

Perspectives

ב"ה

TWENTY THREE

TO HEAR IT FROM THE REBBE HIMSELF

Reb Yoel Kahan

**TEPLACH AND KEPLACH:
KEEPING A KOSHER HEAD**

Rabbi Uriel Tzimmer

**CHASSIDUS IS MEANT
TO BE UNDERSTOOD**

Rabbi Menachem Brod

**THE BATTLE FOR THE SOUL
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The Gemara states that the verse "Seek Hashem when He is close" refers to the "ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur." This terminology raises an obvious question: There are only seven days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, not ten!

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The CHASSIDUS PERSPECTIVE with Reb Yoel Kahn

THE ESSENCE OF YOM KIPPUR

The Gemara states that the verse "Seek Hashem when He is close" refers to the "ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur." This terminology raises an obvious question: There are only seven days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, not ten!

The essence is that Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur each have a unique aspect, separate from what they share in common with the rest of the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah. We thus begin with the unique aspect of Rosh Hashanah, continue with the ten days of repentance including Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur as they are part of the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, and then conclude with the unique aspect of Yom Kippur. This is the meaning of the Gemara's wording, "ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur," there are ten days of repentance that lie between the unique aspects of Rosh Hashanah (before them) and Yom Kippur (after them).

Rosh Hashanah's unique quality lies in crowning Hashem as our King. What is Yom Kippur's special aspect? The fact that "the day itself atones."

The Gemara cites a difference of opinion between Rabbi and the rest of the Sages. Rabbi holds that the day of Yom Kippur itself atones, while the Sages are of the opinion that atonement is only achieved through repentance. The halachah is that Yom Kippur only atones for those who repent. Yet, the language of the Rambam (and the Alter Rebbe in Shachan Aruch) is that "the day itself atones for those who repent."

This indicates that even according to the Sages, the actual atonement is wrought by Yom Kippur itself. Although teshuvah is necessary, it is not what accomplishes atonement; rather, it is merely a condition that allows the atonement of Yom Kippur to take effect.

If not for this wording of the Rambam, we might have understood that the atonement of Yom Kippur is achieved through repentance. Although teshuvah is effective throughout the year, we would have explained that the teshuvah of Yom Kippur is of greater quality. (This would be similar to the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, during which time teshuvah is more potent than the rest of the year.) However, the Rambam states explicitly that the "day itself atones for those who repent"; the atonement of Yom Kippur is not accomplished through teshuvah, but through the merit of the day itself.

This requires explanation. How can the mere day of Yom Kippur erase a person's sins?

Were the atonement of Yom Kippur to consist simply of the seeking

of judgment, where Hashem states that although one sinned and deserves a penalty, He decides to forgo the sentence—we could understand. However, this is not what "atonement" means. The Hebrew word for atonement is *kippur*, which also translates as "wiping away." Atonement means that Hashem wipes away the grave and awful sin produced by avers. How can this *karpah* simply be removed, just like that?

The fact that actual teshuvah erases the *karpah* can be understood. Seforno explain that each *karpah* consists of a "body" and "soul"; the body is created from the act of the sin, while the soul is derived from the pleasure taken in sinning. The regret of teshuvah unites the soul of the *karpah*, while the *vidui*, the verbal expression of regret and resolve, destroys the *karpah's* body (as "leaving the lip is tantamount to *asifah*"). But how is it possible for Yom Kippur itself to have the same effect?

(This is especially difficult according to Rebbo, who holds that there is no requirement for teshuvah. However, even according to the Sages that teshuvah is necessary, that is not what accomplishes atonement; rather, it is the day itself that atones, as explained above. How does that work?)

A DAY THAT ATONES

The Gemara states that the verse "Seek Hashem when He is close" refers to the "ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur." This terminology raises an obvious question: There are only seven days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, not ten!

SPONTANEOUS RETURN

Interestingly, the Minchas Chochav argues that there is no mitzvah to do teshuvah. The mitzvah is that one who does decide to do teshuvah should express their regret verbally (*vidui*). He links this to the fact that there is no mitzvah to divorce; the mitzvah is that if one does decide to divorce, it should be done via a *get*.

Now, the Alter Rebbe writes in Tanya that teshuvah is in fact a mitzvah, a view that has support from the Rambam. However, the Minchas Chochav's view certainly has credence too. But this opinion seems strange. Apparently, the Torah is saying "If you want, you can remain a *rasha*; I am not instructing you to repent. The only thing I am commanding you is that if you do decide to do teshuvah, you must say *vidui*!"

The Rebbe explains that if anything, it is the Alter Rebbe's position that needs to be understood, not the Minchas Chochav.

Deep down, a Jew always wants to fulfill Hashem's Will. When our actions conflict with Hashem's Will, this bothers us deeply, although these feelings sometimes remain hidden. When our sentiments of regret surface, we are ashamed of our actions and do teshuvah.

To do teshuvah because we were commanded to do so would be an oxymoron. Teshuvah by definition is a spontaneous outburst of an overwhelming sense of dissatisfaction. Attempting to regulate it would be similar to the machzorim that give instructions when to break out in

To do teshuvah because we were commanded to do so would be an oxymoron, similar to the *machzorim* that give instructions when to cry.

AUTOMATIC CLEANSING?

This requires explanation. How can the mere day of Yom Kippur erase a person's sins?

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Perspectives

TWENTYTHREE

Contents



12

TO HEAR IT FROM THE REBBE HIMSELF

Reb Yoel Kahan



8

GIVE THEM A CHALLENGE

The Rebbe's Perspective



24

THE BATTLE FOR THE SOUL OF THE RUSSIAN CHEDER

Rabbi Boruch Werdiger



46

TEPLACH AND KEPLACH: KEEPING A KOSHER HEAD

Rabbi Uriel Tzimmer



52

CHASSIDUS IS MEANT TO BE UNDERSTOOD

Rabbi Menachem Brod



58

SNAPSHOTS

14 STORIES OF THE REBBE ON DAVENING AND SHUL



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347.471.1770

info@MerkazAnash.com

www.MerkazAnash.com

478 Albany Ave. Ste. 11

Brooklyn NY 11203

Rabbi Shimon Hellinger

General Editor

Mrs. Basya Yahel

Rabbi Eli Baron

Editors

Rabbi Schneur Zalman Rabin

Reviewer

Rabbi Mendy Browd

Mrs. Shirly Ruvinov

Design

Rabbi Shmuel Pevzner

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FOREWORD

Yellow Chassidus



The deeper issue was that the readers were consistently and progressively being shocked with headlines and newsflashes, and they were therefore conditioned against any sort of meaningful thinking.

Fraidka, the Alter Rebbe's daughter, was well versed in Chassidus, and her father would often recite Chassidus privately for her.

One Shabbos, the Alter Rebbe visited her home to recite Chassidus. Chassidim, ever thirsty for an opportunity to hear a word from their Rebbe, milled amongst the trees that surrounded her house.

The Alter Rebbe turned to his son, the Mittlerer Rebbe, and said, "Gazetten? They want news?!" He grabbed hold of the Mittlerer Rebbe's lapel and said emphatically, "Why aren't they learning Tanya? I tell you – through Tanya one can become a chossid like Avraham Avinu."

This story seems quite unusual. Here were some dedicated chassidim, thirsty for another word of Chassidus, yet the Alter Rebbe turned them away! Why couldn't he give in and let them hear what they so desperately wanted?

In the late 19th century, the term "yellow journalism" was given to reporting that emphasized sensationalism over facts, (often yellow ink was used for highlighting). The real problem with this style of journalism was not just the distortion and exaggeration of facts to facilitate greater hype; the deeper issue was that the *readers* were consistently and progressively being shocked with headlines and newsflashes, and they were therefore conditioned against any sort of meaningful thinking.

A psychological illness, writes the Rambam, spoils the sensitivities just like a physical one. When a person regularly eats unnaturally sweet foods, the body begins to crave that level of artificial sweetness, and then slowly loses its appreciation for the natural flavors of food. Equally with psychological "foods" – after being repeatedly exposed to artificially amplified sensations, our senses become dull to the wholesome flavor and nuance of life.



As we know, this has been a growing problem in recent years.

Before high-speed travel and long-distance communication, the craving for sensationalism was inherently limited. People lived within their own small section of the world and only knew what was relevant to their life. With the advent of the train, and then the telegraph, information could then be packaged and shipped far and wide, thus the newspaper was born. The appetite for “news” was whet, and delight in the familiar, dulled.

In today’s digital society, this issue has reached astounding levels. The constant feed of notifications and “news” – be it world news or a text message – has all but spoiled our appetite for the slower, more subtle experiences of life.

But when it comes to studying Chassidus, slow and subtle is key. Chassidus speaks of *hisbonenus*, letting an idea percolate and saturate in our minds. This process cannot be sped up. To internalize a set of values, we need to muse over them. Sometimes for years.

Of course, the “drop of the king’s jewel” can still accomplish something even when squeezed through a shallow, sensationalist headline. But let’s not delude ourselves to think that this is enough to convey the perception of a deeper reality.

In recent years, we have produced a new genre of “yellow Chassidus” that provokes sensational reactions, instead of finer tastes. This includes loud headlines and bombastic half-quotes, often shared on WhatsApp. Besides robbing us of a calm mind, these addictive headlines condition us against absorbing the pure taste of Chassidus.

We can’t settle for a flashy, trivial, artificial distortion. Uncover the beauty of our rich tradition through texts, thoughts and stories. Relish the flavor of pure Chassidus.

*In recent years,
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“yellow Chassidus”
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Rabbi Shimon Hellinger
General Editor

Give Them a **CHALLENGE**

Sicha of 19 Kislev 5728 (1967)



Seeing how much our children appreciate freedom, we are sometimes reluctant to impose upon them. We somehow imagine that they will fare better if allowed to take it easy. But instead of enjoying the comforts that we provide for them, they become frustrated and rebel.

What is it that they're looking for? Why aren't they satisfied with a comfortable life? What must we do so that they are inclined to follow in our footsteps?

DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION

Fostered by the air of democracy, an attitude developed in this country that parents shouldn't interfere with their children's conduct. The most they can do is to advise their children, but they must then allow them to choose on their own. In fact, one of the leading educators in this country made a philosophy of this notion, and proclaimed that this is how the new generation should be raised.

And now, thirty years later, we see where this philosophy got us. A Jewish woman, whose son converted and became a priest *R"L*, stands up and says matter-of-factly, "What could I do? Today you cannot tell the youth anything."

Before coming to the interview, she put on lipstick and made sure that her skirt was the right length – not too long, the shorter the better – and of course she made sure to speak eloquently at the interview. This way everyone will know that she heads the "progress" and "culture" of the twentieth century.

SINCERE YIDDISHKEIT

The real heartache here is that no one protested. We live in a country with so many Jews, and being responsible for one another, someone should have said something. Not to just agree that one need not or may not say anything to the youth – *since this is a lie!* The youth want to be told, but it must be words that come from the heart. A boy isn't interested in being told to prepare for *bar mitzva* because his neighbor did. The parents are then compelled to promise him all kinds of gifts so that he will commit himself to learn the *haftora* and the *brachos* that are written out for him in English.

And then, when he gets older, they expect him to take it seriously... He didn't see his parents take their own *Yiddishkeit* seriously, or even his *Yiddishkeit* seriously. They didn't tell him to study Torah since it is Hashem's word, but that he should deliver a *bar mitzva* speech since his neighbor did, and if he doesn't it will embarrass them.

And then, when he gets older, they expect him to take it seriously... He didn't see his parents take their own Yiddishkeit seriously, or even his Yiddishkeit seriously.

The old excuse that giving youth difficult tasks will chase them away has been disproven. The youth are interested in being challenged.

The child realizes – intellectually or emotionally – that his parents aren't interested in him. His father is engrossed in business, his mother is arranging "bridge parties," and the *bar mitzva* is for social status. Since they aren't truly interested in a "*bar mitzva*," the boy drops it and goes off to play ball.

THIRSTY FOR MEANING

When the parents later ask the child, "Why do you embarrass us [with your current conduct]?" the child counters, "Did you give me a foundation on which to stand?" The only thing they taught him was to imitate those who made it to the top.

The child is unwilling to accept that mimicking others is a worthy ideal. The reason that it doesn't sit well with him is because a Jew shouldn't be imitating anyone besides Hashem ("Just as He is kind, you should be kind, etc."). Really, this is his own essence, since his *neshama* is a part of Hashem, and by acting in this manner he is finding *himself*.

They write in the newspapers of the mother's "strength" to sacrifice her son. *What strength?! Did she invest any effort or lose sleep to raise her son that her son should do what he did?! The son was simply left to wander on his own, and now they come and create an "educational philosophy" out of it.*

Sparing us the need to investigate the consequence of such an education, Hashem caused the youth themselves to bang on the table demand of their parents: "You are living an empty life and have nothing worth fighting for! Either change your lifestyle and we may join you, or we will go searching elsewhere..."

DON'T SHY AWAY FROM THE TRUTH

The old excuse that giving youth difficult tasks will chase them away has been disproven. The youth are interested in being challenged and told: "Since you're young and undaunted by anything, take upon yourself

the yoke of Heaven and of Torah and *mitzvos*! Do this not to imitate or to make someone happy, but to find *your true self!*"

Most of those who tried this approach saw immediate success. In the remainder of the cases, it planted a seed which will grow over time. The idea will fester within them until, sooner or later, it shines through and sets the child on the correct path. The only condition is: *Say the truth!*

We must tell them: "Listen here! We have faith in your G-d given capabilities, provided that you submit yourself to Hashem's will. You are only human, so you may grow gradually, just accept the entire Torah and realize that it is your true essence." The youth will then show their strength, and they will even surpass their teachers, with no other motive other than seeking the truth.

BEEN THERE, DONE THAT

Whatever "new" -ism one contrives has already been tried throughout Jewish history. To be Jewish at heart without practical observance, to fit the Torah to the spirit of the times, to define Judaism by a language or other cultural element, to mimic gentile neighbors – they have all been tested before and have all failed. The only path that has persevered without change is the way of Torah and its *mitzvos*.

You don't need a degree or a million dollars in the bank – you only need to speak genuine heartfelt words. There's no need to embellish them, since this generation doesn't care what anyone thinks. All they want is to be spoken to maturely – not be manipulated, fooled or talked down to like a small child.

TRUTH BRINGS PEACE

In taking this approach to education, besides staying truthful, one is fulfilling Hashem's *shlichus*.



When a person tries to educate with a thought-up method, he speaks falsehood. The parent can't say it with complete sincerity, since he knows deep down that it's a false compromise and that it won't succeed. Ultimately, truth will prevail, since it's impossible for a falsehood to dominate forever.

Following the true path will bring peace. One won't need to fight with his children, or with the government to arrange more police, or within himself whether to smack his child or bribe him – since everything will go peacefully and tranquilly.

IN SUMMARY:

- Youth want sincerity. They will toil for the truth, but not at all for an insincere act or social obligation.
- The movement to give children choices was born from laziness. People created a philosophy to suit their lack of interest in guiding their children.
- Clear and firm guidance, when said with sincerity, will make its mark on a child. This will result in a happier child and happier parents. **P**



TO HEAR IT
—  — **FROM THE** 
REBBE HIMSELF

REB YOEL KAHAN

THE POWER OF A FEW WORDS

In the 5710's (1950's), I delivered a regular Tanya *shiur* in the Lakewood Yeshiva, which was attended by a number of its students. The attendees told me that if I got a certain exceptional *bochur* to join, many more *bochurim* would come in his wake. I managed to make conversation with this *bochur*, but he was completely uninterested in attending.

