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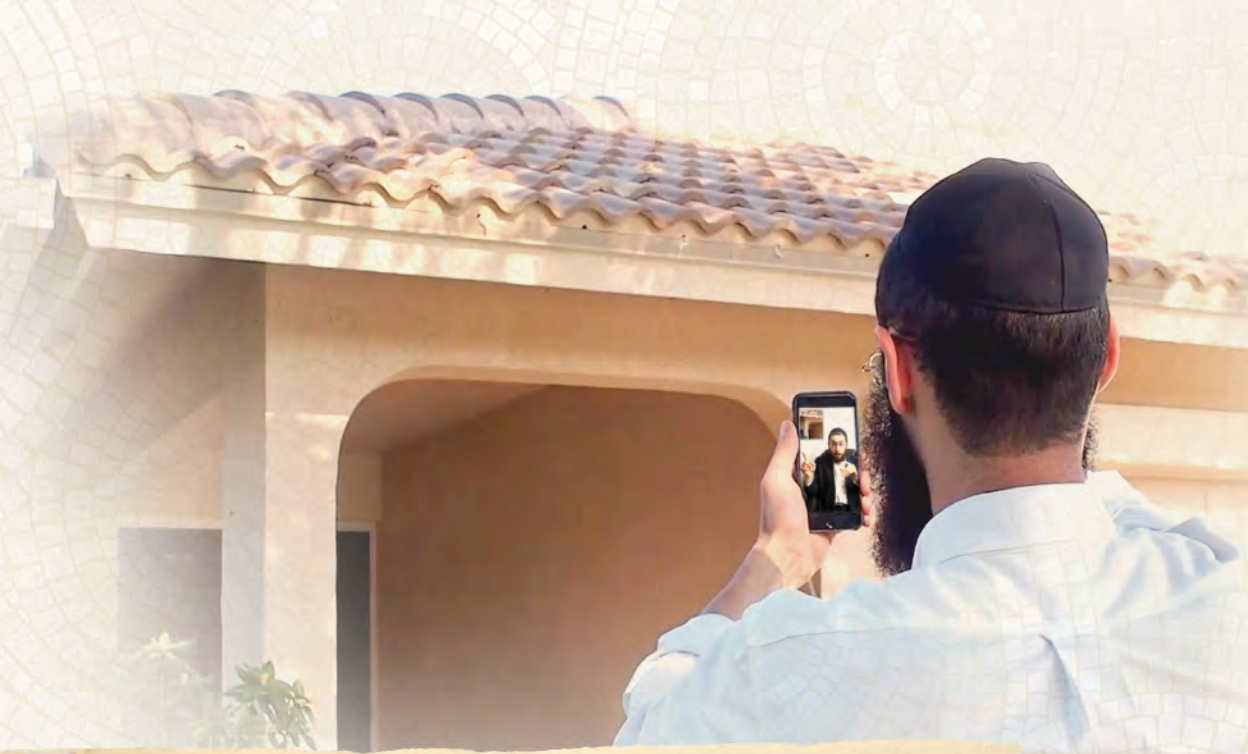
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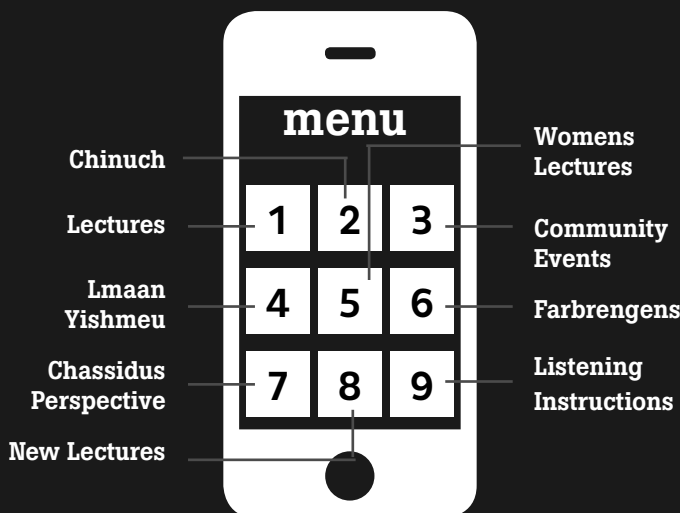
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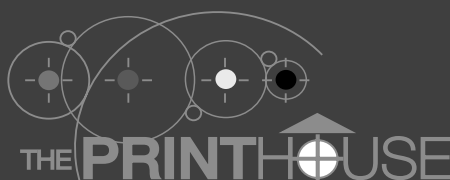
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IS YOUR *Yiddishkeit* ATTRACTIVE?



Reb Pinyeh Korf was born and raised to a different generation. He grew up in Samarkand in the 1940's and was trained in the ways of Chassidus by old-time *temimim* who preached and practiced total commitment to the truth.

Shortly after his marriage he was sent by the Rebbe to serve as mashgiach in the Tomchei Temimim *yeshiva* of Montreal. There, he had to contend with the American-born *bochurim* who did not easily accept authority. Reb Pinyeh never encountered such audacity, and presented his quandary to the Rebbe.

The Rebbe explained to him that today's *bochurim* don't respond well to orders. Instead, the Rebbe suggested, he should influence them through discussion and explanation.



Today, it is an easily recognizable fact that children are not disposed to submitting to authority or following orders. In the Information Age, everyone has an opinion, and children are no exception. The power of "because I said so" is long over.

So how do we pass Yiddishkeit on to children who don't obey instructions?

We buy them. Or we distract them.

In an effort to make Yiddishkeit more palatable, there has been a push to be easy on children by making fewer demands of them and letting them enjoy Yiddishkeit by adding fun to it: games and entertainment to distract them from the toil, and extrinsic rewards for correct conduct.

The implied message of either of these approaches is, Torah life in and of itself is unattractive. It needs an external gimmicks to keep it enjoyable.



While these approaches are certainly better than giving the child a *negative* Yiddishkeit experience, (and are indeed necessary in desperate situations), they aren't enough. As soon as he encounters thrills more exciting than his school raffles, or entertainment more stimulating than the "kosher" variety he grew up with, he will then just move on to pursue those. And he is doing exactly what we taught him. Go for the biggest prize. Stay glued to the entertainment. In trying to beat the world at their own game, we teach our children how to play.

The Rebbe taught that we needn't compete with the world on its own terms. We have a hidden advantage.

Jewish children naturally want to do the will of Hashem.

We don't need to sell it. Reasonably communicated and genuinely modeled, they will follow it eagerly. Of course, it is easier to give orders and entice them with rewards and distractions, but it just doesn't work. *Kabolas ol*, submitting to the will of Hashem even when it is uncomfortable, doesn't just mean giving orders and demand of them to follow. It can be taught (as the Rebbe taught it many times) as a desirable ideal.

There is, however, one important disclaimer: Concepts must be conveyed to a child in a way that is meaningful to them at their current stage. An ideal that inspires us may not resonate with the child. We must "distill" our deepest values so that children can digest them, while ensuring that the original concept remains intact.

To pass Yiddishkeit on, we don't need to demand submissiveness. We don't need to make it fun.

We need to make it meaningful.

Rabbi Shimon Hellinger

General Editor

In the Mind of a Child

THE REBBE'S PERSPECTIVE

What difference does age make for exposing a child to secular subjects?

Why the push to teach children secular subjects?

How can we guarantee financial stability for our children?

In this sicha from Simchas Torah, 5715 (1954) the Rebbe addresses these questions:

WHERE IS THE STRENGTH?

The Navi calls the Jewish people, “Yisroel, a scattered sheep.” With this he expresses his surprise, “How is it that instead of being ‘Yisroel,’ an honorary title which denotes overpowering men and angels, do you behave like sheep, acting with no backbone and following others?”

Wherever a Jew goes, he should lead the entire city. Instead, we see him not influencing others, but rather they are influencing him. He mimics the stupidities of that environment.

Instead of looking in *Shulchan Aruch* at every step and persuading those around him to accept *Shulchan Aruch* as their authority, he accepts *them* as the authority, with the next-door neighbor as the final say (“*posek acharon*”) on how to conduct his household.



The teacher must recognize that he was hired to make his students to be complete *Yidden*. He cannot suffice with teaching them the "subject" of *Chumash* or *Gemara*, and hope that the "spark in it will draw them to good," for until then precious time is lost...

The Jews in Mitzrayim were distinctive in that they didn't change their names, language, and garments. Nowadays, Jews look for ways to disguise their children from appearing Jewish. If the child has *peiyos*, they roll it up—if not cutting them off completely. If he has *tzitzis*, they tuck it in. When a Jewish child walks in the street, people should be able to tell from miles away that he is Jewish...

THE MIND OF A JEWISH CHILD

They are afraid that when their child will ask directions, he will speak English with a Yiddish accent. Therefore, they teach him English and other secular subjects, contaminating his young mind.



The first three years of a child's study are the foundation for all his future success, yet, they contaminate his early years with English, grammar, etc. *Halevai* adults wouldn't know these things, certainly not children before nine or twelve years old. I would ask to delay it further, but "asking for too much can leave one with nothing."

Hashem says that He doesn't need *Gan Eden* nor the *Beis Hamikdash*, all he wants is to dwell in the mind of a Jewish child. And they take that mind and contaminate it with secular subjects! Where is the fortitude?!

They claim that studying English will benefit the child, making it easier for him to succeed later in life. But nobody can foretell the future. Our actions must follow the Torah's directives.

Everything that has value is mentioned in the Torah. If studying secular subjects had material benefit, the Torah would state a *halacha* that one has to study them. Since there is no such *halacha*, and on the contrary the Torah states that one may not study them, and that they contaminate the intellect of the soul, this means that there is no material benefit from them, and quite the reverse.

DEPRIVING THE CHILD

This fellow thinks that he will outsmart Hashem, and not consider the Torah's methods for success. He will seek his own ways and study English to succeed. We must remember that Hashem created the world 5714 years ago, and He runs it as He wishes, and He will continue running it as He wishes—according to the rules of the Torah.

Hashem gave us the Torah over 3000 years ago. This 'unsophisticated' ("batlanisher") nation who didn't learn grammar etc., still stands firm—while nothing remains of other nations, each with its own wisdom. Through holding steadfast to the Torah, the Jews stand strong without secular wisdom.

The claim of material benefit from secular knowledge is not valid. The children do not benefit neither materially nor spiritually.

The children are not at fault; they aren't given any choice on the matter. The parents take them and rob them of a portion their life. What gives parents the right to rob the children of those years? Is this why Hashem gave them children?!

(The Rebbe said this sicha with great emotion and used many other sharp expressions that were not recorded. In the middle of his talk he said several times: "I say this on the basis of the statement of the Rebbe Rashab that Simchas Torah doesn't bring any harm; this will be with kindness and mercy.")

In Summary

- The underlying reason for wanting a child to study secular subjects is often the fear of otherwise standing out. A Jew must be a proud leader, not a follower.
- Since the Torah does not anywhere mention the need for studying secular subjects, and does mention its negative effect, it is impossible that it is a necessary criterion for earning a living.
- The mind of a child is a preferred resting place for Hashem. We must ensure that it remains holy and pure by exposing the child only to holy matters. **P**



Rabbi Ushpol learning in the Yeshivah zal.. Credit: Lubavitch Archives

CHILDHOOD

Rabbi Yitzchak Dov Ber Ushpol was born in 5671 (1911) in Shventzian, Lithuania, to R.Shlomo Eliyahu and Kayla Rochel. He studied Torah with his great-uncle, Yosef Hendel, and later with local teachers.

He had fond memories of his childhood town, recounting the many characters and the *chassidishe shuls*, which were

documented in the volume *Zichron Shventzian* (Tel Aviv, 1965, and translated from Yiddish to Hebrew in *Oholei Lubavitch*, Vol. 1). He recalled Betzalel, the potato merchant: “He had a sweet voice and would sing wonderful soul-stirring *nigunim*. He would donate potatoes to the *chassidishe farbrengens*.” Chaim Zerach had severe problems standing, “yet when he

MASTER EDUCATOR: Caring and Insightful Rabbi Yitzchak Ushpol

BY DOVID ZAKLIKOWSKI

would *daven*, he would forget about his pain.”

At one point during his early years, Rabbi Ushpol studied near the residence of the Rogochover Gaon. “I recall spending some of my free time,” Rabbi Ushpol wrote, “sitting outside his window and basking in his scholarly learning.”

In the mid-1920s, when Rabbi Ushpol was a young *bochur*, his father, continuing a prestigious rabbinical line (including R. Yankel Landau, later *rov* of Bnei Brak), became *rov* of the village of Kurenitz, not far from Vilna, Lithuania.

As an older *bochur* he attended the Rokov *Yeshivah*, and continued in the newly-established Tomchei Temimim *Yeshivah* in Vilna. Eventually for seven years he

RABBI YITZCHAK USHPOL

studied at Tomchei Temimim in Warsaw, studying under its famous Rosh Yeshivah, R. Yehudah Eber. Regarding his studies, a school record stated of Rabbi Ushpol: "He learns in depth, readily adheres to instructions, keeps to the rigorous schedule and is diligent in his studies."

While in Warsaw, he received semichah from the *Vaad Harabanim* of the city. In Tishrei of 5635 (1934), following the instructions of the Frierdiker Rebbe, he became the principal of Tomchei Temimim in Vilna.

Frummet Nechamah Kelowitz, born to an observant family in Brooklyn, New York, endured with many others the lack of suitable matches in the United States. A visiting European rabbi suggested that she travel to Europe to meet a suitable match. There she met Rabbi Ushpol and they got married in 5698 (1938).

R. Yossel Weinberg related that when he was a *bochur* in Tomchei Temimim in Otvozk, rumor had it that Rabbi Ushpol received guidance from the Frierdiker Rebbe on how to date. When his future wife arrived, he wanted to arrange an engagement immediately. "That's not how it's done," the Rebbe advised him. "First sit down with a cup of tea and get to know each other..."

After his marriage, he continued leading the school of seventy pupils. In 5698 (1939), he received *kabalah* in *shechitah*

from R. Chaim Ozer Grodzinski of Vilna. In what reflects the latter's admiration for Lubavitch and its chassidim, Rabbi Ushpol was a frequent visitor to this famed *talmid chacham* and halachic authority.

Shortly before the war he traveled home alone and began the process of acquiring a visa, when WWII began.

WAR BREAKOUTS

Amid the havoc of war, Rabbi Ushpol decided to return to his hometown, Kurenitz, for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, with the intent of then returning to Vilna. However, when his hometown was captured by the Soviets this became treacherous, because the borders between the two countries were sealed. Stuck in Kurenitz, his situation was now dangerous.

Relief was in sight when a student, Yosef Kaminetzky, came to Rabbi Ushpol's home to assist him on a rescue to Vilna, where the current situation was safer. Yosef told Rabbi Ushpol that Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinski had a plan to bring him to the United States with funds he had secured for his visa and travels.

Rabbi Ushpol packed a few belongings and began his dangerous journey. Young Communists were roaming the Kurenitz streets and attacking Jews, however, "they

Caring and Insightful

had respect for me as the son of the rabbi,” said Rabbi Ushpol.

They took a train and then joined a larger group of Jews, continuing on by horse and wagon. “We were stopped by Russian soldiers,” Rabbi Ushpol later wrote, “and were interrogated on whether we intended to escape across the border. I responded in fluent Russian and asked if they believed we could actually smuggle across the border with so many packages.”

The soldiers released them, but the driver mistakenly continued in the wrong direction, toward a Russian army base. The driver began to bitterly cry over his error. A Russian soldier approached the carriage and asked them where they were heading. He continued, “It is okay to tell me the truth. I help smuggle people across the border.”

The travelers paid him and he brought them to a home until nightfall, after which the group headed to the border. The soldier revealed that the villagers asked him to kill the group and split the money with them. He told the villagers that he took responsibility for the group and would do nothing of the sort.

Deep in the night, dogs began to bark. The smuggler instructed the group to hide by digging themselves in the snow, where they remained for an hour, before continuing their journey.



Rabbi Ushpol in the early 1940's in the courtyard of 770.
Credit: Lubavitch Archives

When his future wife arrived, he wanted to arrange an engagement immediately. “That’s not how it’s done,” the Rebbe advised him. “First sit down with a cup of tea and get to know each other . . .”

After hours of trekking, they arrived at the border. Rabbi Ushpol revealed, “We needed to walk over boards placed on top of the water. Mid-way, I tripped and fell into the water. Within a few seconds, my leg froze and I could not get out.”

RABBI YITZCHAK USHPOL

The student body was mostly comprised of Polish refugees, whom the Rebbe Rayatz had instructed to escape to Vilna with the hope of saving their lives.



Rabbi Ushpol (sitting center) with his Talmidim in Vilna before leaving to the United States during WWII. Credit: Lubavitch Archives

Mr. Rodomsky, a member of the group, lifted Rabbi Ushpol out of the water and carried him on his shoulders until they reached dry land.

They warmed up briefly in a safe-house before continuing their journey. The soldier who had smuggled them across the border tried to deceive them by placing them on a path to another army base on the Lithuanian border. The group pleaded with him and offered their precious belongings. He then directed them to a local shul.

The group hired a wagon to take them to Vilna, however they were once again stopped by soldiers who wanted to return them, along with another large group of illegal aliens, to occupied Poland. They begged for freedom, but their beseeching fell on deaf ears. The local Jewish community gathered a large sum of money and successfully bribed the officers, allowing them to continue to Vilna.

Upon his return, Rabbi Ushpol continued to head Tomchei Temimim. The student body was mostly comprised of Polish refugees, whom the Rebbe Rayatz had instructed to escape to Vilna with the hope of saving their lives.

Crossing many borders, Rabbi Ushpol undertook an extensive and dangerous journey via Japan, one of the only escape routes to the United States, as war raged in Europe. Together with his colleagues R. Shmuel Zalmanov and R. Moshe Leib Rodstein, he arrived in San Francisco safely in the fall of 1940 and from there made his way to New York.

MASTER EDUCATOR

Already in Vilna, he developed his educational philosophy that made him beloved amongst his students. Upon arrival in New York, where the Rebbe Rayatz now resided, he was a sought-after teacher, originally teaching at the Toras

Caring and Insightful

Emes Elementary School and later at the United Lubavitcher Yeshivah.

Before accepting this position, he served for a short time as a *mashgiach* of a hotel, using the opportunity to speak to the guests about Yiddishkeit. When he wrote to the Friediker Rebbe about a certain teaching position offered to him at that time, the Rebbe responded that he should not accept the offer, “because you are capable for something greater than that.” (*Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 5, p. 441).

His expertise in education was renown, and he visited many Lubavitch day schools in the United States, providing feedback and guidance. He organized conferences for school directors, allowing for networking and advanced discussion of pedagogy. His views on education are as relevant today as it was in those days.

Rabbi Ushpol wrote a short guide for teachers focusing on the importance of discipline and how it should be implemented. He also composed a booklet

for students, providing instructions and guidance on conduct in school and at home. Both compositions are printed in this issue.

Rabbi Ushpol was beloved by his students, taking a personal interest in their needs, both spiritual and material. He would tell his students, “Boys, you must be healthy, rested and happy.”

As a sensitive educator, he took his responsibility seriously, with an acute sense that this is my mission. He invested himself in totality into the student, the class or other issue at hand. The students, who sensed his great care for them, behaved under his tutelage. He rarely admonished his students; however, if he did, the children did not rebel, because it was paired with total dedication to the student.

He ran a board that would raise funds for the students’ needs, many of whom came from struggling immigrant homes.



Rabbi Ushpol (center) with his Talmidim in Vilna before leaving to the United States during WWII.
Credit: Lubavitch Archives

Rabbi Ushpol was beloved by his students, taking a personal interest in their needs, both spiritual and material. He would tell his students, “Boys, you must be healthy, rested and happy.”

RABBI YITZCHAK USHPOL

Rabb Uspol (center) relates the story of 19 Kislev at a Yeshivah a United Lubavitcher Yeshivah Farbrengen. On Rabbi Ushpol's left is Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky and Reb Yoel Kahan. On his right is the Rosh Yeshivah, Rabbi Chaim Meir Bukiet. Credit: Lubavitch Archives



His expertise in education was renowned, and he visited many Lubavitch day schools in the United States, providing feedback and guidance. He organized conferences for school directors, allowing for networking and advanced discussion of pedagogy.

RABBINICAL DECIDER

and source material. Each Thursday, one student would deliver it to the class.

Rabbi Ushpol was adamant that the *bochurim* should not leave on Friday for *mitvtzoim* until *seder* was over. When he saw the negative reaction of the *bochurim* to his strict stance, he decided to ask the Rebbe's opinion on the matter at his next *yechidus*. The Rebbe concurred that he was certainly correct: *mitvtzoim* should not be carried out on the account of *seder hayeshivah*.

Chosen because of his dedication to complete any project he undertook, in the mid- and late-1940s Rabbi Ushpol collaborated with the Rebbe on adding footnotes to the *maamorim* of the Frierdiker Rebbe. Of those times, Rabbi Ushpol would fondly recall, "The suggestions that the Rebbe gave me were greatly insightful and assisted me in my other writing projects." He developed a close connection to the future Rebbe, "whose words have

Caring and Insightful

always been a resolve for my spirit, strengthening and gladdening me.”

Once, when working on the *maamar Mayim Rabim* 5636, Rabbi Ushpol had difficulty finding a certain source and he asked the Rebbe for assistance. The Rebbe told him that he should return when he has additional problems and he would help him with all of them at once. When he amassed a sizeable amount of unclear sources, he approached the Rebbe and gave him the list. Without missing a beat, the Rebbe cited all the sources from memory, adding that he should check them to make sure none were inaccurate. This incident further deepened Rabbi Ushpol’s admiration of the Rebbe’s sharp memory and extensive knowledge.

Three months after the histalkus of the Friediker Rebbe, Rabbi Ushpol was among the group of Chassidim who approached the Rebbe, expressing their devotion to him with heart and soul and asking that he say Chassidus.

For many years, Rabbi Ushpol was the secretary of the *Chevrab Kadisha* of Agudas Chassidei Chabad. With the encouragement of the Rebbe, he penned a volume, “*Darkei Chessed*” on the observances and customs of mourners and the burial society. As he writes in his introduction, much of the material was taken from his recollections of the customs in his hometown of Kurenitz.



Rabbi Ushpol in the United States, circa late 1940's.
Credit: Lubavitch Archives

Until this day, his volume is widely used as a handbook on these issues.

Before printing the volume, Rabbi Ushpol asked the Rebbe to review the book and add his comments, mentioning their previous work together in the field of publishing and that from that point, “I was connected to you with a strong and deep connection.” In his reply, the Rebbe cited the Alter Rebbe’s explanation regarding the advantage of *zerizus* (*Igeres Hakodesh* 21), saying the book should be printed immediately without waiting for his input.

When writing about Halacha, he sought contemporary sources, and didn’t rely solely on old information. Regarding

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Rabbi Ushpol speaks at an event of Anshei Lubavitch of Borough Park. On the left is Rabbi Mordechai Mentlick, Zalman Gurary, Eya Yeichel Simpson and Shlomo Aaron Kazarnovsky. Credit: Lubavitch Archives



The community's appreciation of his calming and loving spirit came twelve years after his arrival, when they honored him with lifelong rabbinic tenure at a dinner attended by 500 people.

the issue of whether a Kohen can enter a hospital where he may come into contact with a dead corpse, the scholarly journal *Hamaor* testifies to Rabbi Ushpol's diligence in researching the matter thoroughly. Among others, he corresponded with R. Moshe Feinstein and R. Menashe Klein on the subject (see *Igros Moshe, Yoreh Dei'ah, 2:166. Shaalos U'Teshuvos Mishneh Halachos, 4:146*).

Rabbi Ushpol was an integral, trusted and unifying force in the Borough Park rabbinic community. He also participated

in many *dinei torah* surrounding complex halachic cases. One of the well-known *rabbanim* of Borough Park at the time was quoted as saying, "I do not sit at a *din torah* unless Rabbi Ushpol is present." Many neighborhood residents, including tens of community *rabbanim*, would sell their *chametz* through Rabbi Ushpol.

Rabbi Ushpol transcribed the *shiurim* of his teacher, the venerated scholar R. Yehudah Eber. R. Eber, who was murdered by the Nazis, delivered profound *shiurim* at Tomchei Temimim

Caring and Insightful

of Warsaw, and his teachings were published at the Rebbe's instruction in the two volumes of *Shaarei Yehudah*.

Anecdotally, before the first volume was printed, Rabbi Ushpol asked the Rebbe if he should include a *pilpul* from R. Dovber Garfinkel, another member of the *banhalah* of Tomchei Temimim in Warsaw who was killed by the Nazis and "who motivated me to learn Torah by heart." The Rebbe replied advised against including it in that same volume, and Rabbi Ushpol refrained.

BELOVED RABBI

In 5717 (1957), Rabbi Ushpol became the *rov* of the Anshei Lubavitch shul in the Borough Park. In a letter to the congregation, the Rebbe wrote, "I have known Rabbi Ushpol for many years. I am aware of the *chinuch* and *hadrachah* he received in the Yeshivos where he studied, as well as the *hadrachah* he merited to receive from the Frierdiker Rebbe for many years." The Rebbe continued that he was certain that he will be able strengthen the shul, with the assistance its members, "to make the shul worthy of its name and association with Lubavitch" (*Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 15, p. 85).

The community's appreciation of his calming and loving spirit came twelve years after his arrival, when they honored him with lifelong rabbinic tenure at a dinner attended by 500 people. Hapardes

Journal wrote, "Rabbi Ushpol was successful in bringing a lively spirit to the shul, based on tenets of Yiddishkeit and the teachings of Chabad Chassidus. He organizes various *shiurim*, and especially on Shabbos, many come to hear his lectures which are spoken with clarity.

"His exemplary kindness and care for the other, his fatherly concern for every member of the community, his dedication without boundaries to the spirituality of the community, has led him to be one of the central figures of the Jewish community in Borough Park."

Above all, Rabbi Ushpol was a *mentch*, someone who treated others with care and dignity. It was a known fact that if a student from a non-Lubavitcher home entered his class, he would undoubtedly remain in Lubavitch. Seeing how he acted and dealt with others created a true *kiddush Lubavitch*, and it is no coincidence that his *matzeivah* was inscribed with the words *pe'er anashim*—"Magnificence among men."

The couple remained childless, adopting his nephews, whose father passed away at a young age, as their own. This was done on the urging of the Frierdiker Rebbe, who was concerned for their spiritual upbringing if they would be left to tend for themselves. "He treated us like his own children," says his nephew Yosef Goldberg, "never complaining about his own personal situation."

RABBI YITZCHAK USHPOL



Credit: Lubavitch Archives

After his first wife passed away, the Rebbe suggested that he marry Cherna Schmukler, a widow from her second husband, R. Meir Chaikin. Emphasizing the importance for him to remarry, the Rebbe quoted the Halacha that a teacher of children should not remain single (*Shulchan Aruch, Even Ha'ezer, 22:20*). Since Rabbi Ushpol was still saying *kaddish* for his first wife, the Rebbe instructed him to delegate the recitation to another for the remainder of the eleven months.

