanation so that the listeners will better understand. Sometimes it is absolutely necessary.

■ ■ ■

CARE FOR A FRIEND

Reb Leizer Karasik was the dean of our *yeshiva* in Tel Aviv, but had little interaction with the *bochurim*. At the end of each year he would test the *bochurim* to see if they were ready to go up a grade.

On one occasion I went to his home with two other

When reciting a *maamar* in public it should be said in a manner that the listeners can understand. The one speaking should look at the crowd and speak as he would speak publicly.



Rabbi Leizer Karasik with his grandson, Rabbi Mordechai Ashkenazi a"b

bochurim to be tested. One *bochur* didn't learn and during the test he couldn't read the Gemara. Reb Leizer told the *bochur* that whether he deserves to be punished for not learning in *yeshiva* he will discuss with him later, however, in order to ascertain whether he knows *how* to learn he should choose a piece of Gemara which he knows well and he will test him on that. The *bochur* chose a piece, but he still didn't know it.

When we saw that, we began to chuckle. Reb Leizer became very upset and gave us a speech, "Is that the right way to behave? Instead of trying to help him without me noticing, you laugh at him?!"

MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS

Reb Shoiel Ber Zislin was a *rov* in Tel Aviv and was on the board of the *Yeshiva*. He was a "*bar daas*" (wise, clever).



Reb Shoiel Ber Zislin

A new kitchen manager had been hired to replace an unqualified one. Aside from being a good manager he was a shrewd businessman and succeeded in acquiring the products for the *yeshiva* at a very cheap rate. However, he would keep the price difference for himself. The hanhala of the *yeshiva* came to Reb Shoiel Ber complaining that the money belongs to the *yeshiva*.

Reb Shoiel Ber answered: "We are not responsible to fix the world's problems. Our job here is to take care of the *yeshiva*. What's better for the *yeshiva*: to have a manager who is honest but is a '*batlan*,' or a shrewd manager who will take some money for himself? The second one is surely better. If so, we need not mix in."





CHAMPIONS OF STaM AND WHY WE NEED THEM

cham·pi·on

noun

“a person who enthusiastically supports,
defends, or fights for a belief or principle”

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND PRACTICAL ADVICE ON BUYING STaM

Rabbi Yitzchok Raskin, of Melbourne, Australia, founded Machon STaM in Crown Heights, with a mission to raise awareness regarding the quality and the *kashrus* of STaM (an abbreviation for *Sifrei Torah*, *Tefillin*, and *Mezuzos*). Recognized by Va’ad Mishmeres STaM, he revolutionized the STaM industry with the Mezuzah Guide App and his latest endeavor, the Track My STaM tracking system.

PRESERVING AUTHENTIC WRITING TRADITIONS

Given the central role that STaM plays in *yiddishkeit*, Jews have always made great efforts to ensure the availability of kosher *tefillin* and *mezuzos*, regardless of the challenges involved. These challenges came in two forms. The first was the result of living in a hostile or remote environment. The second, was from the *kashrus* of the *mezuzos* and *tefillin* themselves, due to oversight, ignorance or, *r”l*, even deliberate fraud. This article deals with the latter, and what you can do about it.

In order for the letters of STaM to be *kosher*, they must be written in the meticulous style passed down through the generations from Moshe Rabbeinu. While there are slight differences between various writing styles (called *ksavim*), they must all conform to the basic letter structure. Without this, they are *possul*.

Throughout the ages there have been many champions who worked for the protection of the public from poor quality STaM.

Here are just a few.

THE CHAMPIONS OF STAM

In the days of the *Rishonim*, issues in the writing of *STaM* already began to surface. **R' Shimshon ben Eliezer**, a *sofer* in the 13th century, traveled through towns and cities across Europe strengthening the *kashrus* of *STaM*. He discovered *sofrim* who were uneducated in the traditional form of the letters and whose *ksav* was misshapen and thus *possul*. In some countries, the *sofrim* were well-versed, but were not particular about the *tagim* (crowns) that must adorn certain letters. Other *sofrim* supposedly followed the correct style, yet wrote so sloppily that the letters appeared distorted.

R' Shimshon raised an uproar about this.

With the help of the *dayanim* in towns across Germany, he mandated that *sofrim* be tested and scrutinized for fluency in *Safrus halacha*. If a *sofer* was found incompetent, he would be forbidden by the *Beis Din* to write *STaM*. Encountering a similar situation in *Eretz Yisroel*, he resolved to record the detailed laws of the letters in his *sefer Boruch Sheomar*, a *sefer* that serves as the basis for the training that *sofrim* receive today.

R' Yom Tov Milhausen, a student of R' Shimshon, toiled for thirty years to create the first encyclopedic guide to *STaM*, the *Alfa Beisa*. This *sefer* explains the Halachic and Kabbalistic significance of every detail of every letter. He showed how each curve and point has profound significance, and even the slightest alteration tampers with the channels that draw down holiness to the worlds below.

OUR SPIRITUAL GUARDIANS

The Rebbe would often quote the words of the *Tur* (*Yoreh Deah* 285), "Whoever is careful with [the *mitzvah* of] *mezuza* [will see] the lengthening of his days and the days of his children. Moreover, his home will be protected." The Rebbe would also add that not only does the *mezuza* protect us while we are at home, but wherever we are. Indeed, when people would ask for the Rebbe's advice in times of trouble, *r"l*, the Rebbe would often answer that they should check their *tefillin* and *mezuzos* to ensure they are kosher.

Stories abound regarding those who were miraculously healed, saved from harm, or unexpectedly helped because of their purchase and use of proper *tefillin* and *mezuzos*. In the course of my work, I have personally encountered many people who were helped tremendously in the areas of health, income, *shalom bayis* and the *chinuch* of their children, by acquiring or correcting their *tefillin* and *mezuzos*. (See *Guardian of Israel: Miracle Stories of Tefillin and Mezuzah*, Rabbi Aaron L. Raskin, *Sichos in English*, 5713/2013.)

Although ideally we fulfill all the *mitzvos* for the sake of Heaven and not for personal gain, we are promised that through the *mitzvos* of *tefillin* and *mezuzos* we will be protected. The Rebbe explains that the protection afforded us by donning *tefillin* and affixing *mezuzos* is an intrinsic aspect of the *mitzvah*.



THE “MIVTZOYIM MEZUZA” MYTH

In the summer after the Six Day War in 1967, the Rebbe launched the now famous *Mivtzah Tefillin*. Throughout the years the Rebbe continued to mention this *mivtzah* as a means of bolstering physical and spiritual health, as well as many other matters.

In addition to speaking about the importance of getting people to put on *tefillin*, the Rebbe also emphasized the importance of ensuring that the *tefillin* they were putting on were actually *kosher*. “People question the need to check *tefillin* since the *Gemara* says that one can wear his great-grandfather's *tefillin* without checking them. First of all, one must ensure that the *tefillin* were *kosher* in the first place, since unfortunately that is often not the case. How much more so since it has been discovered that there are thriving businesses of fraudulent *tefillin* and *mezuzos* both in Eretz Yisroel and in America. Secondly, even if the *kashrus* of the *mezuzos* was once verified, the quality of *klaf* today is such that the letters or *tagim* often fall off over time” (synopsis of the Rebbe's *sichah* of 20 Av 5734).

Seven years later, at the *farbrengen* of Yud Shvat 5734 (1974), when the Rebbe introduced *mivtzah mezuzah* – that every Jewish home should have *mezuzos* in place – the Rebbe immediately clarified that it is important to ensure that the *mezuzos* one is placing are actually *kosher*.

In 5736 (1976), a plane was hijacked to Entebbe, Uganda, and the Jews on board were held captive until their miraculous rescue. In a unique *farbrengen* dedicated to this incident, the Rebbe announced that it had been found that almost all the *mezuzos* of those that were held captive were either *possul* or positioned incorrectly. The Rebbe introduced a new directive that everyone should make sure their own *mezuzos* are *kosher* and **placed** correctly, and this will protect them from danger both at home and away from home.

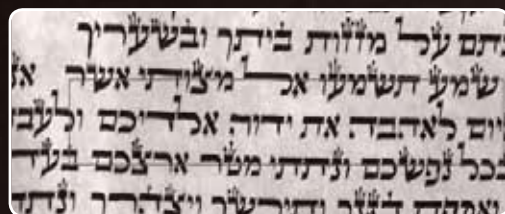
The efforts of these *Rabbonim* paid off, and many reliable and ordained sofrim began writing according to the correct letter format. However, even after a clear code existed, enforcing it was still a challenge.

R' Mordechai Yaffe, 16th century author of the *Levush*, decried the practice of Prague sofrim to use scrolls written by young sofrim in training, and then tell their customers that they had written it themselves.

In the early 1700s, **Maharam Chagiz** travelled through Italy and Israel protesting the lax state of rabbinic authority and campaigning against heresy wherever he found it. He blamed the proliferation of problematic *STaM* for unanswered *tefilos*.

Chacham Chaim Falagi (1788–1869) of Smyrna Turkey, called out consumers for buying from possibly well-versed, but untrained sofrim, as sofrim lacking the skill of Safrus will inevitably make mistakes. He also warned the sofrim to only write *tefillin* and *mezuzos* with *kabala* (Rabbinic ordination), as *halacha* specifies regarding the field of *shechita*.

The **Ben Ish Chai** relates a story of his grandfather, Chacham of Baghdad in the mid 1800's: A visiting Rov and sofer from Damascus, **R' Yehuda Ashkenazi**, pointed out that many of the *batim* were not perfectly square as the *halacha* requires. An uproar arose, and some community members were infuriated that an Ashkenazi intruder was disqualifying their *tefillin*. However, after analyzing the *halacha*, my grandfather, **R' Moshe Chaim**, agreed with the visitor, and announced in the shuls that all *tefillin* should be measured and deformed ones should be replaced.



An entire line of missing crowns

The early 1900's presented their own unique set of problems for the world of *STaM*.

STAM FACTORIES

After the First World War, the *safrus* situation in Eastern Europe underwent a tremendous decline. In some large towns unscrupulous youth, looking to make an easy living, became "sofrim." They would write hurriedly, without as much as the basic required *kavanah*. Senior sofrim would then sell them to unsuspecting buyers, often claiming to have written it themselves.

In some cases, the writers were not even *frum*, and would write on Shabbos. One such factory, located in the Belarusian city of Slonim, had their products sold by Judaica merchants across Eastern Europe and even exported to France, Germany and the United States.

The buyers in these distant countries had no way of knowing the origin of these *tefillin* and *mezuzos* and by whom they were prepared. Every now and then a notice would appear in one of the Torah journals of the time that a batch of *tefillin* or *mezuzos* were found to be *possul*. Sometimes they would arrive already in *mezuzah* cases which, upon further inspection, were found to be completely empty.

In a heartfelt letter to one of his students, the **Chasam Sofer** writes: "Concerning that which you write, that sofrim nowadays are generally competent, this is not at all the case ("לא הי ולא נברא"). Sadly, there are many problematic sofrim and the *Rabbonim* do not supervise them as they do with *shechitah*. Today, there is no doubt that

hundreds of G-d-fearing Jews have yet to put on kosher *tefillin* in their entire life."

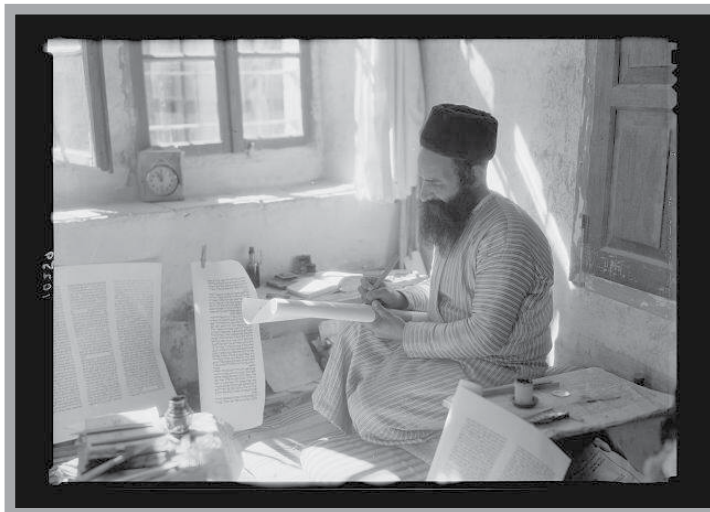
Elsewhere the Chasam Sofer shares his firsthand experience dealing with dishonest *STaM* vendors: "This past summer a merchant came by with over

twenty *mezuzos*. They were all *possul* and I told him as much. I heard however, that the man went on to sell them anyway."

AN ORGANIZED RESPONSE

In 1935, **Rav Tzvi Yechezkel Michelson**, member of The Rabbinic Council of Warsaw and Av Beis Din of Plonsk, understood the need for a change. He founded **The Society of *STaM* Regulation** (חברת שומרי סת"ם) whose goal was to regulate the overall *kasbrus* of *STaM* and enforce the education of sofrim and *magibim* through *kabala* (ordination).

Rav Michelson wrote a letter and had it signed by 87 leaders of the Jewish world, including the **Frieddiker Rebbe**. An excerpt reads: "We



Disconnected crown



Disconnected limb



Missing Kotz Rabbeinu Tam (lower left tip of yud)



Missing crowns

Cheap Mezuzos

have come to alert you regarding the breach in one of the most fundamental *mitzvos*... A tremendous *hefkeirus* exists in the field of *tefillin* and *mezuzos*... Many stumble in this area because they opt for the cheaper *tefillin* and *mezuzos* which will naturally be the *possul* ones, while others assume that there is surely a proper *hashgacha* over whatever is sold... They buy them from any seller, despite the clear warning in *Shulchan Aruch* (*Siman 39*) that they may only be bought from an expert, who must also be more *yerei Shomayim* than a *shochet*....”

The Society then went about preparing a registry of all ordained sofrim and publicized it so that people would know who is trusted to buy from. They answered *shaalos* that were mailed to them from all over Eastern Europe and oversaw the production of *klaf* (parchment), *retzuos* (straps) and *batim* (boxes) according to *halachah*.

This major undertaking was met with overwhelming success. Soon the public was educated in what to look for, and sofrim who were less than scrupulous were put out of business.

Tragically, a mere four years later, World War II broke out and put an end to their activities.

STAM IN AMERICA

After the war, and the shattering of torah life in Europe, the few surviving sofrim departed Europe to begin their life again. Some relocated to The United States while others went to Eretz Yisroel where they intended to continue their professions as certified sofrim. However, the cost of living in the United States was significantly

higher than in Eretz Yisroel and Safrus was an unsustainable livelihood there. As a result, few sofrim were active in post-War America, and instead, *STaM* was imported from Eretz Yisroel at a much cheaper rate.

