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An essay by the Rebbe



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our knowledge of G-dliness must emanate from everything we do, not just Torah and mitzvot.

"It was on the eighth day," is how Parshas Shemini begins, the number eight being in reference to the seven previous days of *milchik*, during which Aharon and his children were crowned the *avodah*; then, on the next, eighth day, the *mitzvah* was inaugurated.

The Ki Yakar raises the following question: considering that the events which took place on this day were unrelated to the things that happened earlier, why should this day be described as the eighth? And he explains that in view of the fact that this day was described as the day when Hashem's glory would appear, there's a need to address why this day was special and featured the revelation of the *Shechina*, and being referred to as the eighth bespeaks the reality that it was of a caliber unlike the usual.

Transcendent or Connected?

Seven represents our universe; eight indicates Hashem's presence. The world was created in seven days, *shabbos* yemei bevracha or holiness, on a level beyond that, there's Hashem, eight. But Moshe counsels Shabbos because Shabbos takes place on the seventh, while *milchik* occurs on the eighth, indicating that it is of a superior quality. The instruments in the Beit Hamikdash had seven strings, while those when Moshe came will possess eight. And so, by referring to the day in our parsha as the eighth, Hashem's revelation becomes understandable.

The Ki Yakar's language is that seven is "*shib*," mundane, while eight is holy, although "*shib*" isn't literal, considering his example of *milchik* and Shabbos, where Shabbos is holy as well. "*Shib*" is being used in a relative sense, because as holy as Shabbos is, eight is entirely G-dly. However, the more the Ki Yakar explains why eight is superior, which is intended to justify why Hashem appeared then, the



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TRANSCENDENT YET IMPACTFUL

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question of how it can actually be considered the eighth seems larger. The seven days of *milchik* seem more unrelated than before, because the greater eight is, the more disconnected it becomes from the first seven. We must therefore conclude that eight is somehow both, demonstrating superiority on the one hand, yet displaying a connection on the other.

BEYOND WORK OR REST

The Ki Yakar also cites a midrash which states that Moshe's great moments are always accompanied by the word "*shib*," since it came to Parashas "*Shib*," then *shib*," and many more. The midrash then states that "*shib*" is equal to eight, signifying that "*shib*" rides the *sevens*. "*Sevens*" is seven, representing the world, either literally worldly things, or even Shabbos, but all within the world's parameters. But the depth of eight is higher, and "*shib*" upon the *sevens*.

What does that mean? Riding doesn't just entail being higher; it also means impacting the entity below. When you ride a chariot, it doesn't lose its status, but the previously ordinary animals now become beholders to you, your chariot, and have been elevated.

Eight is completely G-dly, while seven is holy but still relatively so. Sometimes Shabbos is differentiated, "*Hashem* created the world in six days, and on the seventh day He rested," but on other occasions all seven are combined, the *shabbos* yemei bevracha. When it says that "*Hashem* concluded on the seventh day," there's the question of how that fits with Hashem resting on Shabbos. One of Rabbi's explanations is that the world was previously lacking rest, which Shabbos provided, indicating that Shabbos is still a part of creation, after which rest wasn't lacking. When a person works and then rests, both are active in relation to the world he inhabits, on a level

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478 Albany Ave. Ste. 11

Brooklyn NY 11203

Rabbi Shimon Hellinger

Director

Rabbi Matisyahu Friedman

Mrs. Basya Yabel

Rabbi Yehudah Leib Altien

Editors

Rabbi Schneur Zalman Rabin

Reviewer

Rabbi Mendy Browd

Mendy Drookman

Design

Rabbi Mordechai Morozow

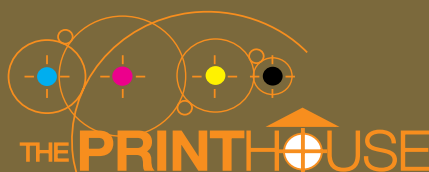
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Do You Believe It?



A *cheder* boy once raised his hand and asked his teacher, “Why does the Torah allow non-Jews to convert to be Jewish, but doesn’t allow Jews to convert to be non-Jews?”

The teacher had barely processed the question when another boy called out, “Because then there would be no more Jews.”



THE STORY IS AMUSING AS IT IS TELLING. While other children were afraid to say (or even think) what this child had said, deep inside, many of them may have actually believed that they would be happier if they were freed from the restraints of Jewish life.

The question that follows is: How can we make a convincing argument for the value of a prescribed life in a world with so many choices? Can we get our children to prefer a *chassidishe maiseh* to a secular novel, and a *chassidishe farbrengen* to a party?

We can. If we believe in it ourselves.

A person can be scrupulous in practice and fanatical in deed, yet secular in thought. If he believes that secular life is better – just forbidden, he doesn’t truly believe. If we want our children to pursue *Yiddishkeit*, we must genuinely feel that a life of Torah and Chassidus is actually better and *more enjoyable*.

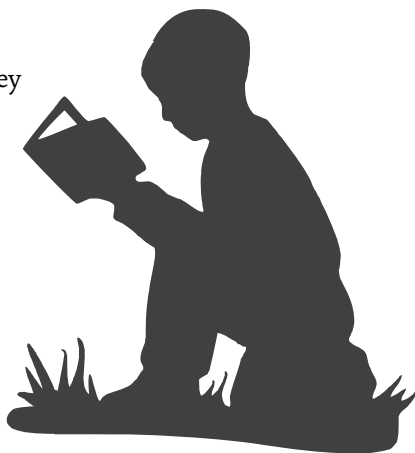
Even if we don’t always favor spiritual bliss over materialistic pleasures, we can nevertheless appreciate that level and wish to be there. That appreciation should be visibly sensed in tangible pleasure from a heartwarming *niggun*, a *geshmake vort* or an inspiring story.

Children are sometimes smarter than we would like them to be, and are hypersensitive to inconsistencies and discrepancies in their role models. If they

detect that we aren't sold on what we preach, they won't buy into it. And since children don't have the self-discipline to do it anyways, we are left with the struggle of trying to manipulate them in the right direction.



How do *we* become convinced? How do we come to believe that *Yiddishkeit* is not only the *right* way, but also the more *enjoyable* way?



A wholesome study of *pnimiyus haTorah* (the inner dimension of Torah), most easily accessible in Chassidus, is the optimal way to realize the unique value of Torah, a Jew and Hashem.

Pnimiyus haTorah is the light and life of *Yiddishkeit*. A wholehearted and contextual study of Chassidus that is faithful to the source (i.e. not picking out a paragraph for the sake of "applying" it to relationships or personal fulfillment), will produce an organic chossid for whom *Yiddishkeit* is the most meaningful ambition (read: enjoyable).

If we can inculcate these teachings in ourselves, the truth in our words will be palpable, and our children will pursue them thirstily.



Being a *dugma chaya* for our children means more than practicing what we preach, it means believing it too. Then, we can hope that our children will appreciate what *Yiddishkeit* and Chassidus have to offer.

Rabbi Shimon Hellinger

General Editor

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UNDERSTANDING --- a --- Child's Needs

We all want the best for our children and so we give them what we value most. We impose upon them what we enjoy. But do we consider what the child wants and needs? How can we know what a child really needs? How do we put our own preferences on the side and truly understand the child?

THE REBBE'S PERSPECTIVE

Second Day of Shavuos 5721 (1961) • Toras Menachem, Vol. 31, p. 53

TIMES HAVE CHANGED

In general, we are required to fulfill our responsibility to teach Torah regardless of the results. However, in Hashem's kindness, especially in recent times, we have merited to see the fruits of our labor.

Not long ago it was considered unacceptable for young men to dedicate themselves to Torah study for no tangible gain. First, he had to establish his financial future. Yet in recent years, as a result of an active effort, more and more young men and women wish to forego the "*shmatotes*" which are spread on the floor and walls [carpet and wallpaper] and other similar frills, so that they can study Torah *lishma*, for its own sake.

Those who grew up before this concept gained popularity have difficulty recognizing this development. They are under the impression that the world remains as they remember



Credit: Lubavitch Archives

Sometimes, women who are innately *merciful*, (how much more so towards their own children), ruin their children. Why do they do this? They don't put themselves in their children's shoes and don't appreciate their children's needs.

it, and are therefore afraid that their children will complain to them why they hadn't prepared them for life with a profession, a bank account and money.

In truth, the world has changed greatly, and the prevailing attitude today is to seek out the truth. Now, children are upset that their parents haven't taught them that there is an objective truth in this world, and that it is found in Torah and *mitzvos*.

EMOTIONAL STABILITY

Revolutions don't happen overnight. Therefore, there are many who still believe that the prime preparation to building a home is to secure themselves a "four- or five-digit" balance in their bank account. This is how they invest all their time, leaving no time for Torah study.



Furthermore, in the majority of cases, people don't end up earning a living from the profession they learned during their teenage years. So even according to their way of thinking, they're wasting their time.

Most importantly:

Just as it is self-understood that the physical health of children takes precedence over furniture and home décor, the same is true of emotional health. If a child is not told the truth, then when he grows up and realizes that he is missing it, he will be unsettled, lacking inner peace. Being unhappy, he will fall into conflict with his surroundings, including his close friends and relatives. And without peace he will lack in material matters as well, since peace is the channel for blessing and material success.

In recent times, even secular authorities write that one must not suffice with assuring the financial future of one's children, but rather they must be offered deeper meaning as well. One then has the choice whether to take this educational lesson from secular authorities, the "broken wells," or to learn it from Hashem's Torah which is over 3,000 years old, and has remained complete and unchanged despite all the variations in time and locale.

AN IMPARTIAL ADVISOR

Whenever advice is given, it is essential to ensure that the advice giver is impartial, and that he can properly understand and appreciate the needs of the listener. The latter condition is difficult to be come by, since people are all so different from each other. Tanya explains that among those who consider their physical life to be primary it is impossible to have true unity, since two physical bodies are separate, and one person cannot truly understand another and place oneself in that person's position.

The *posuk* [about the siege of Yerushalayim] describes that “merciful women cooked their own children.” This is figuratively interpreted as follows: Sometimes, women who are innately *merciful*, (how much more so towards their *own* children), ruin their children. Why do they do this? They don't put themselves in their children's shoes and don't appreciate their children's needs. They think the child is concerned about a few dollars, while in truth it is something much greater that they lack.

So which person is capable of offering good advice? Only one who considers his *neshama* primary can unite with another person, understand him, and offer good advice. And this is possible through Torah. When parents conduct themselves in line with Torah, they will understand what is bothering their child, and will be able to provide the child with what *he* needs.

In Summary

- Children need much more than just material stability. If we don't offer them a sense of meaning, they will feel dissatisfied with life and fall into disarray and conflict.
- We need to give our children what *they* need, and not what we think they need. Generations differ and our children may not crave the same things that we do.
- Understanding another person's needs is only possible by rising above material differences and highlighting the *neshama*. By living according to Torah and following the advice of a selfless individual, parents can choose what is in their child's best interest. **P**

Moving Beyond — Our Self —

A FARBRENGEN WITH REB YOEL KAHN

PREPARED BY RABBI YEHUDA LEIB ALTEIN

Adapted from "*BeDarkei HaChassidus*" - thoughts and stories heard from Reb Yoel Kahn

One of the foundations of *avodas Hashem* is the concept of *bittul*. Chassidus explains that *ein od milvado* doesn't merely mean that there is no G-d other than Hashem; it means that there is no other *existence*. Our *avodah* is to understand and feel how everything is *bottel* and insignificant in comparison to Him. As the Alter Rebbe explains in Tanya that in order to be a vessel for Hashem's presence a person must be *bottel* to Him. To quote the Tzemach Tzedek¹, a Yid should not say *ani* or "I"; instead, his task is to transform the *ani* into *ayin* (אני - אין).



THE *KELIPAH* OF HONOR

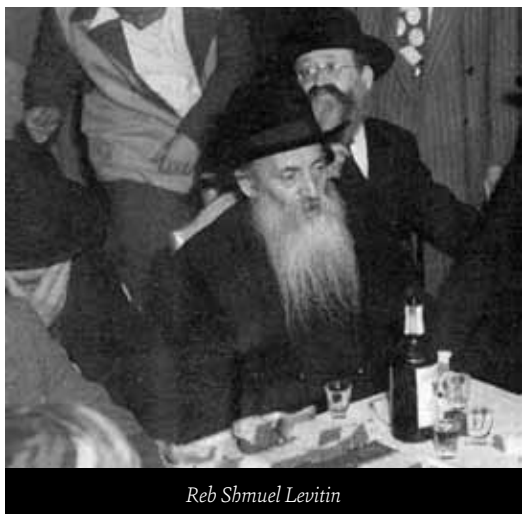
Chassidus² explains that the passion for honor is worse than all other passions. This *taivah* is in direct opposition to what *kedushah* represents—*bittul* and selflessness.

To make it worse, this *taivah* encompasses one's entire existence (or to use the terminology of Chassidus, it comes from the level of *makif* of *kelipah*). If a person has a passion, say, for eating tasty food, you can still talk to him about spiritual concepts. It's just that as soon as he sees an appetizing food, his passion is aroused and he loses interest in those loftier ideals. But when a person is obsessed with honor, he is constantly focused on his self-image and cannot submit to anything higher than himself.

It is important to avoid this *kelipah* at all costs, as it can prevent Chassidus from having any effect on a person.

MOVING BEYOND OUR SELF

— Humility—An Act or the Truth? —



Reb Shmuel Levitin

In the thirtieth chapter of Tanya, the Alter Rebbe quotes the statement of *Chazal*, “Be of a humble spirit before every person,” and adds, “You should *truly* be so.” Reb Shmuel Levitin once said that this is an important addition. Not only should one *act* in a humble manner, but he should realize that this is *truly* the case! A person must understand and realize that the next person is *truly* greater than him (as the Alter Rebbe explains further in that chapter).

When a person learns this *maamar Chazal*, he may conclude that he must conduct himself in a humble manner. If he is pious, he will assist simple people and act in an unassuming way. If he is very pious, not only will he *act* with humility, but he will *speak* with humility

as well. And if he is extremely pious, he will even *think* with humility. He will continuously tell himself: “I am nothing special,” “I am just a plain and simple person,” “Everyone else is greater than me,” and so on.

However, deep down he knows that this is not the case. He knows that he is more learned and G-d fearing than his colleague. Since the Torah tells him to act this way, he follows the Torah’s instructions; but these words are just that—words and nothing more.

The *avodah* of humility and *bittul* is not just about how a person should *act*. A person must realize that the *truth* is that he is *bottel* and insignificant.

Let’s take mathematics as an example. When a person studies a certain mathematical formula—for example, that the perimeter of a square is greater than that of a circle—is the formula only there to teach him how to act, or is it actually true? Of course, even without the existence of any human being, this scientific principle holds true. Its validity is independent on any outside factors.

Similarly, when we say that there is no other existence other than Hashem—including ourselves—it’s because it’s the *reality*. The *reality* is that my existence is

A Farbrengen with Reb Yoel Kahn

only here to serve Hashem, and it's up to me to live my life accordingly.

The same is true of *Chazal's* instruction, "Be of a humble spirit before every person." This doesn't only mean that a person should *act* this way, but rather he should recognize the truth in it. A person should honestly say to himself: "In a certain way, I am truly lower than anyone else. This is the truth, whether I feel and realize it or not. My task is to reflect upon this truth until I understand it and act accordingly, but it is valid regardless of my actions."

TWO WAYS TO CALCULATE

The Rebbe once related the following anecdote.

There was once a chossid who was both a great *lamdan* and extremely humble. People once asked him, "Doesn't the Gemara say that a *talmid chacham* must have a small measure (*sheminis shebishminis*—lit. 1/64) of arrogance? Why don't you display at least a little bit of pride?"

The man explained, "When I arrive at the *beis din shel maalah*, there are two ways for them to calculate my arrogance versus my erudition. If they begin by calculating how much I studied and then proceed to measure my arrogance, I will

When a person studies a certain mathematical formula—for example, that the perimeter of a square is greater than that of a circle—is the formula only there to teach him how to act, or is it actually true?

certainly not fall short. But if they start with my arrogance and then proceed to measure my knowledge, the results will be quite grim..."

This man honestly believed that his scholarship was lacking and was afraid that the pride would be unjustifiable.

THE ANAV OF MINSK

There was once a *talmid chacham* who, due to his great humility, was known as the *anav* of Minsk. He would visit the bathhouse every Erev Shabbos and ask each person who arrived, "Do you perhaps need a pail of hot water? [In those days bathhouses did not have showers and were equipped with pails of hot water instead.] Would you like some soap? How about a towel?" Out of respect to a man

MOVING BEYOND OUR SELF

Before long, the *anav* ran out of patience and muttered under his breath: “Apparently, he doesn’t know that I am the *anav* of Minsk!”

of such great piety, no one would accept his offers.

One day a Kotzker chossid came to town. Arriving at the bathhouse, he quickly caught on to the *anav*’s “*shtik*.”

Soon enough, the *anav* approached him and asked him if he wanted a pail of hot water. The chossid immediately accepted the offer. Having no choice, the *anav* went to fetch him a pail.

When he returned with the water, he asked the chossid, “Perhaps you would like a second pail?”

“Sure, why not?”

“Maybe some soap?”

“Sounds great!”

Before long, the *anav* ran out of patience and muttered under his breath: “Apparently, he doesn’t know that I am the *anav* of Minsk!”

In a similar fashion some individuals once joined together and formed a group known as the *kat batzneia leches*, the society for those who walk discreetly. The Rashbatz, a clever and intelligent chossid, had three questions about this society: (1) If they walk discreetly, why the need for a society? (2) If they are indeed discreet, how is it that everyone knows about them? (3) And most importantly—what do they actually have to hide?!

Chazal say, “He who escapes honor will be pursued by honor.” If honor is an unwanted experience, why is someone who escapes honor “punished” by receiving it?

According to one explanation, the reason is because although he is ostensibly escaping honor, he keeps on peeking backward to see if the honor is pursuing him. The escape itself is a method of seeking honor!³

Holy Honor

Demanding respect on the grounds of *kavod batorah* can sometimes be worse than regular honor-seeking. He thinks that since he’s not defending his own

honor but the honor of the holy Torah, and someone who doesn’t honor him properly deserves to be severely punished!

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Whenever a person feels deserving of honor for his Torah or other spiritual achievements, he must ask himself honestly: Does this quest for honor come from the *nefesh ha'elokis*, or perhaps it comes from the *nefesh hababamis*, and the issue at hand is not the Torah but his personal ego?

One of the ways to discern his true motivation is by gauging how he reacts when someone makes light of another Torah scholar. If he truly cares for *kavod hatorah*, it will bother him in the same measure as when his own honor is slighted. But if it doesn't bother him as much, his concern for *kavod hatorah* is most likely the result of his own *yeshus* and ego.

The Alter Rebbe explains in Tanya that a *beinoni* shouldn't be a *shoteh* and try to

elevate his *machshavos zaros*. That *avodah* is limited to great *tzaddikim* who only receive such thoughts from others, but the *machshavos zaros* of a *beinoni* come from within himself.

The same can be said regarding *kavod hatorah*. As long as one's *nefesh hababamis* is in full gear, he shouldn't be foolish and demand respect on the grounds of *kavod hatorah*, because he probably wants it for selfish reasons, not for the sake of the Torah.

“DON'T BE A SHOTEH!”

Parenthetically, Reb Shimon Zelichover was the *mashpia* in the famous Chachmei Lublin Yeshiva and was an influential figure. Though not a Chabad chossid, he was very passionate about learning



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MOVING BEYOND OUR SELF

Tanya, and he would often talk about the importance of studying it.

To prove his fluency in the *sefer*, Reb Shimon once challenged some *bochurim* to test him by quoting a phrase and asking him to identify its location. They accepted the challenge and proceeded to test him, and he immediately pinpointed the location of each sentence.

One of the statements they repeated was, “Do not be a *shoteh*.” When Reb Shimon heard this, he said: “This is written in every line of Tanya! It is stated clearly in Chapter Twenty-Eight, however, the whole point of the Tanya is to tell us not to be a *shoteh*!”

HONOR “SHELO LISHMAH”

Unfortunately, we see cases where *chassidische yungeleit* go on *shlichus* (whether opening a Beis Chabad or in *chinuch*), and as time passes, their attitude to honor goes through a change.

When they were *bochurim* and *yungeleit*, they were entirely uninterested in honor; the only thing that occupied their minds was to fulfill the Rebbe’s desire. However, after receiving the position of *shliach*, *magid shiur*, *mashpia*, and so on, a slow transformation takes place.

At first, the honor accorded to them by the community or their students

is foreign and feels out of place. They realize that the main thing is to fulfill the Rebbe’s *shlichus* with selfless dedication. However, as part of their *shlichus* they must sometimes be honored, and they slowly get used to it. Slowly but surely their appetite grows, until they pursue the honor itself, even when it doesn’t contribute to their *shlichus*.

The honor began as *shelo lishmah*. They didn’t want the honor for its own sake, only for the sake of the *shlichus*. But “*mitoch shelo lishmah ba lishmah*”—this leads to desiring honor for the sake of honor!

From time to time, a *chassidische Yid* who is involved in the Rebbe’s *shlichus* must make a *cheshebon hanefesh* and ask himself if he is still focused on the right things. He should try to remember the attitude he had when he was a *bochur*, when everything revolved around selfless dedication to fulfilling the Rebbe’s instructions.

PROTECTING “THE REBBE’S HONOR”

Regrettably, concern to protect the Rebbe’s *kavod* can sometimes get mixed up with one’s personal *yeshus*. Sometimes, a *shliach* or other community leader truly desires to defend the Rebbe’s *kavod*, but his personal agenda gets mixed in, and this produces tragic results. As Chazal warn us, “jealousy, lust, and the seeking of honor drive a person from the world.”

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Once, the Kotzker Rebbe said that as one is about to pass on to the next world, the *yetzer hara* comes to him and says, “Do *teshurah* and die like a good Jew!”