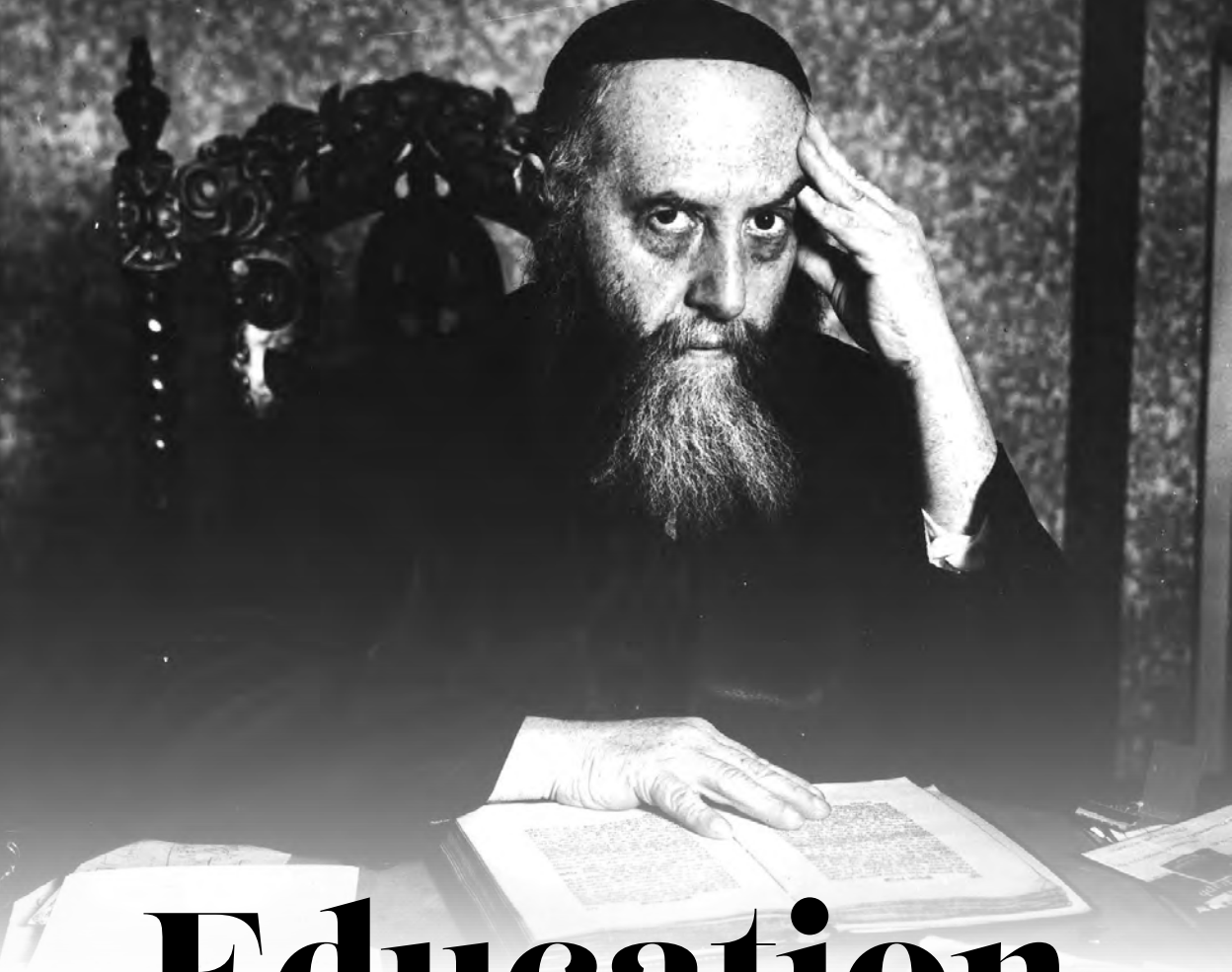
Rabbi Ushpol immediately traveled to Montreal, where his future fiancée then resided, and arranged to meet with Cherna. At their meeting, Rabbi Ushpol asked if she could wait for him to daven Maariv. She later related that not only did seeing him daven *Shemonah Esrei* for half

an hour not deter her from considering the *shidduch*, but it increased her admiration for him.

On 12 Adar, 5743 (February, 1983), he passed away and was interred not far from the Ohel of the Rebbe Rayatz. Although he could have asked to be buried closer, he abstained from doing so, so people would not say he used his connections as a member of the *Chevrah Kadisha* to secure the spot.

A revised version of a chapter from the forthcoming book Footprints: Colorful Lives, Huge Impact. Dovid Zaklikowski could be reached at DovidZak@gmail.com.

Revisions were made by Rabbi Yehuda Leib Altein based on conversations with Rabbi Yosef Y. Shmukler, Rabbi Mendel Cohen of Los Angeles, and Rabbi Yisroel Labkowski.



Education and Discipline

The following unpublished *sicha*, delivered by the Frierdiker Rebbe on 20 Elul, 5703, was said at a meeting of the teachers and *hanbala* of Tomchei Temimim. The Frierdiker Rebbe discusses a number of guiding principles that relate to both the presentation of material and discipline of the class, addressing issues that are as relevant today as when they were first said.

The *sicha* was transcribed by Rabbi Yitzchak Ushpol, one of the teachers present at the meeting. Rabbi Ushpol later prepared a list of guidelines for the teachers based on the *sicha*. The *sicha* and guidelines are being published here for the first time.

Translated by Rabbi Yehuda Leib Altein

- An Educator's Responsibility -

Sicha of the Friediker Rebbe to educators, 20 Elul, 5703

WHAT ARE WE BUSY WITH?

I am sure that this gathering conforms to the second style described above.¹ We have not gathered here to honor anyone—neither the chairman nor the one who will speak after him. This is a purely voluntary meeting for our own benefit and merit. We have no shortage of gatherings in our daily lives, but they are conducted differently. We don't have any tables bedecked before us; we have another sort of "set table"—the *Shulchan Aruch*.



The truth is, that if someone doesn't want to "perform the work of Hashem dishonestly," and certainly if he wants to be successful with his students, he may not enter the classroom without having first prepared the lesson. Anyone who believes otherwise is mistaken. I have seen from experience the great misfortune brought about by such a behavior.

Most of the participants here are busy on a daily basis with studying and teaching, and to a certain degree, with education and guidance as well.

In short, we are all occupied. We are occupied with teaching, we are occupied with preparing material to teach, and some of us are occupied with traveling back and forth. This is the typical problem of *yeshivas kerachim*, city life.² Yes, we are all busy; there is no question about it.

But let's ask ourselves an important question: are we occupied with *ourselves*?

PREPARING A LESSON

As mentioned above, we have the responsibility of preparing material to teach. The truth is, that if someone doesn't want to "perform the work of Hashem dishonestly,"³ and certainly if he wants to be successful with his students, he may not enter the classroom without having first prepared the lesson. Anyone who believes otherwise is mistaken. I have seen from experience the great misfortune brought about by such a behavior.

We also have the responsibility of teaching our students properly. This means (1) to explain the subject matter to them until they grasp it, as well as (2) to develop their skills. This comprises



Credit: Lubavitch Archives

Camp Gan Israel, Napa Valley, CA, 1976.

In this country, where the children speak the native language. It's possible that a child will not understand the Yiddish translation of a certain word, and this will give him an incorrect comprehension of the material, especially if he is young.

various components: (1) To get the child used to understanding a subject clearly. (2) To explain the material well and give it life, if possible—by giving an analogy or example.

Special care must be given [to make sure they understand the material correctly] in this country, where the children speak the native language. It's possible that a child will not understand the Yiddish translation of a certain word, and this will give him an incorrect comprehension of the material, especially if he is young.

Even the mere approach to teaching is a vast topic. A bashful person cannot teach.⁴ As an honest individual one should not be embarrassed to discuss issues with others, and he should not consider himself a born expert.

PROPER DISCIPLINE

However, it is not this area I wish to focus on today. We will have more chances to discuss this in the future, *im yirtzeh Hashem*.

RABBI YITZCHAK USHPOL

Our teachers have a problem regarding discipline. The responsibility of each one of us to ensure proper discipline is great indeed. If we have discipline, we have everything; if it is lacking, we are lost.

Generally speaking, every teacher does his utmost for the initiative of discipline to lie in his hands, because there is no gray area. It is either he who is nervous and loses himself before his students, or it is they who are afraid of him.

However, there is one thing we must remember and know. Just as a lack of discipline is detrimental, a dictatorial-style discipline is harmful as well. With the exception of very young children, a student must know and realize the importance of what is demanded from him, and he must somewhat understand how lack of discipline can damage himself and others.

The students themselves respect the teacher who controls them. They have a special respect for a teacher who controls them strictly but with fatherly love. Based on experience, I can cite many examples of students who were influenced negatively, while on the other hand, [I can cite examples of] the degree to which students were affected positively.

A NUMBER OF PRINCIPLES

1. One should refrain from laying a hand on a child. Doing so has an extreme negative effect on the children of our generation.
2. One should refrain from punishing a group due to the misdeed of an individual.
3. One should carry out every statement he makes, whether in punishment or reward.
4. One should not lower a mark because of a child's misbehavior. These are two distinct areas and should not be joined together.

One must exercise extreme caution when forcing discipline upon a student. One must exercise caution in the attitude and behavior he displays to the student, and he must be careful in the type of language he uses when speaking to him. "The blunder of the sheep will be remembered on the forehead of the shepherd." The child absorbs the words he hears and uses them.

A child can also become embittered from the sour face of his teacher...

Discipline

A LIST OF GUIDELINES

PREPARED BY **RABBI YITZCHAK USHPOL**
BASED ON THE ABOVE YECHIDUS

Discipline is a great and important responsibility for every teacher. With discipline he can achieve everything, and without it he can accomplish nothing. One should not strive to integrate a dictatorial-style discipline; to the contrary, the point is for the student to recognize the importance of discipline in society, both within the class and without, so that he will resolve to control himself whenever disturbance is detrimental to another.

Students themselves admire their teacher if he can instill within them a spirit of *kabbolas ol* and devotion to their work. There is no need to emphasize that discipline is an important yardstick

used by teachers and principals when evaluating a teacher; as such, one should invest all his efforts into attaining it.

DISCIPLINE “DON’T”S

Hitting. One should not raise a hand to hit a student. Although the *possuk* states, “He who holds back the rod hates his son,”⁵ and students are like children, this practice has a negative influence on the children of our generation, and a teacher must train himself to refrain from hitting his students.

RABBI YITZCHAK USHPOL



Before punishing a student, the teacher should speak privately with him once and twice about his misbehavior or negligence to come on time. He should speak gently and not shout at him. Harsh statements spoken on occasion will only be effective if one's usual manner of speech is gentle.

5. **Punishing Many.** One should not punish a group due to the misdeed of an individual. Doing so incites the students (not against the guilty child, but) against the teacher. The innocent children will complain and their admiration for their teacher will rapidly decline. Instead, he should use clever techniques to punish the individual.
6. **Futile Warnings.** One should not warn if he will not punish. A teacher must exercise care with every word he uses to admonish a student, and he should not say out of anger that he will mete out a certain punishment unless he will actually do so. A teacher loses respect when he is not true to his word.
7. **Lowering marks.** One should not lower a mark due to a child's misbehavior. The child views studies and discipline as two distinct categories, and joining them will cause the teacher to be viewed as an enemy.
8. **Sending a child out of class.** One should not make a habit of sending a child out of class. A teacher should not make this be a method of punishment, because a misbehaving child will view it as a reward, and even other children will not consider it a punishment if it happens often.
9. **Sending a Child to the Principal.** One should not make a habit of sending a child to the principal. A teacher who uses this as a common method of punishment demonstrates that he cannot control his students without outside help, and it also arouses suspicions on the part of the principal.

A List of Guidelines

DISCIPLINE “DO”S

1. **Preparation.** A teacher must prepare his lessons. The primary foundation to achieving discipline is the presentation of proper, interesting lessons, and this is impossible to attain unless they are prepared beforehand. A teacher must prepare his lessons in detail so that they will contain something interesting for each student. Questions in particular are an important tool in assessing the students' abilities and developing their skills. In this way, each child will be involved in the lesson and won't have time to misbehave and disturb the class. In a nutshell, preparing the lesson is for the benefit of both the teacher and his students.
2. **Self-critique.** Whenever students misbehave, the teacher should censure his lesson to see if perhaps he is the one at fault. Self-critique is among the most important and effective methods to improving discipline and enhancing studies.
3. **Valuing Time.** A teacher must value time. Arriving late and neglecting to use time properly become life-lessons for the student. Additionally, students do not appreciate a teacher who wastes their time.

The students should not have an empty minute without work. Even when the teacher is busy with technical work, the students should be kept occupied with studies. (Additionally, the teacher should not forget to keep an eye on the students even when he is involved in work or writing on the board.)

4. **Calm Tone of Voice.** A teacher must teach in a calm manner and train himself to avoid speaking loudly. A teacher who is nervous and shouts causes the students to become nervous and shout. If his regular tone of voice is calm and pleasant, he will be able to utilize a loud voice when necessary to instill fear in his students.
5. **Retaining an Authoritative Bearing.** A teacher should adopt the principle of pushing away with the left and bringing close with the right. He should not make the students laugh excessively (which can especially affect the discipline of younger students); instead, he should suffice with an occasional laugh and joke. He should love his students and assist them, but in a respectable manner so his authority will not erode.
6. **Consulting Others.** A bashful person cannot teach. If a teacher encounters a dilemma, he should not

RABBI YITZCHAK USHPOL

be embarrassed to ask the opinion of a teacher with more experience. A colleague's advice and direction can assist him in solving his problem, because tried-and-true experience will sometimes not be found in any book.

7. **Keeping Order.** The teacher should only allow students to speak according to a proper order. The students should be told to raise their hands and wait for permission before speaking. The teacher should not pay any attention to a student who disregards this rule. When the teacher presents questions to the class, he should not ask, "Who knows the answer to this question?" as this can disrupt the order and discipline of the class. Rather, he should ask questions to individual students. This will also help arouse the students' attention.
8. **One-On-One.** Before punishing a student, the teacher should speak privately with him once and twice about his misbehavior or negligence to come on time. He should speak gently and not shout at him. Harsh statements spoken on occasion will only be effective if one's usual manner of speech is gentle.
9. **Yiras Shamayim.** The concept of *yiras shamayim* should be stressed

when speaking to a student. The student should realize that when he does not fulfill his duties he is going against the will of Hashem, and he should be made to understand that doing what the Torah says is for his own benefit, so that he will live a peaceful, happy life. This imbues the student with *yiras shamayim*, so that all his actions will be *leshem shamayim*.

10. **Derech Eretz.** A teacher should accustom his students to act with *derech eretz* toward him, for example, to greet him when they see him in the morning and say goodbye before leaving at the end of the day.

The teacher should set aside times to discuss with his students *sichos* and *maamarei chazal* that describe proper conduct with others, such as greeting them, saying thank you, and respecting elders and *talmidei chachamim*. (It might be advisable to institute that the students should first enter the classroom and sit quietly in their seats, and when the teacher enters they should all stand up out of respect. This will single out the students of our *yeshiva* from other students.)

A List of Guidelines



Speaking at United Lubavitcher Yeshivah dinner. On the right is the Rashag and Rabbi Elya Yeichel Simpson. Credit: Lubavitch Archives

11. Appropriate speech and conduct.

Special care should be given to refrain from acting or speaking inappropriately, as this will be detrimental to the teacher and cause him to lose his respect.

We will conclude with the words of the Alter Rebbe in *Hilchos Talmud Torah*:⁶ “A teacher should not act frivolously before his students, joke before them, or eat and drink with them, so that they will fear him and study from him easily.” **P**

SOURCES

1. See *Sefer Hasichos* 5703, pp. 188–189.

2. See *Kesubos* 110b.

3. *Yirmiyahu* 48:10. See *Bava Basra* 21b. *Shulchan Aruch*, *Yoreh Dei'ah*, 245:17.

4. Adapted from *Avos* 2:5.

5. *Mishlei* 13:24.

6. 4:19.

REGULATIONS — FOR — Students

A HANDBOOK OF PROPER CONDUCT AND ETIQUETTE FOR YOUNG STUDENTS
PREPARED BY **RABBI YITZCHOK USHPOL** AND EDITED BY THE REBBE

The Rabbis taught: There are 4 areas in which a person must constantly exercise his utmost power in reinforcing: 1) Torah, 2) Good deeds, 3) Prayer, 4) Conduct. (Berochos 32).



Dear Student:

We are herewith presenting you an “Order of Regulations”, which will enable you to know how to conduct yourself properly, in a befitting manner for a Ben-Torah. This, in turn, will sanctify G-d’s name, as our Sages comment (Yuma 86a) on the posuk: “And you shall love G-d, your G-d”—that G-d’s name should be sanctified and hallowed through you. This is attained when one

studies conscientiously and when one serves and attends to the needs of Torah scholars. A person should conduct all his affairs in an honest way, and he should speak gently to others. When he follows this path, what will people say about him? Fortunate is his father who taught him Torah, and fortunate is his Rebbe who taught him Torah.

REGULATIONS DURING THE STUDY PERIOD

Remember the words of our Sages: “The fear of your Rebbe should be just as great as the fear of Heaven” (Avos Ch. 4).

“Ben Hai-Hai said: ‘The reward depends on the amount of vigorous exertion and devotion.’” (Avos Ch. 5).

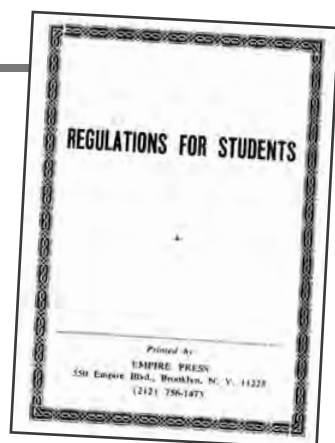
The Rambam explains that the only wisdom and intelligence which has an everlasting effect, is that which you acquire through great diligence, deep concentrations together with the fear of your Rebbe.



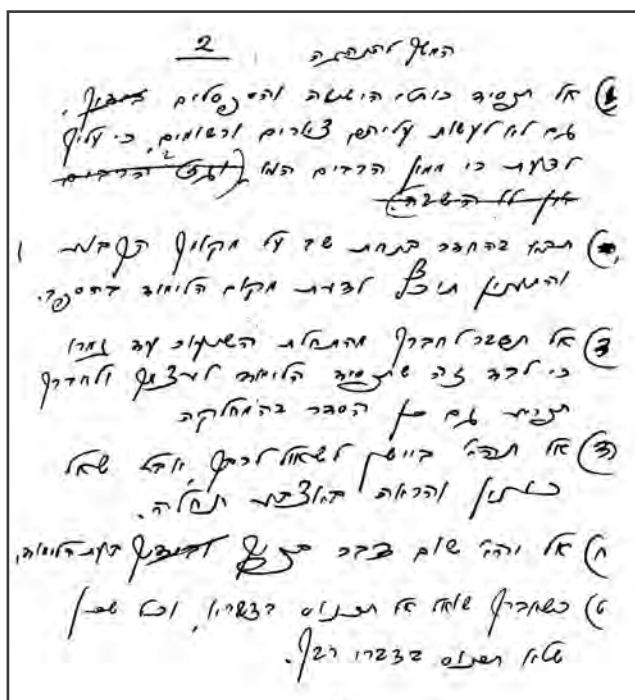
1. Be sure to keep a good and punctual record of attendance. Try your utmost never to be absent from your studies, and make sure not to be even a few minutes late after recess.
2. Enter your classroom quietly, take your own seat, and begin immediately to find the right place in your study book.
3. Refrain completely from talking to your friends—from the beginning of the lesson to the end. When you talk in class, not only are you and your friends missing your studies, but you will also be disturbing the general order and study in the entire class.
4. Never be bashful or ashamed to ask something of your Rebbe! However, stick to the subject which you are studying at the time, and first raise your hand to show your Rebbe that you want to ask a question.
5. Whenever your friend is in the middle of asking or answering something—never interrupt; and of course you should *never* interrupt while your Rebbe is talking. Wait until they're finished and then begin to speak.

An earlier version of the *Seder Hanhaga L'Talmidim* (Regulations for Students in Hebrew) was reviewed by the Rebbe for accuracy. The Rebbe made several corrections which offer insight into his expectations of young students.

On the following pages, we include pictures of some of those edits with English transcript and suggested explanation.



6. You should regard your classroom where you study and pray as a holy place. Therefore, you should not run around in it, and you should avoid shouting in it even during recess!
7. Make sure to keep your classroom as clean as possible. Never throw papers or other things on the floor. Use the wastebasket.



8. Be careful not to scratch or deface the walls of the Yeshiva, the desks, chairs, or the benches. Don't make any marks on them at all! You should realize that these were all bought with public money; and Teshuva does not correct theft or damage of public property.

9. Use your study books in a respectful way. Don't write any unnecessary things in them, and don't use them to write your notes on. It is your duty to put away your books in their proper place after you have finished studying, in order that they shouldn't lie around in abuse.

10. It is not proper to eat or chew anything (gum, etc.) during the time of learning.

11. Whenever you enter or leave the classroom, remember never to go in or out before your Rebbe (if he's there), because this is very disrespectful.

The original read, "Do not destroy the walls and benches of *yeshiva* with your hands." The Rebbe crossed out the words "with your hands."

The Rebbe erased the words, "and theft from the public cannot be returned." Perhaps a young student should only be told that it is wrong, and not the long term repercussions. [See *Shulchan Aruch AR Hilchos Middos Umishkalos* §16 that one can rectify theft of the public, but not completely.]

The original read, "Do not hold anything in your mouth or hands while learning." The Rebbe crossed out the words "and your hands." [The Rebbe's sensitivity to a fidgety child.]



12. Train yourself to say “Good morning” in the beginning of the day, and “Goodbye” (or Shalom) when your studies are over. It

is also important to show your appreciation by saying “Thank you” to everyone who does you a favor.

DILIGENCE IN STUDYING

Remember the advice of our Sages: Rabbi Eliezer said: “Be diligent in studying Torah” (Avos, Ch. 2)

“The words of Torah are as difficult to acquire as golden vessels—and as easy to lose as glass vessels (which break easily)” (Chagiga 15a).



1. Pay strict attention when your Rebbe speaks. Always keep your eyes on the right place (in the book) during the lesson, because the sight of the letters and words themselves increases the ability to understand. Cherish the extra moments which your Rebbe uses to speak with you

after the lesson, because he is always interested in your welfare.

2. Try to review your lessons every single day, and acquire a good companion to review them together with you.

3. Train yourself to review your studies many times. Besides the fact that this will enable you to remember them longer you will also understand them better. As our Sages say: “The more time one dwells upon the words of Torah, the more pleasure he receives from them” (Yerushalmi end of Berochos).
4. While studying, you should always recite the words in a clear and concise tone, as our Sages say: “The Torah is a source of life for the one who utters the words with his mouth” (Eiruvim 13). Furthermore, anyone who studies with his mind alone, without uttering the words—and has the opportunity to study orally—is actually not fulfilling the Mitzvah of learning Torah (Rav’s Shulchan Aruch, Hilchos Talmud Torah).
5. Make every effort to know your studies well and clearly in order that you won’t begin fumbling when someone asks you a question (Kidushin 30).
6. It’s proper to set aside a time to study Torah outside of the regular school hours. The Mitzvah of learning Torah—which is equivalent to all other Mitzvos—is divided into two categories: 1) Understanding Torah—to know how to perform the Mitzvos. 2) To study Torah for the sake of Torah itself: “And you shall delve in it day and night,” as explained in Hilchos Talmud Torah (Rav’s Shulchan Aruch).

REGULATIONS DURING PRAYER

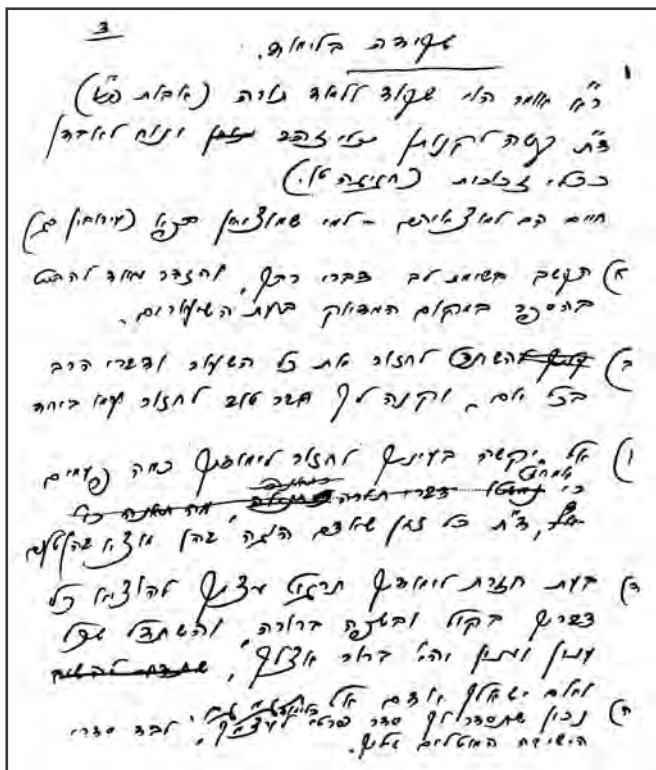
Remember the words of Our Sages: “The Jews proclaimed: Father in heaven, when the Bais Hamikdosh stood we would bring a sacrifice and be forgiven—now we only have the path of prayer” (Medrash Rabba, Bamidbar 18),

It says: “you shall love G-d with all your heart” —which service is performed with the heart? The service of prayer” (Taanis 2).