One day he approached me and asked if I could arrange a *yechidus* with the Rebbe for him. I was pleasantly surprised and organized it. The *yechidus* that should have lasted just a minute or two, lasted 45 minutes. When the *bochur* exited the *yechidus* he refused to discuss it, and he avoided talking to me thereafter. Eventually we fell out of touch.

One day, many years later, I was walking down the streets of Crown Heights and I heard someone calling my name. I turned around to see a man with long hair and jeans, whom I did not recognize. He introduced himself as that *bochur*, and asked if we could learn Chassidus together.

He then shared with me what the Rebbe had told him during that fateful *yechidus*. The Rebbe suggested that he learn Chassidus, but he replied that he thought learning Gemara was enough. The Rebbe pressed him further and added, "If a young man doesn't learn Chassidus, he may take offense when someone argues with him. This could lead him to commit a small sin at night, which may lead to greater sins and so on, until he becomes completely irreligious."

The man continued, "I knew you would pester me to fulfil the Rebbe's directive, which is why I avoided you. But one day, the exact sequence of events that the Rebbe had predicted happened to me, and I became totally irreligious.

"My son came home from school saying that someone called him a Jew. 'What's a Jew,' my innocent son asked me. I was ashamed at my family's state. I dug up my old *Gemara* from the attic to show my son, but I didn't have words to explain what it really means to be a Jew.

"I noticed an ad in the newspaper, advertising a Yud-Tes Kislev *farbrengen* with the Lubavitcher Rebbe. All at once, memories from my *yechidus* came to my mind. I realized how right the Rebbe was, and how everything he had described had happened. I decided to attend the Rebbe's *farbrengen*, hoping that he would say something I could share with my son.

"As soon as I entered the Rebbe's *farbrengen* I hear him say, 'Hashem works things out so that no Jew will ever be lost. He arranges that every *Yid* will return to him in the end. This is a special Divine care for every Jew. Especially for a Jew that has learned Torah in the past, whether *lishma* or not. Such a Jew has a special merit and



Reb Yoel in the 1950's

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OR TWO, LASTED 45 MINUTES.
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care from Hashem, and he is sent special occurrences from Above which push him to be aroused and return to Hashem.'

"I don't know if the Rebbe meant me, or he was just talking about the idea. But when I heard these words I decided that I needed to stay. The Rebbe continued to speak about chassidic concepts for some time, most of which I did not understand. But the atmosphere, the way the Rebbe spoke, and the *niggunim* captured my heart.

"I came to the Rebbe again for the Yud Shevat *farbrengen*, and again for Purim, but I still could not understand much of what the Rebbe was saying."

When I asked the man why he kept coming back if he didn't understand what the Rebbe was saying, he got annoyed and blurted out, "What don't you understand? I see how this Jew talks! He says that a *Yid*, the Torah, and Hashem are one!"

When the man passed by the Rebbe for *kos shel bracha*, the Rebbe asked him how he was doing. We studied Chassidus together for some time and he made many significant changes in his personal and family life, even sending his children for a Torah education.

This fellow did not comprehend many of the concepts that the Rebbe spoke about at the *farbrengen*, yet that wasn't the important thing for him. What mattered to him was to feel the energy which the Rebbe infused

I DUG UP MY OLD GEMARA FROM THE ATTIC TO SHOW MY SON, BUT I DIDN'T HAVE
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THIS FELLOW DID NOT COMPREHEND MANY OF THE CONCEPTS THAT THE REBBE SPOKE ABOUT AT THE FARBRENGEN, YET THAT WASN'T THE IMPORTANT THING FOR HIM.

him with when listening to his words. Such is the impact of the words of a Rebbe.

A REBBE'S CHASSIDUS

The Frierdiker Rebbe writes in a letter:

“There is a difference between Chassidus of a Rebbe and Chassidus which was written by chassidim. The Chassidus which was written by chassidim is certainly based on strong foundations, and it probably includes many deep insights... but it’s not the words of the Rebbe (*divrei harav*). Chassidus of a Rebbe are words given from on high, and those words are entirely different.”

For this reason, throughout the generations chassidim were particular to study the words of the

Rebbe. While they might sometimes read the writings of a chossid such as R. Hillel Paritcher, the true study was the Rebbe’s words, the reason being that the goal of the study of Chassidus is for the G-dly light within it which affects the soul of the one who studies it; this power is only inherent in the Chassidus of a Rebbe.

As the Frierdiker Rebbe explains elsewhere:

“In the words of Chassidus written by chassidim, we hear intellect, the ‘body’ of Chassidus, whereas in the Chassidus of the Rebbeim we hear the soul. The teachings of these great chassidim can lead to emotion... however, from a Rebbe, just a few plain words – such as [the words from Tehillim] “*beheimos hayisi imach* – I am like an animal near You” – burn away our coarseness and draw forth our hearts, energy and senses.”

THE MASTER ARTIST

To describe the advantage of a Rebbe's words, chassidim would use the parable of an artist:

A master artist possesses a true talent for drawing – to absorb and grasp the core of what he plans to draw, and then to distill and put to paper this grand scene that he visualized. A portrait rendered by a master artist portrays the essence of the scene, leaving its viewers mesmerized for a length of time.

A regular person, on the other hand, might make similar lines and dots trying with all his might to emulate the original. Yet, he does not absorb the essence of the scene, and that which he does absorb, he cannot bring to paper. This is an art of shapes and colors, but the soul is missing.

In the terms of Chassidus, the first goes from the abstract to the details, while the second starts with concrete details and tries to climb to the abstract.

This is the difference between the words of Rebbeim and of chassidim.

A creature cannot possibly comprehend its Creator on its own, since he is limited to his own existence by the virtue of being created in a specific way. Therefore, even a great chossid's awareness of G-dliness is from the hard facts and detailed logic, expanding out to the abstract. The brain can explain G-dliness, but its understanding is just an outsider's observation, explained piece by piece, line by line. It is not a grasp of G-dliness itself.

A PORTRAIT RENDERED BY A MASTER ARTIST PORTRAYS THE ESSENCE OF THE SCENE,
LEAVING ITS VIEWERS MESMERIZED FOR A LENGTH OF TIME.





This is why chassidim stuck to the writings of the Rebbeim and didn't take interest in the writings of many great chassidim, despite the excellence and impressiveness of those teachings. It's not that their veracity was doubted; we can rely on these great chassidim to write accurate explanations. It was only because they were human beings and their explanations were therefore just metaphors for G-dly truths.

The Rebbeim on the other hand see the G-dly light itself, and they absorb and grasp it in their minds and hearts. The way they teach Chassidus is to take this general concept and convey it into details. Their artistic ability is to distill the light which they absorb and present it to their flock through *sichos* and *maamarim* which they say and write. When the Rebbe explains, for example, how the G-dly will and intellect are a parable for the lights of *sovev* and *memale* – the all-encompassing and the fine-tuned lights of Hashem – these concepts are vivid to the Rebbe, and the Rebbe dresses this G-dly happening into some understandable metaphor.

When a Jew studies the Rebbe's Chassidus – "*divrei elokim chayim*" – a G-dly light shines in him as well. This light has the power to impact his *neshama*, to draw in it *Elokus* and to inspire it to serve Hashem.

Each generation has its own unique "artist" – the Rebbe – through whom the G-dly light is expressed in that generation. The G-dly light that is relevant to that generation shines through the Rebbe's words, allowing the Jewish people to connect to *Hashem*.

EVEN A GREAT
CHASSID'S AWARENESS
OF G-DLINESS IS FROM
THE HARD FACTS
AND DETAILED LOGIC,
EXPANDING OUT TO THE
ABSTRACT.



A WORLD OUTSIDE THE PIT

The influence the Rebbe has on his listeners can be further illustrated with a parable.

In years past, many Jews lived on the grounds of gentile squires. Many of these squires weren't very kind, and when a Jewish innkeeper would accumulate an outstanding debt, the squire would throw the innkeeper and his family into a deep dungeon. Aside from a small hole through which bread and water were passed through, for minimal survival, the dungeon dwellers did not have any connection to the outside world.

In one dungeon, several families were imprisoned, and they lived there together for many years. Time went by, children were born, and a second and even third and fourth generation were born into the

depths of the earth. They all grew accustomed to the phenomenon of an opening in the ceiling appearing, the pit becoming bright for a moment, and bread and water being tossed in, the daily ration for the dwellers of the dungeon.

In each generation, the parents would describe the large and beautiful world which exists outside the pit to their children. They taught them that the ray of light which shines every day when they receive their food is from the sun which brightens the entire world. They would tell them what led their grandparents to enter this dark dungeon, where they have been for so many years since.

As years past, and the people who were thrown into the pit passed on, and some of the dungeon's dwellers

THEY ALL GREW ACCUSTOMED TO THE PHENOMENON OF AN OPENING IN THE CEILING
APPEARING, THE PIT BECOMING BRIGHT FOR A MOMENT.



LIFE AS THEY KNEW IT WAS COMPRISED OF THE FOUR WALLS OF THE DUNGEON, AND ALL THESE STORIES ABOUT A NICE BIG WORLD OUT THERE SEEMED TO THEM PERFECTLY ABSURD.

began to question the entire story, claiming that it was a fabrication. From their point of view, life as they knew it was comprised of the four walls of the dungeon, and all these stories about a nice big world out there seemed to them perfectly absurd.

THREE GROUPS

If we dissect this situation, we will find that there can be three different attitudes amongst the pit dwellers regarding the outside world.

1. The attitude of those who had previously lived in the real world before the squire threw them into the dungeon. To these people it was obvious that there was a big world out there, and there was no need to prove it to them. They didn't need proof; they saw it themselves and were part of the world before they entered the dark dungeon.
2. The attitude of those who were born into life in the dungeon, but still believed the stories of their

parents that there was a great world above. They never saw the outside world, but they had rational indications of it. These people believed their parents, who were trustworthy to them. It was therefore certain that their words about a great world out there were true; they were not liars. In addition, the fact that a ray of light entered the pit every day, and bread and water were thrown in, seemed to indicate that there was an existence outside of the dungeon.

3. The attitude of those born into the dungeon, who dismissed the stories of their parents, and opined that the world only included the four walls of the dungeon because they were so used to it there. What about the logical indicators of their peers? They said that the pit opening every day was just part of the "nature of the dungeon" – the dungeon naturally opens its mouth each day, and light and bread descends through this opening.

GENERATION GAP

THE REALITY OF THE
DARK PIT IS SOMETHING
THAT WAS THRUST
UPON THEM. THEY ARE
COMPLETELY CERTAIN
OF THE WORLD OUTSIDE,
BECAUSE THEY SAW IT
AND LIVED IT.

A simplistic view would conclude that those born into the pit and believed their parents are more like their parents who saw the outside world. They both knew that there was a world outside of the pit. However, they are both very different than those who deny the existence of a world outside of the pit.

But if we think deeper, we will come to the opposite conclusion. In a certain way, the similarity between these two types which were born into the pit is greater than the similarity between the children who believe in the outside world and their parents.

The attitude of those born into the pit towards the outside world is that of relating to an external existence. Their fundamental and certain recognition is of the existence in which they live. The outside existence that they speak of is not their intuitive reality.

To the first group on the other hand, the fact that a sun and a whole world exist outside of the pit is not something added to their natural sense of reality. The opposite is true: the reality of the dark pit is something that was thrust upon them. They are completely certain of the world outside, because they saw it and lived it.

Both groups who were born into the pit don't **themselves** know and recognize the outer world. The difference is that some have proof that there is a world, and others lack sufficient proof, as opposed to the parents who **themselves** know the outer world.



BELIEF VERSUS PROOF

The application is this:

The power of Jews to believe is literally like eyesight. The *neshama's* certainty in Hashem's existence is like it "sees" Hashem's presence. This *emuna* isn't based on logic and proofs; the *neshama* recognizes the "beautiful world outside of the pit" – G-dliness which is beyond creation.

Yet, it is possible that because of the enclothing of the *neshama* in the body and animal soul, this *emuna* will not shine within the Jew. Among those who are in this situation, there can be two types of people:

One type of people look for rational proof for the existence of the Creator. They believe in what was transmitted through the generations, and they even understand through rational proof that there is an Architect to this world. They understand that there must be a strong and true Power, Who is beyond the limitations of creations, and from time to time He even shines a light to our world, throws us sustenance, and maintains our existence.

The second type of people claim that they don't believe in what was taught to them. They also don't accept the rational proofs about Hashem's existence, and they argue that the supernatural occurrences are simply another aspect of nature.

To both of these groups, the world and nature are certain and absolute existences. They live in the pit, that is the reality that they know, and their life is bound to that experience. All the talk about a different existence is something distant and abstract, to which they do not *really* relate. Even the certainty of those who believe out of proof, is not with the same certainty as actually seeing.

RECOGNIZING ANOTHER REALITY

Let us now return to the parable.

Suppose one day, after many generations had passed in the pit, a person would enter through the opening

into the dungeon. When he hears the debate about the big world outside, and the proofs one way and the other that the fourth generation of pit dwellers put forth, he would turn to them and say, "I don't understand this discussion. Of course there's a big, bright world out there! Life here is nothing compared to the real world outside."

The strength, simplicity and seriousness of his words, combined with his certain tone and facial expressions, will be accepted in totality by all his listeners in the pit. They perceive how this person had seen that world just a short moment ago. Hearing it from him gives them a feeling of certainty about the world outside.

The difference achieved is not only for those who were uncertain about the whole idea; his testimony also makes an impact on the group who had logical proofs for the world's existence. Upon hearing the man's firm words which were said soon after seeing the object of discussion itself, their certainty about the existence of the world is upgraded to an entirely new level. Hearing from him causes them to feel like they also saw it. Until now they had **proof** about the real world; now, through his words, the outer world has "reached them." It's as if they see it with their own eyes.

The live description of the outside world, from where this person just came, totally changes their recognition of it. The more that they listen to this new man's descriptions, the more their certainty of reality outside the pit will grow.

In a similar manner, Hashem lowers *tzadikim* into this world throughout the generations to tell us about a reality "outside of the pit." The *tzadikim* who "see" the G-dliness which is higher than the world introduce a revelation of G-dliness to the people of their generation, and they arouse within them the pure and true faith in the One Above.

THE POWER OF JEWS TO BELIEVE IS LITERALLY LIKE EYESIGHT.



BETWEEN THE PARABLE AND THE APPLICATION

It should be noted, however, that these points are better brought out in the application than in the parable, with two main advantages.

In the parable, the person who has now descended into the pit presently finds himself inside the dark pit. He no longer sees or feels the greater world. The *tzadik*, on the other hand, continues to see and feel *Elokus* in this world just as he did in Heaven above. As Chassidus (*Hemshech Samech Vav*, p. 216) says of Moshe Rabbeinu, “Even as he was here below, he was literally a *neshama* of *Atzilus*, and didn’t change from his essence at all, and was here literally as he was in *Atzilus*.”

Another difference is that in the parable, the inhabitants of the dungeon don’t actually have any

direct connection to the outside world. They were born into the pit, and never saw anything else. In the application, on the other hand, the truth is that the *neshama* of every Jew is a “*chelek Eloka mima’al mamesh*,” literally a part of G-d, and the essence of every *neshama* perceives *Elokus*.

