

The Weekly Farbrengens


MERKAZ ANASH
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LOVING EACH OTHER (IV)

THE FOUNDATION OF OUR PEOPLE

A group of prominent and wealthy chassidim visiting the *Tzemach Tzedek* in Lubavitch desired that the Rebbe should deliver a *maamar* of *Chassidus* for them, instead of spending so much of his time receiving the simple local townsmen at *yechidus* that often concerned mere physical matters. They positioned themselves near the Rebbe's room and began singing the Alter Rebbe's *Niggun*, knowing that this would often open his heart to deliver a *maamar*.

Hearing them, the Rebbe opened the door and asked: "What do you want?"

"We want *Chassidus*, not *yechidus*," they replied. The Rebbe agreed - on condition that no locals would be present.

The locals were immediately asked to leave, and when the Rebbe came out he asked, "Is there no one here from Lubavitch?" The guests assured him that they had all gone.

"If so," he said, "what am I doing here? I too am from Lubavitch!" With that the Rebbe returned to his room, dismayed by the visitors' insensitivity to the plight of the poor townsmen.

(מגדל עז ע' רז)

A certain chossid once hesitated to help his fellow because of an old dispute. Hearing of this, the Rebbe Rashab wrote him a long letter on the importance of unity and kindness. He asks: "How can your complaints against him hold you back from feeling united, when our entire Torah and our people, especially now, are based on unity and *tzedaka*?"

The Rebbe Rashab goes on to explain how, according to *Chassidus*, our unity below creates unity Above, thereby channeling *brachos* below. Even wicked men, like those who built the Tower of Babel, are energized by their unity. However, their harmony is short-lived, for it opposes *HaShem's* innermost will. By contrast, *achdus* amongst those who observe *mitzvos* draws down positive spiritual energy from *HaShem's Achdus* - and *brachos* of that kind endure forever.

The Rebbe Rashab concludes, "It is thus self-understood that the continued existence of our people depends on *achdus* amongst those who observe *mitzvos* and thereby draw down everlasting *bracha* in all good ways. This *achdus* is especially important amongst those who are close to each other, since they come from one source ... How hard did our Rebbeim toil for *Anash* with *mesiras nefesh*, spending countless hours discussing with them their personal matters and implanting within them good and upright *middos* in the spirit of our holy Torah. Woe to eyes that witness all their efforts being lost *ch"v* because of such divisiveness as *not helping a fellow in a time of trouble!*"

(אג"ק רש"ב ח"א ע' צא ואילך)

CONSIDER
 Is the love towards a Yid with a different way of *avodas Hashem* despite his way of service or because of it?

NO EXCEPTIONS!

The Alter Rebbe told his son the Mittlerer Rebbe: Grandfather (the Baal Shem Tov) said that one must have *mesiras nefesh* in *ahavas Yisroel* even towards a Yid whom one has never seen.

(היום יום ט"ו כסלו)

The Rebbe once said:

With regard to the actual performance of the Torah and its *mitzvos* everyone is equal, but when it comes to the feelings behind them, there are differences: one acts out of love for *HaShem*, another out of awe, and a third out of *kabbalas ol*.

The *talmidim* of Rabbi Akiva were truthful people, and their *avoda* penetrated them so fully that it seemed to each of them that only his path was the right way and anyone else was missing out, with the result that they were not able to respect each other as they ought to have done.

This teaches us that a person is obligated to regard every *shomer Torah u'mitzva* positively and to respect him greatly even if his path is not the same as one's own - because that person too is serving *HaShem*. The differences are merely whether his service is prompted by love or fear and so on.

(לקו"ש ח"ז ע' 342)

DESPITE DIFFERENCES

The Baal Shem Tov taught: In every generation there is a *tzaddik*. Some people don't have many *mitzvos* to their credit, but they have *emuna* in the *tzaddik*, while others, who do many *mitzvos* to their credit, don't believe in the *tzaddik*.