The American consumer would buy his *tefillin* or *mezuzos* from local Judaica stores without knowledge of their origin, and unfortunately, much of the *STaM* were written by unqualified writers and were of questionable status.

At that time, there were several people who took upon themselves to correct the situation.

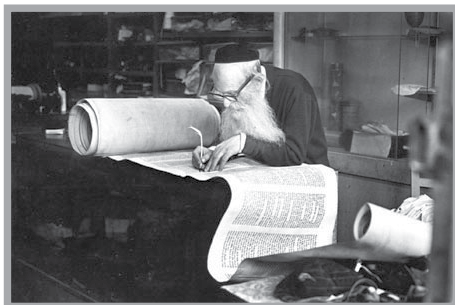
RESTORING THE GLORY OF STAM

Esteemed Lubavitcher chossid, **Rabbi Moshe Yehudah Blau** would travel to Jewish communities

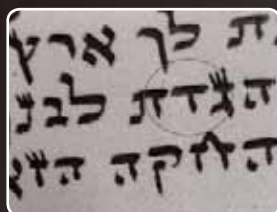
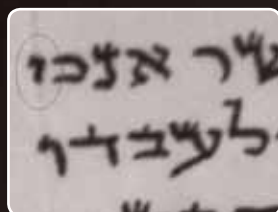
throughout the United States and Canada to publish the manuscripts of Rishonim retrieved from various locations and old libraries including the Vatican. The Rebbe advised him that while he was there he should lecture on practical halachic topics, particularly concerning *tefillin* and *mezuzos*.

Before one of these trips, the Rebbe told him, “You should relay to the people that the *yud* in *tefillin* and *mezuzos* needs to be written with a point at the bottom (*koitzoi shel yud*). Without this, the *tefillin* and *mezuzos* are problematic.”

On another occasion, before Rabbi Blau made a trip to Toronto, the Rebbe suggested that he bring a sofer along. Rabbi Blau announced that his sofer would check everyone's *tefillin* and *mezuzos* free of charge on one condition. If the *tefillin* were



Misshapen Letters



found to be defective, they would not be sewn up and resealed.

At one point, he published a small pamphlet titled, "**How to Convince a Friend That It Doesn't Pay to Use Small Mezuzos**" and distributed it widely in Jewish communities. In the booklet, he touched upon common issues such as missing *tagim*, bargain *mezuzos*, misshapen letters and *mezuzos* written by a sofer who is not a *yerei Shomayim*. He concluded with the advice that one should always show *mezuzos* to an unbiased expert before buying them, just as one shows a house to an appraiser and does not rely on the real estate agent.

Another trailblazer in this field was **Rabbi Yehudah Greenfeld**, a student of **HaRav Shmuel Vozner**, a leading *posek* in Eretz Yisroel. After the Rebbe launched *Mivtzah Mezuzah* in 1974 (5734), Rabbi Greenfeld began building a centralized organization to enforce a universal standard for *STaM*. In 1976 (5736), with the encouragement of *gedolei Yisroel*, and under the directorship of HaRav Vozner, **Vaad Mishmeres STaM** was established.

Among the Vaad's activities was facilitating a systemized ordination procedure for sofrim in America and Eretz Yisroel. To this day over 16,000 sofrim have been tested through their organization.

In 1977, HaRav Vozner came to the Rebbe for *yechidus*, and brought Rabbi Greenfeld along. The Rebbe responded warmly to the organization's mission and quoted a *midrash* that shortly before the coming of Moshiach there will be a special *nisayon* related to *tefillin* and *mezuzos*. The Rebbe said that correcting this matter is an important step in hastening the *Geulah*.

A short while later, in Iyar 1978 (5738), in response to an update of their activities, the Rebbe sent Vaad Mishmeres *STaM* a letter of encouragement and included the sum of \$50

KOSHER PLACEMENT

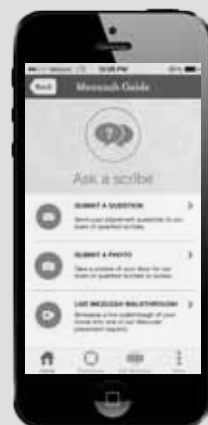
The *kashrus* of a *mezuzah* is not just about the quality of the scroll, but also about how it's affixed on one's doorpost. The Rebbe would often remind people to check this vital detail along with their *mezuzos*. However, the laws of *mezuzah* placement are complex and mistakes are common. And bringing your entire house to the sofer to check isn't really an option.

Since our opening, we have been committed to ensuring kosher placement by sending a *mezuzah* placement expert to the home. However, the recently published *Mezuzah Guide* app brings this feature to every smartphone.



The app, available on iOS and Android, contains a step-by-step tutorial to *mezuzah* placement to determine whether a given doorway requires a *mezuzah*, where it should be placed, a height calculator to measure the optimal height, and most importantly, the ability to share pictures of questionable doorways with an expert.

In a most recent release of the app (March 2015), we added an all new feature: **Live Mezuzah Walkthrough**. With this feature, you can schedule a video chat with an expert, and walk him through your house. He points out where your *mezuzos* belong. This is extremely helpful for those living out of town, and convenient in town too.



The *Mezuzah Guide* app was developed by Shmuel Aber of The Saber Team, who dedicated his work in memory of Shaina Brocha bas Shmuel.

for membership dues. The Rebbe would continue to send yearly membership dues to support their ongoing activities.

WHERE WE STAND: TODAY'S STaM CHALLENGES

As a result of modern manufacturing, the quality of the raw *STaM* items such as the *retzuos*, *batim*, and *gidim* (the sinews used to sew the *tefillin* boxes) have been drastically improved and, as long as they have a *hechsher* on every step of the process, they are better than ever before. But, there are still many quality control issues on the market that every educated *STaM* consumer must know about.

While we have made much progress in the manufacturing process, there are still many quality control issues on the market that every educated *STaM* consumer must know about.

The first and foremost issue with *STaM* today is the mass production by uncertified sofrim. Thousands of such sofrim are flooding the market with subpar *STaM* which are unfortunately being provided by *frum* vendors.

Consumers commonly buy from vendors who are third party sellers and don't know the sofrim personally. We need to realize how much trust this puts in the vendor. A vendor is in business and rightfully seeks to earn a profit. However, unlike other *kasbrus related* articles (i.e. *matzos*, food items, *taleisim*, *tzitzis* etc.) there is no *hashgacha* on the *STaM* writing.

In his race to the bottom, the vendor may unwittingly (often due to his ignorance of the

halachos of *STaM*) cross a line that not only results in lower quality, but possibly a completely invalid product. Common issues found in such problematic *STaM* include misshapen or touching letters, which invalidates the entire *ksav*.

Many sofrim, looking to speed up production, write *tefillin* and *mezuzos* without crowns, and have someone else fill them in afterwards. Although this is technically allowed, it leaves room for serious concern, since very often, necessary crowns are overlooked. Most cheap *mezuzos* (under \$50) are written in this manner.



While *STaM* is generally checked by a *magia* (checker) after the initial writing, if the *magia* is being paid next to nothing per *mezuza*, he will rush to complete as many as possible and not give them the attention they need. He will miss problems that make the *STaM* not-*mehudar* at best, and completely *possul* at worst. (While computer

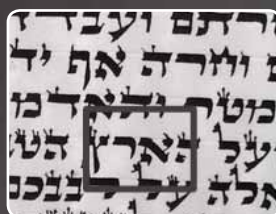
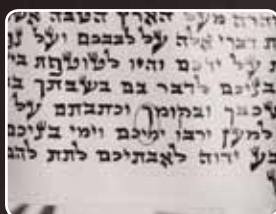
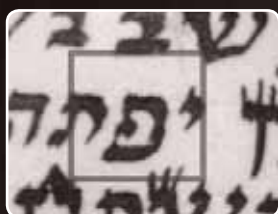
checking was invented by Mishmeres *STaM* in the late 80's, it is generally only relied upon for missing or extra letters. For the finer details, such as misshapen or touching letters, the trained human eye is still needed.)

To combat this epidemic we turn to the same place that allowed us to make better materials: modern technology. But instead of better mechanical leather working tools, we turn to the technology of the day: Information Technology.

NEW TECHNOLOGY: BETTER SOLUTIONS

At Machon *STaM* we teamed up with The Saber Team to launch The Mezuzah Guide App. In

Touching Letters



addition to an extensive guide to placing *mezuzos*, the app allows users to authenticate a *mezuzah* scroll by taking a snapshot of the writing and submitting it to one of our sofrim. When a customer can walk into any Judaica store in the world and verify whether the *mezuzah* he is about to buy is fake or even questionable, the seller will be wary about the merchandise he carries.

Case in point: Two weeks after the app was released, a student from Peoria, Illinois, brought a *mezuzah* from a local Judaica store to his local *shliach*. A quick verification from one of our sofrim confirmed his suspicion: it was written by an incompetent “sofer.” The letters were completely warped and spaced incorrectly. [See picture 1.]

An all new level of transparency and accountability was reached with the revolutionary Track My *STaM* launched in summer of 2014.

Track My *STaM* is, simply put, an information portal. It is where the customer can go to see all the information about his *STaM* as it is being checked, and to be educated about the different levels of quality in *STaM*.



(1) The problematic Mezuza from Peoria

of the letters to which you nod your head and hope he knows what he is talking about.

Now here is what it looks like with Track My *STaM*:

As soon as You give in your tefillin or *mezuzos* to be checked, you are immediately assigned an account with which you can track the progress of your *STaM* order. As the sofer checks through your *mezuzos* or whatever *STaM* you brought, each *mezuzah* is updated with its *kashrus* status, grade (Mehudar,

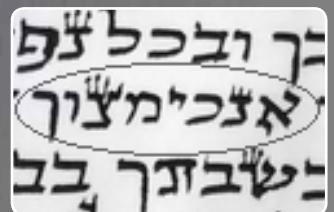
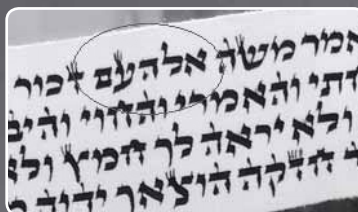
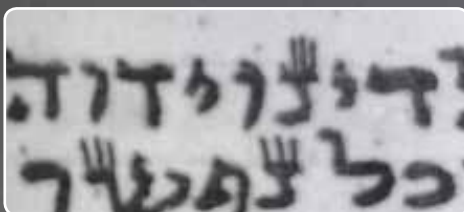
Lechatchila, Basic, etc.), and style of writing (Arizal, Beis Yosef, Alter Rebbe, etc.). If he finds a problem,, he uploads a clear picture of it to your account, with a clear and easy to understand explanation of what you are looking at [See picture 2]. The corrections are then

made and you will receive a notification from the system to know when your order is ready.



(2) inside the new Track My *STaM* portal

Spacing Issues



The tracking system helps ensure quality and halachic standards of *STaM* as vendors and sofrim know their products will be on full display, recorded and shared.

PROTECT YOURSELF

We don't rely on hearsay when it comes to buying a house or choosing a critical medical procedure. We do our own research. And we should do the same for our *STaM*. With such a wealth of information at our fingertips, we are empowered to seek out proper standards in *STaM*. Here are 3 simple steps to get started.

1. Verify The Certification – Every sofer should have *Ksav Kabala*. It's kind of like his practicing license. It ensures he has been tested by *rabbonim* for competence in the laws of *STaM*. When buying from a Judaica store or other third party seller, inquire about the sofer who **wrote** the *STaM*. Most *mezuzos* under \$50 can be assumed to be written by an uncertified sofer. [See "Cheap Mezuzos"]

2. Review The Writing– Before buying, show the writing to another sofer for an unbiased opinion. Remember that poorly written *STaM* can sometimes be not *kosher*. A few of the obvious

things everyone can look out for: irregular spacing, obviously misshaped letters, touching letters, and the necessary protrusion on the lower left tip of the *yud*. [See "Misshapen Letters"]

3. Check The Magia - *STaM* is generally checked by a *magia* before it goes to market. This is the safety net every sofer uses as an extra precaution for human error. But does the vendor supplying the *tefillin* and *mezuzos* know who this *magia* is? Can he vouch for his attention to detail and *yiras Shomayim*? If he doesn't deal with him directly, the safety net of a good *magia* isn't guaranteed.

STaM has been a part of the Jewish story for a long time. The benefits are well known, and the problems aren't new. Knowledge is power and in this field it's critical. Inform yourself. If you are looking for a bargain, ask yourself, what am I sacrificing. Learn about what's on the inside of your *tefillin* and *mezuzos*.

And make sure it doesn't end with you.

Share your experiences. Help the people around you with what they could be looking for. Share what you have found.

Be a *STaM* Champion.





IS OUR CHASSIDISHKEIT UNDERMINING OUR CHILDREN'S YIDDISHKEIT?

Rabbi Leibish Heller is a *Maggid Shiur* in Yeshivah Lubavitch, London

A THOUGHT PROVOKING EXCHANGE

A recent conversation with a *chassidishe Yid* left me deeply intrigued.

I called the father of a *talmid* and told him that his son had a notable capacity to perceive things deeply and clearly and that if he would continue his studies under the tutelage of a particular *rosh yeshiva* who would nurture these skills, he would surely develop into a big *lamdan*.

The father responded that he really couldn't care to what extent his son grows to be a *lamdan*, as long as he is a *chassidishe Yid*.

When challenged that the Rebbe's wish for his son is that he grow to be both a *chossid* **and** a *lamdan* he retorted that while being a *lamdan*

certainly had its virtues, it was nonetheless quite *un-chassidish* to **want** one's son to become one.

When pushed to substantiate this assertion he conceded that he could not articulate his reasoning but remained adamant that it was correct.

Now it would be easy to dismiss his position as just another example where artificial *chassidic* rhetoric is used to camouflage one's flaws and shortcomings: in this case a lack of appreciation for the value of Torah learning.

However, with this man nothing could be further from the truth. I know him to be a sincere fellow and an honest thinker, someone who thought,

spoke and behaved like an exemplary *chossid*;

The father responded that he really couldn't care to what extent his son grows to be a *lamdan*, as long as he is a *chassidishe Yid*.

this was someone whose opinion is worthy of serious consideration.

So what are we to make of the *bergesh* of this distinguished *chossid*? Do we embrace or challenge it? Most importantly what are the potential consequences of his position?

CHOSSID'S ADVOCATE

Chassidus defines the default human consciousness (the *nefesh habehamis*) as being (almost) entirely self-centered; i.e. if man were to honestly search for a common underlying motivation for all of his

natural aspirations, the findings would invariably lead to the 'self' or the 'I.'

There is hardly a human thought or gesture—even the ostensibly sublime and spiritual ones—which cannot be traced back to some 'I'-enhancing agenda.