It is therefore important for every *shliach*, no matter what type of *shlichus* he is involved in, to take time to learn a *maamar Chassidus* in a meaningful way. This has the potential to prevent a lot of *machlokes*. If one feels that the only thing that counts is to fulfill the Rebbe’s *shlichus* it’s impossible for *machlokes* to develop.

If a person is involved in *shlichus* without really thinking about the Rebbe (and really thinking about the Rebbe can only be done by learning Chassidus properly), he may shout slogans such as “*Bittul!*” “*Shlichus!*” “*Dirah betachtonim!*” and so on, yet the *bittul* has to follow *his* way of understanding...

Coupling *yeshus* and *kavod* with *shlichus* and *dirah betachtonim* can have perilous results. If the person’s issue is his **personal** ego, there is only so much he will go

astray; but if he attributes it to *kedushah*, there is no limit to where it may take him.

A *shliach* once complained to me that the Lubavitchers in his town are opposing the Rebbe, because they don’t care about the honor of the Rebbe’s *shliach*!

I explained to him that they aren’t intending to go against the Rebbe’s honor *ch”v*, it’s only that they don’t view his honor as the Rebbe’s honor. Since they don’t see the *shliach* as being selflessly devoted to the Rebbe, they don’t consider their lack of respect toward him as a lack of respect toward the Rebbe.

It goes without saying that we must assist the *shliach* regardless. However, the more he is truly devoted to fulfilling the Rebbe’s *shlichus*, the more the people around him will sense this, and they will listen to him and treat him as a *shliach* of the Rebbe should be treated.

“Die Like a Good Jew!”

The Kotzker chassidim were famous for their sharp, profound sayings.

(Parenthetically, the Rebbe once mentioned the point of dispute between

the Kotzker Rebbe and the Tzemach Tzedek. The Kotzker Rebbe believed that all that was needed was to gather a small group of fiery young men, and the entire world would thus be elevated.

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The Tzemach Tzedek, on the other hand, maintained that it was necessary to influence every individual Jew directly. The Rebbe then mentioned that the Kotzker Rebbe had a deep (*pnimiyus'dike*) relationship with the Tzemach Tzedek.)

Once, the Kotzker Rebbe said that as one is about to pass on to the next world, the *yetzer hara* comes to him and says, “Do *teshuvah* and die like a good Jew!”

This is a deep *vort*! Instead of doing *teshuvah* because his *neshamah* is about ascend to the World of Truth, the *yetzer hara* comes and tells him to do *teshuvah* so that *he* should die like a good Jew. Even his final *teshuvah* the *yetzer hara* tries to connect to his ego!

DESPISING HONOR

Raza, the Rebbe Rashab's brother, was a very humble person, to the extent that the Rebbe Rashab once said that he is jealous of his brother's *bittul*.

“I am willing to place my entire house at the king's disposal!” the rich man offered generously. The king turned down the man's offer. “I don't want *you* to give me the entire house,” he replied. “I want one room that is completely *mine*.”

It once happened that he was sitting at a gathering and those gathered began to speak his praise. When he came home he commented, “I could barely tolerate their praises, but had they spoken derogatory words about me, I wouldn't been able to handle it at all...”

He spoke according to how he grasped the truth at his current level. He couldn't tolerate honor and simply despised it, yet he felt that it didn't bother him as much as if they would put him down.

“BITTUL DOESN'T GO EITHER...”

A group of chassidim in Russia once *farbrenged* together on the meaning of *bittul*. After a few hours of spirited *farbrenging* intermingled with *lechaim*, they walked outside and were confronted by the policeman at the corner. “Who goes there?” he barked.

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So infused were they with the ideas discussed at the *farbrengen* that, despite the fear prevalent in Russia in those days, one of them answered in Russian, “*Bittul idyot—Bittul goes!*”

This was followed by a remark from the next chossid: “Not even *bittul!*” The second chossid recognized that on a deeper level, even *bittul* can be a form of existence, and he declared that this subtle level of existence doesn’t go either...

“JUST ONE ROOM—BUT IT SHOULD BE MINE!”

Reb Zalman Posner once told me a *marshal* he heard from the Rebbe before the *nesius* that illustrates two distinct levels of *bittul*.

Arriving at one of the cities in his kingdom, a king was greeted by a wealthy man. “I would like to ask His Majesty the king to please stay in my spacious residence,” he said respectfully. “I have allocated an entire wing for you. You can use it for the entire duration of your visit!”

“There’s no need to give me an entire suite,” the king replied. “One room is enough, but it should be completely mine.”

The rich man didn’t understand the king’s intent. “I am willing to place my entire house at the king’s disposal!” he offered generously.

The king turned down the man’s offer. “I don’t want *you* to give me the entire house,” he replied. “I want one room that is completely *mine*.”

THE FRIEND AND THE PEASANT

A similar analogy is given of a king who called for one of his friends to do him a favor. The friend was well aware of the king’s immense greatness, and as he entered the throne room, he fainted from fear.

On another occasion, the king asked one of his subjects, a coarse, vulgar peasant, to appear before him. The peasant had no interest in coming to the king and tried avoiding the visit, until he had no choice but to make his way to the palace.

He passed through room after room of artwork and wealth, but none of it inspired him with excitement or awe. Even as he stood before the king, the only thought on his mind was how he could escape fulfilling the king’s request.

The king then commanded the peasant to go and buy him a box of matches. Having no other choice, he did as he was told.

Which person had a greater *bittul* to the king? At first glance, it was certainly the king’s friend, who recognized the king’s glory and fainted from awe. However,

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At first glance, it was certainly the king's friend, who recognized the king's glory and fainted from awe. However, from a certain perspective there is an advantage in the *bittul* of the peasant.

from a certain perspective there is an advantage in the *bittul* of the peasant.

The friend didn't faint because the *king* commanded him to do so; he fainted because *he* felt the king's greatness. While the peasant was indeed lowly and coarse, when he went and bought the matches, it wasn't because *he* felt or understood that this is what should be done, but because the *king* commanded him to do so. The

entire deed from beginning to end was about the *king*.

Bittul can be gauged in quantity or in quality.⁴ The friend unquestionably experienced a greater *amount* of *bittul*, and it permeated his entire existence, while the *bittul* of the peasant only affected his faculty of action. But in that small detail where he did submit himself, his *bittul* was entirely from the king without any involvement of his own ego.

***Bittul* Like a Person**

Chassidus explains that the name of Hashem known as *shem mah* (מ"ה) is associated with *bittul*.

Interestingly, the word *adam*, human, has the same *gimatriya* as *mah* (אד"ם=מ"ה), while an animal has the letters *mah* written clearly in its name (בהמה). Why is this so?

According to one explanation, this demonstrates that a person should not display his *bittul* openly. If everyone can see his *bittul*, it is the same *bittul* as that

of an animal! His *bittul* should remain "hinted" and concealed within him.

MESIRAS NEFESH FOR ZEIDE'S CHALAFIM

However, there is a deeper message to this idea. Not only must one's *bittul* remain unobtrusive, true *bittul* means that one can display strength of character while retaining an inner *bittul*. In fact, the fortitude is the *result* of an even greater *bittul*, as demonstrated by the following story.

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In the times of the Tzemach Tzedek, there was a small town with nine chassidim. In addition to the fact that they were missing a tenth man for a *minyan*, they also lacked a *chassidishe shochet* and a *chassidishe melamed* for their children. They wanted to “import” a fellow chossid who could fill all three roles.

The Alter Rebbe had instituted that *shechitah* knives should be shaped in such a way that allowed it to be both sharp and smooth. Although it has since become common practice among all of *klal Yisrael*, in those days the *misnagdim* vehemently opposed this new-fangled style.

When the chassidim of this town visited the Tzemach Tzedek and expressed their qualms about hiring a *chassidishe shochet*, because of the negative reaction it was bound to cause, the Tzemach Tzedek replied: “For the Zeide’s *chalafim*

(the Alter Rebbe’s *shechitah* knives) it is necessary to have *mesiras nefesh!*”

Hearing these unequivocal words, the chassidim immediately hired the *chassidishe shochet*. At first they tried to keep the matter secret, but in due time it became public knowledge, and the town was up in arms.

The *Beis Din* summoned the chassidim and admonished them for their actions, adding a slew of derogatory titles for good measure. “You are merely a group of *am ba’aratzim!*” they declared angrily.

Hearing this, one of the chassidim stood up and opened a Maharsha. (In those days the Maharsha was printed as a separate book, not in the back of the Gemara as it is today.) He turned to one of the pages and asked the *rov* of the town which Tosafos the Maharsha was explaining. The *rov* was unable to answer.

When they left the *Beis Din*, the chossid’s colleagues turned to him and asked pointedly: “What’s this arrogance all about? Is this how Chassidus teaches one to act?!”



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Reb Chaim Brisker

Seeing the direction where things were headed, Reb Chaim stood up and declared: “I, Reb Chaim of Brisk of worldwide fame, decree with my power of Torah that this matter should be left undecided!”

Immediately, the chossid repeated the relevant Gemara and Tosafos effortlessly.

Although the onlookers were impressed, they assumed he just happened to be familiar with the Gemara and Tosafos on that page. To disprove these thoughts, the chossid randomly turned to another page. Once again, the *rov* was unable to provide the background, while the chossid expounded on the entire *sugya* in great detail as if he had just learnt it.

It turned out that this chossid was no *am ha'aretz*; in fact, he was fluent in the entire Shas along with Tosafos and Maharsha. Realizing that their claims were baseless, the *misnagdim* dropped the matter, and the *chassidishe shochet* was able to continue *shechting* without any disturbances.

When they left the *Beis Din*, the chossid's colleagues turned to him and asked pointedly: “What's this arrogance all about? Is this how Chassidus teaches one to act?!”

“But the Rebbe said that we must be willing to have *mesiras nefesh* for the Zeide's *chalahfm*!” the chossid countered.

This story carries a powerful message.

At first glance, a person's existence stands in direct contradiction to *bittul*. Either he expresses his character or he suppresses it. But this story shows us otherwise. The

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chossid wasn't looking neither for *yeshus* nor for *bittul*. All that mattered to him was the Alter Rebbe's *chalafim*! If this necessitated displaying his intellectual prowess, so be it; he didn't do so because of *yeshus*, rather because this is what the situation demanded. This is the meaning of true *mesiras nefesh*—to be completely devoted to the cause, even at the expense of one's feeling of *bittul*.

THE BITTUL OF REB CHAIM BRISKER

The Frierdiker Rebbe held Reb Chaim Brisker in high esteem, and when the latter passed away, he related the following episode to demonstrate his greatness.

At one of the meetings held by the *rabbonim* in Russia, a certain issue was raised that was crucial for the existence of Yiddishkeit in the country. For some reason, however, most of the *rabbonim* didn't recognize the importance of the matter, and they were about to settle it in a way that would bring about great damage.

Seeing the direction where things were headed, Reb Chaim stood up and declared:

"I, Reb Chaim of Brisk of worldwide fame, decree with my power of Torah that this matter should be left undecided!"

Out of respect for Reb Chaim, the *rabbonim* temporarily laid the matter to rest, and ultimately it was never revisited.

Although Reb Chaim was unassuming by nature,⁵ when the situation required it, he was able to display strength of character. It wasn't arrogance or *yeshus*; it stemmed from his complete devotion to upholding Yiddishkeit.

People assume that willpower is a result of *yeshus*: the more of a healthy self-image one has, the more he will be determined to carry out his ideas. However, Chassidus teaches us that the opposite is true. However great a person's *yeshus* can be, since he is limited, his determination is bound to peter out. But if his fortitude comes from *bittul*, because he understands that this is what the truth demands, he will continue without letup until he perseveres.

To Rise Higher

When a person has fever, taking fever reducing medicine won't get rid of any underlying illness. There is a reason why

he is suffering from fever, and as long as the illness lasts the fever will return once the temporary fix wears off.⁶

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Likewise in spiritual matters: to act, speak or think in a humble manner won't solve the problem that the person feels himself to be important. Only by truly coming to believe that he isn't something special can he change internally.

The problem of honor seeking and ego is that the person is looking for where he "fits into the picture." When a person realizes that it isn't about him, but about what the truth calls for, he can move beyond his ego.

SELF-CENTERED *BITTUL*

The Rebbe often repeated the story of the chossid who was instructed by the Mittler Rebbe to repeat Chassidus in the towns he would pass on his way home from Lubavitch. The chossid, who was gifted with excellent oratory abilities, felt that reviewing the *maamorim* was causing his ego to grow, and he raised the issue the next time he was at *yechidus* with the Rebbe. When the Rebbe heard his concern, he responded: "An 'onion' should become of you, but you should still continue repeating Chassidus!"

According to the simple understanding of the story, the Mittler Rebbe was telling the chossid that assisting others by teaching them Chassidus overrides personal spiritual growth. But perhaps we can offer a deeper explanation.

The Rebbe wasn't only instructing the chossid to continue reviewing Chassidus despite his ego, rather he was actually showing him how to correct his ego. The Rebbe was saying, "This whole problem of yours, that you feel your ego and want to remedy it, centers around *you* and *your* character. Stop thinking about yourself. Fulfill the task you were entrusted with, and don't focus so much on whether you have *bittul* or not!"

There is a similar story of a philanthropist who would give large sums of money to *tzedakah*. At one point he began to worry that he wasn't giving *tzedakah* with the correct intentions. Maybe he was distributing *tzedakah* because he enjoyed it when others heard about his accomplishments and respected him?

Approaching his *rov*, he told him that he was considering to stop giving *tzedakah*, because he felt that it was making him arrogant.

"Don't even think of stopping!" the *rov* said adamantly. "Perhaps you are right that it would be better for *you* to stop giving. But for the *needy people* who benefit from your *tzedakah*, it is better to continue, so they will have food to eat!"

Here as well, on a simple level the *rov* was saying that providing for the poor is more important than circumventing arrogance. But on a deeper level, it is through ignoring these concerns that one can

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reach genuine *bittul*. Instead of thinking about *himself*—whether this will add to his *yeshus* or not—he is thinking about the *other person*, the destitute individuals who don't have bread to put on the table. This is what true *tzedakah* is all about—to think about the welfare of *others*.

There is a type of *lishmah* which is a *madreigab* to strive and prepare for. But then there is a type of *lishmah* where one doesn't think about himself and the spiritual levels he wants to attain, rather he dedicates himself to accomplishing what is needed!

TO BE ARROGANT IS TO BE FOOLISH

The whole idea of seeking honor has no logical basis. If you are indeed so great, what difference does it make what other, “lowly” people think about you? The fact that what other people say carries so much weight demonstrates that you are not all that superior.

Analyzing how others will view your actions has no relevance. If what you are doing is correct, who cares whether someone else knows about it; and if it is incorrect, you shouldn't do it regardless of the reaction it will initiate.

There is an adage quoted in Chassidus, “Every proud person is a fool.” A truly intellectual person will not be arrogant.

“This whole problem of yours, that you feel your ego and want to remedy it, centers around *you* and *your* character. Stop thinking about yourself. Fulfill the task you were entrusted with, and don't focus so much on whether you have *bittul* or not!”

When a person is focused on what others will say about him, he can lose his personal identity. He doesn't consider the objective truth of an idea; all that concerns him is how others will react and if they will admire him.

THE TRUE INTELLECTUAL

Chassidus explains that real intellect means to leave yourself behind in order to properly understand a concept. It can be difficult for an arrogant person to grasp an idea correctly, because his sense of self will taint the way he understands it.

True intellect is not about being clever and having a good head. A thief can also

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When a person is focused on what others will say about him, he can lose his personal identity. He doesn't consider the objective truth of an idea; all that concerns him is how others will react and if they will admire him.

figure out ingenious ways of stealing, but he is merely using his intellect as a tool to further his own selfish goals. A truly intellectual person, by contrast, strives to leave his personal desires behind, and even his previous mindset, in order to grasp the truth of a concept. His goal is to understand the truth, and he will base his mindset and desires on that truth.

An arrogant person may be talented and even brilliant, but he is still far from being a truly intellectual person. He may be able to grasp a practical science such as physics, because it isn't as necessary to leave yourself behind when the concepts you are studying are tangible and concrete. However, when dealing with a more abstract study—such as the study of the soul, and certainly of *Eloku*s—you must be able to break away from your preconceived ideas if you want to understand the concepts as they are.

Interestingly, the Frieddiker Rebbe writes⁷ that Jewish scholars are generally more successful in intellectual disciplines than in practical sciences. Since a Jew has a *nesbama*, even if he doesn't feel a *bittul* to Hashem, he possesses the intrinsic ability

to look beyond his personal self and grasp subtle intellectual ideas.

A noted mathematician once told me that throughout history, Jewish thinkers particularly excelled in mathematics more than in physics, chemistry, and similar sciences. High-level mathematics is an extremely abstract study, as opposed to other sciences that deal with the laws of nature's tangible elements.

THREE REACTIONS TO ANOTHER'S SUFFERING

There are three types of good *midos*: those of a non-Jew, those of a Jew that come from his *nefesh basicblis* – the intellectual soul, and those of a Jew that come from his *nefesh ha'elokis* – the G-dly soul.

There are people who can't handle seeing another person suffer. By some, this evokes memories of past instances where they experienced similar pain, and by others, the mere sight of another's distress agitates them and arouses their compassion. However, their compassion revolves around *themselves* and their inability to see another in pain. They don't

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feel the pain of the *other person*; they help the other person because of their *own* feelings of discomfort. Just as an ox gets restless when seeing red, they get restless when seeing blood.

However, when a Jew has compassion on another, it isn't because *he* can't stand watching the other in pain, but because he feels the pain of the *other person*. He thinks, "Why is it that *he* is suffering and not me?!" This feeling comes from the *nefesh basiclis*—the intellectual soul. As explained above, genuine intellect is about leaving yourself and understanding the truth as it is; hence, the *nefesh basiclis* allows one to feel what the *other* is experiencing.

But this still falls short of the *midos* of the *nefesh ha'elokis* – the G-dly soul. After all, intellect is limited to *the person's* understanding of the subject. Similarly,



compassion that comes from the *nefesh basiclis* is limited to the way *he* views the person in pain. However, compassion that comes from the *nefesh ha'elokis* is based on the fact that the other person was created by Hashem. Since he is important in *Hashem's* eyes, he deserves help.

— The Antidote to Ego: Chassidus —

The halacha is that *bedikas chometz*—which in spiritual service means to locate and get rid of ego and *yeshus*—must be performed with the light of a candle.⁸ If a person does not have “light” and sensitivity—if he doesn't think into what is truly real and important—he may not even notice his own *yeshus*.

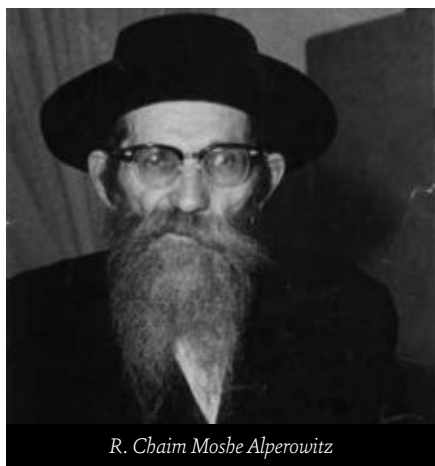
This is what Chassidus is all about—to show us that there is something higher

than our own existence. By learning Chassidus properly and reflecting on its ideas, our ego slowly diminishes and we are able to connect to a higher truth.

A SOLUTION IN ELEVATION

A group of chassidim were once sitting together and discussing the need to

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R. Chaim Moshe Alperowitz

A person who is uncomfortable to *daren* longer in shul because people will notice and be impressed, will not remedy the situation by *davening* at home. The problem isn't that *others* are watching; the problem is that *he* is self-conscious about it.

do what's right because it is right, not because other people are looking at you. At one point, R. Chaim Moshe Alperowitz, a *pnimiyus'dike*, genuine chossid, remarked, "I believe that the solution is to elevate oneself a bit."

He explained:

A person who is uncomfortable to *daven* longer in shul because people will notice and be impressed, will not remedy the situation by *davening* at home. The problem isn't that *others* are watching; the problem is that *he* is self-conscious about it. When he puts on *tefillin*, for example, he isn't concerned that he is showing off, because he knows this is what he must do. Similarly, if he will elevate himself a bit—by focusing on what must be done and not about *his* place in the picture—he will be comfortable *davening* at length and won't be concerned about onlookers.

A MILLION DOLLARS AND FIVE CENTS

In the early years, the Rebbe would return home from 770 by foot, accompanied by Rabbi Chodakov. During those nights when the Rebbe would receive people for *yechidus*, Rabbi Chodakov would wait in his office until everyone had finished entering for *yechidus* and would accompany the Rebbe home.

One day, Rabbi Chodakov called me and told me that when he had accompanied the Rebbe home the night before, the Rebbe had repeated to him a conversation he had with someone at *yechidus*. The Rebbe added that it would be fitting for the conversation to be transcribed and he would then edit it. (Even though these answers had been given to a private individual, the Rebbe wanted them to be publicized since their content was of a general nature.) Rabbi Chodakov repeated

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the conversation to me, I wrote it down, and he gave it in to the Rebbe for editing.⁹

The content of the *yechidus* was as follows:

The individual complained that whenever he does something positive he has all sorts of ulterior motives. The Rebbe answered by way of a *mashal*. Suppose a person enters a deal in which he has the potential to earn a million-dollar profit, and on the side, he will also earn another five cents. Of course, the only thing on that person's mind is the million dollars, and the five cents are of no significance to him.

The same is true in *avodas Hashem*. When a person does a *mitzvah* he connects to Hashem. When he reflects on the greatness of the *mitzvah's* accomplishment—that he, a limited human being, is connecting to Hashem, the infinite Creator—everything else will pale in comparison, and his personal motives will be of no significance.

THE WIND AND THE SUN

There are two ways to fight *yeshus*. One way is to fight it head-on, by contemplating on its disadvantages and fallacies. The second way is to elevate yourself. When a person focuses on how he can connect

to Hashem and fulfill the mission he has been given, all of his foolish concerns will dissipate automatically.