The reason for this is the following: Since *neshamos* today are *gilgulim*, the above distinction depends on the source of an individual's *neshama*. If the source is refined, that person is given the merit of believing in the *tzaddik*. If not, he is lacking in *emuna* and sometimes does not even know of the *tzaddik* at all. We, therefore, who know and believe in the *tzaddik*, are not at all superior to those who don't know and believe in *tzaddikim* and may even oppose them, since possibly those people do even more *mitzvos* than we do. It is not proper to separate ourselves from them; rather, we should be together *be'achdus*.

(מגדל עז ע' שמד)

At a *Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengens* the Friediker Rebbe said:

All the improper ways and actions that brought about the arrest of the Alter Rebbe need not be mentioned and should be forgotten. We need to joyfully relate that there were painful events and there was *mesiras nefesh* which eventually resulted in a *Yom-Tov*. Although according to the Torah, at a joyful event one should recount the story of the miracle being celebrated with all of its details, the Alter Rebbe in his holy letter that begins *Katonti* warns us and teaches us how to conduct ourselves and how to attain the highest level of refined *middos* by not paying back people who wronged us. For these reasons it is better not to recount the story at all.

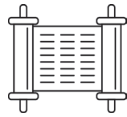
(לקוטי דיבורים ח"ג ע' תשסא)

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AI PASKENING HALACHA

Can Artificial Intelligence (AI) that is trained in halacha be relied upon?

Aside from the fact that AI is in its early stages and makes many errors, there are several reasons why AI could not replace real *rabbonim*.

To *pasken* a halacha, one must know three things: (1) The halachic sources from the Gemara down to the *poskim*; (2) the details of the *shaila*; and (3) how to apply the halacha to the particular situation, the circumstance (*l'chatchila, b'dieved, sh'as hadchak*), and the observance level of the one asking (the *shoiel*).

While AI can help collect information, it is limited in its ability to know and assess the questioner's level. Even with previous technologies — phone or text — *rabbonim* have been reluctant to answer certain *shailos* without knowing the *shoiel* since much of a *psak* depends on the situation of the one asking.¹ (In fact, *rabbonim* would often give conflicting *psakim* on the same *shaila* based on different situations.)

Much of *psak* is transmitted as a *mesorah* from *rav* to *talmid* and absorbed through *shimush* (internship), and each community has its own *mesorah*. Furthermore, when forming a *psak*, a *rov* will sometimes combine various *shitos*, even those not ordinarily relied upon, and a *rov* must be trained in the nuance of which *shitos* are used and which are not.²

Whenever something is assumed to be prohibited, a kosher witness (*eid echad*) is needed to inform us that it is kosher. Similarly, when an item is in question, we need a living *rov* to permit it. Even if AI will prohibit, it is wrong to prohibit unnecessarily and a leniency can sometimes result in a related scenario (*chumra d'asi lidei kula*).

More significantly: The Torah instructs us to bring halachic questions before the *dayanim* living “in your days,” as the Torah was given to *am Yisroel* whose Torah leaders have the power to decide *halacha*.³ We also find that the function of communicating the Torah's ruling was given to Moshe Rabbeinu who transmitted the word of Hashem.⁴ This can only be done by a *neschama* in a body, not a smart computer.

When an upstanding and G-d fearing *rov paskens* a *shaila*, he is given *siyata dishmaya*, heavenly assistance to rule correctly. The Rebbe would relate a story about the Noda Biyehuda who was challenged as a young *rov*, and he answered every *shaila* correctly except for one that was fabricated, for which he did not have *siyata dishmaya*.⁵ For this reason, *shailos* must be brought before a *rov yerei Shomayim*, not just a knowledgeable person or computer.