There is hardly a human thought or gesture—even the ostensibly sublime and spiritual ones—which cannot be traced back to some 'I'-enhancing agenda.

The only respite from the perpetual self-obsessed human condition is via the divine soul which allows for a supra-human 'non-I' state of being. This soul seeks to connect to Hashem,

a connection which is contingent upon (if not synonymous with) relinquishing the obsession with self.



So while one soul is concerned solely with the needs and wants of the 'I,' the other soul struggles to be liberated from the 'I.' This is achieved by studying and applying *Chassidus* which is a concerted ongoing process of tuning in to the divine perspective of reality.

To be sure a *Yid* who doesn't study *Chassidus*, and hence does not engage with this higher perspective, may also perceive *Yiddishkeit* and serving Hashem as the primary focus of his life; however a discerning eye won't help but notice that his *Yiddishkeit* doesn't differ in any fundamental way from the other aspects of his life—like his hobbies or leisurely pursuits—inasmuch as they are all means of self-enhancement, be it in this world or the next.

The *Yid* himself being unengaged with *Chassidus* will be unperturbed by the all-encompassing nature of his 'I' consciousness and will see nothing wrong with the underlying motivation of his *Yiddishkeit*.

PURIST YIDDISHKEIT

For the chossid who lives with *Chassidus*, it is entirely unacceptable for his *Yiddishkeit* to be as 'I'- motivated like the rest of his life. He may pragmatically come to terms with the animal-like 'I' that pervades his mundane affairs, but he is appalled when it encroaches on his *Yiddishkeit*.

Thus while the rest of his needs may be 'I' based, this chossid is adamant that his *Yiddishkeit* should always be *Eibershter* based. Hence if you ask an *olamisher Yid* what his ultimate quest is you will

hear some variation of "*banim uvnei vanim oskim baTorah...*"

Ask a chossid the same question and you will get something to the effect of "*oisfren di kavanah,*" "*dirah batachtoinim,*" etc.

There is no greater turn-off to this chossid than the reassurance that a *mitzva* will enhance his affairs or grant him some reward in this world or the next. He might enjoy a good piece of *kugel* (or a burger) but in no way will he roll his eyes and deem 'kugel-eating' a holy act. His mind distinguishes lucidly between that which is G-dly and that which is not.

This explains the rationale behind our father's indifference to the quality of his son's academic progress: He instinctively identified the desire 'to be the father of a *lamdan*' for what it is.

Just as there is nothing sacred about the lioness that ferociously protects her cub, so too is there nothing holy about the *Yid* who is passionately driven to raise a child who will grow to be the biggest *talmid chochom* possible. They are both serving their respective interests.

While the former is at least honest and transparent about the mundane nature of its maternal instincts, the latter will have you think that this act is the ultimate expression of true *Yiddishkeit*, and this the chossid cannot bear; a spade must be called a spade, and ego is ego.

Had the son been taking a course in accounting or computers, the father would most likely have wished for him to do his very best (after all, which parent doesn't want their child to be their best?). But when it comes to being a *lamdan*, something in him says, "This is wrong, for here the ego

For the chossid who lives with *Chassidus*, it is entirely unacceptable for his *Yiddishkeit* to be as 'I'- motivated like the rest of his life.

is interfering with my *Yiddishkeit* and that cannot be right, so if caring for my son's *lomdus* is a misconstrued version of *Yiddishkeit*, then I want no part of it!" Hence it is his *chassidishe* gut reaction which compels him to not care whether or not his son is a *lamdan*.

PRECARIOUS CHASSIDISHKEIT

While his attitude may be admirable, his conclusion is both unproductive and fundamentally flawed.

It is unproductive because the Rebbe literally begged again and again (of the *hanbalos* and of the *bochurim*) that we produce solid Torah scholars.

Given that a greater emphasis on academic success produces bigger numbers and a higher quality of reputable Torah scholars, that emphasis must be there, come what may.

Furthermore, the typical teenage boy will have tremendous challenges in resisting the various pressures of being an adolescent in today's world. The mere resolve to be a chossid who is devoted to the cause is not always very consistent and cannot necessarily be trusted to keep him focused throughout all the different stages of this turbulent part of his life.

Indeed it is with regards to education that the Alter Rebbe emphatically states in *Chinuch Katan* that we ought to employ second-rate motivations, for only they can guarantee that the lad won't falter during challenging times.

It seems readily observable in every *yeshiva ketana/mesivta* that the one bracket of boys who find it considerably easier to sail smoothly through

these teenage years are those who are intensely immersed in long-term academic pursuits—i.e. they (are expected to, and therefore do) take their studies as seriously as the law or med students take theirs. It follows that those parents who for whatever reason have high academic expectations of their children will see better results with their children's basic *Yiddishkeit*.

Thus it is the reasoning of the likes of this father that is arguably to blame for the ironic and tragic phenomenon whereby in some cases, *davka* among those parents who have a higher awareness of *emes* there are gloomier results in the quality of their children's *Yiddishkeit*.

CHASSIDISHKEIT REVISITED

Our father's attitude however is not only precarious from a pragmatic point of view, it is in fact inherently incorrect. It is wrong because it is based on the erroneous assumption that the *Eibershter* and *Yiddishkeit* are to be confined only to that which we perceive as noble and idealistic.

We were given two *nefashos* and there is good reason for this, for one alone would not do the job.

Chassidus explains that a *Yid* is like a farmer. Even the best farmer would be unproductive without an ox to break through the rough terrain, to soften it and thus activate the latent fruit-bearing capacity inherent within it.

In the business of wheat production the ox is indispensable, no human feature can substitute the ox's contribution in this regard; human intellect cannot plow, nor will the emotions do the job and all the force a human can muster will never match that of an ox.



The same is true for the *Yid*. There are areas in one's life in which one needs to harness the internal 'ox,' for it is even more forceful than the **divine** soul. There is no substitute for the intensity of the ego. This use of the ego is not some unfortunate necessity; it is in fact the very purpose of creation, for it is precisely when we employ the animal soul to promote the interests of the divine that we bring His abode to the lowest of realms.

THE MISSING LINK IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM?

Imagine if all our collective egos were zealously focused on this one goal: That every child maximizes his potential in learning at every stage

of his development, so that at the end he grows to be a great *maskil* of *Chassidus* and a serious *lamdan* of *nigleh*.

There is no greater turn-off to this chossid than the reassurance that a *mitzva* will enhance his affairs or grant him some reward in this world or the next.

Would we not be raising youth who are focused and driven rather than lost and indifferent? Would not the number of dropouts and lost souls within our midsts plummet dramatically?

Is it possible that we live in a time and age in which even the most noble *chassidishe hergeishim* are no substitute for an educational

environment in which everyone shares a common objective that the child be his very best?

Is it possible that a parent's obsession with his child's success is the 'ox' of education? And if it is, what are the consequences of giving it up?



HARNESSING PERSONAL MOTIVES

From the Perspectives Archives

THE PROTECTIVE HUSK

We can observe that for a person to begin growing in *avodas Hashem* he must have an element of pride. He must feel a desire to be close to Hashem and be pained by being distant from Him. He must deem his *avoda* worthy that it will cause Hashem pleasure, and that not doing it will cause the opposite. These attitudes are all a result of feeling himself to be a separate entity who is serving Hashem by choice. A person who is totally selfless doesn't consider any reasons for serving Hashem; he is selflessly committed to Hashem and His will.

This is the meaning in Chazal's statement that a *talmid chacham* must have a small measure of pride— "And it crowns him like the husk to the kernel." In this context a *talmid chacham* refers to a person who serves Hashem with humility (*chochma*).

The husk itself is inedible, yet it enables the kernel to grow by shielding it from the elements. Without the husk the kernel would dry up from the burning sun, or rot in the moisture of the rain. However, once the kernel is ripe, the wheat is threshed and the husk is discarded.

Similarly, pride serves as a protective shield in the beginning stages of *avoda*. An ordinary person is at risk of getting distracted from serving Hashem as a result of burning desires (heat) or laziness (cool water). Pride motivates this person to serve Hashem for selfish reasons. Only one who has developed a selfless dedication to Hashem no longer needs the pride, and should discard it.

(Torah Ohr – Hosafos, Megilas Ester 119c; DH Yavi'u
Levush Malchus – Tzemach Tzedek)

DIFFERENT TYPES OF SHELO LISHMA

R' Munkeh Gruzman, *rosh yeshivah* in Tomchei Temimim of Kfar Chabad, once complained to

the Rebbe that many of the earnest *bochurim* lack motivation in learning Gemara. From the time they started developing their characters according to Chassidus, they felt aversion towards the self-worth of proficiency in learning which motivates most other *yeshiva bochurim*.

The Rebbe acknowledged the need for a *shelo lishma* drive in learning and suggested three alternative incentives for those *bochurim*: to understand Chassidus better, to cause the Rebbe pleasure, and to impress other frum Yidden in order to draw them to the ways of Chassidus.

(Heard from Reb Munkeh Gruzman)

MAKE IT PERSONAL

May *anash* recognize that disseminating Chassidus is for their own benefit as well, so they will treat it as they treat their personal interests. As explained at the *farbrengen*, we now live in an upside-down world which functions at variance with what is explained in Chassidus:

Chassidus explains the advantage of the type of service where "being close to Hashem is good," over the type of service where "being close to Hashem is good **for me**." Now it seems to be the other way around: One learns, understands, and can even explain to others how "being close to Hashem is good," yet he feels no personal connection to the matter—that being close to Hashem is actually **good for him**.

Halevai that *anash* would begin with this method (the supposedly lower level), and then they would surely merit the assurance of Chazal, *mitoch shelo lishma ba lishma*, from doing it for other motives, he will come to do it for its own sake (*lishma*).

(Igros Kodesh, Vol. 18, Letter #6859)



MATZOS IN SAMARKAND

A COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE

Those who are particular in their observance of *halacha* are careful to bake *matza* for Pesach specifically from wheat that has been guarded from the moment it has been harvested. This *matza* is referred to as *shmurah matza*; protected, or guarded *matza*. Specifically, the wheat is guarded so as not to come in contact with any water which causes it to become *chametz*. Back then in Russia, wheat fields were owned by the government and thus, an intricate and secretive operation was necessary to obtain even a small quantity of flour for our purposes.

In our first years in Samarkand, with the war raging, the city bursting with refugees and as famine and deprivation plagued the land, it was unfeasible to even consider having *shmurah matza*. We were simply thankful to have the opportunity to bake regular *matzos* together with the local Bucharian Jews with the few *halachic* stringencies we were able to incorporate into the preparation and baking processes.

The flight of refugees at the conclusion of the war left us somewhat deserted, and suddenly bereft of a sizable portion of our Chassidic leadership. A new, spiritually challenging, era had dawned in Samarkand. We were suddenly forced to manage all Jewish matters on our own, in addition to the

physical and monetary difficulties we already faced.

Lacking an alternative, a band of older, chassidic *bochurim* in Samarkand, in due course including myself, handled the situation to the best of their ability. With Pesach fast approaching, one of our chief tasks was taking charge of the *matza* production. We purchased wheat in the local market, exerting maximal effort to acquire the cleanest unwashed kernels, seeing as it was common among the Uzbekistan merchants to wash the wheat before bringing it to market. We would then painstakingly inspect the kernels for worms and other refuse. There was no electricity at home, so we worked by the light of a kerosene lamp, calling to mind the Talmudic depiction of women checking kernels by the light of the lamps used for Simchas Beis HaShoeivah.

After inspecting the wheat, we would bring it to a mill powered by a waterfall, in the outskirts of the city. Like all property in Russia, the mill was government owned, so it was illegal for individuals to grind their own wheat there, and certainly not for religious purposes. After a hefty bribe, the owner of the mill, an Uzbeki by the name of Osman Aka, would agree to give us possession of the mill for two days.

Cleaning the large millstones was hard work. The base and runner stone, as the two millstones are

called, weighed about 500 kilograms each. With great exertion, we detached them, and began scraping them with small sticks and a special brush. Osman, afraid that we would destroy the stones, would stand to the side, pleading with us to stop scraping so hard. We spent a large portion of the time we had ownership of the mill scrubbing and scouring the thousands of crevices in the millstones. The remaining time – about two hours – was spent grinding the wheat.

The day that we koshered the mill was a momentous event for the community. A large number of community members, *yeshiva* boys and even us, the small children, would trek up to the mill and help in the koshering process.

R. Feivish Genkin was a simple Jew from Samarkand and a constructor of ovens by trade. Despite his simplicity, R. Feivish was unusually punctilious when it came to performing a *mitzva*. The extent of his scrupulousness was such that even R. Berke Chein, who was highly discerning

in his observance of *halacha*, agreed to eat in the Genkin home. R. Feivish owned a gasoline-operated blowtorch that he would bring to the mill. After we concluded scraping out all the nooks and crannies, he would pass his torch over the cracking and scorch any remaining particles of wheat. Only then was the mill ready to be used to make our *matza*.

THE MATZOS OF “R. CHAIM”

It was only in the 1950s that we were able to obtain some wheat that had been watched from harvest. There was a righteous and G-d fearing woman in Georgia who grew wheat in a small field near her house specifically for making *shmurah matza*. We made contact with her and every year, after the harvest, she would send us seven to eight kilograms of wheat. She received similar orders from Lubavitch communities in several cities in Russia. She would parcel the wheat in paper sacks (we couldn't obtain plastic bags), make sure they



were well wrapped, and send them via airmail. We usually received the package after Sukkos.

We purchased a large hand powered coffee grinder, with iron millstones, and used it to grind the wheat. The wheat had to pass through the grinder many times in order to produce fine flour, and between uses we would tighten the metal disks to draw them closer together. Ultimately, from the eight kilograms of wheat that the Georgian woman sent us, we generated six kilograms, give or take, of sifted flour.

Since grinding wheat by hand demanded tremendous physical exertion, we divided the work over several weeks. Every Thursday night a group of *bochurim* convened at the home of a member of the community and while one would grind the wheat, the others would study something of the Rebbe's *sichos* and *farbreng* together. Those evenings had a special aura that could have only been generated by the painstaking care we took in executing this holy *mitzva*.

After a quarter of an hour, the *bochur* grinding the wheat would grow weary and another would take his place. It was a very slow and measured process; each week we would grind just over a kilogram of wheat. That is how we spent the long winter Thursday nights, until we had completed grinding all eight kilograms.

By the end of the process, we would have five kilograms of *matzos*, prepared to the most scrupulous standards. It was enough to supply

each of us with the minimum amount required for the Seder nights, but generally not enough to have *lechem mishneh* for the rest of the meals. Outside of these times, we did not eat *matza* on Pesach. Not having anything left for the end of the festival, also made it difficult to observe all of the Halachic provisions associated with the traditional festive meal. Kiddush, for example, must be recited in conjunction with a meal, which normally means eating *matza* right afterwards. Instead, after making Kiddush, we would drink another glass of wine to stand in for the *matza*, as a Halachic workaround of sorts.

