

THE MYSTICAL POWERS OF TZADDIKIM

R. Yankel Kaidaner

THE REBBE AND THE CHILDREN

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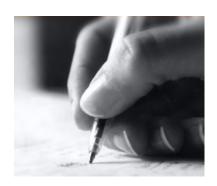
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FOREWORD

An Entirely Different Animal



R. Yoel Kahn shared a mashal with me that he heard from his father R. Foleh:

One poritz learned of the Jewish practice to slaughter their animals in a kosher manner, and decided to adopt the practice, instructing his servant to bring a hog to the local shochet.

When the servant arrived at the *shochet's* door, the *shochet* took one look at the animal and declared it "treif." Hearing that the animal was invalid for slaughter, the poritz sent his servant with a different hog. The servant showed that animal to the shochet, only to be told again that the animal was "treif."

This time the poritz sent his choicest hog to the shochet, who frustratingly told the servant:

"Tell your master that the breed is treif!"

If we don't probe deeper to understand the principles that shape the secular society. we are at risk of being indoctrinated without

realizing it.

Human nature is to scrutinize new ideas. We carefully review a suggestion before putting it into practice. Yet, oftentimes the silent premises and attitudes that foster those ideas slip by undetected.

We are fairly conscientious about allowing secular ideas into our lives. We try to moderate new systems that are proposed. Yet, if we don't probe deeper to understand the principles that shape the secular society that creates those systems, we are at risk of being indoctrinated without realizing it.



Take for example science and Torah. In schools, we are ever zealous about removing opinions on the age of the universe that contradicts Torah tradition. However, a far deeper concern, which is largely unchallenged, is the premise of science as a whole - that there is a definite set of rules that predict the success or failure of every endeavor. Science includes a systematic omission of the presence of a Master of the Universe who governs every aspect of our lives.

Likewise, secular media spreads inappropriate news and entertainment, and so instead we are presented with kosher alternatives. But gossip and trivial amusement are never kosher. Besides a waste of time, they promote shallowness and an inability to internalize serious ideas.

The same is also true in the field of education. There are many educational theories that don't comply with Torah's way of education, and when we encounter a recommendation that runs against halacha, we're quick to discount it.

But what about general attitudes such as: What do children need most? What motivates them to preform? How much responsibility should be placed on a child? What is the role of a parent?

These and others fundamental questions we must ask ourselves, and those who educate our children. We must ensure that our children are getting a wholesome Yiddishe chinuch; not a censored secular approach.

Torah life not just a different cut; it's an entirely different animal.

Rabbi Shimon Hellinger

General Editor

We must ensure that our children are getting a wholesome Yiddishe chinuch; not a censored secular approach.

EDUCATION BEYOND REASON

Sicha of Parshas Vaeira 5721 (1961)

Toras Menachem, Vol. 29, p. 310

"Chanoch lana'ar al pi darko," educate a child according to his way, is an often-heard dictum. In order to touch the heart and mind of a child, we must speak on their level and cater to their needs.

But can this instruction really be applied indiscriminately to Torah education? Is there a place for overwhelming a child with holiness which they cannot fully grasp? How do we know when to limit and when to shower?

TEACH THEM THEIR WAY

Mvfather-in-law [Frierdiker] saintly the Rebbe related:

There was a melamed who, in teaching Chumash and Nach to his students, would endeavor to garb the various miraculous stories in somewhat more realistic, rational terms. When he encountered issues that he couldn't rationalize, he would skip them.

The *melamed* argued that education should follow the instruction of "chanoch lana'ar al pi darko" - educating a child according to his way. He reasoned that it is particularly difficult for young children, especially young girls, to grasp wondrous concepts. Therefore, one should impart these gradually: first the concepts existing within the natural order, then the miracles implemented within nature, and finally, the miracles that transcend nature.

When word of this reached the Rebbe Rashab, he rejected this approach completely.

At first glance, one could argue that the melamed actually had a point. The importance of educating a child gradually "according to his way" is pointed out in numerous places, beginning with the Rambam, who maintains that one should teach children by motivating them with various incentives, relative to their age. A younger child is rewarded with sweets. An older child is encouraged with the promise of buying him shoes, awarding him with honors and so on, until ultimately, he is raised up to the level of studying Torah *lishmah*, for the sake of Heaven. The same is also true for the study of Chassidus, as elucidated in the section Chanoch Lana'ar in Tanya. What, then, is the fallacy of the melamed's approach?

FAITH: ALL OR NONE!

The response is as follows:

Only something that it is made up of parts can be conveyed gradually. Logic by nature is made up of basic concepts and deeper ones. Therefore, one can

Logic by nature is made up of basic concepts and deeper ones. Therefore, one can advance gradually, first teaching the child the simpler aspects of Torah and then the deeper concepts.



advance gradually, first teaching the child the simpler aspects of Torah and then the deeper concepts. However, an essential point that is indivisible - such as the essence of life – cannot be conveyed in steps. Either one is fully alive, or one is not alive at all!

The same is true of a Jew's spiritual life - his connection to the Living G-d:

A Jew is connected to and united with Hashem as He is One and entirely above nature (Havayeh) via the Jew's indivisible yechida. A Jew's faith – also limitless and above nature - expresses this connection.

It follows, that faith cannot be conveyed in segments. Either a child is told that Hashem is One and infinite and can bring about the miracles that are above nature, or the child hasn't been taught faith - for partial faith is not faith at all!

Moreover, trying to explain everything logically is the very opposite of faith.

The ultimate goal is to introduce Hashem as He is above the world, into the world. That means, that even while a person is active in the world, he feels how Hashem is completely One.



A LIFETIME GUARANTEE

The ultimate goal is to introduce Hashem as He is above the world, into the world. That means, that even while a person is active in the world, he feels how Hashem is completely One.

The ultimate objective of teaching faith to children is that even once the child grows intellectually, and endeavors to comprehend everything with reason, he should maintain the core, simplistic faith in Hashem that transcends intellect.

This is the true meaning of the possuk, "chanoch lana'ar al pi darko – gam ki yazkin lo yasur mimenah" - educate a child according to his way, so when he grows old he will not deviate from it:

Precisely when a child is young, one must implant within the child an instinctive faith in Hashem as He transcends nature, so that even when he "grows old" and develops intellectually, he will maintain an intrinsic, suprarational faith in Hashem.

IN SUMMARY:

- Gradual education is important for teaching constituent concepts and skills. Torah ideas and behavioral motivators are processes which require step-by-step growth.
- A Jew's faith in Hashem is essential essence and cannot be split into parts. The supernatural existence of Hashem can and should be taught to children from a young age.
- · Trying to get Torah ideas to "make sense" and appeal to human perception obscures the existence of Hashem and is the very opposite of faith.



All Trades

The Life and Worldview of REB MEILECH ZWEIBEL

Maskil in Chassidus, gaon in nigleh, oived
Hashem, mekushar, mashpia, communicator
of chassidic tradition and stories, caring and
understanding, humble and orderly.

THE MASHPIA

conviction and excellence

R MEILECH HAD NO AIRS TO HIM AND WAS APPROACHABLE TO ALL HE COULD PATIENTLY LISTEN TO A YOUNG STUDENT'S ELEMENTARY QUESTION IN A MAAMAR OR TO A RECENT BAAL TESHLIVA'S PERSONAL DILEMMA

Maskil in Chassidus, gaon in nigleh, oived Hashem, mekushar, mashpia, communicator of chassidic tradition and stories, caring and understanding, humble and orderly.

These are some of the portrayals given by students to describe the mashpia R. Meilech Zweibel, who passed away earlier this year, on 19 Cheshvan 5777. Thousands of students looked to him as their role model, and even those who didn't know him were strengthened by the mere knowledge that in a house tucked away in a forest near the yeshiva campus in Morristown, NJ, lives a chossid who upheld the torch of Chassidus Chabad.

Most individuals excel in one area and are deficient in others. R. Meilech's well-roundedness - nigleh and Chassidus, personal avoda and care for others, profound and levelheaded - was truly exceptional. And he didn't just dabble in those fields; he excelled in each area.

R. Meilech was what is known in chassidic terminology as a "pnimi" (lit. an inward person). This refers to a person who is guided by his inner convictions, and not swayed by popular opinion and the latest trends in chassidishkeit.

R. Meilech had no airs to him and was approachable to all. He could patiently listen to a young student's elementary question in a maamar or to a recent baal teshuva's personal dilemma. He didn't try to impress or please his listeners, and he didn't look to make his opinion known - speaking up only when he deemed it necessary.

His style of farbrengens were remarkable. He would expound on the inner themes of Chassidus and skillfully weave them along with stories and chassidishe vertlach to deepen his point and enlighten his listeners.

After a biography, we are pleased to present you with a transcript of one such farbrengen.



R. MEILECH ZWEIBEL

R. Meilech was born on 17 Menachem Av 5701 (1941) in Tel Aviv. His father. R. Tzvi Yaakov. a Tzanz chossid. wanted his son to attend a chassidishe yeshiva, but there were none in his area. A neighbor, Reb Yehuda Shmotkin, a senior Chabad chossid, suggested the Tomchei Temimim yeshiva in Lod which also had younger grades and a dormitory. At eleven years of age, young Meilech joined the yeshiva.

As he grew older, he became a close pupil of the mashpia R. Shlomo Chaim Kesselman. Under the tutelage of R. Shlomo Chaim that he developed an appreciation and dedication to Chassidus, and throughout his lifetime, he would repeat sayings he heard from the *mashpia* of his youth. At the Rebbe's instructions to develop the bochurim's appreciation for the intellectual depth of Chassidus, he went with several other bochurim to hear explanations in Chassidus from the great chassidic intellectuals R. Moshe Gurary and R. Nochum Goldshmit. As a member of Igud Talmidei HaYeshivos in Lod, he would travel from time to time to deliver *shiurim* in Chassidus in other Yeshivos.

In Tishrei 5722 (1961), a group of bochurim from Eretz Yisroel including R. Meilech were given the opportunity to visit the Rebbe and learn in 770 for half a year. R. Meilech treasured that period, and remembered all the sichos and maamorim that he heard during that time. He would say that while he had previously learned the meaning of being a chossid, the Rebbe introduced him to the concept of just fulfilling Hashem's will, not to become anything.

In the yeshiva at 770, the mashpia R. Shmuel Levitin would sometimes enter the zal during seder nigleh, sit down by his table, and talk to the bochurim about Chassidus and chassidic personalities. The mashgiach R. Mordechai Mentlik was not very happy about the interruption of learning, but out of respect for R. Shmuel he would not say anything. Though



R. Meilech was exceptionally diligent and did not like to stop his learning, he took advantage of this opportunity to receive from an eltere chossid.

Once, R. Shmuel asked the bochurim if they knew where the expression "gevald" is used in Chassidus, aside from at the end of Tanya. R. Meilech replied immediately that it could be found in the maamar Ulekachtem 5661. R. Shmuel was amazed at his proficiency and he later mentioned it to the Rebbe. When the Rebbe inquired about the bochur's name, R. Shmuel could only recall that the bochur had dark glasses... and the Rebbe smiled.

R. Meilech sought opportunities to befriend and learn from R. Yoel Kahn, several years his senior, who then taught the younger students who studied in "Bedford and Dean," and on Ocean Parkway. This developed into a lifelong friendship of mutual respect.

In 5725 (1965), a shidduch was suggested for him with his wife, Libby Blesofsky. The Rebbe encouraged the *shidduch*, and wrote to her that "[he is] a young man of whom the Torah speaks praise - a chossid, talmid chacham, baal midos, and so on."

Soon after his chassuna, R. Meilech was appointed mashpia in the yeshiva in Newark, NJ, which later relocated to Morristown. The Rosh Yeshivah at that time was R. Yisroel Friedman, and the two could be seen spending hours together, discussing and debating Torah and darkei hachassidus.

R. Meilech stood out for his diligence and orderliness. He made sure to utilize every moment, and always had a Torah pamphlet in his pocket to peruse in any spare time. His extraordinary diligence is brought out in the following story: Several months before his passing he was taken to the hospital, and when he arrived, he immediately requested a sefer. When a sefer was not able to be found, he asked to listen to a *shiur* on the telephone, but there was no reception. He was very pained until they found a maamar in one of his pockets, and he immediately delved into the maamar.

R. Meilech's diligence was one expression of his exceptional *kabalas* ol and self-discipline.

R. Meilech would arrive to the veshiva's seder exactly on time, and made sure to finish his shiur right at the conclusion of the *seder*, emphasizing the importance of orderliness. He stressed the need to go to sleep

HE AVOIDED FARBRENGING OUTSIDE OF HIS HOMETOWN, SAYING THAT THERE ARE PLENTY OF CHASSIDIM WHO COULD FARBRENG.

on time, and would quote Rabbi Boruch Shimon Schneerson, his Rosh Yeshivah in Lod, who remarked: "Some of my colleagues in Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin studied day and night. I made sure to sleep eight hours a night and I was more successful than them." R. Meilech would say, "A true masmid is one who sleeps, learns and davens at the proper times, and not one whose lifestyle is 'wild' without order."

R. Meilech would not push off something he had to do, but he took care of it right away. A student shared how R. Meilech advised him in *yeshiva* not to delay even his schedule of washing laundry. R. Meilech reasoned that in this way he remains in control of his life and doesn't do things only when he is forced to do them.

Though R. Meilech was personally removed from worldly matters and pleasures, he possessed a keen understanding of practical matters and many benefited from his advice.

Along with his appreciation of the deepest elements of Chassidus, he would emphasize the importance of practical observance. At one farbrengen, he spoke for hours about lofty concepts, but concluded by inspiring the bochurim to be more particular to review the sedrah shnayim mikra v'echad targum. Indeed, he would often quote a saying that the difference between Lubavitch and Kapust is that in Lubavitch they review the sedrah. This meant that in Kapust they were involved in lofty matters, and did not necessarily pay proper attention to small things like reviewing the sedrah, whereas in Lubavitch the involvement in Chassidus did not come at the expense of kabalas ol.

Another one of his outstanding features was his humility. He never imposed his opinion, and generally



avoided expressing strong opinions. Even in learning he would usually say, "I seem to remember that it says this in such a place..." Due to his unassuming nature, he avoided farbrenging outside of his hometown, saying that there are plenty of chassidim who could farbreng.

His approach was to focus on the positive, and not to put down or embarrass anyone. He would not mark tests. Instead, he would call individual bochurim into his office and review the test with them. If the bochur had difficulty answering the questions, R. Meilech would "explain" what the bochur wrote, so that he understood the correct answer without feeling uncomfortable.

Though R. Meilech gave off the impression of being naïve, this was far from the truth. Rather, he overlooked students' flaws since pointing them out would most likely not have the desired effect. Instead, he devoted his full attention to each student in turn, making sure that they left him with a good feeling.

HE DEVOTED HIS FULL ATTENTION TO FACH STUDENT IN TURN. MAKING SURF THAT THEY I FET HIM WITH A GOOD FEELING.