Every Jew has an extraordinarily deep connection to Hashem, and every Jew has endless spiritual reservoirs in his soul. But when the *neshama* comes down to this world, its intense bond with G-dliness and the spiritual qualities that result, can become concealed. Through cleaving to *tzadikim*, a Jew’s *neshama* shines brightly. **P**

Adapted from the book Darkei HaChassidus - talks of Reb Yoel Kahn



HEARING THE REBBE TODAY

—
DOVID KAUFMAN

Standing at the Rebbe's farbrengens, one could feel that the Rebbe was not merely exhibiting intellectual and rhetorical genius, but was sharing a G-dly truth. That truth trickles down to us when we hear the Rebbe speak.

A person may learn and know Torah facts, yet may not feel it to be real. A Rebbe, who is called a *roeh emunah*, transmits to us exactly this. The primary way the Rebbe does this, is through teaching Torah. Through learning the Rebbe's Torah, and specifically when hearing it from the Rebbe himself, one can effortlessly develop a firm *emunah* in Hashem and his Torah, and in the inherent value of a Yid. Over time it becomes a person's natural perspective on the world.

On many topics, the Rebbe takes a supra-rational approach, and hearing it from the Rebbe makes us receptive to it. For example, the Rebbe dismissed concerns over having many children since Hashem decides if a child should be born. Now, since Hashem sustains the entire world, if He decides to create

the child, he will supply the parents with enough money and strength to raise the child to adulthood (see Likutei Sichos vol. 25, p. 36). This perspective transcends the "common-sense" perspective, but to the Rebbe, G-dliness is perfectly amiable with the world's character. Many people who heard it from the Rebbe, began to relate to that approach.

The same is true for more global issues, such as the safety of Eretz Yisroel or MiHu Yehudi (the need for halachic standard concerning who is a Jew). Over several decades the Rebbe spoke about these topics without giving up or getting "tired." By the Rebbe, this was not a duty, but an evident issue, and that he conveyed to his listeners.

We are fortunate to have hundreds of hours recorded of the Rebbe speaking on a variety of occasions. By listening to the Rebbe himself, we can absorb not only the Rebbe's teachings, but the life and emotion that is within them.



ONE Rebbe,
TWO Barons,
THREE Years,
AND FOUR HUNDRED
THOUSAND RUBLES

The **BATTLE** *for the* **SOUL**
of the **RUSSIAN CHEDER**

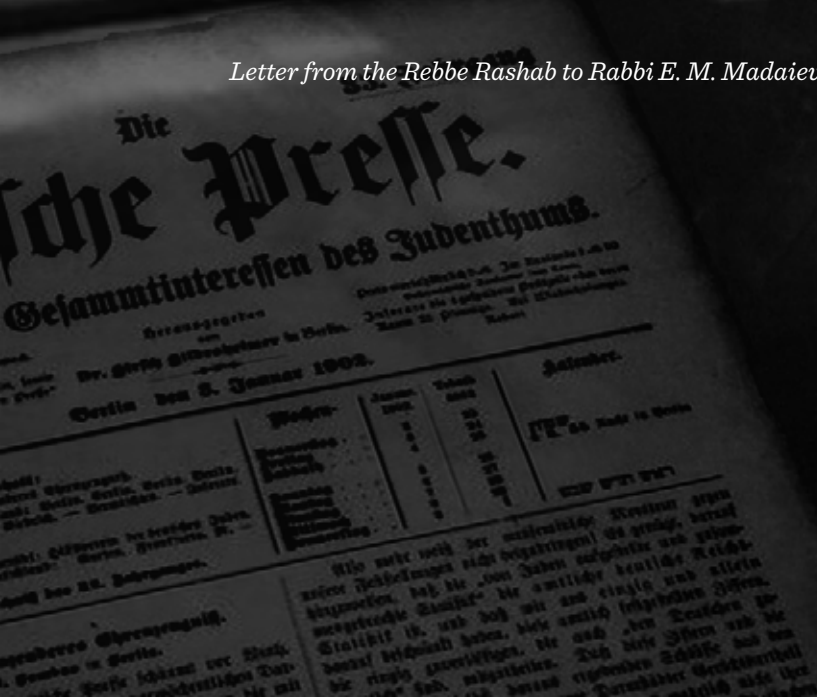
PART TWO

BY RABBI BORUCH WERDIGER

... As for the JCA matter, were I to explain to you everything that transpired this past winter in detail, all the parchment in the world not suffice to contain it; nor, if the seas were ink [would there be enough to write it].

The brunt of the work, however, was in Paris. Our dear R. Avrohom Persohn exerted himself tremendously, expending much effort; many words were spilled upon deaf ears; the great pain and heartache this has all caused is understandable...

Letter from the Rebbe Rashab to Rabbi E. M. Madaievsky, Igros Kodesh §746, vol 3, p. 277.



TIMELINE

– UNTIL NOW

5660 (1899-1900)

WINTER – Chamah schoolhouse built in Lubavitch.

WINTER – Rebbe Rashab meets with Baron Ginzburg about chadorim, to no effect.

1 ADAR – Notice appears in Hamelitz.

4 ADAR – Rebbe Rashab hears about article from MM Monezsohn.

5 ADAR – Rebbe mentions it in a letter to R. Eliezer Moshe Madaievsky (635).

– Rebbe spends two weeks in Petersburg to formulate plan of action, to draft letter, translate, get other Rabbonim to write their own letters.

13 ADAR – Attempts to arrange a meeting before Pesach with Monezsohn, Madaievsky, and Yeshaya Berlin in Lubavitch. (Meeting did not eventuate.)

SPRING – JCA internally discusses sending inspectors to Russia to supervise expenses.

7 TAMMUZ – Rebbe travels to dacha for his persistent health problems.

SUMMER – Rebbe spends two weeks in Petersburg taking advice.

20 AV – Letter to Chaikin (660) asking him to translate letter into French and English, and to find a lawyer to make several copies of the letter “on good paper” and to send them all back to the Rebbe. Asks for addresses in London and Paris, and instructs for English letter to be delivered to the JCA office in London by Chief Rabbi Adler. Discusses prospects for success and mentions his poor health.

11 ELLUL – Letter to Yeshaya Berlin (661) mentions sending someone to Paris committee, and dubious prospects for success. R. Chaim Ozer Grodzinski and R. Chaim Soloveitchik commit to sending letters of their own.

LATE SEPTEMBER – JCA authorizes and advance of 25,000 for Chamah schools in Bessarabia.

RECAP

In the first part of this story, in Adar of 1901 (5660), the Rebbe Rashab catches wind of an enormous philanthropic pledge from the Paris-based Jewish Colonization Association (JCA) to the Russian Chevra Mefitzei Haskalah (Chamah). With this 1,000,000 franc (400,000 ruble) cash infusion, Chamah would be able to massively expand its fledgling Haskalah-inspired school network, with potentially catastrophic consequences for the traditional cheder system, and Russian Jewry as a whole.

Despite the many competing communal concerns of the day, Lubavitch’s relatively obscure place on the Jewish scene, his own limited influence in Western Europe, and persistent health issues, – not to mention the sluggish and disorganized state of Eastern European Orthodox Jewish activism – the Rebbe Rashab quickly sets on launching a campaign to have the pledge cancelled. By constructing a coalition of traditional rabbinic leaders, and identifying sympathetic figures within the JCA, there is a chance of getting his argument heard. In brief, his claim is this: The original founder of the JCA, Baron Maurice Hirsch, devoted his energies to improving the plight of Russian Jewry, while the current head of Chamah, Baron Horace Ginsburg, was blind to it. Supporting Chamah, therefore, would do nothing for the Jewish people physically, and it would do far worse for them spiritually.

With the advice and assistance of his close chassidim, the Rebbe begins developing his plan, garners support, and drafts a long, official letter to JCA in French and English. He chooses the chossid Reb Abele Person to serve as a representative to the great Torah sages of the East, but further West, the intimidating, unfamiliar salons and halls of power await. Several months have already passed since the initial news broke, and the odds of success grow longer by the day. The time to act is now.

GO WEST, YUNGERMAN

Sometime around Rosh Hashana of 1901, as the Jewish year ticked over to 5661, the pipeline of funds stretching across from Paris to Petersburg slowly eased open. The JCA's pledge proceeded at a plodding pace, as per well-established philanthropic custom, but in the meantime Chamah received an advance payment of 25,000 rubles. According to JCA records, the money would go towards "training teachers, to create and maintain six schools in the colonies of Bessarabia, and for the annual upkeep of another eleven primary schools."¹ If Lubavitch was going to stop this flow of funds, time was running out.

Inevitably, the high and holy days of Tishrei caused further delays. By now, most other matters of

communal interest had receded to the background as Rebbe Rashab was focusing ever more of his time and energy to the JCA affair. After Sukkos, he made another push to assemble his chassidic advisory council, now with the addition of the chossid Reb Shmuel Gurary of Kremenchug. This time, as he wrote in a letter to Reb Yeshaya Berlin, the meeting would have a more focused agenda:

"It is extremely urgent that we arrange a meeting regarding the matter I initiated at the start of this past summer, in order to determine how to proceed – now is the time to commence. Since there are several pressing details to be considered, and I cannot decide them on my own, if it is at all possible, I ask that you

IN THE MEANTIME CHAMAH RECEIVED AN ADVANCE PAYMENT OF 25,000 RUBLES.

IF LUBAVITCH WAS GOING TO STOP THIS FLOW OF FUNDS, TIME WAS RUNNING OUT.



THE REBBE'S OWN WORSENING PHYSICAL STATE WAS ANOTHER SOURCE OF CONTINUED BACKGROUND INTERFERENCE.

come here next week... if you can come here on the Sunday of *Parshas Lech* [Lecha], it is also good...

PS: It is unthinkable that we put this matter aside as we have others... for it is an issue of broad relevance, and of chief importance. Moreover, we have already made significant progress, thank G-d, and must now consider how to act and to proceed. Therefore, I repeat my request that you find the time to visit. Please let me know of your decision, no later than this Motzoei Shabbos.”²

However, once again, the logistics of coordinating a meeting between Berlin, R. Menachem Monish Moneszojn, R. Eliezer Madaievsky, and now Gurary, proved to be unworkable. Additionally, R. Berlin seems to have fallen ill at this time, with an eye ailment threatening to make the trip from Riga especially difficult.³

The Rebbe’s own worsening physical state was another source of continued background interference. It had gotten so bad that Reb Menachem

Cast of CHARACTERS

THE REBBE'S CIRCLE

REB YESHAYA BERLIN

Successful businessman and guilded merchant, close confidante and cousin (by marriage) of the Rebbe, gave advice and financial support. Lived in Riga.

REB MENACHEM MONISH MONEZSOHN

Chossid, confidante, and financial supporter of the Rebbe. Lived in Petersburg, maintained government contacts there, including “The Launderer.”



R. ELIEZER MOSHE MADAIEVSKY

Rov and government rabbi of Chorol. Acted as representative of the Rebbe, received a salary for his work. Also in touch with “The Launderer.”

“THE LAUNDERER”

Government source, apparently in the ministry for religion.

REB AVROHOM ABBA “ABELE” PERSOHN

Chossid and the Rebbe’s representative throughout the affair. Lived in Königsberg, Prussia (today Kaliningrad).

THE MODERNISTS



BARON MAURICE DE HIRSCH (1831-1896)

German-born Jewish philanthropist, banker, and railroad tycoon. Founder of the JCA.



BARON JOSEPH EVZEL GINSBURG (1812-1878)

Russian Jewish banker, patriarch of the Ginsburg family, founder Ginsburg Bank and Chamah, father of Horace. He was ennobled by the Grand Duke of Hesse-Darmstadt in 1871, and Joseph received the title of baron in 1874.



BARON HORACE (NAFTOLI TZVI) GINSBURG (1833-1909)

Russian financier, advocate, philanthropist, head of Chamah, chairman of JCA Committee in Russia. Lived in Petersburg, son of Evzel, father of David.



BARON DAVID GINSBURG (1857-1910)

Russian scholar, activist, was involved with Chamah and JCA, son of Horace, grandson of Evzel.



YAKOV POLIAKOV (1832-1909)

Russian philanthropist, banker, was involved in JCA and Chamah. Having grown up near Lubavitch, along with his influential businessman brothers Shmuel and Eliezer, he was sympathetic to the Rebbe Rashab’s views. Based in Petersburg.



EMILE MEYERSON (1859-1933)

Polish-born Jewish chemist and philosopher, JCA administrator in Paris.



TZADOK KAHN (1839-1905)

Chief Rabbi of France, member of JCA, frequently served as a liaison between traditional Jewry and the organization. Lived in Paris.



NARCISSE LEVEN (1833-1915)

German-born, French Jewish philanthropist, politician, and lawyer. President of JCA, lived in Paris.

DR. KLEIN

Acquaintance of Narcisse Leven, the president of the JCA, and purported ally of Lubavitch. Lived in Paris.



Monish and other close chassidim wrote the Rebbe, “urging me to travel out of the country since my health is so poor, especially of late.” Their advice was a stint at the Bavarian health resort of Bad Wörishofen, accompanied by the Rebbetzin. If needed, they would then proceed to Paris in order to consult with a medical expert there, and then spend a few months in the recuperative air of the French Riviera, at Menton.

Until then, however, there was work to do; shortly after Sukkos, the Rebbe summoned Reb Abale to prepare for his upcoming mission. Reb Abale Person arrived in Lubavitch on the 24th of Cheshvan, and spent the next week together with the Rebbe Rashab, preparing the letters he would be presenting to the Rabbonim on his itinerary. Then, at long last, on the 3rd of Kislev, they set out from Lubavitch together. At Minsk, they separated, Reb Abale travelling northwest into Vilna, the Rebbe’s party down into Central Europe, to Warsaw, Vienna, and then the spa resort where he would spend the better part of nearly six months.

The first stop on Reb Abale’s whistle stop tour went well, and after picking up Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzinski’s official letter, he was soon on the road again. At Brisk, things went a little more slowly: Before their departure, a copy of Reb Chaim Soloveitchik’s letter had arrived in Lubavitch, and the Rebbe Rashab was skeptical that it would do their cause any good. The tone of his petition to the Committee seemed overly harsh, its arguments unproductive. Even the other Lithuanian rabbis agreed that it needed improvement.

Reb Chaim, however, would only do so on the say so of Reb Eliyahu Chaim Maizel of Lodz, so it was on to the next scheduled stop for Reb Abele. But once he managed to meet with Reb Eliyahu Chaim to pick up *his* letter, and then with R. Tzvi Hildesheimer, the aforementioned publisher of the influential Orthodox newspaper *Die Jüdische Presse*, already two weeks had passed. Reb Chaim Brisker’s first draft would have to do. Onward!

After a brief visit home in Königsberg, it was on to Berlin, then Frankfurt, Karlsruhe, Halberstadt, Fulda, and Baden in Switzerland. More towns, more rabbis, more names, and more connections. After this whirlwind of steam train travel, Reb Abale then met up again with the Rebbe Rashab in Wörishofen to regroup.

While there, they sent copies of the rapidly proliferating pile of petitions onto practically anyone with pull in the JCA, in Paris, as well as London. The hope, at any rate, was that once Reb Abele was in Paris, these notables would commit to exerting their influence in the right direction. It seems that, having dived headfirst into the world of Jewish diplomacy, the Reb Abale had learned to swim, and picked up a bit of confidence to boot. He now agreed to conduct the meetings with the cream of French Jewry himself, on arrival.

THE RABBONIM



R. CHAIM OZER GRODZINSKI
(1863-1940)

Rov and Av Beis Din of Vilna, communal advocate and leader, former student of R. Chaim Soloveitchik in the Volozhin Yeshiva, supporter of JCA campaign, signatory to Rebbe Rashab’s letter.