1. Always try to pray in a shul with a minyan, as our Sages say: “When is an acceptable time? When the public is praying” (Berochos 8). Say all the prayers in their proper time, and in the right order. Also, be very careful to recite the Shema in its proper time, both in the morning and evening, and thus fulfill a Mitzvah of the Torah.
2. When your classmates and friends are praying in the classroom, don’t

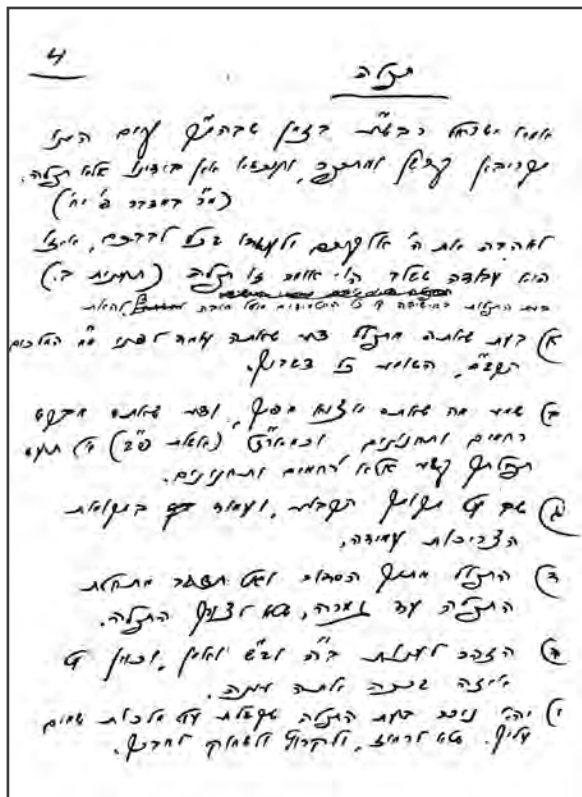
- separate yourself from them— but pray together with them.
3. Prepare yourself to begin praying together with the minyan. Your prayers should be said in a gentle and soothing tone; make sure to pronounce all the letters and words distinctly, because each and every word of prayer is very important.
 4. Always pray with a Siddur, and don't speak to anyone from the beginning of the prayer until the end, unless it's something which is absolutely necessary for the prayer.
 5. Recite the words loud enough for you to hear what you're saying, and remember that you are requesting G-d's mercy and forgiveness. As our Sages say: "Don't say your prayers as a routine, but show Hashem that you want His mercy and forgiveness" (Avos Ch. 2).
 6. Take great care in answering Boruch Hu Uvoruch Shmoy, Amen and Amen Yehei Shmei Rabba in those places where you are permitted to answer. "Anyone who answers Amen Yehei Shmei Rabba with his full intention will merit to have all evil decrees against him nullified" (Shabbos 119).



The original read, "You must try to review," and the Rebbe crossed out the word, "You must," leaving only, "Try to review."

The original quoted a parable of Chazal comparing Torah study to a fig which has endless flavor. The Rebbe omitted the parable. [Perhaps since it is unfamiliar or surprising.]

The original stated that every subject should be clear to the student "so that you will be able to answer." The Rebbe crossed out those words. [Perhaps the student could understand it to imply that the purpose of knowing the information is to perform well on a test.]



The original read, "During prayer, always be seated in your proper seat, and stand up only in the appropriate places." The Rebbe crossed out the word "only" [i.e. that the child may stand at other portions of davening as well.]

7. During prayer, always be seated in your proper seat, and stand up in the appropriate places, but don't walk back and forth while praying.
8. Train yourself to have the heavenly yoke—the yoke of the Al-mighty—upon you at all times, and it should be conspicuous. Don't wink or make any motion to your friends while praying.
9. When reciting prayers which are said while sitting, the person should be careful not to cross his legs. He should realize that he is sitting in the presence of the Al-mighty, and, as it is written (Thillim 140:14): "The righteous shall sit in front of You"; the word *yeshorim*—lit. the righteous—can also mean in a straight position (a play on words). (Sefer Chassidim, 431).

REGULATIONS DURING EATING

Remember the words of our Sages: "When Jews eat and drink, they first recite words of Torah and praise to Hashem" (Megillah 12b).

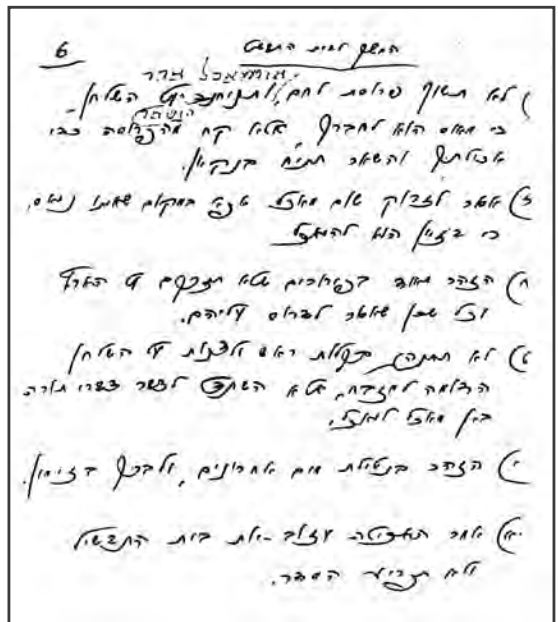
"Which is a small parsha which contains the basic principles of the Torah? The posuk: 'Know Him in all your ways'—that even when you are occupied in your material needs, you should also think of Hashem" (Berochos 63a).



1. When going to the lunchroom, walk quietly and in a proper manner. Don't run or shout! While you are in

the lunchroom, also, behave properly and sit with respect.

2. Make sure to wash your hands properly, be particular about cleanliness and cutting of the nails, and try not to mumble the words when you say the blessings. Say the blessings with the proper intention, and listen to the words which you recite.
3. Sit in your regular place, and don't eat while standing. When sitting in the presence of a great person, don't begin eating until he does.
4. Don't use your hands for any food which usually requires an eating utensil.
5. Don't bite off a piece of bread and lay the rest on the table, because it's very unpleasant to others. Train yourself to take off a bite-size piece with your hand, and leave the rest on the table.
6. It is forbidden to throw any food, even to a place which is not unclean—because it's a disgrace to the food.
7. Be very careful with crumbs; don't throw them on the floor, and surely don't step on them.
8. Remember that the table is compared to the Altar (of the Bais-Hamikdosh), and therefore it's improper to misbehave there. Try to say a "Dvar Torah" in-between courses.
9. Don't speak while there is food in your mouth, for besides the fact that this is dangerous (Taanis 5b) it's also bad manners.
10. Make sure to wash your hands after eating (*mayim achronim*). Always try to "*bentsch*" with a "*Mezuman*" either with 3 or 10 people together, because it's forbidden for one to separate himself from the public and bentsch alone.
11. After you have finished eating, leave the lunchroom in an orderly manner, and don't cause any disturbances.



The original read, "Don't bite off a piece of bread and lay it on the table." The Rebbe added, "[bread] or **any** food and lay **the** rest on the table." [Interestingly, the first edit was not included in the final version.]



Credit: Lubavitch Archives

CLEANLINESS AND HYGIENE

Remember the words of our Sages: Rabbi Pinchas ben Yoir said: Diligence leads to cleanliness; cleanliness leads to purity; purity leads to holiness; holiness leads to humility; humility leads to fear of sin and the fear of sin leads to piety (Chassidus)” (Shekolim 9).



1. Take a bath several times a week, and washing your hands and face is a must every day (Rav’s Shulchan Aruch, Hilchos Netilas Yodayim, 4).
2. Rinse your mouth and brush your teeth (in the weekdays) every morning, because this is important for the body hygiene, and it’s also forbidden to say G-d’s name without rinsing out the mouth (except on a fast-day) (Ibid).
3. If you have a bad odor in your mouth or on your body, try to get some medical relief, in order not to cause your friend any discomfort. Your friend suffers from this—but he might be ashamed to tell you (Migdal Oz, Rabbi Yaacov Emdin).
4. Be sure to take a haircut when your hair grows long, in order not to look disgusting in the eyes of your friends. Take great care of the clothing which you wear, that they should always be clean, without having any dust or spots on them. When you take off your clothes and shoes, put them away neatly in a good place.
6. You are obligated to conduct yourself in a clean manner wherever you happen to be—even in a room by yourself and especially when you are amongst others. This will enable

- you not to cause any unpleasantness to others, or a “Chilul-Hashem.”
7. Train yourself to be orderly in all your affairs, and you will benefit from this all your life.

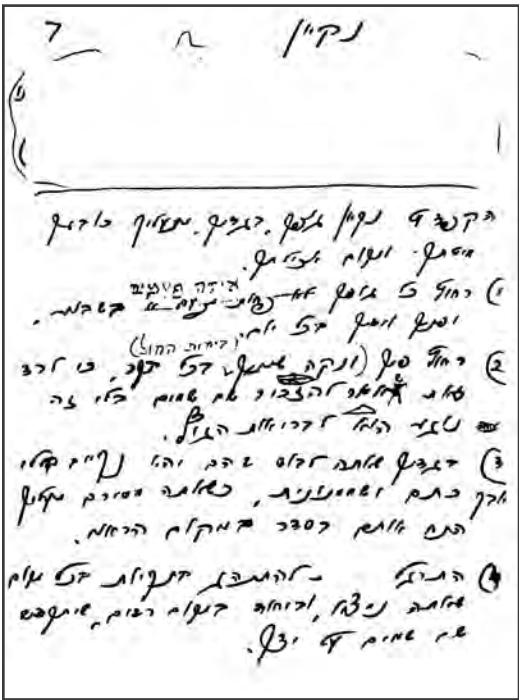
HONORING YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER

Remember the words of our Sages: “It says: ‘Honor your father and mother,’ and it also says: ‘Honor G-d with your wealth’—thus the Torah compares the honoring of parents to the honor of G-d (Kidushin 30).



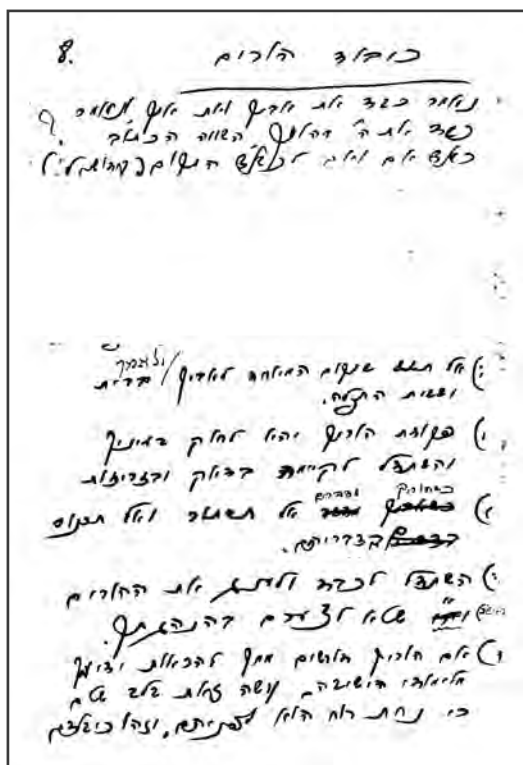
1. Don't sit in the place where your father and mother usually sit whether at home or in Shul.
2. Those things which your father and mother command shall be binding upon you, and you should exercise all your power to fulfill them diligently and precisely.
3. Never interfere while your parents are talking, and don't contradict them even when you know that there's a mistake in their words. Rather try to ask, and speak cordially until they realize what the truth of the matter is.
4. Honor your parents, and always do things which will give them pleasure and L-rd forbid, never cause them any anguish.
5. If your parents want you to show them what you have studied, fulfill their wish promptly and enthusiastically, because this is considered an honor to your parents.
6. When your parents awaken you in the morning, GET UP at once to serve

your Creator. Thus you will have a double reward: You've fulfilled the Mitzva of honoring your father and



The original read, “Wash your body no less than once a week.” The Rebbe changed it to, “several times a week.”

After the words, “and brush your teeth,” the Rebbe added, “during the weekdays.”



The original read, "Don't sit in the place where your father usually sits whether at home or in Shul." The Rebbe added, "and your mother."

1. It is a Mitzva to honor and respect an elderly person, and always conduct yourself properly and respectfully in front of someone who is older than you.
2. Don't embarrass your friend—or anyone—through speech or action, and be especially careful not to embarrass someone in public. For, our Sages said: "Whoever embarrasses someone in public does not have a share in the world-to-come" (Bava Metzia 59).

mother, and you also be able to keep a perfect attendance record.

7. You are obligated to honor your elder brothers and sisters, and to be on peaceful and friendly terms, with your other brothers and sisters, both older and younger; this will also give your parents lots of happiness.

CONDUCT TOWARDS OTHERS

Remember the words of our Sages: "Anyone who is liked by others, is also liked by the Al-mighty" (Avos Ch 3).

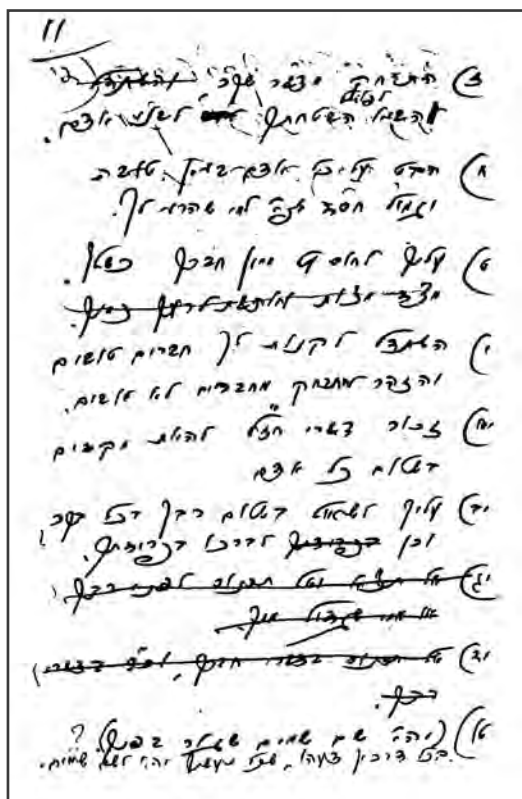


3. Never cause your friend any harm or inconvenience. Always remember the words of Hillel: "That which you dislike—do not do unto others," because the entire Torah is based on the Mitzvah of "You shall love your friend as yourself."
4. Refrain from saying lies, and stay away from gossip, evil talk, revenge and other unworthy habits.
5. Try your utmost to be well-liked by others, as it is written: "And he found grace in the eyes of G-d and man".
6. You should always speak gently to others; think first before you say anything, because it's impossible to take back your words once you have said them.

7. Always live up to what you say; and fulfill everything you promise someone.
8. Look upon everyone with a good eye, and be kind even to one who has caused you harm, as our Sages advised, to subdue your Yetzer-Hora (Bava Metzia 32).
9. Train yourself in the quality of embarrassment, because when you will become embarrassed in front of others you will thus be careful not to do anything bad or unworthy. The characteristic of embarrassment is the path for a long life.
10. You are obligated to be as considerate of your friend's money

just as your own, for besides the Mitzvah which is involved, this will also enable you to have many good friends and acquaintances.

11. Try to acquire good friends, and remove yourself from unworthy friends.
12. Greet everyone you meet. When you enter a gathering say 'Hello' (or Shalom) to everyone, and sit down in a proper place.
13. If it's necessary for you to request a favor or ask for something from others, do so in a gentle tone with nice words. Don't press them if they say no, but regard their answer to have been said properly under the circumstances,
14. When you leave a gathering be sure to say 'Good-bye' (or Shalom) to all those who are present. If all of them are leaving, let the older ones leave first. **P**



The original read, "try to fulfill everything you promise others." The Rebbe crossed out the word, "try."

The original read, "You are obligated to be as considerate of your friend's money just as your own because of the *mitzvah* of *v'ahavta l'reiacha kamocha*." The Rebbe crossed out the reason. [Interestingly, in the final version of the booklet it mentions the *mitzvah* and also that it will get him friends. If this was the Rebbe intention, perhaps it is since the child will be more motivated by this tangible benefit.]



TOO GOOD?

RABBI BINYOMIN COHEN

The saintly Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev is rightly famous as the defender of the Jewish nation. Countless stories are related concerning his love for his fellow-Jews, and his incredible ability to judge their behaviour in a favourable manner. He was, however, as Rov of a city, also involved in very down-to-earth and simple matters concerning and affecting the lives of those many individuals who turned to him for assistance.

One such person, a woman, once came to Rabbi Levi Yitzchok with a problem. She had bought a cow in order to ensure a supply of fresh milk. She would use some of the milk for her family and children, and the rest she would sell, thus enabling her to buy food and other necessities. The problem was that, despite all her efforts, the cow refused

to provide any milk. She tried and tried, but not a drop came forth. In desperation she went to Reb Levi Yitzchok to seek his advice.

The Rov heard her story, thought for a while, and then asked the distraught woman if she had been attempting to milk the cow into a bucket. “For sure” replied the woman. “And,” continued Reb Levi Yitzchok, “is the bucket clean? Maybe the cow sees some dirt in the bucket and does not wish to give milk?”

The woman threw her hands up in horror. “Rebbe, what are you saying?” she sobbed. “Do you have any idea how clean that bucket is? I would **never** use a bucket which wasn’t spotless. I scrubbed the bucket for half an hour, I rinsed it out, I dried it and I polished it. You should have seen how shining and sparkling clean the bucket was. You never saw a bucket like it!”

“Now,” exclaimed Rabbi Levi Yitzchok, “I can understand why the cow refuses to give any milk. **Too** clean is also no good.”



I heard the above story from Reb Mendel Futerfas, one of the great Chasidim of our generation. Even if one could be excused for entertaining some doubt as to its historical accuracy, the basic message of the story is nevertheless clear and relevant, even for those who will never go anywhere near a cow. In all of the challenges and problems with which we are faced we are encouraged to take a balanced approach, rather than zealously devoting all of our attention to what may well be a very minor detail. It might not harm to investigate the state of the bucket as just one factor among a whole range of more important considerations. It may in fact be true that a cow could be deterred by the presence of visible and obvious dirt in the bucket. There is, however, no way known in which polishing and shining the bucket is going to make any difference to the cow, and to put all of one’s energies and efforts into this is a good recipe for the bucket to remain empty.

The lesson is equally true with regard to the path a person chooses in his service of Hashem. Unbridled intensity and enthusiastic extremism may be attractive options,



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especially for the young at heart. The Rambam, however, recommends (Hilchos De'os Ch. 1 Halacha 4) striving for the middle path and avoiding extremes. Similarly, Chassidus demands that he be able to combine realism with idealism and create a harmonious unity between his spiritual goals and his practical limitations. Only when he accords due importance to each aspect of his Avodas Hashem (service of G-d) will he be capable of taking a genuinely middle-of-the-road approach, as desired by Torah. If, however, one perspective is emphasized to the virtual exclusion of all else, the end result is unlikely to be particularly satisfactory.

Of course, we often do not know where to draw the line, and how to distinguish between a major and a (relatively) minor issue. We would do well to discuss the matter with someone else who could be sufficiently objective to view the situation as a whole. He could then call a spade a spade, and avoid that imbalance which results from any one aspect being too good.



If stability and balance are important for the individual, they are even more crucial for society as a whole. No-one lives in total isolation, and his personal quirks and idiosyncrasies may have a far greater effect on those around him than he will ever realize.

Take, for example, the story of Sarah, a pious Jewish lady who lived on the ground floor of one of the apartment houses which opened into a communal courtyard in Vilna some one hundred and twenty years ago. Sarah was scrupulous in her observance of every Mitzvah, and, while she was friendly with all the women who lived in the courtyard, she never compromised her religious standards for any reason. Everyone looked up to her, and saw in her behaviour the sort of perfection which they could only long for.

Sarah's Shabbos, or, to be more precise, her Erev Shabbos, was very special. Her husband being a man of considerable means, Sarah was able to employ a full-time maid to keep her house spotlessly clean. She thus had plenty of time to bake her own challos, and to cook her fish, soup, chicken and cholent all by herself. By noon on Friday, all the food had been cooked and was placed in the oven to stay warm. Her apartment sparkled with the gloss of the silver candlesticks and the light reflected from the crystal decanter, as Sarah now commenced the spiritual side of her Shabbos preparations.

She read through the Tze'na Ure'noh (A Yiddish commentary on the Sidrah of the week) as well as other holy and inspiring texts, thus making herself worthy to receive the approaching Shabbos queen. It is a great Mitzvah to add to the Shabbos by accepting on oneself the sanctity of Shabbos even

before the holy day has actually arrived. Through this, one transforms part of an ordinary weekday (Friday) into a day of sanctity (Shabbos). The earliest time possible for such acceptance is P'lag Hamincha, which is one and a quarter seasonal hours before sunset.

As soon as P'lag Hamincha arrived, Sarah would light her Shabbos candles, and thus bring the purity and tranquillity of Shabbos into her home long before the men set out for Shul. The candles stood on the center of the large dining room table which was covered with a shimmering white tablecloth. From there they cast a warm glow throughout the apartment, as well as being clearly visible through the window.

Peace may have descended upon Sarah's home, but the same could hardly be said for her neighbors. None of them having been blessed with the same material means as the wealthy Sarah, the whole burden of preparing for Shabbos fell on their shoulders. They found themselves

rushing from one chore to another, especially on the short winter Fridays, as they busily prepared for the approaching Shabbos. Toiling to complete the myriad tasks still confronting them, they would look out into the courtyard and see Sarah's Shabbos candles shining clearly through the window. This silent announcement of the Shabbos queen's arrival made them feel tense and nervous, anxious and inadequate. The Shabbos candles had already been lit, and here **they** were, nowhere near ready. How come that they didn't seem to be able to manage as well as their exalted neighbor? Maybe Shabbos would arrive in a few minutes, and they would, G-d forbid, not yet have finished their preparations! As their nervousness increased, their tempers grew shorter. They snapped at their children and shouted at their husbands, who could only wonder why such serenity reigned in Sarah's home, in contrast to the frenzied and ill-tempered chaos which, it seemed, they were condemned to endure. All in all, the pressures and frustrations



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Sarah's candles paled into insignificance and were totally ignored as all the housewives realized that they had ample opportunity to complete their preparations. After all, the Rov didn't seem to be in any hurry to finish smoking. Apparently, he was in no rush to greet Shabbos, so why should they need to be holier than him?

of every Erev Shabbos served to create an atmosphere which was the complete opposite of all that Shabbos symbolized.

Enter Rabbi Elya Leizer, a local Rov who had just moved into his new apartment in the courtyard. He was both surprised and upset to hear, on his first Erev Shabbos, the sounds of domestic strife wafting through the air as husbands and wives berated each other. After Shabbos,

he inquired into the root of the problem, analysed the situation and came up with a plan which he decided to implement without delay.

The next Friday was a frosty mid-winter day. The European winter is really cold. Sub-zero temperatures ensured that people stayed indoors, and even coats were not of much use against the biting wind. Undaunted, Rabbi Elya Leizer in the late afternoon lit his pipe indoors, pulled his fur-lined coat over his Shabbos garb and calmly walked outside into the freezing cold. Once there, he sat down on his balcony and relaxed as he slowly smoked his pipe. Ignoring the cold and the wind, he continued to smoke unhurriedly until precisely one minute before candle-lighting. He then stood up and disappeared indoors.

The Rov's appearance on his balcony did not go unnoticed. All the wives of the courtyard were caught by surprise. Every week they saw the candles in Sarah's home burning brightly and silently calling out "Shabbos" to each of them. By contrast, this week's message seemed to be very different. Instead of having sanctity and serenity forced upon them long before they were ready to receive it, they now saw with their own eyes the Rov sitting and smoking without a care in the world. This was

surely the most powerful of proclamations that it was **not** yet Shabbos. “Take your time, ladies” the relaxed figure of the Rov seemed to announce. “Do what you need to do and everything will be fine. There is plenty of time until Shabbos.”

Sarah’s candles paled into insignificance and were totally ignored as all the housewives realized that they had ample opportunity to complete their preparations. After all, the Rov didn’t seem to be in any hurry to finish smoking. Apparently, he was in no rush to greet Shabbos, so why should they need to be holier than him? Unflustered, each of the housewives completed her tasks in time for Shabbos. Some of the husbands were pleasantly surprised to hear their wives humming to themselves as they worked, and even offered to lend a helping hand. Peace descended upon many families and Shabbos was received in a truly desirable atmosphere. All this due, not to Sarah’s candles, but rather to the Rov’s pipe.

Again, I cannot vouch for the authenticity or historical accuracy of the above story. It is not, however, difficult to find similar scenarios being enacted in our midst, without our even being aware of them. We rightly encourage and applaud all manner of worthy achievements in the area of Torah and Mitzvos, piety and chassidishkeit. We aim for the best, and see no need to lower the bar. Like Sarah’s Shabbos candles, our religious devotion shines clear for all to see. However, similar to Sarah’s Shabbos candles, we

sometimes unfortunately forget that there are many other Jews who, for a variety of reasons, may be unwilling or even incapable of emulating our lofty example. For them, that perfection which we take for granted, may seem overwhelming or even intimidating. Our perfection has to stay, but someone should be prepared to point out to those who do not feel quite ready for our degree of enthusiasm, that the basics of Yiddishkeit are at least as important as its embellishments.

In the story, it was a wonderful thing for Sarah to light her Shabbos candles one and a quarter hours early. Halachically speaking, however, it was totally unnecessary, as lighting eighteen minutes before sunset is just fine. The Rov did nothing to discourage Sarah – she could continue on her level – but did find a need to address the realities of life as experienced by her less exalted neighbours. If this meant sitting outside in the freezing cold, so be it. If it meant taking time off his own preparations for Shabbos, that was just too bad. Sarah could sit inside and enjoy the light and warmth. He, with his broader vision and more sensitive heart, was prepared to suffer at least a passing discomfort as he sought to provide encouragement to those who needed it most.



Transplanting the message into a slightly different, but far broader, context could

help us appreciate the unique demands and opportunities of the Shlichus given to us by the Rebbe concerning Klal Yisroel (the Jewish People) as a whole.

On the one hand, every Chosid is aware of how necessary it is that he and his family strive to maintain the highest levels in all matters of Kedushah. It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of each and every one of us being a Dugma Chaya (living example) of all that Hashem and His Torah demand of us. The greater the flame, the less likely it is to be weakened or extinguished. The stronger the light, the further it will radiate. The atmosphere in our homes should be one of complete commitment to a clearly-defined way of life with all its joys and responsibilities.

At the same time we need to be able and ready to sit outside in the cold. We need to appreciate that an unfortunately large part of Klal Yisroel is so far removed from Torah perspectives and traditional Jewish values that most basic practices of Yiddishkeit seem to them to be antiquated, irrelevant and pointless. The last fifty years alone have seen a major shift in society attitudes away from a traditional, religious approach, and towards a left-wing permissiveness where all are seen as equal (i.e. the same) and the best thing which you could do is that which you enjoy the most.

As long as we remain with our lights in the comfort and security of our homes it is questionable whether we will be able to have any significant effect on those who lead a very different way of life. This despite the fact that many of them are quite aware of, and may even somewhat admire, those Jews who lead a totally religious life and thus avoid many of the problems plaguing Western society at large. Seeing the lights in someone else's house often merely reinforces the perception of "us" and "them", and strengthens the attitude that what is precious to the religious "them" is fairly meaningless for the more worldly "us".

Our Shlichus is, of course, to help change that perception. For that to happen, we need to be ready to leave our comfort zone.

It is, of course, much easier to maintain a discreet distance from the general community. If one then feels slightly guilty, he can always fulfill his responsibilities to Jews at large by exhorting them from the secure isolation of a pulpit, newsletter or similar. The simple fact remains, however, that only through receiving support on their personal level will people be motivated to appreciate the value of their own actions. Only through contacts initiated within their own context will they become sufficiently inspired to make any sort of change to their way of life. You can call out to a person from a great



As a result of the Esrog being handled by so many people, it became considerably discoloured. This discolouration could, in certain cases, serve to disqualify the Esrog from a Halachic point of view.

distance, but to give him a helping hand you have to be next to him. At the end of the day, the real heroes are the ones who are prepared to get close.