In Torah knowledge, R. Meilech possessed mastery in both nigleh and Chassidus. His style of learning was unique, focusing on a thorough understanding of the material, illuminated by other sources, without elaborate pilpulim. He always thirsted for knowledge of new areas in Torah, and notwithstanding his sharp selectiveness, he read and listened to whoever could offer a worthy Torah insight.

His kabalas ol, coupled with his thirst for Torah, brought him to study various maamarim and Nigleh seforim hundreds of times, every time with the enthusiasm as if he is learning something new.

For example, throughout many years of his position as mashpia, he taught the maamarim of the Rebbe Rashab from the years 5665-5666. Each





maamar would span approximately three weeks, and during that time he was observed to learn through the maamar tens of times, though he had already taught that maamar for so many years. He studied hemshech samech vov hundreds of times, and possessed outstanding proficiency of its content, saying that this hemshech contains the fundamentals of the Chassidic outlook on life.

R. Meilech was involved in the editing and review of various scholarly Torah publications, including Likutei Sichos. The Rebbe had expressed dissatisfaction with the caliber of the written up sichos submitted for his review, and stipulated that they be reviewed by a reliable individual first. At first, R. Meilech was only responsible for the sichos about Chassidus, and eventually he became responsible for both areas.

In addition to his other duties in the Morristown yeshiva, he was the spirit behind the journal Ha'aros Hatemimim V'Anash that appeared weekly for the course of many years. Besides heading the editorial board, he authored many of the essays himself (under various pseudonyms). R. Meilech also served on the editorial board of popular Chassidus Mevueres series of *maamorim* and Tanya, and he would clarify difficult passages in his straightforward manner.

R. Meilech would encourage the bochurim to be dedicated to Torah study not only with kabalas ol, but also with vitality and enthusiasm. He would repeat the saying of the Rebbe Rashab that while one must toil in Nigleh ("b'Toraso yeh'geh"), one's primary desire ("cheftzo") should lie in "Toras Hashem," referring to Chassidus. At the same time, he would often say that proper study of Chassidus and davening should motivate a person to be involved in service of Hashem during the rest of the day - in the case of a bochur, by studying Nigleh in depth.

R. Meilech would often refer to the difference in style between the farbrengens of R. Michoel Der Alter and R. Shmuel Gronem Esterman. It can be said that R. Meilech's own farbrengens were more similar to the latter's style, who instead of demanding outright specific things from them, would inspire through stories of Chassidim and describing the wondrousness of Chassidus.



LIVING A MIRACULOUS ROUTINE

a farbrengen to remember

WHICH IS A GREATER MIRACLE?

Chassidus explains that there are two types of miracles - those that defy nature and those that are enclothed in the natural order - and each one has an advantage.

A miracle that breaks nature is advantageous in that it isn't concealed. Such a miracle pierces through nature's concealment of G-dliness, and the Elokus that functions within the world becomes instantly recognizable. Still, a miracle that is enclothed in nature is ultimately greater.

Hashem created nature to appear as though it contradicts holiness and Elokus, and that is precisely why it is necessary for an open miracle to "break" nature. On its own, nature seems to deny Hashem's presence. However, a miracle that occurs within the confines of nature shows that *Elokus* is found there as well, and that nature itself is G-dly.

This, the Rebbe explains, was the greatness of the Frierdiker Rebbe's liberation on Yud Beis Tammuz. While it was noticeably miraculous, it was nevertheless orchestrated within the natural order. It was a nes ha'mlubash b'teva, a miracle clothed in nature (Maamar Boruch She'asa Nissim 5715).

While we may not fully comprehend the various levels of Elokus, the message of a nes hamelubash b'teva is that there must be a relationship between the natural and the supernatural.

MIRACLES IN PRACTICE

How does this concept play itself out in avoda?

There are times in life when a person functions in a manner of nes, G-dly inspiration, and there are other times when a person is involved in teva, mundane activities. The idea of nes hamelubash b'teva is to fuse these two worlds, so that the inspiration shines brightly into the mundane life.

For example:

When a person is young, they attend yeshiva, where they are free of financial worry, and can be totally submerged in Torah and avodas Hashem. At this point, they are - so to speak - above the constraints of nature and the realities of this physical world. But then there comes a time when one must leave the walls of yeshiva and get involved in the world at large. There, one becomes preoccupied with financial burdens and social obligations - "nature."

The notion of a miracle enclothed in nature teaches us that we must not divorce the two. Even once we enter the natural world, we can and must allow the inspiration of yeshiva to express itself in our newfound mundane responsibilities.

In other words, a miracle doesn't necessitate breaking the rules of nature. The essence of a miracle is a G-dly revelation, and that can happen even within the natural order. A person can live within the restrictions of the broader world, and yet enable Elokus to shine in his life.

POST-DAVENING

There was a bochur in the yeshiva in Lubavitch who would *daven* and serve Hashem with great sincerity. When he entered yechidus with the Rebbe Rashab, he asked the Rebbe several questions concerning the lofty avoda of Chassidus. One question that troubled him was: "What does Chassidus mean with 're'iyas Elokus b'muchash,' seeing G-dliness in a tangible manner?" The Rebbe addressed all of his questions except for this one.

A while later, he entered *yechidus* again and asked if perhaps the following explanation would answer his previous inquiry:

During davening on Shabbos, one contemplates how nothing can compare to Hashem (ein aroich) and how all the worlds are nullified to Him (bittul ha'oilomois). When he walks outside after davening and sees mundane and worldly objects, he automatically views them with the G-dly perspective with which he davened. The Rebbe agreed that this was in fact the explanation.

Just as a miracle shines within nature, so too a person's inspired davening should shine into their "after davening" (nuch'n davenen). The Tzemach Tzedek once said that the main difference between the davening on Shabbos and during the week is the difference in their nuch'n davenen - the feeling the person has when he heads into the street.

THERE ARE TIMES IN LIFE WHEN A PERSON FUNCTIONS IN A MANNER OF NES, G-DLY INSPIRATION, AND THERE ARE OTHER TIMES WHEN A PERSON IS INVOLVED IN TEVA, MUNDANE ACTIVITIES





EVEN ONCE WE ENTER THE NATURAL WORLD, WE CAN AND MUST ALLOW THE INSPIRATION OF YESHIVA TO EXPRESS ITSELF IN OUR NEWFOUND MUNDANE RESPONSIBILITIES.

POST-YESHIVA

Let's take this a step further:

When one is within the walls of yeshiva, it's not such a novelty for the energy of his davening to remain afterwards. The "world" of yeshiva is not such a contradiction to the inspiration of davening. But to retain this inspiration after entering the real world, that is truly performing a "miracle in nature."

We must ensure that our avodas Hashem is not standalone and isolated, but rather it is a continuation of. and impacted by, our years in yeshiva. We should abstain from falling into a monotonous routine of just doing what we should. Instead, we must ensure that our everyday is infused with the "miraculous."

R. Shilem Kuratin was a student in Lubavitch for several years, and after he got married he returned to serve as the mashpia. As a bochur, he dressed in tattered clothing as many of the bochurim did. However, when he returned, after his marriage, he was dressed in clean and neat clothing. It is said that the Rebbe Rashab was pleased to see how R. Shilem was able to continue his devotion even when he had to comply with societal standards.

We aren't meant to spend all of our lives between the walls of yeshiva, however, we must ensure that our yeshiva life should continue to serve as the driving



WE SHOULD ABSTAIN FROM FALLING INTO A MONOTONOUS ROUTINE OF JUST DOING WHAT WE SHOULD. INSTEAD, WE MUST ENSURE THAT OUR EVERYDAY IS INFUSED WITH THF "MIRACULOUS."

force. In addition, we must maintain a connection with the yeshiva ideals by briefly returning to the yeshiva lifestyle whenever we can. The Rebbe Rashab says in Toras Sholom that even after one has married, he must always remember that he is a tomim, which is about hanachos atzmusoi, putting himself aside entirely.

There was once a student of Tomchei Temimim who married and took a job, but remained a faithful tomim: whenever he had a day off from work, he would head to the yeshiva and follow the yeshiva schedule. Although nature had taken its course and he had to support his family, he maintained an essential connection to the supernatural lifestyle, to which he reverted when circumstances allowed.

On Simchas Torah 5722, the Rebbe taught the niggun an'im zmiros and told the story behind it. It involved a chossid who was so inspired on motzaei Yom Kippur that he danced around the bima all night long. He knew that the ultimate service of Hashem involves dealing with the mundane, but he couldn't tear himself away from the feelings of Yom Kippur.

This is a healthy feeling; while recognizing the need for acting within the confines of nature, we must also appreciate the need to connect that nature with something greater - such as the heightened inspiration of Yom Kippur.

PRACTICE ROOTED IN HIGHER

In the beginning of Igeres HaTeshuvah, the Alter Rebbe explains that the essence of teshuva is reaccepting the yoke of Hashem and His mitzvos, in exchange for having separated oneself from Hashem through transgressing. Additional acts of repentance, such as fasting and giving tzedaka, serve only to further uplift the neshama.

In the beginning of the fourth chapter, the Alter Rebbe writes that in order to properly understand what teshuva is about, there is a need to understand the two types of teshuva: teshuva tata'a, the lower teshuva, which entails returning the neshama to its pre-sin state, and teshuva ila'a, the higher teshuva, which is to return to the state of bittul it was in before entering the body.

The question arises why this information is relevant to a person who wants to do a basic teshuva? If teshuva is simply a commitment to follow the mitzvos, why should a person need to know about returning to the lofty bittul of teshuva ila'a?

The Rebbe explains that even when we are simply interested in practically observing the mitzvos, we must realize how these mitzvos express an essential connection that we have with Hashem. This awareness gives us the strength and resolve to overcome our challenges.

With this, the Alter Rebbe wished to connect "nature" - physical observance - with "beyond nature" - the awareness of the neshama's essential connection. We should not just perform *mitzvos* because this is what we were commanded to do, but because we are Jewish and it's impossible for us to separate from Hashem.

(Interestingly, this is in line with the Alter Rebbe's style in both the Tanya and in Shulchan Aruch: to first lay down the essential concept, and then proceed to explain how it plays out in detail. [See Seforim V'Sofrim by Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin – Ed.])

NOT A PORTRAIT

The Gemara in Brachos (10a) quotes the possuk "Ein tzur keilokeinu," there is no rock like our G-d, and interprets it as. "Ein tzauar keilokeinu." no one can form an image like our G-d. The simple meaning is to praise the wonder of Hashem's artistry Who blows life into the human form, but R. Nochum Goldschmidt quoted the following explanation from earlier chassidim:



HF KNFW THAT THE UITIMATE SFRVICE OF HASHEM INVOIVES DEALING WITH THE MUNDANE, BUT HE COULDN'T TFAR HIMSFI F AWAY FROM THE FEELINGS OF YOM KIPPLIR

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THE SKILL OF AN ARTIST IS TO ENVISION A SCENE AND BRING IT TO LIFE ON PAPER.

AN ARTIST CAN DRAW A SETTING WHICH MAY LOOK EVEN MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN THE

ORIGINAL, THOUGH IN REALITY IT IS LIFELESS.

The skill of an artist is to envision a scene and bring it to life on paper. An artist can draw a setting which may look even more beautiful than the original, though in reality it is lifeless. The same is true of Hashem; he envisioned a world and drew it up, though in reality it doesn't have an existence of its own.

R. Nochum would conclude that a Jew can sometimes be merely a "portrait of a Jew;" he lays *tefillin*, performs *mitzvos* and so on, but all without life.

Unfortunately, the same can be said today regarding Chassidus. There are some people who practice darkei haChassidus and the Rebbe's instructions, but they lack a spiritual life and vitality. They are like a "portrait of a chossid;" possessing the required actions but missing the inner excitement that ought to be infused by Chassidus.



A JEW CAN SOMETIMES BE MERELY A "PORTRAIT OF A JEW;" HE LAYS TEFILLIN, PERFORMS MITZVOS AND SO ON, BUT ALL WITHOUT LIFE. UNFORTUNATELY, THE SAME CAN BE SAID TODAY REGARDING CHASSIDUS.

SEVEN TO ONE

In the Rebbe's first maamar, Basi Legani, the Rebbe discusses the importance of us being the seventh generation of Chassidus Chabad, and emphasizes that we are seventh counting from the first (shvi'i larishon). This means that although action associated with malchus, the seventh mida – is what matters most, and this is particularly so in the seventh generation, it must still come as a continuation to the deeper appreciation of Chassidus of the first generation.

(This connection is emphasized with regards to the first generation, more than with any of the other intermediate generations. Interestingly, the Rebbe gave special instructions to study the maamorim of Torah Ohr and Likutei Torah each week, and not maamorim of the Rebbe Rashab or other Rebbeim. Perhaps the intent was so that we should appreciate how all ideas of Chassidus begin from the first generation, the Alter Rebbe.)

DAAS TACHTON IS ITSELF AN EXPRESSION OF HASHEM'S INFINITE POWER, THAT HE CAN CREATE SOMETHING THAT APPEARS TO BE SEPARATE FROM HIM. THUS, NATURE ITSELF EXPRESSES THE INFINITUDE OF G-DI INFSS!

FINITE BY INFINITY

There is yet a deeper meaning to working within nature. The assumption until now was that nature itself is mundane and distant from Hashem, and it requires an infusion of the miraculous plane to become connected. However, Chassidus reveals that on a deeper level, the limited confined "nature" has its own inherent greatness.

We find this concept explained in the haskala (philosophy) of Chassidus:

Chassidus explains that there are two perceptions of the world's existence: daas tachton, the lower perception, and daas elyon, the higher perception. Daas tachton is our perception from below that the world is an entity, albeit kept alive by G-dliness. Daas elyon is Hashem's perception from above that the world is totally insignificant in relation to Hashem's infinite light.

On the surface, it seems that *daas tachton* is merely a limited version of knowing Hashem, and Hashem's true greatness is more evident in daas elyon. The Rebbe explains, however, that in truth, daas tachton is itself an expression of Hashem's infinite power, that He can create something that appears to be separate from Him. Thus, nature itself expresses the infinitude of G-dliness!

A similar concept exists in avodas Hashem:

On the surface, it seems like a person's practical fulfillment of Hashem's commandments holds a limited connection to Hashem, and cannot compare to the inspired connection that he had during davening or in yeshiva. But in truth, practical observance itself expresses an infinite connection to Hashem. It is merely that Hashem willed that we apply this unlimited connection through technical practice in a finite world. Nature itself is beyond nature.

This mindset is also relevant while we are in the holy setting – during davening or in yeshiva. As we gather the strength and inspiration for when we head out to the world, we should recognize the relationship between the two stages and prepare ourselves accordingly.

A DEEPER OBSERVANCE

This concept is expressed in the fact that practical observance is paramount, and the most important thing is to actually perform the *mitzva* in a physical manner. The loftiest ideas of Chassidus cannot reach Hashem's Essence, but a practical mitzva can.