One time, in the middle of Pesach, I had only two *matzos* remaining and I went to my friend, Michael Mishulovin, and asked him whether he had any extra so I could have two *matzos* for the Shabbos meals during the Intermediate Days of the holiday. He told me that he had just one *matza* left. When I heard that, I told him to take one of my *matzos* instead.

When we divided the precious *matzos*, R. Moshe would passionately say: "Since *matzos* are declared by the Zohar to be the "food of faith," those of the highest kosher standard must be given to the young women and the *bochurim* who will usher in the next generation of Chassidim. It is they who need to ensure that their faith will be absolute, and pure."

Due to our fear of the authorities, we did not want others to know about our special *matzos* and only a small selection of trustworthy individuals was



in on the secret. Most of the community was unaware that there were *matzos* baked with hand ground *shmurah* wheat. Even the boys from the *yeshiva* who learned in our homes and overheard us talking in Hebrew about our hand powered mill (*rechaim shel yad*) hadn't a clue what it was about: They assumed we were alluding to the *tefillin* worn on the arm (*shel yad*), belonging to a certain "R. Chaim."

In addition to these *matzos*, we continued to purchase wheat from the local market and grind it in the mill outside the city. These *matzos* were served to the women and children; for the most part, it was only a few *bochurim* and men who were careful to eat *shmurah matza* exclusively.

A MOTORCYCLE MOTOR AND A COFFEE GRINDER

The tedious, sluggish output of the coffee grinder troubled me for some time and I struggled to find a creative solution to solve this predicament.

In those days, almost everyone had a motorcycle. It was the most convenient means of inner city transportation. One day, I thought of connecting a motorcycle motor to the coffee grinder, which would drastically reduce the labor needed to operate the mill. I replaced the handle of the grinder with a wheel and then connected the wheel to the motor. This enabled the disks of the grinder to churn very quickly.

I put this mechanism together at the Mishulovin home, since they had volunteered a room for the cause and were one of the trustworthy families in Samarkand. Moreover, using the grinder with a motor would be rather noisy and would arouse the unwelcomed curiosity of neighbors. The Mishulovins lived at the end of a street, and the

walls of their house faced a cemetery. We needed not be worried about quiet neighbors like those.

I was thrilled that my innovation proved successful, and the mill ground the wheat quickly and efficiently. The setback was that the motor began to heat up dramatically and needed water poured over it to cool off. Of course, we were afraid to do so, since the water would come in contact with the wheat, and render the entire batch of flour unfit for use. Instead, we would periodically turn off the motor and wait for it to cool off by itself. Despite the difficulties, within a short amount of time we were able to grind nearly all the wheat and we were ecstatic.

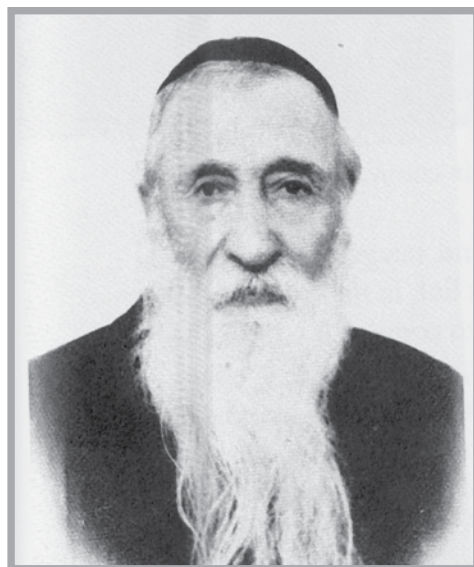
Unfortunately, our joy was short-lived. The device was efficient, but the axle turning the mill was rotating too rapidly, and towards the end of the process, it suddenly blew out. As the engineer of the contraption, I felt terribly guilty. We were relieved that

at least we had already ground most of the wheat, but we needed to devise a new and better plan for the following year.

WATCHING FROM THE HARVEST

In the meantime, we thought of a new plan: As in Georgia, summers in Samarkand invariably had no rain at all. If we could only obtain a large amount of locally produced wheat, we could easily protect it from water after the harvest, and have enough wheat for all of our needs.

We asked R. Refael Chudaidatov to shoulder this new undertaking. He knew the language of the local farmers and was familiar with the Uzbek mentality. He also knew all the Samarkand collective farms, or *kolkhozes*, and would be quick to befriend their owners. My brother Berel had



R. Refael Chudaidatov

a late model motorcycle and he offered to drive R. Refael, if he wasn't afraid to ride with him. R. Refael, smiled at my brother and said, "Afraid? I have driven such a bike before you were even born! Let's go." They concocted a story to explain to the farmers why they needed the wheat, and they left in search of a *kolkhoz*.

The closest *kolkhoz* where wheat was grown was thirty kilometers from Samarkand. When they arrived there, the Muslim Uzbeks were in the midst of eating their midday lunch, pita bread and green tea with sugar. As soon as they noticed R. Refael, with his flowing white beard, they stood up and honored him by inclining their heads, shaking his hand.

On top of having to convince the farmers to supply them with the wheat, and explaining why they needed such a large amount of wheat, R. Refael and Berel had another challenge. Eating *matza* at the Seder constitutes the fulfillment of a Biblical commandment, and as such, a Jew is required to be directly involved with all of the stages of its preparation, with the express intent of doing so *lishma*, for the purposes of the *mitzva*. For R. Refael and Berel, this meant they would need to personally sit on the tractor during the harvest, and formally declare that the harvest was "for the sake of the *mitzva* of *matza*," as they harvested.

To this end, R. Refael concocted an entire story so they would not suspect this to be something related to religion: "I am soon marrying off my grandson. There is an ancient custom among Jews that at a grandson's wedding, all guests are served *lepyoshki* (flat bread) baked from wheat cut by the groom's grandfather himself." R. Refael then added with a wink, "Of course, we will pay you well for it." The bribe was necessary since the law did not allow a *kolkhoz* to sell any wheat to private citizens, as it was considered embezzlement of state property.

The chairman of the *kolkhoz* was amenable to this special request and told them that when the wheat would ripen in another two weeks, they could come and harvest it themselves.

After agreeing on financial compensation, they returned to Samarkand.

Two weeks later, as the two prepared to leave, we started to plan a way to move the large quantity of wheat to Samarkand. Traveling by train with sacks of wheat was not an option, because police officers would check the passengers and their packages. If they would inspect the sacks, it would be clear to them that we were transporting stolen wheat to sell. Being charged with a criminal offense was all they needed.

In the end, we rented a truck that belonged to someone we knew. We cleaned the floor of the truck thoroughly, bought ten new sacks, and R. Refael and Berel set off. Arriving at the *kolkhoz*, they were greeted by a sea of ripe wheat swaying in the wind, ready for harvest. As agreed upon, they climbed onto the tractor, proclaimed "*lesheim matzos mitzva*," and began the harvest. The tractor did all the work, and at enormous speed: it cut the wheat, removed the husks, and shot out pure kernels of wheat. Within a half hour, the new sacks were filled with two hundred kilograms of wheat. My brother Berel said that it was the first time they saw the work of a combine harvester, and it was amazing to see wheat flowing in such large quantities directly from the field into the sacks.

This arrangement continued throughout the following years, until our departure from Russia. Each year a few of us would travel to the *kolkhoz* to harvest the wheat.

On one occasion, Yitzchok (Itche) Mishulovin went along with R. Refael for the cutting of the wheat. On the return journey, R. Refael sat near the driver and Yitzchak sat atop the sacks in the back of the truck in order to guard the wheat. From his perch above the sacks, Yitzchak suddenly felt a few cool drops of water land on him. Lifting his eyes, he saw that the skies were clear, so he yelled at R. Refael to halt so they could check where the water was coming from.

The driver refused to stop as he was afraid the police would discover the undocumented

merchandise, but Yitzchak pounded on the roof until he came to a halt. It turned out that near the driver's seat there was a basin of water used for cooling the motor should the need arise. The water was in a large rubber bowl, and the jerky ride made it spray up from the bowl. Having no choice, Yitzchak stood for the rest of the journey as he tightly clutched the sides of the rubber bowl to prevent any water from splashing on the wheat.

Naturally, the more scrupulous amongst us did not want to use the flour from the first layer of sacks that had been subject to the spraying water. We made signs on the sacks to mark which ones had been lying underneath, and used them for the higher quality *matzos*.

GENUINE MILLSTONES

Now that we had such a large amount of certified water-free wheat, it clearly would have been absurd to grind it all with a coffee grinder. The only alternative was to return to the municipal flour mill, clean it well, and grind our large stock of wheat there.

Truth to be told, after seeing how difficult it was to clean the heavy millstones, it did not seem right to me that after carefully watching the wheat from the time of harvest, we should be forced to compromise and use those millstones for grinding. However hard we worked to clean all the crevices on the stones, it was impossible

to reach every miniscule crack and remove all the old flour.

Additionally, since the mill was powered by water, there was the distinct possibility of moisture combining with our wheat, which was of course very problematic. On one occasion, we even discovered that actual dough had formed around the base stone. We plastered the base stone with several layers of paper, but it couldn't compare to millstones that were reserved for Pesach use.

Due to all these factors, I was determined to construct a genuine mill so that we would be able to grind all the wheat on our own. Overall, it would be less expensive, and moreover, halachically, it would be incomparably superior.

I proceeded to the mill to scrutinize the grinding process and I learned how the machinery functioned. Then I headed to the factory where millstones were manufactured and introduced myself as a chemistry student who needed small millstones for grinding various compounds. Thank G-d, they didn't ask any questions, and agreed to sell me a new set of millstones. They were made from natural stone, and each one was around 60 centimeters across and weighed some eighty kilograms, heavy enough to grind a large quantity of wheat. There were also artificial millstones available, but we had determined that these would better suit our purposes.



They prepared the stones for me with the necessary grooves, including, as I had requested, a special hole in the corner of the runner stone. We would insert a wooden pole into the hole in order to rotate the stones manually. I then went to an old Jew who was a carpenter by trade and asked him to construct a sturdy table for me, following a sketch I had drawn. When the table was completed, I brought it to a shed in our courtyard, positioned the stones on the table just as I had seen at the mill, and we began to grind.

Rotating the grindstone was hard work for one person. It was tricky too, since by turning the handle, he would block the wheat falling from the feeder above the mill into the hole in the center of the top stone. To make things easier, I tied some rope to the handle so we could work in pairs, each person pulling the stone a half-rotation. Within a short amount of time we managed to grind about twenty kilograms of wheat relatively easily and in the best possible way: entirely by hand, with new millstones.

Despite our success, I wasn't satisfied. For starters, the grain being dispensed from the bucket of wheat over the mill still didn't have an unobstructed path: When the rope was pulled across the mill, some of the wheat would spill on the rope and fall to the sides. Furthermore, after all the tugging at the mill, with a person pulling in either direction, the table had nearly collapsed. Most importantly, my goal had been to grind

all the wheat for our entire community to have enough *shmurah matza* for the entire Pesach. This was still far beyond our abilities.

I decided that the following year I would try again to attach a motor to the mill, but this time I would buy a bona fide motor. When I told my friends of my plan, they didn't think I would be successful and also claimed that assembling such a machine would be too costly. I told them that I wasn't asking anyone to chip in towards the cost and would try to arrange it on my own; only if I was successful would I divide the expenses amongst us.

To be honest, building a genuine motorized mill was not a simple operation at all, for both technical and practical reasons.

For technical reasons it was necessary to obtain an engine that could operate on a household electrical outlet, with enough power to move the heavy grind stone. According to my estimation, the engine needed to generate 1.5 horsepower. Typically, however, such an engine rotated at 1800 times per minute, which would be much too fast for our purposes, and cause the stone to fly in all directions.

I had never studied physics or mechanics; my knowledge of secular subjects amounted to the three and a half years I spent in elementary school. Still, I was blessed with a knack for mechanics and I realized that I would need to



create a complete system of gears to reduce the number of rotations.

After figuring out which wheels and hinges were needed to build the system, I had to overcome the practical obstacle: How does one obtain an engine, wheels, and hinges in Soviet Russia? It sounds simple – just go to the store and buy a motor – but in Russia of those years, the only way was by travelling to a factory that manufactured motors and providing a reasonable explanation for the purpose of the purchase.

I knew of an enormous workshop by the train station dedicated to repairing train compartments, where I assumed I would be able to obtain a motor. Once again, I presented myself as a chemistry student when I arrived, and after providing a bribe (of course), they offered to sell me a small, 1.5 horsepower motor. The workshop also had a lathe, so I could order the axles, wheels, and gears I needed as well, and after showing them a sketch I had drawn beforehand, they prepared all the components according to my specifications.

Together with a number of shafts and wheels I had purchased at the same factory, I began to assemble the contraption in the shed in my parents' courtyard. I placed the stones on top of the iron table, and attached the engine alongside it. By means of a rubber belt, I connected the rotating shaft of the motor to a larger wheel. This wheel had a smaller wheel further down its axle, which connected to yet another larger wheel. Finally, with the entire mechanism in place, the motor speed was reduced from 1800 revolutions

per minute to about 80 per minute, providing just the right speed, and force, to the mill.

I fashioned a strong metal bucket with a small hole in the bottom and fixed it over the center of the mill. By design, the vibration of the rotating stones would cause the kernels to slowly pour into the grinding area.

After long weeks of concerted effort and toil, the long-awaited moment finally arrived. I switched on the motor and everything worked perfectly! The motor shifted the wheels, the wheels rotated the stones, the wheat entered between the stones, and flour poured into the sack. Mazel Tov!

I called my friends to come and behold my creation and they

were duly impressed. Within one hour we were able to grind fifteen kilograms of flour, and in just a day and a half we finished grinding all of the wheat for the entire Samarkand Lubavitch community. I can hardly describe to you the feeling of elation that coursed through our veins as we watched the wheat being ground to flour. We instantaneously burst out in song and danced around our very own mill.

SPECIAL HIDDURIM

After grinding all of the wheat, we went to bake the *matzos*. In earlier years a few families would gather together in the *padriad* – the Bucharian communal *matza* bakery – and would bake all of the *matzos* they needed in just a few hours. But now that we had enough to feed the entire Chabad community, we needed some more time. Instead of working in constant fear that someone would raise an alarm about the religious commotion



Mishulovin family home in Samarkand

going on in the bakery, we looked for someone willing to rent his house to us for a few days so we could freely bake our *matzos* with all of the extra precautions customary in Chabad.

There were years that we baked in the home of R. Yitzchak Chai Ledayev, a former student in the underground Tomchei Tmimim in Samarkand during the war. Other years, the “bakery” was situated at the home of Binyamin “the Fisherman,” so called despite the fact that he never caught fish, neither from the sea nor the river; he simply purchased from the fishermen and sold the fish in the market.