Chassidim borrowed this widespread fable to explain how Chassidus affects a person:¹⁰

The wind and the sun once debated over which one of them was stronger. The wind decided to show his prowess. Pointing at a person standing down below, he said, “Watch and see how I can blow his clothing off of his body.” Saying this, he began blowing strongly.

Feeling the powerful gusts, the man buttoned his coat tightly. The wind responded by blowing even more ferociously, and the man countered by tightening his belt. The wind had no choice but to give up.

It was now the sun's turn to demonstrate his abilities. The sun unfurled its rays, and as the temperature began to warm, the person loosened his belt, unbuttoned his coat, and finally removed it entirely.

As long as a person is acting within the framework of his own self, he will be unable to leave his ego, and attempting to wage war against it can actually make

As long as a person is acting within the framework of his own self, he will be unable to leave his ego. But when the light of Chassidus begins to shine within him, he rises higher and the trivialities disappear by themselves.

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things worse. But when the light of Chassidus begins to shine within him, he rises higher and the trivialities disappear by themselves.

LESSON FROM A SAUNA

Rabbi Sholom Ber Gordon was the *rov* of a shul in Newark. Once, when he was at the Friediker Rebbe for *yechidus*, he related that it was sometimes necessary for him to administer rebuke to members of his congregation for their improper conduct. He was extremely uncomfortable fulfilling this task. Telling people off was not his thing, especially since he was much younger than them.

The Rebbe prefaced his answer by asking him if he was ever in a sauna.

“In a sauna, you walk up steps and get hot, and then someone comes over to you and strikes you with a branch, which helps release the sweat.

“Just imagine how a person would feel if someone would come along and smack him with a branch in the middle of the street! Why is this conduct acceptable in a sauna, so much so that he will even ask for more?!”

“The answer is that when a person has been elevated and warmed up, he himself will ask for additional blows!”

When a person is elevated and is focused on higher matters, he will shed his *yeshus* and other issues on his own accord.

TOTAL IMMERSION

The way to raise oneself higher is by “immersing” in Chassidus. To quote the Rambam at the end of *Hilchos Mikva’os*, one must immerse himself in the “pure waters of knowledge.”

Total immersion means that one is completely underwater, and no part of him can be seen from the outside. Similarly, a person must immerse himself in the waters of knowledge—Chassidus. This is the meaning of learning Chassidus abundantly (*beshufti*). This doesn’t only mean to learn a lot of Chassidus in quantity, but to be totally submerged in Chassidus so that nothing else is important to him. Learning Chassidus in such a way lifts a person above the silly ego of the *nefesh habahamis*.

“Just imagine how a person would feel if someone would come along and smack him with a branch in the middle of the street! Why is this conduct acceptable in a sauna, so much so that he will even ask for more?”

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A person can spend his entire life fighting his *yeshus* and remain in a dark prison cell. Chassidus teaches us that the correct approach is to illuminate ourselves, so that the *yeshus* will disappear on its own.



FOUR PRISONERS IN A DARK CELL

There were once four prisoners together in a prison cell, three clever individuals and one simple one. One of the prison guards enjoyed making their lives difficult, and he would lower their ration of hot water into the dark cell so they would burn themselves. The three clever prisoners figured out how to hold the kettle without burning themselves, but the simple prisoner would always get hurt.

One of the clever prisoners tried to teach the simple one how to hold the kettle, however, his efforts were futile and the simple prisoner didn't catch on. Turning to his two colleagues, the first prisoner

demanding, "Why don't you come and help me?!"

"Oh, I'm busy," one of them replied. "I am trying to invent a way of bringing light to our cell. That way we won't need to explain this to him at all!"

"And what about you?" they both asked the third one.

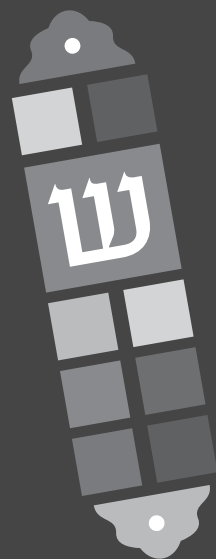
"Me? I'm trying to conceive of a way for us to leave prison altogether!"¹¹

A person can spend his entire life fighting his *yeshus* and remain in a dark prison cell. Chassidus teaches us that the correct approach is to illuminate ourselves, so that the *yeshus* will disappear on its own. **P**

SOURCES

1. *Derech Mitzvosecha* 62b.
2. See for example *Hemshech Ayin Beis*, Vol. 1, p. 209.
3. See *Toras Menachem*, Vol. 22, p. 131.
4. See for example *Likutei Sichos*, Vol. 9, p. 73.
5. See *Sefer HaSichos* 5702, p. 112.
6. See *Toras Menachem*, Vol. 56, p. 283.
7. See *Sefer HaMa'amorim* 5681, p. 222.
8. See *Likutei Torah*, parshas Acharei, 26b.
9. The *yechidus* was later printed in *Toras Menachem*, Vol. 15, pp. 203–204.
10. *Lubavitch VeChayoleha* (by R. Foleh Kahn) in the name of R. Avrohom Dovid Posner.
11. See *Sipurei Chassidim* by R. SY Zevin in the name of Reb Simcha Bunim of Peshischa ("A Treasury of Chassidic Tales" by Uri Kaploun p. 163).

The “Right” Side



AN INTRODUCTION TO THE LAWS OF MEZUZAH PLACEMENT

RABBI SHIMON HELLINGER

Most observant Jews today are familiar with the importance of verifying the *kashrus* of *mezuzos*. The multitude of details required to make a *mezuzah* kosher, and the host of issues that can invalidate them, compel the responsible consumer to research the authenticity of a *mezuzah* before buying it.

Even after ascertaining its legitimacy, he will ensure its ongoing *kashrus* by checking

it regularly. Some conscientious people go so far as checking their *mezuzos* every year, particularly in preparation for the new year.¹

Yet, surprisingly, an essential aspect of the *mezuzah's kashrus* has not merited the same level of attention: the *mezuzah's* placement.

1. *Mateh Efrayim*, §581. The Rebbe asked that this worthy custom be publicized – *Sefer HaSichos* 5748, Vol. 2, p. 610.

OUR PROTECTORS

The Rebbe would often quote the words of the *Tur* (*Yoreh Deah* 285), “Whoever is careful with the *mitzvah* of *mezuzah* will see the lengthening of his days and the days of his children. Moreover, his home will be protected.” The Rebbe would also add that not only does the *mezuzah* protect us while we are at home, but wherever we are.

Although we are generally discouraged from performing *mitzvos* for personal benefit, the protection of the *mezuzah* is not a *segulah*, but an inherent part of the *mitzvah*, (see *Likutei Sichos*, Vol. 19, *Parshas Eikev* 5).



Of course, even the most *mehudar mezuzah* only equals a *mitzvah* when it is placed on the doorpost. *Halacha* specifies in great detail exactly where on the doorpost it must be placed for every kind of doorway. If a *mezuzah* is placed incorrectly, *halacha* says it is as if the *mezuzah* wasn't placed at all.²

The problem of misplaced *mezuzos* is not a new one. Rabbi Eliyahu David Rabinowitz-Teomim, the “Aderes,” (1843-1905) records in one letter, “In most of the homes that I have visited, I found some error in placement of *mezuzos*.”³ With the decline in rabbinic home visits and the rise of innovative architecture (the two are not necessarily correlated), the problem has only increased.

[It should be noted that the obligation of *mezuzah* applies equally to all doors in a home (provided that they meet all the

requirements for a *mezuzah*). In *halacha*, every room is called a “*bayis*,” and has its own independent obligation.

Rabbonim throughout the generations have decried the long-held myth that only the front door of a home is obligated.⁴ [Most likely, it originated from a time when the majority of average homes were “studio” huts. As homes grew larger, people continued their “tradition” of affixing a *mezuzah* on the front door only.]

In this article we will review some of the underlying principles and common errors of *kvias mezuzah*.

4. Ignorance of this matter was so widespread that the Maharil (c. 1365-1427) was asked whether it was considered arrogant (*mechzei keyuhara*) to place *mezuzos* on every door in a home, since most people only placed only one *mezuzah* on the front door. In his reply he tries to find reasoning for the prevalent custom based on outlying opinions in *halacha*, but concludes that these explanations are not valid and these people are missing out on both Torah and rabbinic obligations.

2. *Shulchan Aruch*, *Yoreh Deiah*, 289:2.

3. *Nefesh Dovid* §16.

THE “RIGHT” SIDE

ON YOUR RIGHT

The Torah says, “*Uchesavtam al mezuzos beisecha* — and you should write them [and affix them] on the doorposts of your home.” Chazal⁵ expounded the word *beisecha* as if it read *bi’asecha*, your “way of entering.” Since most people begin walking with their right foot, the right doorpost, which is near the right foot, is considered the “way of entering.”

[Following this teaching, it would seem that if all the members of a household are lefties, the *mezuzah* should be placed on the left, since for them that is the “way of entering.” (In this context, it wouldn’t matter if they were left-handed but left-footed, which can be measured by which foot they would use to kick.⁶) However, *poskim* write that the *mitzvah* is not performed with the body and is not affected by the individual’s nature, and the “way of entering” follows the majority of people.⁷]

5. *Menachos* 34a. The Zohar (Vo’eschanon 263b) writes that having the *mezuzah* on the right side protects a person from spirits who attempt to latch on to a person’s left side when he exits the home.

6. This is indeed relevant for performing *chalitza*, when the brother partaking in the *chalitza* is asked to kick a ball to ascertain which is his stronger foot.

7. *Rama* 289:2. The source of this *halacha* is in the *Mordechai* (c. 1250–1298) who writes that *mezuzah* is different “since it is meant to protect all the members of the house.” This

While the “right side” is obvious when entering the front door, it is less straightforward when it comes to doors within the home.

In some scenarios there is a logical definition for the “way of entering,” and it is clear that one enters *into* the room. In other scenarios, it is more difficult to decipher which way is the “entrance” and which is the “exit.” For example: A doorway between the kitchen and dining room (which both have other entrances) can be viewed as an entrance to the kitchen or as an entrance to the dining room.⁸

Several rules are given to ascertain this:

1) *Pnimi* – as mentioned, an inner room, i.e. a room with only one entrance.

2) *Rov Hilucho* – the direction of the traffic through that doorway upon entering the home from the street. Since, for example,

would imply that if all (or even the majority) of the household members are left-footed, it would be placed on the left. The *Bach* (1561–1640) expresses surprise at this, since we have never heard this being done (perhaps it is just so uncommon). He explains that it follows the majority of society as a whole who are right-footed. The *Shach* (1621–1662) explains the difference from *tefilin* which is performed with the body.

8. We do not require a *mezuzah* on both sides for each room, since the doorway is labeled as an **entrance** in one direction and an **exit** in the other direction, and only an entrance requires a *mezuzah*, not an exit – see *Rashi Menachos* 34a, *DH Derech Biasecha*.



the majority of traffic flow is from the hallway to the kitchen, we label the doorway as an entrance to the kitchen.

3) *Rov Tashmisho* – the doorway is primarily an entrance to the main room. Some set the main room as the room more significant to basic living needs (i.e. eating and sleeping). Others emphasize the room where more time is spent by the family members. A practical difference between these two is a doorway between a dining room and a living room. More time may be spent in the living room, however the dining room is used for more basic living.

4) *Heker Tzir* – lit. “recognition of the hinge” – the room in which the hinge sits is considered the inner room, and the doorway is an entrance to it. This is also noticeable as the room into which the door swings. **1**

[What is the logic in this last rule? In ancient times people always installed the hinges of a door on the inside of the home. Perhaps the reason for this was since if the hinges were outside the home, a thief could slip out the hinges and unhook the door.⁹]

9. Some want to say that it is because opening a door inward is the more convenient. However,

Now, a simple reading of the sources would imply that *beker tzir* is only applied when all the other rules have been applied unsuccessfully (i.e. there is more than one entrance to the room, the flow

of traffic is equal, and both rooms are of equal importance). This is indeed the practice of most communities.

In Lubavitch, we have a tradition from the Rebbe Rashab and earlier¹⁰ (based on works of *Rishonim*) that *beker tzir* takes precedence over all the other considerations. Practically this mean that if the doors of a bedroom swing outward, the mezuzah is placed on the right side **exiting** the room. **2** Though common logic would dictate otherwise, the doorway is considered an entrance to the **outer** room.¹¹

the above reason would perhaps explain why *Chazal* emphasized the location of the hinge and not the direction that the door swings.

10. In a letter to Rav Yaakov Landau, *rov* in the home of the Rebbe Rashab and later in Bnei Brak, the Rebbe writes that he had heard that some ascribe this tradition to the Alter Rebbe. In his response, Rav Landau writes that the Rebbe Rashab repeated it in the name of his father, the Rebbe Maharash, but did not mention a tradition from the Alter Rebbe. (*Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 12, p. 436)

11. Perhaps it can be said that other signs are circumstantial, whereas the place of the hinge is part of the house itself (particularly since the word from which we derive that it be placed on the right is “*beisecha*,” your house).

THE “RIGHT” SIDE

However, this can only be said if there is even a remotely possible way to enter the room, such as a door or even a window or skylight, which can open wide enough for a person to enter. Then we can theoretically visualize the door to the bedroom as an entrance to the outer hallway. If there is no such opening (or the window is gated with no accessible opening), we are forced to view the bedroom door as a door to the bedroom.¹²

12. In a famous responsa, Rav Zalman Shimon Dvorkin, *rov* of Crown Heights, records his memory of this rule as heard from Rebbe Rashab:

“I remember when I was a youngster and I was a regular visitor in the home of the Rebbe [Rashab], there was a door where the *mezuzah*’s position caused all the *rabbonim* to wonder. I heard then that the Rebbe was asked and he replied that his father the Rebbe Maharash said that even an inner room which has only one doorway and a window, and the door opens outward, the *mezuzah* must be placed on the right side as one exits the room, in accordance with the *heker tzir*. The questioners then asked, ‘But it’s impossible to leave the room unless you have entered first, so the doorway is first an entrance and it should be placed on the right side when entering?’ The Rebbe replied, ‘One can enter through the window.’ The questioners probed further, ‘What if the window is high off the ground?’ And the Rebbe replied, ‘One can raise a ladder.’”

From this dialogue it is apparent that there must be another possible entrance. Rav Dvorkin presented this conclusion to the Rebbe, but the Rebbe did not address this point in his letter. (*Kfar Chabad*, Issue 743)

Additionally, a door leading to the street or to an unenclosed outdoor area must be viewed as an entrance to the home, and not an entrance to the outdoors. ³ An enclosed backyard is obligated to have a *mezuzah* ⁴, and if the doorway of the home swings out into the yard, it is viewed as an entrance to the yard and the *mezuzah* is placed accordingly.¹³

When there is no *heker tzir* we are left with the first three rules. This is true whether it is a doorway without a door ⁵, a pocket door ⁶, sliding doors ⁷, or a door that swings in both directions. ⁸

There are differences of opinion on the order of rules 2 and 3. For example, if the flow of traffic is from the dining room into the kitchen, *rov bilucho* dictates that it be placed on the right in to the kitchen, while *rov tashmisho* may lead to it being placed on the right entering the dining room where meals and other activities take place. The more accepted practice is to give preference to *rov bilucho* and to place it on the right in the direction that you normally enter. However, each person should consult their *rav* for a practical ruling.

Similarly, Rav Yaakov Landau records that the Rebbe Rashab mentioning “jumping through the window.”

13. See *Sefer HaMinbagim* p. 81; *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 12, p. 424.



EVEN A FRUM JEW

In 5736 (1976), a plane traveling from *Eretz Yisroel* to Paris was hijacked by terrorists and brought to Entebbe, Uganda. All the Jews on board were held hostage to negotiate an exchange of terrorist prisoners in *Eretz Yisroel*. Through a miraculous rescue, almost all of them were saved.

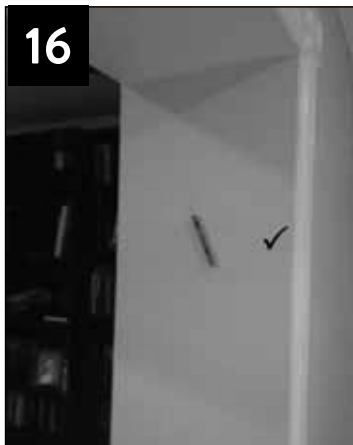
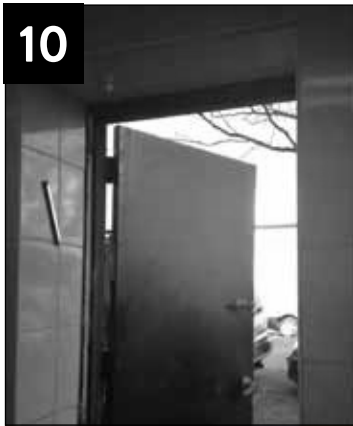
In a unique *farbrengen* dedicated to this incident, the Rebbe announced that it had been found that **every single one** of those that were held captive had *mezuzos* that were either invalid or positioned incorrectly!

The Rebbe related that among the hostages was a *frum* Jew who lives in New York. When Lubavitcher chassidim visited his home after

his return and offered to check his *mezuzos* he declined at first, saying that his *mezuzos* were all according to *Shulchan Aruch*. However, the visitors did not let up, and they pleaded with him to let them come in and take a look, until he finally yielded. Once inside, they spotted a doorway which is obligated according to some, and yet it did not have a *mezuzah*. At this point, the man allowed them to check the rest of his home, and they discovered two doorways which were unquestionably obligated that did not have *mezuzos*!

The Rebbe concluded with an instruction that everyone should make sure their own *mezuzos* are *kosher* and that they are placed correctly.

(*Sichos Kodesh* 5736, Vol. 2, p. 604)



THE “RIGHT” SIDE

ON THE DOORPOST

The Torah tells us to affix the *mezuzah* “*al mezuzos beisecha*,” on the doorpost. The Gemara states that it belongs “*b’soch chalah hapesach*,” within the cavity of the doorway. The Gemara then invalidates a *mezuzah* placed “*me’achorei hapesach*,” behind the doorway, and variant interpretations are put forth regarding that ambiguous location.

Practically, the ideal place for the *mezuzah* is within the doorframe ahead of the door.

9 If this is difficult (due to lack of space or if the *mezuzah* may be vandalized), one may place it within the doorframe after the door. **10** If there is no space within the doorway, (i.e. the door fills the entire thickness of the doorway), **11** one should ideally carve a cavity in the doorpost and place the *mezuzah* inside.

When that isn’t possible, the next best option is to affix it on the face of the (outer) doorpost, (i.e. facing the street).

12 If there isn’t any distinct doorpost, (e.g. a glass wall and door), it is essential that the *mezuzah* be placed **entirely** in the first three inches next to the doorway. **13** Further away is not part of the “doorpost” anymore, but the continuing wall.

It is important to note that the doorpost is the post that is adjacent to the space which one can pass through. A sidelight is not part of the passageway, and the *mezuzah* cannot be placed past it. **14** Similarly, the

stationary panel of a sliding door is not a door, but a glass wall. If the stationary panel is on the right side, the *mezuzah* should be placed at the **beginning** of the stationary panel which is closest to the passageway, since that where the (glass) wall ends. **15**

Whenever possible, the *mezuzah* should be placed “*b’tefach hasomuch lachutz*,” in the outermost handbreadth (about 3 inches) of the doorway. **16** This adds additional protection to the home and makes it noticeable sooner when entering. However, when a doorway has multiple layers of width, some prefer placing the *mezuzah* on the narrowest post (i.e. closest to where people walk) even if it won’t be in the outermost *tefach*. **17**

COMMON OVERSIGHTS

In surveying homes for correct *mezuzah* placement I have encountered some doorways that were completely overlooked. Here are the most common scenarios:

(1) Unconnected doorframe:

In order to constitute a doorway it must have at least a right doorpost and a lintel, but it is not necessary that they be attached. As long as they are aligned they combine as a doorway based on the *halachic* concept of *gud asik*, that an object can be “stretched” upward.

THE “RIGHT” SIDE

A common application of this is a kitchen counter-bar which is on the right side of the entrance to a kitchen. ¹⁸ The side of the counter is the doorpost and the lintel crosses directly above it. In this case the *mezuzah* is placed at the bottom of the top third of the counter (which is also the doorpost).¹⁴

(2) Beginning of a wall:

The opinion of Rabbeinu Osher, the Ro"sh, is that the beginning of a wall, "*rosh kosel*," also constitutes a doorpost. The classic case of *rosh kosel* is a three-walled garage which is completely open on the fourth side without any doorframe, yet we visualize the front edge of the side walls as doorposts. ¹⁹

This rule is also applicable when the side walls continue to run perpendicular to their original direction. Here too the corners of the side walls are considered doorposts. ²⁰

If the wall bends on the right, but continues straight on the left, it requires a *mezuzah* (as long as there is a lintel above). ²¹ The Ro"sh holds that only a right doorpost and a lintel are required to form a doorway. However, if there is no wall at all on the left side, it does not require a *mezuzah*. ²²

14. We do not place it on the wall above the counter since that space (the top of the counter) is not a passageway.

The rule of *rosh kosel* only applies to the **beginning** of a wall which forms the image of a doorpost. The end of a wall (i.e. when a hallway opens up into a wider room) does not show a post when entering and does not obligate a *mezuzah*. ²³ It is therefore necessary to ascertain which would be the right side where the *mezuzah* would be placed, and if there is no post on that side, it is exempt. ²⁴

(3) Outside gate:

The obligation for *mezuzah* applies not only to a home, but even to a courtyard used for leisure or storage. Therefore, a pedestrian gate ²⁵ or a car gate ²⁶ which has an arch on top requires a *mezuzah*.

Since the yard has its own obligation it is considered like another room of the house, and the *mezuzah* on the doorway between the house and the yard follows the same rules as a doorway between two rooms.