Once, a Simchas Torah farbrengen went very late, and the Frierdiker Rebbe, who was particular to daven mincha at the exact time, kept asking for the time. R. Chatche Feigin didn't want the farbrengen to end, so he saw to it that the Rebbe be told an incorrect time.

After a while, the Frierdiker Rebbe sensed that something was amiss and said to R. Chatche, "With all the profound philosophies we cannot comprehend Atzmus, Hashem's Essence, but with mincha we can reach Atzmus!" The same is true of every mitzva.

Notwithstanding the advantage of physical observance in its own right, the practice should not be detached from its deeper meaning. The study of Shulchan Aruch should be with a mindset and a desire to forge a deeper connection. Hashem desired that we should not only have the essential connection, but that it be felt in an open and revealed manner. This is accomplished by appreciating the meaning of the mitzvos and becoming aroused with inspiration.





THE LOFTIEST IDEAS OF CHASSIDUS CANNOT REACH HASHEM'S ESSENCE, BUT A PRACTICAL MITZVA CAN.



ONE TORAH

R. Shilem once asked the Rebbe Rashab how one can be involved with and enjoy both Chassidus and Nigleh when they seem to counter one another: Chassidus arouses the passion of the neshama, while Nigleh engages reason and cold logic. The Rebbe replied that they are both Torah, thus they do not pose a contradiction to each other.

If one studies Nigleh as one entity, Chassidus as another, and mivtzoim as a third, then they may conflict with each other. But if they are all viewed as parts of Torah and avodas Hashem, then they don't conflict, and they even reinforce each other.

In Hemshech Ayin Beis, the Rebbe Rashab poses a contradiction: In one place, the Zohar states, "Yisrael,

oiraisa v'kudsha brich hu kula chad," the Jewish people, the Torah and Hashem are one, and elsewhere it says that "t'las kishrin miskashra'an da b'da," three knots - Jews, Torah and Hashem - are tied to one another. The first indicates that they are one entity, while the second implies that they are connected, but not one and the same.

Initially, the Rebbe Rashab suggests that perhaps this depends on which part of Torah is under discussion - the revealed parts of Torah, Nigleh, or the hidden parts of Torah, Nistar. However, he concludes that this cannot be true, since all parts of Torah are equally united with Hashem.

R SHILEM ONCE ASKED THE REBBE RASHAB HOW ONE CAN BE INVOLVED WITH AND ENIOY BOTH CHASSIDUS AND NIGI FH WHEN THEY SEEM TO COUNTER ONE ANOTHER



THE FELLOW OPENED A TANYA AND RFAD THAT THROUGH TORAH STUDY ONE BECOMES UNITED WITH HASHEM. "I WAS RIGHT," HE SAID TRIUMPHANTLY, "THERE'S NOTHING ABOUT THE VALUE OF **TORAH**!"



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HASHEM'S WISDOM

There are people who view Torah as a "study" that is separate from Hashem, and they fail to realize that Torah is *Elokus*.

There was once a misnaged who overheard chassidim discussing Tanya and challenged them, "How can you study Chassidus when you don't value the study of Nigleh?" The chassidim told him that this was not at all so, and suggested that he read what the Alter Rebbe writes in Tanya about the greatness of Torah study. The fellow opened a Tanya and read that through Torah study one becomes united with Hashem. "I was right," he said triumphantly, "there's nothing about the value of Torah!"

What was this man's mistake? That he viewed Torah as an entity of its own, completely divorced of G-dliness. We can make this mistake as well and think that Chassidus is more connected to Hashem than Nigleh. In truth, Elokus is all about achdus (unity) and every dimension and attribute of Hashem is Him. For this reason, Chassidim throughout history studied Nigleh in great depth, since they recognized that Nigleh is no less a part of Hashem's Torah than Chassidus.

A certain chossid once visited Miami, and on Shabbos morning, he went to the Lubavitch yeshivah for davening. As everyone prepared for shacharis, he was horrified to see a bochur approach the rosh yeshivah with a question in Ketzos Hachoshen, a distinct Nigleh sefer. When he returned to New York, he wrote to the Rebbe a report of his visit, including this incident. The Rebbe commented on it, "Thank you for the good news that the bochurim are so engrossed in learning."

WITHOUT BEING TOLD

When I was in yeshiva in Eretz Yisroel in 5718-19 (1958-59), I was involved in Igud Talmidei Hayeshivos, and we would travel around the country to various Bnei Akivah yeshivos to share Chassidus and farbreng with them. We would do this several times a year, such as Yud Tes Kislev, Yud Shvat and Yud Beis Tammuz.

One year, we decided that we shouldn't just share an idea in Chassidus with them, but also something in Nigleh. We would find out which section in Gemara they were learning and share with them a relevant pilpul in Nigleh, and then afterwards we would share the idea in Chassidus.



AS EVERYONE PREPARED FOR SHACHARIS, HE WAS HORRIFIED TO SEE A BOCHLIR APPROACH THE ROSH YESHIVAH WITH A QUESTION IN KETZOS HACHOSHEN, A DISTINCT NIGI FH SFFFR

The Rebbe responded, "I was particularly pleased to read in your letter regarding adding in piplulim of Torah." Although the Rebbe had never explicitly instructed us to do this, we had understood this to be the Rebbe's desire, and in fact the Rebbe was very pleased.

If you ask a Jew who hasn't studied Chassidus, "Why do you study Gemara?" you will receive various explanations, but not that studying Gemara brings G-dliness to the world. We are fortunate enough to have been taught the true value of Torah, and we ought to apply it in practice.

Even if a person doesn't enjoy learning Nigleh, he should do so with the discipline of kabolas ol, and he will eventually come to enjoy it. I recall that I once went into yechidus with the Rebbe and wrote on my note regarding a certain matter of hafatzos hamayanos that I was involved in, and I said that I wasn't enjoying the work. The Rebbe assured me, "The work should be done with kabolas ol and geshmak (enjoyment) will come over time."

CHANGING OUR REALITY

The fusion of above and below is relevant to the study of Chassidus.

When person learns Chassidus, his feeling is that Elokus is far above him, and through his study of Chassidus he connects to it. He realizes that the essence of *Elokus* is beyond the energy that creates the world. This does not necessarily change his reality. He feels like his eyes were opened to a heavenly revelation, but he has yet to internalize it.

To this end he must begin to question: Who's to say that what is written in Chassidus is actually so? Who says that there's a G-dly energy sustaining the world? Or that the world is entirely absorbed in G-dliness? And that the entire purpose of creation is to reveal the G-dly powers? When he carries on with this debate in his mind back and forth, it will eventually become his reality.

WHY DO YOU ASK?

What is his intent with all of this? It's not that he has unanswered questions or that he disagrees with the G-dly concepts. A Jew, by nature, believes in Hashem and doesn't need any evidence. Rather, the Rebbe explains, he wants his intellect to share his neshama's perspective, since Hashem desires that our emunah should permeate our understanding. The goal is for the neshama - the spiritual - to permeate the mundane intellect.

Does he become distant from Hashem as a result of his questioning? Surely not, since all along he has a steady faith in all that Chassidus teaches. Moreover, his *entire* objective in questioning is to bring that faith down into reason. Thus, he is never really separated from his connection to Elokus.

Likewise, anyone who spent time in Tomchei Temimim and is familiar with the Rebbe's teachings, has been imprinted with the *emunah* of Chassidus – ein od milvado, the ongoing recreation of the world, hashgacha pratis, and so on. Our intellectual probe of Chassidus allows that faith into our mind. This is very different than *Chakirah* (Jewish philosophy) that seeks proofs for G-dliness. The Rebbe once related what the Rebbe Maharash told a chossid. "With the first ten minutes of studying Chassidus one can become a 'chossid;' after that one can climb higher and higher."

ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

During the communist Russian regime, they replaced all the academic textbooks to communist versions - even textbooks of math and calculus. Although

DOES HE BECOME DISTANT FROM HASHEM AS A RESULT OF HIS QUESTIONING? SURELY NOT, SINCE ALL ALONG HE HAS A STEADY FAITH IN ALL THAT CHASSIDUS TEACHES.





IF SOMEONE WILL SAY THAT THE ALTER REBBE'S GREATNESS WAS THAT HE COMPOSED A BEAUTIFUL MELODY, HE'S SPEAKING FOOLISHNESS, SINCE THE ALTER REBBE WAS MUCH GREATER THAN THAT

math is universal and two plus two is always four, nonetheless they shrewdly replaced it all.

Their reason was this:

When one studies a subject, they are bound to come across examples offered by the authors of the textbook to help the student better understand the subject. For example, in a math textbook one is likely to encounter an example of a shopkeeper needing to figure out how much change needs to be returned to the customer. Now, in communist Russia there were no stores, since communist ideology preaches that everything is government property and the individual is only a part of the country, not his own entity. So the communists edited every textbook to omit sections like these, thereby subtly ingraining the message of communism in the pupil's head.

The same is true with Chassidus, l'havdil. The maamar that one learns is not there to convince us of

the existence of a Hashem, because that is taken for granted. The discussion is only within the context of Hashem; for example, if Hashem needs to constantly create the world or a onetime act would suffice. The implicit message is that Hashem is a fact, it's only certain aspects that require a better understanding.

The story is told of a devout Jew who was asked if he believes in Hashem, and replied that of course he does. When challenged whether he would be willing to swear about it he hesitated, "I don't know about that. Swearing falsely is a serious matter"...

The abovementioned relationship with Hashem that results from studying Chassidus is called *hiskashrus*, binding. However, a deeper connection is called dveikus, cleaving, where the entire focus turns to Hashem and not the individual. This occurs when one studies Chassidus in such a manner that the person is completely absorbed in Elokus.

WHEN LOWER IS HIGHER

R. Shmuel Levitin once shared a thought on the words "kodosh kodosh kodosh" in the name of R. Hillel Paritcher: The first kodosh represents Hashem's infinite greatness and His being removed from this world; the second kodosh represents Hashem's involvement in the world; the last *kodosh* expresses the idea that Hashem is in fact both removed and involved simultaneously.

R. Shmuel Levitin repeated the following mashal from the famed chossid R. Bere Volf Kozevnikov:

There once lived a great scholar who could also draw beautifully. Now, if someone will say that the scholar's greatness is that he can draw, that's foolish, since his drawing is of no comparison to the depth of his understanding. If someone says that the scholar's greatness is the depth of his understanding, that's a worthy praise. But if someone says that the scholar's greatness is that he can instill the depth of his understanding into his paintings - that is truly an exceptional praise.

R. Shmuel would then elaborate:

The Alter Rebbe composed the niggun known as the Daled Bavos. If someone will say that the Alter Rebbe's greatness was that he composed a beautiful melody, he's speaking foolishness, since the Alter Rebbe was much greater than that. Another person will praise the Alter Rebbe for his *geonus* and *tzidkus* and his authoring the Tanya. That is surely more accurate. But it is a much greater praise, to note that the Alter Rebbe instilled the four spiritual worlds into the four stanzas of the Daled Bavos.

The same is true regarding Hashem. From the perspective of daas tachton, the lower understanding, a person thinks that Hashem's greatness lies in that he created the universe. Truthfully, that's a foolish praise, since for Hashem that is not greatness at all. Daas elyon, the higher understanding, is that Hashem is far greater than the many finite worlds. However, Hashem's true greatness is that He limited His infinite energy to create finite worlds. That is truly remarkable.



THE POWER OF ISKAFYA

As a result of learning about the lofty levels of G-dliness described in Chassidus, one can mistakenly think that working on improving character traits and preforming iskafya are immaterial. This is wrong, since it's not enough to connect on a lofty level, but we must also refine the lower, coarser elements.

I recall how during the earlier years, the Rebbe never lifted his hands above the table during the farbrengens. His hands were clasped under the table and he moved them about, but this was only visible to those who stood nearby. I recall two occasions in 5722 (1962) when, out of excitement, the Rebbe lifted his hands above the table.

One occasion was when the Rebbe spoke about the fact that the word *anochi* – the first word of the *Aseres* Hadibros - is an Egyptian word, and another time when he spoke about iskafya. The Rebbe then said, "Imagine, with one iskafya one 'overturns' all the worlds!" and the Rebbe waved his hands to indicate turning over.

ABOVE AND BELOW

Chassidus explains that Hashem both creates the world constantly and He watches over every detail in it. Understandably, creation is loftier than hashgacha

THE REBBE THEN SAID, "IMAGINE, WITH ONE ISKAFYA ONE 'OVERTURNS' ALL THE WORLDS!" AND THE REBBE WAVED HIS HANDS TO INDICATE TURNING OVER.



THE WAY TO CONFIRM THAT NIIR GROWTH IN AVODAS HASHEM IS GENIIINE IS BY CHECKING IF IT DFTRACTS FROM OUR **FNGROSSMENT IN** MATERIALISM



Credit: Shlomo Zalman Fried

pratis, since we're not discussing the details of the physical world, but the G-dly energy that creates the world. Yet, a person must contemplate hashgacha pratis as well. for two reasons:

Firstly, because physical life is closer to a person's nature. When a Jew considers how whatever happens to him or is said to him is because Hashem willed it, his life is transformed to one of G-dliness. Hashgacha pratis is something we can relate to on a personal level.

Secondly, hashgacha pratis is rooted in G-dliness which is beyond the world. A person must be aware that Hashem's involvement in the world is connected to His creating the world from nothing. The Elokus that is beyond the world is the source and the underlying truth of the *Elokus* that functions within the world.

Likewise. Chassidus explains that the ohr hamemalei kol almin, the word of Hashem that creates this world from nothing, is only a ray of the ohr hasovev kol almin, a much greater G-dly energy that encompasses the world. The Rebbe Rashab said that chassidim would call Adam Kadmon (A"K) an ordinary foot soldier. Although this is the highest spiritual level after the tzimtzum, they recognized that it is insignificant to the G-dly light that is before the tzimtzum.

Why do we need to emphasize this? Why is ohr hamemalei not grand enough for us - after all it creates our entire universe?

But this is the idea: Every level and practice should be associated with its higher source. When one studies Chassidus, one should not think that the "small things" are just small. Iskafya, ohr hamemalei and hashgacha pratis are connected to Hashem Himself.

IMPACT ON LIFE

R. Shmuel Levitin would say that the way to make an accurate accounting is to first add all the figures together to reach a total, and then, to verify that the total is correct and accurate, one subtracts the figures down to the bottom. It thus came out that the subtraction validated the addition. The lesson in avodas Hashem, he would say, is that the way to confirm that our growth in avodas Hashem is genuine is by checking if it detracts from our engrossment in materialism. Every addition in avoda should automatically be matched by an equal measure of subtraction of olam hazeh.

Some bochurim once visited R. Osher Nikolayever who learned Chassidus with them. When they finished, R. Osher told them, "I see that you can learn nicely. The problem is that you also eat nicely..."