The Rebbe related on several occasions the story of the Tzaddik who gave his own Lulav and Esrog for the use of the whole community. (The Rebbe himself actually did exactly the same.) As a result of the Esrog being handled by so many people, it became considerably discoloured. This discolouration could, in certain cases, serve to disqualify the Esrog from a Halachic point of view. When asked about this, the Tzaddik replied that, on the contrary, the greatest beauty of an

Esrog is when so many people use it to fulfill the Mitzvah. (The Chasam Sofer in his Chiddushim to Succah 36a makes precisely the same point.) Physically speaking, such an Esrog appears to be far from beautiful. Torah, however, adds a totally different definition of beauty – one which measures also the number of Jews involved and the number of Mitzvos performed. This is genuine beauty and deserves to be the focus of all our efforts. When we aim for that which Torah defines as good, we will come to realise that true good is **never** too good. **P**



A Unique APPROACH to Education

RABBI AHARON DOVID GANCZ

Adapted from a talk in Crown Heights – 9 Adar 1 5774

SIMILAR BUT OPPOSITE

Whenever we seek to clarify ideals, the most attention must be given to less apparent deviations. Obvious contradictions are unlikely to mislead an educated person.

Likewise, in the realm of *chinuch* and interpersonal relationships, the obvious directives of Torah are well-known. Yet, what sometimes misleads are matching ethics in secular wisdom. While on the surface they appear similar and even the same, upon further analysis, we uncover that not only are they different, they are actually opposites.

Chazal say, “If someone tells you that there is wisdom among the nations – believe

him; but if he tells you that there is Torah – don’t believe him.” Secular thinking has come up with profound guidance for ethical living, however, as products of their own mind they are lacking “Torah,” a connection to Hashem. This is not just about which laws to observe, but it’s an entirely different attitude to life itself.

Every person has unique challenges, and every group of people has its challenges. The *yetzer hara* is sly and ensnares people based on their weaknesses. Just as germs grow and mutate, the *yetzer hara* was programmed to evolve and match its setting.

Yet, just as Hashem gives us the ability to develop new remedies to tackle the

germs, He gave us the wisdom to outsmart the *yetzer hara* through the right amount of attention and thought. Hashem says, “*Barasi yetzer hara, barasi lo Torah tavlin*—I have created the *yetzer hara*, but I have given you the Torah as an antidote.” To this end, chassidim would constantly

talk and *farbreng* together to recognize the *yetzer hara*’s new facades and to find new ways to deal with him.

Let us consider a few areas where secular views are confused with values of Torah and Chassidus.

Dovid Hamelech says in Tehillim, “*Shamra nafshi ki chossid ani* — Protect me since I am a chossid.” The simple meaning is of course that Dovid is asking for protection in the merit of his piety. However a *chassidishe vort* reads the *posuk* differently: Because I am a “chossid” I require a special protection not to misapply the ways of Chassidus.

Of course, Chassidus lifts us up above ordinary coarse challenges and gross errors that in the absence of Chassidus we would have to struggle with. But Chassidus makes us more refined so we risk becoming exposed to subtle mistakes, from which we ask Hashem to protect us.

HASHEM AND THE WORLD

The Baal Shem Tov taught *ain od milvado* – not only is there no other **power** in the world, but there is nothing but Hashem. He taught that Hashem is not merely *Keil Haolam*, G-d of **the** world, but rather it’s *Keil Olam*, G-d-world, meaning that the world is one with Hashem.

Before the Baal Shem Tov, everyone knew that there is a world which was created by

Hashem, but they viewed Hashem and the world as separate entities. Hashem is the Infinite Creator, and the world is a giant, yet finite, collection of galaxies. The Baal Shem Tov introduced a new worldview based on *Kabala* where there is nothing outside of Hashem. Whatever exists, as insignificant as it may be, is an extension and an expression of Hashem through

Secular thinking has come up with profound guidance for ethical living, however, as products of their own mind they are lacking “Torah,” a connection to Hashem. This is not just about which laws to observe, but it’s an entirely different attitude to life itself.



Credit: Lubavitch Archives

Every person has unique challenges, and every group of people has its challenges. The *yetzer hara* is sly and ensnares people based on their weaknesses. Just as germs grow and mutate, the *yetzer hara* was programmed to evolve and match its setting.

tzimtzum, a series of concealments through which He works in the finite.

Around the same time as the Baal Shem Tov, Spinoza popularized Pantheism, a faith that, *l'havdil*, also preaches the unity of G-d and world. He exclaimed that G-d is the intricacy of small particles, the vastness of space, and the beauty of nature. They too believed that "everything is G-d."

On the surface, these ideologies are the same or similar. But as I heard many times from Reb Yoel Kahn, when we delve deeper we realize that they are complete opposites. The Baal Shem Tov revealed a deeper element of *achdus Hashem* and making the world even less significant than previously believed, while pantheists used the world to replace Hashem. To the Baal Shem Tov G-d is the world, but to them world is the god.

THE VALUE OF MATERIALISM

There are some communities that don't suffer much from *veltishkeit*. In the *mussar* environment, the whole idea is restraint. Fasting and breaking oneself is a product of the perception that the world is no good. The *yetzer hara* can't sell worldliness to people with such an outlook. So instead, he sells them *gaivah*: that they are destined to become a *gadol* and that their *Olam Haba* is outstanding. They need remedies to deal with this *yetzer hara* which is unique to them.

Of course, as human beings, they are not immune to temptations and challenges, but intellectually they believe that "*velt iz treif*," the outside world is no good. This stance is what they hold in principle and it is what they teach their children. They certainly don't mock the words of *mussar* and they won't publicly sanction a permissive lifestyle. They don't need a special remedy to be protected from outside influences.

Chassidus, on the other hand, gives this world value. Tanya teaches that the

purpose of all of the spiritual worlds is *olam hazeh hagashmi*, this physical world, for it is here that the Essence of Hashem is expressed. Chazal say (Avos 4:17), "One hour of *teshuvah* and *maisim tovim* in this world is greater than all of the World to Come." Chassidus explains that this is not because of the reward for those deeds, but because those actions themselves connect us directly with Hashem, which is superior to the mere ray of Hashem offered in Gan Eden.

Chassidus also emphasizes that *kol ma shebara Hakadosh Boruch Hu ba'olamo lo bara ela lichvodo*—whatever Hashem created in this world he created for his own glory. There is nothing that is separate or conflicting with *avodas Hashem*. Everything permissible was created to be used for serving Hashem and to transform this world into a *dira btachnonim*, a dwelling place for Hashem. For this reason, Chassidim were not afraid of the world.

THE CHALLENGE

This is where the *yetzer hara* steps in. He takes advantage of this positive approach of how "world" is a means to such a great end, and makes **it** the **end**. "The world need not be shunned," he argues, "It's alright to indulge in it. Avoiding the world is not the way of Chassidus."

We must realize that we are being taken for a ride and get off the bandwagon.

A non-Lubavitcher once told me that he loves Chassidus and *Likkutei Sichos* because of their similarity to the teachings of R' Samson Refoel Hirsch. The *frum* world at large is afraid of the

There are some communities that don't suffer much from *reltishkeit*. In the *mussar* environment, the whole idea is restraint. The *yetzer hara* can't sell worldliness to people with such an outlook. So instead, he sells them *gairah*.

secular world. But R' Hirsch encouraged the study of secular subjects and mixing with broader society, and likewise the Rebbe encouraged his chassidim to go out and engage the world... Sadly he missed the point.

While R' Samson Refoel Hirsch indeed saved thousands of Jews in Germany from assimilation with his approach, Chabad Chassidim views his philosophy as a compromise. It was a reaction to the attraction of secular studies that was so strong in German circles. He believed that the only way to overcome it was through permitting it alongside Torah, (similar to the way the Torah itself permitted certain prohibitions because of its insurmountable challenge – see

Rashi at the beginning of *Ki Teitzei*). However, with this position he sanctioned secular society and implied that they can go hand-in-hand with Torah.

The Rebbe, on the other hand, was fiercely opposed to attending college (except in special situations), not only because of the dangers involved, but also because of its inherent

contradiction to *Yiddishkeit*.

In one letter (printed in *Dem Rebbe's Kinder* p. 456) the Rebbe writes that one of the more serious problems with college is its implication that one can be proficient in Gemara, with *semicha* in “*Yoreh Yoreh*” and “*Yadin Yadin*” (*dayanus*), and yet without a college degree he is incomplete. The reverence that it gives to worldliness is dangerous. Though people will argue that the reason for attending college is purely for *parnasa*, the underlying motivation of those attending college is not such. It represents a subconscious sense of respect for secular knowledge and savvy conduct.

A *melamed* who wanted to go into business went to seek the counsel of the Alter Rebbe and another great *tzadik*. The Alter Rebbe advised him to remain a *melamed*, yet when he traveled to the other *tzadik*, he was advised to go into business.

When the *melamed* informed the *tzadik* of the Alter Rebbe's advice, the *tzadik* exclaimed: “Zalmen'yu [as the Alter Rebbe was called by the *talmidim* of the

Mezritcher Maggid] knows not the true *kavana*; one must not behave in a manner of 'no world'. Rather while being involved 'in world[ly matters]' one must nevertheless stay 'above the world' (*Nit 'nit velt' nor 'velt un ois velt'*)."

When the *melamed* repeated this exchange to the Alter Rebbe, the Rebbe said: "This would have been true if you were a businessman and you wanted to become a *melamed*, for this would demonstrate that even 'in world' (business) you recognize that there is 'no world' (hence the desire to become a *melamed*). But in your case, you *want* to go into business..."

NON-EXISTENT

Chassidus does not merely disregard the world as much as mainstream *Yiddishkeit*, but it disregards it even more so. In fact, the reason Chassidus is not afraid of the world is because of its **non-existence**.

The previous model of *Keil Haolam*, G-d of the world, recognizes the world as an independent reality — the question is only what you do about it. If you are "*Chareidi*" you shun it, running from it so it shouldn't disturb your *Yiddishkeit*. If you follow "*Torah Umada*" you embrace it, but you lay down guidelines to ensure a proper balance so that your *Yiddishkeit* not be destroyed.

To the Baal Shem Tov's model of *Keil Olam*, there is no world to run from. The world is not another power *chas veshalom* that is **interfering** with Hashem, rather it is the mere expression of Hashem

which is being created by Hashem this very moment. Therefore it is not something to fear. Mundane parts of the world are opportunities to express holiness by directly or indirectly servicing a Jew and his G-dly work. Forbidden matters are also part of G-dliness, for they were created for us to abstain from them.

However, the mutated *chassidishe yetzer bara* accepts the world as is. Since the world is not a contradiction to *Yiddishkeit*,

Chassidus emphasizes that whatever Hashem created in this world he created for his own glory. Everything permissible was created to be used for serving Hashem and to transform this world into a *dira b'tachonim*, a dwelling place for Hashem.

Chassidus does not merely disregard the world as much as mainstream Yiddishkeit, but it disregards it even more so. In fact, the reason Chassidus is not afraid of the world is because of its non-existence.

he embraces it without any guidelines in place. In other words, it is not *Keil Olam*, nor *Keil Haolam*, just plain *olam*!

It should be stated that this article is not about judging the principles of *Torah Umada* or their *gedolim*. It's about judging our own *yetzer hara* to ensure that we don't come to a situation where Chassidus is synonymous with "*Torah Umada*" or far worse.

In the days of the Tzemach Tzedek, a *chassidishe shochet* in a certain town began wearing boots like the new fashion. The townsmen became concerned with his modern conduct and notified the Rebbe.

When that *shochet* next visited Lubavitch, the Tzemach Tzedek told him that he heard that he began wearing boots and asked why he did it. The man excused himself saying that the slaughterhouse was full of blood and mud, and he felt it was disrespectful to enter the *shul* with dirty feet. Now, with his new boots, his feet remained clean and he wore his clean shoes to *shul*.

The Tzemach Tzedek called over his *meshares* Chaim Ber and said, "Chaim Ber, come help me laugh! This man is cloaking his actions in *kedusha* and *Isheim Shomayim*!"

And he added, "My Hirshel (the *shochet* in Lubavitch) is a fine *yerei Shomayim*, and he doesn't wear boots..."

(*Eileh Toldos Peretz* p. 644 ; partially cited in *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 9, p. 21))

SHELTERED CHILDREN

This observation and concern is not my *chidush*; it was addressed by the Rebbe long ago.

The Rebbe quotes the famous story: When the Tzemach Tzedek was a young

boy, his teacher in *cheder* told him that the *Baal HaTurim* writes that the seventeen years that Yaakov lived in Egypt were his best years. The young boy was naturally surprised. How could it be that Yaakov Avinu, whose life was holiness and



The Rebbe explains that although transforming darkness is a valuable task, it is reserved for those who are advanced in G-dly service. A child must be raised in the simplicity of Torah and *Yiddishkeit*. He shouldn't have to struggle to conquer evil – he's not ready for that.

spiritual service, should most enjoy the time he spent outside of the Holy Land, in such a decadent environment?

The boy decided to present his question to his grandfather, the Alter Rebbe. His grandfather told him this: Before Yaakov entered Egypt, he sent his son Yehuda to establish a place of study, a *yeshiva*. Thus, even in *Mitzrayim*, he was surrounded by Torah and *kedusha*.

The Rebbe questions this explanation: How does that explain why his years in Egypt were better? If it was because he

was now able to transform the darkness of *Mitzrayim* into light, why didn't the Alter Rebbe say so to his grandson?

The Rebbe explains that although transforming darkness is a valuable task, it is reserved for those who are advanced in G-dly service. A child must be raised in the simplicity of Torah and *Yiddishkeit*. He shouldn't have to struggle to conquer evil – he's not ready for that. That is why the Alter Rebbe only told his grandson about the positive element in Yaakov's *avoda*.

At a central gathering of Lubavitch educators, Reb Yoel quoted this *sicha* as a fundamental principle in educating children in our times. Despite everything Chassidus has to say about the value of elevating the mundane, the basis for *chinuch* must be purity and shelter from conflicting messages.

Everyone understands how ludicrous it is to confuse the *shirayim* of a *tzaddik* with a Macintosh apple. It would be equally foolish to confuse Chassidus Chabad with human rationale.

It is said that when the great *chossid* Reb Itche der Masmid was shown the great Manhattan skyscrapers, he wasn't overawed. He explained, "Chassidus teaches that all things, spiritual and physical, are kept alive by G-dly energy

from Above. Now, our material world is the lowest of them all and receives its energy from the refuse of the *Ofanim*, the angels in the world immediately above us. Are you getting excited by refuse?"

To Reb Itche der Masmid Chassidus was a reality. When he looked at the impressive structures, he saw *Elokus*. When he realized that the bystanders were seeing something else, and relishing its mundane physical aspect, then it became to him sheer "refuse." There was no concern that he would fall in. We, and especially our children, aren't on that level, and we must always be on guard.

Denying one's own weakness and vulnerability to *olam hazeh* was already an issue in the Alter Rebbe's times. In Tanya (ch. 28) the Alter Rebbe challenges a notion prevalent in his time that if one is assaulted by bad thoughts during *davening* he should elevate them by uncovering their holy source. He strongly warns his chassidim against this service; only a *tzaddik* who is truly above such thoughts can elevate them, an ordinary person attempting it will simply be swept along with it.

When discussing the need for young married men to continue learning for 2-3 years after marriage (as set in Shulchan Aruch), the Rebbe added: "The *yezter hara* is a 'professional,' so he comes and brings you a proof from Chassidus. Chassidus demands that we engage with the world! If you want to listen to the *yezter hara*—*nu*, what can I do. *But why do you have to drag the Alter Rebbe and Chassidus into it?* It's like the Tanya says, '*He grabs the king's head and pulls it down, burying his face....*'"

(*Toras Menachem* vol. 33 p. 88)

CHASSIDUS CHABAD OR HUMAN RATIONALE?

There is another area in which the *yetzer hara* attempts to cash in on our holy beliefs.

Chabad has a unique way in serving Hashem using our intellect – *Chochmo*, *Bina*, and *Daas*. It demands thorough thinking and analysis, and it expects emotions to be born from deep thought and contemplation. To a real chossid this requires *avoda pnimis* (internal service), something which is beyond the ordinary *avoda* of most upright Jews.

The *yetzer hara* is a traitor and encourages us to confuse it with *chakira*, questioning our faith. *Emuna pshuta*, simple faith, is a basic tenet in *Yiddishkeit*. Not only does Chabad not negate *emuna pshuta*, but it deepens it. That which every Yid believes because of his *neshama* and tradition is internalized through contemplation. We do not philosophize or engage in *chakira*. We don't try to figure out the true existence of Hashem through our own philosophical exercises.

A Jew is influenced by his own *neshama* and by a *neshama klalis*, a general *neshama*, his Rebbe. The difference between a Chabad chossid and another chossid is that while another chossid connects to his *neshama* and to his Rebbe through inspiration—at a *tish* with *shirayim*, by listening to his Rebbe's *davening*, etc.—a Chabad chossid isn't satisfied with that alone. Chassidus Chabad requires connecting to the Rebbe through intellect—Chabad.

The teachings of a Rebbe convey his essence, similar to the way Hashem wrote His Essence into the Torah, “*Ana nafsbi kesovis yehovis*.” The Rebbe's *sichos* and

One of the most sought after treatments today is for low self-esteem. In the view of Chassidus the cure is *bitul*. To modern society the cure is building the person up.

maamorim convey his holiness, and must be learned in that spirit. When learning, I don't insist on fitting the *maamar* into my understanding, but setting my understanding according to the *maamar*.

Imagine a cultured person, a *Yekke*, comes to see a Rebbe and beholds a long line of chassidim waiting to get *shirayim*. He can't bother waiting all that time, and besides, taking food from the Rebbe's hands is not so hygienic. So he goes to the Rebbetzin and asks her what kind of apple her husband is giving out. Macintosh, she says, she bought it yesterday. So he goes to the same store and buys a Macintosh apple.

Everyone understands how ludicrous it is to confuse the *shirayim* of a *tzaddik* with a Macintosh apple. It would be equally foolish to confuse **Chassidus Chabad** with **human rationale**.

If life is about pleasure, then you indeed need a therapist at every turn, since life is fraught with challenge. But if life is a sacred mission, then you are not fazed by a loose spring. You are a soldier and you carry out your duty with pride, notwithstanding whatever difficulty you may encounter.

SELF-ESTEEM

One of the most sought after treatments today is for low self-esteem. In Chassidus as well, *atzvut*, depression, and lack of enthusiasm, are considered the most damaging character traits. Here again, the two opposites, Torah and Chassidus and secular wisdom look alike, but are light-years apart.

In the view of Chassidus the cure is ***bitul***. To modern society the cure is **building the person up**. The Rebbe once explained that no matter how high a person's self-esteem will reach, it will remain limited. If, however, a person's esteem is based on being a servant of the King, then he is infinitely great. In the expression of Chazal, "*Eved melech – melech*," the servant of a king is like the king himself. *Bitul* is not about **crushing** a person *chas veshalom*, but about **uplifting** him by connecting and uniting him with Hashem.

This attitude changes the entire way we derive satisfaction. To a true soldier, the happier the king is, the more satisfaction

and contentment the soldier has. He has no need or interest in building his own entity or ego. Conversely, if satisfaction is derived only from "self," then the self has to be promoted, and putting aside one's own ego is perceived as unhealthy and detrimental.

The Rebbe would often quote Chazal's statement, "*Ani lo nivreisi ela l'shameshes Koni* — I was **not** created **for any other purpose** than to serve my Master." (Moreover, the Rebbe preferred this version over the version that states, "I was created to serve my Master," since this version implies that there is no other purpose in our lives besides serving Hashem.)

To elucidate this point: Imagine if Rabbi Chadokov would have called us in and said, "Listen, there are thousands of letters coming in to the Rebbe and we need another secretary." What would the first response be? Not "How many hours? What is the compensation?" but rather "When do I show up?" To serve the king is the most fulfilling position.

OVERCOMING PAIN AND SUFFERING

In the previous analogy, being the Rebbe's secretary comes along with a lot of hard work, challenges, and stress. Yet, the satisfaction of the mission and the connection to the Rebbe makes it worthwhile and meaningful. Thus, not only does submitting to a higher power give a person satisfaction and high esteem, but it also softens bumps in the road and challenges in life.

People run to therapists because of the challenges and problems. They are unhappy and look for the best way to resolve their troubles. Can a person overcome challenges without constant support and confirmation? Is it possible to be happy while living with challenges?

Let us examine what living with challenges is like in the following instances:

Suppose someone goes on a beautiful two-week getaway vacation. Every detail of his trip is prearranged—five-star hotel, catered meals, a tour guide—comfort at every step of the way. He is paying full price to spend a few days in bliss. It turns out all so perfect except for one thing: his mattress had some loose springs and wasn't so comfortable. He returns home and files a complaint with his credit card company to cancel all of the charges. He is upset; his desires weren't fully met.

Now imagine a soldier in war who was assigned to kill an enemy who is endangering society. For days he lies in a ditch with bullets flying overhead, waiting for the right moment to make his move. Could you imagine him complaining in the middle of this about springs in his bed? This uncomfortable situation is part of what he is about; it is his mission and pride.

If life is about pleasure, then you indeed need a therapist at every turn, since life is fraught with challenge. You become very needy, always wanting more than what you have, feeling more destitute than a pauper. No one goes through life without a loose spring in a mattress, and you will have to constantly look for ways to alleviate discomfort. Visiting a therapist may indeed be this person's best option.

But if life is a sacred mission, then you are not fazed by a loose spring. You are a soldier and you carry out your duty

The point here is that we should not confuse psychology with Chassidus, which is a higher mode of living. Indeed, not everyone is on an altruistic level, and some people need more down-to-earth solutions, that speaks to the *nefesh habehamis* as well.



Credit: Lubavitch Archives

When the Torah was forced upon us it says something not only about the absolute value of the Torah, but also about our unique connection to Hashem. He is our loving Father and puts us on the best path, not leaving us to make a decision on our own.

with pride, notwithstanding whatever difficulty you may encounter.

Different people may visit the war-zone and experience it very differently. The one who comes on vacation is naturally going to find it very uncomfortable. Then there are government employees who are hired to build bunks. They didn't come for pleasure, but are nevertheless out for personal interest, and they find discomfort to be a nuisance. Then there is an ordinary soldier. He is interested in serving his country, but he seeks appreciation and award. He calculates how many medals he has earned so far and how he can earn more. He too has a

limit to what degree of discomfort he can tolerate before it becomes too much.

Finally, there's the soldier in the ditch, focused on his mission to defeat the enemy. No discomfort matters to him. This is his life. He doesn't need a therapist. Though he didn't study psychology, he can teach the therapist about contending with and lifting yourself above challenges.

The point of this article is not to discourage anyone in need from seeking professional help. If one feels that he can't handle the burden alone, let him ask a *mashpia* to help him or to guide him to a professional who is true to Torah *hashkafa*.

The point here is that we should not confuse psychology with Chassidus, which is a higher mode of living. Indeed, not everyone is on altruistic level, and some people need more down-to-earth solutions, that speaks to the *nefesh babehamis* as well.

In other words: If someone feels that Chassidus and the approach of “*keil olam*” is too lofty, they may resort to pragmatic Torah counsel (which is what authentic *mussar* is about) and “*keil ba’olam*.” But we should not pull down Chassidus, which results in plain *olam*.

WHO AM I TO IMPOSE?

Another beautiful characteristic of Chassidus is the way it uplifts a person. Chassidus dwells on the beauty of connecting to Hashem, “*Taamu ureu ki toiv Havaye* — taste and you will see that Hashem is good.” It makes you want to serve Hashem instead of being forced to.

Many people regard Chassidus as holistic medicine as opposed to traditional medicine. Instead of fighting disease, it builds up your immune system to the extent you are not prone to disease anymore. It changes you from within instead of imposing upon you from the outside.

There is a similar phenomena which mimics Chassidus but is absolutely *treif*. In today's society we hear statements like: “Who are you to impose this on your children?” “Your morals aren't better than mine,” “Live and let live,” “Let your children make their own decisions,” “Accept everyone for who they are,” “Be open minded don't enforce.”

Hashem gave the Torah to the *Yidden* and rewarded them for exclaiming “*naaseh*

v'nishma,” yet at *Matan Torah* he held the mountain over their heads so that they accept the Torah. Why was this necessary after they had already willingly accepted it? The simple answer is that had it been dependent on their acceptance, then at a time when they weren't interested, they could relax their observance. By placing the mountain over their heads Hashem impressed upon them the need to commit to Torah even when they won't be motivated.

So the question, “Who am I to impose on my child?” does not have a place. Choice is only relevant when there is no definite right or wrong, and it is left to preference. Non-Jews weren't given an absolute value system, and much of their life can depend on mood and interest. We were given clear directives, and we convey that truth to our children.

The secular world perceives us as following a constricted lifestyle, while they are free to choose as they please. In reality, we walk a solid bridge and theirs sways with the wind.

A LOVING CONNECTION

At a recent *farbrengen* in Morristown Rabbi Moshe Wolberg, *maggid shiur* in Lubavitch Yeshivah of Manchester, illustrated this paradox with a mashal:

Imagine that the Rebbe called a *chossid* into *yechidus* and asked him to immediately set out on *shlichus* to a distant city. The Rebbe advises him to go home and discuss it with his wife and come back with an answer the following day. There is no doubt that any *chossid* true to his name would consent immediately.

Now imagine another *yechidus* where the Rebbe tells a *chossid* that he is needed in a specific place and that he should go home

and tell his wife that they are leaving for this *shlichus*.

Which *chossid* would be more proud? Naturally the second *chossid*, whose *shlichus* was “forced” upon him. Besides demonstrating the absolute significance of his *shlichus*, it indicates that he has a much greater connection to the Rebbe. You can’t force a neighbor’s child to do something, you can only make an offer and let the child decide on his own if it is right for him. With your own child, you are comfortable making decisions for the good of the child. A faithful *chossid* of the Rebbe doesn’t need to be asked.

In a letter to someone who requested that the Rebbe instruct a couple to move on *shlichus* to a certain town, the Rebbe replied that he does not approach people to go on *shlichus* unless he is certain that they are *mekushar* to him.

(*Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 19, p. 451)

Thus, when the Torah was forced upon us it says something not only about the absolute value of the Torah, but also about our unique connection to Hashem. He is our loving Father and puts us on the best path, not leaving us to make a decision on our own.

Someone at the *farbrengen* questioned this argument: If a forced Torah is so much greater than our own choice, then why do we celebrate the fact that on Purim the

coercion was cancelled and they accepted it on their own?

Reb Meilech Zwiebel, the *mashpia* in Morristown, who was also at the *farbrengen*, explained that until the story of Purim, they followed the Torah because of force without sufficiently appreciating its value. On Purim, not only did they come to fully understand and appreciate the Torah, they also understood and appreciated the richness of having it **forced** upon them.

Similarly, Chassidus is not about imposing against our will, but to bring us

to **love** what was imposed upon us by our dear Father, the *Ribbono Shel Olom*.