While we have tried to cover some of the more common scenarios, there are countless more questions that can arise when placing *mezuzos*. We hope that this article will bring the much needed awareness to the complexity of the matter, and efforts will be made to inquire and verify that *mezuzos* are placed properly—for the precise observance of the *mitzvah* and the protection of the dwellers of the home. **P**

To schedule a complete review of the placement of *mezuzos* in your home through a home visit or live video chat, email rabbihellinger@machonstam.com or call 347-422-7704.



18a



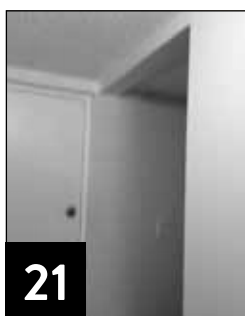
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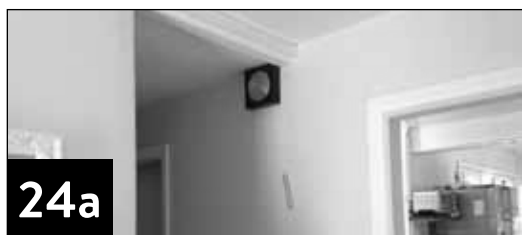
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CHECKING THE DOORWAYS

Reb Yoel Kahn related:

During the 5740s (1980s), I delivered a *Tanya shiur* to a group of non-Chabad chassidim. After one *shiur*, one man shared a story with me that occurred with his brother-in-law:

This brother-in-law had some serious issue, and he sent a request to the Rebbe for a *bracha*. The Rebbe replied with an instruction that he check his *mezuzos*. Sure enough, four of his *mezuzos* were *possul*, and he replaced them with *kosher* ones.

Being a considerate person, he wrote the Rebbe again thanking him for the good advice.

A short while later he received a phone call from the Rebbe's secretariat: The Rebbe had written on his letter, "I am surprised that you only checked the *mezuzos* and **not the doors**." The man hurried to inspect his doorways, and indeed found that one doorway was missing a *mezuzah* completely.

Am I a **Giver**

Or a **Taker?**

REBBETZIN YEHUDIS HELLER A”H

Adapted from a lecture

Everything people do can be divided into two categories: giving and taking. Every social interaction has a giver and a taker, or, in the words of Chassidus, a *mashpia* and *mekabel*.

It seems that giving is the ideal, to be *mashpia*, a “giver” and not a “receiver.” A provider, not a dependent; whether money, care, or time.

Better yet, when a person does an act of giving, aside from fulfilling a *mitzvah*, the person becomes more like Hashem.

In fact, the word *Mitzvah* too connotes a connection (*tzavva*) with Hashem that comes as result of Hashem performing all the *mitzvos* Himself. When we then perform *mitzvos*, we are following Him and being like Him.

Doing acts of kindness particularly resembles Hashem, Who gives life and sustenance. Actually, all Hashem does is give. He has no need to receive from anyone. Our giving mimics Hashem and makes us more G-d-like.

GIVE TO WHO?

Every giving action, must be met with an act of receiving. A *mashpia* necessitates someone else who will be *mekabel*.

Our math might mean that at any given moment a giver becomes closer to Hashem, since Hashem only gives, and at the same time, the recipient becomes further from Hashem. However, such a social structure seems absurd. It is as if there are limited seats in the audience, and to get closer to Hashem requires someone else to move back, with nothing less than behaving oppositely of Hashem?

WHEN GIVING IS TAKING

Let's start from the beginning: What is a 'giver'?

Take a wealthy person giving *tzedaka* to a pauper. He is giving, right? On a deeper level, the receiver is giving far more. The wealthy man gives *gashmius*, food for this world; the poor man gives eternal wealth, in the World to Come.

Consider also, that giving tremendous amounts to *tzedaka*, might not be "giving" at all, if the giving is, say, motivated by

public recognition, having a name on a building, getting a picture in a newspaper, or being honored at a dinner. It is possible for a person to donate millions to a worthy cause, and yet his underlying thought is what *he* will get out of it. In this case, he is "taking" more than he is "giving."

This, of course, does not take away from his *mitzvah* of giving *tzedaka*. The question though is, how much of that giving action is actually "giving," and how much is "taking"?

The same can be true when a person is *mashpia* in *ruchnius*. Giving somebody the chance to better embrace Torah and mitzvos is giving, right? Well, again, the underlying motivation may still be to receive, be it satisfaction or honor. Here too, it doesn't take away from the importance and value of what he has done. The point is that it's quite possible that an action may appear one way on the surface, and be completely different deep down.

WHEN TAKING IS GIVING

And it works the other way too. While on the receiving end, someone can actually be "giving".

It is possible for a person to donate millions to a worthy cause, and yet his underlying thought is what *he* will get out of it. In this case, he is "taking" more than he is "giving."

A chossid in Europe was collecting funds for a Chabad *yeshiva* in France. He had something about him that no one could say ‘no’ to him. He would tell people, “I don’t care how much you give. Give me a penny, but I want you to have the *zechus* to be part of the Rebbe’s *mosad*.” He was very sincere; he genuinely wanted each person to have a part in this great *mitzvah*.

Imagine a child bringing a gift to his mother. The actual gift is irrelevant, what matters is that the child *wants* to give a gift. When the mother receives the gift, *she* is giving to *him*; giving him the opportunity and satisfaction to give.

Now it seems more accurate to say that in every act of giving, both the giver and the receiver are giving and receiving. When guests visit, they will feel more comfortable when they bring along some sort of gift. Thus, receiving the gift is actually a *chesed* to the guest.

It’s not what you *do*, it’s where your *intention* is.

Chazal say, that a person’s objective should always be to give. Hashem created the world with pure kindness, and He expects us to give like him. That is the meaning of the *possuk* negating gifts. One should indeed hate to receive gifts, when there is no positive “giving” involved.

The world today is very much the opposite. Everyone wants to get as much as they can for free. Instead of giving to others, the world reminds us to be “assertive” to make sure no one is “stepping on us.”

WORKING AS CHESED

A business interaction also involves giving and taking. One party gives a service or product and the other pays with currency. But like everything else, the question is: What is my objective? Do I want to provide others with a service, but since I need a living I charge? Or do I want to get money, but in order to do so I must give something in return?

A practical difference between these two attitudes surfaces in how a person balances giving and receiving. If the seller is looking to give, he will provide the best service at a fair price, while if he is looking to receive, he will try to get away with doing the least amount of work and collect the most payment.

In Jewish communities in past generations, it wasn’t uncommon to find a businessman whose primary intention was to give. He was extremely careful to check the quality of the merchandise he was selling and not to overcharge, since he was looking to provide for his customer’s needs.

Imagine a child bringing a gift to his mother. The actual gift is irrelevant, what matters is that the child *wants* to give a gift. When the mother receives the gift, she is giving to *him*; giving him the opportunity and satisfaction to give.



Chazal say that Chanoch, the great-grandfather of Noach, was a shoemaker and he did it as a spiritual activity. One understanding of this is that he sewed every stitch with the intention to make a good shoe for the wearer. His shoemaking was *chesed*. Of course he charged, but his life was about giving.

The Chofetz Chaim had a grocery store, which he made sure to manage according to Torah. He checked the accuracy of the weights and was very honest about his merchandise. Shoppers began to realize that they got more in his store, and started shopping only at his store, causing a loss to other stores. The Chofetz

Chaim refused to take away *parnassa*, so he opened his store for only two hours a day. When he saw that he was still causing the others a loss, he closed his store completely.

Today, business seems to mean more than competing with other businesses. It calls to undercut and undermine the competition, with over pious “best-service” claims and marginally cheaper prices.

These two business models extend to the employee-employer relationship as well. While many employers may try to get the most from an employee, and employees try to get more money and work less,



The world today is very much the opposite. Everyone wants to get as much as they can for free. Instead of giving to others, the world reminds us to be “assertive” to make sure no one is “stepping on us.”

the Torah's model of “giving” is quite the opposite. The lowest employer-employee relationship in Torah is that of an *eved*, a slave. The care a master must show for his slave is astounding. If the master has only one pillow, it must go to his slave. The Torah expects the *employer* to look out for the employees, not waiting for a demand to be lodged.

REACHING SATISFACTION

Torah teaches a rule: A person who has ‘100’, will naturally want ‘200’. If he has ‘200’, he will want ‘400’. And so it continues; a person is never satisfied.

Every human has a natural need to accomplish and to give to others. Hashem established the world on *chesed*, and created humankind “*btzelem elokim*,” giving us the innate need to give and contribute. A person who isn't contributing will always feel dissatisfaction.

Most interpret their dissatisfaction incorrectly, and attribute it to a material lacking. Looking for a fix they think, “If I have 200 I will be happy.’ Already from a young age, a child thinks, “If I get a lollipop then I'll be happy.” Lo-and-behold, the happiness is short-

lived, and the child looks for something more. Growing and noticing what others have, the child thinks that those things will bring him happiness. The cycle continues, and continues until the once child reaches a mid-life crisis. Children who were spoiled with plenty often realize at a young age that nothing that

money can buy will make them happy and depression sinks in. Some may take longer to try everything and discover the seeming unattainable satisfaction.

Like a painkiller, it helps temporarily but it doesn't correct the problem and the next day demands a double dose.

Society and media indicate that happiness comes from things, and that receiving will bring happiness. If we stop and reflect on the moments of happiness and satisfaction in our lives, we will find that it involved doing for others; giving not taking. Society seems to lag in realizing that happiness comes from within, from doing what's right.

'Receivers' never have enough. They suffocate the 'giving' gears within, causing themselves terrible unhappiness and destroying that which makes them great. It's interesting how people run away from what they need most, and what will make them the happiest.

system moved further from stability unable to deliver the promises.

Alexander the Great, a mighty conqueror, was also a student of Aristotle. The Midrash relates how in one African country he observed the local king preside over a peculiar court case. One man had bought a field from the other and after he bought it he found a treasure. He argued that the treasure belongs to the seller. The seller argued that he has sold the field and everything in it, and the treasure belongs to the buyer. The judge asked if they have children of marriageable age, and ruled that they marry their children to one another and give the treasure to them. Alexander was amazed. When asked by the king what he would have done, Alexander replied, "I would have killed them both and taken the treasure for my coffers."

Generally, people come to court to assert their rights. The strength in government

FAILED POLITICAL SYSTEMS

Over the last few hundred years we have witnessed many new political systems. Each new system claims to solve world problems, often promising financial freedom to the working class. In retrospect, each

A business interaction involves giving and taking. But the question is: What is my objective? Do I want to provide others with a service, but since I need a living I charge? Or do I want to get money, but in order to do so I must give something in return?

'Receivers' never have enough. They suffocate the 'giving' gears within, causing themselves terrible unhappiness and destroying that which makes them great. It's interesting how people run away from what they need most, and what will make them the happiest.

comes through promising to protect the people's rights, sometimes those of the rich, so they can become richer, and at others times those of the poor. The people submit to the government to preserve their own rights.

But these two people were an anomaly. They weren't interested in their rights. Alexander understood that they have no need for an authoritative government. "How can we have power over such people? Those who aren't interested in the rights I offer will be the first to rebel since they don't need me." Seeing them as a danger to his government, he sought to eliminate them.

Every kind of government exists because it promises to give something. The citizens become takers, and in that lies

the problem. The nature of takers is that they want more, always. People may receive tremendous benefits from the government and wonder why they aren't getting more. Subconsciously, capable people want to feel capable. They don't want to take; they get frustrated. However, they misunderstand the frustration as symptom of not getting *enough*. The more the government gives, the more dissatisfaction it creates. It's not healthy; it strips away dignity and self-esteem, their "*tzelem elokim*." In turn they come to hate those who have more, even though it's not possessions that upset them, it's their own dissatisfaction.

The Torah doesn't hand out rights, only obligations. Women, men, workers and employers all have obligations. If everyone keeps their obligations, this automatically ensures that everyone's 'rights' are preserved and all needs are met. Torah is full of directives about giving *tzedaka*, but nowhere does it say that the people who need it should ask for it. The emphasis is on giving.

The nature of receiving and demanding undermines the character of mankind. They get caught up thinking, worrying and concerned with themselves. Thinking of others lead to a much happier and more satisfying life. It's human nature and Torah's guarantee.



Today, business seems to mean more than competing with other businesses. It calls to undercut and undermine the competition, with over pious “best-service” claims and marginally cheaper prices.

UNHAPPY RELATIONSHIPS

Take for example a lender and borrower. The person who lends is not allowed to pressure the borrower to pay back, so much so, that if the borrower is uncomfortable, the lender may not even pass by his house, to ensure that the borrower shouldn't feel pressured. That's how sensitive he's expected to be. At the same time, the borrower is obligated to

pay back as soon as possible, and he must live sparingly in order to repay his debt.

The problem starts when the lender meets the borrower, and says, 'Hey, the Torah says that you must pay me right away.' The borrower replies, 'Well, the Torah says that you're not allowed to pressure me.'

Instead of learning the *halachos* relevant to them, they know those relevant to the other. Instead of matching themselves to the Torah's instructions, they are twisting the Torah to fit themselves.



The Torah doesn't hand out rights, only obligations. Women, men, workers and employers all have obligations. If everyone keeps their obligations, this automatically ensures that everyone's 'rights' are preserved and all needs are met.

Likewise, an employer has many obligations towards his employee. The employee isn't given the rights to demand them. On the contrary, he is told to serve his employer faithfully.

In a healthy setting, the employer should say to his employee, "I see your family is growing and you're making many *simchos*. I have to pay you more." Likewise, the employee should tell his employer, "I see it's hard for you to pay my salary; maybe my work isn't really worth what you're paying me." The employee should be uncomfortable taking more than he deserves, and the employer should want to make his employee's life more comfortable.

More than anything, this applies between husband and wife. The greatest problem today is that each spouse focuses on what they need instead of what they must give.

When the Torah says a man is obligated to honor his wife more than himself, this is an obligation for the *husband*. At the same time, the Torah sets down an obligation for the woman to honor the wishes of her husband. Each is told what they have to do.

However, if the wife says, “The Torah says that you’re supposed to honor me more than yourself,” and the husband says, “The Torah says you must fulfill my wishes,” they are abusing the system and twisting it to the complete opposite of how it was intended to work.

When husband and wife both “give,” they both end up getting much more satisfaction. But the focus is on the other person’s obligation instead of their own, it leads to disaster.

ASSERTING OURSELVES

This very uncommon framework was quite commonplace in previous generations. People sought happiness and contentment, and weren’t obsessed with getting the better end of every deal.

The last century brought about a tremendous emphasis on assertiveness, the “I” generation. People have learned that, “If I behave too nice to my employer,

I’ll be taken advantage of.” So they assert their demands.

Unfortunately, today’s children are not immune. They learn to make demands of their parents and pour on guilt that they are not meeting all their needs. The sense of having their own “rights,” threatens our

The problem starts when the lender meets the borrower, and says, ‘Hey, the Torah says that you must pay me right away.’ The borrower replies, ‘Well, the Torah says that you’re not allowed to pressure me.’

young and pure, giving them a sense of entitlement for first-class treatment.

Children crave to be shown that we believe in them; that we trust that they are capable human beings. Give them room to do. Help your children realize what they are capable of doing. Build them up. Doing for them only makes them feel inferior and dependent. It breaks their self-respect.

If the wife says, “The Torah says that you’re supposed to honor me more than yourself,” and the husband says, “The Torah says you must fulfill my wishes,” they are abusing the system and twisting it to the complete opposite of how it was intended to work.

FOR THE LOVE OF GIVING

Reb Shamshon Refael Hirsh teaches that the word אהבה, love, is routed in the word לה, to give.

On a basic level, love brings a natural desire to give. Kayin and Hevel ‘gave’ the first *korbanos* without being taught to do so. It was a natural expression of their love for Hashem.

On a deeper level, the more you give, the more you love.

Perhaps a reason why parents love their child more than all others is a result of giving endlessly and unconditionally from the very beginning. That giving breeds endless love.

Chazal say that children are born helpless and in need of so much attention, and the purpose of giving is to create and strengthen the parent-child bond.

Putting energy into someone else, a child or student, puts a part of *you* into that person. You are giving of yourself,

literally. And because we love ourselves, we love the “us” that is now in them.

Popular wisdom has it backwards, claiming love grows in the receiver. The Torah understands love to grow in the giver. A child loves his parents for all they have done for him, yet it cannot compare to the love felt within the parents. It’s not receiving that causes love, it’s giving.

GIVING IN MARRIAGE

Marriage thrives when husband and wife remember that love thrives through giving. Most marriages start off with the desire that each person wants to do for the other. Somewhere along the way, twisted culture gets to them saying ‘What am I getting here?’ That’s where problems start.

In the secular world many marriages begin with written agreements of one party’s demands, to frame it lightly. No matter the details of the agreement, such marriages reek of what each party is trying to gain from the relationship. It is doomed from the very beginning.

Real love can only be developed by focusing on the other. If a relationship is built with the trust that my spouse will always have me in mind and I will focus on what I will bring into the marriage, then it will develop into love, and they won't keep on checking if the score is "50/50."

It seems human relationships did so much better in previous generations, when we weren't 'smart' enough to worry about preserving our "rights."

BEING THE HEAD NOT THE RAG

For 20 years, Yaakov faithfully worked for Lavan, tending Lavan's flock. When an animal was attacked, Yaakov would replace the loss even though he wasn't obligated. When Yaakov first met Lavan, Lavan was poor. Yaakov made Lavan a very wealthy man. For 20 years, Lavan continuously cheated Yaakov with payment, seemingly taking advantage of Yaakov nonstop!

Yaakov could have said, "When dealing with a crook, act like a crook too." But

Yaakov didn't let Lavan drag him down. Instead he thought, "True, the world isn't ideal, and people around me aren't good. But how should I react? What will I accomplish by lowering myself?"

While we aren't on Yaakov's level, and keeping up such integrity towards a dishonest employer is likely to make us miserable, we shouldn't allow any predicament to undermine our standards.

The Chofetz Chaim took a guest into his house who stole valuable items

from the house. The

Rebbetzin came

crying, "It was

so expensive,

why are

you letting

people into

the house?"

So he got up

and ran after the

thief. The Rebbetzin

was delighted, thinking

that he would get it back.



The last century brought about a tremendous emphasis on assertiveness, the "I" generation. People have learned that, "If I behave too nice to my employer, I'll be taken advantage of." So they assert their demands.



Credit: Lubavitch Archives

Chazal say that children are born helpless and in need of so much attention, and the purpose of giving is to create and strengthen the parent child bond. Putting energy into someone else, a child or student, puts a part of *you* into that person.

However, the Chofetz Chaim caught up with the thief and told him, “Make sure not to sell it for cheap. It’s an expensive item.”

Even though “giving” is ideal, even when the other person’s decency falls short of our own, be realistic with your limitations. Balance the quest to live by loftier standards with staying positive and cheerful. Just remember to aim to

become a giver. In every interaction, look to help and you’ll see the relationship improve.

When at home, and feeling that a family member is stepping on us, we are being taken advantage of, and we can’t stand it, keep focus on living higher and being a giver.

WHEN TO EDUCATE?

Yaakov didn't try to educate Lavan. When the Chofetz Chaim ran after the thief and told him not to sell it for cheap, he didn't offer the man a lesson on the importance of honesty. An educator needs to know when it's in his position to educate and when it's not. The education will take place by example.

If someone is obviously taking advantage of me, I must think: Is it my job to educate them or just to accept and assist them? In certain situations, it may indeed be appropriate to say something. But I have to be honest and ask myself: Am I really thinking of helping the guest or how to protect myself?

In family relationships, especially husband and wife relationships, trying to educate the other person can be sensitive and dangerous. Oftentimes, young couples have lots of idealistic fantasies of how they want to live, and they want to change their spouses. They mean well, but it's not their place to change their spouse.

The attitude of trying to educate and make demands of others is an easy way out. Try focusing on our obligations not rights. Every relationship necessitates

Maybe we are *shluchim* to our own homes and lives too? Endeavor to accept our loved ones without judging them and to be a “giver” to the best of our ability.

becoming vulnerable, and that is hard. Find balance, but keep on learning on the side of ‘giving.’

TOTAL GIVING

Avraham Avinu sat by the entrance to his tent because he felt a need for guests. He was simply delighted to do for others.

In a Chabad House, the *shluchim* will take people in, and do so much for them, sometimes receiving very little or nothing in return. Yet they are so happy that these Yidden come. That is why they are there. Even if the Yid moves on and forgets his encounter at that Chabad House, the *shluchim* are nonetheless satisfied to have helped this person on the right path.

The *shluchim* have accepted this mission and have defined themselves as such. At home, this is more difficult to achieve. Maybe we are *shluchim* to our own homes and lives too? Endeavor to accept our loved ones without judging them and to be a “giver” to the best of our ability. **P**

Chinuch

RETHINKING EDUCATION

An essay by the Rebbe

The following essay was prepared by the Rebbe as participation in a government educational conference to which the Rebbe was invited. The Rebbe's speech was read aloud by the chairman of the conference.

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— Some Basic Problems of Education —

By Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

President Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Inc.

Educational arm of the Chabad Lubavitch Movement:



Education, in general, has two primary objectives: (a) the acquisition of knowledge, including the application of the acquired knowledge, and (b) education in a stricter sense, namely, the cultivation of a proper code of ethics and morality, and the development of a concept as to his purpose and mission in life, which will be reflected in the daily conduct of the boys and girls when they grow up and take their places in society.

The foundation of the said educational structure, especially in the area which comes under (b) above, is laid during the early period of the child's education, i.e. the period when the child receives his (or her) elementary education. My discussion is concerned with this school-age in particular. More precisely, I wish to discuss here some elementary problems in elementary education.

The school is not the only source of education. Long before the boy or girl begins to attend school, they learn from their parents, grandparents and

immediate family. This source of education stays with them also during and after the school period. Concurrently, the external environment, namely, the society at large, and the day-to-day life within it, provides a further source of "schooling," one which exercises a strong influence on the individual at all age levels.