Binyamin “the Fisherman” owned a large yard that held an oven for baking *matzos*. The Bucharian ovens were constructed like the ovens of Talmudic times. Unlike today’s *matza* ovens, where the fire burns on the side and the *matzos* are placed on the floor of the oven, in the Bucharian ovens, the fire was on the bottom and the *matza* dough had to be pressed against the roof and walls of the oven.

One had to be something of an expert to make the *matzos* properly stick to the walls without dropping into the burning coals below. Our first attempts at this were pretty hopeless, so before we had mastered the art, we asked the Bucharian women to fill in for us amateurs. As time elapsed we learned the ropes and our *yeshiva* boys replaced them.

In the earlier years my brother Berel and Dovid Mishulovin did most of the work. Later on, when we grew older, Michoel Mishulovin, Yaakov Lerner, Mordechai Goldschmidt, and I joined as well. As the years passed, others got involved in the *matza* baking as well: Yitzchok Mishulovin, Yosef Volovik, Moshe Lerner and Benzion Goldschmidt.

The difficulty with employing local workers was that they were not accustomed to our stringencies

and extra precautions. For example, in the process of attaching the *matzos* to the oven walls, they would place a vessel of water near the oven, and prior to sticking the *matzos* they would dip their hand in the water and smear it on the *matza*! The water gave the *matza* dough a stickier consistency, thereby enabling it to remain glued to the walls, but this was one of the first things we eliminated. The water was used throughout the day and it

was almost certain that remnants from the first *matza* batch remained in the water and had likely leavened.

Since we baked the *matzos* without smearing them with water first, we had to force the *matzos* onto the walls of the oven to make them stick. The extra force weakened the oven to the extent that by the end of our baking, it was close to falling

apart. This enhanced the halachic standard of our *matzos* in a way we hadn’t anticipated: every year we used a new oven.

To stick the *matzos* to the walls of the oven, we used a small, round cushion. The *matza* went on one side, and on the other side was a pocket-like depression. We would stick our hand into the pocket and press the *matza* dough onto the wall. The drawback with using the same cushion repeatedly was that any dough residue on the cushion would become leavened after eighteen minutes. At first we cleaned and scraped the cushions between each *matza* with a specially designated brush, but that didn’t satisfy us. The speed at which we needed to work made us unsure they were being sufficiently cleaned. Moreover, we were afraid that the hot glove hastened the leavening of the *matzos*.

It finally dawned on my brother Berel that there was a simple solution. By attaching a piece of paper between the cushion and the *matza*, they wouldn’t



Mordechai Goldshmidt and Yackov Lerner

come in contact with each other. There would be no need to clean anything, as we could simply replace the paper with each new *matza*. Placing paper into the oven seemed dangerous, so the idea was rejected at first, but after several attempts we managed to thrust the cushion with the paper in and out of the oven quickly enough without the fire singeing the paper. We prepared a large quantity of paper and two or three cushions. One of the boys would stand near the oven and fasten paper to the cushions with safety pins, and after every use he would replace the paper.

Every year we would buy new plywood covers for the tables. We would also cover the table with paper, and changed the paper every fifteen minutes so that no dough over eighteen minutes old would remain in the bakery.

To perforate the rolled-out *matza* dough, the local *matza* bakers would use a wooden rolling pin into which small nails had been inserted. Of course, it was very hard to clean this rolling pin. We first scrubbed it with a metal brush, but when we tried to kosher the nails by passing a flame over them, we almost burned the rolling pin.

We decided to replace the wooden rolling pin with an iron one that we would be able to kosher. Over time, we prepared a rolling pin to which a number of wheels were attached. This enabled us to quicken the piercing process and keep the *matza* exposed for even less time.

R. Eliyahu Mishulovin, a *chassidishe yungerman* of deep inner character, served as the *mashgiach*. He was especially particular regarding the cleaning of the rolling pins. Under his watch, we would use pieces of glass to scrape off virtually the entire outer layer of the pins. He also carefully checked the mixing bowls. It happened more than once that after everyone had checked the utensils and

declared them clean, he would find a tiny scrap of dough which we had all somehow overlooked.

It would break my heart to see R. Eliyahu crying with regret when he found something improper or noticed a detail no one had paid attention to. In Hebrew, the extra care and measures one takes in the performance of a *mitzva* is referred to as a “*biddur*,” literally the adornment, or beautification of the commandment. Oh, how these *biddurim* touched him to the very core of his soul! Each year he would make a list of issues that needed to be corrected the

following year. But the next year he would cry again, saying that we had not yet achieved the proper *biddur*. At the same time, however, it was heartwarming to know that we had such *chassidishe yungeleit* amongst us.

It truly was the most ideal *matza* production we could have hoped for. From the time we began grinding the wheat ourselves until I departed from Russia in 1971, we were able to grind all

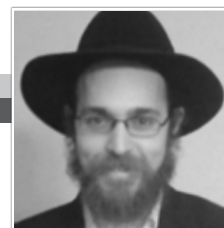
of the *shmurah* wheat every year with our special millstones and bake the *matzos* in new ovens.

In the late ‘50s we began receiving packages of *matzos* from Kfar Chabad. When we first received them in the original packaging with the seal of approval from the Chabad Rabbonim, it was hard for us to believe that they could bake such large quantities while ensuring that they were baked within eighteen minutes.

When R. Simcha Gorodetzky departed from Russia, we asked him to take a look and report back to us whether these *matzos* were prepared according to the standards we were accustomed to. A short while later, he informed us that he had visited the *matza* bakery in Kfar Chabad and they were careful with all the precautions that we were particular about. “However,” he continued, “you should continue eating the *matzos* you bake yourself. There is no greater *biddur* than that.”



Reb Eliyahu Mishulovin



THE POWER OF PERSPECTIVE

ALL IN THE MIND

In today's world there are many books that are classified as "self-help". Many of these books are based on the understanding that our actions result from the mind and that by improving our outlook our behavior will change.

These books demonstrate how to improve life through developing a proper perspective on oneself or on how to build relationships, how to deal with problems, and so forth. This principle—that by changing a perspective one can create vast improvement in one's life—is a principle that even many non-religious individuals adhere to.



However for a Jew who sees everything in the context of the Torah's teachings, the process of changing a perspective in the right direction takes place on a completely different level, and achieves far greater results.¹

To help understand how this works, we will present a short overview of how this idea was explained in classical Jewish works and how it is explained in *Chassidus*.

A TORAH MINDSET

Rabbeinu Bechaye Ibn Pekuda lived in Saragossa, Spain during the generation that preceded the Rambam. He wrote a *sefer* called *Chovos HaLevavos*. In the *sefer*'s introduction he writes that until

1. In many of the Rebbe's sichos he explains that all of the mitzvos in the Torah—even those that make sense logically—are to be fulfilled only because Hashem commanded us to. This concept requires a person to take a deeper look at many of the things that they do. For example: When someone pays

his workers on time or gives *tzedaka*, he doesn't do so (only) because he understands that it's a good thing to do, but because Hashem commanded him to. In a similar sense we must take a deeper look at the concept of "focusing our thoughts". A Jew who knows that he is commanded by Hashem to think the

his time there were many *sefarim* explaining how to fulfill the *mitzvos* that are performed with the body, but none that explained how to fulfill the *mitzvos* that are performed in the mind and heart. These are the “duties of the heart” after which his *sefer* was titled. He argues that these duties are of equal or greater importance to the duties of the body, and are deserving of as much explanation. While simple belief in the tradition may be sufficient for children and the ignorant, it does not suffice for intelligent individuals.

Nearly a thousand years later, the *sefer* is still considered a basic *sefer* of *avodas Hashem* in all Jewish circles.

Besides for raising awareness on the importance of the duties of the heart, Rabbeinu Bechaye also made deep philosophical, ethical and theological ideas accessible to the common man. Up to this point only great scholars were able to discern how to carry out these ideas. But his *sefer* was written in the colloquial Arabic and explained in clear terms what it means to serve Hashem with the heart and how to go about it. These explanations also addressed fundamental Jewish beliefs such as the unity of Hashem, Hashgacha Pratis, and trust in him. The goal of these explanations is not only to give a person more instructions (like in *Halacha*—to know what is permitted and what is forbidden etc.) but also

For a Jew who sees everything in the context of the Torah’s teachings, the process of changing a perspective in the right direction takes place on a completely different level, and achieves far greater results.

to give a person new perspectives on how to look at Hashem and our relationship with Him.

For example: In many places our sages describe the destructiveness of arrogance and how it is forbidden like idol worship.² However, they do not clearly explain how one can remove arrogance and attain humility. However, in the Gate of Humility³ Rabbeinu Bechaye lists seven reflections⁴ to consider in order to rid oneself of arrogance. They can be summarized as four themes:

1. Physical insignificance and inadequacy: The physical body is created from lowly physical

elements. Even if someone is physically comfortable, life is short, passes quickly, and is replete with problems that you cannot free yourself from.

2. Spiritual inadequacy: However hard you try no one is perfect, and every person must acknowledge that they come very short from fulfilling everything that he should in the Torah and Mitzvos. When the Day of

Judgment comes no excuses will be accepted.

3. The all-encompassing greatness of Hashem: Being constantly in the presence of Hashem should inspire tremendous awe. The sages of old were so great that among them were people like Rabbi Yonasan ben Uziel who’s words of Torah would burn up a bird flying overhead. The sages were on a lower level than the prophets of old (the *Neviim*). Yet the *Neviim* (like Daniel)

right things realizes that’s it much deeper than just self-help. Through focusing his thoughts the way Hashem wants him to he makes a connection to Hashem in his mind and heart.

2. See for example Gemara Maseches Sota 5a-b.

3. Gate 6 Chapter 5

4. The Rebbe would translate *lehisbonein* as “to reflect upon”.

were terrified in the presence of angels. The angels are terrified in the presence of Hashem. Certainly we, who are lesser than all of them, should be even more awestruck by the fact that we are constantly in Hashem's presence.

4. The stature of the individual in comparison to Hashem: All of mankind and the entire world is created with

Hashem's infinite wisdom. If you consider yourself in comparison to all of mankind, you are very small. How much more so in comparison to the entire planet earth. How much more so in

He argues that the “duties of the heart” are of equal or greater importance to the duties of the body, and are deserving of as much explanation. While simple belief in the tradition may be sufficient for children and the ignorant, it does not suffice for intelligent individuals.

comparison to the entire universe. How much more so in comparison to the Creator of everything, before whom you are considered like nothing.

These ideas are not just facts to be learned and stored away. They are ways of training our brains how to think about ourselves and our purpose. In other words—these lessons provide us with tools, not only with static information.

A HALACHIC OBLIGATION

The Rambam took this principle and made it clear in *Halacha* that these mitzvos are the foundations of the entire Torah.



In his *sefer* which he writes is made up of “*halachos balachos*”, entirely dedicated to *halacha*, the Rambam placed the theological fundamentals of Torah at the beginning of his work. The first volume is *Sefer Hamada*, the Book of Knowledge, named so because it explains the mitzvos that are performed in the mind and heart. The reason these *mitzvos* come first is because they are a prerequisite for the proper fulfillment of the other *mitzvos*.

The first section in that book is *Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*, the “Laws of [the *mitzvos* which are] the Foundations of the Torah”, in which the Rambam explains the first four *mitzvos*: (1) To know (i.e. to understand⁵) the existence of Hashem. (2) To know (i.e. to understand) the unity of Hashem. (3) To love Hashem. (4) To fear Hashem. The Rambam begins this section by saying: The ultimate foundation for the fulfillment of the Torah and *mitzvos* and of all wisdom is to know and understand that Hashem is the first existence Who is constantly bringing everything else into existence.

After explaining these and a few other fundamental mitzvos the Rambam proceeds with *Hilchos Deios*, Laws of Attitudes. Here he explains how we connect to Hashem by shaping our attitudes according to the way that Hashem wants. Hashem wants us to have a generous

attitude, a positive attitude, a merciful one, a well balanced one and so forth. This process of shaping our attitudes is almost entirely fulfilled through focusing our thoughts properly according to what is explained in the Torah.

Another example: One of the *mitzvos* he explains is the mitzvah to love every Jew like yourself.

This *mitzvah* is not fulfilled simply by giving *tzedaka* and is not violated only by physically hurting another. This *mitzva* is fulfilled by thinking good about another Jew until one wants to help him, and is transgressed by thinking bad about another Jew until he doesn’t want to help him, or until he wants to hurt him *chas veshalom* (“*lo sisna es achicha*

bilvavecha”—do not hate your brother in your heart). This is another example of the Rambam codifying ways of focusing our thoughts properly in *halacha*.

A CHASSIDIC MINDSET

All of this is the way it is explained in classic Jewish texts that have existed for close to a thousand years. But *Chassidus* takes it all a step further:

In *Tanya* the Alter Rebbe defines our service of Hashem in the context of the struggle between the G-dly soul and the animal soul. In chapter twelve

The goal of these explanations is not only to give a person more instructions (like in Halacha) but also to give a person new perspectives on how to look at Hashem and our relationship with Him.

5. In the beginning of *Mitzvas Haamanas Elokus* the Tzemach Tzedek proves that when the Rambam says that the mitzvah is to “know” he doesn’t just mean to believe that Hashem exists and is the Creator. For as the *Semag* asks: “If one doesn’t believe that Hashem exists then how can he accept a commandment to believe?” Rather, it means that someone

who believes in the existence of Hashem should reflect upon on His true existence and how it transcends (and permeates) all other types of existence. Similarly, the way to fulfill the mitzvos of accepting His unity and of loving and fearing Him are attained through focusing our minds on contemplating His unity and greatness etc.

he describes the model of service of Hashem that we should strive for as the “*Beinoni*”. The *Beinoni* always makes sure that his G-dly soul is in control of how he thinks, speaks, and acts. How does the *Beinoni* always have the ability to control his actions? This is because Hashem created man with the innate ability for the mind to control the heart. In other words, if you know what the right thing is, you can do it even if you don't feel like it, whether it's in deed, speech, or even thought.

The innovation here is that the Alter Rebbe is not simply giving you tools to train your behavior, but tools to train and transform your inner self, your intellect and your emotions. This is not simply about self-control, but about a methodological process of internal transformation.

This principle is encapsulated in the phrase “*moach shalit al haleiv*” “the mind controls the heart.” But this control can be extended in two different ways:⁶

1. The more basic level is that the mind controls the way you act upon your emotions. A person's actions flow directly from their emotions. You do what you feel like unless your mind tells you otherwise. This is the most basic idea of self-discipline, to train

yourself to act a certain way despite your natural tendencies and desires. This is how a child learns to behave like a *mensh* and how a Jew learns to behave like a Jew.