R. SHOIEL THOUGHT TO HIMSELF, "DOES THE REBBE REALLY NEED MY TWO LIRAS?" INSTEAD, HE DECIDED TO SEND SOME OF THE CORRESPONDENCES THAT HE HAD RECEIVED FROM THE FRIERDIKER REBBE

R. Zalman Havlin was sent by the Rebbe Rashab to be a mashpia in Horoditch. One wealthy chossid who lived in that town asked R. Zalman to come farbreng with the bochurim in his house, so that his family would be influenced and inspired. R. Zalman agreed, but on condition that they first pour a pail of dirty water all over the house. The man tried to convince R. Zalman out of it, but R. Zalman would not relent.

The chossid really wanted the farbrengen in his home, and so he had no choice but to agree. As they made up, R. Zalman and the bochurim poured the dirty water all over his carpet and furniture. R. Zalman then fulfilled his end of the deal and he farbrenged all day until midnight. The farbrengen had a tremendous impact on the family and they changed completely.

Why was it necessary to cause the family anguish and dirty their home? Because in order to be receptive to Chassidus, one has to first let go and belittle the material world. It isn't possible to be a chossid and mekushar without that measure of subtraction in the area of materialism.

PARTING WITH SOMETHING

The Rebbe gives us his brachos for the things we need, but we have to be prepared to give up at least something of ourselves.

R. Shoiel Brook was a Chassidishe Jew of yesteryear whom I knew fairly well. Before Rosh Hashana 5711 (1950), he sent the Rebbe a pidyon nefesh (pa"n). It is customary to send money together with the pa"n, but R. Shoiel thought to himself, "Does the Rebbe really need my two liras?" Instead, he decided to send some of the correspondences that he had received from the Frierdiker Rebbe. He had risked his life to smuggle them out of Russia, and he treasured them immensely. Since he knew that the Rebbe cherished letters from the Frierdiker Rebbe, he sent these most personal and treasured belongings to the Rebbe together with his pa"n.

Picture this: At that time, the Rebbe had still not accepted the nesius, and he was seen by many as one of the Frierdiker Rebbe's sons-in-law. Yet, R. Shoiel was willing to give him the letters which he received from his Rebbe. R. Shoiel understood that to request a bracha from a Rebbe, one must give up of himself. One cannot maintain his full self and have a connection to the Rebbe on the side.



WITHOUT FINISHING THE POINT, ALMOST MID-SENTENCE, THE REBBE STARTED SINGING A HEARTFELT NIGGUN

BEYOND OURSELVES

During one Purim farbrengen, people were approaching the Rebbe between the sichos to speak about various personal issues, and the Rebbe was dissatisfied about it. The Rebbe then said that Hashem gave Purim as a once in a year opportunity to forget about one's self, yet people are still preoccupied with their own needs and desires. The Rebbe spoke about this idea at length but never really made a definite concluding message. Without finishing the point, almost mid-sentence, the Rebbe started singing a heartfelt niggun. It would seem that the Rebbe couldn't find the words to share the message. and the *niggun* served as the culmination of the *sicha*. Rabbi Nehorai says in the Mishna, "Maniach ani kol umoniuos sheba'olam" - I abandon the occupations of

the world (and I teach my son only Torah - Kiddushin 82a). The Chassidic interpretation is that the primary occupation of this world is to abandon one's own selfness, "maniach ani." Have you ever seen a person do something without thinking first what he stands to gain from it? That is human nature - to think about oneself. However, Chassidus demands that our interest should be what **Hashem** will gain, and this is how Rebbe lived. This is an incredibly difficult feat, but it's something that we must work on.

R. Shmuel Levitin would say that the difference between Chassidus Chabad and other paths of Chassidus is that other Chassidus focus on bitul hayesh el ha'ayin, nullifying the ego before Hashem,



THAT'S ANOTHER STORY COMPLETELY! APPARENTLY, ONE CAN FEEL INSIGNIFICANT BEFORE HASHEM, YET FORGET THAT MONEY IS ALSO INSIGNIFICANT.

while Chabad Chassidus focuses on bringing the ayin of *Elokus* into the *yesh*, our day-to-day lives.

R. Shmuel would also say that we must bear in mind that there are three things that are valueless:

The first is the world around us, which Chassidus explains is nullified before Hashem. The second is a person's own self, as the Alter Rebbe says in Tanya perek 43, that a person must include himself in his awareness of the world's bittul. The third, R. Shmuel would say in the name of R. Hillel Paritcher, is to remember that money too has no value. That's another story completely! Apparently, one can feel insignificant before Hashem, yet forget that money is also insignificant.

A GREATER IDEA

When the chossid R. Leib Hoffman came to Lubavitch, he was dissatisfied to see the mashpia R. Groinem teaching Tanya to the *bochurim* in a method of *pilpul*, pointing out questions and offering explanations. He argued that Chassidus is about being engrossed in a concept and becoming uplifted.

What was the issue? In those generations, they viewed Chassidus as a means to improving themselves; the idea that Hashem has a goal to create a dirah b'tachtonim and that "I was created only to serve my Maker" wasn't a focus of Chassidus. The way to personal growth was to live with a concept of Chassidus, not to discuss the purpose of creation.

Similarly, when I studied under the tutelage of R. Shlomo Chaim Kesselman, he would focus on avoda and iskafya. When I arrived in 770, I was surprised to hear the Rebbe speaking about Atzmus, Hashem's Essence. The Rebbe's terminology was completely foreign to what I was used to, something much greater.

This is not to say that the Rebbe disregarded personal avoda. On the contrary, when the Rebbe talks about Atzmus, this mandates practicing iskafya. However,

AVODA AND ISKAFYA AREN'T PETTY COINS, BUT THE ESSENTIAL WILL OF HASHEM. TORAH IS LINCHANGEARIE AND THESE ASPECTS OF CHASSIDIIS ARE APPLICABLE IN ALL TIMES.

the Rebbe speaks about *iskafya* at the core – how it's connected with Hashem's Essence.

ALL ABOUT THE DETAILS

The pursuit of connecting to Hashem's Essence should not detract from our attention to the details. On the contrary, in the Rebbe's worldview, the small details of *mitzvos* and *avoda* are the will of *Atzmus*. Hashem Himself. This makes the details all the more important, more so than "grand" things which are only a ray of Hashem's holiness.

R. Nissan Nemenov once farbrenged in 770, and spoke about avoda as he usually did. The crowd listened intently and were inspired to improve. One chossid was bothered by what he saw as nitpicking, and he told the following *mashal*:

A great king once married off his only daughter. The wedding feast was planned for many months, and was attended by all of his citizens and by notables

from the surrounding lands. At a high point during the festivities, one ordinary citizen approached his king and pulled at his sleeve. He wanted to remind the king of a measly debt that the king owed him from some years ago... Likewise, concluded the chossid, the Rebbe is leading us towards Moshiach, and here you are busy with avoda and iskafya, which are petty coins in comparison to the king's overarching aim.

The truth is, however, that the comparison is inaccurate. Avoda and iskafya aren't petty coins, but the essential will of Hashem. Torah is unchangeable and these aspects of Chassidus are applicable in all times.

At another one of R. Nissan's farbrengens, R. Bentche Shemtov interjected and started speaking about the Rebbe. R. Nissan understood what he was getting at and said to him, "Bentche, Hashem surely could have made a dirah b'tachtonim by himself, but he desired that we do it. Of course, the Rebbe can do anything, but he wants that we should do it!"

AT A HIGH POINT DURING THE FESTIVITIES. ONE ORDINARY CITIZEN APPROACHED HIS KING AND PULLED AT HIS SLEEVE HE WANTED TO REMIND THE KING OF A MEASIY DEBT THAT THE KING OWFD HIM FROM SOME YEARS AGO



WHO CARES WHAT WE DO?

WHEN WE TALK ABOUT
HASHEM, IT IS NONSENSICAL
TO SAY THAT HE DESIRES
SOMETHING FOR ITS BENEFITS
AND DISLIKES SOMETHING
BECAUSE OF ITS DEFICIENCIES;
HASHEM IS INFINITELY
GREATER THAN EVERYTHING.

When one begins to learn Chassidus, at first glance they will notice that Chassidus says that *mitzvos* reach only a certain level of *seder hishtalshelus*. If one does an *aveira*, he must correct it with *teshuva* which reaches above *seder hishtalshelus*. The idea seems to be that the effect of our actions is limited to specific levels, and beyond the dimension of *seder hishtalshelus* our actions are irrelevant.

This, of course, is incorrect, since Torah and *mitzvos* are from Hashem Himself. The Rebbe Rashab said, "Every *mitzva* is directly connected to *Atzmus*, and it is from *Atzmus*. It is from the *ba'al harazton*, the desirer Himself, that the commandments came to us."

By human beings there are two elements: the essence of who we are and what we desire. When we want something, it stems from our desires; but who we are at our core is deeper than that. But when Hashem instructs us to perform a *mitzva*, it is coming directly from the *ba'al harazton*, the desirer Himself. Tefillin, Shabbos and all the other *mitzvos* are linked to Hashem's essence.





UNCOVERING THE MOTIVATION

In that case, how does *teshuva* work? Is it possible to reach higher? The Rebbe Rashab explains that teshuva demonstrates how Hashem isn't limited by His desire.

When a human being desires something, it's because it has benefits, and when he doesn't want something, it's because of deficiencies that it brings. If we don't manage to obtain something that we desire, we feel like we're missing something.

When we talk about Hashem, it is nonsensical to say that He desires something for its benefits and dislikes something because of its deficiencies; Hashem is infinitely greater than everything. Rather, Hashem wanted that such and such be considered a *mitzva*. while something else is not, and he is not confined to these wants in any way.

For example: If a king chooses a wise man to be his second-in-command, the king will pay attention to his advice, since this man understands how to run a country. But if the king appoints a simpleton with no qualifications, the king will certainly not listen to him. This man's appointment is only because the king desired him, and not because of any qualities.

The same is with Hashem's desires. When he commanded us to perform a certain mitzva, it is not because there's inherent value in that good deed or inherent evil in the aveira; it's simply Hashem's free choice.

Teshuva doesn't reach higher than mitzvos, since there isn't anything higher than the Essence of Hashem to which the mitzvos are linked. What teshuva does is **reveal** that a mitzva's greatness is only because Hashem wants it (ba'al haratzon), and not that He is *ch*"*v* confined to wanting the performance of a mitzva for its specific qualities.

When we learn Chassidus, we must ensure that we don't think that there are different dimensions - the lower one being Hashem's desire for us to do mitzvos. and the higher one is teshuva - since there is nothing higher than Hashem as He is connected to a mitzva.

Just as Hashem performs miracles within the confines of nature, we too must make "miracles within nature." While Hashem's intent is that we should serve Him in the ordinary world, the aim is to recognize the G-dliness within nature, and to acknowledge that there is something that is beyond the mundane. We must not escape the details, rather we must draw the infinite light into the everyday.

L'chaim, l'chaim!

you wanta Mikvah?

RABBI BINYOMIN COHEN

Isser Brikman, born in the city of Mazyr, Belarus in 1909, did not enjoy the easiest of childhoods. The turbulent atmosphere prevailing in Russia many vears before the Revolution, in addition to the later instability of a nation at war, all helped foster a spirit of lawlessness in which armed gangs and militias flourished. Jews, especially religious ones with their distinctive appearance, were an easy target for those roaming murderers.

In 1917 one such band paid a visit to the Brikman household, where the eight-year old Isser endured the trauma of witnessing his father being hanged in front of him. His widowed mother, unable to support herself and her six young children, gathered her family and went to live with her late husband's father, Reb Yisroel Brikman. Zeida Yisroel received them graciously, but the logistics of the situation, with three generations crammed into one tiny dwelling, were obviously rather challenging.

Sometime later, Zeida Yisroel received a letter from his son Nochum who had left home a few years earlier to marry and settle in the U.S.A. After informing his father that he had bought a house in New York and that his financial situation was comfortable, Nochum went on to make a bold suggestion. Given that there were then no restrictions on leaving the country, maybe his father would consider moving the whole family to New York, where life would be considerably more pleasant than in Belarus?

Surprisingly, his father replied in the affirmative. Nochum wasted no time. He immediately made bookings with the steamship company and sent his father tickets for the whole family to travel to

the U.S.A. As soon as Zeide Yisroel received the tickets, the entire household threw themselves into feverish preparations for their approaching trans-Atlantic voyage.

All would have been well had Zeide Yisroel not been shown, by a well-meaning but thoughtless friend, a picture of his generous and successful son Nochum. When he had left home, Nochum had worn a full beard. Now, in the picture at which Zeide was looking, Nochum's appearance was distinctly different. No trace of a beard was visible on the cleanshaven, smiling countenance, which his horrified father beheld.

Zeide Yisroel's reaction was emphatic and immediate. Gathering the whole family around him, he took the envelope containing the tickets from the drawer where it had been carefully stored. Grasping the tickets in one hand, he used the other hand to pull open the door of the oven where a fire was burning. He then meticulously tore up each ticket into tiny pieces which were immediately consigned to the blazing fire.

"My feet", declared Zeide forcefully to his startled family, "will never step into that treifeneh medinah" (unclean country). Indeed, they never did, and a young Isser would have to wait for nearly thirty years before another exit opportunity presented itself.

Meanwhile, however, a clear message about priorities had been delivered. The tickets may have gone up in smoke, but the family's scale of values was intact. On the contrary, Zeida had strengthened it. He had made sure that his family understood that our connection



"My feet will never step into that treifeneh medinah."



with Hashem and His Torah comes before all else. Our focus has to be on the ruchniyus. The gashmiyus will take care of itself.

Of course, it was difficult to be in Belarus, and in America would be much easier. Relocation would certainly mean improving their lives in almost every respect. However, this could only be applied where one's spiritual standards were in no way compromised. Yiddishkeit comes first, and all other considerations a very distant second. That which was truly valuable was not worth sacrificing for any number of comforts which the Goldener Medinah would provide.

A young and impressionable Isser absorbed his grandfather's message in its entirety, and for the rest of his life it was recognizable in his every move.

A Jewish boy needs to fill his mind with Torah, so he spent the nineteen-twenties, like most of his contemporaries, studying in various underground Yeshivos. Moving frequently from place to place, in order to avoid attracting the unwelcome attention of the N.K.V.D., their Torah study was primarily an expression of religious devotion and defiance.

After his marriage in the early nineteen-thirties he learned shechitah at which he excelled and which was to later become his permanent vocation. Between 1941 and 1945 he was conscripted into the army of the U.S.S.R. Shortly after the end of the war, in 1947, he and his family managed, together with many others, to leave the Soviet Union. Arriving shortly afterwards in France, he put his expertise in shechitah to good use as he taught and trained many of the younger Chassidim to become shochtim.

Most of the families who had left Russia did not intend to settle permanently in France. Rather, they viewed it as a temporary haven from where they could plan and arrange their subsequent relocation to the country of their choice. The Brikmans intended to emigrate to the U.S.A. and spent the next five years waiting for official permission to settle there. Meanwhile, Reb Isser continued teaching and practicing his shechitah.