R. CHAIM SOLOVEITCHIK
(1853-1918)

Rov of Brisk, author of Chiddushei Rabbeinu Chaim, born in and formerly taught at Volozhin. Supporter of JCA campaign, signatory to Rebbe Rashab’s letter.



R. ELIYAHU CHAIM MEIZEL
(1821-1912)

Rov of Lodz, Lithuanian-born, musmach of R. Yitzhak Volozhiner, advocate of communal causes, widely respected and influential amongst Orthodox Jewry.



R. TZVI HIRSH RABINOVITCH
(1848-1910)

Rov of Kovno, son and successor of the great R. Yitzhak Elchonon Spektor. Maintained an affiliation with Baron Ginzburg.



R. ELIEZER GORDON (1841-1910)

Rov of Telz, and Rosh Yeshiva of the Telzer Yeshiva.

R. AVIGDOR CHAIKIN

Chossid, Rov in Sheffield, England. Produced the original French translation of the Rebbe Rashab’s letter.

RABBI DR. TZVI HIRSH HILDESHEIMER (1855-1910)



Editor of the Orthodox newspaper Die Jüdische Presse. Son of the early Modern Orthodox Rabbi Azriel Hildesheimer.

R. SHLOMO COHEN

German-born Rabbi in Paris, supported the Rebbe Rashab, helped Reb Abele while in Paris, and made the second French translation of the letter.

R. S. ALTMAN

German-born, “G-d-fearing” Rabbi in Paris, helped the Rebbe Rashab and Reb Abele while in Paris.



IT SOON BECAME APPARENT THAT THE FRENCH TRANSLATION OF THE REBBE'S OFFICIAL LETTER HAD BEEN POORLY WRITTEN, ITS MESSAGE OBSCURED AND AT TIMES LOST ALTOGETHER.

WHEN IN PARIS

Unfortunately, it didn't quite work out that way. Reb Abele arrived in Paris in the beginning of Adar and met up with the German Rabbis Altman and Cohen, both of whom served as sources of considerable help and counsel. Once he began setting up meetings with affiliates of the JCA, however, Reb Abele seemed to encounter one dead end after another. First, Dr. Klein, the purported friend of the JCA president, seemed to have lost all confidence in the mission, suggesting instead it would have better luck back in Petersburg.

Even more worryingly, it soon became apparent that the French translation of the Rebbe's official letter had been poorly written, its message obscured and at times lost altogether. "I am surprised," wrote the Rebbe Rashab, "that our friend R. Avigdor Chaikin accepted such a translation."⁴ Meanwhile, the Hebrew version of the letter had been written up by hand, which made it less accessible to the largely French speaking affiliates of the JCA – even, apparently, the religious ones. Once in France, however, these

problems weren't so easy to surmount: A good Hebrew to French translator, a Parisian print-house with Hebrew typeface, and, importantly, people who could be trusted to do all the above with total discretion were hard to come by.

Fortunately, Rs. Cohen and Altman came to the rescue; Cohen was fluent in both languages, and pledged he would find the time to do the translation, and Altman would have it typed up in the resultant French. As for the Hebrew version, the tenacious Reb Abale managed to find a printer in Paris who could do the job for the princely sum of 100 francs.⁵

Additionally, Rs. Altman and Cohen proposed one more major edit before the missive was formally delivered to the JCA. As written, the Rebbe Rashab's letter bore only his signature, and was written in the first person singular. Instead of simply having other rabbis send similar statements of support, they suggested switching the letter to the plural, so that it would be sent in the name of the three other prominent Eastern European rabbis mentioned

previously: R. Eliyahu Maizel, R. Chaim Soloveitchik, and R. Chaim Ozer Grodzinski.

The Rebbe gratefully accepted Altman and Cohen's offer, and readily agreed to their suggestions. Although R. Eliyahu Maizel didn't quite share his outspoken opposition to secular studies, he was confident that all three rabbis would agree to have their signatures affixed to the letter. Not only that the, Rebbe Rashab insisted that his name appear last, despite being its original author. Since "they are more eminent, and better known over there,"⁶ he wrote, it would help the cause. This letter, bearing all four names beneath it, would be presented

Of course, all of this would take time, for which reason the Rebbe insisted that Reb Abele's meeting with Rabbi Tzadok Kahn should not wait for the new translation; the original Hebrew would have to suffice in the meantime and "he'll understand what he understands."⁷

There was yet another ominous factor behind the scenes that underscored the need for both discretion and the desperate pace of work. Keeping a watchful eye on the news media, the Rebbe Rashab learned from a report in *HaTzefirah* that a twenty man Zionist delegation from Odessa would soon be paying a visit of their own to the JCA in Paris, in order to secure funding for their new settlements in the Holy Land.

Some of the most influential figures in the movement would be there, from Menachem Ussishkin to Asher Ginsburg (Achad Ha'am). There was no way to know, but their presence in Paris could throw a wrench into the entire campaign.

In a sense, there was an opportunity for a marriage of convenience here, since both groups had no interest in the increased funding of the Chamah schools back in Russia. But the Rebbe Rashab would have none of it: Save for one A. Greenberg, head of the Odessa Committee, he wrote that the Zionist leaders were "terrible wicked men," whose animus to traditional Judaism was already well established. Ussishkin and Ginsburg both had personal ties to Lubavitch,⁸ but in all likelihood this only made their enmity towards the Rebbe especially vicious.

"It will not be good if they learn of our efforts," he continued, "since they will no doubt endeavor to do the opposite, G-d forbid. May Hashem protect us from them; we must occupy ourselves in our own efforts, and hope that Hashem will come to our aid."

For Reb Abele, this disorienting mix of maddeningly fitful progress, together with intense, high stakes pressure must have been emotionally exhausting. By now, it had been nearly a year since news of the pledge broke, and still it hung in the air like a dark cloud. By all appearances, Reb Abele's furious whirl of

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TIMELINE

5661 (1900-1901)

TISHREI – *In a letter to R. Chaim*

Ozer, suggests waiting to find a suitable representative to committee before sending letters.

25 TISHREI – *Still no meeting between chassidim (665).*

16 CHESHVAN – *Letter to Berlin (667) explains plan for sending letter and emissary:*

- *Abale Persohn will gather support and letters from Vilna, Brisk, Lodz, then go to Paris.*
- *There he will meet with Dr. Klein, who knows JCA president Leven.*
- *Mentions learning that R. Tzadok Cohen advised on the JCA pledge.*
- *Mentions travelling abroad, to Paris, and then to Menton, France alone.*

24 CHESHVAN – *Persohn arrives in Lubavitch to prepare for trip.*

- *Copy of letter from Reb Chaim arrives.*

3 KISLEV – *Persohn and the Rebbe set out from Lubavitch; Persohn's mission starts in Vilna, the Rebbe heads for spa town Bad Wörishofen.*

Persohn visits Vilna, then Brisk (R. Chaim doesn't want to rewrite his letter without advice from R. Elye Chaim of Lodz), then two weeks in Lodz, then a week at his home in Königsberg.

21 TEVES – *Persohn heads for Berlin.*

22 TEVES – *Rebbe recounts all of the above in a letter to Madaievsky (686), sends Persohn letters for Frankfurt. Describes Persohn's itinerary: Frankfurt, Karlsruhe, Halberstadt, Fulda; then return to the Rebbe in Wörishofen; then to Paris to meet with Dr. Klein.*



activity had amounted to nothing thus far; Klein had been a no-starter, the letter wasn't even ready, and he still hadn't secured a meeting with Kahn. The Rebbe Rashab had already expressed his frustration with how things were grinding on, and empathized with Reb Abele:

“I feel your heartache that until now nothing has been done about the real matter at hand, and at how difficult progress has been. Nevertheless, we must hope that all this will be matched by the eventual good that will result from all it.”⁹

In another letter, while lamenting the diffident, defeatist attitude he sense amongst some of his rabbinic colleagues, he adds:

“The main thing is not to despair, G-d forbid. We must strive to do everything in our power, in the firm hope that Hashem will come to our aid. Even though in our minds, [success] may seem far away, for Him it is not far at all. Man can choose to act in line with this elevated perspective, for which near and far are all the same.”¹⁰

MOVEMENT ON THE SEINE

The meeting with Kahn, when it took place in late Adar, offered a glimmer of encouragement, at last. The rabbi had not been admitting anyone for meetings in recent days, owing to a brief illness, but when he saw Reb Abale, together with R. S. Altman, he appeared to be in a welcoming mood.

Reb Abale formally presented the Chief Rabbi of Paris with a sheaf of letters, comprising a personal letter from the Rebbe Rashab, his official missive to the JCA, along with those of R. Grodzinski and R. Maizels. On the Rebbe's prudent advice,¹¹ R. Soloveitchik's more explosive letter was left out, since his name now appeared on the official address. It was a Friday, and in what looked like another positive gesture, R. Kahn set aside some time on Monday to meet again, during which time he would peruse the correspondence just received.

Monday seemed to bring yet more progress. Several months earlier, the Telzer Rov and Rosh Yeshiva, R. Eliezer Gordon, had met with R. Kahn in Paris for a heated discussion on the matter. As R. Gordon had written to the Rebbe Rashab at the time, R. Kahn then acknowledged his own influence within the JCA, and also indicated that he was receptive to the position of the traditional religious establishment.¹²

Now, in hindsight, R. Kahn admitted that appropriating money for schooling was indeed at odds with the Baron Hirsch's – and the JCA's – core relief mission. The JCA Committee would have preferred investing directly in



THE MILLION FRANCS ALREADY PLEDGED WAS A LOST CAUSE. THE ONLY REMAINING QUESTION, HE INSISTED, WAS WHERE THE JCA WOULD SEND ITS MONEY IN THE FUTURE.

the construction of factories, and other forms of job creation, had not the younger Baron Ginsburg prevailed on them to send Chamah desperately needed funds for its own initiative. Essentially, Kahn had conceded the Rebbe Rashab's position in full. All the same, he advised them to focus on the future – the million francs already pledged was a lost cause. The only remaining question, he insisted, was where the JCA would send its money in the future.

Although this concession from Rabbi Kahn was in itself an important victory – at least there wouldn't be even *more* money! – it wasn't nearly enough for Lubavitch. “Our demands,” replied Reb Abele, “pertain to the past as well as the future.”¹³ The Rebbe

agreed in his follow up letter to Reb Abele, correctly surmising that the lion's share of the pledge had in fact not been sent yet. Now all the JCA had to do was simply to declare that, “after receiving a number of complaints about their actions, they can no longer provide the funds. In general, they aren't afraid of changing their word, if only they wish to,” he added.¹⁴ Contemporary fundraisers can surely commiserate.

Notwithstanding Kahn's warm affectations and conciliatory words, the Rebbe Rashab was skeptical any real progress had been made. The next test was Reb Abele's joint meeting together both R. Kahn and the head of the JCA, Narcisse Leven. Only then would they learn their prospects for success.¹⁵

THE PRESIDENT'S PROMISE

Finally, after more than a year, the JCA campaign was showing signs of real life. Throughout this entire period, the Rebbe had been in close contact with Reb Abele, following his itinerary, setting up meetings, and sending funds to pay for his expenses. Now, in early Nissan, letters between the Rebbe Rashab and Reb Abele were coming thick and fast.

While the latter prepared for and then followed up on his initial meeting with Leven, the Rebbe strategized, supplied ammunition for argument, and suggested talking points. There was one letter from Erev Rosh Chodesh Nissan, another from the next day, another from the 6th of that month, and then the 9th. All the while, he kept his confidants abreast of the latest

developments, sending Persohn's letters onward to R. Moneszohn, who would then forward them to R. Berlin.¹⁶ Adding to the air of urgency was the fact that Pesach was fast approaching; it seems that the Rebbe wanted Persohn to make as much progress as possible before heading home to his family in Königsberg. The Rebbe's letter from the 6th even offered alternate train travel plans that would allow him to get home by Erev Pesach.¹⁷

As the pace of letter-writing picked up, so did the rhetoric. Having come to terms with Baron Ginsburg's antipathy towards traditional Judaism, not to mention its adherents in Lubavitch and elsewhere, the Rebbe Rashab was ready for all out

THE ORDER OF MAN'S NEEDS ARE AIR, DRINK, FOOD, CLOTHING, AND SHELTER." WHY
BOTHER WITH HOUSING WHEN THERE'S NO BREAD FOR THE TABLE?



war. He wanted Reb Abele to communicate to Kahn and Leven, in no uncertain terms, that this was not a man to be relied upon for questions concerning the communal good.

“You can tell them,” he wrote to Reb Abele with righteous fury, “that when it comes to spiritual matters, the entire congregation of G-d fearing Jewry in these lands consider Baron Ginsburg to be a destroyer and corrupter of all that is good in Israel.” Even the non-Jewish officials of the Russian government, he added, had come to the realization that he was no “Jewish patriot,” and that his “heart was not in same place as his brothers.”¹⁸

Echoing this point in a follow up letter from a few days later, the Rebbe added that the Baron’s judgment in material communal matters was equally suspect. But even as he excoriated the Baron, the Rebbe explained and accounted for his behavior:

“The truth is that Baron Ginsburg... is not interested in knowing the needs of [our brothers], and has no intention of directing the JCA’s resources to their betterment.

There are several reasons for this... the first being that he has become accustomed to his lofty and wealthy way of life, and since he scarcely spends any time amongst his brothers, his standpoint does not allow him to see how they live. After so many years in the highest social circles and station in life, imagining and feeling [for their predicament] is beyond him. Secondly, his dedication to academic education does not allow him to devote himself to anything else...”¹⁹

A recent JCA-funded boondoggle with Ginsburg’s backing was a case in point: As reported in the Hebrew papers *Hamelitz* and *Hatzefirah*, some cheap housing units in Warsaw and Vilna were going unused since the Jews they were meant for hadn’t the means to pay rent, and the units themselves had been built too far from potential places of work. Embarrassed by the decrepit living conditions of the Jews in these areas, the Baron and other philanthropists had rushed the project without considering the actual needs of their beneficiaries.

The first thing these people needed, explained the Rebbe, was a job; if they could earn a living, they would be able to properly maintain the condition of their own homes. “As explained in the *maamer* *Mayim Rabim*, based on the *Moreh Nevuchim*,” he wrote to Reb Abele, “the order of Man’s needs are air, drink, food, clothing, and shelter.” Why bother with housing when there’s no bread for the table? In short, if the JCA wanted to address the needs of Russian Jewry, it ought to consult with people familiar with them, instead of out-of-touch plutocrats like Baron Ginsburg.

TIMELINE

ROSH CHODESH ADAR – *Persohn sets out for Paris, passes through Karlsruhe the next day, met there with Oscar Shlomo Strauss of JCA.*

ADAR (-BEGINNING) – *Persohn arrives in Paris.*

– *Persohn meets with Dr. Klein.*

15 ADAR – *Letter from the Rebbe to Persohn (704), encouraging him to continue to visit Dr. Klein, discussing Hildesheimer of the Jewish Press inspecting the schools, attaching signatures to the letter, pressing the issue in general and counselling against despair.*

19 ADAR – *Efforts to produce new translation and printed version of letter. Frustration over lack of progress.*

24 ADAR – *Persohn and R. Altman meet with Kahn.*

27 ADAR – *Second meeting with Kahn.*

NISSAN – *Rebbe mentions in letter to Yeshaya Berlin (716) that Persohn has been in Paris for a month and during that time he:*

- *Made introductions.*
- *Met Dr. Klein, without success.*
- *Met R. Altman, who is moved by the cause, and a true “yerei shomayim.”*
- *Persohn manages to visit Tzadok Kahn, along with Alterman, who concedes the point about the JCA’s mission, and that Ginzburg only secured the money on an emergency basis, but says that the money already pledged is a forgone matter.*
- *R. Shlomo Cohen advises to attach the 3 Rabbonim’s signatures to the letter.*
- *Finds a Hebrew language printer to secretly print letter for 100 francs.*
- *Rebbe finds out that first translation is not good, must be redone.*
- *R. S. Cohen volunteers to redo translation, Altman to type it up.*



"IT'S ALL A LOT OF CHASSIDIZMUS," HE SAID OF THE REBBE RASHAB'S ARGUMENTS;
NO MORE THAN A BUNCH OF RELIGIOUS FANATICISM, A FEW LUBAVITCHERS WORKING
THEMSELVES INTO A CHASSIDIC ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

TIMELINE

6 NISSAN – Letter to Persohn (719) about tactics, evidence misuse of funds, difference between Ginzburg and Poliakov.

– Persohn meets with Leven, Meyerson.