FUN VS. SATISFACTION

We mentioned earlier that a soldier at the battlefield is not on vacation, but on a mission. Yet, from time to time, he too must go on vacation. Yet, there is a difference between the soldier's vacation and the vacation of the civilian. The civilian goes on vacation for fun, while the soldier goes to rest up and further enhance his mission.

It is interesting to note that in conversational Yiddish there is no word for "fun," since it wasn't a relevant term in day-to-day conversation. A child must have satisfaction, which results from a warm and comfortable environment where someone listens to what he has to say. He must feel that he is something very special and people care about him.

Of course, a child also needs to play with toys and run around, but he must be taught that they are a means to an end – that eventually he can settle down and do something meaningful. Secular wisdom says that in order for a child to be happy we must always provide him with "fun." Instead of being a means to an end, fun becomes an end of its own.

The truth is that every child naturally craves real satisfaction. Fun leaves him feeling empty and hungry. I have asked *bochurim* who wanted to abandon *yeshiva chas veshalom* and go "have fun": "Do

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you think that with your fun you will be happier than Reb Mendel Futerfas?" Their answer was always a clear "no."

Our attitude in this matter impacts our children. If a child walks around with the feeling that when he grows up he can have lots of fun like "the adults," we have failed the child. On the other hand, if he sees that his parents are living with a mission and with meaning, he too will aspire to that mission.

DISCOVERING OUR NESHAMAMA

The Frierdiker Rebbe famously announced that “*America iz nisht andersh*,” that the same Torah and *mitzvos* that were applicable in the Old Country apply in new land just as well. The same is true of Chassidus.

We and our children have *neshamos* just like our ancestors. Although we live in a different environment than them, Chassidus discusses how to free the neshama from its exile in materialism. All of Tanya is geared to help us overcome the challenges of our *nefesh habehamis*. While some of the particulars of *golus* have changed, the message of Tanya is the same.

Chassidus teaches us how *neshamos* work. Secular wisdom does not recognize a *neshamama*, and cannot address its unique character.

A *bochur* complained to me that he believes with complete faith that he has a *neshamama*, but what does it help him if he can't feel it? I told him that the materialism of America kidnapped his *neshamama*, but it can be easily freed.

When a person who was kidnapped as a baby is reunited with his birth-mother after two decades, he will most likely not feel an immediate connection. However, it is only a temporary impediment, and over

When other groups practiced *kirur*, they began by logically convincing a person of the truth of Torah or finding some other human attraction to *Yiddishkeit* in order to make it appealing. Lubavitch would go directly to Torah and *mitzvos*, since a Yid has a *neshamama* which is naturally drawn towards *Elokus*.



Credit: Lubavitch Archives

time he will develop a connection with his biological mother. Building a relationship with his mother is not trying to create an artificial connection, but awakening a dormant feeling. If he surrenders to not having a relationship with this mother, he is siding with the kidnapper.

Chassidus explains that the *nesbama* in *galus* is like a high officer in jail. He still has the qualities of an officer, he is only barred from putting them into practice. However, as soon as he walks out of prison, he is a high officer again.

This was always what distinguished the approach to spreading *Yiddishkeit* between other organizations and Lubavitch. When other groups practiced

kiruv, they began by logically convincing a person of the truth of Torah or finding some other human attraction to *Yiddishkeit* in order to make it appealing. Lubavitch, on the other hand, would go directly to Torah and *mitzvos*, since a Yid has a *nesbama* which is naturally drawn towards *Elokus*.



Hashem should help us that the *yetzer bara* should not succeed in blurring these distinctions that were so clear to chassidim of yesteryear.

Our children want and enjoy the truth. Let us give it to them with joy. **P**





RABBI SHMUEL KAPLAN



In 5771, Rabbi Shmuel Kaplan, head shliach of the Maryland region, launched a project to compile a Siddur which would be illuminated by the *pirushim* of Chassidus. The Siddur, which was published in 5763, presents insights and inspirational chassidic thoughts on each part of the daily *davening* culled from throughout vast body of Chassidus, to help Chassidim *daven* with a new *geshmak*.

The weekday siddur met with tremendous success and had to go to a second printing within six months. The Shabbos Siddur is now being released to coincide with the Kinus Hashluchim.

NOT PRESSING BUTTONS

The obligations to love and fear G-d are *mitzvos* that are not time-bound: they can – and should – be fulfilled at all times.

Nevertheless, it is not realistic to expect a person, immersed as he is in his mundane daily physical activities, to suddenly become inspired with a passionate love of G-d. Obviously, careful planning and preparation are necessary to evoke such a feeling.

Our Sages therefore created an elaborate, step-by-step process of meditation in *tefillah* to overcome this very hurdle. In *Shema*, we declare the oneness of G-d and cite the commandment to love G-d. The intent is not merely to recall the commandment, but to actually fulfill it while reciting this prayer. Indeed, even the preceding rungs of the ladder of *tefillah* were structured to evoke a love of G-d and enable it blossom forth during the recitation of *Shema*.

These feelings express the power of love within the G-dly soul. Nevertheless, since that soul inhabits the same body as the animal soul, its arousal of love affects the animal soul as well. It is natural that a person who sees a friend inspired with the love of G-d in prayer will pray with more

It is not realistic to expect a person, immersed as he is in his mundane daily physical activities, to suddenly become inspired with a passionate love of G-d.

feeling himself. So too, when the G-dly soul is aroused with the love of G-d, it will inevitably impact the natural (animalistic) soul as well. (In this spirit, the Rebbe Rayatz describes how one day in the township of Lubavitch, Reb Chaim Meir the Butcher overheard the sweet and soulful *davenen* of a certain vintage chassid, and enviously exclaimed: "Aay! What a *davenen*! For a *davenen* like that I would give away a whole side of beef!")¹ True, the initial effect will not be internalized but will only be what *Chassidus* terms *makkif*, something which the intellect of the natural soul does not really grasp. Eventually, however, its influence will filter inward, and will have an effect which *Chassidus* terms *pnimi*; i.e., the natural soul will ingest it and identify with it.

This is implied by the very commandment to love G-d cited above. Our Sages note² that in the command to love G-d בְּכָל לִבְּךָ, "with all your heart," the word "heart" appears in a poetic spelling, with the letter *beis* repeated. They explain that the intent is that we are to love G-d with "both our hearts": not only with the good inclination

After tasting what it means to take pleasure in G-d, he will look differently on simple material pleasures. After all, he will have experienced something richer and more fulfilling.

but
also
with the evil inclination. Even the dimension of our being that usually hankers after material benefit and physical satisfaction should also be redirected toward the love of G-d.

How is that possible? Firstly, as said above, the natural soul is exposed to the G-dly soul's experience of love and delight in Divine service. That helps a person redefine his conception of pleasure and satisfaction. After tasting what it means to take pleasure in G-d, he will look differently on simple material pleasures. After all, he will have experienced something richer and more fulfilling.³

Moreover, the meditations in *tefillah* are also directed at influencing the natural soul to love G-dliness, for they stress

that G-d is the source for all goodness and energy in the world. The natural soul of course wants what is good for it, and when it understands that G-dliness is true goodness, it will be motivated to seek it out.

To explain with an analogy: When two unrelated people share an apartment, they will inevitably interact, though initially perhaps on a superficial plane. Although each lives a separate life, when one of them is in a lively mood, he will lift the feelings of his downcast housemate, especially if the cheerful fellow takes the time to explain the reason for his happiness. Were such interaction to continue on a daily basis over many years, the pervading demeanor of the somber housemate would eventually be changed and uplifted.

This is how the natural soul is refined day after day, as the individual engages in sincere and concentrated *tefillah*. As the verse states: "As the refining pot [refines] silver and the furnace refines gold, a man [is refined] *according to his praise*;" i.e., a person is refined in proportion to his meditative praise of G-d in prayer, and the love and fear that he thereby generates.

IN THE PRESENCE OF THE KING

This process of *beirur*, self-refinement, reflects the purpose of the initial passages of our prayers, and it culminates in the

recitation of *Shema* and its blessings. The second part of *tefillah*, *Shemoneh Esreh*, is of an entirely different nature.

Our Sages state⁴ that during the recitation of *Shemoneh Esreh*, a person should see himself as a servant standing in the presence of his king. At such a time, no one else may be shown any degree of recognition or significance whatsoever.⁵ Not only may one not acknowledge the presence of others while he addresses the King: he must also set aside his own ego and stand before G-d in a state of total *bittul*, self-nullification. For him, the only reality at that moment should be G-d alone.

This state of mind can be attained only by the G-dly soul. Since it is an actual part of G-d and inherently seeks to be absorbed into its G-dly source, it is able to rise above its personal identity and ego-consciousness. The natural soul, by contrast, is innately self-conscious, with an identity independent of G-d. Hence, it cannot achieve such a state of *bittul*: during the *Shemoneh Esreh* experience, the natural soul is a mere bystander.

This explains why *Shemoneh Esreh* is said in a hushed tone, without the level of outward emotion that is perhaps displayed during other stages of *tefillah*. When one is in a state of *bittul*, the emotions, which are a direct expression of one's "I," do not emerge at all. Thus, during *Shemoneh Esreh*, the G-dly soul is totally absorbed in its own service without any connection to the animal soul. And this

distinction between the spiritual service of *Shema* and that of *Shemoneh Esreh* enables us to understand the uniqueness of our *tefillah* on *Shabbos*.

SHABBOS: ALL OUR WORK IS COMPLETED

In our Friday night prayers, we describe *Shabbos* as "the consummation... of heaven and earth." *Shabbos*, a day of rest without work, offers a foretaste of our state in the ultimate future, in the era of *Mashiach*, when all our physical needs will be provided for us without any effort on our part. With the above phrase, we introduce the recitation of the verses that describe the conclusion of Creation,⁶ "Heaven and earth and all their hosts were completed...." The Hebrew for "were completed," *vaychulu*, shares the root of the noun *kilayon*, "intense longing." Implied is that on *Shabbos*, all creation longs to be uplifted and absorbed into a higher level of existence. It is not that *because* we rest on *Shabbos* we are able to put more focus on the spiritual. Rather, we rest *as a result* of the higher spiritual state that pervades all existence on that day. Work is prohibited *because of* the higher state of reality introduced by *Shabbos*.

This concept is illustrated in the following narrative related by the *Tzemach Tzedek*.⁷

Shortly before the Alter Rebbe passed away in the village of Piena, he invited the *Tzemach Tzedek* to ask questions.



On weekdays, tefillah is intended to refine the natural soul. On Shabbos, the entire creation, including even the natural soul, is already on a higher plane, so that there is no need for such refinement. Why, then, do we pray at that time?

One of those questions concerned eating on *Shabbos*.

Now, one of the forms of work prohibited on *Shabbos* is *borer*, "separating." But *borer*, which in a spiritual sense refers to sifting out and elevating the sparks of G-dliness embedded in food, takes place as we eat our *Shabbos* meals. Why, then, is this permitted on *Shabbos*? The Alter Rebbe had explained in several *maamrim* that when a person takes pleasure in his *Shabbos* food, he draws down Divine pleasure from Above. The sparks of G-dliness invested in the food are thus

elevated without the need for a process of refinement on our part.

The *Tzemach Tzedek* asked: since we still (are obligated to) eat food on *Shabbos*, which is a mixture of good (the G-dly sparks) and evil (its physical dimension) how are we not violating the prohibition of *borer* on *Shabbos*?

The Alter Rebbe responded that with the onset of *Shabbos*, all of creation, even material matter, is elevated to a higher state. The process of separation and refinement has already taken place.

Hence, when one eats in order to fulfill the *mitzvah* of taking pleasure in *Shabbos*, the food is uplifted without any effort on man's part.

ON SHABBOS THE SOUL FLIES FREE

This exchange pinpoints the distinction between the *tefillah* of weekdays and the *tefillah* of *Shabbos*: On weekdays, *tefillah* is intended to refine the natural soul. On *Shabbos*, the entire creation, including even the natural soul, is already on a higher plane, so that there is no need for such refinement. Why, then, do we pray at that time?

As explained above, concerning *Shemoneh Esreh*: we pray on *Shabbos* not in order to refine the natural soul, but in order to give expression to the spiritual potential of the G-dly soul – to empower it to experience the sublime pleasure that pervades all existence on *Shabbos*. On *Shabbos*, the G-dly soul does not have to work to infuse purpose and holiness into one's mundane everyday activities, because on *Shabbos* that holiness has been imparted into existence from Above. On *Shabbos*, the G-dly soul is free to experience the Divine, unencumbered by any other consideration.

WHEN THERE IS NOTHING TO DO

The Torah commands,⁸ “You shall work for six days and perform all your tasks.” The *Mechilta* asks:⁹ Is it possible to complete all of one's work in six days? What this means, then, is that on *Shabbos*, a day of tranquility, one should consider all his work as completed. Not only should one step beyond the past week's work; beyond that, he should forget about all the work that he will ever have to do in future. On *Shabbos*, he should see himself as free of the need to work, as if he will never have to work again. This frame of mind is a foretaste of the situation that will prevail in the era of *Mashiach*.)

How is it possible for a human being, living in a physical body with an agenda of its own, and enmeshed in a world of money and materiality necessary in order to assure its very survival, to attain such a state? On his own, it would in fact not be possible. Indeed, it is only because on

When one eats in order to fulfill the mitzvah of taking pleasure in Shabbos, the food is uplifted without any effort on man's part.

The natural soul, too, is on a higher plane on Shabbos. Accordingly, it does not offer any significant opposition to the G-dly soul's Shabbos service. It stands by and watches, and to a certain extent is even carried along by the G-dly soul's activity.

Shabbos
we are
endowed with a *neshamah yeseirah*, an additional soul, that we are capable of reaching such a state.

The Alter Rebbe defines¹⁰ this "additional soul" by focusing on the wording of the *Kiddush* that is recited on Friday night: "He sanctified us with His commandments and He desired us." When we desire something, it becomes the center of our attention. At that moment, it is our entire world. Similarly, when G-d "desires us," this means that the focus of His attention is on us. Now, in the human realm, focusing our attention merely motivates us; it alone does not actually accomplish anything. G-d's focus of attention, by contrast, brings about an effect within

our souls, empowering them to become conscious of their essential unity with Him, and enabling them to shake off the mundane needs and drives of the animal soul.

For this reason, we omit all requests for our personal needs in our *Shabbos* prayers. The G-dly soul has no earthly needs at all on *Shabbos*, not even the intent to use physical things for a holy purpose. The natural soul, too, is on a higher plane on *Shabbos*. Accordingly, it does not offer any significant opposition to the G-dly soul's *Shabbos* service. It stands by and watches, and to a certain extent is even carried along by the G-dly soul's activity.

MAXIMIZING THE HERE AND NOW

Sefer Yetzirah describes¹¹ our existence as being defined in three parameters: *olam* (space), *shanah* (time), and *nefesh* (soul). As mentioned, on *Shabbos*, we are granted an added dimension of *nefesh*, the *neshamah yeseirah*. In the areas of *olam* and *shanah*, too, *Shabbos* is unique, set off from the days of the week. It is an island in time, distinct from the other days. In the words of our Sages,¹² it is *mikadsha vekayma*, "inherently holy." In contrast to the sanctity of the festivals, which depends on the Jewish people who determine the dates of the calendar, the

sanctity of *Shabbos* descends from Above, emanating from a level that cannot be aroused by man's Divine service. While one is within this envelope of time, no other time is relevant.

Similarly, with regard to the dimension of space, the Torah relates,¹³ "See... G-d has given you the *Shabbos* day... Let every man abide in his place; no man shall depart from his place on the seventh day." On that basis, our Sages¹⁴ prescribed *Shabbos* limits beyond which a person may not proceed on *Shabbos*. At the onset of *Shabbos*, every individual acquires a certain place (*koneh shvisah*), which defines him spatially for the duration of *Shabbos*. When one accepts that he is where he is and cannot change his place, the concept of mobility recedes in importance; what matters is the "here." He shuts out the whole wide world and focuses exclusively on his immediate space; this brings on a true sense of calm and tranquility.

Thus *Shabbos* tells a person, "I have no place where I need to be except where I am now, and I have no other time outside the present." This unique spiritual environment creates the opportunity for the additional soul we are granted on *Shabbos* to express itself. When a person aligns himself with this inner spiritual environment, adapting the mindset that "all his work is completed," his soul sings out. This is what our *Shabbos* prayers are all about.

In this vein, our Sages¹⁵ saw *Shabbos* as a foretaste of "the day that is all *Shabbos* and rest for life everlasting," a glance into what life will be like in the Ultimate Future. In that era, the refinement of the material world and the natural soul will have been completed, and mankind's sole pursuit will be to attain successively higher states of bonding with G-d.

Every *Shabbos* and particularly during our *tefillah*, we have the opportunity to experience such a state. **P**

SOURCES

1. Sefer HaSichos 5701, ch. 7, sec. 9.
2. Berachos 54a; Sifri and Rashi to Devarim 6:5.
3. See Tanya, chs. 9, 49.
4. Shabbos 10a.
5. See Chagigah 5b.
6. Bereishis 2:1-3.
7. Derech Mitzvosecha, pp. 90a-b.
8. Shmos 31:16.
9. Parshas Yisro, Parshas BaChodesh, sec. 7.
10. Torah Or, p. 87d.
11. Ch. 6.
12. Beitzah 17a; Berachos 49a.
13. Shmos 16:29.
14. Eruvin 51a.
15. The end of Tractate Tamid.
16. See Rambam, Hilchos Melachim 12:5.

THE LUMINARIES OF HOMES

THE TEACHER IN CHASSIDIC LEGEND

PREPARED BY PERSPECTIVES STAFF

Community Pillars

THE TRUE LUMINARIES

In his diary, the Friediker Rebbe records a trip with the Rebbe Rashab from Lubavitch to their vacation home in Serebrinka:

From far off, we can see two travelers sitting at the side of the road. As we come closer, I recognize Reb Peretz and Reb Menachem Mendel, the *melamdim* of Beshenkovitz. I told this to my father, and he instructed the wagon driver to slow down and drive close to where they were sitting.

As we passed them, we beheld a beautiful sight: Under a shady tree, the two chassidim sat with their *tallis katan* and *yarmulkes* showing, and their jackets, hats, shoes and walking sticks beside them. Reb Menachem Mendel, his eyes closed, was leaning on his elbows which he supported with his thighs. He was listening as Reb Peretz, whose eyes were also closed, repeated a *maamar* in the

distinctive singsong of *Chassidus*. And like any scholar deeply engrossed in Talmudic debate, he highlighted certain phrases by gesturing freely.

My father instructed the driver to stop for a few minutes, and the chassidim did not notice us. When we continued, my father told me that they were reviewing the *maamar* that begins, *Mi madad beshaalo mayim* that he had delivered on the second day of Shavuos.

The sight of the two chassidim apparently made a strong impression on my father. As we passed the town of Rudnya, he said to me:

“Five thousand, six hundred and sixty years, nine months, thirteen days, fifteen hours and so many minutes, that little plot of land has been waiting for Peretz and

***Chassidishe melamdim* are the true luminaries of *Yiddishe* homes. They are the Avraham Avinu's of every generation who infuse *Elokus* into every home.**



Mendel to come along and share words of Torah. And by doing that, they fulfilled the sublime will of *HaShem*.

"It is hard to assess the pleasure that this elicits On High, or to describe how envious the *malochim* are of these *Beshenkovitzer melamdim*. The Rebbeim in Gan Eden are rejoicing with such grandchildren.

"Chassidishe melamdim are the true luminaries of *Yiddishe* homes. They are the Avraham Avinu's of every generation who infuse *Elokus* into every home. The Mittlerer Rebbe would show more affection to the *melamdim* than to the *rabbonim*, and would say: 'It is the *melamdim* who turn *Yidden* into vessels to absorb G-dliness!'" (*Kuntres U'Mayon*, p. 35)

WHO MADE NEVL?

The Mittlerer Rebbe held *melamdim* in high esteem and often related to them with deference. Nevl was always known as a *chassidishe* town, the home of many chassidim who were dedicated to Chassidus and avoda, and on this the Mittlerer Rebbe once said, "Who turned Nevl into a *chassidishe* town? Not its *rabbonim* not its other scholars, but its *melamdim*!" (*Likkutei Sippurim*, Mittlerer Rebbe §18)





THE HIGHEST LEVEL

Among chassidim in general and among Chabad chassidim in particular, there are many levels, such as *baalei haskala*, *balei havana*, *balei deiah*. In Chabad, the chassidim most highly regarded are generally the *melamdin*. (*Sefer HaSichos* 5710, p. 362)

THE REAL 'MIZRACH'

At one of the first *farbrengens* of Reb Aizil Homiler in Homil, he told the townspeople:

"You must know that the *shul's* real '*mizrach*' is at the back of the shul, near the oven, where the *melamed* stands. Pay attention and study a *vort* of the *melamed* as you would study a *vort* spoken by the Rebbe."

As a result of that statement, the feet of the respected *baalei-batim* who sat in the *mizrach* "burned" for an entire year, and Homil became brighter. (*Sefer HaSichos* 5704, p. 96)

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LIVING FOR OTHERS

Reb Nechemia Zalman of Shventzian was a student of Reb Michel of Opatzk, one of the prominent chassidim of the Alter Rebbe. He was a phenomenal genius both in *nigleh* and in *Chassidus*, and would often spend his time alone in deep thought.

Being exceptionally organized, he kept a strict schedule. Every morning at about three a.m., when the sky showed its first pale signs of day, both on weekdays and on *Shabbos*, he would meditate on

Chassidus for six hours with his *tallis* over his shoulder, and then daven for another six hours. It was then time either to go home to eat and rest, or to daven *Mincha* and *Maariv* and then go home, depending on the season.

He would make a yearly trip to Lubavitch around Shavuot time, and would stay for five or six weeks. On the first day of Shavuot, when the visiting *rabbonim* were invited to the table of the Tzemach Tzedek to hear exclusive stories of the



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Although he was a talented lamdan, and could have taught older students, which also would have brought him a greater income, he chose to teach young children – so that he could implant in their hearts a love for Torah and yiras Shamayim.



Rebbeim and to discuss Torah thoughts with the Rebbe, Reb Nechemia Zalman was seated up front and would amaze the other guests with his novel Torah insights.

Now, on the outskirts of Lubavitch, on a hill off to the left, there was a little pine forest, in the middle of which stood a booth made of branches. At the foot of the hill flowed a brook about six feet wide, and deep enough to reach a person's waist. Throughout his stay in Lubavitch, Reb Nechemia Zalman made this hut his home. Every night, after sleeping and reciting *Tikkun Chatzos* in the township, he would head out to the forest, where he would *toivel* in the river and prepare for *davening*. After *davening* he would eat

something, rest for an hour, learn, *daven Mincha*, and return to town.

Yet though he chose to spend most of his day there in solitude, he returned to the Rebbe's courtyard every evening for the "*yechidus* dance." Traditionally, whenever a chossid exited *yechidus*, his fellow chassidim would join him as he danced in joy over his great merit to have been in the Rebbe's presence, while others clapped their hands to the rhythm of the *niggun*. And though by nature Reb Nechemia Zalman was a loner, he eagerly looked forward day after day to witnessing this comradely celebration of the superiority of Mind over Matter, the superiority of the soul over the body.

The Rebbe Maharash once related how he himself would stealthily visit the forest to peek between the cracks of that hut. He wanted to observe Reb Nechemia Zalman's face as he meditated upon topics in *Chassidus*, his eyes closed and his face aflame, and seemingly detached from bodily concerns and indeed from This World.

At a *yechidus* in תרל"ח (1878), the Rebbe Maharash told his son, the Rebbe Rashab:

"The purpose of the descent of a *neschama* in this world is not to be satisfied with only elevating the individual himself, but also to impact another person. Reb Nechemia Zalman was exceptionally great, but his *avoda* was the *avoda* of an individual and did not draw anyone along with him. The



ultimate purpose of the *neshama* in This World is accomplished by chassidim like Reb Yosef Hillel, the *melamed* who taught little children in Druye, and like Reb Shmuel Chaim, the *rov* of Lutzin.

“Reb Yosef Hillel the *melamed* was a student of the elder chassidim in Druye, whom the Alter Rebbe taught that the ultimate goal of a chassid is to share with others the spirit of *avoda*, the correction of *middos* and *abavas Yisroel*. This schooling influenced Reb Yosef Hillel so deeply that although he was a talented *lamdan*, and could have taught older students, which also would have brought him a greater income, he chose to teach young children –so that he could implant in their hearts a love for Torah and *yiras Shamayim*. In the course of the

last fifty years he raised great numbers of G-d-fearing students.

“What Reb Yosef Hillel implanted in their young hearts cannot be uprooted, or even weakened, by all the winds in the world. This is the ultimate purpose of the descent of a *neshama* – to see to it that a Yid should live his life according to the will of *HaShem*.

“The town of Lutzin was made up primarily of coarse people, who were engrossed in *machlokes*, *rechilus*, jealousy and other bad *middos*. They would slander one another and make each other miserable.

“In תרכ”ז (1867) they asked me to send them a *rov*, so I sent them Reb Shmuel Chaim, the *melamed* in Tcharei. Reb Shmuel Chaim had exceptional *middos*





Credit: Lubavitch Archives

A gathering of children in 770 praying for the health of the Rebbe, circa 1992

and loved everyone. While in his hometown, he had guided the *chassidische yungeleit* with great success.

“When he arrived in Lutzin he was perturbed by the lowly state of the people there. Yet unfazed, he immediately got to work, to drive out whatever was negative and to introduce light. And within a few years of patient *mesirus nefesh* he transformed the town.

“Aside from the fact that the *mesirus nefesh* of Reb Yosef Hillel and Reb Shmuel Chaim impacted a multitude of people, their *mesirus nefesh* was truly elevated, since it was not for their personal benefit.

And this is the vessel for the *bracha* of the Alter Rebbe – that chassidim should be successful in their Torah and *avoda*.”

The Frierdiker Rebbe records the above in a letter to teachers and he concludes:

The lesson from this is that aside from the responsibility to teach his students, every teacher must educate and guide them in *yiras Shamayim*, *middos tovos* and *derech erez*. The responsibility for their future lies on his shoulders, and their future depends on his personal conduct.

(Letter from 15 Teves 5705, Igros Kodesh of the Rayatz, Vol. 8 p. 497)

SINCERE ADMIRATION

The Tzemach Tzedek once said, “The level of *chassidishkeit* has gone down.”

He went on to explain that in the days of the Mittlerer Rebbe, first the *melamdim* were

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admitted for *yechidus*, then the *rabbonim*, and finally the *baalei-batim* would take their turn. Now, he said, the *baalei-batim* enter first. (After all, they have important matters to discuss; besides, they are the ones who support the *melamdim* and *rabbonim*....) Only afterwards are the *rabbonim* and *melamdim* admitted.

When the elder *mashpia*, Reb Groinem, related this story, the *temimim* in Lubavitch asked him why the Tzemach Tzedek did not reverse the order to the way it had been in the past. Reb Groinem, in true chassidic tradition, explained with a story:

"There was once a villager, a simple *yishuvnik*, who would occasionally visit the *rov* of the nearby town and ask him all his *shaylos*. One day he arrived at the home of the *rov* and found him at a meeting discussing a serious matter with his colleagues. When the meeting ended, the villager presented his *shaylos*, and then asked the *rov* if he could know what was the matter of such great concern.