At the end of 1951 the long-awaited entry visas to the U.S.A. were finally issued. Arriving in the States a short while later, the family first settled in Cleveland, Ohio. Not long afterwards, Reb Isser heard that the community of Albany, the capital city of the State of New York, were looking for a Shochet. He applied for the position, was accepted, and moved with his family to what was, truth be told, a rather small and, religiously speaking, undeveloped community.

The Rebbeim of Lubavitch repeatedly emphasized that a shochet is, and must ensure that he is, one of the major pillars of the Jewish community in which he serves. His Yiras Shomayim needs to be even greater than that of the Roy. The Roy is seen to be the head of the community, but the shochet is its heart. On countless occasions the Rebbe Rayatz and his successor, the Rebbe of our generation, stressed the crucial role and responsibility of the shochet in ensuring that all matters pertaining to the Yiddishkeit of a community be maintained at the highest level.

Small wonder then that the newly arrived shochet of Albany found himself almost immediately involved in the question of the local *mikveh*.

The nineteen-fifties were not exactly a prime period as far as the observance of Taharas HaMishpacha was concerned. The more traditionally minded among the immigrants of half a century earlier had managed to build mikvaos in many of their communities, but their children and grandchildren were not necessarily that interested in using them. Religious observance was, in general, at a crossroads, and the percentage of families using the mikveh was extremely small. In Albany, Reb Isser discovered, there was a maximum of ten families who regularly used the *mikveh*, while the majority of the community found it completely All of which provides an adequate unnecessary. background and

explanation for the problems posed by the actual mikveh itself.

The basis of every mikveh is the forty Se'ah (approximately 800 liters) of rainwater which are gathered in one place. This water, however, becomes invalidated for use in a mikveh if it has at any stage been gathered into a movable vessel. When trying to make a *mikveh*, therefore, it will not be possible to arrange bins in different places to collect rainwater and to then combine their contents, since the water has become invalidated through being in the bin.

On countless occasions the Rebbe Rayatz and his successor, the Rebbe of our generation, stressed the crucial role and responsibility of the shochet in ensuring that all matters pertaining to the Yiddishkeit of a community be maintained at the highest level.



The city of Albany is situated on the banks of the Hudson River, which freezes over in the winter, thus providing an ideal solution for the filling of the mikveh.

The normal way to make a *mikveh* is to arrange that the rainwater should fall onto the sloping roof of a building and from there be channeled into a vertical pipe which leads into a collection tank which is built into the ground. This arrangement will, however, be viable only in places where there is (at least sometimes) an adequate rainfall. In those areas where rain is both intermittent and sparse, there could be major problems involved in establishing the mikveh.

One of the means often employed to overcome this problem involves the use of natural ice. This will mean taking blocks of ice from the river and transporting them to the location of the mikveh. Obviously, the reason for using ice is because it is a means of transporting rainwater without it having been contained in a vessel. By the same token, however, the greatest care will have to be taken to ensure that at no stage is the ice contained by the walls of the vessel. This could necessitate the use of perfectly flat shovels for gathering the ice, drilling holes in the floor of the truck used for transporting it, and countless similar precautions.

The city of Albany is situated on the banks of the Hudson River, which freezes over in the winter, thus providing an ideal solution for the filling of the mikveh. Unfortunately, either due to ignorance or for other reasons, the requisite care had not been exercised in the collection and transportation of the ice, thereby creating serious doubts as to the validity of the resulting mikveh.

Reb Isser, and the few others who were totally devoted to strict Halachic observance, found themselves in a difficult position. That most of the families in the community did not use the mikveh was hardly under their control. That even those who were committed to its use might be using an invalid mikveh, was an entirely different matter.

Reb Isser took it upon himself to present the doubts and concerns of the worried families to the President of the community. He would point out to him the supreme importance which the Shulchan Aruch attached to there being in every community a *mikveh* which was kosher to the highest standards. Surely the President would understand that their antiquated mikveh needed both a physical and spiritual renovation and would be happy to make communal funds available for such a worthy cause.

The President was, to say the least, surprised. The mikveh had been functioning for over forty years, and this was the first time anyone had suggested that there was some sort of problem.

"And who thinks that it needs fixing?" he said to his wife later that evening. "The Rabbi? No, the shochet! We pay a fellow good money - much more than we can really afford - to slaughter a few animals. We give him a job; we help him settle in a new country. And how does he show his gratitude? He starts finding fault with our community and its mikveh! Let him go and live with his friends in Brooklyn. This is Albany, U.S.A., not some medieval village in Eastern Europe."

Not surprisingly, Reb Isser's request for a complete review and refurbishment of the mikveh was politely but firmly rejected. "There really is no money available at the moment to make any improvements," said the President, trying to sound sympathetic rather than dismissive. "Maybe one day if we could cut back on the shechitah expenses, we could use the extra money for the *mikveh*," he added with a smile.

Reb Isser ignored the hint. Albany needed a mikveh which was one hundred per cent kosher. If no Rabbi had seen fit to organize it, and if a President whose commitment of Shulchan Aruch was, at best, minimal, was not prepared to support it, then the shochet would have to be the one to step into the breach.

Two major problems would now have to be solved. Firstly how to find the money for a new *mikveh*, and secondly, what to do about the families who needed a mikveh meanwhile?

The second question was the easier of the two to answer. The city of Saratoga Springs, which was relatively close to Albany, boasted a mikveh which was both new and built in accordance with the highest Halachic standards. Of course, a local mikveh would have been preferable, but, under the circumstances, a forty-minute drive to Saratoga was not the end of the world. Thus, the families of Albany started using the mikveh in Saratoga on a regular basis.

Far more difficult was the problem of raising money to build a mikveh in Albany itself. Reb Isser was encouraged by the Rebbe in his efforts, but he was unable to collect anything like the amount needed. While it was fairly predictable that Albany itself would not generate any significant funds, one could be forgiven for thinking that the enormous Jewish population of New York would participate generously. Unfortunately, their response fell far short of expectations, and Albany remained for many years without an acceptable mikveh.

At last, in 1966 the problem was solved. A certain Rabbi K., who lived at the time in Albany, decided to construct a *mikveh* in the basement of his home. The financial details are not exactly clear, but there was definitely a major saving of funds. With no need to purchase land or to pay for the building of a custommade facility, the expenses of the new mikveh would be a mere fraction of even the modest amount of money which had been raised. Reb Isser was delighted. Albany would now have its own mikveh, which would meet every Halachic requirement and, at the same time, be financially viable.





"Reb Isser, do you want money or do you want a mikveh?"

The *mikveh* was built in the basement; it was no longer necessary to travel to Saratoga, and Reb Isser, having achieved one of his life's tasks, could now relax.

Not so simple. During the next few years, the district in which Rabbi K's house (and the *mikveh*) were situated, deteriorated considerably. By 1971, several of those who patronized the *mikveh* regularly, were quite nervous about visiting the area.

In a far better neighborhood, some distance away, stood the Jewish Community Center. The Center stood on a large lot of land a considerable part of which was empty. The governing body of the Center were prepared to donate the spare land for the construction of a *mikveh*, but not to contribute in any way towards the construction costs.

Reb Isser was not keen on the idea of relocating. After all, they already had a functioning *mikveh* plus financial stability. Did they really wish to now embark on a new project which, in addition to using up all the money which they presently had in reserve,

would put them into debt for goodness knows how long? He decided to consult with the Rebbe, who, he was sure, would concur with his prudent and responsible approach.

When he was next in *yechidus* with the Rebbe, he carefully described all details and aspects of the situation as he sought the Rebbe's guidance.

The Rebbe's response was as forceful as it was brief. He looked Reb Isser in the face and said:

"?מקוה, איר ווילט געלט, צו איר ווילט א מקוה"

"Reb Isser, do you want money or do you want a mikveh?"

In other words, if you want to make a (larger, more accessible and inviting) *mikveh*, you will need to be focused on the *mikveh*, not on its cost. If, however, your main concern is that there should always be sufficient funds to cover all expenses, you may be sure that there will never be any significant growth

or improvement in either the mikveh itself or in the number of people using it.

Strong words and a fairly sharp message. reflection, however, not very different from that which a young Isser had heard from his grandfather half-a-century earlier as he watched the tickets go up in smoke: "Our concern and focus has to be on the ruchniyus. The gashmiyus will take care of itself."

This was by no means the first time that the Rebbe had expressed such an opinion. On the contrary, he repeatedly and publicly encouraged all those who were active in Torah organizations or institutions, to focus on the goal which needed to be achieved and to view all else as a means to that end.

To quote words which the Rebbe said in 5711 (1951):

"The normal approach is that when there is a decrease in income, one starts looking for ways and means of cutting back on the expenditure in order that it should not exceed the income. We need to realize that when we are dealing with the running of Torah or similar institutions, this is not Hashem's way. With regard to matters of Torah and mitzvos the opposite approach has to be taken. One has to start with the main issue - to work out how the institution should be conducted in such a manner that Hashem's intention should be fulfilled to the maximum extent. This will automatically mean expenses of such and such a sum. Only after this sum has been determined, should one look for ways to achieve the necessary income to cover these expenses."

"If there is a shortfall, it is brought explicitly in Gemara and Shulchan Aruch that Hashem says, "My children, borrow on My account and I will repay."

"My father-in-law (the Rebbe Rayatz) testified about himself that he was always in debt, since he was always trying to increase his expenditure (for spiritual matters) regardless of how much money he had at any given time. Due to this approach, the result was, as he concluded, that he never once bankrupted (failed to repay his debts) since the revenue always increased substantially in accordance with his expenditure."

"This is what the Rebbe promised to all those who are involved in communal work as his emissaries, that they too will always be in debt, since they will spend more than their income. Simultaneously, they will never bankrupt since the income will continually increase. They will then increase their expenditure even more, and so on continually."

The words speak for themselves. Far from being a call for fiscal irresponsibility, they are an encouragement to stimulate ever-increasing funds through being primarily focused on what can and should be achieved through those funds.

Let us start with ourselves. Let us open our minds and hearts, wallets and pockets, and use our money to achieve things which are really important.

And the Mikveh in Albany? It was built next to the Community Center and presently caters for approximately ten times as many families as originally used it. P

"Our concern and focus has to be on the ruchniyus. The gashmiyus will take care of itself."

MYSTICAL POWERS OF

TZADDIKIM

Sipurim Nora'im - Wondrous Tales - is a collection of stories about the early chassidic Rebbes authored by R. Yaakov Kaidaner, a chossid of the Mitteler Rebbe and the Tzemach Tzedek. The book contains stories of the Baal Shem Tov, the Maggid, the first three Chabad Rebbes and several other tzaddikim.

Though it was printed over 140 years after the Baal Shem Tov revealed himself, it is still one of the first books of chassidic stories. Several of the stories in this book were later copied into other collections.

Sipurim Nora'im is known for its commitment to accuracy. Throughout the book, the author emphasizes who he heard the story from and the reliability of that person. Some of the stories occurred with the author himself.

The Frierdiker Rebbe related how during the period of his engagement (summer of 5656 [1896]),

his father, the Rebbe Rashab, instructed him to read Sipurim Nora'im, adding that, "on R. Yaakov Kaidaner one can rely."1 It is said that the Rebbe likewise gave instructions to read Sipurim Nora'im during the engagement period, saying the book increases yiras Shomayim, which is imperative before getting married.2

As an introduction to his collection of stories, the author penned an essay on the greatness of tzaddikim and their ability to perform wonders. He explains why some people doubt the miraculous stories, and he explains in a logical manner how one can believe in these fantastical accounts.

In his book Metzaref Ha'avoda - a debate on the validity of Chassidus - R. Yaakov included this introduction as a final letter from the chossid to the misnaged. Some small sentences were added there, and they are included here enclosed in square brackets.

May the Fashioner of all forms and Creator of all beings protect me from the opinions of the mighty, who moan and chirp against the inscription of the shining stories.

Those who oppose the stories of tzaddikim are divided into two independent groups:

One group consists of those who turn to their perverseness, convoluting all actions of the good as evil, and speak disparagingly against the righteous men of the generation. The feeble-minded are seduced into believing their falsehood, and follow them "like an ox to the slaughter; like a venomous snake rushes to discipline the foolish one."3 This leads them to conclude that "It is useless to serve Hashem,"4 and they delude themselves into thinking that their shameful deeds are advantageous and more truthful than the deeds of the righteous tzadikim.

The Rambam writes regarding such people: "This is how the wicked scoffers spend their time: they begin by discussing nonsense .. and this leads them to speak negatively about tzadikim .. and in this way They therefore view the wisdom of the Oral Torah as natural human intellect, like algebraic mathematics, and the Sages of the Talmud are in their eyes like the Greek scholars, l'havdil.

they become habituated to speak against the prophets and find fault with their words."⁵

The second group consists of those who don't accept the belief that even in this natural world there exists a spiritual plane beyond the façade of nature, as there is in the spiritual worlds. Unfortunately, in this low and dark generation, this advancing plague has crept its way even into some of the learned folk. Even though we observe them studying Torah diligently, they have nevertheless clothed the holy Torah in spotted and patched clothing, i.e., the garb of pride and haughtiness. It is common knowledge that if his fellow fails to accord him the title "Gaon" when addressing him in a letter, he will harass his fellow to no end, for his pride constitutes his entire ambition in life.] All his efforts in studying the Torah are solely for the purpose of demonstrating his wisdom and to fight with and put down his colleagues and teachers. Regarding those who study with such intentions, Chazal say that it would have been better if they were never created.6

The primary cause for the outbreak of this ugly plague is their lack of *emunah* regarding the presence

of spirituality in this world, though they attempt to hide it. They therefore view the wisdom of the Oral Torah as natural human intellect, like algebraic mathematics, and the Sages of the Talmud are in their eyes like the Greek scholars, *l'havdil*. Foolishly, the sharp ones among the contemporary scholars imagine that they would certainly be among the ranks of the Talmudic Sages if they lived in that era.

(7 I hope that the reader doesn't mistake me as someone who scoffs at Torah scholars, Gd forbid. By my life, I would not have the audacity to say such things on my own. However, I saw the above points in a public lecture from the true Gaon and Tzadik R. Refael Cohen of Hamburg,⁸ transcribed in the *sefer* Zecher Tzadik.⁹ He speaks there at length against scholars of this category, and I nearly quoted his holy words verbatim.)

Based on the above words of truth, one can understand why both above-mentioned groups laugh at the shining stories. [Indeed, in similar situations the Sages¹⁰ have applied the *posuk*, ¹¹ "[For the ways of Hashem are straight;] the righteous will walk in them and sinners will stumble over them."]

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Besides for the two above-mentioned groups, there is a third category of people that view these stories strangely. It is not due to their lack of *emunah*, Gd forbid, rather because any area in which a person doesn't have familiarity and experience is considered remote and foreign from their intellectual standpoint.