10 NISSAN – Persohn leaves Paris.

EREV PESACH – Rebbe writes to Poliakov.

EARLY IYAR – Rebbe learns that Leven changed his mind.

11 IYAR – Persohn arrives in Paris.

12 IYAR – R. Altman spots the Rebbe in the street.

– Rebbe meets with R. Kahn.

– JCA conference takes place in Paris.

24 IYAR – Rebbe returns from Paris to Wörishofen.

LATE IYAR – Monezsohn meets with Poliakov in Petersburg.

ROSH CHODESH SIVAN – Rebbe writes about encouraging Rabbonim of Eastern Europe, and about sending Persohn to Brisk, Telz, and elsewhere.

9 SIVAN – Rebbe arrives in Bad Homburg.

15 SIVAN – Persohn heads out to Brisk, then Minsk, Telz, etc.

EARLY TAMMUZ – Persohn visits Vilna.

5 ELLUL – Rebbe returns to Lubavitch.

Beyond simply diminishing Ginsburg's influence within the JCA, the Rebbe Rashab hoped to promote those people who actually did have Russian Jewry's best interests at heart – people like that of the previously mentioned Yakov Poliakov. It was at that time that the Rebbe decided to amplify Poliakov's voice within the organization.

In part, what set Poliakov apart from Ginsburg and the other grandees of JCA and Chamah was his background: He, along with his similarly successful brothers Eliezer and Shmuel, had a simple upbringing in the Vitebsk area, and still maintained deep roots there. Shmuel Poliakov, in particular, used to delight in recalling how his father had taken him as a child to see the Tzemach Tzedek in Lubavitch, while Eliezer would attribute their tremendous business success to the Rebbe's blessing on that occasion.²⁰

In the Rebbe Rashab's eyes, the Poliakovs were better positioned "to know and to feel the material privations that our brothers experience; they have not yet forgotten life in Orsha,²¹ and are well familiar the condition of their brothers."²² Just as the Rebbe had argued so forcefully in his official petition, they knew that the JCA's first priority had to be economic development. "Lazer" Poliakov had often discussed the need for factories and the like with Baron Hirsch, and other JCA members, and Yakov "would scream about this every time they met together."²³

Persohn's initial audience with Leven and Kahn began well. The JCA president happily accepted the newly-translated French version of the Rebbe's letter, and made up to meet a few days later. But by the second meeting, something appeared to have changed. Leven had a "different attitude about him,"²⁴ and seemed suddenly cynical.

"It's all a lot of *chassidizmus*," he said of the Rebbe Rashab's arguments; no more than a bunch of religious fanaticism, a few Lubavitchers working themselves into a Chassidic ado about nothing.

Reb Abele pointed to the letter bearing the names of some of Russia's greatest Torah sages. "None of the other three signatories are chassidim!" he protested.

Unconvinced, Leven said he would ask his affiliates in Petersburg for their thoughts on Lubavitch's demands. Petersburg, of course, meant Baron Ginsburg; advice coming from those quarters was hardly going to dissuade the JCA from its current course. In response, Persohn insisted that Leven at least consult with Poliakov in Petersburg; Leven gave his firm word that he would.

The advent of Pesach now brought a strange lull. After over four long months on the road, Reb Abele was returning home to his family. Before leaving, he made contact with another potential ally within the JCA, a Russian born chemist and philosopher by the name of Emile Myerson. More importantly, Myerson had an administrative role in the JCA, and would hopefully be able to use his influence to direct Leven away from Baron Ginsburg's perspective. Now his work in Paris was done, if not complete.

In the meantime, the Rebbe stayed on in Wörishofen and continued to work. On Erev Pesach, he wrote a warm letter to Poliakov, filling him in on the past few months, and advising him to expect Leven's inquiry. After Pesach, he added, Reb Abele would pay him a visit to brief him on the details.

It now seemed that after so many months of planning and positioning, everything was in place: Reb Abele had finally met with Kahn, who had introduced him to Leven, who was now going to take on advice from Poliakov – if he kept to his word – as well as from Meyerson. The JCA Committee would be having one of its regular meetings a couple weeks

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City of Petersburg circa 1900



after Pesach, in which this entire matter would no doubt be discussed. At this point, there was little else to do but wait. “Now the matter depends on you,” wrote the Rebbe Rashab to Poliakov, “and to you we turn our eyes.”²⁵

Pesach came, Pesach went, and it soon became clear that Leven had not kept to his word.

A CHANGE OF HEART

The Rebbe Rashab and Reb Abele had been eagerly waiting to hear from Rs. Altman and Cohen in Paris about any news from the halls of the JCA. It was already Iyar when the news broke like a bombshell:

Instead of consulting with Poliakov as pledged, Leven had gone directly to Baron Ginsburg, who then wrote a scathing letter of his own, denouncing the opposition to Chamah’s program as rooted in Chassidic fanaticism. Ginsburg even went so far as to suggest that some of the signatures affixed to the Rebbe Rashab’s official letter had been forged. The damage this assault had on the message of the letter was enormous.

The best explanation for Leven’s shift had even worse implications: It was becoming clear that Ginsburg had a man inside the JCA. “We think it’s someone

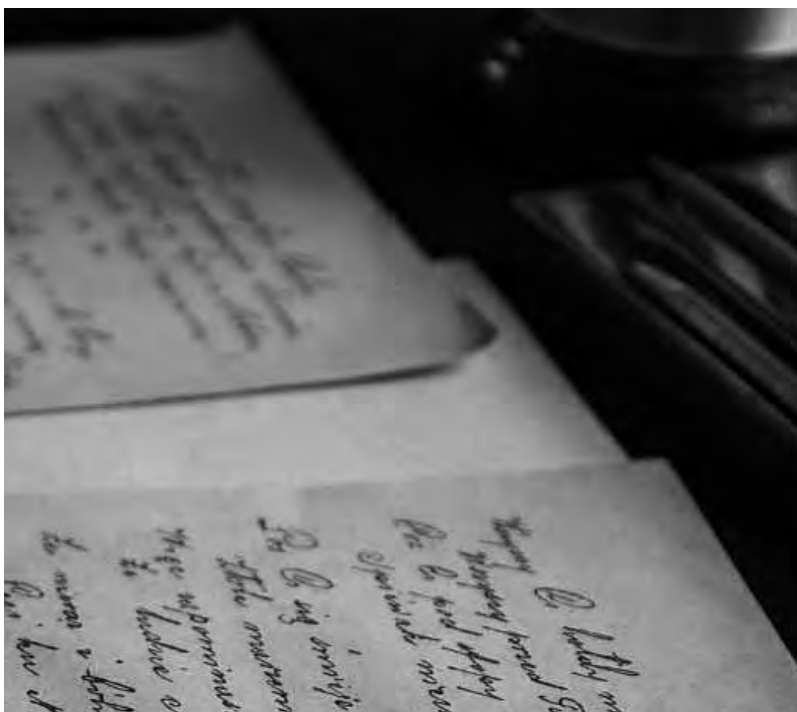
in their secretariat,” the Rebbe wrote in a brief to Madaievsky, “someone from our lands, placed there by Baron Ginsburg, and whose will is identical to his.”²⁶ In all likelihood, the plant was the very same Emile Meyerson Reb Abele had met with, and who previously given the impression of support.

Meanwhile, Rabbi Tzadok Kahn had proven a rather less reliable ally than thought. The Rebbe Rashab had come to the conclusion that his affable demeanor and gestures of support had been nearly as misleading as Meyerson’s. “He wishes to do nothing, except bluff and dissemble,” wrote the Rebbe Rashab. Kahn was a religious Jew in practice, and was perhaps sentimental for the traditional Yidden back East, but he shared precious few of their convictions. Instead, his heart was in the West – that is Western Europe.

Certainly the same could be said of Narcisse Leven, of whom Poliakov once remarked, “He is Jew as much as he is a Turk”²⁷ – which is to say not very much at all. So, whereas they were unsure how seriously to take the concerns raised by the fervid Chassidic zealot from Lubavitch, an impressive, modern, charismatic figure like Baron Ginsburg was much closer to their ideal model of Jew, and they trusted him implicitly.

Thus it seemed that over the course of a few days, the past six few months of diplomacy had come undone.

GINSBURG EVEN WENT SO FAR AS TO SUGGEST THAT SOME OF THE SIGNATURES AFFIXED TO THE REBBE RASHAB'S OFFICIAL LETTER HAD BEEN FORGED. THE DAMAGE THIS ASSAULT HAD ON THE MESSAGE OF THE LETTER WAS ENORMOUS.





IF HE FELL AFOUL OF THE MIGHTY GINSBURGS, THE IMPLICATIONS FOR HIS PLACE IN THE PETERSBURG SOCIAL SCENE AND BUSINESS COMMUNITY WEREN'T PRETTY.

First Klein, then Kahn, now Meyerson and Leven. Was it all over?

The Rebbe hardly seems to have entertained the thought. Immediately after reporting the bad news to Persohn, he writes in a letter a few weeks after Pesach: "I, on my part, have resolved to do our outmost, with G-d's help, and the hope that He will come to our aid. However, me must now deliberate on how to act, and what to do."²⁸

LAST GASP

Since Leven had never actually made direct contact with him, the last best hope for influence within the Committee still seemed to be Yakov Poliakov. The problem was that his ideas on Jewish welfare, while sincere and deeply held, were a minority opinion within the JCA. Whenever headquarters would field advice from its Petersburg branch – and certainly if they asked anyone from Chamah –

Poliakov's dissenting views would be drowned out by Ginsburg's minions.

To work around this problem, the Rebbe, still in touch with R. Khan and the other Parisian rabbis, secured a pledge from Leven that he would get in touch with Poliakov *directly*, that is to court his views in a personal capacity.

One can well imagine why Poliakov was nervous to go this far out on a limb. Expressing disagreement in a closed meeting was one thing; going behind the backs of the Chamah leadership, in direct defiance of the august Baron himself, so as to scuttle a 400,000 ruble donation from the JCA, and effectively sabotage its entire school network would take some serious chutzpah. Besides, if he fell afoul of the mighty Ginsburgs, the implications for his place in the Petersburg social scene and business community weren't pretty.



The resort town of Bad Wörishofen

"DEMAND FIRMLY FROM
POLIAKOV THAT NOW IS THE
TIME TO DEMONSTRATE
HIS GOOD WILL TO OUR
BROTHERS [AND REMIND
HIM THAT] SOME PEOPLE
EARN THEIR PORTION IN THE
WORLD TO COME IN BUT A
MOMENT..."

Surely aware of the moral dilemma Poliakov was about to find himself in, the Rebbe Rashab now roped in the chossid Reb Menachem Monish Moneszohn to meet with Poliakov in Petersburg and talk some steel into him. Poliakov was in fact planning a trip to Paris close to Tammuz time, so, in a Sivan letter to Moneszohn, the Rebbe wrote to ensure he would bring up the matter when he met with Leven there. The time had come for Poliakov to stick his head out and make his dissenting views known, loudly and clearly.

"We must demand of him that when he is in Paris, he meets with Leven, and tries to turn the conversation to this matter, to explain what the welfare of our brethren demands, and how [the JCA] is currently on a crooked course. Although it might be difficult for him to do, he should learn from Baron Ginsburg, for whom nothing is too difficult when it comes to realizing his wishes..."

Demand firmly from Poliakov that now is the time to demonstrate his good will to our brothers [and remind him that] some people earn their portion in the World to Come in but a moment..."

With the Poliakov play in process, the Rebbe Rashab planned a personal intervention of his own. In Iyar, his treatment at Wörishofen had stalled and, as he wrote to Reb Yeshaya Berlin, he was "suffering greatly from a lack of sleep."²⁹ The frustrations of the JCA affair were certainly no help. His doctor recommended a change of air in Switzerland, but the Rebbe had other plans.

Instead, he planned a discreet two week jaunt to Paris over Lag B'Omer, for a consultation with a local professor of medicine, and meetings with Rabbi Khan, as well as Narcisse Leven, if he could secure one. He would be accompanied Rabbi Yakov Mordechai Bezplov, and stay at the Hotel Byron on 22 rue Lafitte. Apart from these vital appointments, as he wrote to Reb Abele, the Rebbe wanted to remain shuttered in his room and meet with no one else, so to keep the visit secret, "for a hidden reason."³⁰

As fortune would have it, the good Rabbi Altman happened to recognize the Rebbe in the street, to the latter's initial disappointment. The secret was out, although having a friendly face in Paris had its benefits. In a letter to his Rebbetzin, the Rebbe writes that R Altman ended up faithfully providing him with a trusted shochet, warm meals, and even cheese and milk. Medical matters aside, and an unproductive meeting with R. Kahn,³¹ the outcome of his trip remains largely mysterious.³²

As a last major push, the Rebbe Rashab returned to rile up the rabbinic leadership. As Leven and Khan repeatedly indicated, the JCA had remained unresponsive to his campaign since its "arguments had originated in hasidic quarters, which they understood to be unrepresentative of the broader Orthodox community."³³ In order to succeed, the Rebbe now had to expand the coalition, and delegate responsibility for the campaign to others, and especially to those outside the Chassidic world.

For the second time, the tireless Reb Abele Persohn was summoned from his home in Königsberg, this time to head back East drum up support in Lithuania for the renewed offensive. In a letter to Reb Abele, the Rebbe lists a host of sages and scholars: The rabbis of Telz and Slonim, as well as the "somewhat less famous, less active" Chofetz Chaim of Radin. The Rebbe of Slonim was also approached; the JCA's objection was not so much about Chassidism in general, as it was against Lubavitch, and the Rebbe Rashab's brand of Chassidus. The rabbi of Kovno, thought to be less

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emotionally invested in the campaign, and too close with Baron Ginsburg to retain his better judgment, was eventually included as well, for his potential to bring yet other influential figures aboard. “Now, the only way is to inspire the Rabbonim of our land to join this holy war,” wrote the Rebbe.³⁴ He continued:

“If they truly think it bad to give Yiddishkeit up [to the JCA], in such precarious state, shouldn’t they be inspired on their own, to work with all of their might to rescue it? Isn’t protecting our children the main thing, the foundation of everything? Of what benefit is it to them when they occupy themselves with strengthening Torah study? [...] Surely it is a good thing, but when children’s souls are being corrupted in such a terrible way, how does strengthening Torah study help? [...]