“The moral and ethical standards of our society have not kept pace with the advancement of knowledge. The influence of the contemporary environment in the area of moral advancement has become negligible, and often more negative than positive.”

Let us, for a moment, examine the role and relative importance of these three major sources of education – the home, school

and society – in our day, and compared to previous generations. This will help us not only to discover what changes, if any,

have taken place, but also to project into the future any corrective measures that may be deemed advisable, or necessary.

MORAL ADVANCEMENT

Generally speaking, the emphasis in the past was on molding moral character (in the wider sense of the term) and on behavior rather than on imparting knowledge. In line with this attitude, it used to be the home and the church which exercised the essential influence on the ethical and moral education of the child.

In our generation the situation has basically changed. The pressures, social, economic, etc., are directed towards a formal education. There are various effective ways and means of stimulating the child's interest in, and ambition for, scientific advancement. These have created in the contemporary child a drive towards the acquisition of knowledge.

“Vital though this part of the child's education is, it is not as “obvious” to the average parent (himself a product of a largely materialistic society) as the need of knowledge.”

On the other hand, insofar as moral conduct is concerned, the influence of the home, church, and society in general, has been on the wane, for reasons into which we need not enter here. As a result, the moral and ethical standards of our society have not kept pace with the advancement of knowledge. On the contrary, they have deteriorated, so that the influence of the contemporary environment in the area of moral advancement has become negligible, and often more negative than positive.

As for the school, it likewise contributed towards this objective, regarding it as an integral part of its function, on par with (and perhaps even more than) its role in the dissemination of knowledge. To a lesser but nonetheless significant degree, the society itself complemented the work of the home and church by placing a greater value on conduct than on erudition per se.

It is becoming increasingly evident that the school must now largely supplant the home and church in this vital part of the child's education, namely, the inculcation of moral values. Moreover, vital though this part of the child's education is, it is not as “obvious” to the average parent (himself a product of a

“Curricula are steadily being expanded and intensified, and there is a constant endeavor to accelerate the rate of scholastic advancement.”

largely materialistic society) as the need of knowledge. This means two things: firstly, that the initiative to correct the situation will have to come from the educators and school authorities; and, secondly, that it will require considerable attention and effort – extraordinary effort in some instances, to overcome the indifference, or even opposition, of certain parental circles.

In speaking here of morality and ethics, I am well aware that there are various concepts as to what constitutes true ethical and moral values, and whether or not these concepts are subject to

change and revision to follow the times, and whether there is any need for such definitive norms altogether. The position enunciated here is based on the premise that ethics and morality are obligatory disciplines, and indispensable to the very existence of human society. Furthermore, I am speaking here of ethical and moral concepts as they were defined by our ancestors (with relatively minor modifications which do not affect our discussion).

So much for my general thesis. We may now examine its validity in the light of prevailing conditions and tendencies.

CHARACTER QUOTIENT

The emphasis on scholarship and scholastic achievement is very much in evidence everywhere: at home and in the schools. It is geared to a society where scholastic achievement is a deciding factor in many job applications, promotions, careers, etc. Curricula are steadily being expanded and intensified, and there is a constant endeavor to accelerate the rate of scholastic advancement. The contemporary child hears a great deal about intelligence tests and aptitude tests; I.Q. and A.Q. have become familiar symbols to children. But what about C.Q. (character quotient)? Is

it not as important to test and measure the child's progress in character building and moral advancement as his progress

“The contemporary child hears a great deal about intelligence tests and aptitude tests; I.Q. and A.Q. have become familiar symbols to children. But what about C.Q. (character quotient)?”

“A great discrepancy obviously exists between the degree of emphasis placed on scholastic achievement and that which is placed on “moral conduct.””

in amassing facts and figures? A great discrepancy obviously exists between the degree of emphasis placed on scholastic achievement and that which is placed on “moral conduct.”

It would be unfair to say that the public schools have completely ignored the moral issue, or the need of character building. There is no denying that much of the material that goes into the so-called Social Studies in the public schools, to mention one instance, has been conceived with a view to emphasizing the ideals of democracy, tolerance, social justice, respect for the law, and the like. Why, then, have these efforts not been effective in curbing juvenile delinquency and spreading juvenile decency?

I venture to suggest and emphasize here one reason, in addition to the many others one often hears in a discussion of these issues:

An essential factor in the deterioration of the moral standards of the children and adolescents of our contemporary society is the fact that vast numbers of children in the public schools are brought up on a strictly and exclusively secular morality and ethics.

The exclusion from the public schools of any activity that would mention and inspire some thought about a Supreme Being is to vast numbers of school children tantamount to almost a denial of His existence. In our society, where morality and ethics can hardly be said to be at a premium, where the most prevalent criterion of what is right and proper is the claim that “everybody does it,” there is no real deterrent for a child against giving free rein to his natural drives and propensities. The authority of the police officer or juvenile court has not proven an adequate deterrent, especially when the truant juvenile bag the ever-present hope that he can “get away with it,” or that he can outsmart the policeman and the judge and the probation officer.

“In our society, where morality and ethics can hardly be said to be at a premium, where the most prevalent criterion of what is right and proper is the claim that “everybody does it,” there is no real deterrent for a child against giving free rein to his natural drives and propensities.””

CREATOR AND MASTER

There is only one factor which can induce children to curb their desires and cultivate decent and moral conduct. That is – the knowledge that the world in which we live is not a cosmic accident, but that it has a Creator and a Master, Who takes a “personal interest” in all its affairs and in every individual in particular. Imbued with this idea, the child will grow up with the realization that his actions come under Divine scrutiny; that nothing can be concealed from Him, and no one can outsmart Him. It will not be fear of Divine retribution alone that will deter him, but as he grows more mature it will be the feeling of awe, coupled with love, for the Divine Majesty that will be “a lamp unto his feet” in his daily conduct.

Those who will be responsible for the education of our youngsters in the days ahead, on the national, state, and community levels, and especially those who determine educational policy in the public schools (the system with which this discussion is particularly concerned), will have to reevaluate the foundations on which our present educational system rests. It will be necessary – if we are to

“There is only one factor which can induce children to curb their desires and cultivate decent and moral conduct.”

preserve at least minimum standards of morality – to place in the center of all educational activity, whether at home or in the school, the emphasis on a Divinely based morality and ethics, and to bring into closer harmony the ideals of knowledge and conduct.

Our youth is growing (though not necessarily growing up) and it cannot wait until the adults will work out some “nice” formula, within the existing educational order, for their spiritual survival. The situation demands a thorough re-examination of basic approaches of education, unhampered by preconceptions. There can surely be no validity to the argument that anything that has to do with morality founded on the acknowledgment of Supreme Being should be held in abeyance until the

“It will be necessary – if we are to preserve at least minimum standards of morality – to place in the center of all educational activity, whether at home or in the school, the emphasis on a Divinely based morality and ethics.”



“Our youth is growing (though not necessarily growing up) and it cannot wait until the adults will work out some “nice” formula, within the existing educational order, for their spiritual survival.”

boy or girl has reached maturity and decided for himself, or herself, what kind of a morality, secular or Divine, he or she wished to adhere to. This indeed is the dictated policy in certain countries and we know the results of such a policy.

It is a tragic delusion to think that the natural proclivities and appetites are

something which the child will “outgrow” in time; just leave it to him. You cannot expect this any more than you can expect a person to lift himself up by pulling at his hair. There must be an outside power upon which to lean for support if any effort to elevate oneself physically, and even more so spiritually. In our generation we have, to our dismay, seen how little the school boy and school girl have been influenced by their teachers, or older brothers, in the way of moral standards. We have, moreover, seen a breakdown in parental control and the ineffectiveness of the policeman on the beat. The alarming growth of juvenile delinquency leaves no doubt as to the inadequacies of the existing means and methods.

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As for the hope that advanced human “civilization” will itself somehow correct those ills, we do not have far to go to convince ourselves what a “broken rod” human culture is upon which to lean for moral elevation. The country that was the most “cultured” and “civilized,” whose

preponderance not only in the realms of science but also in philosophy and ethics was well known, was precisely that country which has outraged every moral principle and produced the most depraved and vicious animals in human form.

CONCERTED EFFORT

To some extent the discrepancy between knowledge and conduct can be narrowed by a concerted effort on the part of parents, spiritual leaders, youth workers, and similar groups, to inculcate into the children the idea of the existence of a Creator, Who holds everyone accountable for one’s actions. It would be folly, however, to shift the entire responsibility on the parents and ministers of religion, while the children are compelled to spend five days of the week in the school, where their character and ideas are actually molded to a much greater extent than at home, or in the house of worship which they visit only occasionally.

It is inconceivable that while many educators have been bold enough to come out with all sorts of experiments in educational policy, some of them dubious

or even perilous, there should be such an obviously misplaced “embarrassment” to voice the vital need of impressing upon all children of public schools and private schools that there is a Supreme Being, Who not only created the world at a given time in the past, but Who watches it continuously, and from Whom no action, word or even thought can be hidden.

In an era when old-established scientific theories are frequently toppled and cast by the waysides, it is to be hoped that educational concepts and practices will not escape the scrutiny of a fresh reappraisal in the light of experience. After all, what is at stake here is not just another technological improvement, but the youth of our generation, the very future of mankind. **P**



ARE YOU A THERMOMETER OR A THERMOSTAT?

RABBI SHOLOM BER AVTZON

When I first heard that question, “Are you a thermometer or thermostat?” I looked up in surprise. What is the message that Rabbi Shmuel Lew is trying to impart at the *farbrengen*? But when he began explaining it, it all made sense.

A thermometer measures the temperature and informs us how hot or cold it is, while a thermostat sets and makes the temperature in the room according to its setting. In other words, a thermometer adapts to its surroundings, while a thermostat creates its environment.

Just as a thermostat that is connected to the boiler brings warmth into a cold environment and warms up an entire house or building complex, so too we who are connected to Rebbe have the ability to bring warmth and inspiration to the community in which we live. We can influence them to focus not only on everyday mundane manners, but also on something more spiritual.



Hearing this thought, I was reminded of a story that the Frieddiker Rebbe related about the esteemed chossid Reb Pinchos Reizes:

In the city of Lubavitch lived a wagon driver by the name of Nochum Nochumavitch. One ordinary weekday, Nochum entered the *shul* when Reb Pinchos was in the middle of his *davening*. Listening to Reb Pinchos' *davening* inspired Reb Nochum that he also had an urge to pour out his heart to Hashem.

The simple wagon driver took out a *siddur* and turned to the *musaf* service of Yom Kippur. He recited the "*Avodah*" with great concentration, he cried emotionally when he recited "*Al Cheit*," and he fell to the floor for "*Korim*." Even though he was an unlearned person, at that moment he reached a lofty level.

When Nochum the wagon driver finished his *davening*, he exclaimed, "I can no longer be on the same level as the horse!" He felt that he could not remain on the simple ordinary level of the past. He gave up his job as a wagon driver and found a position as the *shamess* (caretaker) of a *shul*.

The Frieddiker Rebbe concluded this story by quoting the Mittlerer Rebbe, "Even a great Talmudic genius would envy the level this simple Jew attained."

Reb Pinchos didn't look around to see how many other Jews were willing to *daven* at length. He knew that was what he was supposed to do. He didn't do it to impress anyone, because no one was there. He conducted himself that way because that is how a chossid of the Rebbe conducts himself.

And that is being a thermostat. We set the heat at the level we should be, and that itself influences and inspires others.



But we may ask, "How can one person influence his surroundings and not be influenced by them? I am only one and they are so many?"



RABBI SHOLOM BER AVTZON

is a veteran teacher in Tomchei Temimim – United Lubavitcher Yeshiva, Ocean Parkway. He has authored numerous books, including the acclaimed Rebbeim Biography series and Early Chassidic Personalities series, and is a sought-after lecturer and farbrenger.



The same is true for a person: If he is preoccupied with *davening*, learning and elevating others, this will prevent him from “absorbing” outside influences.



When the noted chossid Reb Itche der Masmid came to America in 5700 (1940) to collect money for Russian Jews, he barely went around to collect. In the morning, he would go to *shul* and *daven Shachris* with the *minyan*, but would continue on for many hours.

But on that day, ten minutes passed, twenty minutes passed, half an hour, and their guest was still *davening*.

The answer to this question was taught by chassidim using a *balacha* about salting meat.

Shulchan Aruch notes a phenomenon that as long as the meat is spewing out blood, it won't absorb any of the blood that came out from the pieces around it. However, after the meat completely finishes its discharge, it will absorb the other blood to the degree that salting it cannot draw it out.

The *shamess* of the *shul* would want to lock up right as *davening* finished, but would respectfully wait for the last person to finish his prayers. So around ten minutes after the final *kaddish*, he would usually lock up. But on that day, ten minutes passed, twenty minutes passed, half-an-hour, and their guest was still *davening*.

When two hours passed, he came near and heard that the guest rabbi was in midst of “*Birchos Krias Shema*,” and he called his friends to tell them of the strange occurrence. People left their businesses to see for themselves. Either the man had to be one of the *tzaddikim* they heard about and they wanted to request a blessing from him, or the *shamess* was making things up and had to be replaced.

Seeing such a *davening*, they resolved to give him much more *tzedaka* than they

What did he do that was so special? He *davened* the wrong *tefillos* and took on a different job! What is there to envy? Perhaps the lesson is not in *what* he did, but *what it took for him* to do it.

originally would have had he come to their homes. Furthermore, many of them used the opportunity to speak to him on how to conduct themselves in America. In fact, a few hundred *shuls* adapted *Nusach HaAri* as their *nusach* as a result of his influence.



Notwithstanding the above points, there is perhaps another more important lesson to be learned from the story of Reb Pinchos Reizes. Perhaps the point of the story is not about the greatness of Reb Pinchos, to whom it may be difficult for us to relate, but to the simple wagon driver, as the Frierdiker Rebbe concludes this story with the statement that “Even a great Talmudic genius would envy the level this Jew attained.”

What did he do that was so special? He *davened* the wrong *tefillos* and took on a different job! What is there to envy?

Perhaps the lesson is not in *what* he did, but what it *took for him* to do it.

We often wonder: Hashem is so much greater than us, how do our actions really have meaning to Him? We read in *davening* that He is exalted and far

above this world, and that this world was created with His words alone. How can our actions be meaningful to Him?

Chassidus explains that a person speaks and a parakeet can say a few words. Yet, when a person speaks it doesn't excite anyone (unless it's your child's first words), but when the parakeet mimics a person it evokes glee. Why the difference?

The explanation is that something unexpected is exciting. Since it is not surprising for a person to speak it doesn't excite us. But when a bird speaks our language, it causes laughter and joy among the listeners.

The same is true for our service of Hashem. In essence, Hashem is far greater than our actions. Yet, He chose to derive enjoyment from our *kabolas ol*. Our service may not be anything extraordinary, but when we change our activities for the better and do something unexpected, then, like a talking parakeet, we cause Hashem tremendous joy.

We may not be great chassidim, but in overcoming our challenges to learn or *daven* a little more, we make the great chassidim envious. **P**

What are we Teaching Them?



This article appeared in Yiddish in Di Yiddishe Heim, Autumn 5745 (1984).



Things were going wrong right from the beginning. Moishie woke up early in the morning burning with a fever; he could hardly move. Then a few minutes later he began giving back everything he ate; to me it seemed as if he were giving back everything he had eaten in the last week.

Somehow I managed to send the rest of the children off to school, to the music of Moishie's wails and the baby's cries of neglect. I really shouldn't complain, because things did settle down by 9:45, when I had to leave for the doctor. I even managed to throw all the bedding and clothes into the washer — the ones that were hit when Moishie didn't make it to the bathroom.

As usual the doctor said it was a virus and gave a prescription and diet to be followed strictly. I just made it back in time to let in the plumber who was scheduled to fix the kitchen sink at 11:20. As he arrived at the door, I met him with a baby in each arm, and managed with my last bit of strength to show him what had to be done.

And wouldn't things like that happen... as I'm rushing back and forth between the plumber and the crying children, I stubbed my toe badly on one of his big bulky tools.

Now I was really full of self-pity. I was limping back and forth between plumber and kids: wash had to be put in the dryer, meat defrosted, supper cooked, beds made... My toe was really bothering me and I was convinced that I belonged in bed...

I just couldn't wait for the moment that Raizel would walk in the door. She would understand; she would save the day. What would our house be like without my dear teenage daughter?! The hours slipped by and finally the children started coming home in their usual shifts. I was counting the minutes and the seconds for my dear Raizel...

Until... "Hi, Ma". Raizel finally walked through the door. "You'll never guess what I have to do tonight," she began even before I had a chance to begin my sob story... "We have the biggest report ever due for tomorrow. We have to look up at least five *meforshim*. It will take me all night even if I

"I don't think you really understand how much work I have to put into this report in order to pass; Mrs. Heiler is a murder teacher."

begin right away. Is supper ready, Momma?"

"A report like that you have to complete in one evening?" I questioned.

"Actually we did have two weeks, but these last two weeks were packed every night—we had tests or reports, and now this..." she explained. In a few minutes Raizel had gobbled down the supper I managed to put together, some of it eaten while talking to one or another of her friends on the telephone.

"You know, Raizel," I began, "things were pretty hectic in the house today... Moishe has fever and I stubbed my toe very badly and can hardly walk."



Raizel looked at me with some measure of pity, but mostly of disbelief. I guess that's because Raizel very proudly thinks of her mother as some sort of a superwoman who manages no matter what. Right after supper she took out her piles of *seforim* and papers and her sticking candy — and of course telephone in hand. The wash was not yet put away. Moishe was crying again, and so was the baby; maybe he was catching the virus from Moishie.

“Raizel, what’s the matter with you – can’t you help out when your mother doesn’t feel well?”

The dishes had to be washed and the younger kids put to sleep. “I’ll do the dishes, Raizel,” I began. “I’ll even fold the wash and put it away, all you have to do is put the younger children into pajamas and tuck them into bed, with *krias shma* of course...”

Raizel looked at me quite puzzled. “I don’t think you really understand how much work I have to put into this report in order to pass. Mrs. Hefler is a murder teacher. She is going to take off points left and

right. Don’t you want me to get a good mark for my report?”

Now Raizel was even more upset than I was. Poor child. She does try very hard to be a top student.

I was now convinced that my toe was really broken. I couldn’t put my foot on the floor at all. The older boys were not coming home from *yeshiva* until late, and although the middle ones meant well, I couldn’t really rely on

them now, with Moishie sick and the baby so cranky.

Things in the house got out of control. No one was doing any homework, the four- and five-year-olds got into mischief, and the eight- and nine-year-olds got into a fight— a sibling fight which at this point I

had no strength to untangle. I suppose I could have convinced them to help me a little, but they still needed direction, and I was busy with the baby and Moishie. If only Raizel could do it...

The key turned in the door and my husband walked in. My younger ones were still not in bed, the middle ones still fighting. Moishie wailing, the baby the crying, and mommy groaning... and Raizel was crunching her apple and talking on the phone with five different *seforim* open in front of her and writing and writing and writing.

"What's going on here?" my husband asks.

I apologize for not feeling well and began a long story of my hectic day and swollen toe. In truth I just had no more strength to go on...

"Raizel, what's the matter with you – can't you help out when your mother doesn't feel well?" My husband let out his whole disappointment at poor studious Raizel.

"But, Tatty, I have a gigantic report to do for tomorrow. It's from my hardest teacher and the whole class is working all night at it... My teacher also said that she will take no excuses for not having the report in on time and no notes from parents will help. Do you really want me to fail?" Raizel's big blue eyes were now full of tears. She had to convince herself and her father that she really wasn't that bad...

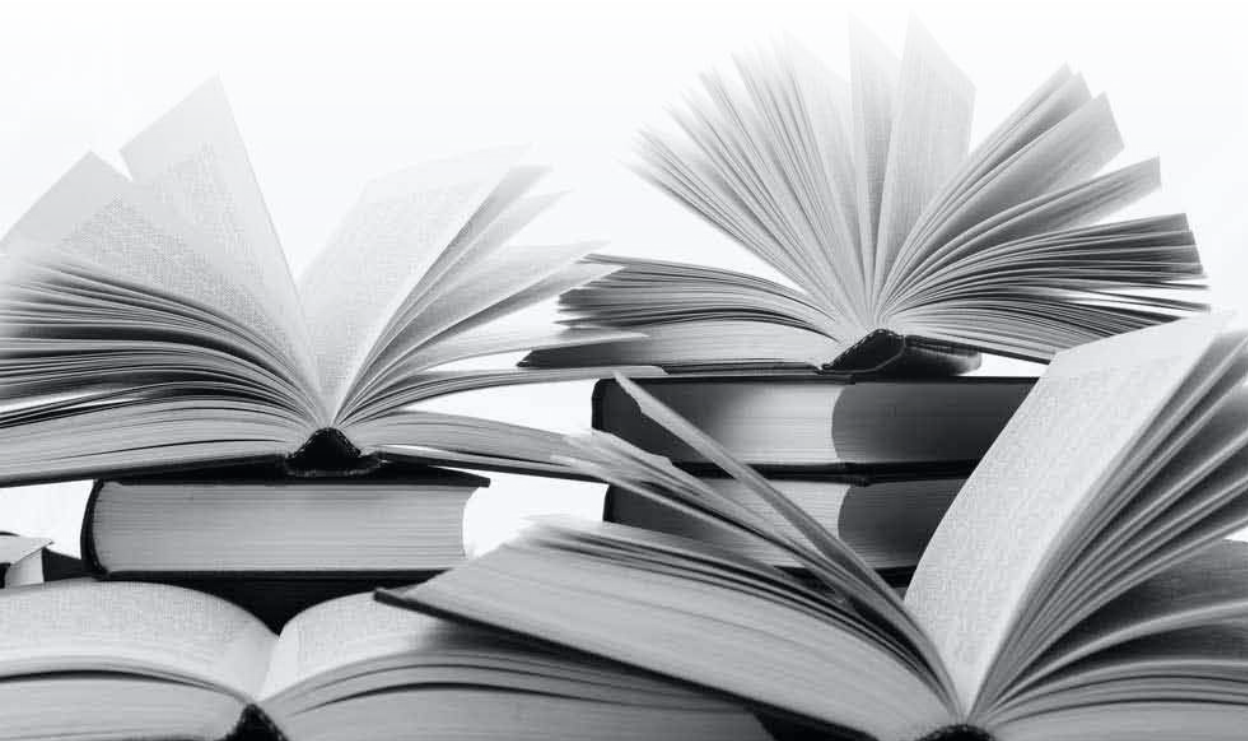
"What kind of report is this anyway? A whole night for one report?" my husband couldn't understand.