"The *rov* explained that since it hadn't rained for a while, they were deliberating whether they should declare a day of fasting and *davening* for the much-needed rain, to save them from possible famine. The villager, astonished, offered his counsel.

'I have a far simpler solution,' he said.

'Whenever my cat runs into the house and crouches near the oven, rain begins to fall shortly after. All we must do is grab the cat, place it near the oven, and the rain will surely follow!'



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The *mashpia* concluded: "In the days of the Mittlerer Rebbe, the *baalei-batim* admired and respected the *melamdim* and *rabbonim* and gave them precedence. But now that the situation has declined and they no longer respect them, rearranging them in the correct order is no more helpful than putting the cat near the oven to bring the rain...."

(*Reshimos Devorim*, Vol. 1, p. 137)



Credit: Lubavitch Archives

A shiur in Lod in the 1950s

— Educational Methods —

AN IN-HOUSE MELAMED

The Rebbe once shared this personal anecdote:

In my childhood, my father hired a teacher for my brothers and me. He lived in our home, and my father set aside a special room for him. My father wanted him to reside in our home so that we children should learn from his way of life and personal conduct, and not only learn the subject matter that he taught us.

(Sichos Kodesh 5733, Vol. 1, p. 456; BeTzeil HaChochma, p. 29)

GAINING THEIR TRUST

The first step is to educate a child with a strong foundation—that he is a son of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, who are the same fathers of his parents, his grandparents and of all Yidden. In order to implant this feeling in his pupils, the teachers must act accordingly, because a child does not understand play-acting (“*chochmos*”). When he sees that he is told one thing, and then finds his teacher acting differently, not only is that lesson undermined, but moreover he loses trust in his teacher completely. *(Toras Menachem 5744, Vol. 1, p. 113)*

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THE FIRST STEP

The first step in education is for the educator to show a living example in his personal conduct. This is always the best way to influence another person.

Furthermore, human nature is such that to influence a student to do something, the educator must do it to a greater degree, since the student considers himself to be less advanced and thinks that he can therefore live at a lower standard than his teacher.

In addition, the educator must speak “words that come from the heart.” This will cause his words to “enter the heart,” as is written in *seforim* and as everyone can observe in his own experience. (*Toras Menachem* 5742, Vol. 3, p. 1210)

THEY WILL BANG ON THE DOORS

In this letter the Rebbe advises the *banhala* of a certain *yeshiva* that was having difficulty with recruiting students on how to make their *yeshiva* sought after:

Attracting new students and encouraging them to remain in *yeshiva* depends on the *roshei yeshiva* and the *mashpi'im*. It is quite **obvious** that merely teaching students at designated times, and even *farbrenging* with them occasionally, does not suffice. Torah is not like other subjects; it must be alive and all-encompassing, by the students and more so by the teachers.

If the *roshei yeshiva* and teachers learned Torah in this manner, the *yeshiva* would **no doubt** become legendary throughout *Eretz Yisroel*. Young people would come banging on the doors, begging to be allowed to listen in to *shiurim* that capture them and energize them with *chassidishe* zeal and warmth. This liveliness can be

achieved not only when teaching *Tanya* and *Chassidus*, but even when teaching *alef-beis*. (*Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 15, p. 9 – *emphasis in the original*)



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Human nature is such that to influence a student to do something, the educator must do it to a greater degree, since the student considers himself to be less advanced and thinks that he can therefore live at a lower standard than his teacher.



DISPLAY ONLY

Reb Michoel Beliner ("Michoel *der Alter*") of Nevl was a mashpia in the Tomchei Temimim *Yeshivah* in Lubavitch. When he grew old and weak and could no longer teach the *bochurim*, Reb Leizer Kaplan, the administrator of the *yeshiva*, asked the Rebbe Rashab for permission to stop paying Reb Michoel his weekly salary of five rubles.

The Rebbe Rashab told him, "For me it is worth the money in order that he should stay, and the *bochurim* will be able to watch him. He is a *tziyur* of an old *chossid*". (*LeSheima Ozen*, p. 109)

A PART-TIME TEACHER

There was once a *melamed* who was known as "Reb Pesach *melamed shaos*" ("the hourly *melamed*"). Being a great *oved HaShem*, he spent only a few hours every day with his students. In the summer he would begin teaching after *davening Mincha*, and during the winter, after *Maariv*. He would warn the parents of this ahead of time, so that he would not be "doing the work of *HaShem* dishonestly." (*Sefer HaSichos* 5702, p. 122)

TEHILLIM WITH TEARS

A *melamed* from Nevl once complained to the Rebbe Maharash that he couldn't do *iskafya* while eating. He always finished his food until the last drop. The Rebbe Maharash asked him what sort of delicacies he was eating, and the *melamed* replied that he ate porridge.



Credit: Lubavitch Archives

The Rebbe instructed him to continue eating as usual, but that every day before *davening* – except for *Shabbos* – he should recite three *kapitlach* of *Tehillim* in a way that brought him to tears. (*Reshimos Devarim*, p. 155)

A MAN AFLAME

American *yungeleit*, *bochurim* and boys need to be told very clearly what a *melamed* is, and particularly what a *chassidisber melamed* is. The term “*melamed*” refers to a Yid who knows the true value of the Torah’s letters, and for him those letters are precious and holy.

With the *melamdin* of the past, the letters of Torah burned in their hearts. When a *melamed* taught his pupils *alef-beis*, the *alef* was aflame, and when he taught *kamatz alef*, the *kamatz* was aflame. The same happened when he taught them *Chumash*. In the heart of the *melamed* it was aflame, and this he imparted to the children. (*Sefer HaSichos 5701*, p. 122)

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REB YEKUSIEL DER MELAMED

The Frieddiker Rebbe related:

One of my teachers was Reb Yekusiel *der melamed*. Though he was in his seventies, he had the gift of finding his way into the mindset of four- and five year-olds. He would draw their hearts close to him, so that they loved him and loved the subjects he taught them.

Reb Yekusiel was a *bar poel*: he was able to translate their lessons into practical analogies that they could identify with. I don't know if he inherited his talent of teaching or if he was blessed with it, but in any case he was an amazing, extraordinary *bar poel*. (*Sefer HaSichos* 5680-87, p. 209)

REAL IMPACT

There used to be chassidim who would put aside their personal obligations for the ideals of *Chassidus*. At times a *melamed* would not show up in *cheder* because he was busy working on himself. When he returned he would rebuke a boy: "Why didn't you learn on your own? Don't you know that there's a G-d in the world?!"

Such *melamdim* were few, yet they left an impact on everyone around them. (*Sefer Hasichos* 5684, p. 61)

A LASTING EFFECT

In their youth, the *tzaddikim* Reb Elazar and Reb Eliezer Lipa, sons of Reb Elimelech of Lyzhensk, suddenly lost their interest in learning, and their teacher reported this to their father.

Reb Elimelech questioned the teacher about who *his* teachers had been. The teacher enumerated a number of upright and G-d fearing *melamdim*, but Reb Elimelech probed further. Finally, the teacher recalled that one of his early teachers was not such an upright fellow. Hearing this, Reb Elimelech said, "Now I understand why you had trouble teaching the children." (*Kfar Chabad, Issue* 1584, p. 56)



——Portrait of a Melamed——

A HEARTFELT PLEA

Among the Mittlerer Rebbe's chassidim in Shklov were Reb Michel the *melamed*, and Reb Shlomo Monessohn, a wealthy businessman.

Once during a *farbrengen* Reb Michel broke down into bitter tears. As he held his head he said to himself: "*Ribbono shel Olam!* Have pity on me and give me an enthusiastic *geshmak* in *veboer eineinu besorosecha* - 'Light up my eyes with your Torah,' like the *geshmak* of Reb Shlomo when he says, *veha'osher vehakavod milfanecha* - 'riches and honor come from You.'

Reb Michel of course had no intention whatsoever to put down Reb Shlomo: he was simply considering his own pitiful state. Yet his sincere words so impacted Reb Shlomo when he overheard them that he immediately set out to see the Rebbe in Lubavitch. He entered the Rebbe's study for *yechidus*, and returned a changed man. (*Sefer HaSichos* 5702, p. 152)



PURSuing CHASSIDUS

A *chassidisher melamed* named Reb Dovber once traveled by foot all the way from Beshenkovitz to Lubavitch to hear Chassidus from the Rebbe Rashab, only to discover that the Rebbe was away. Without hesitating, he headed to the village where the Rebbe was staying, but when he arrived there, he was told that the Rebbe was not delivering Chassidus.

He was understandably very pained. After all, he had come all this way expressly in order to hear *Chassidus*. He walked around dejected. His host, who didn't know what was bothering him, encouraged him to trust that *HaShem* would see to it that everything would work out.

During the *Shabbos* meals the host tried to persuade him to share his problem, in the

hope that he could be of help, but Reb Dovber wouldn't say a word. By *Seuda Shlishis*, Reb Dovber finally opened his heart. He told his host that he lacked nothing; all he wanted was to hear a *maamar* from the Rebbe. He had worked hard to get there, but his desire was left unfulfilled.

The host was a simple Jew, but feeling close to the Rebbe Rashab, he approached him and said: "There is a guest here who is very pained that he can't hear *Chassidus* from the Rebbe. Whenever I see a Jew in pain and I'm able to help him, I help him. This time, *the Rebbe* can help this man – by delivering a *maamar*!"

A short while later the Rebbe made it known that he would oblige, and after the *maamar*, Reb Dovber's face shone. He was elated. (*Sefer HaSichos* 5690, p. 133)

The Luminaries of Homes

A HUMBLE SOUL

Every Shavuos, Reb Peretz Beshenkovitzer, a poor and humble chassid who worked as a *melamed*, would visit the Rebbe Maharash in Lubavitch. One year so many *orchim* came for Shavuos that Reb Peretz assumed that he wouldn't have a chance to be admitted to the Rebbe's study for *yechidus*. However, the Rebbe on one of his walks noticed him, and later asked the *gabbai*, Reb Levik, to call him in.

Once inside, Reb Peretz bemoaned the fact that he was like an empty vessel, totally unworthy.

The Rebbe said, "In order to truly feel that lack, one must do something. Tell me: do you shed tears as you say *Tehillim*?"

Reb Peretz responded that he did. The Rebbe then instructed him to say two *kapitlach* in this manner every day for the rest of his life, and concluded, "But for *kabbalas haTorah*, when one is preparing himself to receive the Torah afresh, he must do so with *simcha*."

In later years Reb Peretz related that every Shavuos, recalling this *yechidus*, he would contemplate how the Rebbe had lowered himself from *Gan Eden* all the way down to his level, in order to guide him in his *avoda*. (*Sefer HaSichos* 5705, p. 101)

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MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE

A person doesn't have choice about the children that are born to him, but he does have a choice about how he raises them, by having them educated according to the Torah by teachers who are *yirei Shamayim*.

A *chassidisher melamed* implants *yiras Shamayim* in a child's heart in a way that no wind in the world can uproot. A *chassidisher melamed* ignites a child's heart with the light

of *Chassidus*, and this provides the *pintele Yid* with everlasting nourishment.

This is true of whoever was taught by a *chassidisher melamed*. Wherever he will be, and in whatever lowly state of *yiras Shamayim* he may be, those roots that his *melamed* implanted in him will remain intact, and will influence him positively. (*Simchas Torah* 5697, *Likkutei Dibburim*, Vol. 2, p. 329b) **P**

“ALL THE NEWS THAT’S FIT TO PRINT”

MRS. MOLLY M. RESNICK

Mrs. Molly Resnick is a former Israeli TV & PBS Science Producer and NBC News Producer, and founder of MATCKH - Mothers Against Teaching Children to Kill and Hate. She is the wife of the late Dr. Larry Resnick A”H who for many years served as the Rebbe’s Doctor. Mrs. Resnick is an Educational Mentor and Jewish Life Coach, and an international speaker in 5 languages.

In 1979 I had my first Yechidus with the Rebbe. In my naiveté as an NBC TV News producer, I recall asking the Rebbe for an interview so that I could promulgate his views to the world. When I pressed him the Rebbe gently declined saying “*Lo alecha hamelacha ligmor,*” thereby giving me a principle for life: it’s not our job to finish all the work. Looking back, my understanding is that though the Rebbe never hesitated to make use of the airwaves, he was scrupulously careful to control the message, and he knew better than to allow a newbie like myself to present his views to the world.

Cut – 2015.

It started with an ad for a lecture on improving marriage that I found just a little too risqué... then a trailer about Taharas Hamishpacha with images that made me cringe... then a promo for a series on relationships that was a tad

too explicit... then a *parsha* essay with language that made me blush...

They were all meant to inform, enlighten, and acquaint large audiences with the wise perspective of Torah.

They were all meant to show that *Yiddishkeit* shies away from nothing, addresses every realm of human endeavor, and is so very up to date.

But in our effort to enlighten the world, it seems to me that we are losing our bearings. “Intimacy” is a holy and hallowed subject, whose very euphemistic name – “Family Purity” –attests to its sacred nature. The Rambam even writes that Hebrew is called “*lashon hakodesh*” – a *holy* language – because it:

“has no special name for the organ of generation in females or in males, nor for the act of generation itself that generates offspring, nor for seed, nor for secretion

and feces. Hebrew has no original expressions for these things, and only describes them in figurative language and by way of hints, as if to indicate thereby that these things should not be mentioned, and should therefore have no names; we ought to be silent about them, and when we are compelled to mention them, we must manage to employ for that purpose some suitable pseudo expressions, and when we are compelled to do so, we must make any effort to do it confidentially" (Moreh Nevuchim 3:8).

Indeed, one of the very first things that impressed me when I became a *baalas teshuvah* was how utterly euphemistic all my teachers were. And not only when they discussed intimate matters. Talking in euphemistic terms, it seems, is actually rather a hallmark of all our "greats". Can anyone imagine the Rebbe or an *eltere chassid* using explicit language in talking about such topics?

Some people argue that one must be explicit because clarity cannot be compromised. I can attest from extensive personal experience, however, that the

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Furthermore, hasn't the Rebbe consistently taught us that we have to "elevate people to the Torah and not lower the Torah to them?" Don't we realize that in lowering our

standards to reach others, we are just cheapening ourselves and our product? Do we imagine people will respect us more when we use language that appeals to their *nefesh ha'bahamis* as opposed to their *nefesh Elohis*? Don't we all know and feel intuitively that unobservant Jews and, *l'havdil*, non-Jews admire us precisely because we are different, precisely because we don't look, act, and talk like them? Indeed, has imitating "the world" ever proven to be honorable or advantageous to us in the long run?

There is also another problem with the use of explicit language in *hafatzas bamaayanos*. The world has become much smaller and interconnected. In this interwoven universe it is almost

impossible to target one crowd while leaving the other in the dark. How realistic is it to expect that this particular article/speech/film which is not meant for *chassidishe* or “*eigene*” audiences will actually not reach them? We and our youth are exposed to everything and unfortunately learn from everything.

Has anyone noticed how some of our youth talk? My jaw practically dropped recently when I heard a *chassidishe* girl tell an off-color joke, oblivious to the fact that she sounded uncouth and, frankly, rather crude. Desensitization has become rampant. We are all losing our sensitivity to one degree or another. (See HaYom Yom of 20 Elul that one fails to notice his own crassness.)

Some people contend that this decline is precisely why we must use explicit language. After all, the argument goes, since they are already exposed, let them hear the Torah’s truth clothed in the uncouth lingo they have already become accustomed to. While the motivation

We have to do all we can within the parameters of the Torah to reach every lost soul possible. But if we cannot reach certain people without crossing the lines, we must accept this reality. One cannot violate G-d’s will for a “higher” cause.

to adopt such a philosophy may resonate with some, in practice, following this route is dangerous. Not only does it corrode the soul, it ultimately harms the community at large. It results in comfort with immorality that leads to further

decay. As a holy people, we must act holy, speak holy, and think holy.

But what about those Jews (and non-Jews) we might not reach without using explicit language? Frankly, that should not be our concern. It’s Hashem’s. We have to do all we can within the parameters of the Torah to reach every lost soul possible. But if we cannot reach certain people without crossing the lines, we must accept this reality. Our purpose, after all, is to bring people back to Torah, and one cannot do that by circumventing the Torah. One cannot violate G-d’s will for a “higher” cause. If we are working for G-d and for His *shliach*, the Rebbe, then we must follow the rules they set down.



In recent months I have accelerated the discussion on this subject with friends and acquaintances and also *mechanchos* and *rabbanim*.

Unfortunately, even if they agree, many just refuse to come out publicly. Some are just fed up of saying the same thing over again and being ignored. Others are silent because they are intimidated; they don't want to be perceived as "not with it" or "old-fashioned".

I am convinced, though, that the silent majority in our community agrees that something is terribly wrong - that something needs to be done. Personally I think its time to raise a cry.

We must undertake to return to our fundamental principles. We must reclaim what has always been our timeless heritage, until very recently. We must restore our purity and holiness.

In order to 'return home' we need energized advocacy. We need to publicly



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despite, or perhaps because of, the world's moral degeneration and desensitization, we are undertaking to use only euphemistic language when we teach and discuss such matters in the future.

How wonderful it would be if we purposefully chose to shun explicitness!

How glorious it would be if we raised the banner of "Euphemism and Eidelkeit"!

What a triumph for holiness it would be! **P**

resolve to henceforth act as proud Jews and *chassidim* and communicate the way the Rebbe would want us to. And we need *rabbanim*, *mechanchim*, and *mashpiim* to champion this cause and infuse it with a strong dose of vital legitimacy and passion.

How wonderful it would be if we undertook to reverse the wheel and proclaim that

Reb Berke Chein

A Guest IN Samarkand

BY RABBI HILLEL ZALTZMAN

There is a special place reserved in my childhood memories for the unique personage of Reb Berke Chein. When the authorities came to arrest Reb Berke in Lvov, he managed to escape, and passed through several hiding places before arriving in Samarakand. Once there, he found refuge in the Mishulovin home and our own, for the next six years. Throughout this period, we were able to observe Reb Berke's chassidic qualities from near, and have them engraved in our spirits.

R. BERKE'S CLASSROOM

My memories of Reb Berke Chein begin with my childhood in Samarkand. R. Berke came to Samarkand together with the other Lubavitcher chassidim who had fled to central Russia during World War II. When the Lubavitcher refugees formed a community and opened *yeshivas* and secret schools, R. Berke became a teacher, and many parents wanted their children to be his students. One day my father came home and happily announced that he had been able to arrange a spot for me in R. Berke's class.

I was six years old at the time and I was very apprehensive about this piece of news. R. Berke, I had heard, punished his students with a *kontchik*—a leather strap fastened to a rod—as was customary for schoolteachers of old. One student, Mottel Kalmanson, had told me that he was a good teacher and never hit anyone, but I was still worried. Mottel, I thought to myself, is R. Berke's nephew, so he might receive special treatment.

The Rebbe once recounted during a *farbrengen* that his teacher had also kept a similar *kontchik* on the wall. With a smile, he added that for some students, the mere sight of the strap on the wall was enough; for others the teacher had to take the strap down once in a while, to correct their behavior; and for yet others, the teacher had use it a little more...

"When I joined R. Berke's class I discovered that although a *kontchik* did hang on the wall, R. Berke never used it. Mottel Kalmenson was right: R. Berke was a good teacher. And, over the years, I learned that he was much more than that."

When I joined R. Berke's class I discovered that although a *kontchik* did hang on the wall, R. Berke never used it. Mottel Kalmenson was right: R. Berke was a good teacher. And, over the years, I learned that he was much more than that.

AT THE LAST MINUTE

When the Soviet government agreed to allow Polish refugees to return home after the war, R. Berke, along with many other Lubavitchers, tried his luck at faking Polish citizenship. He traveled to Lvov (Lemberg) where community activists—led by R. Leibel Mochkin and R. Mendel Futerfas—arranged the forged documents for him. This was, it hardly needs to be said, very dangerous work, and those who were caught paid with long years of imprisonment and forced labor in Siberia. It was only after Stalin's



“Suddenly, a police car pulled up beside them. When R. Berke saw the car, he sensed that *they* had come for him. A moment later, a man dressed in civilian clothing emerged and in the typical KGB fashion, “politely” asked R. Berke to accompany him.”

death that their punishment was annulled and they were released.

Since obtaining a Polish passport was such hazardous work, the activists gave priority to families with children still in need of a Jewish education. After much effort, R. Berke was able to obtain Polish papers for himself, his wife, and their two young sons, as well as for his in-laws R. Shneur Zalman and Menuchah Kalmanson and their own family.

This was during the summer of 1946. At the appointed time, he showed up with his family at the Lvov train station. Not knowing that the secret police were following them, they waited with pounding hearts for the moment they could board the train to safety. After just half an hour of travel, they would finally reach freedom across the border!

Suddenly, a police car pulled up beside them. When R. Berke saw the car, he sensed that they had come for him. A moment

later, a man dressed in civilian clothing emerged and in the typical KGB fashion, “politely” asked R. Berke to accompany him. R. Berke managed to say a few words to his family, and asked them to say chapter 20 of Psalms on his behalf. His wife cried out to the policeman, “Where are you taking him?” The policeman eyed her coolly and replied, “He will return in a while.”

The train was supposed to come at any moment, and in those few minutes, the Cheins had to make perhaps the most fateful decision of their lives: Who was going to continue with the plan to leave Russia and who would stay behind with R. Berke?

R. Berke's wife Feigel had already made up her mind, and firmly declared: “I'm not travelling anywhere.” If her daughter was staying, Mrs. Kalmanson announced, then so was she. Ultimately, only the Kalmanson sons boarded the train. The train clattered noisily away and the dejected Chein family returned to the city.

A few months later, another train was arranged to transport purported Polish citizens out of Russia. Mere hours before the train's departure, some community activists discovered an opportunity to include an additional two boys to the group. Mrs. Sarah Katzenelenbogen, known as “Mume Sarah,” arrived at the Chein-Kalmanson residence and suggested that the two Chein boys, Meir

Simcha and Mordechai, seize the chance to escape.

Feigel was not home, so this time, it was up to the boys' grandmother to make the crucial decision. She took the boys to the train station and sent them off; their mother only found out what had happened with them when she came home a few hours later and asked where her two sons were. Another two months later, and another train was approved for departure, and the family decided that their grandfather R. Zalman Kalmenson should join the boys, so they would not remain as orphans of the living. And so it was that Feigel remained in Russia alone with her mother, without her husband and children.

FUGITIVE

R. Berke was taken to the cellars of the KGB and after a long, painful interrogation he was sentenced to death. Eventually, they reduced his sentence to eighteen years imprisonment, and then finally to ten years.

Throughout this terrifying time, Feigel worked behind the scenes to smuggle her husband out of jail. She did not rest day or night, and by extraordinary miracle, after two years, she managed to bribe a few of the right people and have R. Berke released. The Cheins lived for a short while in Lvov, where R. Berke's two

brothers resided, during which time their daughter Freida was born.

Not long afterwards, the authorities decided to once again pursue anyone connected to the great escape from Russia of 1946-47 who had not yet been arrested, or like R. Berke, had been arrested and released.

As was their way, the secret police descended upon several homes the same night, so that no one would be able to warn anyone else. They arrested several activists still in Lvov, one of whom was R. Berke's brother, Dovid Leib. R. Dovid Leib's wife managed to run to R. Berke and warn him. Minutes later, agents showed up at R. Berke's house. Miraculously, he had managed to flee the house with only his *tallis* and *tefillin*, just before they showed up.

From that point on, a dangerous and exhausting chapter in R. Berke's life began, as he was forced to wander from one hiding place to another, his freedom hanging by a hair. He was afraid to notify his family of his whereabouts, and so began a long period of separation from his wife, lasting until 1958.

At first he concealed himself with a family in Lvov and did not even step outdoors. When he felt the noose tightening in Lvov, he traveled to his aunt Bas-Sheva, the wife of R. Yehuda Kulasher (Butrashvili), who lived in Malachovka, a suburb of Moscow.

It didn't take long for the police to visit his aunt's house and ask whether they had any guests. R. Berke was in the middle of his prayers, completely unaware that anything else was happening. The police however noticed his figure from behind, wrapped in *tallis* and *tefillin* and facing the wall, and asked who he was. R. Yehuda asked them not to disturb him since he was praying, and incredibly, they left.

Naturally, after such a close encounter, R. Berke was afraid to continue staying with his aunt, so he left. But even though his fervent praying had very nearly gotten him caught, R. Berke refused to be daunted by the police: He remained particular about even the smallest details of chassidic practice all throughout his wanderings, even when it was immensely dangerous to do so.

For some time, R. Berke went from one Lubavitcher family in the suburbs of Moscow to another, until he felt that he had to leave and decided to travel to distant Samarkand. The trip from Moscow to Samarkand, a train ride of a few days, was dangerous. Passengers were checked several times during the long journey by conductors, and by policemen, who would enter the train at various stops to verify that no one was transporting illegal merchandise. Each passenger was required to present his passport and other documents.

*Myself in front of the ►
Mishulovin home.*

Needless to say, if they would have checked R. Berke's papers and discovered that he was a wanted man, he would have been in serious trouble. But, staying in Moscow was no longer an option, so despite the danger, R. Berke felt he must travel to Samarkand. He hoped that in a place far from Lvov and the center of Russia, he would be left alone.

R. CHAIM—THE “AFIKOMAN”

Miraculously, R. Berke made it to Samarkand without incident. He went to the home of the Mishulovin family, old friends of his, and found refuge with them. I was a little boy when I went to visit my friend Michoel Mishulovin and saw a stranger in the other room talking to his elder brother Eliyahu. Although R. Eliyahu was only nineteen, he was considered an intelligent young man and R. Berke was comfortable conversing with him.

When they saw me, they closed the door, and I realized that he was a Jew in



So when we spoke about R. Berke, we would call him R. Chaim. My aunt Rosa Duchman, a well known wit, nicknamed him “the Afikoman”: Like the highly sought-after piece of matzah on the Pesach Seder night, he was thoroughly hidden.

hiding whose presence was secret. As such, I didn't tell anyone what I had seen. Afterwards I found out that it was R. Berke Chein.

Nobody in Samarkand knew that R. Berke was in the city. In order to guarantee that none of the family members would spill the beans by mentioning “R. Berke” by mistake, he decided to call himself



◀ *A portrait of R. Berke Chein teaching children in an underground cheder*

I was about ten years old at the time. My parents told me that we would be having a guest, a Jew who had no other place to live. They warned me that nobody was allowed to know that he was in our house.

“Chaim.” It wasn’t a lie, since his full name was Chaim Dov Ber.

In general, R. Berke was very particular about telling the truth. He said that the Rebbe Rayatz was once asked what to do during a KGB interrogation; it’s forbidden to lie, but of course you couldn’t tell the truth either. The Rebbe Rayatz answered

that lying wasn’t permitted, but the truth still had to be concealed....