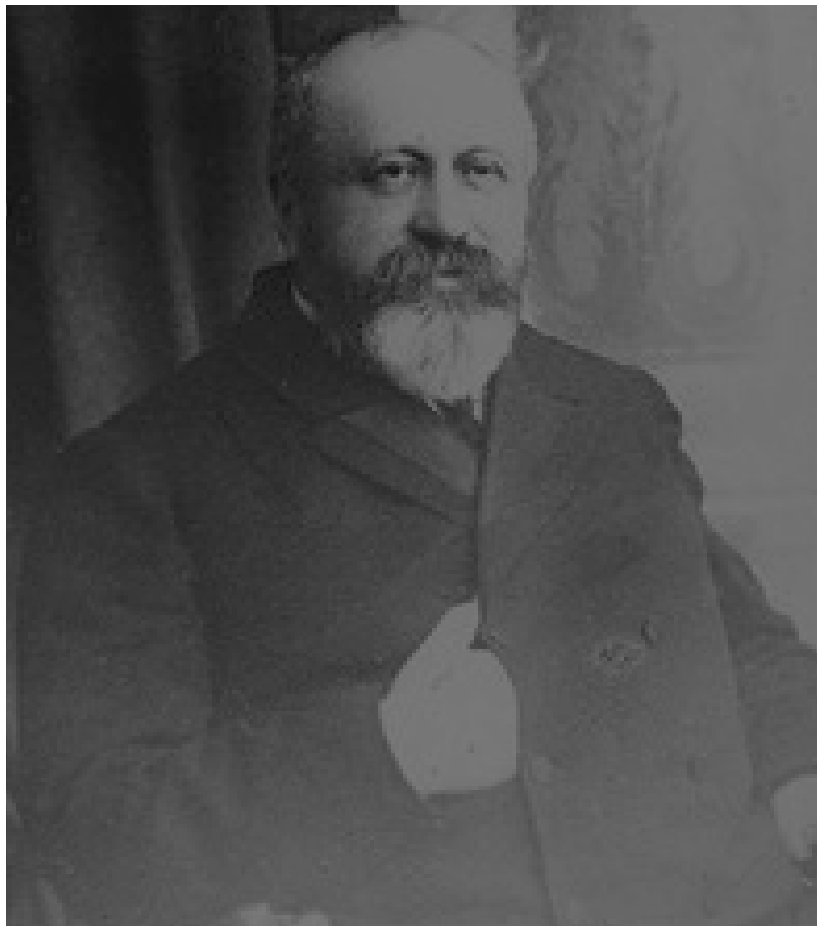
It is as though someone were fixing his house by starting repairs in the middle of the wall, while down below the foundations have completely corroded and rotted through. What help is it to fix the middle?...

We must fix the building as well, but aren’t the foundations paramount?

If the Rabbonim will strive to truly invest themselves in this with all of their energies and their might, there is a real hope that they will have an impact, with the help of G-d. As we well see, the Committee members are not entirely dismissive... if the Rabbonim get involved, write letters, whether in forceful or gentle language, explaining how wrong this is, and demonstrate their opposition publicly and firmly... they will have a positive impact.”

A month and half later, the Rebbe Rashab reports in a letter to Reb Yeshaya Berlin that R. Chaim Brisker and R. Chaim Ozer Grodzinski were acting with “great force, and great energy.” Tellingly, the Rebbe Rashab had received word of Baron Ginsburg’s furious reaction to his campaign. “He knows the truth about how bad things are” wrote the Rebbe of the Baron, “and he is afraid that the words of the Rabbonim will sway the Committee against his will and that of the people who surround him.”

“HE KNOWS THE TRUTH
ABOUT HOW BAD THINGS
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Baron Horace Ginsburg



Despite these positive signs, the money continued to flow. At around the two year anniversary of his campaign, the JCA voted to send funds to support the co-educational Haskalah school in Lubavitch. A few months later, they approved another 50,000 rubles towards teacher training. More time passed. By this point, despite the Rebbe's continued letter-writing, it seemed that the battle was lost.

But then, by the three-year mark, it was suddenly over: Rumor had it that the JCA had decided to withhold 600,000 francs of the original pledge. In a letter to Rebbe Yeshaya Berlin dated 9 Adar 5663 (1902), the Rebbe recalled a meeting he had in Paris months before:

“When I spoke with R. Tzadok Khan in Paris, he told me that they would not give any more than the amount already pledged... I challenged that since they haven't actually given that money yet, and now that there are protests over the donation, they can withhold it. He confirmed that they hadn't given it all yet – and now they have withheld the above amount.”³⁵

Still, the story remains shrouded in some intrigue. “The reason for this is impossible to know,” wrote the Rebbe a few days later, “perhaps they paid heed to the protests against Chamah.”

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EPILOGUE

In the introduction to the Rebbe Rashab's treatise *Kuntres U'mayon*, the Friediker Rebbe quotes his father with an encapsulation of the affair's ultimate outcome:

"[T]hose million francs... with the kindness of the Almighty, through our efforts, the money has been directed towards the construction of a weaving mill in Dubrovna. In addition to the several hundred Jewish families of Dubrovna earning their livelihood by working in the mill, it has had positive impact on the entire surrounding region."³⁶

Quite possibly, this investment in the Dubrovna textile industry explains where the balance between the remaining 400,000 francs from the JCA's original million franc pledge, and those monies already directed to Chamah, wound up.³⁷ Precisely, that is, where the Rebbe Rashab argued the JCA ought to focus its attention – towards developing economic opportunities for the long-suffering communities of the Pale.

At any rate, what is clear is that those many months of tireless activity, of letters, train travel, incessant meetings, advocating, begging, pleading, imploring, arguing and more – ploughing, planting, and sowing all of it – were now matched by a reward to reap. Surely the Friediker Rebbe's famous remark, recorded in *Hayom Yom* of 12 Tishrei, is appropriate here:

We are assured by covenant that any wide-ranging effort and labor pursued wisely and with friendship is never fruitless.

Those years, at the turn of the twentieth century, were witness to great internal strife within Russian Jewry, a kind of rolling battle between radicals, reformers, and traditionalists, each fighting on multiple fronts. External tensions were growing as well. Over the next two decades, three Russian revolutions, a World War, and the brutal rise of Soviet Communism – not to mention the Holocaust two decades after that – would wash away most of these debates like sandcastles before a tidal wave.

WITH THE KINDNESS OF THE ALMIGHTY, THROUGH OUR EFFORTS, THE MONEY HAS BEEN DIRECTED TOWARDS THE CONSTRUCTION OF A WEAVING MILL IN DUBROVNA.



TORAH-TRUE JEWISH EDUCATION IS A PRECIOUS THING, THEY TELL US, SOMETHING TO BE NURTURED, DEVELOPED, AND DEFENDED AT ALL COSTS.

With the benefit of hindsight, don't these internecine squabbles start to seem like so many deck-chair rearrangements on the (as yet unbuilt) Titanic? One might well ask. But in truth, the opposite could be said: In the face of such catastrophe, perhaps the only response was to batter down the hatches, making the hull of Russian Yiddishkeit sturdy enough to handle whatever came its way, and ensuring there were enough lifeboats so that at least the survivors could go on to rebuild.

Certainly, there is a message that still rings out clearly from this affair. The rivers of sweat, toil, and tears that the Rebbe Rashab and his chassidim faithfully

shed for the sacrosanct soul of the cheder continue to speak for themselves: Torah-true Jewish education is a precious thing, something to be nurtured, developed, and defended at all costs. Circumstances may have changed, a century has passed, and most readers of this story will find themselves at least a continent away, but surely this kernel of conviction remains as true now as it did then. **P**

The author is deeply indebted to Rabbi Naftoli Brawer's study on the Rebbe Rashab and the JCA affair, and to Rabbi SB Levin's invaluable work on the Rebbe Rashab's Igros Kodesh.

Endnotes

1. Cited in Brawer, N., op. cit., p. 60.
2. Igros Kodesh, vol. 3, p. 151.
3. Ibid., pp. 152, 156.
4. Ibid., p. 213.
5. Ibid., pp. 225-6.
6. Ibid., p. 209.
7. Ibid., Igros Kodesh, vol. 3, p. 213. In a later letter, we learn that Reb Abele managed with some difficulty, and at a cost of 100 francs, to find a discreet Parisian printer capable of printing the original handwritten letter in a more legible Hebrew typeface. The limited Hebrew language skills of its intended recipients – as noted *ibid.*, p. 225 – possibly speaks to their distance from other aspects of traditional Yiddishkeit.
8. Menachem Mendel Ussishkin came from a family of Chabad chassidim; Achad Ha'am's wife's maiden name was Schneersohn.
9. Ibid., p. 214.
10. *ibid.*, 208.
11. Ibid., p. 209.
12. Ibid., p. 152.
13. Ibid., p. 226.
14. Ibid., p. 221. Incidentally, the same 29 Adar letter refers to the birth of the Rebbe Rashab's granddaughter the previous Shabbos. Her name – on the Rebbe's advice (*ibid.*, 219) – would be Chaya Mushka.
15. Ibid. 223.
16. Ibid., p. 226.
17. Ibid., p. 232.
18. Ibid., p. 223.
19. Ibid., p. 231.
20. Sefer HaSichos 5701 (Lahak), p. 92.
21. A town in the province of Vitebsk, less than 50 miles from Lubavitch.
22. Ibid., p. 231.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., p. 278.
25. Ibid., p. 241.
26. Ibid., p. 278.
27. Ibid., p. 262.
28. Ibid., p. 250.
29. Ibid., p. 253.
30. Ibid., 250.
31. Ibid., p. 278.
32. Brawer, N., op. cit., p. 72.
33. Ibid.
34. Igros Kodesh, vol. 3., p. 260.
35. Ibid., p. 382.
36. *In שולחן היחוד* in the beginning of Hayom Yom it notes the Frieddiker Rebbe as spending the year of 5661 setting up the Dubrovna factory.
37. See Brawer, N., op. cit., p. 77, fn. 142.

TEPLACH AND KEPLACH



KEEPING A KOSHER HEAD

RABBI URIEL TZIMMER

Rabbi Uriel Tzimmer was a man of incredible talent who accomplished a great deal during his short life. With a PhD in languages and political science, he served as a translator for the U.N. He also worked as a secretary for the Rebbe, translated parts of the Tanya, and edited many of the Rebbe's talks, until his untimely passing in Kislev of 5722 (1961) when he was just 40 years old.

The Rebbe encouraged Reb Uriel to write on contemporary issues, and during the months before his passing, when he was already quite unwell, he exerted himself to write his book *The Jewish Adolescent* which was published posthumously (selections of which were included in the book *Bas Melech Pnima – The Rebbe on Modesty*).

The following is a translation of a Yiddish article he wrote for *Di Yiddishe Heim* in the Summer of 5721 (1961).



Rabbi Uriel Tzimmer at the UN

“Why do people pay attention only to what they put in their pots (*teplach*) and not to what they put in their heads (*keplach*)?” This pointed question was asked by the Frierdiker Rebbe numerous times in various forms throughout his years in the United States.

While the Frierdiker Rebbe invested great efforts to introduce “kashrus of the heads” even to those who didn’t have kosher pots – indeed with the hope that one will lead to the other – his painful question was pointed at those who are aware and careful about the kashrus of their food.

To them, the question was much stronger:

One who knows nothing about kashrus must be taught from the basics, but you already know what kashrus is.

*“Why do people pay attention only to what they put in their pots (*teplach*) and not to what they put in their heads (*keplach*)?”*

Don't you realize that the spiritual "food" you consume and feed to your children must be kosher?

Many Jews were inspired by this call. Yet, there is still lots to be done.

KOSHER FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Since even the smallest amount of tainted views poison the mind, it requires great effort and Heavenly assistance to be freed of them. Non-kosher spiritual "food" can be even more detrimental to the soul than actually eating non-kosher food; the Alter Rebbe makes this point clear in Tanya in discussing how

the study of secular topics can defile the most refined aspects of the person – his mind and intellect.

At the very least, we must administer the same level of care to the kashrus of mind food as we do regarding the kashrus of our kitchen. Every Jewish woman knows of the assiduousness required to uphold a kosher kitchen. If one non-kosher ingredient is mixed in to a food, the kashrus is not somewhat insufficient – it can be 100% non-kosher.

Moreover, even if the kitchen and all the food products inside are kosher, all it takes is a cook who is not careful about kashrus, even without meaning any harm, to ruin the kashrus of the entire kitchen.



Rabbi Uriel Tzimmer

Don't you realize that the spiritual "food" you consume and feed to your children must be kosher?



BLACK, WHITE, AND GREY

The average *frum* Jew who enters a non-Kosher restaurant on the course of a trip isn't faced with major temptation. He knows full well that all the food there is *treif*, and he won't even consider eating anything from the restaurant. An outsider who observes him enter the restaurant also understands that he isn't going to eat anything.

It is far more difficult if a hotel or restaurant advertises in big letters that it is kosher, while the truth is that its kashrus is not reliable. One who enters such a place may very well end up eating non-kosher food. And if he takes the food and brings it home to heat it up in his kosher kitchen, it can be even more destructive.

Even if the food seems kosher, what guarantee is there that this is so? All the food could be prepared with the same utensils that are used for the non-kosher meat or milk products. It makes no difference what type of food it is – it could be a *shtetl*-esque kugel or gefilte fish and be problematic just the same.

Even if one were to investigate thoroughly and establish the kashrus of a particular product from an otherwise-unreliable establishment, his neighbors wouldn't know this. What they know is that an ultra-religious family that is particular about kashrus is eating a product from that source. Unaware of the research conducted regarding that particular product, they will conclude that everything is totally fine.

The average frum Jew who enters a non-Kosher restaurant on the course of a trip isn't faced with major temptation.



An article about a Jewish leader authored by one who isn't permeated with holy views, can be far more spiritually harmful than an article about fields and forests.

TREIFE FOOD FOR THE MIND

Since the kashrus of what we allow into our heads requires at least the same amount of if not more scrupulousness as does what we allow into our kitchen, let us apply the above principles to the kashrus of the reading material that we feed our minds:

When dealing with material authored by non-Jews, there is at least some degree of protection. Its non-Jewish origin is clear from the outset, and that it has no connection to Jews. One who occasionally reads a news bulletin in a non-Jewish paper is analogous to getting a glass of water from a non-Jewish restaurant while travelling. Even if one stumbles and reads other sections in the paper, the very fact that one knows it was authored by a non-Jew helps prevent the information from getting too deeply absorbed in one's mind.

More detrimental is the so-called "Jewish" literature, regardless in which language it is written, the biggest challenge of all being when they discuss religious topics. Ads in the city for homemade kugel and gefilte fish could be perceived by sincere Jews as kosher. The truth is that these "kosher-style" foods can be completely *treif*. Likewise, an article about a Jewish leader – such as the Rambam or Baal Shem Tov – authored by one who isn't permeated with holy views, can be far more spiritually harmful than an article about fields and forests.

Even if this material is brought into a kosher institution or home, not only does it not become kosher, but it jeopardizes the kashrus of that entire place.

This may not be apparent to the average reader, for a talented author could ensure that his article contains no false information and only facts from reliable sources. But at the same time, it can be full of poison.