For example, in the eyes of one who is not skilled in the sciences of astronomy and computation of distances, the astronomers are considered as foolish liars or "fortune tellers." An astronomer can calculate that a particular star high in the sky is 30,350 *parsah* and four *zeres*¹² away from the earth. One who is unfamiliar with this field might laugh at the astronomer and view him like someone who is crazy. In the eyes of the astronomer, on the other hand, such computation is just as obvious and simple

as measuring a table. He views the person that is ignorant in the field of astronomy as subhuman, who ought to be fed animal food instead of wasting food fit for humans.

In truth, it could very well be that this ignoramus in astronomy could be much more knowledgeable than the astronomer when it comes to other fields. For example, for the production of whiskey, it is necessary for a large amount of flour to be mixed with water. This would normally require the difficult labor of a few people mixing the flour and water over the course of a few hours. This man, however, invented a technique by which the flour can be guickly mixed with the water without the manual labor of any human being, namely through the use of steam.

In the eyes of the astronomer, however, this astronomical ignoramus is a fool. His wondrous technique for whiskey production must be some form of witchcraft, making him deserving of the death penalty.

To better relate to this concept, I will recount what I heard from a wise man from the city of Liadi who did business in the Kingdom of Prussia.¹³ He related that he once traveled to the region of Warmia, 14 where he had a business opportunity involving quality linen, and the deal involved a large sum of money. Half of the money he had on hand, and he had a banknote for the other half.

When he came to the merchant, the latter told him: "I see that you are wise - especially because you live in Liadi - and you must be familiar with the teachings of Kabbalah. I have a small question to ask of you, and if you answer me satisfactorily, I will return to you the money recorded in the post note."

The merchant proceeded to take out a siddur from his room, and pointed to the twenty six phrases ending in "ki l'olam chasdo" where there was printed the names of the angels that recite each particular praise.

The merchant asked: "I request that you explain to me how such foolishness can be printed in the *siddur*. We don't know what the angels are like, and how do we know that they have names? Even if they have



In the eyes of one who is not skilled in the sciences of astronomy and computation of distances, the astronomers are considered as foolish liars or "fortune tellers."



names, how do we know what their names are? Even if we were to know their names, how does the printer know which angel says each particular phrase?"

The man from Liadi responded: "My friend, I will relate to you what happened to me on my way here, where I saw clearly that my journey isn't successful. One night, I mistakenly strayed from the proper route. It was bitterly cold and I felt like my life was hanging on the balance. Towards morning, I finally reached an inhabited area with one large house and three small houses. I saw a tall old man standing next to the large house, who was born and raised there, and had never seen anyone else in his life. He never heard of the world of business dealings, as his livelihood was from the inn, the three houses, and working the land. He also never saw any village or city other than his inn and the three houses.

"When the old man saw me, his face darkened and he jumped backwards. When I tried to approach him, he continued distancing himself from me. He asked me in a loud voice: 'Who are you?'

I responded: 'I am a Jew.'

He asked: 'Where are you from?'

I responded: 'From Liadi.'

He asked: 'What is Liadi - an animal or a person?'

I responded: 'Liadi is the name of a city.'

He asked: 'What is a city?'

I responded: '300 houses inhabited by Jews is

called a city.'

He retorted loudly: 'You are lying! 300 houses

together don't exist - why do I live alone?!'

He asked: 'How far away is the city from here?'

I responded: 'Eighty miles.'

One night, I mistakenly strayed from the proper route. It was bitterly cold and I felt like my life was hanging on the balance.



He laughed loudly and said: 'Liar, liar! Are you a bird that can fly? How can a human being travel from such a great distance?'

I beseeched the old man to allow me into his house to warm up a bit, but he said: 'There is no way I will let you in, for I don't know what you are, perhaps you are a demon.'

He continued to ask: 'Where are you headed?'

I responded: 'To Warmia.'

He asked: 'What is Warmia?'

I responded: 'The name of a city.'

He said: 'Now I caught you lying! Before you said that the name of the city is Liadi, and now you say that the name is Warmia!'

I responded: 'Each city has its own name.'

He asked: 'How far away is Warmia?'

I responded: '100 miles.'

He asked: 'What will you do there?'

I responded: 'I want to buy quality linen."

He said: 'How are you able to know about linen in a place 180 miles away, and I don't know anything about

this? You must be some horrible witch; therefore, there is no way that I will allow you into my house.'

I responded: 'I was notified by a letter that arrived in the mail.'

He asked: 'What is a letter? Is it the name of a person? And what is the mail?'

I responded: 'A letter is made up of alphabet written on a paper.'

He said: 'I am not familiar with writing, paper and letters of the alphabet. Now you are lying again! Before you said that the letter and the mail notified you; now are saying that the paper, alphabet and writing notified you!'

At this point, I saw that I was ill-fated for I was at the brink of death. I began pleading and crying hysterically until his wife and children came out to see what was happening. When they saw me, they were also frightened and [asked: 'Who is this?' When the old man repeated our conversation to them, his wife] also concluded that I must be a witch or murderer.

His sons eventually had mercy on me, and allowed me to warm myself up in the house. They sat me in the

corner, and they all remained at a distance, for they were frightened of me. The old man continued to ask: 'Why will the man in Warmia give you the linen?'

I responded: 'Because I will give him coins.'

He asked: 'He also paid for the linen, and certainly he needs it to clothe his family. Why would he give it away to you?'

I responded: "He will profit, for I will give him more money than he paid for it.'

[He said: 'He is a thief; how can he take more money than he paid?']

He asked: 'Is it possible to bring money from such a great distance?'

I responded: 'I have a banknote from a banker to the merchant for half the money.'

He asked: 'What is a banker? Who is the banker?'

I responded: 'He is a successful merchant who is wealthy, and he is a guarantor for me.'

He asked: 'How will the merchant in Warmia know that the merchant in Liadi is a guarantor for you?'

I responded: 'I have a banknote from him.'

He asked: 'Do you have the banknote with you?'

I responded: 'Yes, I do.'

He asked to see it, and when I showed it to him, he felt it from all sides and said: 'It does not contain the worth of even one coin, and the merchant will give you merchandise in exchange for this?!' They all laughed at me as if I was crazy.

"Now, my friend, if you pay attention to this story, I think you will find a satisfactory answer to your question. The old man in the story is not to blame, for he never saw or heard the dealings of the world. Therefore, I was a witch, liar and crazy man in his eyes. If he would have been involved with other people throughout his life, he may very well have been a successful merchant. On a similar note, although you are extremely knowledgeable, when it comes to Kabbalah you are analogous to the old man's view on business dealings."

Indeed, Gdly wisdom is extremely broad and deep; each detail containing myriads of profound concepts. As in our case, the knowledge regarding the essence of an angel as well as the meaning of names; why when three or four letters are combined together they become a name for a person or angel. Additionally, there are deep and wondrous esoteric explanations on the topic of the letters.

One who has studied these topics thoroughly with the proper depth does not view the names of the angels as foreign. This is analogous to the way we view the knowledge of merchandise 100 parsah away as commonplace just like seeing something close by, notwithstanding the fact that the old man in the story viewed it as divining the unknown.



There are esoteric explanations connected to every detail in the text of the prayers. To one who was granted by Gd knowledge in this area, it is evident why a specific praise is connected to a particular angel with a particular name. Based on his knowledge of the inner intention hidden within every letter of the praise, it is apparent how it corresponds to that particular angel.

It is not wondrous to us how the merchant can give such a large amount of money in exchange for a paper with some letters. The old man in the story thought that this was illogical, similar to the way you view the names of angels. However, when one is familiar with worldly dealings, one views the old man who was unfamiliar as not in the category of humans.

Every intelligent person knows that in this generation many oppose supernatural things. They compare these ideas to prophecy, which has long departed from the Jewish people, and dismiss these wondrous stories as impossible. For this reason, we must discuss the concept of Ruach Hakodesh. We will keep it short, as I am anxious to complete this work and I don't intend to expound on the topic.

R. Chaim Vital, in his Shaar HaKedusha, 15 writes as follows: "One who deals kindly with his Creator is called holy, for he has refined himself of all impurities and sanctified his soul with the sanctity of Hashem... [he makes himself a chariot to Hashem's holiness...] This is what Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair referred to when he said:16 'Abstinence brings to purity... holiness brings to piety, and piety brings to Ruach Hakodesh.' He has attached himself completely to Hashem, reaching the revelation of the Torah's secrets and the ability to prophesize the future. 'Rabbi Meir said:17 One who studies Torah for its own sake merits many things... and the secrets of Torah are revealed to him..."

This implies that one who refines his body to a great extent will know the future. However, it is difficult to understand the connection that proper conduct and purity of thought has with knowing the future. Refining one's materialistic body can make a person a fitting receptacle for the spirit of prophecy, which is bestowed from above. In the above quotation, however, the reference is to Ruach Hakodesh, something attained on one's own, without divine revelation.

This will be understood by prefacing what R. Chaim Vital writes there 18 in connection to prophecy and Ruach Hakodesh in particular: "Following the prophets of Chagai, Zecharia, and Malachi, prophecy ceased and Ruach Hakodesh remained; the latter being the drawing of the lights of Yetzira on their own."

From this it is understood that one who has refined himself is able to reach the level of *Ruach Hakodesh*. This means that the spiritual lights of the world of Yetzira will be revealed to him, and his entire being transformed to the refined nature of Yetzira. In other words, his sense of time and place, as well as his eyesight and all his senses will be on the level of Yetzira.

As is known, everything that exists in this physical world is found in the spiritual worlds as well, only that they exist on a spiritual and refined level. In this regard, each world is considered as physical in relation to the world above it: Beriah relative

To one who was granted by Gd knowledge in this area, it is evident why a specific praise is connected to a particular angel with a particular name.

to Atzilus, Yetzira relative to Beriah, and Asiyah relative to Yetzira. Nonetheless, whatever is found in the lower world exists in the world above it in a spiritual state.

In the physical world of Asiyah, the concept of space is grounded in a very physical sense; in Yetzira, however, it exists on a more refined level.

To illustrate: If one envisions physical space in his mind, the picture is intangible and spiritual relative to the actual space; in relation to Yetzira, however, even the envisioned image is still considered physical. Nonetheless, the essential concept of space does exist in Yetzira - indeed it serves as the source for space in this world - albeit on a different plane. Time also exists in Yetzira, though it is more spiritual, quicker, and undefined than time in this world. Our time is limited to the present moment; what the future will bring is completely unknown. In Yetzira, however, what will happen twenty years later is known just the same as the present moment.19 In Beriah and Atzilus, the concepts of time and space are even more spiritual and undefined; [in Beriah, for example,] the "present" includes 100 years of our time.

We observe in the soul that the more spiritual the faculty is, the quicker it takes to function and fulfill its goal. Will-power is the highest faculty, not even limited by the letters of thought, and what takes a moment to desire can take fifteen minutes to think about in an organized fashion. To speak about this

desire would take two hours, and to actually act upon the desire takes a lot longer. In a similar fashion, the more spiritual the world is, the more its concept of time is unlimited, to the point that in Atzilus one day is equivalent to 1000 of our years.

In the same way, all our bodily senses are also found in the spiritual worlds, but in more refined manner than the way they exist in this physical world. Evesight in this world can be blocked and limited due to an obstruction, a far distance or darkness, and it is also limited to the present moment.

As is known, eyesight is rooted in the brain-faculty of Chochma, and sight exists also on an intellectual level, such as in the teaching,²⁰ "Who is wise? One who perceives the consequences [of an action]." Eyesight is physical relative to intellectual sight. The latter is not obstructed by a wall, for a person can determine the way it must be on the other side. Darkness as well as distance in place or time don't hinder intellectual sight either, and one can accurately predict what the price of merchandise will be a year later in a distant place if he is truly wise.

Based on the above, we can have some understanding regarding the refined nature of sight in Yetzira. Relative to it, even the intellectual perception of a tremendous genius is rendered physical; the distance between them being incomparably greater than between intellectual perception and physical eyesight. Similarly, the sweetness experienced

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when comprehending a deep intellectual concept is considered physical relative to the sweet taste of a fruit as it exists on the level of Yetzira.

This is evidenced by the fact that souls divested of their bodies derive pleasure in the lower Gan Eden; the spiritual layer of Asiyah, which receives from the lowest level (Malchus d'Malchus, the tenth level within the tenth sefira) of Yetzira. If the sweetness of Gan Eden's fruit would be at all comparable to the sweetness of a deep intellectual concept, it would not serve as a source of pleasure for souls that are divested of bodies and do not anymore relate even to the most spiritual aspects of the physical world. It must be, therefore, that the fruit in Gan Eden is on a spiritual level that is incomparably higher than anything found in the physical world. This demonstrates that even the most lofty and spiritual levels of this world are completely incomparable to the lowest ("coarsest") levels in Yetzira.

Based on the above, it is understood that the bodily senses in this lowly world are far inferior compared to the way they exist in Yetzira. Therefore, those who

attained Ruach Hakodesh and reached the sanctity of the world of Yetzira by completely divesting themselves from the concealments of the body and physical world, also have intellect and sight as it exists on the level of Yetzira. Because the concepts of time and place in Yetzira are on a different plane, it is no wonder that they can see something 1000 parsaos away and know what will happen years later, for this is the type of sight that exists in Yetzira. It is comparable to the way it is not wondrous how a wise person can use his intellectual perception to predict what will happen in a future year, only that the sight in Yetzira is loftier than even the deep intellect of Shlomo Hamelech by myriads of levels.

After these words of truth, which are sourced in the "holy mountains," it is not surprising how the stories transcend the realm of nature. Through their intense refinement, they attained Ruach Hakodesh, and perceived everything as it exists in Yetzira. Therefore, they saw what was happening in a distant place just like we see a close place, and knew what would transpire years later in the same way that we know what is happening in the present moment.

The sweetness experienced when comprehending a deep intellectual concept is considered physical relative to the sweet taste of a fruit as it exists in Yetzira.

One shouldn't wonder how such levels can shine in our lowly generation, for it is addressed clearly in Tana D'vei Eliyahu which is quoted [by R. Chaim Vital] in Shaar HaKedusha (3:7):

"After we have warned against the methods of comprehending the future in the previous section,²¹ one still mustn't despair. On the posuk,22 "Devorah was a prophetess..." it is taught in Tana D'vei Eliyahu:23 'By the testimony of the heavens and earth. whether it is a man or woman, Jew or non-Jew, and even a slave or maidservant, their conduct can make them worthy of Ruach Hakodesh resting upon them. We have heard about, and seen, unique individuals that have attained Ruach Hakodesh in the present time, and they would tell the future. Some of them knew of wisdom that was not revealed in previous generations."

It is well documented in the Talmud various miracles that were brought about by the Tannaim, comparable to the greatest prophets. Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair commanded a river to split,24 and the emperor Antuninus told Rebbi "I know that that the smallest amongst you revives the dead."