"You don't understand and Tatty, we need five *meforshim* – five *meforshim*!" Raizel said with so much emphasis that you would think the five turned into five hundred. But I guess they were harder to find than to write. "To prove our point we need to write at least five sides and quote five *meforshim*." Raizel said trying to sound as intelligent as she could.

"And what point do you have to prove?" he asked.

"The significance of our topic," was the reply.

"Now tell me Raizele, what is your topic and what do you have to spend the whole night and five papers and five *meforshim* to prove." Raizel did not hesitate, and without the slightest realization of the paradox, the illogic of it, "We have to make a five page report on *kibud av va'eim*, respecting and honoring our parents!" **P**





Book Review

A YEAR IN Correspondence

THEMES IN THE REBBE'S LETTERS OF 5736

BY RABBI SHIMON HELLINGER

There is something unique about the Rebbe's letters scarcely found elsewhere in the Rebbe's teachings.

In the *sichos*, and certainly in the *maamorim*, the discussions revolve around universal concepts, all-purpose inspiration. Even the proposed solutions are more general in nature. Reading those sources, brings to mind the image of an extraordinary *tzaddik*, genius of all areas of Torah and Chassidus, leader and visionary. However, pragmatic considerations of personal constraints, limited funding and social norms seem to be ignored, perhaps deliberately so.

Not so in the Rebbe's letters. Predominantly in the Hebrew letters we encounter a pragmatic approach and detailed responses to specific dilemmas. These pointed answers offer a more concrete understanding of the Rebbe's stance on the practical challenges that arise in personal, family, and community life. Besides the limited benefit for one who has that identical question, the collection as a whole paints a picture of the Rebbe's down-to-earth attitude. It seems, that besides being spiritually inspired, a *chossid* must be sensible and pragmatic, well familiar with the outside reality and mindset, and must deliberate the fine points of worldly technicalities.

As the years progressed and the questions posed to the Rebbe multiplied, the Rebbe

It seems, that besides being spiritually inspired, a *chossid* must be sensible and pragmatic, well familiar with the outside reality and mindset, and must deliberate the fine points of worldly technicalities.



began replying to questions with short handwritten notes which were then relayed to the questioners by phone or in person. Oftentimes, the Rebbe would simply underline the appropriate words in the question, and add nothing more. In the later volumes of *Igros Kodesh* these short replies were included as "letters," with footnotes including the question whenever it was accessible.

A few months ago, a new volume of *Igros Kodesh* (Vol. 31) was released which includes the Rebbe's Hebrew letters and handwritten notes of the year 5736 (1975-1976) – 40 years ago – totaling just over 300 letters and responses. Browsing through a year's worth of correspondence offers insight into what occupied the Rebbe during the span of that year, and completes the picture that can be gleaned from the *sichos* the Rebbe spoke publicly that year and diaries of the *bochurim* that have been released in various forums.





Events of the Year

First of all, are several major incidents which marked the year of 5736:

MIVTZA CHINUCH:

In Spring of 1976 the Rebbe raised the need to increase Jewish education everywhere, adding another campaign to the existing eight *mivtzoyim*.

The Rebbe's secretaries uncharacteristically initiated contact with many individuals about raising awareness and increasing the *chinuch* situation in communities worldwide. Letters were sent to rabbis

about reaching out to communities in Ireland and Scandinavia, and Latvian immigrants in *Eretz Yisroel*, and to traveling businessmen to utilize their trips to Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong to better the *chinuch* there. (appended to letter #11819) Given its importance, the Rebbe offered to pay for a portion of whatever deficit was incurred. (#11830)

The Rebbe also wrote to children directly asking them to increase their *own* Jewish education and to influence their peers. (#11838, #11846) In fact, the Rebbe tells the children, since they spend more time with friends than do adults, they are more obligated to influence friends. (#11910)

At that time, the Rebbe established the "*Twelve Pesukim and Sayings of Chazal*" for children to study and memorize. In a talk, the Rebbe had suggested that a booklet of the Sayings be printed with a space for children to record the names of friends whom they inspired to study the Sayings or to increase in their Torah observance. (*Sichos Kodesh*, Vol. 2, p. 453)

OPERATION ENTEBBE:

During the summer of 1976 a group of terrorists hijacked an El-Al plane flying to France and brought it to Uganda. In a miraculous recovery mission, Israeli soldiers succeeded in saving the hostages.



A child reciting one of the 12 Pesukim.

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Operation Entebbe, summer 1976

Soon after, a top-secret report on the operation was hand-delivered to the Rebbe by an anonymous messenger. The Rebbe responded with several suggestions (one of which was to form a hostage recovery team in the Israeli army) which, due to its covert nature, was not mailed, but returned with the person who brought it. (#11932)

In a public letter, the Rebbe points out that although outstanding miracles had occurred, the Jewish people should increase in *mitzvos* for safety, especially the *mitzvah* of *mezuzah* with its unique protection power. Since all Jews are united, one Jew's *mezuzah* adds protection for Jews everywhere. (#11882, #11898)



Recurrent Themes

Then, there are of course common themes found all through *Igros Kodesh*:

SCHOLARLY EXPOSITION

Torah letters are naturally a substantial portion of the Rebbe's correspondence. Leading *rabbanim* and authors would

turn to the Rebbe with queries about general halachic topics and questions on the Rebbe's teachings. The persons in this volume include: R. Simcha Elberg, head of Agudas Horabonim and editor of the *HaPardes* Torah Journal, on whether cutting the *esrog* off the tree and building the *sukka* constitute a *mitzvah*

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R. Efraim Yolles in an animated discussion with the Rebbe at a *farbrengen*.

on their own; R. Meir Katz, a *rosh kollel* in Chaifa, on the wording of the *bracha* on candle lighting for *Rosh Hashana* (the Rebbe even toils to justify the non-Chabad *nusach*); R. Efraim Yolles, Chief Rabbi of Philadelphia, on the possibility to think about two locations at once; R. Dov Zlotnick, Yerushalayim, on the capacity of later rabbis to disagree with earlier ones (which depends on how we understand the metaphor of a dwarf on a giant's shoulders); and other brief responses on why we don't recite a *bracha* on *Shema*, Divine reward and retribution during *galus*, and the need for a *mezuzah* on a house where one doesn't yet live according to the *Targum Yonasan*.

At the Kinus Torah scholarly symposium in 770 that followed Pesach, R. Chaim Gutnick, *rov* in Melbourne, Australia, said something which the *bochurim* thought

to contradict what the Rebbe had said at a *farbrengen*. It caused a great uproar. When sharing the exchange in a written report to the Rebbe, the Rebbe commented, "*Un a gevald* – without a commotion." In other words, Torah has many facets, and it is okay to discuss other facets than the one that the Rebbe had discussed on a given occasion.

ON BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS

Another common thread is the Rebbe's involvement with books and other printed matter – review of publications and urging to have them published sooner.

Readers of the Rebbe's Hebrew letters are surely familiar with the Rebbe's ceaseless requests of the staff of *Encyclopedia Talmudis* to publish their volumes at



a quicker pace. Here, the Rebbe makes a bold suggestion: Instead of keeping everyone waiting until the books are published, the authors should release their private card system with all the basic references of unpublished topics. (#11886) A high level of noble altruism.

R. Chaim Dov Shevel was an erudite author and had written extensively on the Ramban, and at one point began translating the Ramban on Torah into English. In an earlier letter, the Rebbe had written to him that he could better utilize his talent on other projects, since the Ramban in English is a luxury. In response to R. Shevel's argument that *tzedaka* indeed requires providing luxuries to those who lack it ("a horse to ride on and a servant to lead the way"), the Rebbe countered that still there are more urgent projects which take precedence. Moreover, whoever is truly lacking the study of Ramban will figure out how to study the original. (#11657)

One book in which the Rebbe was personally involved is *Toldos Levi Yitzchak*, the biography of the Rebbe's father, by R. Naftali Gottlieb. The Rebbe insisted that it be carefully reviewed for accuracy, and personally corrected some dates and names and deleted several



R. Simcha Elberg at a farbrengen.

stories recounting the Rebbe's uniqueness as a youngster. (#11890, #11943)

Regarding a newspaper article about the Frierdiker Rebbe's life, the Rebbe comments, "The **main thing** is missing – to utilize the article to spread Yiddishkeit!!" The Rebbe then guides the writer to elaborate upon the Frierdiker Rebbe's declaration that "America is no different," his efforts for Jewish education in outlying communities, and the publishing of English material, everything from beginners' *bentchers* to advanced Chassidus. (#11739)

Always sensitive to the responsibility inherent in publishing for the public, the Rebbe also checked that all published material meet a quality standard. When an individual proposed to translate *Hilchos Birchos Hanehenin* into English the Rebbe insisted that it be reviewed



Kinus Torah in 770. Speaking is R. Simcha Elberg.

by a practicing *rov* “who knows English well” and an English editor (#11898), and the Rebbe demanded that all quotes in publications be properly sourced to avoid mistaken attributions (#11783).

Other publications which the Rebbe addressed include: the works of the Rogatchover Gaon (#11703); the journal *Machsheves* (replying with Torah sources for what the journal called a “folk saying”) (#11907); and “the long *maamar* by the Mittlerer Rebbe” (which the editors tell us refers to one that he recited before R. Akiva Eiger in Posen, and about which the Rebbe expressed surprise over its length, considering that it was said before someone unacquainted with Chassidus) (#11898).

“TO MEET THE SPIRIT OF EVERY MAN”

A recurring theme in this volume of letters are responses to requests for financial support for a variety of worthy causes – the publication of books, a school for nurses, community shuls, a *mikvah*, and more – in hope that the Rebbe has access to extra funding. In line with *Shulchan Aruch’s* instruction for one who cannot fill a pauper’s needs, the Rebbe uplifts each supplicant’s spirits and includes a donation “from my own pocket.”

Another type of questioner is the aggressor who takes account with the Rebbe’s words or a Chabad custom. The Rebbe, despite his overwhelming

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responsibilities, takes the time to explain in a mellow tone, for example, how the Alter Rebbe could turn back the clock to learn longer with the Mezritcher Maggid's son, how Chabad is more particular about *Sof Zman Krias Shema*, and that Shabbos candles may be lit by unmarried girls ("It is evident in *Likutei Sichos* that I make every effort to base my words upon those who preceded me and I say so explicitly").

Another classic *Igros Kodesh* trope are the repeat questions by those who didn't suffice with the Rebbe's first response (#11945, #11737 and more). The frustration in the Rebbe's tone is noticeable, not so much by his need to reply again, but by the fact that the questioner cannot stand on his own feet and work out a solution with the guidelines the Rebbe had given.

This volume includes several mentions of harmony between *shluchim* and the need for activists to work in cooperation with

Regarding a newspaper article about the Frierdiker Rebbe's life, the Rebbe comments, "The main thing is missing – to utilize the article to spread Yiddishkeit!!"



the central offices. (#11810, #11715, #11683) However, despite repeated requests, the Rebbe refused to decide on disputes among the management of organizations abroad (even when one organization sent a representative on a trip to New York to discuss it with the Rebbe), saying that getting involved would be "against *Shulchan Aruch*." (#11823)



Gamut of Topics

The wide array of personalities and topics addressed in the Rebbe's letters is striking. Here are a few examples:

- In a letter to a biochemist the Rebbe mentions a scientific theory that the Rebbe had suggested and asked him to investigate, since "I have

surprisingly found in several fields that specifically the experts who are constantly engrossed in the subject can overlook an obvious detail." Yet, the Rebbe concludes disappointingly, no answer came forth about his theory's validity. (#11917)

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When youth blunder because they lack basic knowledge of Torah, we cannot afford to waste time on comparatively trivial matters of extra-terrestrial life.



- Another letter is a response to someone who thought he had come up with a “simple process” for generating electricity. While referring him to seek out experts about the practicalities, in typical Chassidic fashion the Rebbe draws a lesson from it: Every Jewish *neshamah* is capable of producing endless amounts of energy through a “simple process” – speaking to the person words that come from the heart. (#11920)
- One fascinating letter discusses the possibility of extra-terrestrial life, which the Rebbe states isn’t inherently opposed to Torah. However, concludes the Rebbe, he answered the question “without much enjoyment.” No matter how important a discussion, it is out of place while a house is on fire or a patient lay deathly ill. Likewise, when youth blunder because they lack basic knowledge of Torah, we cannot afford to waste time on comparatively trivial matters. (#11902)
- When word reached the Rebbe that someone lashed out at his fellow in public, the Rebbe noted the severe prohibition of embarrassing a person publically, and the excuse that it was “for the sake of a *mitzvah*” is equally against *halacha*. (#11759)
- The Rebbe did not allow for the building of a boy’s school on the same grounds as a girl’s school even with a wall between them, out of concern that some won’t know of the wall, and conclude that Chabad is doing something forbidden or, on the contrary, that it is permissible. (#11865)
- In a letter to a Chabad supporter, the Rebbe expresses displeasure at his beginning a letter to a Jewish gathering with a quote from Shakespeare. Even had he been from the righteous gentiles – and his writings imply that he was an Anti-Semite – why should Jews, G-d’s chosen nation from millennia earlier, turn to them for moral guidance? Especially since, those so-called “cultured nations” actually practiced much oppression and persecution. (#11901)
- When young Nechama Greisman submitted to the Rebbe an article on



her hospitalization during a visit to Minnesota, and her doctor's surprise at meeting a chossid in a Midwest hospital, the Rebbe wrote:

"It is very surprising that the main point is missing [from your article]: Through your incident a Jew saw for the first time a chossid, and especially an American girl who speaks English like himself, and despite her intense pain she exerts herself, not for her own treatment, but to explain to him Yiddishkeit to the extent of practical action – [donning] *tefillin*. So much so, that he forgot that he is a doctor etc., and forgot about his whole identity! What aroused him was his total concentration on "a living Chassidus and a living chossid" – in which he saw the overall spirit of Yiddishkeit... Who can estimate the future impact it will have on him?!" At the Rebbe's advice, she added this emphasis to her article. (#11661)



REACHING OUT

Naturally, there are countless letter and notes on *shlichus* and *mitvzoyim*:

To a *shliach* who was unhappy in his place of *shlichus*, the Rebbe highlights his past success, but notes that a *shliach* cannot possibly succeed unless he is eager, and otherwise, he should consider finding another occupation elsewhere. (#11940)



Chassidim sing at an "Evening with Chabad"

In a note to someone looking for a *shlichus*, the Rebbe advises only looking into options that are practical and financially viable. It is also relevant to the success of his *shlichus* – that he has the peace of mind to spread Yiddishkeit. (#11941)

"*Erev Chabad*" was a program where *chassidim* in *Eretz Yisroel* visited secular kibbutzim to share Chassidic thoughts and song. Rumor had it that one inspiring Chabad *niggun* they had been singing had been used by the Palmach military brigade and would be perceived as a secular song. The Rebbe advised that they should be on the safe side and not sing that *niggun*. (#11788)

Shortly after the launch of *Mivtza Chinuch* and the "Year of the Jewish Child," one *shliach* wrote to the Rebbe that the word *משיח* could serve as an acronym for *מבצע ילדיהודי חינוך* – the campaign of the



“Through your incident a Jew saw for the first time a chossid, and especially an American girl who speaks English like himself, and despite her intense pain she exerts herself, not for her own treatment, but to explain to him Yiddishkeit to the extent of practical action.”



“Year of the Jewish Child” and education. The Rebbe objected since, “this acronym may stop some people from joining the campaign.” (#11826)

When R. Leibel Kaplan of Tzfas notified the Rebbe of financial challenges and

the need to stop the construction of his building, the Rebbe advised that he inquire what other organizations do in similar predicaments. To someone’s offer to fundraise, the Rebbe challenged, “Does he have any experience in fundraising? Is he suited for it?” (#11914)



———— A Published Volume ————

And now to the presentation.

The publishers did an excellent service by collecting the historical and conceptual background of the letters. The information enables us to understand what the Rebbe is saying and to appreciate the circumstances at the time the letter was written.

Just a few examples: The letter to Jewish women on the importance of *mezuzah* was written two weeks after an attack on an El-Al plane in Istanbul, Turkey, as retaliation for Entebbe (#11898); the

question of extra-terrestrial life follows the landing of the Viking Mars lander just a month earlier (#11902); and a short note on how to address patients’ transgressions was a postscript of an English letter to a psychiatrist on not sanctioning transgressions to relieve guilt. (#11782) (Interestingly, in this postscript the Rebbe adds that he need not preach Torah to them, but however he weans them away from forbidden conduct is fine, just as a child is drawn to Torah with treats.)

Other upgrades to the recent volumes of *Igros Kodesh* include: including the

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Image of Mars from Viking lander

Hebrew translations of the Rebbe's public letters which were also edited by the Rebbe, translation of Yiddish letters to Hebrew, inclusion of letters sent by the Rebbe's secretariat which were sometimes ordered by the Rebbe himself (at any rate, they are fascinating and they add insight to the other letters), detailed references to sources, and cross-references to other writings and *sichos*.

On the subject of sourcing: I would like to see more cross-references to the Rebbe's teachings and, better yet, precedent in early Jewish writings for seemingly novel ideas – such as the approval of Chinese Medicine (#11790), the allowance for gradual growth in Torah observance (#11791), and the role of women in education (#11837). Sources for

classic quotes are not as necessary, and for recurring well-known phrases they are redundant (the generic phrase “*Toras Chaim* – the Torah of Life” in *Sim Shalom* which appears over thirty times need not be referenced).

The additions of a detailed table of contents and an index of irregular expressions (*bituyim meyuchadim*) are most welcome.



Of course, one volume of letters cannot capture the hundreds of hours of private *yechidus*, hundreds of oral replies relayed by the secretariat, and tens of *farbrengens*. It is nonetheless a fascinating account of one facet of a year with the Rebbe. **P**

Get Real!

RABBI AVRAHAM KATZ

Excerpt from his forthcoming book

A Practical Guide to Davening

Ideas and guidance on how to daven – based on the teachings of Chassidus

Experienced students of Chassidus are well familiar with the important role that thinking Chassidus plays in Chassidishe davening. What does it mean to "think Chassidus"?

And more importantly: How do we think Chassidus so that it should uplift our davening and impact our day?

In order to know before Whom one is standing during davening, one must learn about and develop an awareness of Him. However, learning doesn't just mean to read words in a book; it means to understand and connect to those ideas until they become part of you.

SEARCHING FOR ELOKUS

The Rebbe Rashab explains (*Kuntres HaTefillah*, Chapter 12) that in order for a person to receive and benefit from what can be accomplished by thinking Chassidus, he must first be a *keili* for it. To be a true *keili*, one must experience a true arousal to turn to Hashem (התעוררות) (תשובה אמיתית) and be yearning for *elokus*.

Chassidus will only truly affect us if we are searching. If we think we are alright, we haven't opened ourselves up to allow Chassidus to penetrate us. We must realize that we are missing something, and we must truly feel a need to connect to Hashem. When we feel such a need and *then* think Chassidus properly, it will revive us and give us *chayus*, since it will be providing us with what we are lacking and yearning for.

This doesn't mean that we should not think Chassidus until we do complete *teshuvah*. On the contrary, thinking about Hashem will help us do *teshuvah*. What it

does mean is that we must recognize the need to be "searching" and have a goal of becoming closer to Hashem. Then thinking Chassidus will really work.

In other words: It is not enough to think Chassidus just because it is written in *seforim* that it's a good idea. We must think Chassidus because we feel a need to connect to Hashem, to the truth, and to our inner self. It must be done because it's part of who we are and it touches the core of our being (נוגע בעצם).

This is unlike action-based mitzvos, where the main thing is the action, and a person's attitude or lack thereof is of secondary importance (relating merely to the revelation of the mitzvah, i.e., how much it will affect him and so on). However, *chovos halevavos*—mitzvos that are situated in the mind and heart—are different. By these mitzvos, a person's attitude, such as his approach to the mitzvah, the reason he is doing it, and so on, plays an important role in the actual mitzvah.

WHO IS A PNIMI?

Another important factor in the impact of Chassidus upon a person is taking it in *bipnimiyus*, internally.

The Frierdiker Rebbe explains that there are two main problems with a shallow person—a *chitzon*, versus a deep person—a *pnimi*:

The first problem with a *chitzon* is that he is a shallow person; he has no depth of personality. He learns, davens, and accomplishes a lot, but he doesn't possess a depth of feeling and appreciation for what he does.

A *pnimi*, on the other hand, has a deep concern for what he does; he does things he truly values and thinks into what he does very carefully. A *pnimi* makes sure that something that truly matters is done properly. When a *pnimi* learns Chassidus, he thinks about what he learns until he truly understands it. When he continues on to davening, he thinks over the idea he has learnt until he actually feels it. He takes his time with what he does and doesn't rush things through, and he knows that he must do a proper job.

This is especially true in *avodas Hashem*. He makes sure he understands what he learns, connects to davening, and truly cares about his fellow Yid, which is expressed in the way he helps another. A *chitzon* doesn't have such depth. He does only as much as necessary so he can say that he did what he was supposed to do. When he understands an idea, he

understands it superficially and only as much as necessary, but he doesn't actually grasp the depth of the idea.