AN UNHOLY APPROACH TO HOLY MATTERS

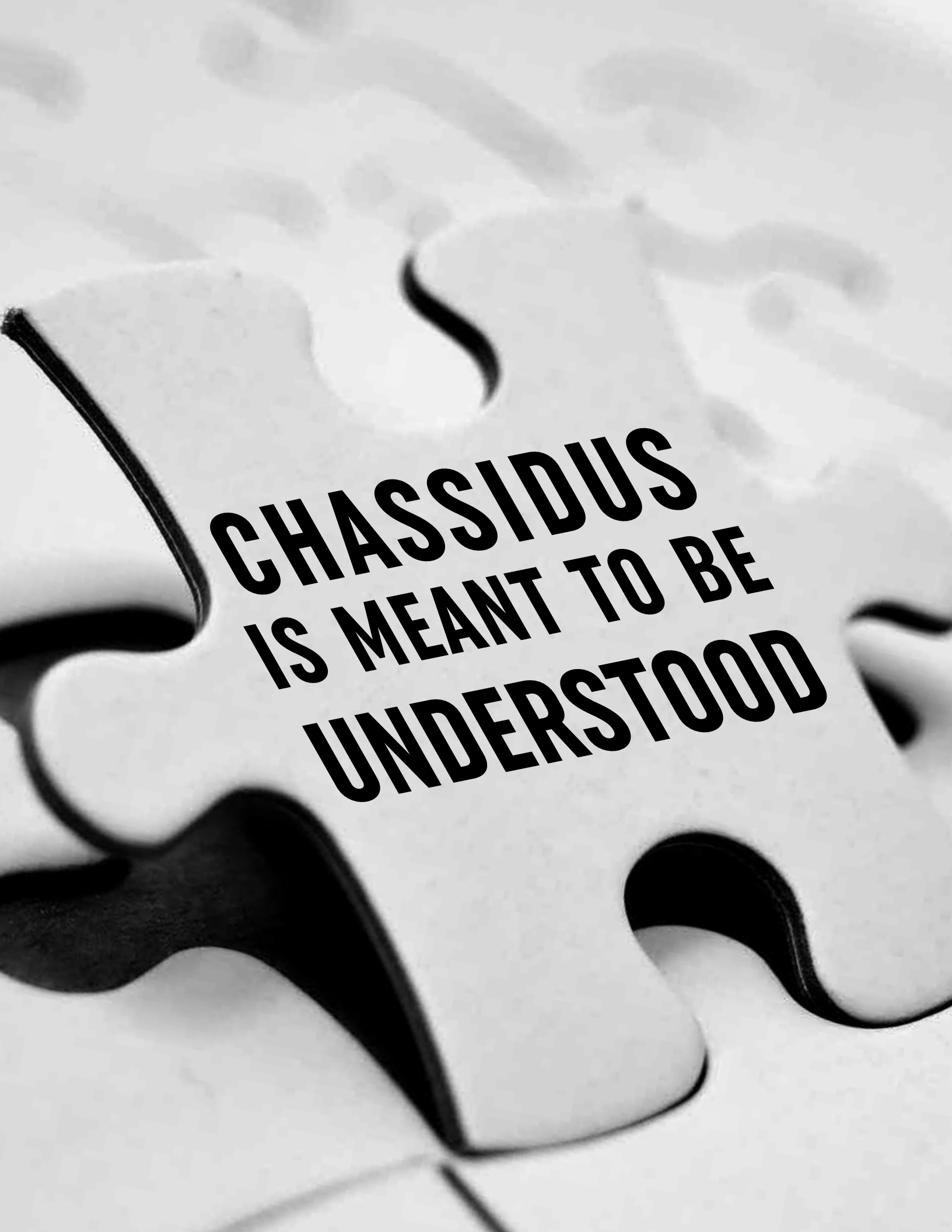
If, for instance, someone would write about the Tzemach Tzedek and elaborate at length about his vast Torah knowledge, halachic responsa, love for Jews, befriending the Cantonists, his miracles and so forth – which are all true and accurate facts – but they would intentionally omit how he was the chief opponent to the Enlightenment movement in Russia, this creates a false impression, notwithstanding how beautiful they painted the other aspects of his life. In fact, the nicer they write about the Rebbe, the worse its effect can be.

It is superfluous to point out that even if this material is brought into a kosher institution or home, not only does it not become kosher, but it jeopardizes the kashrus of that entire place. Even if the article is reviewed thoroughly and verified to not contain anything negative, an uneducated reader wouldn't be aware that only this particular piece has been approved. The fact that such reading material is found in a kosher institution will be seen as a stamp of approval for all other material published by that same source.

No book on a secular topic can be as harmful as one that discusses the Torah; no baseless speech can be as damaging as talk regarding Hashem, if it has a non-kosher source.

These are just the basics of keeping kosher pots and heads. Perhaps at a future opportunity we can discuss more of the details. **P**





**CHASSIDUS
IS MEANT TO BE
UNDERSTOOD**

RABBI MENACHEM BROD

A fine custom has been instituted in our *shul* in Kfar Chabad: At the conclusion of Shabbos, during the time of *raiva deraivin*, as the crowd sits and sings *niggunim* as a preparation for the recitation of a *maamar*. Tens of children sit in two long rows and join in singing mellow Chabad *niggunim*. The *ba'alei menagnim* which lead choose *niggunim* which are more commonly known, and from time to time introduce a lesser-known *niggun*, which the children quickly pick up. When the *maamar* is recited, the children sit in astonishing silence. This wonder is the work of one *yungerman* who encourages the children and gives them each a bag of treats.

A guest who chanced upon our *shul* one week profoundly enjoyed the scene, and expressed his positive impression to me after *maariv*. He had just one complaint about the *maamar*, “Why is the *maamar* said in conversational Hebrew and not in Lashon Kodesh as the Rebbe wrote it? Is this a Chabad House?!”

“Well, the *sicha* on Shabbos morning is also said in conversational Hebrew,” I replied nonchalantly, knowing what his reaction would be.

“How can you compare a *sicha* to a *maamar*?” my conversation-mate thundered. “A *sicha* is said in Hebrew so that the people understand, but a *maamar* is ‘*divrei Elokim chayim*,’ the word of the living G-d.”

“Why is the maamar said in conversational Hebrew and not in Lashon Kodesh as the Rebbe wrote it? Is this a Chabad House?!”



Rabbi Menachem Brod is the spokesperson for Chabad in Eretz Yisroel and the editor of the popular Sichas Hashavua.

Is it possible to listen to a maamar which is repeated word for word in Loshon Kodesh as it's written? Is there even a chance that someone will listen?"

"Which we need not understand," I completed his sentence.

"No..." he started to reply, and I stopped him, "What 'no?' Is it possible to listen to a *maamar* which is repeated word for word in Loshon Kodesh as it's written? Is there even a chance that someone will listen?"

"The *neshama* understands," was his reaction.

"So you are saying that Chassidus has turned into a *segula*. People should sit and space out, think about other things, and the *maamar* should be just for the *neshama*, instead of nourishing the soul with rich and relevant material," I said.

■

AN AMERICAN JOURNALIST

It was in 5739 (1979). I was then a young *bochur* in Tomchei Temimim in Kfar Chabad. My *chavrusa* for Chassidus was R. Menachem Kirsh (today of Crown Heights), who had recently arrived from South Africa. We were sitting and learning Chassidus one Friday night, when someone came to tell us that an English speaker had arrived at the *yeshiva*, and someone needs to speak to him. Menachem got up and went to the person.

Before *davening* I asked Menachem who the person was, and he said that the guest told a strange story. He claimed that he was a tourist from the U.S. who got stuck on the road, and was told that he could spend





An aerial view of Kfar Chabad

Shabbos in Kfar Chabad. Menachem managed to get the real story out of him little later.

It turned out that the man was an American journalist who decided to write a book about Israel. His chosen method was to land on different places in Israel, all over the country, and then describe what he heard and saw. He somehow heard about Kfar Chabad and was told that it was worth spending a Shabbos there. That's how he "landed" in the *yeshiva*.

Time passed. One day Menachem showed me an envelope which arrived in the mail from the U.S. The journalist had sent him the chapter which described his Shabbos in Kfar Chabad. He translated a few paragraphs for me into Hebrew, and it was truly a beautiful portrayal. The chapter ended with a *farbrengen* with R. Mendel Futerfas. The man described the *farbrengen*, the *niggunim*, and ended something like this:

"At a certain point, quiet reigned, and one of the students began to speak. It seemed like a chant, since he was speaking very quickly, and was not making any effort so that others would want to listen. The other students indeed were not trying to listen. I asked one of the students what this was about, and he replied, 'It's a text from the *Kabbalah*, and there's no need to understand it...'"

I asked one of the students what this was about, and he replied, 'It's a text from the Kabbalah, and there's no need to understand it...'"

A "GEDAVENTE" MAAMAR

It seems like the warping of the concept of "*chazering Chassidus*," and its transformation into something ceremonious, started when the knowledge and usage of the Yiddish language diminished, and many started repeating *maamarim* in the printed text. In the past, when *maamarim* were repeated in Yiddish, no one ever thought of "reciting" it word for word from the text. They learned a *maamar*, reviewed it many times and absorbed its content, and then repeated it in spoken Yiddish according to one's unique manner of expression.

Just read this description by R. Nochum Shmaryahu Sassonkin about how the famed *tomim* R. Dovid Horodoker *chazered* Chassidus:

"Once, after a few years in Tomchei Temimim, he arrived in the city L. and was honored with repeating words of Chassidus. People were concerned that he would share deep concepts, which they would be unable to grasp, but were amazed at how his words were clearly explained and illuminated.

"He related to the crowd of listeners the *maamar* in *Likutei Torah, Parshas Tzav*, about the level of 'youngsters' (*ne'arim*), and why Yosef and Yehoshua

were called 'youngsters.' The *posuk* says that youngsters will shame the elders (*ne'arim pnei zekeinim yalbinu*), and he explained what 'elders' meant spiritually. His words shone, and everyone enjoyed it, even the simplest listeners.

"Where did Dovid attain this ability? He would '*daven* with the *maamar*.' In doing so, the first step is to review the *maamar* until one knows it by heart. Then, he contemplates and toils to understand it thoroughly. Finally, during *davening*, he contemplates about its intricate details, and explains it to himself so that even the *nefesh habahamis* understands that G-dliness is good and sweet, and thus yearns for it."

These few lines say everything. First of all, in the past people would listen to *maamarim* being said, to the point that they were concerned whether the speaker would repeat a *maamar* which was too deep and not understood. Secondly, a *maamar* was repeated in a manner that everyone understood and enjoyed, with each detail of the *maamar* explained.

The Rebbe refers to this way of *chazering* Chassidus many times in his letters. It is certain that the Rebbe views repeating *maamarim* as something intended to be intellectually absorbed by all the listeners. The Rebbe speaks about the need to develop oratory

*In the past, when
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R. Nochum Shmaryahu Sassonkin



R. Dovid Horodoker

*The Rebbe returned the maamar with a note:
“Literally word for word from the tape.”*

talent among the *temimim*, so that they could *chazer maamorim* properly. There is no oratory talent in reciting a *maamar* word for word. For that you need memory.

In fact, the Rebbe even permits the speaker to add explanations which fit the content of the *maamar* – from *sichos*, letters, and stories by the Friediker Rebbe. The Rebbe adds that if this doesn't suffice, one can employ the kind of talk “that is spoken at *chassidische farbrengens*.”

We're not talking here about adding or commentating on the *maamar*, but simply about relaying the content of the *maamar* in a language that enables the listening and comprehension of participants.

The Rebbe himself said *maamarim* in spoken language, and not as they are written. Just listen to the Rebbe saying a *maamar*, and compare it with the print, and you will immediately see the difference between his spoken language and the written. Those who were involved in preparing *maamarim* for the Rebbe's editing related how the Rebbe once expressed displeasure from the way a *maamar* was written, as it was too closely aligned with the way the Rebbe had actually said it. The Rebbe returned the *maamar* with a note: “Literally word for word from the tape.” This clearly shows that written vernacular is impossible to double as spoken language.

At a recent visit to 770, I discussed this with R. Yoel Kahan. He immediately responded that it was obvious that understanding is crucial, and was surprised that there was even a doubt. He brought to my attention a letter by the Rebbe Rashab which is printed in the end of *Kuntres Eitz Chaim* (Igros Kodesh, Vol. 2, p. 721):

“On Shabbos Kodesh after *mincha* they should share words of Chassidus by heart, either the *rov* or others who know how to speak. The deliverer should prepare himself by learning it well, and understand the concepts himself and also how to explain them to another. He should feed his words in a way that the concept be understood to the listeners, and he should arrange his words in a proper order, and intend the words [which is saying to be] about himself, and words that come from the heart enter the heart.”

Let us leave the recitals for the *bar mitzva* boys, and let us *chazer* Chassidus as chassidim did throughout the generations. The language – Yiddish, English or French – is not important. What is important is to repeat the *maamar* with enthusiasm, with enlightening explanation, to the point that there can be concern that the speaker might feel some satisfaction from his speaking. Then we can tell him: “A *tzibelle zul fun dir veren, uber Chassidus zulstu chazern*,” even should an “onion” become of you, you should continue *chazering* Chassidus! **P**

SNAPSHOTS

— 14 SHORT STORIES —

of the **REBBE** *on*

DAVENING *and* SHUL

ONE THE REBBE'S MESSAGE

“During the winter of 5730 (1970),” related Professor Velvel Green, “I was invited to London, UK to take part in epidemiological research, my field of expertise. Upon the Rebbe’s directive I also invested much time to assist the work of Lubavitch there.

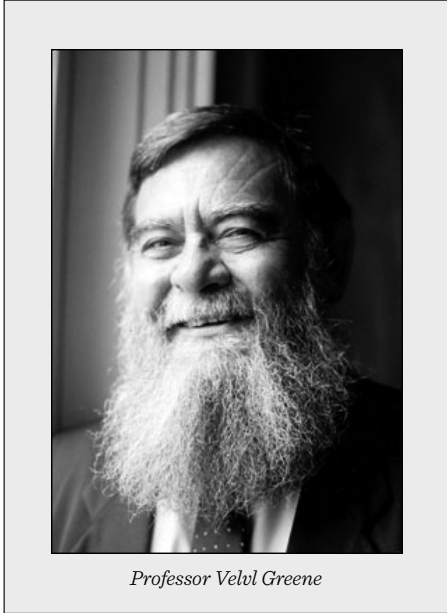
“One day, while I was busy at work in the hospital, I received an urgent call. ‘There is an emergency meeting at Lubavitch House,’ I was told. ‘An important message from the Rebbe came in. Drop everything – come now.’

“I took the train. At Lubavitch House, I saw all the local chassidim and Lubavitch affiliates already assembled in hushed silence. Reb Bentzion Shemtov was seated at the head of the table, but did not utter a sound. I was told that he had just arrived from New York with an important message for all *anash*.

“Suddenly, Reb Bentzion got up and announced, ‘The Rebbe said that *davening* must be “nice!”’

“The meeting was over. From that day on, everyone *davened* in one *minyán*, there was no talking, and the *chazanim* were chosen carefully; the *davening* revolutionized, becoming ‘nicer.’”

(Professor Green Sholom Ubracha, p. 153)



Professor Velvel Greene

TWO**THE WORDS OF DAVENING**

In the public letter of Erev Pesach 5724 (1964), the Rebbe decries the way people want to make great changes in their lives, but do not understand that the trivial, small things are what make the person.

One example the Rebbe gives: “Being cautious not to swallow words in *davening*.”

HaRav Chodakov related:

The Rebbe once called me over and said, “There is this boy who *davens* in our *minyán* in 770, and it seems that he skips words in his *davening*. Please make sure he is spoken to.”

Reb Leibel Groner related a similar incident:

During Chanukah 5742 (1981), the Rebbe *davened* downstairs in the big *shul*. In the middle of *davening*, the Rebbe turned around a number of times, looked towards the children, and said “*Amen*” louder than usual.

A few days later the Rebbe told me, “It has already been three days that I see a child not answering ‘*Amen*’ properly. There are adults who stand next to him, yet they don’t do anything about it. I wanted to go over to him myself, but that would have created an uproar.”