Here, when we say “the mind controls the heart,” we mean that it controls the way the emotions impact our behavior. This does not mean that the mind is simply controlling our behavior and bypassing the heart. Even here the heart itself must also be affected—you must “want” to do the right thing and overcome conflicting feelings because you know it's right. Intellectually knowing what

is right won't change your behavior unless you have some kind of emotional desire in your heart to do the right thing. Only then can intellect override your other desires (In Chassidic lexicon this is called *Iskafya*, see Tanya chapter 13.)

2. A deeper level of “the mind controls the heart” is that the mind transforms the desires of the heart to truly want what's right. (In Chassidic

lexicon this is called *Is'hapcha*—see the *maamar* of Basi Legani 5715.) This process starts at bar mitzvah when a person has *daas* enough to truly internalize ideas into their heart. Through constantly working on *davening* and *hisbonenus*

These ideas are not just facts to be learned and stored away. They are ways of training our brains how to think about ourselves and our purpose. In other words—these lessons provide us with tools, not only with static information.

6. See *bemshech* of Rosh Hashana 5663 and 5665 which elaborate on the concepts of the development of character in the form of *mutba*, the natural potential for emotions, when one's actions are only a function of *NeHY* (actions without strong feeling); *murgash*, actual felt emotions, when one's actions are a function of *ChaGaS* (natural emotions that are revealed and channeled through the mind); and *muskal*, intellectually developed emotions, when one's actions are a function of

ChaBaD (profound and penetrating understanding).

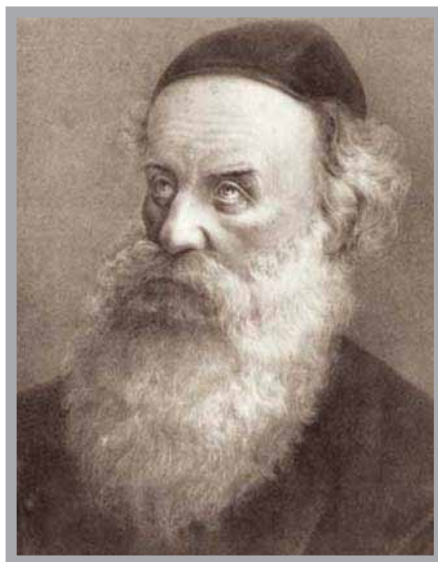
It is explained further that on the level of *murgash* the mind reveals the natural emotions and harnesses them so that a person will control his actions to act based on what he knows is right despite his emotions. On the level of *muskal* the depth of the mind elevates the emotions to the level of intellect, so that a person will feel the same way that he thinks. This is the idea of *Is'hapcha*.

you can actually change how you feel about physical things and experience ever deeper levels of your connection to Hashem.

Chovos Halevavos can bring a person to a certain level of this transformation, but only Chassidus can really make a true transformation. This is because Chassidus is the revelation of G-dly knowledge, and reveals the inner dimensions of the *neshama*, which have this transformative power. A person using ideas that are based on human intellect, cannot achieve the same degree of transformation. (See Hakdomo of Tanya.)

This also explains why there is such a deep distinction between what a Jew can achieve and what a non-Jew can achieve. (See Chapter 1 of Tanya.) When someone uses the intellect of the G-dly soul he can always control the emotions of the animal soul to not let them come into expression in action. This ability for the G-dly soul's intellect to control the emotions of the animal soul is more than just the fact that Hashem created every human with the ability for the mind to control the heart. In the case of the non-Jew both his intellect and his emotions are created beings and on the same spiritual level

(*kelipas noga* or *shalosh klipos batemaiois*). It's just that the mind is superior and more powerful than the heart and therefore controls it).⁷



The Alter Rebbe is not simply giving you tools to train your behavior, but tools to train and transform your inner self, your intellect and your emotions. This is not about self-control, but about a methodological process of internal transformation.

In the case of a Jew, however, his G-dly soul is revealing the truth of Hashem—it's saying the truth, and his animal soul is concealing Hashem—it's saying falsehood, and falsehood compared to truth has no reality; just like darkness is automatically dispelled by light. A Jew has a G-dly soul that is bound up with Hashem to the point that this connection is his entire life. That means that he would be willing to give up his life rather than separate himself from Hashem by going against His Will. This is because the G-dly soul's connection to Hashem isn't based on figuring out that Hashem is the best for its own existence, it comes from the soul "seeing" and being bound with the truth of Hashem. This awareness of His truth drives the soul to reunite with its source in Him despite the fact that it will lose its own independent existence (see Tanya chapters 18 and 19). And since this connection is so strong that

it transcends any logic (even the logical motive of self-preservation), he is willing to do anything in order to connect himself to Hashem through the

7. See chapter 51 of the *Tanya*: Since the life of the soul comes through the brain, so the life of the heart comes through the

brain, that's why it can control the heart.

Torah and Mitzvos. This is the basic concept that every Jew can focus on at any time in order to be able to control their actions, as explained in the fourteenth chapter of *Tanya*.

There is a general principle called *ain chavush matir es atzmoy*—that someone in prison can't free himself, only someone from outside the jail can let him out. Similarly the limitations of human intellect and emotions can't be completely transcended through human intellect. However smart someone could be, he can't figure out a way to go beyond being human. Only Hashem who transcends any limitations can give us a way to go beyond our human limitations. It is for this reason that even the wisdom of the greatest

Torah scholars—if their teachings were based on their human understanding—doesn't have the power to make the transformation. Only the teaching of *Penimiyus HaTorah*—especially the teachings of Chassidus—have the ability to make that transformation since they are a revelation of Divine Intellect. Divine Intellect is the source of the creation of human intellect and has the ability to change it (like the programmer can change the computer program from the outside, but within the program it can't change itself). Only through contemplating on the Divine Wisdom of *Penimiyus HaTorah* can one affect real transformation of the mind and the heart to have a different type of awareness of Hashem.

THE PROCESS OF REFLECTION

Accordingly, attaining a greater awareness of Hashem is not only one *mitzvah*, or many *mitzvos*, or even many fundamental *mitzvos*. It is a process through which we are able to serve Hashem at any second of the day. This concept is further brought out in the 42nd chapter of *Tanya* where the Alter

Rebbe says that when someone will reflect every day on the fact that Hashem is watching him at every moment then at any time that he thinks about that fact, even for a very short time, he will be able to control himself. This ability to focus our thoughts on Hashem is thus not only a foundation behind our service of Hashem, but is the constant force pulling us through all of the different

Even *Kabbalos Ol*, which means just to accept Hashem as the King and not based on any understanding, is mainly something that happens in the mind. It means that a person consciously accepts in his mind with complete certainty that he must do whatever Hashem wants no matter what.

situations throughout the day.

Even *Kabbalos Ol*, which means just to accept Hashem as the King and not based on any understanding, is mainly something that happens in the mind. It means that a person consciously accepts in his mind with complete certainty that he must do whatever Hashem wants no matter what.

The basic idea that the mind can control the heart is not an innovation of *Chassidus*, as we demonstrated above from the *Chovos HaLevavos* and the Rambam. The innovation of *Chassidus* is that we can use our mind to understand and connect to G-dly ideas that are essentially higher

than human intellect, applying them as the basis of our conduct in real life.

An example of a G-dly idea that Chassidus explains in a way that human intellect can understand and channel into action is the first contemplation that the Tanya presents as a way to reveal our “hidden love” for Hashem. To think of Hashem’s unity as the only existence (*yichuda ilaa*) is not something any human being could ever attain alone, it is a revelation of *Elokus*—a Divine perspective. Yet not only can we understand this concept, we are so connected to it that it can drive us to actual self-sacrifice to the point of giving up our life rather than deny it. When we understand our connection to Hashem based on that higher level we can bring that depth into our daily life.

Although we are incapable of living with *yichuda ilaa* on a day-to-day level, the awareness of it can nevertheless impact us.

In Kuntres Eitz HaChayim the Rebbe Rashab explains that our main service of Hashem has to be with *yichuda tataa*—with an awareness of Hashem as He is creating and giving life to our world. However, the only way that our service of Hashem can be proper is when it is permeated with a higher awareness that there is no existence besides Him at all. This is because without that our

ego is still present and blocks out the true unity of Hashem. Only when a Jew knows that really there is nothing besides Him even in the physical world

can all of his actions become windows to reveal G-d’s true unity, which is the purpose of all creation (see Tanya chapter 33).

This type of awareness is something that only *Chassidus*, a revelation of divine perspective rather than human intellect, can generate.

In addition to having an effect on a day to day basis in how we serve Hashem, this realization can have a deep long term effect and be the determining factor in steering us in the right direction. In chapter twelve of *Tanya* the Alter Rebbe explains that when a Jew comes to love and fear Hashem through reflecting on His greatness during *davening*, this leaves a deep impression on the Jew that lasts the entire day. In other words, when you realize that what you really care about is Hashem and nothing else, then when something comes up during the day you will already have attained the right attitude and know automatically how to deal with it. You won’t have to struggle as much to focus on doing what’s right since you

will already be connected to a higher perspective due to your mindfulness during the morning *davening*.



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Bas Chana



MONEY TALKS

This article first appeared in Di Yiddishe Heim - Winter 5746 (1986)

Money was never a problem when I was growing up. We were a solidly upper middle-class family and comfortable living was taken for granted as no more than our due. All of my friends had similar homes and lifestyles, and I grew up assuming that most people had the things we had: nice wardrobes, rich drapes, carpeting and such, things I took for granted, later to rebel

against. I also grew up feeling that there had to be more, much more, to life than a closet full of clothing and a home with plush carpeting. With my mother's dictum that "it's as easy to love a rich man as a poor one" ringing in my ears, I made up my mind to marry for love, idealism, anything but a desire for the "good life".



When I came to that Encounter weekend so many years ago, the sight of bare floors and spartan homes was a refreshing surprise. My search had indeed ended. People in this community did indeed put ideals above all else. They were aflame with the love of Hashem and the desire to do His will in the world. After miles of peace marching, years of folk singing, and mountains of philosophical literature, I had at last found a life of commitment and purpose. My Jewish soul, so long denied the true nourishment it craved, would now be fulfilled.

That was years ago. In the interim I have seen that I was not wrong at all in my assessment of the truly frum community. The decision I made then was the best one of my life, and there is indeed a life of intense idealism and commitment. That is the core of our community. However, around this vibrant core of self-sacrifice and devotion there is an outer flesh, as it were, of materialism unworthy of our community. Why do my children speak admiringly of the fancy clothing or elegant homes some of their friends have? Why do my kids, and not only mine, crave a lifestyle more reminiscent of what my parents gave to me than of what their parents can afford to give them?

Why are there three designer dress stores on one short shopping block in my area, and not one budget shop for those who find that paying \$80 and up for a dress is beyond them?

Two shopkeepers I spoke to said that they carry the more expensive items of children's clothing exclusively, since that is what "walks right out of the store". The young mothers today will not buy cheaper items, finding them too "junky". How do these families, with husbands either in Kollel or just starting out, afford this type of clothing for their kids? And what will those same kids demand in their teens, when now they are wearing \$35 dresses over their Pampers?

The ostentation in home decorating that we used to mock in others (while visiting a community notorious for its conspicuous consumption, my eagle-eyed husband once spotted marble garbage can covers) has now made a very definite entrance into our own "four ells".

Gleaming new appliances, spanking new kitchens, luxurious furnishings are fine if they are within one's budget. But what of the families who borrow, remortgage homes at great interest, or perform other financial contortions in order to obtain these luxuries? To what lengths will



we drive ourselves in order to keep up with this frenetic pace? And are these people who are mortgaged to the hilt in a position to pay their fair share of tuition? Perhaps these are the same folks who demand substantial scholarships because they are having such difficulty making ends meet. I was told more than once that my husband and I are crazy for paying the tuition we do. Our Yeshivos don't throw out kids for paying little. If one has to spend so much just to maintain one's lifestyle, how much can be left?

Besides the obvious strain of borrowing beyond one's means, it has not been unheard of, unfortunately, for people to bolster their income with income in dishonest ways. The danger to children in seeing this poor example is very great. The danger to one's own sense of values is equally so. The false profits gained are used to maintain an artificially high lifestyle, creating a standard of a "normal lifestyle" for average people which is simply wrong.

But living on a budget is a bore. The glamour of life in the fast lane, the glitter of admiring and buying new things is far more alluring than the day-to-day drudgery of trying to make ends meet. Yet whenever I think of the extraordinary and sometimes extra-legal lengths my peers will go to maintain that style, I bless my plain home and my undisturbed night's rest; my husband can still keep his Torah-study schedule at night unafraid of a sheriff or bill collector in hot pursuit.

Last Shabbos Mendy's Shabbos shoes tore. They were cheap... very cheap. When Mendy's older siblings were his age they didn't have Shabbos shoes in the first place. Who could afford such

things? But now... O.K., so I bought him and his younger brothers shoes for Shabbos, but the least expensive kind. So there we were that Shabbos morning, Mendy prostrated on his bed, too ashamed to wear his week-day shoes to shul. He couldn't bring himself to be seen as a poor kid.

Now, I don't like to lecture, but on that Shabbos morning I started to set Mendy straight on what constitutes a true *shondab*. Being broke is no disgrace. Stealing and lying to keep up an inflated materialistic lifestyle is. We are not broke

from eating steak and wearing designer shirts. We pay tuition, we have a nice big family *b"b*, we have guests, and of course we give as much tzedaka as we can, and that's why we never have extra money, and that's no reason to feel like less of a person. The *Ribono Shel Olam* decides who will be rich and who poor, and life is too short for us to waste time

second-guessing those decisions.

A friend of mine expressed the relief she felt when she visited the home of a fellow member of the local Bikur Cholim Society. It was so nice to see a plain *balebatishe* home, one that didn't give her the desire to go home and kick her walls. The home was warm and comfortable, and it didn't reek of wealth.

We are all just human. Everyone wants to live a little more comfortably. But let us not go to extraordinary means to obtain these comforts. Nor should we strive to outdo one another in our attempts to live graciously. We are a holy nation, a nation dedicated to a higher purpose and destined for a far richer reward than we can ever imagine.

Everyone wants to live a little more comfortably. But let us not go to extraordinary means to obtain these comforts. Nor should we strive to outdo one another in our attempts to live graciously.



What Makes Children Learn?

It happened one fine evening, when I stopped by Empire Shtiebel for *maariv*. I had opened my *siddur*, and was fastening my *gartel* just right, when a new world opened up before me.

At exactly 5:55pm the doors swung open and a group of children bustled in, rubbing their hands from the cold, chatting playfully among themselves.

“What’s this about?” I ask my *davening* neighbor, a middle-aged man, wearing his glasses at the tip of his nose.