1. הליכות חנוך ע"ר"ז - טלפון, מו"ד הגר"מ אהרן ע"ה - הבעיה הכפולה בסמט.
2. ראה ברכות ז' ע"ב ("גדולה שמושה של תורה יותר מלמודה"). וראה הליכות חנוך ע"ר"ח. אג"ק הכ"ו ע' 344 ואילך.
3. ראה ס' כללי הדיון ע' קע"ח בשם הר"ח פלג"י. ספר החינוך ס"י תצ"ה.
4. שמוות פ"ח פט"ו. וראה פירוש"י שם "לשאול תלמוד מפי הגבורה".
5. ראה תו"מ תשד"מ ח"ב ע' 753.

לע"נ מרת ציפא אסתר בת ר' שלום דובער ע"ה

Our Heroes



REB CHATCHE FEIGIN

Reb Yechezkel (Chatche) Feigin was a top *talmid* in Tomchei Temimim in Lubavitch, and was from the group of *bochurim* sent by the Rebbe Rashab in 5672 (1911) to establish the *yeshiva* Toras Emes in Chevron. He married the daughter of Reb Yehuda Leib Tzeitlin of Zhuravitz, and then served as *mashpia* in various branches of Tomchei Tmimim in Russia. Eventually he became the *menahel* of all branches of Tomchei Tmimim. In 5687 (1927), he became the Frierdike Rebbe's personal secretary and *gabai*. From then on Reb Chatche was always at his side — in Russia, Riga and Poland. He was also in charge of fundraising for *maimad* (support for the Rebbe and his activities). He was killed *al kidush Hashem* on 9-10 Tammuz 5701 (1941) in Riga.

During one *farbrengen*, a *bochur* complained to R. Chatche, “If only you knew what type of issues I have...”

R. Chatche told him, “You're mistaken. You're simply arrogant and want to feel special. You're not so foolish to think that you have outstanding talents, so you imagine that you have unique problems. But your motive is the same: to feel different. You need to come to terms with

the fact that you have neither outstanding talents nor outstanding issues – you're just like everyone else...”

R. Chatche's depth was noticeable even in his capacity as secretary. His letters to *anash* regarding *maamad* flowed with *chassidische hergeshim* and Chabad exposition on the nature and value of providing for the Rebbe.

In one letter he elaborates upon the prime importance of supporting the wellbeing of the Rebbe and the *yeshiva bochurim* even over more critical projects to save Yiddishkeit. He quotes the Alter Rebbe's explanation on why the first Beis HaMikdash would have been spared had they learned Torah properly, though they transgressed the worst *aveiros*: as long as the head is healthy, the body can be saved. So too, as long as some Jews serve Hashem and study Torah in its pristine form, *klal Yisroel* can be healed.

For a full biography and a selection of his writings, see: **A Man of Mind and Action – The Life and Writings of Reb Chatche Feigin in Perspectives Digest, Issue 14.**

A Moment with The Rebbe



THE REBBE KNEW ME

Rabbi Sholom Blank, *shliach* to Miami, Florida, relates:

During my *bar mitzva yechidus* in 5717 (1967), the Rebbe asked me if I knew how many strings were on my *tzitzis*. I answered that there are thirty-two strings total. The Rebbe then took out a piece of paper and wrote down the number 32, using the letters *lamed* and *beis*, and then explained that this spells *lev*, meaning “heart,” and gave me a *bracha* to have a *gutte hartz*, a *vareme hartz*, un a *Yiddisher hartz* (a good heart, a warm heart, and a Jewish heart).

During one *farbrengen* when I was a *bochur*

at 770, the Rebbe was handing out bottles of *mashke*, and called out, “Who is going to Montreal?” Since no one answered, I said that I was.

The Rebbe reached out to hand me the bottle, and I stretched my left hand to take it. As I did that, the elder *chossid* Reb Yisroel Jacobson called out, “Take with your right hand!”

But the Rebbe turned to him and said, “No, he's left-handed.” The Rebbe knew that I was a lefty and that, for a lefty, the left hand takes the place of the right hand. The Rebbe knew me.

Dedicate an issue of *The Weekly Farbrengen* in honor of a *simcha* or *yahrtzeit*

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