The second problem with a *chitzon* is that he isn't honest with himself. Even if he would have the depth of mind to plumb the depths of a difficult piece of Gemara, he doesn't plumb the depths of his own life to find out what he really cares about. A *chitzon* fools himself by thinking that he already understands and feels, that he is doing a satisfactory job, and that he is a good person. He doesn't want to be honest with himself and make sure that he truly understands and cares about Hashem, feels deeply about Hashem, and works diligently on improving himself.

A *pnimi*, on the other hand, wants the truth, no matter how hard he will have to work for it. He doesn't fool himself, because he isn't afraid of the truth, what that will demand of him to do, and how much work it will take.

HOW TO BECOME A PNIMI?

The Rebbe Rashab explains that there are three things necessary for a *chitzon* to become a *pnimi*. First, it must bother him that he is a *chitzon*, that he doesn't really care about the things he should care about. Not that it should bother him that he isn't acting properly, because as we said before, it could be that his performance is exemplary; rather, it should bother him that he is so shallow.



When a *pnimi* learns Chassidus, he thinks about what he learns until he truly understands it. When he continues on to davening, he thinks over the idea he has learnt until he actually feels it. He takes his time with what he does and doesn't rush things through, and he knows that he must do a proper job.

Second, he must have friends who will guide him and ensure that he is proceeding on the correct path to become a *pnimi*. A *chitzon* is used to fooling himself. If he tries to become a *pnimi* without outside help and support, he may

fool himself into thinking that he isn't fooling himself when in actuality he is fooling himself.

Third, he must make an effort to learn things thoroughly and in depth (*be'iyun*) so that he will grow accustomed to

thinking deeply. By getting used to thinking through a *sugya* from beginning to end, he will get used to thinking thoroughly about life in general.

[Perhaps the first two pieces of advice are geared at fixing a *chitzon's* second problem (that he isn't honest with himself), while the third piece of advice is directed at the first problem (that he is a shallow person).]

THE BIGGER PICTURE

In order for us to approach the idea of thinking Chassidus properly, we must

first be aware that this is part of a bigger picture. It is part of our journey to become a *pnimi*, to have real depth of heart and mind and really care about Hashem.

This idea is one of the main concepts discussed in Tanya. The Tanya is based on the *possuk* "*ki karov eilecha*," "It is extremely close to you in your mouth and *heart* to do [Torah and mitzvot]." How is serving Hashem with real feeling (with one's *heart*) within a person's reach? Because we can use our brain to think about whatever we want, and when we will think about Hashem properly, we will create (or reveal) deep feelings within ourselves that result from a deep



A *pnimi*, on the other hand, wants the truth, no matter how hard he will have to work for it. He doesn't fool himself, because he isn't afraid of the truth, what that will demand of him to do, and how much work it will take.

intellectual appreciation of Hashem (Tanya, Chapter 17).

[Even if we think Chassidus and don't have an exciting emotional experience, it is still considered as if we served Hashem with our heart, because Hashem connects the "positive thought"—the deep contemplation of Chassidus—with the resulting actions, and the appreciation that is felt from that contemplation is also a type of feeling (Tanya, Chapter 16).]

Thus, thinking Chassidus is part of your lifelong journey to serve Hashem with real feeling, and this is something we should realize before we begin (סוף מעשה במחשבה תחלה).

CONCLUSION

There is an essential difference between the first idea of "searching for Elokus" and the second idea about "pnimiyus":

The first idea is that we have to be receptive to Chassidus for it to affect us. For example, if we indulge in eating or other material pleasures, we won't be sensitive to Chassidus and it won't affect us properly.

Yet, while even if we are still incomplete we can overcome that barrier with hard work (see Tanya Chapter 42), if we never experienced a true yearning for a deeper connection to Hashem (התעוררות תשובה), we haven't opened ourselves up to Chassidus in the first place. Thus, we must work on opening ourselves up so that Chassidus can affect us.

The second idea, however, is that even after we do open ourselves up to Chassidus, we must realize what thinking Chassidus is about: that it is part of our personal journey to serve Hashem with true feeling and become a deeper person. **P**

For more information about the book, email: avraham.t.katz@gmail.com

SOURCES

לשלימות הענין נביא כאן המ"מ שהם היסודות של הביאור בפנים, עם עוד מ"מ:

(א) לקו"ד: ח"א ליקוט ג אותיות ה-ו, ט-י, טז. ח"ב ליקוט טו אותיות ב-ח. ח"ג ליקוט כז אותיות ה-ו.

(ב) ד"ה ושבתי בשלום עת"ר ע' עג-עד (במהדורה הישנה).

(ג) סה"מ תרס"ג ח"ב, בהביאור של אדמו"ר הריי"ץ על המאמר הראשון של ההמשך, ע' ה-ו.



Feature

My Journey to the Yeshiva in Lubavitch

MEMOIRS OF REB SHMARYOHU SASSONKIN PART 1

Reb Shmaryobu Sassonkin, also known as Reb Shmerel Batumer (in reference to the town of Batumi, Georgia where he served as rov), was the Rov of the Chabad community in Yerushalayim from his arrival in Eretz Yisroel in 5710 (1950) until his passing on 19 Menachem Av 5736 (1976).

In his memoirs titled "Zichornosai", he records in descriptive style his youth, the Tomchei Temimim yeshivah in Lubavitch, his rabbonus in Batumi and the state of Georgian Jewry, and his challenges of living Jewishly in communist Russia.

The following chapter includes his travels and travails, the various yeshivos he attended (including that of Reb Elchonon Vasserman hy"d), and his decision to study in Lubavitch.

MY HOMETOWN

I was born to my parents, Avrohom and Rivkah Sassonkin of blessed memory, in the small town of Prepoisk, in Mohilev, White Russia. The town stood at a junction, from one direction the road led to Tzerkov and from there to Krimchev and Amchislav. (The latter is mentioned in the Responsa of the Alter Rebbe, and I too feel a personal attachment to that town, for I studied there for two years.) In the other direction the road led directly to the city of Homel. This city is famous amongst Chabad Chasidim, for the great scholar and Chossid, Rabbi Yitzchok Aizik Epstein, known amongst Chabad Chassidim as Reb Aizil Homiler, served as the rov and headed the Beis Din there.

To the east of the town flows the River Sohz, which continues on to Homel and

runs into the great river, "the Dnieper". In those days, communication with the outside world and especially with a city so far away as Homel was conducted by way of steam-boats. In this district they had not yet developed buses or locomotive-trains, and the primitive forms of ground transportation were only used if there was some pressing need.

My father was a student of the Babroisk yeshiva which was headed by the Rebbe of Babroisk, R. Shmaryahu Noach Shneersohn [a descendent of the Tzemach Tzedek]. My mother was the daughter of R. Chaim Sheinin, known as R. Chaim Rabinoker.



R. Shmaryahu Noach Shneersohn of Babroisk.



Boats on the Dnieper River

I was born on Erev Sukkos 5650 [Autumn 1889], although my passport records that I was born in 1888 according to the secular calendar.

THE SHULS AND THE LEADING FIGURES

In Prepoisk there were three *shuls*: two in the town center – that of the Chabad chassidim on the right and that of the *misnagdim* on the left – and another small *shul* stood alongside the road that led to Homel.

In the large chassidic *shul*, my uncle by the name of R. Yisroel Yamnitzki served as *shamash*. He was also the *rov*'s assistant, the *shamash* of the *chevra kadisha* and a *melamed*. The *rov* himself was a *misnaged*, a student of the Volozhin *yeshiva*, and so he *davened* in the *misnagdic shul*.

A prominent member of the *misnagdic shul* was R. Yaakov, the town's "*gevir*" (influential man of means). He was a Torah scholar with an impressive appearance. His son Nachman, conversely, went off to pursue secular studies in the government school in Mohilev, and only due to his financial standing did they allow him not to write on Shabbos.

However, an unfortunate tragedy befell him when he returned. He was sleeping alone in a room which had a window into a beautiful garden. One night, a horse grazed there, and by the way, stretched its head into the open window and brayed loudly. The poor fellow woke up with a jolt, and went out of his mind from fear. He ran about all night in madness, and none of the medicines they gave him had any effect. In the morning they had to tie him up and take to the asylum in Mohilev.

One night, a horse grazed there, and by the way, stretched its head into the open window and brayed loudly. The poor fellow woke up with a jolt, and went out of his mind from fear.

A TOMIM VISITS PREPOISK

In 5655 (1894) when I turned five, I was enrolled in my uncle's Cheder, which was housed in one of the rooms in the *shul*. I learnt under the tutelage of my uncle for three semesters (a semester being half a year, either a winter or a summer).

Once, while in Cheder, my uncle stepped out for a short while. The young students went into the main *shul*, which was still open, and found a *yeshiva* student was *davening* alone. He was a guest who had come by steam-boat from the town Vietka, and was a "Tomim," a pupil of the Yeshiva in Lubavitch – "Tomchei Temimim". In the manner of the Temimim, he wore a long coat and his face was crowned with *paiyes*. The people of Prepoisk were not used to such dress, for they all had short *paiyes* and short coats. Consequently, this *yeshiva* student looked to them like some strange creature, and when he walked in the street youngsters gathered around him, running after him and laughing at him.

In the *shul* he *davened* with devotion, with song and melody, in the manner of the prize students of Chabad. The Cheder children imitated him with their voices

and disturbed him from his *davening*. When his patience was spent, he chased after them in an attempt to dispel them from the *shul*. They all ran away and he couldn't catch them. However, I was a quiet boy who did not imitate him, so I was not afraid to remain in the *shul* and he poured out all his wrath on me...

Years later, when I was myself a student in Lubavitch, this young man, Shmuel Vietker as he was known,¹ came to visit the Rebbe as is customary. I reminded him of his visit to my town, Prepoisk, and what had occurred then. He told me, that when he returned on the steamboat an entire party of Prepoisk youths gathered about him to mock him. They would not let him be and demanded that he sell them his *paiyes*. When he saw that it would be difficult to rid himself of them, he answered them that he would agree to their demand, without accepting any payment, so long as they would in turn

1. Born 5638 (1878), he learned in Lubavitch and was considered a serious "*tomim*" and advanced in Nigleh. He served as *rov* in Plisso near Vilna, and was in close contact with R. Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky, who organized support for R. Shmuel's widow after his untimely passing. (Sources: *Oholei Sheim* (Gottlieb) p. 369, *Nitzutzei Ohr* by R. Avrohom Weingarten quoting R. Shmuel Levitin).

fulfill a specified condition [which he did not disclose]. When they heard his demand they backed down and he was left in peace.



REB BERE VOLF KAZOVNIKOV

Chassidim tell a similar story about the great scholar and chossid, R. Dov Zev Kazovnikov, who was the *rov* of the Chabad Chassidim in the great city of Yakatrenislav, Ukraine. (Later, this position was occupied by the scholarly genius and chossid, R. Levi Yitzchok Shneerson, the father of the present Rebbe.) He was referred to as Reb Bere Volf Yakatrenislaver, for amongst Chassidim it is not customary to crown people with titles. He had a very sharp personality and his mouth dripped with pearls of Chassidic wisdom. When I was in Chernigov by the great *rov* and chossid Reb Dovid Hirsh Chein (“Radatz”), he told me, “Since Reb Bere Volf has passed on I have no one with whom to discuss a word of Chassidus,” since Reb Bere Volf had a vast knowledge of Chassidus.



Reb Bere Volf
Yakatrenislaver

In those days, when observant Jews traveled on the steamboats together with the non-Jews and Jews who mocked observance, they would not wrap themselves in a *tallis* for Shachris. Rather, they would only wear their *tefillin*, so as not to be overly conspicuous. They would also *daven* quickly, so that their fellow travelers would not have too much opportunity to ridicule them.

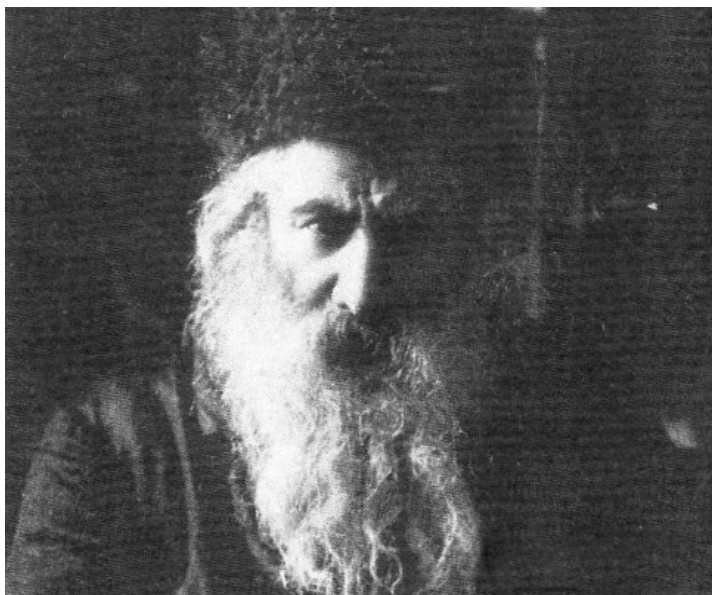
Not so Reb Bere Volf! To him there was no difference whether he was traveling or at home. He upheld the words of the Rama at the beginning of Shulchan Aruch, “One should not be ashamed of those who mock him”, to the fullest degree. His custom was as follows: First He would study Chassidus, afterward he would wrap himself in *tallis* and *tefillin*, and *daven* at great length with extreme devotion.

On one of his journeys, it occurred that a group of scoffers were seated at the far end of the steamboat. All of them sat with uncovered heads and none of them had ever seen, nor heard, a form of prayer like that of this Rabbi. All they knew of prayer was that in prayer you say words; there are those who do so quickly and there are those who do so slowly, reading aloud and with more patience. However, prayer out of song and melody, at times bitter and at times joyous – of such prayer their ears had never heard!

This was the first time in their lives that they ever saw such a prayer and they imagined that this individual must be some provincial Rebbe, an unsophisticated leader of Chassidim more primitive than himself. They were certain that they would now have an opportunity to have a good laugh at his expense and without him even realizing that they were making fun of him. They prepared themselves for the tremendous outbreak of glee that would follow their mockery and with greedy eyes anticipated the completion of his prayers.

Once he had finished, they approached him, and extending their hands to him in greeting they requested the privilege of hearing a few words of Torah from as holy a personage as he. Reb Bere Volf listened to them with an assumed air of tremendous naivety and agreed to their request on two conditions: Firstly they must cover their heads; secondly they must agree to listen carefully to his sacred words.

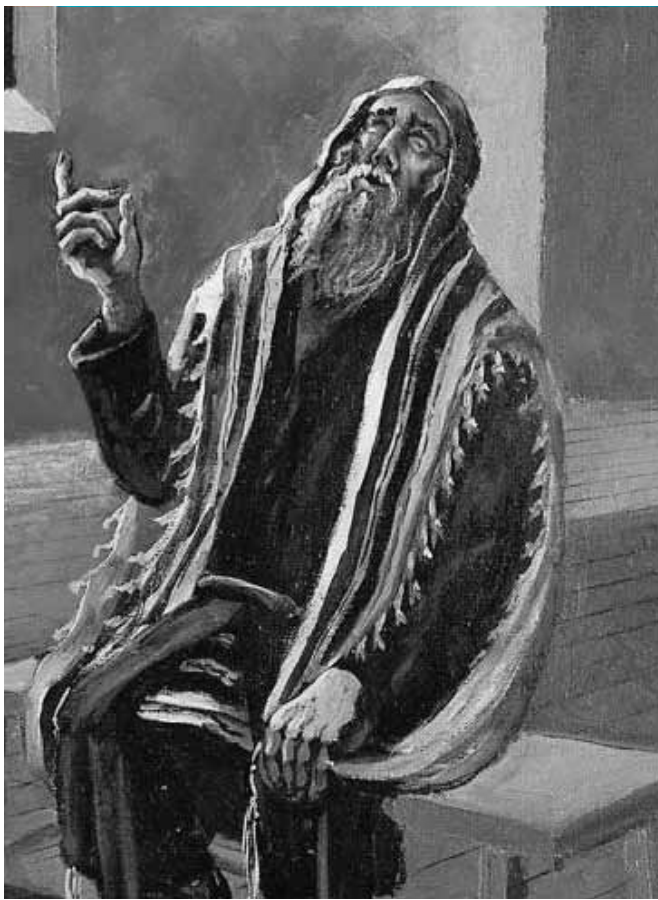
The crowd of scoffers gleefully hastened to put on their hats, imagining that "the



The Radatz told me, "Since Reb Bere Volf has passed on I have no one with whom to discuss a word of Chassidus,"

Rebbe" had fallen into their trap – now they would surely have what to laugh about! Once they had returned, with covered heads and earnest expressions of dutiful attention on their faces, Reb Bere Volf began to tell them about a small book called "Tanya", authored by a great and holy man. He told them that a holy man had once said of this book, "though it is a small book, its wise author managed to place inside it the Infinite Creator!"

Hearing this, they already wanted to burst out laughing, thinking that this "Rebbe" had no idea whatsoever that a band of irreligious and unconcerned scoffers were sitting before him. However, they did not



“In conclusion”, said Reb Bere Volf, “if I was *darening* in your corner, you would have had a right to claim that it disturbs you. But when I *daren* at one end of the steamboat and you are seated at the other end, why can you not hold yourselves back? Why act like that wicked animal, entering my vicinity in order to debase me?!”

wish to spoil the opportunity to hear his Torah teachings and so have occasion to mock him all the more, and with great effort they managed to quell their mirth.

“In this small book”, Reb Bere Volf continued, “Three types of people are described: A Tzaddik, a Beinoni and a Rasha. A Tzaddik is someone who has entirely removed his evil inclination from within him. He is disgusted by the pleasures and interests that preoccupy the rest of the world, and his only pleasure is in the study of Torah and the fulfillment of *mitzvos*, to which end he devotes his entire life. The opposite of a Tzaddik is a Rasha, whose entire world centers only on physical gain and pleasure, such a person has managed to remove from within him any good inclination. Once he has driven the good from within him, it is difficult for him to understand those who shun worldly pleasure. The Rasha imagines that such people are lacking in intelligence, for they simply do not know how to take advantage of the joys of life.

"A Beinoni is one whose evil inclination remains complete, and in this sense he is comparable to a Rasha, for the Beinoni does not have the ability to banish it entirely, like the Tzaddik. However, unlike the Rasha, the Beinoni does no evil. The Beinoni desires all the pleasures of this earth, however, knowing that the Torah forbids those pleasures, he uses his mind to rule over the desires of his heart. Therefore he is called a Beinoni – intermediate type, for he is neither a Tzaddik, nor a Rasha ..."

His words penetrated them deeply, and they were prepared to leave without implementing their derisive designs. But Reb Bere Volf requested that they remain to hear him out to the end, then he continued:

"These three levels are said with regard to humankind, however, they exist by animals too. For instance, by dogs: A 'righteous' dog constantly crouches on the porch steps, ensuring that no one shall enter his masters house without permission. If the master gives permission, the dog allows one to enter. However, one who comes without permission, the dog barks and doesn't allow him to enter.

"Not so a 'wicked' dog, he constantly roams to and fro throughout the entire courtyard, and if he sees anyone walking in the area of his courtyard – even on the other side of the street – the 'wicked' dog

already begins to bark. If the 'intruder' doesn't pass by quickly enough the 'wicked' dog will jump on him from behind and is even prepared to bite.

"However, the 'intermediate' dog doesn't care who is walking in the street – even on the side of his courtyard – so long as one doesn't actually enter the courtyard!

"In conclusion", said Reb Bere Volf, "if I was *davening* in your corner, you would have had a right to claim that it disturbs you. But when I *daven* at one end of the steamboat and you are seated at the other end, why can you not hold yourselves back? Why act like that wicked animal, entering my vicinity in order to debase me?!"



THE YESHIVAH IN AMCHISLAV

On the day before Sukkos 5662 (1901) I reached the age of Bar Mitzvah. In those days they did not make a celebration on the day of the Bar Mitzvah, they simply called me to the Torah, my father recited the *bracha*, "*Boruch Sheptarani*", and said the *possuk*, "behold I have given before you the life and the good... and you shall choose life." I promised him that I would study in a *yeshivah*, for I choose life and good, and there is no good aside from Torah.

Immediately after the festival I traveled to *yeshivah* together with a few other youngsters who had already learnt in the *yeshivah* in Amchislav, during the previous semester. When I arrived in Amchislav I discovered that the founder of the *yeshivah* was the scholarly genius Reb Elchonon Vasserman. He was the examiner and decision maker as to whether or not to accept students.

He opened up a *Mesechta Kesubos* before me, pointed to a particular *Tosfos* and instructed me to study it and uncover a difficulty with the explanation provided therein. I easily found the difficulty. He then pointed to another *Tosfos* and said, “study it and find an answer to the question.” I easily worked out how the second *Tosfos* resolves the first and with that the test was completed.

REB ELCHONON'S METHODS

Reb Elchonon was a distinguished personality and his face seemed to shine with wisdom. Apart from being a genius in learning, his wonderful genius and expertise was also reflected in the way he taught, such that I have never seen his like. He was also a very practical person. It was enough to hear his *shiur* for the duration of one semester, in that short time he already enlightened your eyes and gave you a solid foundation in the study of the Talmud.

In general, Harav Vasserman ran the *yeshivah* firmly. While delivering his *shiur* he knew how to cast fear upon the students, ensuring that they would pay attention and listen well. It was his custom to expound the Gemara before the students with excellent explanation. He addressed only the unadorned rationalization of the Gemara, together with the commentary of Rashi, explaining with good reasoning the connotation of the cryptic text, with such lucidity that even a child could understand. So excellent and pleasant was his initial elaboration that *Tosfos'* questions on Rashi's explanation were automatically resolved.