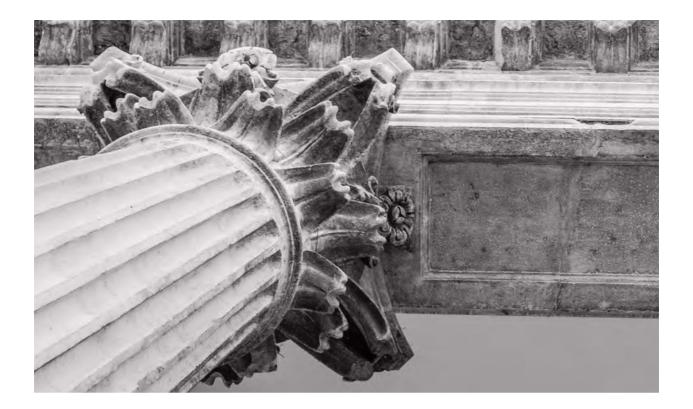
Knowledge of the future was considered something trivial to them, as evident from the account in Yosifun (Chapter 55): "When Hurdus would go as a lad to study by the sages, Menachem, a colleague of Hillel the Elder, was among the assembly of sages. When Menachem saw the lad, he stood up, prostrated himself and proclaimed, 'Long live the king, long live the king.' The lad assumed that the sage was mocking him, so he cursed the sage. Menachem

grabbed him and smacked him on his bottom as lads are disciplined, and told him: 'You will surely reign with great wealth and honor, and your kingship over the nation of Hashem will be vast. When you will be king, you should remember the smack I gave you, for it signifies the sins you will commit. You will do many evils and you will also do good things, but follow my voice to hold onto the good and discard the bad. It is in vain that I discipline you with words, for I see that you will not abandon the evil conduct.' Menachem thereupon wept profusely...

"And it came to pass that when Hurdus became king. he remembered what had transpired. He called for Menachem and told him: 'Your words have been fulfilled, and since you possess Gdly wisdom, please tell me how many years I will rule and how long I will live.' The sage kept silent without answering him, and the king became frightened, thinking to himself that his end was near and therefore the sage was silent. The king asked further: 'Please tell me, will I rule for ten more years?' Menachem responded: 'Ten, twenty, and even thirty and more.' The king asked: 'How much is more?' but the sage remained silent. The king was very joyous as he trusted the words of Menachem, and he honored him and gave him great wealth."

The words of Menachem were fulfilled in entirety. as described in Yosifun. Although this appears to be prophecy, it is known that prophecy had already ceased by the time of the Tannaim. Rather this was Ruach Hakodesh which was attained by the Tannaim through refining their physicality and dedicating themselves entirely to Torah.

When Menachem saw the lad, he stood up, prostrated himself and proclaimed, 'Long live the king, long live the king.'



For us, it would be a loss of much goodness if we would not know what transpired with our predecessors that shone before us.

It has been a while now that I have been feeling zealous for the heavenly saints who lived amongst us and by now are almost forgotten. True, they don't lose out because of this, as they are basking in the shade of Hashem's glory with crowns on their heads, and their respect in this earthly world is of no significance to them.

For us, however, it would be a loss of much goodness if we would not know what transpired with our predecessors that shone before us. Therefore, I believed that if I were to remain silent, I would be sinning to Hashem. Thus, I raise my hands to Hashem, although it's difficult for me and my strength is waning. This desire emboldened my soul with

strength to set forth a virtuous remembrance for the achievements of the heavenly saints. With my stylus I will inscribe a small portion of the vast amount that I saw and heard from the elite of the land, [and this will serve as a remembrance for myself, as well as others in our time.]

By my life, I was extremely careful not to sin with my tongue, and I withheld one thousand words in order not to stumble with one crookedness. I didn't gather anything in my hand unless I saw it and verified it, or I heard it from trustworthy people who don't speak falsehood and stood at the wellsprings of Torah and holiness.



Our merciful Father, may He be blessed, had mercy on our lowly and dark generation. In a time when truth is lacking, falsehood is gaining strength, and holiness is being cast aside; the pure emunah missing even from the Torah scholars. In order to restore the fallen sukkah of Dovid, He let gold flow from his treasure house which houses the lofty souls; the one unique one amongst many generations, the holy soul of the Baal Shem Tov, which served as a balm to heal the sinners and to enliven the righteous and upright with Gdly vitality, as well as the pure soul of his student, the holy Rabbi Dovber, 25 whose teachings were lofty and esoteric. With wondrous love he transmitted this to his veteran pupil, who shone with two lights (Shneur), the broadness of the revealed Torah and the depths of

its hidden dimensions. The heavenly nazirites, his grandson and great-grandson,26 inherited the double lights until the coming of the redemption.

Hashem continued in His mercy to shine forth tzadikim, geonim, heavenly saints, that will pour the living waters from the river originating from Eden, from the mouth of the holy Yisrael, 27 in whom Hashem takes pride, and from the mouth of the master who reigns in the treasure houses of the hidden secrets, namely Dovber,28 flowing water from the One of Ancient Days to all.

It arose in my thoughts to transcribe their wondrous deeds, so that subsequent generations will know the kindness of our Creator who did not remove His kindness and truth from His nation, and displayed

When alert eyes will recognize that the occurrences recorded herein are impossible under natural circumstances, his soul will be enlivened with Gdly vitality, and when he reads the wondrous stories, his heart will become enflamed for Torah and service of Hashem.

His Gdliness to our fleshly eyes similar to the way He did in previous generations. When alert eyes will recognize that the occurrences recorded herein are impossible under natural circumstances, his soul will be enlivened with Gdly vitality, and when he reads the wondrous stories, his heart will become enflamed for Torah and service of Hashem. Conversely, this lowly world will be secondary to him; in his eyes like an antechamber to enter the banquet hall.

I be seech from Hashem to protect me from stumbling with my tongue. Many opportunities to stumble await the tongue, and it is almost impossible for one who speaks much to avoid this, if not for the help of Hashem who accounts for our deeds.

When these words of mine will please the knowledgeable amongst the nation, I will know that my hopes have not been let down. May the pleasantness of Hashem be upon me, and the work of my hands be established. I will not display my name on this letter of mine, for this is not my desire. I did not compile this other than to demonstrate that the Jewish nation is not widowed, and we have seen Hashem's wonders even in the present generations. I desired the truth, therefore, my palate will utter truth and my lips will speak just words; my forever faithful witness is in the Heaven.

Anyone who seeks the truth will certainly find Gdly delight in these words of truth, and why do you ask for my name when it is concealed. Your light will burst forth like the dawn.

Endnotes

- 1 Reshimas Hayoman, p. 376.
- 2 Shaarei Nisu'in, p. 299.
- 3 Mishlei 7:22.
- 4 Malachi 3:14.
- 5 Rambam end of Hilchos Tumas Tzaraas
- 6 Berachos 17a.
- 7 Parenthesis in the original.
- 8 Rabbi Refael Cohen (1722-1803) was a disciple of the famed Shaagas Arveh, and later became chief Rabbi of Altona. Hamburg, and Wandsbeck. Although he numbered among the followers of the Gra, he refused to participate in the cherem against the Chassidim, see the introduction to Beis Rebbi.
- 9 This sefer contains his two final public lectures. It was first printed in 1805. In the 1879 edition, this portion appears on pg. 11b. In the new 1990 edition, on pg. 28.
- 10 See for example Nazir 23a.
- 11 Hosheia 14:10.
- 12 A Parsah consists of 4 mil, each made up of 2000 amos, equaling approximately 2.4 miles. A zeres consists of 3 tefachim, equaling around 9.45 inches.
- 13 A German kingdom that constituted the state of Prussia between 1701 and 1918 and included parts of present-day $Germany, Poland, Russia, Lithuania, Denmark, Belgium\ and\ the$ Czech Republic.
- 14 Warmia is a region in northern Poland, and was part of the historical province of Prussia.

- 15 Vol. 1, gate 3.
- 16 Avodah Zarah, 20b.
- 17 Avos 6:1.
- 18 Shaarei Kedusha, vol. 1, gate 3.
- 19 In Derech Mitzwosecha, Haamanas Elokus, ch. 12, the Tzemach $Tzedek\ explains\ that\ the\ many\ details\ of\ this\ world\ are\ included$ in a more general way in the spiritual worlds, and ten or fifteen years can be seen in one glance. Based on this, he explains the story when the Baal Shem Tov wrote to his brother-in-law regarding events that had not transpired yet, for the Baal Shem Toy would ascend to the chambers of Yetzira where time was more inclusive
- 20 Tamid, 32b.
- 21 He details there methods of prophecy that are not applicable anymore and methods of practical kabbalah (kabbalah maasis) which are forbidden to be used.
- 22 Shoftim 4:4.
- 23 Section 9.
- 24 Chulin 7a
- 25 The Maggid of Mezritch.
- 26 Apparently alluding to the Mitteler Rebbe and Tzemach Tzedek.
- 27 A reference to the Baal Shem Tov, from whom all the chassidic Rebbes drew their waters.
- $28\,\mathrm{A}\,\mathrm{reference}$ to the Mitteler Rebbe, who was Rebbe at the time this was written

A Pair of WITCHES and their DOWNFALL

Recorded by

R. YANKEL KAIDANER

in his work **Sipurim Noraim**

IN THE SURROUNDS of

Liozna, there was a brilliant young Torah scholar who would spend his day in the study of G-d's Torah, supported by his father-in-law. With time, the fatherin-law's financial position faltered, and the young man was forced to enter the business world.

One time, the young man made a trip to the regional trade fair and bought some merchandise there, but on the return trip his wagon driver fell ill and was left bedridden at a wayside inn, so the young man carried on by himself.

It was close to Shavuos, and the young man's long standing custom had been to travel to Liadi each year in order spend the holiday with the Alter Rebbe. So, as he travelled through the forest that bordered on Liadi, he was suddenly flooded with the memories of regular visits to the Rebbe. So acute were his pangs of bitter nostalgia that he decided, then and there, to throw everything else aside. He abandoned his wagon and wares in the forest and proceeded on foot until he had arrived in Liadi, close to Mincha time.

As he entered the Rebbe's study hall, the Rebbe remarked to his precious son, the great Rabbi Dovber, "This young man here, with his tremendous selfsacrifice, is worthy of being called a chossid." The rabbi, the son, was amazed, for he knew that his father had not yet exchanged even a single word with the fellow since his arrival. Eventually, after approaching and speaking with the young man, Rabbi Dovber learned for himself of the chossid's act of selfsacrifice.

With the conclusion of the holiday, the young man entered the Rebbe's holy chambers for an audience.

The Rebbe told him, "The wagon and the wares will, please G-d, be fine."

But it was precisely the wagon and wares that had been the cause of the young chossid's anxieties. "What shall I do?" he cried. "These business dealings are distracting me from my Torah study and service of G-d!"

"My firm advice is this," said the Rebbe. "See to it that you purchase an inn outside a village. It is an untroubled means of livelihood, as your wife will be able to manage the liquor sales, and you will be able to study and pray."

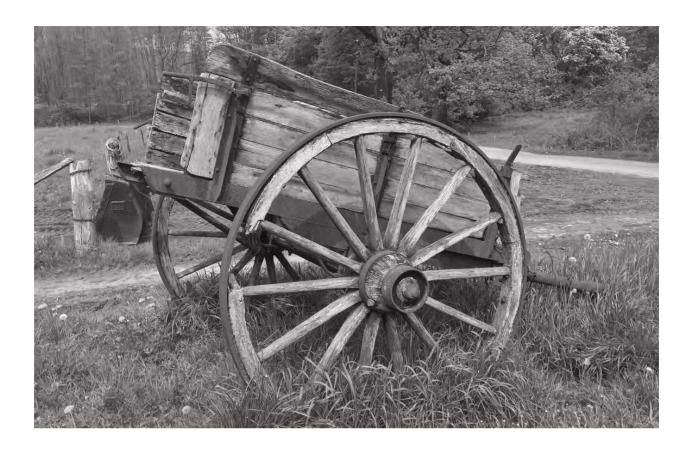
After this he went off on his way, back to where he had left the wagon, and saw from a distance that the wagon, along with the wares, were indeed still standing intact by side of the road.

Meanwhile, travelling from the opposite side of the forest, a great nobleman was approaching the same spot. He, too, spied the wagon and merchandise from afar, and noticed they were standing on their own, unaccompanied by any man. Then he watched how the young man came over to the wagon.

As the nobleman neared the wagon, he called out to the young man, and asked him, "I've been watching that wagon from quite a distance away; why has it been standing by itself in the middle of the forest, without anyone to watch it?"

The young chossid smiled. "My lord," he said to the nobleman, "the wagon has been standing like that, all by itself, for three days!" And without much thought, he proceeded to relate the entire story, much to the nobleman's amazement.

As he travelled through the forest that bordered on Liadi, he was suddenly flooded with the memories of regular visits to the Rebbe.



"My lord," he said to the nobleman, "the wagon has been standing like that, all by itself, for three days!"

"I see in you that you are a good, upright man," the nobleman eventually said. "In my estates, there is an inn that would offer a good living for yourself. If you so wish, you may rent it."

"But I am poor man - I have no money for an inn, or even to buy any alcohol stock or animal feed to sell," said the young man.

"I will give you the money and everything you need to run the inn," replied the nobleman, "and in 12 or 13 months you will certainly be able to pay me off, because the inn is a good source of income."

The young man agreed, and the nobleman told him where the property was located, and his name. He then travelled on to his home, sold his merchandise, and from there to the nobleman, to rent the inn. But once he was there, the Jewish people who live around

the nobleman's lands told him that he shouldn't be renting the inn, even though it was indeed in a profitable location: Anyone who resided in that inn would not make it through the year without suffering a loss of life - either his wife, his children, or himself. As they went on to tell him, there was a gentile who lived beside the inn and worked the mill that sat in its courtyard, and that he and his wife were great sorcerers. "And that," they concluded, "is why we all steer clear of the inn."

"I have no fear of witches," the young man responded. "My holy Rebbe instructed me to take this up as a living- would our holy Rebbe provide me with a livelihood that would kill me? From him, no evil will result, G-d forbid."

Disregarding their words, he took the inn from the nobleman, and the money that the baron gave him proved to be more than enough. After several months, he returned the funds to the nobleman in full, for now he had ample income, and he met blessing and success wherever he turned. Soon, he became wealthy in that inn.

After half a year, he began to sense that he was ill. As the days wore on, the illness grew stronger, and he became so feeble that he could barely walk on his own feet, and he understood that it was the work of the gentile sorcerer. He hurriedly prepared himself for travel to the Rebbe in Liadi, and arrived there on a Shabbos eve, the week that the Torah portion of Balak was to be read.

On Shabbos, after the evening prayers, the Rebbe taught Chassidus, but the young fellow was so very weak that he was unable to listen in on the discourse. Only on the next day, for the morning prayers, he managed to muster the strength to come to shul where the Rebbe was praying. The Rebbe did not see the young man's face, and did not notice him at all.