“Ah! It’s the *mishnayos kinderlach*,” he responds as he straightens his glasses. “Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, they’re here with the *seforim*.”

“You know, it’s amazing,” he adds. “They learn the never-learned *masechtos*, like *Kilayim* and *Zevachim*. I wish I would have learned them as a kid; maybe I would have understood yesterday’s Rambam...”

“So what makes them come?”

His eyes peer over his slipping glasses as he replies, “I honestly don’t know. It’s *mamash a nes*. No prizes, no money, no threats – they just want



Rabbi Weisfish teaching a class

to learn. How or why they come? Maybe ask them. But whatever it is, it works..."

■ ■ ■

"So why do you come?" I ask one boy.

Sruly, nine years old and three-feet tall, is more than happy to talk. "Well, how many *masechtos* could you be tested on?"

Oy, *chutzpah*! I tap him lightly on the head, and remind him how you talk to adults. Well, to be honest, it was my only way of avoiding the question.

"So it's interesting?"

"Well, not always," he confesses, somewhat more subdued. "Especially when we begin a new topic. But it gets better as we move along, because then you begin to feel like you know something."

■ ■ ■

How do we get children to learn Torah? Or anyone, for that matter?

So many approaches have been tried, including money incentives, group programs and threats of social failure. But Rabbi Nochum Weisfish has another way, the good old-fashioned way: By teaching it.

Apparently, all people, including children, are more than happy to take advantage of any opportunity to grow in knowledge. As long as it's presented that way.

BUT DOES IT WORK?

"Yes!" says Rabbi Weisfish emphatically, "Much better than I imagined!"

Now in their third year, what began as a small group of kids who would spend forty minutes of their own time every day studying *mishnayos*, has evolved into a movement of one-hundred strong.

"It actually really began with less than a few," recalls Rabbi Weisfish. "I would learn daily with my son at Empire Shtiebel, and someone asked me if I could learn with his kid too. Then another made the same request. From there it has grown to four classes, officially starting from age 7, but there were times when we had kids as young as 4 come to learn *Chumash*."



Rabbi Chazan with boys who finished Seder Zro'im

"Since its inception, *Brachos* was learned four times, *Peiah* three, *Demai* and *Kilayim* twice, and many more once."

Chevre Mishnayos She'al Yi'day Tinokos Shel Beis Raban (the official name) boasts some qualified staff, including Rabbi Fruendlich, the *Maseches Demai* teacher, Rabbi Mathles who teaches

Maseches Shvi'is, and Rabbi Ahron Chazan who teaches *Arachin*.

Rabbi Chazan says, "The amount of general knowledge that my students acquired is astounding. When they get older and the Gemara quotes something regarding any type of *karban*, they will be comfortable learning it, because they will have a solid foundation in these concepts."

■ ■ ■

So what's the theory? It's deeper than just managing without rewarding. This program believes that offering prizes is not only unnecessary, but damaging, because it subconsciously plants a notion in the child's mind that this is something he

shouldn't be wanting to do, and is therefore being rewarded, or compensated, for his cooperation.

So do prizes have no place at all?

“Well, the rule of thumb in *chinuch* is that there are no rules. Obviously, there are cases when specific programs must be designed in order to assist a struggling child, which could include incentives. But that shouldn't be the norm. There is no reason that the majority of children should lose out, making them feel the need to be rewarded, and thereby compromising their learning experience, just because some others do need that crutch.

“We do give out some treats and gifts of appreciation now and then. But they're not presented as a motivation. And that's not why they come. When I go away for a month during the summer, there are no treats and everyone comes just the same.

“The *geshmak* of satisfaction, of broadening knowledge and gaining skills, goes much further than candy. This is what makes children into independent *yeshivah bochurim*, with a genuine thirst for growth.”



Siyum for completing Seder Zero'im



The youngest class learning

It's a phenomenon, there's no question about that. However you turn it, theory or philosophy aside, you can't not be impressed. This is real stuff. Kids genuinely gratified with growth, and stimulated by comprehending new concepts.

In my humble opinion, some of the success should also be accredited to the consistency. You could set your clock based on the Monday to Wednesday schedule, throughout the year except for *yomim tovim* and *Chanukka*. During the summer months they learn other *mesechtos*, so that children who are away for the summer don't miss out.

Its simplicity and order are also great for the kids. While the older classes learn for an hour straight, the younger groups are treated to a *chassidishe maisch* for the first twenty minutes. That's

it. No raffles, no announcements. Plain and solid.

And Rabbi Chazan is proud of the results. “I took my class to get tested by Rabbi Braun on the entire *Seder Zeroyim*. He was supposed to test them for fifteen minutes, and only on the ‘prearranged questions.’ However, the test ended up being for 45 minutes, with two-thirds of the questions not from the question sheet...”

If that's not *nachas*, what is?

■ ■ ■

Father and Son on the Same Page

"So, tell me what you learned this week?"

"Uh... hmm... Well, we learned Gemara *daf bei amud alef*, with *Tosfos* and *meforshim*."

"Can you tell me about it?"

"You want me to repeat what we learned all week in 5 minutes?!"

"Just share something."

"I don't know where to begin."

■ ■ ■

If you have a *bochur*-age son learning in *yeshivah*, you surely know what it feels like. Wouldn't it be *geshmak* if you could actually carry on a substantial conversation with your *yeshivah bochur*?

Velimadtem is here to change that with an innovative project to achieve this goal: to put fathers and sons "on the same *daf*." Prepared in conjunction with Lubavitch *yeshivos* around the world, this project enables fathers to connect with their sons in a most meaningful way.

It is the brainchild of Rabbi Mendel Itzinger, *menahel* in Lubavitch Mesivta of London, who oversees the project and directs it.

"So many fathers want to know what their sons are learning and discuss it with them but don't have

the time to prepare the Gemara, especially not in depth. With this program they can familiarize themselves with what their son is learning in a minimal amount of time."

Members of the program will receive an email each week with an overview of the Gemara and a collection of central *meforshim* in simple English or Hebrew. Having read through the summaries, they will be comfortable discussing it with their sons in *yeshivah*.

One participant shared his positive experience: "I have been a member since the beginning- it is phenomenal! Once a week I talk to my son, and although I spend only a few minutes discussing it with him it is still very special."

Another father writes in an email, "Keep up the great work! It may take time for people to get used to this revolutionary concept, but soon people will

realize how beneficial it is. The papers are not too long, not too short, written well and clearly."

One father actually shares them with his son who struggles a bit with his learning and it has helped him keep up.

For more details about the program, visit: www.velimadtem.com



Mivtza Matzah Now Automated

Often it's simply technical reasons that hold us back from doing *mivtzoim*. That's what **Rabbi Tzali Laufer** is here to help with.

Over five years ago, **Lubavitch Youth Organization** launched “**Mivtzoim for Anash**,” a program that simplifies the *mivtzoim* procedure. The one behind the program is Rabbi Tzali Laufer, a *yungerman* passionate about both the Rebbe's *mivtzoim* and helping *anash*, who arranges, coordinates and provides supplies for *anash* to spread *Yiddishkeit* across New York City.

Before each *yom tov*, Rabbi Laufer reaches out to *anash* and invites them to make *mivtzoim* a family experience. He works out all the details—

timing, materials, transportation—and you need only to go.

Now the people at “**Mivtzoim for Anash**” have made *mivtza matzah* hassle free. At their new website **GiftMatazah.com** you can send *matzos* to anywhere in the U.S. for cost price (3 *kazayis matzos* for just \$5 plus shipping cost). Last year they sent out several hundred pounds of *matzah* and this year they are prepared to send out even more.

Here's how it works:

Visit **GiftMatazah.com** and select the *matzah* package you would like to send.

Fill out the recipient's name and address, enter payment information and they will ship the *matzah* on your behalf. The *matzah* is sent in a beautiful *matzah* box, packed for shipping, and includes a Passover Guide.

This Pesach, Every Yid you know should have
Shmurah Matzah
at their Seder!

מתקנת הרבי, להשתדל לשלוח לחג הפסח למכיריו מוצות עגולות
 שמורות אפירות-יד, לכל הפחות עבור הסדרים. (ספר המנהגים)

**Share the
 food of faith
 with your...
 Friends
 Relatives
 Doctor
 Lawyer
 Accountant
 Business Associates
 Or any Yid you
 know!**

"נחנת" במאור ממה שהתעסק לחלק מצה שמורה לחבריו מלפנים וגם עתה". (אניק חייא ע' לה)

We'll ship your Matzah nationwide!
 New York Area: Box of 3 Matzos \$11.00/1 lb. \$18.00
 Midwest: Box of 3 Matzos \$14.50/1 lb. \$21.25
 West Coast: Box of 3 Matzos \$16.50/1 lb. \$23.25
 Prices include shipping Each set includes a "Passover Guide"

To place your order please visit www.LubavitchYouth.org
 or contact MivtzaMatzah@gmail.com / 917-439-6646

Lubavitch Youth Organization
 *Matza can also be picked up at 305 Kingston Ave. (Levi Yitzchak Library)

COUNTER PERSPECTIVE

RESPONSES TO PREVIOUS ARTICLES

The Divine Nature of the Moreh Nevuchim (9)

Thanks for another wonderful issue.

After writing about the Rambam's sefer Mishneh Torah, Rabbi Matusof writes, "Following its completion in 1177 the Rambam wrote the Sefer Hamitzvos which serves as a sort of introduction to the Mishneh Torah".

From the Rambam's introduction to Sefer Hamitzvos it seems that the Sefer Hamitzvos was written **before** the Mishneh Torah, and that is the way it is commonly assumed. I would like to know whether Rabbi Matusof is actually of the opinion that the Sefer Hamitzvos was written later or whether it was just a typographical error.

Thanks in advance.

■ ■ ■

An Open Letter to My Rebbi (9)

Dear Perspectives magazine,

I read the Bochur's letter to his Rebbi with interest. I have had a similar issue which I would like to share with you.

I used to *daven Kabolos Shabbos* in a Shul near my home. Near the place where I sat there were a few people who would spend the large part of *Kabolos Shabbos* schmoozing. At the beginning of the

school year, I brought along my 8 year old son to Shul for *Kabolos Shabbos* for the first time. I was extremely uncomfortable when after *davening* he went over to one of the "shmoozers" and said "Gut Shabbos Rebbi".

I now *daven Kabolos Shabbos* elsewhere.

A parent of a *davener*

■ ■ ■

Samarkand (9)

In your previous issue, in the article titled Samarkand Shpitz Chabad, a *chassidishe Yid* relates that he was told by a *chassidishe Rov* that he is acting properly by telling off people who belittle a chassidishe practice.

I think it's important to clarify that this is definitely not a "*bora'ah lirabim*." It's quit obvious that this was said to a clever chossid who had an authentic *chassidishe* upbringing and understands when and how it is appropriate to give *mussar*.

While inspiring someone when it is appropriate and in the correct way with true *ahavas yisroel* and understanding can be very beneficial. If it is done in the wrong way it can cause tremendous damage.

Before one gives *mussar* one needs to make sure he has enough wisdom and sensitivity to ensure that his actions will have positive results and not the opposite. As Chazal say, "*lo kol hurotze litol es hashem yavo viyitol.*"

■ ■ ■

The Shiduch Crisis

Hi,

Your publication is great, but it's a shame you don't have more articles on practical things like the *shiduch* crisis. You may say, "Well everything has been discussed already, and how much could we talk on the same topic?" I have heard that said before. All I could say to them is that they obviously don't have the crisis at home. Yet.

When you are facing an aging son or daughter every day, there is no limit how much could be

discussed. It could, and should, be discussed every day. We have got to put our heads to this, because it's not getting any easier, and the ramifications are reaching further than having older singles. Let us just say that when there is frustration in the air, it expresses itself in many forms... It's *dinei nefoshos mamash, begashmiyus uberuchnius*.

Yours truly,

Rabbi Dovid Gordon

■ ■ ■

Chassidisher Life

Dear Editor,

This winter a great book came out by Reb Heishkeh Dubravsky A"H on the life of Reb Peretz Mochkin.

The book is far more than a biography. It takes the reader through decades of *chassidisher* life and work, acquaints him with a culture of values and *mesiras nefesh*, and warms the heart with pearls of real *darkei bachassidus*.

As a Lubavitcher who reads the latest publications, I could testify that this book stands head and shoulders above the rest. I want to thank the family and all others involved for the efforts they put into it.

Chaim Pearlman

P.S. A suggestion: it would be very worthwhile to translate the book. Perhaps Perspectives could do something towards that end.

■ ■ ■

Victory of Words (8)

I wanted to write to you concerning the "My Perspective" section of the Perspectives magazine.

In the last edition, Teves 5775, there seemed to be an increase in the amount of people that wrote. I usually find this section very interesting, even if I don't necessarily agree with what is written, but I feel that your magazine is a good forum for people to write *hashkafa* related articles (and even the anonymous letters have their place, in my humble opinion).

However, the first article of the section, entitled "Victory of Words," doesn't, in my opinion, belong in

your magazine. The article doesn't deal with *hashkafa* and the writer is giving their own interpretation to the Rebbe's words. I feel that the writer is stretching Didan Notzach to fit with their nice idea.

Similarly, in a previous issue you printed a poetic article about the trees. It was nice, but what is it doing in your magazine? I think these people should find another vehicle to express their thoughts.

All the best,

C.K.

■ ■ ■

Hachnosas Orchim in Crown Heights

Firstly I want to thank you for your excellent magazine. I have no complaints, besides for a request that it get published more often than four times a year. The issues you deal with are too important. Please become a daily. Tomorrow.

Now, I want to bring an issue to your attention.

In Crown Heights people are very proud of their *hachnosas orchim*, and rightfully so. Few communities in the world have so many guests, and host them with such grace every time.

However, the issue is that there are many people locked out of this circle of goodness. The people who are really in need, those with no family and friends, have nowhere to turn. So while every Yud and Chof Beis Shvat thousands are spoiled for choice, with places to eat and sleep, thousands more are not.

During Tishrei, there are organizations who care to put up *bochrim* by families, and likewise during the

Kinnus Hasbluchim the service is there for *shluchim*. Well, what about the rest of the year? And more important, what about the rest of the people?

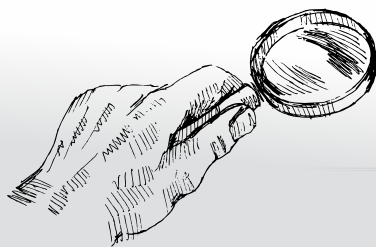
There are hundreds of people who think long and hard before every trip to Crown Heights because of these technical reasons. Is this the way Chassidim should be? Should a chossid not come to the Rebbe because he has nowhere to stay?

Now, I'm not complaining to the residents. They have no access to those in need. I am simply writing to bring the issue to your attention. Perhaps Merkaz Anash could set up a *hachnosas orchim* hotline. Maybe just for meals.