So when we spoke about R. Berke, we would call him R. Chaim. My aunt Rosa Duchman, a well known wit, nicknamed him “the Afikoman”: Like the highly sought-after piece of matzah on the Pesach Seder night, he was thoroughly hidden.

R. Berke stayed with the Mishulovins for a few months until he began to fear that he had been noticed, and it was decided that it was time for another hiding place. After much deliberation and a careful investigation of the possible options among residents of the city, staying with us emerged as the next best option. Eliyahu Mishulovin spoke with my older brother Berel about relocating R. Berke to our house and my brother discussed it with our parents. They gave their consent and R. Berke moved into our home.

MY RIGHTEOUS MOTHER

I was about ten years old at the time. My parents told me that we would be having a guest, a Jew who had no other place to

live. They warned me that nobody was allowed to know that he was in our house.

Our home consisted of two rooms and a small corridor. The first room was a dining room, living room, kitchen, and a bedroom for my parents, sister, and myself. The second room, which was not heated in the winter nor cooled in the summer, was for R. Berke. Berel slept in that room too. In the winter we would try to set up a kerosene heater to warm the room, but in the summer the room was sticky with thick humidity.

The bedroom was connected to a little porch facing the yard, but during the day, R. Berke didn't dare to go out on the porch lest one of the neighbors catch sight of him. He was holed up in the heat of his room all day, but absorbed in prayer and his personal divine service. Late in the evening he would go out on the porch to breathe some fresh air.

I remember that during the long summer days my mother would tell R. Berke to go rest a bit. He would point to the cemetery that could be seen from the window of our home and say, "Over there, we will rest a lot. Now there's no time for that."

Some Bucharian families lived in our courtyard, but our apartment was above ground level, and separate from the rest. This was a big advantage when it came to hiding R. Berke's presence but it created an uncomfortable problem. In those days we didn't have a bathroom, and used an

outhouse some forty or fifty meters away from the house. It was a small structure housing a hole in the ground partially covered by some wooden boards.

R. Berke certainly couldn't go out to the yard every time he needed to relieve himself; before the day was out, all of our neighbors would know of the presence of a foreign man in our home. Lacking an alternative, he used a chamber pot, which had to be emptied a number of times daily. We were only young boys, and were hardly attentive to these small details, so the burden fell upon our righteous mother.

She did everything with sensitivity, not only to keep things secret from the neighbors, but also so that R. Berke wouldn't notice and feel uncomfortable. She would wait until R. Berke was immersed in prayer, at which time he wouldn't see or hear anything going on around him, and she would hurry to clean up. She did this not only for the first day, or week, or even the first year of his stay, but for the entire five to six years that R. Berke was an intermittent guest in our home.

There were no washing machines in those days and my mother would wash all of our clothes, and R. Berke's, by hand. She would place the clothes in a pot of hot water and soap, rub them with soap on an iron washing board, and rinse them clean. It was hard work indeed. R. Berke tried to do it himself a number of times, but my mother wouldn't hear of

it. “How can I allow him to tear himself away from his service of, his praying and learning?” she would say. “For me it is the greatest privilege!” R. Berke pleaded with her to hire a gentile woman to do it, but we couldn’t bring a stranger into the house as long as he was hiding there. My mother tried to do the laundry when R. Berke was still praying to avoid making him feel uncomfortable.

Over the years that R. Berke stayed with us, he became sick a number of times. Naturally, my parents couldn’t take him to the doctor or call one in. How we managed each time, I don’t remember, and looking back, I can’t understand how we did. I do recall one time though, when he was seriously, even dangerously, ill, we had no choice but to call in a doctor. My parents explained simply that we had a guest who had become sick.

My parents, as the Mishulovin family had before, knew the price they would pay if they would be discovered hiding a fugitive from the Soviet police. But did they have another choice? They couldn’t throw a person into the clutches of the KGB! Once, I heard the adults discussing a possible story to tell in case he was caught, G-d forbid. They would claim not to know R. Berke: this poor fellow had simply showed up at their door without a place to live, and as compassionate people they’d had pity on him and took him in. They knew that the KGB wouldn’t buy the story but knowing that they at

least had a cover story in place helped to calm them somewhat.

One day, sometime into R. Berke’s stay with us, some government official came by our house to check the residents’ logbook. He entered our home and noticed that the door to the second room was closed; as usual, R. Berke was in his room praying, and as the inspector opened the door, there he was. My parents said that he was praying and could not be disturbed, but apparently the official suspected that something wasn’t right and began to ask questions about this man. He had to be bribed so he wouldn’t talk.

After that incident, R. Berke relocated to his other hideout—the Mishulovin home, and moved back and forth several times over the years. The inspector, however, continued to return to our house every month and demand money to keep his mouth closed.

A BEINONI FROM THE TANYA

R. Berke’s stay greatly enriched chassidic life in Samarkand and contributed immeasurably to our chassidic education. As young boys, we observed R. Berke’s behavior and learned how a chassid should act, not only while praying and learning but also during the mundane moments of day-to-day life. R. Berke was a living example of the saying: A chassid walks as a chassid, eats as a chassid, and sleeps as a chassid. In every detail of his

life, his chassidic character, piety, and discipline were apparent.

R. Berke once told us that in his youth his behavior had been completely different, and that he had been absorbed by far less lofty concerns. As a young man, he had been obsessed with earning money: His very first words, he told us, were “Mama” and “money,” and as a child, he loved money so much that he used to kiss the stuff. By fourteen, he already had extensive business dealings and quickly became very successful. He would trade merchandise for such large sums that he had to wrap the money around his entire body in order to hide it as he traveled from city to city.

But when he was a little older he began to wonder about his future. He wondered whether he would always be immersed in the world of business, and so exposed to the cheating and lies that seemed so unavoidable. So moved was he that he decided to change his life and become a preschool teacher. He also worked on his personal character and in time, he transformed himself from being a penny-pinching hoarder to a generous donor to charity.

When we heard this, we realized that this is what being a chassid is about. R. Berke's story was an example of true mastery of self, and a demonstration of the mind's power over the heart. This, we understood, is how we are to overcome



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R. Feivish Genkin

Summoning his remaining strength he screamed at R. Feivish, You should know that you're starting up with the the Baal Shem Tov and all of the Rebbeim!" Hearing this, R. Feivish relented and did as R. Berke requested.

our lesser instincts; how to break the Evil Inclination. The book of *Tanya* holds up as an ideal for the everyman the figure of the *Benoni*, the "Intermediate Man," who through extraordinary discipline and faith manages to rise above his nature and emulate in deed the perfectly righteous. To us, R. Berke was the embodiment of this heroic figure. He fought his lower inclination all of his days, and succeeded in ruling over it.

IMMERSION IN THE MORNING

R. Berke's day began immersing in water. In his first years in Samarkand there was no *mikvah* and despite the danger, he would instead use a small river at the city's edge. Early each morning, while the townspeople were still asleep and the streets were empty, R. Berke would leave the house. As an additional precaution, he would don dirty rags as though he was homeless, tuck his beard into his coat, and walk to the river. He did this every day throughout the summer, but as winter neared, we thought he would stop, especially since he had grown sickly by

then. We were wrong, and he continued even during the frigid winter months.

During those years before a ritual bath was set up, we boys would also immerse in the river or in a lake, and we would pass through town on the way slightly later on in the morning. Ordinarily we made the trip by tram, and walked on Shabbos, but when during the summer the town center became a hangout for some of the crasser, more vulgar locals, we felt it was inappropriate to do so. We thought to skip our Shabbos morning dip and suffice with the immersion the day before, maintaining that it wasn't proper for us to see the sights of the town center on the holy day of Shabbos, before prayer.

When R. Berke heard of this, he rejected the idea and said that there was nothing in the world that could substitute for the holy act of immersing before prayer. He quoted the declaration of Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev: "Depression can accomplish that which the greatest sin cannot, and *mikvah* can accomplish that which the biggest mitzvah cannot." He said that a young chassidic man had to develop the self-restraint to look only within his immediate four cubits.

There was no way that we should forego immersing in the *mikvah* on Shabbos before prayers.

Even in later years, when R. Abba Pliskin's *mikvah* reopened, R. Berke preferred to immerse in the river in the summertime. He was afraid that his daily visits to the illegal *mikvah* would arouse suspicion and might eventually betray its location. He also preferred not to bother R. Feivish Genkin who, along with his wife Chasha, had become responsible for operating the *mikvah*. Only during the winter, when the river was extremely cold, did he immerse there.

Later on, when R. Berke's legal status was established and he no longer needed to hide, he frequented the *mikvah* consistently. It once happened that R. Berke's pre-immersion spiritual preparations took longer than usual and he only arrived once it was already closed. R. Feivish, a rigid and uncompromising man, if a little simple, refused to open for him. R. Berke pleaded with him but R. Feivish refused, on principle.

It was a winter day, but despite the freezing cold, when R. Berke gave up trying to convince R. Feivish he went to

the river instead. When R. Feivish saw how serious R. Berke's commitment was, he was so impressed that he gave R. Berke the key to the *mikvah* so that he could go whenever he wished.

Each night, R. Feivish's wife Chasha would take charge and have the *mikvah* open for a few hours for the use of the women. When R. Berke heard the time that the *mikvah* was closed every night, he asked R. Feivish to leave it open for at least another hour. He said that if a woman came a few minutes after closing time, she should be able to immerse.

R. Feivish maintained that rules are rules; people should show up during hours and not come late. R. Berke couldn't accept this sort of stubborn pedantry, especially over something as crucial a cornerstone of Jewish life as *mikvah*. He turned pale and began to shake as we had never seen him before, so overwrought that he could barely speak. Summoning his remaining strength he screamed at R. Feivish, "You should know that you're starting up with the the Baal Shem Tov and all of the Rebbeim!" Hearing this, R. Feivish relented and did as R. Berke requested.

If he noticed that someone else's *tefillin* were of a superior quality, or in better shape than his own, he felt that making do with his would be inadequate. Instead, he would regularly ask to borrow our *tefillin*.

THE SECRET SUCCAH

After immersing in the *mikvah* in the morning, R. Berke would proceed with his daily routine: He recited, word by word, the entire Psalms, ate a little something, and then sat and learned Chassidus until ten o'clock. The morning prayers took him two hours, until noon. Then he would put on a second set of *tefillin*, as per the view of Rabbeinu Tam. For R. Berke, just putting on *tefillin* was quite an undertaking, as he tried to ensure that his observance of the mitzvah would be of the highest possible standard.

If he noticed that someone else's *tefillin* were of a superior quality, or in better shape than his own, he felt that making do with his would be inadequate. Instead, he would regularly ask to borrow our *tefillin*, and once he was no longer forced to hide, he would walk to the homes of certain Lubavitchers to do so. There would be one person whose head *tefillin* he found to be of a higher standard, and the hand *tefillin* of another, so R. Berke would borrow from both of them. He also had a custom of reading the Shema from parchment before he began his prayers. In general, when R. Berke heard of some way to enhance his religious observance—a *biddur*—he tended to adopt it immediately.

He would finally finish praying at 1:00 PM and then sat down to eat lunch. After such prayers, even eating became a mindful exercise. He was careful not to

eat ravenously or gluttonously. He would take a slice of bread, cut it into little pieces, and put one piece at a time into his mouth, chewing it slowly. That's how he ate everything he was served.

He would say that even according to good health practices, it's best to eat slowly so as to properly digest the food; people were just indulging themselves when they ate quickly.

During the long summer days, he would rest at two o'clock for an hour. (Parenthetically, whenever he went to sleep, he was particular not to cover his feet [See Shulchan Aruch Harav, 619:19].) At three o'clock he sat down for his regular regimen of Torah study on a range of topics. During the long summer days he would have sufficient time in the afternoon to recite the entire Psalms again. Then it was time for the Afternoon Prayer, some more study, the Evening Prayer, followed by another study session that included the Code of Jewish Law and Chassidus.

R. Berke would also say *Tehillim* before praying on Shabbos and afterwards he would review the week's Torah reading with *Targum*. He then recited the entire *Tehillim* again before the afternoon and evening prayers, each of which took him over an hour and a half.

R. Berke longed to pray with a minyan and we tried to the best of our ability to make this possible. Since he couldn't leave

the house, we would arrange, whenever possible, for the Shabbos minyan to take place in our home.

Since no one yet knew of R. Berke's presence in Samarkand, his participation in the Shabbos services presented us with various challenges. The Zaltzman and Mishulovin families, who did know the secret, comprised less than ten men, so additional men had to be invited to participate, thereby placing R. Berke in jeopardy. Whenever a minyan was arranged in our house, we were faced with the dilemma of who to invite, and we only reached a decision after first consulting with R. Berke.

Obviously, R. Berke could not actually pray in the same room as us. He would hide in his room in utter silence and follow the service from there, answering Amen and *Boruch Hu u'voruch shemo*, and reciting *Kedusha* and *Modim* along with us. His joy in participating in a minyan was indescribable.

Sometimes we only had nine men and needed R. Berke to make the ten. We couldn't announce his presence by simply proceeding with the minyan, but were loath to forego it altogether. Instead we would count a child holding a Chumash as our tenth man and say that we were relying on this somewhat obscure Halachic solution for the minyan.

For the High Holidays and Sukkos, R. Berke would always go to the Mishulovin

I will never forget how R. Berke poured out his soul in heartfelt prayer on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. I lack the words to describe the broken heart of this chassid, estranged from his Rebbe and his family, hiding for years and uncertain of when his sorrows would finally come to a close.

home. Eating in the sukkah at our house was dangerous since it was located in a shared yard, while the Mishulovins' was private. R. Feivish Genkin constructed a sukkah for them with a double wall that created a secret compartment containing a sukkah of its own. If someone would visit, they wouldn't dream that behind that sukkah was another smaller one, in which R. Berke was spending the Holiday, praying and learning.

The Mishulovins were also able to host a larger minyan to accommodate the bigger High Holiday crowds. Additionally, it was safe to blow the shofar there, whereas our neighbors would have likely heard those kinds of sounds coming from our house. So, we preferred that R. Berke move in from the High Holidays and onwards.



◀ *R. Berke learning together with R. Mendel Futerfas.*

I was seventeen at the time and was the *chutzpanik* of the group. I entered R. Berke's room and said, "These young men are busy throughout the week and now they're sitting here to *farbreng* for Shabbos Mevorchim. You haven't finished reviewing the weekly portion, so now we have to sit and do nothing?"

I will never forget how R. Berke poured out his soul in heartfelt prayer on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, when he was finally able to openly join the minyan. I lack the words to describe the broken heart of this chassid, estranged from his Rebbe and his family, hiding for years and uncertain of when his sorrows would finally come to a close.

He prayed at length, and with copious tears; even a heart made of stone would melt listening to him. The silent *Shemonah Esrei* prayer of the morning service alone took approximately an hour and a half; his recitation of the Psalm prior to the shofar blowing took about forty minutes, as tears coursed from his eyes so heavily that he could barely say the words. The rest of the congregants would wait for him to conclude before proceeding. Observing R. Berke's prayer, we boys tried to emulate him and pray at length: we were ashamed to complete *Shemonah Esrei* in less than half an hour.

R. Berke's *kapparos*—the ritual transfer of sin to a chicken

as preparation for Yom Kippur—was an entire service unto itself. He woke up early in the morning and spent an hour performing the ritual, reciting each word of the relatively short *Bnei Adam* prayer slowly and with intense concentration as tears dripped onto the pages of his prayer book.

We would often watch R. Berke as he prayed. We noticed how, in his intense focus on the words of the prayers, he would sometimes grind his teeth. This would happen on a regular weekday and even more so on the High Holidays. We saw his total immersion in prayer, and the tears that regularly poured down his cheeks, especially during *Shemone Esrei*. When I eventually left Russia, it was hard for me to grow accustomed to the fast-paced prayers and the five-minute *kapparos* common elsewhere.

PEARLS FROM FARBRENGENS

At a later point, when R. Berke was able to appear in public, Lubavitch men and boys in Samarkand would enjoy his hearty *farbrengens*. I remember how on one *Shabbos Mevorchim*—the last Shabbos of the month—the sat down together after the prayers. They made Kiddush, said *l'chaim* and waited for R. Berke, who was still in the middle of reviewing the Torah reading, and whom they were too shy to interrupt.

I was seventeen at the time and was the *chutzpanik* of the group. I entered R. Berke's room and said, "These young men are busy throughout the week and now they're sitting here to *farbreng* for *Shabbos Mevorchim*. You haven't finished reviewing the weekly portion, so now we have to sit and do nothing? Soon everyone will leave and go home!"

Had I said that to someone else, I would have surely been tossed out of the room, but R. Berke, with his refined, gentle character, indicated with a movement of his head and a wordless, "*Uh uh*," that I was right and that he would try to finish up quickly. Still, he didn't want to stop in the middle because he was accustomed to reciting the entire portion without interruption, and couldn't do otherwise.

Every year, on his birthday, he committed to enhancing his religious observance in some way, a custom he said the great R. Hillel of Paritch used to do. He related that once on his birthday R. Hillel resolved to begin sweeping the floor of his house from the door inwards, as opposed to the common fashion of sweeping directly out of the house, out of respect for the *mezuzah* fixed to the door.

During *farbrengens*, R. Berke would often speak of R. Itche *der Masmid*, one of the most revered chassidim of the day. He said that R. Itche would always speak about R. Hillel of Paritch and R. Isaac of Homil, and then proceeded to explain

that when a chassid speaks often about a certain chassid, it's a sign that he is close to his level. I thought to myself, R. Berke often speaks about R. Itche der Masmid, so they must be similar as well.

SEVEN YEARS OF SOLITUDE

From Reb Berke's flight from his home in the dead of night, throughout his subsequent wanderings throughout the Soviet Union, and until he found refuge with the Mishulovin and Zaltzman families in Samarkand, his wife Feigel remained in Lvov as a "living widow," mothering their newborn daughter Freida. Feigel had no idea what had happened to her husband or where he was. Had he been caught and tried? If he hadn't been caught, where did he go? Where was he hiding? R. Berke assumed that the secret police examined any mail his wife received, so he dared not send her any information about him, lest they both fall into the clutches of the KGB.

Once R. Berke felt comfortable in our home, my mother began coaxing him to update his wife about his situation. "At least," urged my mother, "let her know that you are alive, and not in jail, but with Jewish families." R. Berke disagreed, insisting that the KGB would see the letter and that they would likely discover that he was in Samarkand.

My mother pleaded with him to have mercy on his wife; by then she had been living for years without any information about her husband, but R. Berke insisted that his wife did not want to know where he was. It was likely that the KGB were interrogating her every so often to try extract some information from her about his whereabouts. "She would certainly prefer not to know, so she won't have anything to tell anyone," he stated firmly.

However, as time passed, my mother came up with an idea. Her brother, R. Dovid Pevzner, lived in Lvov and R. Berke's wife would visit his home often. My mother thought of writing a letter to her brother asking about R. Berke's daughter Freida, who had been born three months before his escape. She assumed that her brother would understand why she was asking: why else would she ask about a child she had never seen? This way, his wife would realize that he was in Samarkand among Chassidim.

However, R. Berke did not agree to this either. He was afraid that the KGB would figure it out and then all would be lost. That's how great our fear was under Stalin's rule.

A story I heard from R. Moshe Nissilevitch many years later illustrated R. Berke's tragic predicament during those days.

One night, R. Berke went to see R. Moshe, who was heavily involved in all of R. Berke's affairs. In a most serious tone he

said, "I want to consult with you about a crucial matter that must remain private." R. Moshe promised to keep it a secret and R. Berke began to share his deep anguish about his wife.

"I cannot describe the pain I feel for the suffering of my wife, Feigel, and all that she has endured these past few years. Even now, she doesn't even know what happened to me. It seems that there is still no end to my troubles in sight, and I don't know when I will be able to reunite with my family. Perhaps I am forbidden according to the Torah from leaving her in such a situation and should divorce her..."

There was a dreadful silence. R. Berke and R. Moshe stood there with tears mirrored in their eyes. R. Moshe's head was bent over in deep agony. He couldn't bear to hear the things R. Berke was saying and he didn't have a word to utter in reply. R. Moshe told me how he felt his insides twisting and churning within him, and that if the earth would have suddenly opened its mouth, he no doubt would have disappeared there.

R. Berke continued to speak, as though to himself. "I hope she will find a good man and get married. With time I hope she will forget about me and lead a normal life." He then turned again to R. Moshe and asked him directly, "Do I have permission according to Torah to



R. Berke continued to speak, as though to himself. "I hope she will find a good man and get married. With time I hope she will forget about me and lead a normal life." He then turned again to R. Moshe and asked him directly, "Do I have permission according to Torah to cause her so much suffering day in and day out?"

Aside from the danger involved in forging papers and preparing new documents, placing the fate of R. Berke into the hands of this simple, anonymous woman added a new dimension of fear to the plan. Nevertheless, there was no other option.

cause her so much suffering day in and day out?"

R. Moshe was choked by tears and he could not respond. He finally managed to croak, "I cannot advise you ... What can I say? We will think about it together and we will decide what to do."

The next day, R. Berke went to R. Moshe again and said, "I didn't sleep all night and I tried to think about what I should do. I finally decided that according to Torah I am forbidden from divorcing her: Where is my trust in Hashem? In a moment, He can change the situation so that we can reunite!" R. Moshe was very happy to hear this from R. Berke and he warmly encouraged his decision.

AN ATTEMPT TO FORGE IDENTITY PAPERS

R. Berke continued to hide in our house and in the Mishulovin home, immersed in his spiritual world and busying himself all day with prayer, Torah and the service of G-d. No resolution of his situation could be seen on the horizon.

Throughout this time, there were meetings between our families about what to do

for R. Berke; his present situation could not continue. The families came to the conclusion that the only thing that could be done was to change his identity papers so that he would become a "new" man. There were three men at that meeting, and they decided on the spot to form a Jewish court of law in order to issue a divine mandate guaranteeing the success of this initiative.

At first they thought to change his name from "Chein" to "Shein," a common name that would entail a change of just one letter, but then decided that it was too similar. They had to give him an entirely new identity and erase the name "Chein."

It wasn't sufficient to alter R. Berke's identity papers. In the Soviet Union every person had a ledger that stated all of the places he had worked in the past and the reasons for leaving each job, allowing the KGB to amass information on every person from his places of work both present and past. It was necessary to obtain an existing work ledger from someone who had died that could be appropriated by R. Berke. In time, they located a ledger that belonged to a deceased Jew by the name of Goldberg, and decided to adopt the name. In

order to act on all these ideas, however, they needed someone with connections in the Interior Ministry, and to this end the next stage in their scheme was hatched, one that at the time seemed completely irrational.

A 25-year-old woman by the name of Zina worked for R. Tzvi Hirsh Lerner. She arrived in Samarkand during the war after her entire family had perished in the Holocaust in the city of Vilna. In Samarkand she made connections with some of the clerks in the Interior Ministry and they wanted to use her ties to help R. Berke.

Aside from the danger involved in forging papers and preparing new documents, placing the fate of R. Berke into the hands of this simple, anonymous woman added a new dimension of fear to the plan. Nevertheless, there was no other option and they decided to tell R. Tzvi Hirsh about R. Berke and his plight, and to ask him for his opinion.

R. Tzvi Hirsh, a fine and loyal Jew himself, was let in on the secret. They told him that there was a great chassidic Jew who needed to flee from the authorities. The authorities had been after him for years, forcing him to part from his family and hide in Samarkand; the only thing that could save him was a new set of documents from the Interior Ministry. Since they had heard that his employee Zina knew clerks at the

Interior Ministry, they wanted him to convince her to help out.

Although he knew the danger that this entailed, R. Tzvi Hirsh agreed to get involved. He told Zina about an unfortunate Jew who needed new documents and promised her a nice sum of money for her help. To his great surprise, Zina said she would help but she wanted to do so solely for the sake of helping another Jew, without receiving a penny for her efforts. When R. Tzvi Hirsh conveyed her answer, we were all surprised. In Russia of those days it was very rare for someone to do this sort of thing without ample reward.

Within a short time all the information was prepared and given to Zina. We prayed that everything would go smoothly.

THE POLICE CATCH THE FORGERS

According to the plan, the entire process was to be concluded within two months. Zina began to work on it and everybody anxiously awaited the results. The days passed in torturous slow motion. And then one day the bad news came. The police had caught a group involved in forging identity documents.

We were all terrified, especially R. Berke. R. Tzvi tried to contact Zina to find out if she knew what had happened, but he could not locate her. We began to fear that



◀ *Myself in front of the Samarkand courthouse.*

Zina realized how frightened we all were and she asked R. Tzvi to convey a calming message to R. Berke. She said, "Please tell him that he can remain in the city in peace and quiet as he did until now because nobody will be able to get anything out of me. Even if they cut me to pieces, I won't reveal a thing."

It was encouraging to hear this but of course we couldn't rely on her—who knew if she really would withstand the interrogators' torture? We were unsure how to proceed.

In the meantime, we received information about the arrest of the forgery ring, and in bits and pieces were able to understand what had happened. A few people had connections with the Interior Ministry and used them to forge documents in exchange for good money. Zina knew them and persuaded them to help her forge documents for R. Berke. In order to obtain the new identity, a form had to be filled out with all of the applicant's personal information. She retrieved the form from the Interior Ministry and filled it out.

It was precisely at this time that the police discovered the forgers, setting off a wave of arrests, in the course of which they caught some of the forgers red-handed. Zina was also arrested when the police

she too had been arrested. Unfortunately, we soon found out that she had been arrested along with some other Jews from the Bucharian community who were involved in a counterfeiting operation. You can imagine our shock. Our first reaction was that we had to send off R. Berke. Although Zina did not know where R. Berke was, during her interrogation she was likely to confess that she had been asked to deal with the matter and they would be able to track down both R. Tzvi Hirsh and R. Berke.

However after some consideration, we decided to try to contact Zina and find out whether she had been discovered with R. Berke's documents. Legally it was permissible to visit inmates in prison so R. Tzvi went to see her. His visit appeared natural since she was his employee and he certainly wanted to know what had happened and how she was faring.

R. Berke asked to meet her in order to pay her and thank her personally for saving him from falling into the hands of the Soviet authorities, but she refused. She said she did not want a Jew to feel uncomfortable because of her and she did not want to be paid.

officers found the form in her pocket with R Berke's false information. The police realized that the form was intended for someone who wanted false papers and they tried to extract this important information out of Zina.

However, she was a noble and pious woman and she kept her promise by refusing to surrender any information. Despite the torture inflicted on her, she repeated her claim that she did not know the person they were after. She said that she had been walking down the street when a stranger had approached her and claimed that he did not know how to fill out a legal form and asked her for help. She helped him but had mistakenly put his form in her pocket before walking away. She had no further information about who it was for.

A public trial was announced to take place in the local courthouse. I was 13 years old at the time, and it was decided that my brother Berel and I would attend the trial so that we could find out whether Zina would actually be sitting in the

defendant's chair, and if she was, what she was accused of. Also, we would know whether the name "Goldberg" would be mentioned or whether she would be accused of something else entirely.