It was his custom to pay close attention to how well the students listened to the *shiur*; who listened intently, who without much intent and who didn't listen at all. On concluding, he would turn to a student and require him to repeat the entire *shiur* by heart, directing him to close the Gemara. Being that the chosen student had not been listening, he by default would not be able to go over what had been said. Reb Elchonon would let the first student be, directing another, who had been listening without concentration, to repeat the *shiur*. Since the second student had been listening somewhat, he would be able to go over some of the *shiur*, but would become confused and stammer as he repeated it. Reb Elchonon would help him out, clarifying his confusions until he had repeated the entire *shiur*. Then he would

again turn to the first, who had earlier been unable to go over the *shiur*. If on this occasion he had listened and knew it well, all would be well; if not Reb Elchonon would rebuke him, saying that he is a student who does not want to listen, who turns his ears away from words of Torah. If on a third occasion that student did not know the *shiur* well enough to repeat it by heart, Reb Elchonon would expel him from the Yeshivah. In this way he entirely uprooted the problem of students not paying proper attention to the *shiur*, although it began through fear, subsequently all the students would become accustomed to concentrating well as he delivered his *shiur*.

His method of teaching *Tosfos* was as follows: a student would read and explain the *Tosfos*, and when he arrived at a passage that required elucidation or clarification, Reb Elchonon would interrupt the student, and proceed to elucidate and clarify the concepts until they were illuminated and exceptionally lucid. He was keen to only address the unembellished explanation of the Gemara and the *Tosfos*, and he did not at all like the method of *pilpul*.

Once we had finished learning a particular subject, sometimes covering seven *dapim* of Gemara or more, Reb Elchonon would announce that during the next two days there would not be a *shiur* and that the students should spend the time reviewing the Gemara



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At that time the most famous yeshivos for older students in the world were Telz, Volozhin, Slobodka, Mir, Radin and Lubavitch. I stood at a cross roads and did not know where to turn.

thoroughly. By the time the review was complete, on the third day, he would have a list of the all the students divided into small groups, classified according to their levels of ability and knowledge. Sometimes there were three students in a group, sometimes five or more. Each group would enter separately and ask them different questions, if they were fluent in the Gemara and the *Tosfos* that they had learnt they would be able to answer his questions with ease. Since the students realized that everything was dependent on fluency, they would compete to review what they learnt very well. Although with this method of study we were only able to learn a smaller amount relative to other *yeshivos*, nevertheless, we knew the Gemara that

we learnt well and and it was fluent in our mouths.

I had such an incredible appetite for studying, and I would rise each morning when I heard the shepherd blowing his horn to gather the sheep – about two hours after midnight during the summer – and I would hurry to the *yeshivah* and review my studies. When Reb Elchonon found out that I woke up so early he advised me not to do so, since it could affect my ability to concentrate.

THE YESHIVAH'S DEMISE

For a full year I learnt in the Yeshivah with diligence. Reb Elchonon would guard the student like the apple of his eye - if a

student G-d forbid became ill, he himself would take care of him, take him to the hospital and arrange devoted care. Once he traveled to one of the big cities and brought cloth for winter clothing for all the students of the *yeshivah*.

During the third semester, the final summer during which Reb Elchonon remained in the *yeshivah*, an unpleasant event occurred. During that period there where already a number of trouble-makers who attempted to convinced the *yeshivah* students to learn secular studies. Unfortunately, they managed to draw some ten students after them who agreed to learn secular subjects; nevertheless, they also wanted to continue to hear Reb Elchonon's *shiur*. As soon as they arrived, however, Reb Elchonon sent them outside. In order to prevent an outrage from arising, the *shiur* was said behind closed doors throughout the next two weeks, until they gave up hope of being allowed to attend. Reb Elchonon announced that the *yeshivah* would not tolerate secular studies and anyone who wishes to study secular subjects should leave the *yeshivah*!

Indeed, all the students agreed with Reb Elchonon's statements. However the devil's work succeeded, for the trouble-makers found support among the laymen of the town who put pressure on the Rabbi of the City to take the students of the *yeshivah* under his control and supervision. Then they telegrammed Reb

Elchonon – who had traveled away to spend the *yomim tovim* with his family – that he should remain at home and that hereafter the Rabbi would fill his old position. The *yeshivah* continued to exist for only one more semester, after which it was closed down. When Reb Elchonon's students heard that their teacher would not be returning, there was no reason for them to remain in the *yeshivah* and they departed some to Telz, some to Slutzk, some to Volozhin and some to Radin. I went to Kremenchug.



AT A CROSSROADS

I finished learning in the *yeshivos* for younger students at the end of the winter of 5665 (1905). At that time the most famous *yeshivos* for older students in the world were Telz, Volozhin, Slobodka, Mir, Radin and Lubavitch. I stood at a cross roads and did not know where to turn. Though I had studied in Krementchug, a city of Chassidim, I had not had much contact with them and knew nothing of Chassidus, especially not Chabad Chassidus. I had met with students who had come from Telz, Volozhin etc. and many of them had shorn *peiynos*, long bangs, and would bemoan their status as *yeshivah* students saying "What will be of us?" They chose to study secular subjects hoping to become doctors and lawyers. Though I knew that not all the students in

those *yeshivos* were like them, I decided not to attend those *yeshivos* for I knew that the spirit of the secular enlightenment had permeated their study halls and was afraid for my soul lest I too be smitten.

First I thought that I would go to Radin to the *yeshivah* of the "Chofetz Chaim", from which the students returned complete in their *yiras Samayim*, or to Lubavitch. But I quickly made up my mind not to go to either. I did not want to go to a *yeshivah* where they studied Mussar [ethical works] due to the air of melancholy that hovered over the students of those *yeshivos*, and regarding Lubavitch I heard that the study of Gemara was neglected there and that they spent most of the day studying Kabbalah, going to *mikveh* and other such mystical activities, and I had no interest in becoming a "*mekubal*."

While deliberating this matter, word reached me that in the city of Kishinev one wealthy man by the name of Perlmutter established an impressive *yeshivah* with his own funds. I rejoiced at this news, since this *yeshivah* didn't focus on *mussar* or *kabbalah*, yet it was made up of chassidim, and had the conditions for a G-d fearing education.

When I arrived in Kishinev I encountered the impressive three-story *yeshivah* building: the first floor was a large cafeteria made up of long tables and benches, the second floor was divided into large classrooms for the *shiurim*,

and the third floor housed the dormitory rooms with a few beds per room. The place was incredibly clean and in the courtyard there was a laundromat and a bakery. The exterior magnificence captured your heart.

When I entered the study halls I saw young *bochurim*, all with long *peiys* and wearing long chassidic garb. I told them that I am a *yeshivah* student and that I am looking for a *yeshivah gedola* in which to study. They stared at me with wonderment: a *yeshivah* student with short garb?! The advanced students approached me to determine my abilities. They were studying *Mesechta Pesachim* and asked me several questions which their *rosh yeshivah* had asked them. To my good luck I was fluent in that *mesechta* and I could answer all of their questions immediately. They were very surprised by my answers and announced that this "Litvak" had no need for their *yeshivah*.

I asked them if there was a *yeshivah* for older students in the vicinity, and they told me that in a small *shul* belonging to the patron Mr. Perlmutter there is a *yeshivah* where the graduates of their *yeshivah* continue on. There they study *Gemara* and *poskim* in preparation for answering *halachic* queries; it was basically a *beis medrash* for rabbinics. It was very small, with only about ten students, and they were doubtful whether I could succeed in being accepted there, since it was intended for the graduates



of their *yeshivah*. They advised me to go speak to Mr. Perlmutter himself.

I came to the majestic mansion of the patron and asked to speak to him. He welcomed me warmly but was adamant about not accepting me into his *yeshivah*. He told me openly that he could unfortunately not accept a “Litvak” into the *yeshivah* out of fear that I, including my short garb, may negatively influence the other students. I didn’t try to plead with him since I knew that his arguments were fair. As I sat in his office I began thinking that I should probably travel to Lubavitch, and the rumors I had heard about it were probably false.

When I arrived in Kishinev I encountered the impressive three-story yeshivah building: the first floor was a large cafeteria made up of long tables and benches, the second floor was divided into large classrooms for the shiurim, and the third floor housed the dormitory rooms with a few beds per room.

My father had asked me that when I settle down in Kishinev I should inform him, so that he would also come to Kishinev and try his luck there. I wrote to him that I have not settled, but if he wishes he can come to Kishinev anyways since it is a big city and it is easy to establish



When he came there with his long garb and chassidic hat, some of the merchants laughed at him and ridiculed his strange dress.

oneself. I added in my letter that I am waiting for his response before I plan my trip to Lubavitch.

While I searched for a place to study, I encountered an eighteen-year-old boy whose parents were completely non-observant and did not know anything about *Yiddishkeit*. He had worked in a factory until a tragedy occurred and he lost his hand R"L. As a result he became a *baal teshuva*. He promised to support me as long as I would study with him several

hours each day. I thought about it and agreed to his proposition.

One Shabbos, I entered *shul* before davening, and was surprised to find a loud squabble. People screamed loudly and their faces were red, and the uproar seemed to intensify from moment to moment. I stood in shock wondering what was happening. Everyone was so preoccupied with screaming that they did not bother explaining to those at the sidelines what the issue was about. When the argument

reached its peak, they grabbed one of the respected *baalei batim* who stood at the *Mizrach*, led him to the door and took him outside. The room fell silent.

When matters calmed down someone explained to me what had happened: That man was a respected member of the community who followed the ways of Chassidus. He worked as a traveling salesman of a factory which sold its products in Lithuania. In those regions, the Jews shaved their beards, wore short garments and hid their *tzitzis*. When he came there with his long garb and chassidic hat, some of the merchants laughed at him and ridiculed his strange dress. The man, who was naturally shy and was afraid that his mode of dress would impact the success of his dealings, bought himself a modern set of clothes – jacket, hat and tie – like all the other businessmen. From then on, whenever he left Kishinev he would change into his modern clothes, and when he returned he changed back and acted exactly as he had all along. This continued for quite a while.

The truth was that his change of clothing was not simply external. For the *misnagdim* of Lithuania, who were raised with such dress, it did not affect their spiritual state, and one could be a *yerei shamayim* and upstanding Jew with the modern dress. But for a chossid who was used to wearing different clothes, when he exchanged his clothes for non-Jewish garb, and followed the ways of the

gentiles, it was not for naught that they would label him with derogatory titles such as “*tzilem-kup*” (due to the image created by a hat with a brim) or “*deitchel*” (meaning an assimilated German Jew) since his *chitzoniyus* had indicated that his *pnimiyus* had been impacted, and the spirit of Chassidus no longer rested within him.

Regarding this man as well, though at the onset he was a “chossid with modern clothes,” he slowly became “modern with chassidic clothes.” As his chassidic spirit waned and his passion for *Yiddishkeit* cooled, he thought, “Why should I constantly change my look and disguise myself? After all, what is wrong with a good-looking modern suit?” And from thought to action he came home one day in his modern garb, and that’s how he appeared in *shul*. That’s what caused the ruckus. People began to scream that this man was creating a breach in the accepted practice, and if let to be it will cause a greater breach in the fence of *Yiddishkeit*. Others argued that they should leave him, since by chasing him away they may cause him to leave *Yiddishkeit* completely. Everyone agreed that it was a breach and brazenness on that man’s part, and it was an indication that he had gone sour. In the end, the prosecuting side had the upper hand and they removed him from the *shul*. This episode further justified the *yeshivah*’s patron not wanting to accept me, a Lithuanian, in his *yeshivah*.



I remained in Kishnev till after the *yomim torim*. In the small *shul* where I studied, one of the *rabbonim* of the city *darened*. He was very gracious to me and throughout the *yomim torim* I ate at his table.

Since I had my needs provided by that young *baal teshuva*, I was happy and he was too. He was happy to have found a teacher, and I was happy to have my needs cared for and I could sit and study Torah in peace. I spent that entire summer in Kishinev.

With the passing of time I learned that in this city dwelt the in-law of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, R. Avrohom Shneersohn, [his daughter was married to the Friediker Rebbe and he himself was] descended from the Rebbes of Chabad, and that from him I would be

able to find out about Lubavitch and about Chassidus. I visited him and he was very gracious to me, assuring me that there was no better place for me than the Yeshiva in Lubavitch. He explained that all the rumors about Lubavitch were fabrications, that Chassidus is not Kabbalah but an intellectual discipline of phenomenal lucidity. I told him that I had already made up my mind to travel to Lubavitch, and thereby fulfill the instruction to “go into exile to study Torah.”



I remained in Kishnev until after the *yomim tovim*. In the small *shul* where I studied, one of the *rabbonim* of the city *davened*. He was very gracious to me and throughout the *yomim tovim* I ate at his table.

Once he told with great excitement that he saw in a small book called "Tanya", written by "the Rav" – as the Alter Rebbe was known in those regions – a wonderful explanation on a matter that bothered him his entire life, the matter of Divine manifestation: Why is there a need for a specific house such as the *Beis HaMikdash* of old, or a *shul* nowadays, for is it not true that "the entire world is filled with his glory"?!

However there it is explained at length, by way of a parable, that while the soul does indeed fill the entire body, it is manifest and revealed mainly in one specific place, namely with the consciousness that resides in the head. Similarly regarding Hashem as well, though the entire world is indeed filled with his glory, He is nevertheless more revealed in the *Beis HaMikdash*, and today, in the *shul* – a "*mikdash me'at*" (see Tanya chapters 51-53).



R. Avrohom Shneersohn's Kever in Kishnev

The Rabbi explained the concept at length and from his words I learned that the discipline of Chassidus that they learn in Lubavitch – whose source is the scholarly genius, the author of the Tanya – is not incomprehensible matters of Kabbalah, but rather concepts filled with logic and complete lucidity. This episode strengthened and inflamed within me the desire to travel to Lubavitch. **P**

*Thanks to ChabadRevisited.blogspot.com
and Rabbi Eli Rubin for providing the
basis for this translation.*

BEHIND THE PICTURE

BATSHEVA GORDON

AT HOME:

I am sitting on my couch and relaxing when I hear a beep from my phone – another WhatsApp message. But wait, this is no regular message. It is not a question from a friend or a viral (Chassidishe) video. It's a precious beautiful picture of my son in *cheder*, singing in his sweet voice as the *rebbe* teaches them a new song. Wow! Just look how my son is all into it. Such *nachas*!

I'll tell you the truth, ever since I sent my first child to school I've wondered what really goes on there. Now with the help of technology, my son's *rebbe* shares with me pictures regularly so that I can see how he's enjoying school.



IN SCHOOL:

All the teachers in the teacher's room are raving about this new parent-pleasing tool. Sounds like a fast and easy way to gain points with my students' parents.

We're in the class room practicing *kriah* – now that is something worth sharing with the parents. I take out my phone to snap a video of how he



**We just learned a new niggun and
the boys are singing so nicely.
I take out my phone quickly to
catch the perfect video.**

reads so nicely, but as soon as he sees the camera he becomes shy and turns around. OK, I'll try my luck with the next reader. Wow, all eyes are on me to see when the camera will come to them.

Time for lunch. We just learned a new niggun and the boys are singing so nicely. I take out my phone quickly to catch the perfect video. One boy stops eating and starts singing for the camera. Another boy who was dancing so nicely, stopped as soon as he noticed the camera. I hope he won't become so self-conscious not to dance next time (true story).



Maybe our kids deserve some space to grow and express themselves without making a show for a camera. **P**

My Perspective

READERS WRITE

Never Too Late, Never Too Early

Devoiry L.

I hear many people complaining about the extravagant simchos and the exorbitant funds spent on weddings by average families who struggle to cover tuition costs. Indeed, there is no justification in spending money one doesn't have on things that are totally unnecessary. A nicer wedding does not a nicer life make. However, this problem does not begin when our children get engaged. It starts when they are born.

We, the parents, buy strollers that cost the better part of a month's rent, and dress our children in the value of a week's salary (including accessories that cost as much as a top lawyer's hourly fee). This is for babies. As our children grow older, we get them the latest toys, whether or not they need/want them. Every child in the class gets to participate in every fad, and we feel that our children cannot be the only ones

left out; it might hurt their self-esteem and social standing. Students come to school wearing hair accessories that cost between \$8 and \$20 a piece (as opposed to \$2 ones). Many students have different hairbands for every day of the week. Multiply that by five sisters.

Our kids have Shabbos coats and Shabbos shoes and Shabbos jewelry. They have the best nosh, the best games, the best linen. They have the nicest clothing, the prettiest knapsacks, the most beautiful ... fill in the blanks.

What about us, the parents? Sheitlach, suits, cell- phones, purses ... need I continue?

Some of us don't give our children the best of everything. We simply cannot. But we still want to, and when we communicate

that feeling of lacking, it has almost the same effect as actually giving it. "I'm sorry, my dear, I wish you could have the nicest jacket of all your friends, but I cannot afford it." As opposed to, "Yes, dear, some girls have things nicer than ours. We don't always have to have the best." (The only way we can actually say that is if we ourselves don't always have the best.)

One group of parents is at an unfair disadvantage: those who are truly satisfied with basics but their children place unreasonable demands on them due to the pressures of society. I can only wish these parents the best of luck in inculcating their

children with proper values. Ultimately, their good chinuch will most likely bear fruit.

Why do we expect our children, or nieces, to not need and want and expect to receive the best, if this is what we have been feeding them all their lives? We never equipped them with the tools to be satisfied with what they have. It's never too late to begin the training, but it's never too early, either. Perhaps for us young mothers, we can begin lowering the wedding standards by lowering the kindergarten standards.

Oif Simchos!



Disposable Prizes

Shifra N.

I'd like to share my frustrations on a chinuch issue that's been bothering me.

Every so often, my five-year-old child excitedly comes home with a prize she received from her teacher. She is proud to explain to me why she received it, the reason for her choice, and what she will do with it. Then she gets to enjoy it – for a day or two at best, and often not longer than

a couple of minutes. She then comes to me and tells me sadly, "I should've picked something else; this wasn't a good toy."

Children live in the moment and have difficulty accepting objects as fleeting and temporary. They take their prizes seriously and look forward to using them, and instead they end up with heartbreak. It isn't fair to give a child a cheap 'chachke'

which can be enjoyed for no longer than a few minutes. It also teaches children to treat their possessions as disposable and not treasure their belongings.

Since it isn't always possible to buy more substantial prizes, perhaps I can suggest another approach. Instead of using objects, use experiences. This can be a class activity such as baking or a craft, in which the deserving students can do

something extra (decorate two cookies, or receive a special craft item – such as pom-poms, beads, wood chips, or make a frame, keychain etc.). Alternatively, they can get to go somewhere special or receive special privileges with their Morah.

Besides avoiding heartbreak, it can teach a child to appreciate more than transient material stuff.



—“All the News That’s Fit to Print” (12) –

Chaya S.

I really appreciated the excellent article by Mrs. Molly Resnick on refined speech. It was about time that someone spoke up.

Those of us who are in contact with the secular world are constantly being exposed to loose language, and only with a conscious effort can we retain our sensitivity. It is so much easier to lose sensitivity, than it is to gain it back.

Today, this problem exists even by those who aren't on shlichus and live in Chassidishe communities. There are various media outlets and publications which call themselves "Chabad" which

defy even the most basic moral standards, by posting content and pictures which were considered loathsome just ten years ago! Unfortunately, many fine adults and children read these sources undiscerningly, and are subconsciously readjusted to view such language and imagery as acceptable.

We must be very discerning about what comes our way, even if it says "Chabad" and boasts pictures of the Rebbe and Chassidishe messages. The damage and confusion this exposure causes to our

children and ourselves, far outweighs whatever *toichen* they include.

At the very least, we must give our children direction and guidance. When our children ask us, "Why don't we do XYZ when so-and-so does?" we must explain to them that we are Lubavitcher chassidim and have a higher standard. And when they pry further, "But they are also Lubavitch?" it is OK to say, "Lubavitch

is a way of life set out by our holy Rebbeim. These people have chosen not to be Lubavitcher chassidim in all areas of their life."

Better yet, an unambiguous Chassidishe education spelling out exactly what a Chabad-Lubavitch lifestyle is, will avoid such questions from the very beginning. It is the only way we will survive in this confusing time before Moshiach comes.



A Unique Approach to Education (12)

Chaim Rubinson

Dear editors,

Thank you very much for your quality publication.

I thoroughly enjoyed the article by Rabbi Aharon Dovid Gancz on what is Jewish living. I feel that presenting it as being about education did a disfavor to the article which contained so much more

than education. It contained crucial guidance on self-esteem, overcoming obstacles, dealing with sadness and depression, and living an inspired life. It is a fundamental article that I think every person should read.

Yasher koach! **P**

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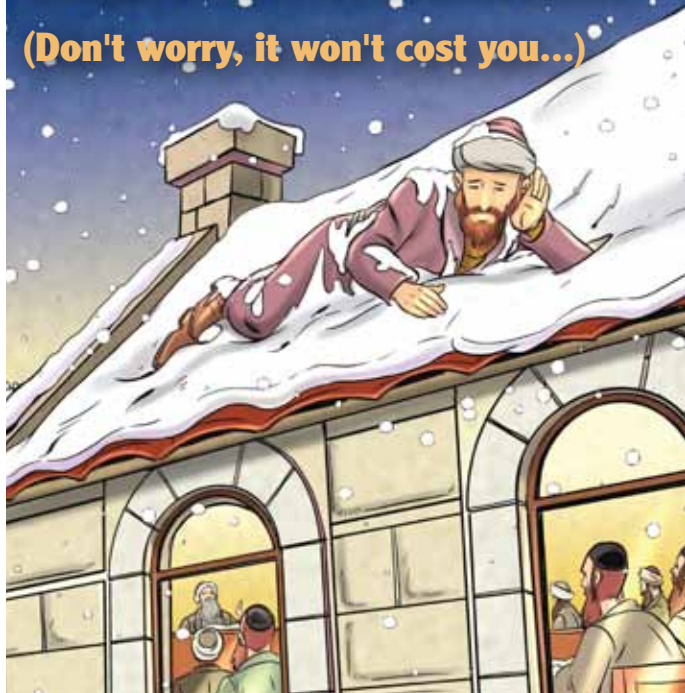
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