Whatever the solution, let us at least be aware of the problem.

Sincerely,

Mr. B. Morris



my **PERSPECTIVE**

The Truth About Camps

Yehudah Kaplan

Over the past decade, thousands of words have been spilled, in conversation and in print, over the alarming rate of our youth going off the *derech*. Accusations have been made against our school systems and against the parents. The *rabbonim*, the *mashpiyim* and even our store vendors have been blamed.

No doubt, there's a kernel of truth to all of the above. There is however one area, which I feel has been overlooked, and interestingly enough, it is the first one to be mentioned by most educators. How much this is of influence, cannot be proven without thorough study, but surely a factor deserving of attention it is.

I am talking of the two month summer camps.

First the facts:

(Most of what is written here is regarding the boys camps, of which the writer has more an idea, but much of it is equally relevant to the girls programs.)

1) All the camps are being run by twenty two year old *bochurim*, and twenty year old girls

respectively. Simply put: Three hundred children in the hands of a person who is not yet ready to have children of his/her own.

2) The curriculums, games, plays, night activities and songs, are being prepared by teenagers. No professional guidance provided.

3) Overlooking their work is the director, who sees the camp as a business enterprise and whose expertise in education is next to nothing. While traditionally there is a camp rabbi, he does not have much influence on the day to day workings of the camp.

4) The most important goal every staff member is told: Make sure the kids have a good time. Everything else is secondary.

5) In the boy's camps, the counselors are generally the less chassidishe bochurim. This is simply due to the fact that any bochur interested in learning would prefer to go to a Yeshivas Kayitz or at least be a learning teacher. It is therefore usually the fun seeking, available, camp-style bochur who is

spending two months with the kids as their role model.

Likewise, the head counselors of the boy's camps must be the kind of bochur who is ready to sacrifice half a year of learning to prepare for the summer.

6) There is no academic standard that has to be met by the camp curriculum. In other words, it is impossible for a camp's learning to fail. Emotional and behavioral intendancies are not the responsibility of the camp either. Once the summer is over, all staff members are scot free.

The results are only to be expected:

The unsettled seventeen year old counselors and waiters dictate the education; basic good ethics and traits, like not screaming in the streets, not ridiculing others, being respectful of your teachers etc., all become "nerdy" in camp. The camp atmosphere demands that you be with it. "It" is monitored by the popular night activity director who has just about managed not to get kicked out of *yeshiva*.

These same educators of our youth are also creating and cheering with the kids street-like chants, which are usually meaningless, and at times coarse. The more silly and immature one could be – the better counselor he is. The staff will generally not deny that the cheering is more for their own fun, than for the children.

The activities and programs are infiltrated with secular culture. Many a camp play was based on movies, which for some reason the play writers happened to have seen. The scavengers and shmayonkies may also have the same.

Then there's the dress. The staff members, finally relieved from their *yeshiva* shackles, could dress as hip as they wish. White shirt and dark pants are not 'cool'. A green-*yarmullka* bearer is a hero. All campers wishing to 'fit in' follow suit.

The learning is a joke too. Unlike all other camps, Lubavitch camps do not provide married experienced teachers, who know their stuff and

discipline professionally. In fact the learning teachers are even younger than the counselors. The results are; tampering with the learning, turning good kids into trouble makers, and a vicious cycle of bribes and punishments being implemented by the clueless, and occasionally careless bochur in charge.

The emotional damage is worthy of a study of its own. Publicly humiliating kids is daily procedure in the dining room, petting and picking is customary and creating outright competition is the fuel on which camp runs.

All of this is covered and packaged in a few attractive fluffy wrappers, which blind the parents and set them to rest. Mushy Rebbe songs, *mishnayos ba'al peh* contests, loads of fun and expensive trips, bring back home smiling kids. But the damage was done, and will only surface during the course of the school year.

The Rebbe attempts to excite the kids about learning and yiddishe values, but year after year, it falls flat. The teacher is simply not 'with it' – with camp.

In camp they were taught that learning is a non-issue, and here the teacher is trying to make it sound like it's a life matter. Their counselors were 'cool', and this teacher is telling them that chassidishkeit is what's important.

The *chutzpah* to the teacher soars, as a natural continuation of the fun. It is quite possibly also due to the fact that the teachers are subconsciously perceived as old-fashioned not-with-it people, as a result of the worldly camp atmosphere.

It cannot be expected otherwise. After being brainwashed for eight weeks that camp is the best place and being spoiled with treats, trips and fun; after enjoying 'runaways' from learning class and spending half a day in the swimming pool or the baseball court – the *rebbis* are being put up to heavy competition. One that they are bound to fail at.

As the year progresses, the *rebbe* somehow stitches up the damage done by the summer, and

attempts to instill a learning ethic, *derech eretz* and *yiras shomayim*. But as the summer comes around, it all goes up in smoke as the next batch of teenagers set about blinding his dear pupils with the easier, cooler, alternative way of life.

Back in camp, camper and counselor have much in common; they both relate of a miserably boring year of irrelevant Gemarah, and dive into a “fun-packed summer experience of a lifetime”, one that shall “change your child forever”.

In the tug of war between the schools and the camps, the latter usually succeed. They have everything going for them, including the 24-hour atmosphere, the not being restricted to educational programs, not being answerable to any level of providing skills and knowledge, and

an enthusiastic youthful staff anxious to partake in the fun.

The results are all well known to us.

The past few years have seen much of our energy invested in constructively criticizing our community. I believe that most of our homes, and the vast majority of our teachers, are doing only good. The real culprits are the camps.

One frustrated teacher once remarked that since the Rebbe originally set up the camps for non-*frum* kids, and since the camps are not managing to attract them, they are attempting to produce them on their own. A sad joke of bad taste, but one we cannot laugh away.

Our kids are not going off any *derech* – their striding strictly on the alternative path they were shown.

■ ■ ■

Communicating Our Values to Our Children

Rabbi Zalman Goldberg

Several years ago, the Crown Heights community was graced with several seminars on the topic of *tznius*. Important personalities such as Rabbi Gancz and Rabbi Gluckowsky were among the inspirational speakers. One of the concepts Rabbi Gancz elucidated for us was an intriguing perspective to *tznius*.

Just as in the area of *muktza* we respond with mild shock if a child transgresses, because it's so 'out of the question', so too should be our reaction to laxity with *tznius*. If there is a problem, it needs to be addressed.

Now, we don't want to make anyone feel bad, but we want them to feel that for *frum Yidden*, a skirt above the knee when seated, or a questionable neckline is 'out of the question'.

To clarify, many parental responses to *tznius* infractions are the source of negativity. Put downs, insults and too much *gvurah* are damaging to a child. A response of shock to a *tznius* transgression is not negative; it is a clear message with no ambiguity.

I feel compelled to repeat a story that Rabbi Gancz related. An individual from Monsey was in a position to sell his house and was offered a significantly higher price by a non-Jew than by a Jew. He went to Rabbi Dovid Vichnin, o.b.m., with his dilemma. "I know it's more important to sell to a *Yid*, but if I sell to the *goy* I will have more money to distribute to *tzedaka* and to pay more tuition to the *mosdos*." In his great wisdom, Rabbi

Vichnin exclaimed, "You're thinking of selling to a *goy*?!"

That was enough; the seller had a clear answer and he never felt bad that he lost \$50,000 by selling to the Yid. He later explained his tremendous gratitude to Rabbi Vichnin for his frank response. Had the Rav been nicer about it and said that some *poskim* say it's permissible in some circumstances, but we *pasken* like those who forbid it, he would have protested the *psak* and complained, "Why can't we *pasken* like the more lenient opinion?" Now, with the answer he received it was crystal clear that there was no way in the world that he would sell to a *goy*.

This can be easily applied to *chinuch*. Of course we don't want to make the child feel bad. We do however want a clear message to get across to the child. This can be accomplished through conveying a firm instruction in a pleasant manner.

It goes without saying that all of the above mentioned needs to be tailored according to age, for how long there has been an issue, etc., but the need for verbal communication is vital.

Another point that I find crucial to make in regard to verbal communication is actually contrary to common belief. You have no doubt heard it

said by many eloquent speakers that we must realize that a good example goes a lot further than 'preaching' without 'practice'. This is age old wisdom. However, if this is where it stops, I'm afraid we've missed the point. Yes, a Rebbi who speaks one language and lives another is undoing all he has taught. But did you ever hear of a teacher who just shows an example but doesn't teach? Sure, some people will be inspired and may even emulate the Rebbi's conduct, but for most students it will be a good party. The good example has to be brought and presented to the child's reality verbally.

Likewise in parenting; I've seen the unfortunate *Chassidishe* families where no doubt the best example was set, but connecting the message to the individual child didn't seem necessary, and down the line, the *chassidishkeit* did not endure. Let's not convince ourselves that just setting an example is enough. It is a huge part of the *chinuch*, but can very well not reach its destination; the child and his behavior. Whether a negative incident occurred or not, it is always valuable to discuss Torah standards on an individual level, in a caring and loving way with one's child, **in addition** to showing a good example. This approach is sure to bring optimal results.



Crown Heights, City of Brotherhood

Menachem Block

It's Yud Shevat time once again, and the snow dusted streets of Crown Heights take on a life of their own. An endless stream of visitors pile into the Big Apple at an ever quickening pace, and it's a *Sholom Aleichem*, a warm greeting and a quick schmooze here, there and everywhere. Heartbeats are quickened as the separation of space closes, reunion breathes in the air.

Ah, Crown Heights of yore springs to life before my eyes. A Crown Heights that fills every couple of months, a Crown Heights whose very air is

filled even when devoid of human presence. And albeit with a slight twist, the Crown Heights that fills before my eyes in this annual midwinter scene.

True, Crown Heights remembers better times. Times when a world of beyond nestled itself deeply within our streets and neighborhoods, when day to day reality overflowed with happenings and personalities that ran at the center of the world. Crown Heights remembers Tekios and Hakafos,

a dollars line bending around the corner and Moshiach just about to arrive.

Crown Heights is just not the same, what with its modern twist and secular elements making themselves increasingly comfortable in a place so very dear.

Yet beyond the whitened beard and indifference of age, somewhere beyond the surface of the Crown Heights collective consciousness bubbles a raging fire, a fire of love and Yiddishkeit and everything else good. A Crown Heights rooted in the far off world of memories.

And indeed, that Crown Heights is very much alive and well, in our young and in our old, in our Bochurim Farbrenging the night in 770 and its overflow neighborhood.

Truth be told, 770 often elicits a chuckle from my throat upon descending its basement staircase. What is this building? And who are these people? Is this mess of persons and happenings definable, or is it all as random as it seems?

But tonight on the eve of Yud Shevat, the magic puzzle of the Jewish people crashes into place with tremendous force, a force of historic proportion and eternal significance. For what indeed is the hand that bonds the multi-colored scarf with his childhood friend, the bench-and-sefer Bochur? The hand that links the limitless variety of humanity that calls itself Lubavitch? It's the beautiful unity of Hashem Echad, a unity from above playing itself out in the heart of mortal being below. It can take a sharp eye and heightened awareness to recognize those slight nuances that mark the Divine nature of the meetings of souls taking place on our streets and public places, yet they are there nonetheless. If only you open your eyes to see the Lubavitch all around you.

I am Lubavitch, city of love. I am Crown Heights, city of brotherhood. And my Rebbe lives on, in my mind and in my heart. And in my heart of hearts, my Rebbe lives in my future destiny too.

■ ■ ■

My Phoneless Conversation

Dovid M.

Yud Shvat 5775. I woke up early since it was going to be a busy day with all the Yud Shvat *inyonim* to do, especially with this year's addition of Friday *mivtzoim*.

By the time I headed towards the Ohel there was a small line already there. As the line moved forward I concentrated on my *Maaneh Loshon* while in the back of my mind I kept on wondering, "Why hasn't Shmuly (my younger

brother) called or texted me about where he is holding?" Getting onto the bus and still without a word from Shmuly, I spent the time listening to a Yud Shvat Farbrengen.

As I stepped off the bus I saw Shmuly who said, "Dovid, I was trying to reach you for a while already." Right! I just remembered that I forgot to recharge the next month of my pre-paid phone.

It will be a Yud Shvat morning to remember.

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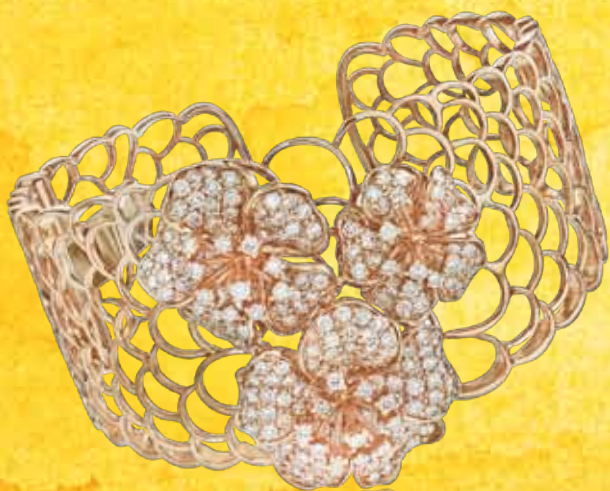
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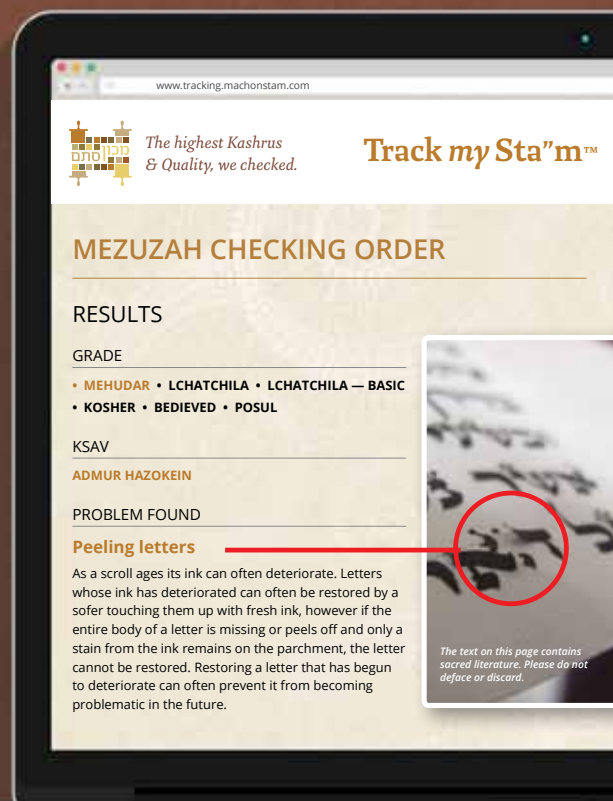
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