It was the Rebbe's custom to read the Torah for the shul himself, and when he reached the fifth portion of the reading, he specifically instructed that the young man be called up to the Torah for an aliyah. The congregation was completely mystified by this development, since it had never happened before that the Rebbe should personally order whom would receive which aliyah. What's more is that it seemed quite clear that the Rebbe hadn't even known of the visitor's arrival at all before then; this was the first time he come to the shul, and he had only arrived halfway through the prayers since he was so weak.

The Rebbe seemed to become especially fervent as the young man ascended to the Torah, glowing like fire as he began reading the Torah portion with intense passion. When he reached the verse "For there is no divination in Jacob and no soothsaying in Israel," he turned his head backward, and it was as though he was transformed into a fiery flame. His eyes were wide open, as they were whenever his soul ascended heavenward, and he recited the verse again and several times more, each recital with extraordinary, ever-greater devotion. The assembled crowd was shocked; they had never seen anything like it in their lives.

When he reached the fifth portion of the reading, he specifically instructed that the young man be called up to the Torah for an aliyah.





The city of Dzisna

After Shabbos, the young man began to feel his body regain its strength. Eventually he was able to visit the Rebbe's holy study, and the young man recounted what had happened to him.

"Do not worry at all," the Rebbe told him. "Please G-d, you will be perfectly healthy, 'for there is no divination in Jacob." Again, he repeated the verse several times with extraordinary fervor, then he blessed him, and bid him farewell on his journey home.

The young man travelled back to his home, and even while still on the road, he felt almost entirely healthy. Once he had arrived, and neared his house, the Jewish people who lived around the nobleman said to him, "Did you hear what happened near your inn? That gentile who lives next to you, beside the inn, the one who manages the mill - he and his wife both met a sudden, unexpected death, just like that, without even presenting the slightest signs of illness beforehand!"

"What day did this happen?" he asked them.

"On the holy day of Shabbos, in the morning," they said, and he told them how in Liadi, during his *aliyah* to the Torah, he'd had a premonition of just such an occurrence.

When he came home, his wife related the same thing to him, and they knew that this story had taken place at the very moment that our holy Rebbe had read the verse, "For there is no divination in Jacob." The time of death had been at that moment, only once he had repeated the verse several times.

This incredible story has since become universally renowned and oft-repeated: When I was recently in the city of Dzisna and mentioned the episode, all of the locals said that they recalled it. They knew the young chossid in the story, and they even knew the sorcerer, for the courtyard in which the story had transpired is close to Dzisna. They said that the young man grew enormously wealthy there, and became known as one of the more outstanding Torah scholars of the region; for the rest of his days, he would never leave the tent of Torah. P



ONE

"YOU HAVE REVIVED ME!"

A Rebbi at the Lubavitch *Cheder* of Detroit, Michigan, was talking to his class. He told the boys that we have to learn from the way the Rebbe cherishes every word in *davening*, how the Rebbe stands so seriously and says every word from the *Siddur*. One student internalized his *rebbi's* words, and took upon himself to begin saying *Birkas Hashachar* in the morning from a *siddur*.

After keeping to his *hachlata* for a while, the young boy wrote a letter to the Rebbe, reporting what he was doing. Despite the heaps of unanswered mail, and the weight of *Klal Yisroel's* burning issues on his shoulders, the Rebbe made time to express to the child the significance of his letter. The Rebbe wrote to him:

"Hechyisoni, kemayim karim al nefesh ayeifa – You have revived me; like cold water on a weary soul!"

"Hechyisoni, kemayim karim al nefesh ayeifa – You have revived me; like cold water on a weary soul!"

TWO

"HAYITOCHEN?"

Reb Gershon Shusterman shared the following personal story:

"I was twelve years old, learning in the *cheder* on at Ocean Parkway, when I received a message that the principle wants to see me. At the principal's office, he dropped a bombshell. Harav Chodakov, the Rebbe's *mazkir* had asked to see me! I was to come at nine o'clock to his office, knock once, and wait. I felt nauseous, and I was literally trembling. But at the appointed time, I was at the office, my little knees pounding against each other.

"Harav Chodakov had a message for me. He showed me a recent test I had taken at *cheder*, (which had been included in the reports the Rebbe received regularly) on which I had received an unacceptable mark. Next to the mark, in pencil, and in the unmistakable handwriting of the Rebbe, was etched one word: *Hayitochen* – How's this possible?

"The Rebbe did not say I was bad, or even that I had done badly. This word meant one thing; I know you could have done much better. It was uplifting, but certainly very demanding."



Next to the mark, in pencil, and in the unmistakable handwriting of the Rebbe, was etched one word: Hayitochen – How's this possible?

THREE

"WHEN WILL YOU MASTER ALL THESE SEFORIM?"

A conversation that took place on 13 Nissan 5712:

A young boy, free from *cheder*, was playing outside the Rebbe's room. When the Rebbe saw him, he inquired why he was not learning. The child explained that there was no *cheder* during the days preceding *Pesach*. The Rebbe repeated his question, and the child, thinking that the Rebbe had not understood him, repeated his answer.

Seeing that the child was not comprehending, the Rebbe took a sefer from his table, opened it to the last page, and patiently said to the child, "Do you see how many pages there are in this *sefer*? And do you see how many *seforim* there are in this room? And do you know that there are many more *seforim*?"

The child nodded his head in the affirmative, and the Rebbe continued. "When will you master all these *seforim*, if you don't learn in your own time?"

FOUR

"THE HANHALA HAS KINDLY AGREED..."

It once happened that a *talmid* of the *yeshivah* on Bedford Ave. was suspended from the *yeshivah* by Harav Mentlik, the Rosh Yeshivah. He would only be allowed back if he learned a certain amount of *Tanya baal peh*.

The *talmid* wrote a letter to the Rebbe, in which he wrote that he feels the punishment is unfair. He asked of the Rebbe to please speak to the *hanhala*, to accept him back, without requiring him to learn *baal peh*.

The Rebbe's answer flabbergasted the *talmid*:

"In your letter, I was pleased to read that the *hanhala* has kindly agreed to facilitate your continued learning in the *yeshivah*, under various conditions. In truth, these conditions, should really be done out of your own accord, for this way you may rectify your misdeeds..."

(Hiskashrus, issue 535)



FIVE

YECHIDUS OF A TWELVE YEAR OLD

Reb Yisroel Yosef Zalmanov relates:

"When I turned twelve years old, I merited a special yechidus. I went in on the $11^{\rm th}$ of Shevat, at 8:30pm.

"The Rebbe said, 'Although the mitzvos are only binding once a boy turns thirteen, there is one exception, the *mitzvah* of *neder*, which is also incumbent on a twelve year old.

"What is a *neder*? A *neder* is made about something permitted but unnecessary. The person vows to abstain from indulging in this permissible activity.

"This is what is demanded from a chossid, even a twelve-year-old chossid. Clearly, the forbidden is out of the question. A chossid, though, must also know the concept of *lifnim mishuras hadin*, serving Hashem beyond the letter of the law."

(Heichal Menachem, vol 2, page 207)

This is what is demanded from a chossid, even a twelve-yearold chossid.

HAVING TIME SIX

When a boy would come into the Rebbe before his bar-mitzvah, he would receive a special bracha. Often, the Rebbe would ask him to say a part of his *drash*a, on which the Rebbe would often comment on the content and delivery.

When Reb Shlomo Majeski entered yechidus for his bar-mitzvah, he was asked by the Rebbe what he prepared to say for the bar-mitzvah, and upon his reply, he was asked to begin reciting the ma'amar.

When the bochur reached the part where the ma'amar says, "Yidden say to Hashem, 'We want to learn Torah, but we have no time!", the Rebbe stopped him and said lovingly in the tune of the maamar, "But you, who doesn't have the responsibilities of parnassa, can study Torah day and night, and you cannot exempt yourself with tefillin..."



A DAY WITHOUT TORAH?! SEVEN

The Rebbe looked at the father and said with disappointment, "How could this be?!"

During yechidus, the Rebbe would often ask children what they were learning, and have a small discussion with them on the subject.

On Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan, 5740 (1980), the Rebbe asked a child what he is learning. The boy answered mishnayos and Chumash. The Rebbe tested the boy on Parshas Beshalach, after which he asked, "Are there mitzriyim today?"

The boy did not answer. The Rebbe turned to the father and said, "He obviously doesn't follow world events..."

That same evening, a six-year-old boy entered yechidus, and the Rebbe asked him what he had learned that day. Since the boy was visiting New York with his father for Tishrei, he had not learned anything that day. The boy, therefore, did not answer.

The Rebbe looked at the father and said with disappointment, "How could this be?!"

EIGHT

IN THE REBBE'S HANDS

"I was eight years old," recalls Reb Mordechai Meshulovin, "and was visiting 770 for my first time, in Elul 5738 (1978).

"One Friday, my uncle Yitzchok Chazan advised me to stand in the lobby, so I would get a dime from the Rebbe's holy hand. Indeed, as the Rebbe came out, he noticed me and gave me the coin. "Here is where the trouble began. Try as I might, I couldn't reach the slot in the pushka to put the coin in. In those days, there was only the higher slot. I jumped a few times, but couldn't manage.

"What happened next took a split second. The Rebbe slipped his siddur under his holy arm, and picked me up in the air. I put the dime in the pushka, and the Rebbe put me down."

The Rebbe slipped his siddur under his holy arm, and picked me up in the air. I put the dime in the pushka, and the Rebbe put me down.



SENSITIVE GUIDANCE NINE

The Rebbe called over one of the girls, and said to her, "Please go over to your friend, and wish her a gut Shabbos. It was a sunny Shabbos afternoon, and two little girls were playing in the courtyard of 770.

Just then, the Rebbe had to pass through, on his way to the library, where the Rebbe and Rebbetzin would stay for Shabbos. However, the Rebbe could not walk in between the two girls, as halacha prescribes.

The Rebbe called over one of the girls, and said to her, "Please go over to your friend, and wish her a gut Shabbos." The girl happily obliged, their feelings were not hurt, and the path was cleared for the Rebbe to walk.

TEN

CARING FOR A CHILD

Reb Dovber Levitin of Eretz Yisroel relates:

"I came to 770 as a child for Tishrei 5739 (1978). Every Monday and Thursday, when the Rebbe came in for krias haTorah, I would go to receive a nickel or dime for tzedaka.

"One day I was late. As I ran to 770 on Eastern Parkway, I suddenly noticed the Rebbe's car driving next to me. The car was driving at an unusually slow pace, so I kept on running together with it, and ended up arriving just on time to 770.

"The mazkir Reb Binyomin Klein later told me, 'While I was driving, the Rebbe noticed you, and told me that this must be a child from Eretz Yisroel who doesn't want to miss the tzedaka, so I should slow down. As I drove, the Rebbe watched you run with a broad smile."

This must be a child from Eretz Yisroel who doesn't want to miss the tzedaka



ELEVEN HIGH EXPECTATIONS

The Rebbe saw potential in children where others could not. The time of the young was especially valuable, and on occasion the Rebbe would express deep wishes for its utilization in school, after school hours and during *yom tov* vacation.

Reb Yosef Yitzchok Katz relates:

As the *kos shel brocha* line moved along, the photographer Reb Levi Itche Freidin stood to the Rebbes far right and was snapping pictures. A twelve year old boy, a friend of mine, stood next to Mr. Freidin and occupied himself with changing the films for his cameras.

Suddenly the Rebbe bent over, and looked at the boy. With the *becher* still in his hand, the Rebbe said to him:

"Your grandfather was immersed in the *maamorim* of the Mitteler Rebbe, and you waste your time playing with these toys?!"

As a father motivates his child, the Rebbe looked straight at him and said, "Start learning the Mitteler Rebbes maamorim!"

(As heard from Reb YY Katz)

"Your grandfather was immersed in the maamorim of the Mitteler Rebbe, and you waste your time playing with these toys?!"



TWELVE

WHEN A CHILD ASKS

Every Hoshana Raba, the Rebbe would stand at the door of his *sukka* and lovingly distribute *lekach* to an endless line of men, women and children.

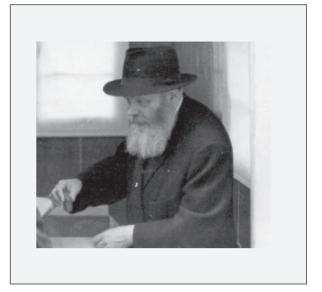
"One year," relates Harav Osher Lemel Cohen of Beitar, "My wife went by with our daughter (Mrs. Yocheved Butman). She was then two years old. and as she approached the Rebbe, she stretched out her hand.

"Although there were others before her in the line, the Rebbe extended his hand over them, to give the honey cake to my eager daughter.

"When my wife's turn came, the Rebbe gave her a piece of cake, and then my daughter stuck her hand out again. The Rebbe again gave her a piece.

"One of the attendants quickly commented that she had already received. But the Rebbe, despite a most hectic schedule, patiently turned around and said, 'When a child asks for more, one must give...'"

(Parshios Im Harebi, Bereishis, page 233)



The Rebbe, despite a most hectic schedule, patiently turned around and said, "When a child asks for more, one must give..."

THIRTEEN

FATHERLY CARE

RebShabsaiSlavatitzkirelatesthefollowinganecdote:

"On one occasion when the Rebbe distributed nickels to the children, to be given to tzedaka, my family and I merited to be in 770 to take part. Our young daughter received a nickel. In the commotion, we found ourselves standing some distance from our daughter. The Rebbe noticed that our daughter was alone, and he himself bent down and picked her up. In the Rebbe's hands, she managed to reach the pushka and drop the penny inside.

"Immediately thereafter, the Rebbe continued towards the beis medrash for davening. Our daughter was stuck in the sea of bochurim swarming to follow the Rebbe. Our daughter was unnoticed and in quite a predicament. Suddenly, the Rebbe turned around and pointed with his finger towards our daughter. Almost instantly, a path formed, allowing our daughter to rejoin the rest of the family.

"We have still kept the little coat in which the Rebbe held our daughter, as a memory of that special moment."

The Rebbe noticed that our daughter was alone, he bent down and picked her up.



FOURTEEN

HEARTINESS, SIMPLICITY AND INNOCENCE

The sun was blazing as the Rebbe walked to the library on *Chag Hashovuos* 5738 (1978). A small child, thinking that this was his father, ran up to the Rebbe. He held onto the Rebbe's hand, and wiped the sweat from his forehead with the Rebbe's *kapata*.

Aghast bystanders scolded the child's mother for allowing this to happen. Remorsefully, she sat down after *yom tov* to pen a letter of apology, and gave it in to the Rebbe.

On *Motzoei Shabbos Parshas Pinchas* the mother received her response. The Rebbe began by marking her apology letter with a question mark and an exclamation point.

Then the Rebbe wrote: "Quite the contrary, it gave me great pleasure: The heartiness, simplicity and innocence of a child are immeasurable. If only the adults would have something of it."

"Quite the contrary, it gave me great pleasure: The heartiness, simplicity and innocence of a child are immeasurable. If only the adults would have something of it." easy. simple. cash.





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