Since it was a public trial, our presence was not unusual. I sat down in the front and listened fearfully to the court proceedings. On the defendants' bench I could see Zina, whom I recognized since we lived in the same neighborhood, and another three Jews from the Bucharian community. I listened to every word, and although I did not understand all that was said, I was certain that among the confiscated documents was one with the name Goldberg, and that Zina had been implicated with these documents.

At the end of the trial, the judge read the sentence: The two Bucharian Jews who admitted to their guilt were sentenced to seven years in jail. A third got three years. Zina, who had denied everything, was sentenced to six years in jail. When we told R. Berke he was beside himself. "For my entire life I will be indebted to

So severe was the Lubavitch community's attitude towards collaborators that once, after R. Berke became legal, he summoned us into a room before Rosh Hashanah. Looking grim, he said, "It has come to my attention that I am suspected of collaborating with the KGB."

this young Jewish woman who sacrificed herself for my sake and stood up to the police interrogators," he said.

Zina was sent to complete her sentence in Siberia, doing her labor, but because of her good behavior she was released after three years. R. Berke asked to meet her in order to pay her and thank her personally for saving him from falling into the hands of the Soviet authorities, but she refused. She said she did not want a Jew to feel uncomfortable because of her and she did not want to be paid. She had acted exclusively for the sake of Heaven. A short while later we heard that she had left Samarkand and returned to her birthplace, Vilna. "*Oy!* Who can measure the power of a Jewish spirit?" said R. Berke.

FIRST SIGN OF LIFE

During that terrifying time, we became consumed by despair. Although I was a young boy, I wondered why G-d had done this. No one knew how to proceed, and a short while later the situation became bleaker with the notorious Doctors'

Plot and the resulting outbreak of anti-Semitism that erupted. The papers were full of loathsome propaganda against the Jews and the atmosphere in the Jewish communities was at an all-time low.

You can imagine how R. Berke and all of us felt. We knew that we were hiding a traitor who wanted to cross the border illegally. The government was seeking to besmirch the Jews, and revelations like this were immediately blown to disproportion and used to paint as counter-revolutionaries.

My mother would comfort R. Berke and say, "Don't be distressed. The time will come when Feigel will come here and you will both travel to *Eretz Yisrael* and join your sons."

But it also seemed so outlandish, and so removed from reality. R. Berke said sorrowfully, "*Oy*, I am here in a situation worse than that of a dog. A dog can roam freely in the streets, while I have to hide indoors all day. I have no identity papers and I'm trapped without a hope. I don't know what tomorrow will bring—will I remain here, will I be in a Jewish home, or will they arrest me? If they arrest me,

they will send me to Siberia. Then what? Feigel will remain an *aguna*, unable to remarry, forever.”

At that time, my mother’s optimism seemed like salt on an open, raw wound.

It was only after Stalin’s sudden death on Purim 1953, and the release of the doctors in the middle of Pesach, that things started looking up. The situation had eased to the extent that R. Berke finally acceded to my mother’s pleading and agreed to let her write a letter to her brother in Lvov to give regards to Freida’le, R. Berke’s daughter. As my mother anticipated, R. Berke’s wife understood the hint and quickly sent a letter in response. You can imagine how excited R. Berke was to see his wife’s handwriting. He read line after line as his shoulders heaved with broken cries.

SECRET MEETING IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT

In the meantime, life was progressively becoming easier. The new Premier of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev, decided to grant pardon to hundreds of thousands of political prisoners, including those who tried to cross the border illegally. We thought that perhaps R. Berke would benefit from this; if the prisoners had been released, maybe his file had been expunged. If so, it was time to use his old papers with his real name.

But it was still hard to shake off that long tenured feeling of terror and R. Berke was afraid to use his real name after so many years of hiding. He consulted with Eli Mishulovin and Moshe Nissilevitch, and R. Moshe came up with a radical idea: to find out in the KGB offices whether or not they were still looking for him.

In those years there were Jews who were called to the KGB offices from time to time to be grilled for information about the Jewish community. I cannot describe the fear we felt knowing that the sting could very well come from within, from one of our own. As R. Chaim Zalman Kozliner once put it, the situation that we were living in was such that if someone was suspected of collaborating with the KGB, he was “forgotten” as far as the Lubavitch community was concerned. No excuses would help. It should be noted that often these Jews were used by the KGB against their will, and it was very hard to remove oneself from their clutches.

So severe was the Lubavitch community’s attitude towards collaborators that once, after R. Berke became legal, he summoned us into a room before Rosh Hashanah. Looking grim, he said, “It has come to my attention that I am suspected of collaborating with the KGB. But, Heaven knows that I am innocent of having anything to do with them, so do I care what others think about me? But since the Torah urges us to be innocent before G-d *and* before Man, I am telling



KGB Headquarters on Lubyanka Street in Moscow.

you that I have never had anything to do with the KGB and there is not a shred of truth in this.”

It was painful to hear this from R. Berke. We told him that we hadn’t heard anything of that nature, and of course we did not suspect him, G-d forbid. After much effort we succeeded in reassuring him of this.

R. Moshe Nissilevitch was friendly with one of these alleged co-operators. The story behind their companionship was as follows:

In 1946, when many Lubavitchers succeeded in sneaking out of the country to Poland via Lemberg, R. Moshe also tried his luck, but was too late. He miraculously avoided imprisonment, but the KGB was looking for him, so he changed his name on his official documents to Sholom Friedman.

When he arrived in Samarkand, he told everyone that his name was Moshe Friedman. Although it said “Sholom” on

his papers, many people already knew him as Moshe and he couldn’t change that. If he was caught and questioned about it, he could claim to have two names, Sholom and Moshe, and that he used one name on his papers and the other in everyday life. Most of the community, including me, did not know that his family name was actually Nissilevitch. Only a few people who knew him from before the war knew it.

One man, of whom we were all wary, knew R. Moshe well and was aware of his past, including his failed border crossing attempt. He also knew of the name change from Moshe Nissilevitch to Sholom Friedman. In fact, it was this man who had forged the documents. He had been caught and imprisoned along with the activists involved in the escape, and after Stalin died, he was released from jail and came to Samarkand. R. Moshe saw him and was very afraid that the man would inform on him.

However, a few years went by and R. Moshe was never called in by the KGB; his impression was that the man was not the informant he was suspected of being. Although this man had fallen into the KGB's net, he remained G-d fearing and he hid from them whatever he was able. Once he reached this conclusion, R. Moshe decided to meet with him, all the while keeping his eyes wide open for any hints of deception.

The two would converse for hours, and the man would tell R. Moshe of his searing guilt over his visits to the KGB office. He said that every Wednesday, the day he had to go to the office, was a terrible day for him. He said, "You cannot imagine what I go through during the interrogations. The interrogator attacks me like a wolf. He bangs his fist on the table and frightens me with threats about what they will do to me if I don't talk.

"When I say that I have nothing to tell them, he orders me to go to a certain house and to see whether there is a minyan there on Shabbos, and he warns me, 'You should know that we have other people who work with us and they are honest and devoted. They will tell us the truth. If you try to lie to us, you will suffer forever.'"

This is what he would tell R. Moshe, and R. Moshe believed and empathized with him.

None of us in Samarkand knew of the connection between the two, because R. Moshe kept it to himself. He knew that if he told anyone of his trust in this man,

they would all have to be on guard against R. Moshe himself as well.

Now, with R. Berke's circle of confidants considering the resumed use of his original documents, R. Moshe thought of consulting with this fellow to find out whether the KGB was still interested in R. Berke and his whereabouts. Naturally, before doing this, he had to get R. Berke's approval.

When R. Moshe asked R. Berke about the plan, R. Berke nearly fainted. "Are you serious?" asked R. Berke. "You've lost your mind!" But R. Moshe had excellent powers of persuasion and he managed to convince R. Berke that this was the right move.

R. Moshe lost no time. He left immediately to speak with his contact, and after making the appropriate small talk— as only R. Moshe knew how—he began to slowly and carefully inquire whether the KGB was interested in R. Berke. The man told R. Moshe that they had never asked him about R. Berke and he added that he was sure that if the police were on the lookout for him, they would have asked him to gather information.

After receiving this piece of news, R. Berke was very happy but still a little nervous. R. Moshe decided that R. Berke should meet with the man himself so he could hear it from him directly. Arranging a meeting like this was complicated and dangerous, for it would reveal R. Berke's hiding place. R. Berke was then hiding in the Mishulovin home and they certainly would not agree to have this man come to their house to meet R. Berke. It would

I cannot possibly describe how excited R. Berke was to meet his wife and ten year old daughter, who had barely been three months old when he last saw her, and their long separation began.

endanger not only him but the Mishulovin family as well.

R. Moshe decided to tell no one else of the meeting and to call it for the dead of night, once everyone was asleep. The Mishulovin's house had a private yard, and R. Berke hid in a small shed in the yard. They arranged a certain time of night for R. Berke to open the gate for them, and then they would enter his room and speak by candlelight.

When R. Moshe's man heard that R. Berke was in the city and wanted to meet with him in order to hear the information from him directly, he became very excited. He knew R. Berke very well and they had not seen each other since their arrest in 1946. The man knew the bitter and dire noose still clutching at R. Berke. He did not need to be told about his sons and his wife, and how they hadn't seen or heard of him in years. He knew it all.

Late at night, R. Moshe brought the man to the gate of the Mishulovin home. R. Berke had unlocked the gate and the two entered R. Berke's hiding place. The electric light was turned off, the room lit only by the weak glow of a small candle. It is impossible to describe their emotional reunion. They fell upon one another and

cried. They kissed with true brotherly love and cried some more. Then they kissed again and cried.

They reminisced for a long time, and after R. Berke heard directly from him that his name had never been mentioned in the KGB interrogations, he was convinced of the veracity of his words. The man advised him to use his old documents and after the meeting, R. Berke decided to do so. He registered as a resident of the city, and after years of hiding, he was now legal.

PERSONAL REGARDS FROM R. BERKE

After becoming a legal resident, R. Berke relaxed somewhat, and he finally agreed to write a letter to his wife in his own handwriting to inform her that he was living among Lubavitchers and doing well. He refrained from writing his location since he was afraid that the authorities in Lvov were still looking for him. He also refused to send the letter through the post because he was afraid that the KGB would read it. He insisted on finding someone who could deliver it personally.

My brother Berel lived in Stalinabad (now known as Dushanbe) after he married, and at precisely this time—it was sometime in



R. Berke (center) receiving kos shel berachah from the Rebbe

1955—he was sent by his work to attend a conference in Moscow. On his way there he passed through Samarkand. Eli Mishulovin considered it vital that one of us give R. Berke’s wife the letter and his personal regards, and so he arranged with my brother to meet at the train station in Samarkand.

When they met, Eli gave Berel two missions: to travel to Riga and raise money to assist R. Berke in settling down in Samarkand, and to travel to Lvov and give R. Berke’s wife the letter and regards. Eli handed him the letter in an open envelope and said that R. Berke had told him that if Berel wanted, he could read the letter.

Berel did not dare to read the letter but one line that could be seen through the envelope sent shivers up his spine. In Russian, R. Berke had written, *“You surely remember that when we met and decided to marry, we said that wherever we lived and*

wherever we will be, we would never forget one another.”

Still today, as I write these lines, I am amazed by the sacrifices that people expected to make in those years. A young couple met and decided to marry and what did they talk about? Not about buying a house, and not about furniture, but asking one another to keep their commitment alive whenever and wherever they would end up.

Berel first went to Riga where he met Chabad Chassidim such as R. Yisrael Pevzner, R. Mulle Pruss, R. Notke Berkahan and others, who warmly welcomed him and gave him generous donations. From there he continued on to Lvov.

He did not want to go directly to Feigel’s house for fear that it might be under surveillance, so the meeting took place in my uncle Dovid Pevzner’s house. Feigel met him there with her daughter Freida.



R. Berke with his son, R. Mottel.

Feigel's joy was immense when she heard that Berel had a letter from her husband. She took the letter and as soon as she saw her husband's handwriting, she wept tears of joy. She read it through, tears streaming down her cheeks.

Despite her strong desire for more information about her husband, she did not ask my brother who he was or where he came from. She knew that you don't ask these questions in Russia. All she asked was, "Did you personally see my husband?"

When Berel said that he had seen R. Berke, she couldn't believe her ears. She asked him the question again and again,

with several variations, to make sure that Berel had indeed seen her husband. My brother told her that not only had he seen R. Berke but that he had even shared a room with him for two years. He said that R. Berke asked him to send his regards and to tell her that he was healthy and living among Lubavitchers and that he was strong in his belief that they would unite again soon.

Feigel's joy was boundless. My brother felt that his trip to Lvov was well worth it.

Fully reinstating his original identity was an achingly slow process, and it was another year before R. Berke even dared

to tell his wife where he was. Finally, once all of his papers were in order, he rented an apartment and asked her to come to Samarkand. A group of us went to the train station to meet Feigel and her daughter and bring them to R. Berke's new home. I cannot possibly describe how excited R. Berke was to meet his wife and ten-year-old daughter, who had barely been three months old when he last saw her, and their long separation began.

The entire Lubavitch community in Samarkand welcomed R. Berke's wife with great honor. We knew how much this woman had endured over the years she had been alone. In addition, she was a distinguished woman, highly refined, and of tremendous piety.

After arriving in Samarkand, Feigel related that a year earlier, in 1957, she convinced her parents to submit a request to join her young sons so that they wouldn't remain alone outside of Russia. Their request had been accepted, and they were already in *Eretz Yisrael*.

THE TRIP TO ERETZ YISRAEL

After his reunification with his wife, R. Berke began to think about the possibility of arranging an invitation from a relative in Israel, so that they could in turn request an exit visit. In those years, fear still hung heavily in the air, and hardly anyone dared to submit such a request. The few who did gather the courage to do so knew that it was almost certain that a year would pass before they had an answer,

and it would most likely be negative; that was always the answer.

While sending an emigration application to OVIR, the visa department of the Interior Ministry, was out of the question for R. Berke, who had been arrested for the very crime of trying to leave the country, he thought that his wife should request to reunite with her parents in Israel. Perhaps he would also be granted permission to leave after that.

R. Berke sent a letter to his father-in-law, in which he asked—not overtly of course, but by hinting—that they seek the Rebbe's advice. His father-in-law passed the question on to his grandson, R. Berke's son Mordechai, who was at the time studying in the Tomchei Tmimim of 770, in New York, and asked him to present the question to the Rebbe: Should his mother should ask for permission to emigrate? The Rebbe's clear answer would surprise them all: "Your father should submit a request for the entire family to leave and G-d will help them."

Mordechai was taken aback. Nobody had even considered this possibility. R. Berke was still technically an outlaw in the Soviet Union; how could he run the risk of applying? When he expressed his reservations to the Rebbe, the Rebbe smiled warmly and dismissed his fears with a motion of his hand, saying, "They won't catch on."

Indeed, R. Berke received an invitation from his father-in-law in his name and was granted permission to emigrate only

half a year after he submitted his request. Another half a year later, before Rosh Hashana of 1960, they received their travel passports. R. Berke didn't want to spend one extra minute in the Soviet Union. They packed their bags and left for Moscow during the middle days of Sukkos, and then for Israel, via Vienna, just a couple days later on Hoshanah Raba. Our joy for the Chein family was boundless.

JOY AND TEARS TOGETHER

After R. Berke left for Moscow, R. Moshe Nissilevitch came up with an idea to obtain Jewish book and copies of the Rebbe's talks. In order to carry out his plan I would have to travel to Moscow immediately and speak to R. Berke before he left for Israel, for the secret message could not be transmitted through anyone else.

In those days we hardly ever received any of the Rebbe's teachings. The books and pamphlets that tourists would occasionally bring and leave in shul were immediately snatched by the KGB and taken to the "Ministry of Culture." There was only one other way to obtain Chassidic discourses, talks, and other books. In those days, the few people who received permission to emigrate had to go to the Israeli embassy in Moscow in order to arrange their paperwork. When they entered the embassy, they would be greeted by a small sign that read, "The walls have ears," and an embassy official would motion to them to keep quiet. The official would take them to a bookcase

and signal to them to take as many books as they wanted, to leave with relatives still closeted in Russia. This is how we occasionally got a hold of Jewish texts, which were subsequently distributed throughout the Soviet Union. But this didn't happen very often.

As usual, R. Moshe came up with an original idea. Samarkand was an ancient city and was frequented by tourists who came for its various sights and attractions. Jewish tourists who visited the city would naturally make a stop at the shul, and here R. Moshe spied an opportunity. Although we were afraid to pray at the shul, if we had a pre-arranged hiding place, we could go there occasionally and take books that tourists would leave behind.

R. Moshe was enthusiastic about his plan and convinced me to fly to Moscow to ask R. Berke to bring the idea back to 770, so that when someone reliable next travelled to Samarkand he could be inform of the hiding place. We could rely on R. Berke to inform only the right people. So I flew to Moscow and told R. Berke the idea.

It did seem like a great plan, but unfortunately, it was also too complicated, and in the end nothing came of it. Moreover, there was no need for it: By the 1960s, Russia had begun to establish warmer political relations with the West, and many tourists began arriving from across the globe, bringing with them prayer books, *Tanyas*, and various other Chassidic works.

When I flew back to Samarkand, I felt broken and crushed. I was thrilled at the thought that R. Berke would be spending the last day of the Festival—Shmini Atzeres—in Kfar Chabad, Israel, but I could also feel the spiritual vacuum that had been created in Samarkand with R. Berke's departure. I thought to myself: Here I am, landing in Samarkand, while R. Berke is landing in the Land of Israel!

On Shmini Atzeres we sat and *farbrenged* for the first time in years without the presence of R. Berke. As the Zohar puts it, "Joy is fixed in this side of my heart; crying fixed in the other." Of course we were happy that R. Berke's suffering had finally come to an end, as he reunited with his sons after fourteen years apart, far from this land of torment. Yet, we were being left bereft of a chassid like R. Berke, and a sense of sadness still tugged at our hearts. With who would we *farbreng*, beneath whose radiant light would we warm ourselves? How would we hear sweet, chassidic prayers as pleasant as R. Berke's?

I'll never forget that Shemini Atzeres *farbrengen*. I sat alongside my friends R. Mordechai Goldschmidt, R. Michoel Mishulavin, and R. Yaakov Lerner. We said l'chaim, sang and cried, and then we said l'chaim, sang, and cried some more. So we continued well into the night, until we drifted off to sleep with our heads on the table. **P**



We were being left bereft of a chassid like R. Berke, and a sense of sadness still tugged at our hearts. With who would we *farbreng*, beneath whose radiant light would we warm ourselves? How would we hear sweet, chassidic prayers as pleasant as R. Berke's?

My Perspective

READERS WRITE

—“Welcome to the Real World” —

Mushky Raskin

The *parsha* following the *Kinus HaShluchim* is often *parshas Vayeitzei*, telling us that it's time to leave our fathers home, time to head out on *shlichus*. The middle of the *parsha* tells us “*Ufaratzta!*” spread out to all the corners of the world, conquer it! The *parsha* ends off with “*V'Yaakov holach ledarko*” the mission to get going, head on the way. It's a *parsha* of Shlichus.

Every Yid has a Shlichus. We were all sent from our comfortable place in Heaven down to this world with the mission of *dira btachtonim*. We have a job to inspire our co-workers, lead our families, and bring warmth to our communities. There is someplace and someone waiting just for you. It's your portion, your shlichus from Hashem. How do we carry out this shlichus of our *neschama* to the world?

The Parsha of Shlichus gives us the tools.

This Shabbos was also the Rebbe's *Ufruf*, the Shabbos before his *Chassuna*, the Shabbos which blessed that special day that connected us to him. In a special *maamar* for that occasion the Rebbe Rayatz explains that the world was created through Torah, it is kept in existence through learning Torah and it is built and affected through learning Torah.

The Rebbe in 5722, building on this *maamar*, gives us a very empowering perspective on life. The world out there is waiting for us to elevate it. The concealment is waiting to be thrown off, the lost sparks are waiting to be revealed. The world has no objections, if the mission doesn't seem to be working the issue is mine. When I reveal my essence the true essence of the

world is revealed, that it too is all for the *shlichus*.

The world is built on Torah, Torah is its true identity and so deep down the world will never oppose Torah. It's just an impossibility.

Sometimes in life it's hard to remember this, but experience has shown that it's more pleasant for you to remind the world that its true identity is Torah, than for the world to have to remind you.

You know that awkward moment when the doorbell rings and you rush *mincha* gobbling down the words, certain that your colleague is waiting there impatiently. You finish in record time only to discover a bored salesman standing at the door and a polite text from your colleague saying she is running 15 minutes late?

Remember the time you stood in front of the mirror giving yourself a *beter* to wear those heels not exactly befitting a Bas Melech, and when you finally get to the event you are so embarrassed to be the fanciest one there?

And of course that time that you were running into the Eighteen Minutes on Friday to make that extra dish, and then the guests were allergic to the sesame in the dressing?

It's just not worth it. The world is Torah and bending Torah won't get us anywhere.

When going on *shlichus*, a *shliach's* deepest *tefila* is that he not get in the way. That he let the Rebbe act through him to get the work done.

There is a well-known story that illustrates this point well:

First year out of college, a Jewish law student gets an interview with a prestigious firm. Having proudly worn his yarmulke during those long years of school he is now in a dilemma thinking that if he were to wear it to the interview he stands no chance of getting this fantastic position. As he is about to walk in he slips the *yarmulke* into his pocket. Without even offering him a chair, the boss inquires as to the absence of his *yarmulke* stating that they only considered him because of the reports about his strong values. Considering that he clearly isn't so strong, the offer is off.

I was once learning with a girl the basics of Yiddishkeit, but she didn't seem interested. Nothing I could say could light her spark, no argument swayed her. I asked the menahel for advice and he suggested Likkutei Sichos. I was flabbergasted. If *chakira* and logical arguments didn't work, how would learning a *sicha* stand

a chance? Having asked, I was bound to listen, and so we sat down to our first *sicha shiur* directly from the book. Within minutes she was entranced. It was her favorite thing to learn, she would quote it endlessly and see the ideas we had learn coming up all over.

Bring her to the Rebbe and problem solved.

The way to succeed is to be real. We do what Hashem wants of us and the rest

comes along. It has to. That's the way Hashem created it.

Making compromises just doesn't work. And if it does, it's not for long.

When Yaakov left his father's home for Charan he spent fourteen years in *yeshiva*. That did the trick. No professional courses or tactics, just good old Torah. In Charan itself Yaakov kept the Taryag Mitzvos, as he later told Eisav.

We will do our part and Hashem will do His.

—— Russian Bar Niggunim ——

Yitzchak S.

There is a famous *chassidische niggun* which was taught to us by the Rebbe, known as '*Stav Yapitu*,' which originated from ... Russian drunkards. The story behind this *niggun* is that chassidim heard it sung in a stopover "Kretchme" (a Russian bar) and found it worthy of being converted into a *niggun*.

Without getting into who is qualified to transform a *goyishe* song into a *niggun* and what kind of songs can be transformed, I would like to share a lesson that I took from this:

Chazal are famously quoted as saying that "*chochma bagoyim ta'amin, Torah bagoyim al ta'amin*," meaning that while there may be wisdom among *goyim*, they cannot have the Torah perspective on life. Yet, I have heard it quoted many times as a reason that we **can** and **should** read secular books and take secular courses given by *goyim* (or by Yidden whose ideas are based on *goyim* and just add "sources" when they can).

Let us analyze the story of *Stav Yapitu*: true chassidim discovered a worthy *niggun* amongst the *goyim*, but would anyone in their right mind suggest that

chassidim canvas Russian (or American) bars to find another *niggun*?!

Likewise, when it comes to learning how to live and how to approach marriage and education, it is one thing if we happen to encounter an interesting technique which is consistent with Torah (of course, even then we need to consult with the right person to actually know if it's consistent).

But to go and study secular education models is a different matter altogether!

As we tell the Israeli backpackers before they head out to visit the gurus in India: "Before you search elsewhere, perhaps you should find out what your own heritage has to offer. Perhaps there is another, more profound way in Yiddishkeit (Chassidishkeit) which you haven't been shown..."

The Rebbe in English

Leah B.

To the Perspectives staff,

Compliments on your quality digest.

I especially wanted to compliment you on the column titled "The Rebbe's Perspective" which is an essay from the Rebbe on contemporary topics. It's amazing how you present it in such a coherent manner making it a pleasure to read.

I'm embarrassed to admit, but I usually find reading an English *sicha* boring,

and I have to force myself to learn it. Translations are literal and the language is academic, and I must strain myself to understand what it means, often having to reread it several times. Your rendition is smooth and simple. I hope that others will take a lesson from you on how to present the Rebbe's *sichos* in a palatable way, yet without compromising on the Rebbe's words.

Hatzlacha,

———— Signature of Honor?! ————

Levi R.

Dear editors,

I thoroughly enjoy every issue of Perspectives and I look forward to the next. The content is thought provoking and offers our family plenty of material for discussions at our Shabbos table and beyond.

I would like to point out a recent issue which has also made its way into your magazine (most likely the result of an oversight).

In my days, a college degree was looked down upon by a chossid. Few were given permission by the Rebbe to pursue a degree, often completing one that was started before becoming *frum*. Regardless, it was viewed as a tool for a profession. No one believed that college had something to contribute to the personal life of a chossid. We were taught by our *mashpiim*, and most of all by the Rebbe, that the answers to life are in Torah.

It seems that today's younger generation lacks that mindset. In all honesty, I am not so bothered by someone who attends

college to develop a career to support his family (though the Rebbe decried this many times and insisted that a degree is not necessary to earn a living, and many of the reasons listed there apply today just the same). What bothers me most is when people believe that college will enhance a person's understanding of life, relationships and education.

This has come to a ridiculous peak when some educators proudly list their degree initials after their name! And this was an advertisement targeting normal boys, not mentally disabled children RL who need special help! Is that why I should send my child to your *yeshiva* because the *menabel* has a degree? Do you really believe that a teacher with a degree is more qualified than a capable *chassidishe melamed* who was trained by senior *chassidishe mechanchim*?

I realize that at times the degree is only for the sake of qualifying for certain funding. But that can be noted as such, and not as a signature of honor. **P**

"Chaval* on each day which delays the reading and study of this book"

*it is a regrettable loss

-The Lubavitcher Rebbe

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This account brings home the essence of what it means to have *mesiras nefesh* and what it means to be a Jew.

In the Lubavitcher Rebbe's words: "... There are three ways one can bring others closer to Torah and Judaism: By learning Mussar, the Torah's ethical teachings; by learning Chassidus; and another way is by recounting the tremendous sacrifice of the Jews living behind the Iron Curtain [to maintain Jewish life there]. It is easy to understand that the third way leads to the best results with regards to bring Jewish people closer to the to Torah and to Judaism."

Shabbos Parshas Zachor, 5785

"In my opinion, it's important to circulate the book among the young generation in particular".

The Rebbe's *chozer*, Reb Yoel Kahn

"Zaltzman's account offers a previously undiscovered tale of Chabad which was NEVER BEFORE documented or written".

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