(*Hachinuch Vehamechaneh*, p. 62)

In the middle of davening, the Rebbe turned around a number of times, looked towards the children, and said “Amen” louder than usual.

**THREE****CHAYUS IN DAVENING**

In honor of his seventeenth birthday, *Hatomim* Shmuel Notik, today a *shliach* in Chicago, IL, merited a *yechidus*. In the note which he handed to the Rebbe he asked how he could develop a *chayus* in *davening*.

The Rebbe responded:

“The teaching of the Friediker Rebbe is well known that one should divide his *davening* into six or seven segments, and each day of the week to ‘*daven*’ one part.

“However,” the Rebbe clarified, “this is not referring to the simple *pirush hamilos* [literal translation], which is a daily obligation. This is only in reference to the *chassidisher taitch* [Chassidic insight] of *davening*.”

The Rebbe concluded with an assurance, “If you do this, you will develop a *chayus* in *davening*.”

FOUR

YOU CAME TO SHUL TO DAVEN? THINK ABOUT HASHEM!

During the *farbrengen* of 13 Tishrei 5743 (1982), the Rebbe publicly lamented the state of the *davening*: “People come to *shul*, and instead of looking in the *siddur*, they watch me *daven*! There may be a concept of looking at a *rov*, but *davening* is not the time for it.

“You came to *shul* to *daven*? Think about *davening*! Think of Hashem! We’re not talking of deep *kavanos*, rather merely about standing ‘as a servant before his master.’ Think about the Master!”

As the *sicha* continued, the Rebbe expressed such anguish with the laxity in *davening* that he threatened not to join the public *minyán* if matters didn’t improve.

It happened once, during the 5730’s (1970’s), that as the *aron kodesh* was opened, the *niggun* “*Ano Avdo Dekusho Brich Hu*” was started, and the Rebbe began dancing vigorously.

Naturally, many in the crowd turned to get a better look at the Rebbe during these special moments of ecstasy. The Rebbe however pointed to the *aron kodesh*, signaling where to look.

(*Heichel Negina*, p. 312)



FIVE

DAVENING WITH A MINYAN

When the Rebbe wanted to give a public message to chassidim, it would often be through Reb Nissan Nemanov, the *mashpia* in Brunoy, France. After his *yechidus*, he would *farbreng* in 770 and publicize the Rebbe’s words.

In the *yechidus* of Tammuz 5733 (1973), the Rebbe said, “The concept of *davening* with a *minyán* has lately become extremely neglected. Some think that *tefilla betzibur* is for children... They should know that anyone not *davening be’arichus* is obligated to *daven* with a *minyán*!”

Two years later, on 9 Teves 5735 (1975), Reb Nissan had another *yechidus*. As soon as he entered, the

Rebbe continued the conversation left off two years earlier.

“What is the situation in France regarding *davening* with a *minyán*? We are just coming from Yud-Tes Kislev. All of the *Pada Beshalom maamorim* connected to this day discuss the importance of *davening* with a *minyán*.”

The Rebbe rose slightly in his chair, and said with great emotion, “Why is no one active about it? Why is there such negligence? Even non-chassidim appreciate the greatness of a *minyán*. Other things we manage to accomplish, but this issue is only getting worse.”

SIX THE PREREQUISITE FOR DAVENING

During the 770 visit of the renowned Toldos Aharon Rebbe of Yerushalayim in 5721 (1961), a heated discussion ensued between the Rebbe and his guest. The Rebbe insisted that a *Yid* must prepare for *davening* by learning Chassidus, while the Toldos Aharon Rebbe maintained that having the simple *kavana* suffices.

During the course of the conversation the Rebbe expounded, “*Davening* must be with all of one’s limbs. This obviously does not only refer to the physical limbs, but also to the various facets of the person’s character: his intellect and emotions.

“Now,” continued the Rebbe, “if a person does not understand the depth of his *tefilla*, he is utilizing only a shallow part of his mind, thereby relinquishing its depth. *Davening* must be with every facet of a *Yid*’s being, including that depth.

“The only way to achieve this would be by learning and contemplating the inner meaning of the *tefilla*, through the study of Chassidus.

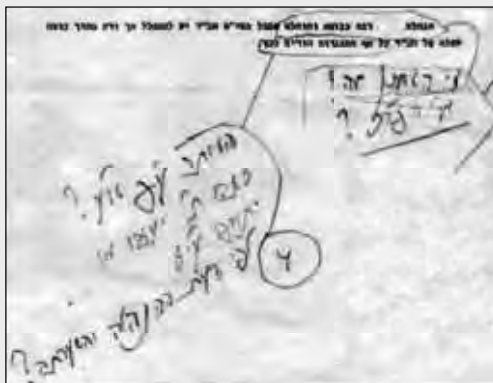
“It does not have to be Chabad Chassidus,” the Rebbe concluded, “but Chassidus it must be.”

(Toras Menachem, vol. 30, page 319)



The Toldos Aharon Rebbe

“If a person does not understand the depth of his tefilla, he is utilizing only a shallow part of his mind”



The Rebbe’s hand-written response

“Is it permitted according to the Shulchan Aruch, to force a child to daven in a nusach that is not his own?”

SEVEN NON-CHABAD NUSACH

The administration of a Lubavitch day school, that had accepted students from non-chassidic homes, came to the conclusion that it only befits a Chabad school that the children *daven* in *Nusach Ari*, as the Alter Rebbe has established.

Despite some of the parent body protesting, the principal enforced the rule, and the administration reported the good tidings to the Rebbe.

In his holy handwriting, the Rebbe responded with dismay. “Who partook in this meeting? Where are the minutes?”

Then the Rebbe raised the question: “Is it permitted according to the *Shulchan Aruch*, to force a child to *daven* in a *nusach* that is not his own?”

And still another question: “how many children, in the view and estimate of the administration, will be attracted or distanced, as a result of the new policy?”

(Simpson Teshurah, Kislev 5774)



EIGHT DAVENING TIMES

When the great 5706 (1946) Russian exodus of Chassidim finally settled, a large contingent spread throughout the periphery of Paris. Reb Chonyeh Levin lived in Aubervilliers, a suburb of Paris, together with some ten other Lubavitcher families.

In a 5718 (1958) *yechidus*, after answering Reb Chonyeh's questions, the Rebbe prodded, "Tell me, what time do you begin *davening* in the *anash shul* of Aubervilliers on Shabbos?"

Reb Chonyeh answered, "Being that the *mikva* is a great distance away, a good forty-five minute walk, the *davening* begins at 10:30. It happens that until everyone gathers and puts themselves together, *davening* could be delayed until eleven o'clock."

The Rebbe was not pleased. He gave Chonyeh a message to deliver to *anash* of Aubervilliers: "Tell them in my name, that the *chazzan* should already begin *Hodu* at ten o'clock sharp."

The Rebbe prodded, "Tell me, what time do you begin davening in the anash shul of Aubervilliers on Shabbos?"

NINE A WELCOMING SHUL

Despite being preoccupied with the loftiest of worlds, the Rebbe's care for the *shul* at 770 brought him to deal with the most mundane of matters.

"It is important that there be clean towels available for people to wash their hands before *davening*," the Rebbe stated at the 28 Elul *farbrengen*, 5728 (1968).

Another such occasion was the *farbrengen* of Shushan Purim 5741 (1981), when the Rebbe made the following suggestion:

"This *shul* has been operative for many years. Various people step in to learn and to *daven*, they come in tired and sweaty – why shouldn't they find a glass of water, or a hot tea?"

The Rebbe then made note of the fact that there weren't even cups available, or a designated place in the *shul* to have a drink. "The Rebbeim taught that it is important to be well-mannered."

Following that *farbrengen*, a tea machine was purchased, soon to be replaced by a larger one, eventually evolving into a fully stocked tea corner at 770.



"The Rebbeim taught that it is important to be well-mannered."

TEN

HOW A CHOSSID DAVENS

The esteemed chossid Reb Sa'adya Liberow first came to the Rebbe in 5718 (1958) from his *shlichus* in Morocco, and periodically came thereafter on a consistent basis. His stays in 770 were spiritually stirring experiences for him, during which he would spend many hours covered in his *talis*, *davening* with devotion.

Reb Yisroel Friedman relates:

“I remember one Shabbos in 5719 (1959), as Reb Sa'adya stood and *davened* in the smaller *shul* of 770, the Rebbe walked in. The Rebbe stood there for a few moments, looking at him with a special expression of pleasure: the Rebbe's face literally shone as he observed the chossid *davening*, totally oblivious to his surroundings.”

Reb Sa'adya's son Reb Sender adds, “On another occasion, the scene repeated itself. This time, after the Rebbe watched my father *daven* for a moment, the Rebbe turned to the bystanders and said, *Zeht vi a chossid shteit un davent*. (Look how a chossid stands in prayer).”

(*Techayeinu Issue 7; “Reb Sa'adya Liberow,” Adar 1 5768*)



Reb Sa'adya Liberow

The Rebbe's face literally shone as he observed the chossid davening, totally oblivious to his surroundings.



The Rebbe showed that youth have a prominent position in a shul.

ELEVEN

CHILDREN IN SHUL

The Rebbe's love for children and their participation in *tefilos* was obvious. Through encouraging “*Amen*”, their singing, and even the lengthy banging out of Haman on Purim, the Rebbe showed that youth have a prominent position in a *shul*.

At the same time, the Rebbe demanded appropriate behavior.

Reb Zelig Slonim, who established the Shikkun Chabad *shul* in Yerushalayim, once received a letter from *HaRav* Chodakov, decrying a report the Rebbe had gotten from a visitor.

“The children's conduct in the *shul* and courtyard was inappropriate. It disturbed the *davening* and they also failed to show respect to the elderly.

“Upon the Rebbe's directive, I am writing to you to improve the situation to the extent that you can, and I would appreciate a report of what has been done.”

(*Labkovsky Teshurah, Tammuz 5775*)

TWELVE NOT FOR EVERYONE

The Rebbe insisted that *davening* at 770 should begin at 10 o'clock on Shabbos, to allow for time to appropriately prepare for *tefilla*, through learning and contemplating Chassidus.

However, this wasn't for everyone. In a 5734 (1974) *yechidus* with Reb Efraim Volf, the administrator of Chabad *mosdos* in Eretz Yisroel, the Rebbe directed him regarding the Beis Sefer Limelacha vocational school:

"At this *mosad*, *davening* should start no later than the time of reading *Krias Shema*. Since the students learn

Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, they wouldn't understand why *davening* doesn't begin at the proper time.

"A *yeshivah bochur*, who is capable of learning Chassidus for two hours, understands why according to Chassidus *davening* should start later. But not a student at a vocational school. Especially the younger classes. Regarding the older classes, if indeed they could learn for two hours, and none of them waste their time, they could begin *davening* at ten."

(For the full *yechidus* see *Halperin Teshurah, Tammuz 5762*)

Regarding the older classes, if indeed they could learn for two hours, and none of them waste their time, they could begin davening at ten."



Reb Elya Chayim Roitblat

I will never forget how the Rebbe turned around to look at Reb Elya Chayim. A wide smile spread across his holy face, expressing deep pleasure.

THIRTEEN A CHOSSID'S DEVOTION

In the rebbes presence chassidim were naturally measured. However, there were times when a chossids self-expression in front of the rebbe caused *nachas ruach*.

"It happened one year on purim," relates Reb Yisroel Friedman, "as we stood and *davened mariv* with the Rebbe at seven o'clock. Since the *fabrengen* would only begin hours later, the crowd was very small, and every motion that anyone did was audible.

"Reb Elya Chayim Roitblat, the longtime melamed of oholei torah, recited the *oleinu* prayer, pronouncing every word with devotion. Everyone in the *shul* could hear him.

"When he reached the words *she'heim mishtachavim le'hevel ve'lorik* (they bow to vanity and nothingness) he muttered to himself almost unwittingly, "*feh, klipah!*"

I will never forget how the Rebbe turned around to look at Reb Elya Chayim. A wide smile spread across his holy face, expressing deep pleasure.

(*Techayeinu Issue 7*)

More than once, on the way into *shul*, the Rebbe stooped down to pick up a cigarette butt or fallen paper, and on occasion stopped to reorganize a pile of *seforim* on a nearby table. It happened that the Rebbe also made mention of it in public.

“The *shul* tables should be cleaned immediately following a *farbrengen*, so there won’t be a halachic question if it is permissible to *daven* in these circumstances,” the Rebbe said at a 21 Elul *farbrengen* of 5724 (1964).

Four years later, 28 Elul 5728 (1968), the issue arose again. “The towels shouldn’t be thrown on the floor, and there shouldn’t be boxes in every corner of the *shul*.”

“And those who didn’t make the mess, but pass by and don’t care for it, are also responsible.

“Imagine,” intoned the Rebbe, “if a child behaved this way at home. His parents would educate him, and if necessary punish him. This is the home of Hashem! The parents and teachers should educate the children to behave at least as they would in their own homes!”



The Rebbe points out to Rabbi Chodakov a small scrap of paper on the shul floor.

“And those who didn’t make the mess, but pass by and don’t care for it, are also responsible”.

The Weekly Farbrengens

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EDITOR RABBI SHIMON HELINGER

FEELING FOR A FELLOW

CARING FOR ANOTHER

One day, when the Rebbe Rashab was ve years old, he and his brother Reb Zalman Aharon, who was over a year older, decided to play "chossid and Rebbe." The Razo would act as Rebbe and the Rebbe Rashab would be the chossid coming into his hat, and the Rebbe Rashab came to ask him for a tikkun.

"For what are you asking a tikkun?" the Razo asked.

The Rebbe Rashab replied, "This past Shabbos I ate some nuts, and later found out that the Alter Rebbe writes that it is good to refrain from eating nuts on Shabbos."

The Razo counseled him to make sure henceforth to daven from a Siddur and not by heart.

"Your advice won't help, and you're not a Rebbe!" exclaimed the Rebbe Rashab. "When a Rebbe answers, he is supposed to sigh. You didn't sigh, so your advice is no good!"

Retelling this incident, the Rebbe commented that when one Yid helps another, the assistance itself is not enough; what is vital is his sigh, empathizing with the other's pain. Doing a favor for another for the sake of perfecting oneself, for the sake of one's own sheleimus, without feeling the other's heartache, is not kindness, but the opposite.

During one of the Mittlerer Rebbe's visits to the farming colonies that he had established in Kherson, the Czar decreed that Yiddishe chitza be drafted to his army. One day a woman wailed loudly from the window of the house...

A chossid called Reb Eliyahu Abeler was once asked by the Rebbe Maharash at yechidus, "How is your business going?"

"Boruch HaShem," he replied, "but I am pained by the fact that a fellow villager of mine called Yosef has no success to enjoy. Misfortunes are constantly coming his way. A horse and wagon were bought for him so that he could travel to

Even after the Yidden entered Eretz Yisroel, they were instructed to postpone the mitzvah of bikkurim until every Yid had been allotted his plot of land. The Rebbe explains that as long as there is even one Yid who is unhappy, one cannot truly rejoice in his own good. Even if he does not feel the other's pain, he should at least be ashamed of that lack of sensitivity and not display his joy publicly by bringing bikkurim to the Beis HaMikdash.

The Friediker Rebbe spent Yud-Beis Tam-muz 1928 (תרט"ח) in a village near Riga. During the traditional niggun of Pada l'aha-lom, celebrating the Rebbe's release from prison on that day, a year earlier.

The Rebbe stopped them and said, "As long as the Yidden in Russia are not free I cannot celebrate, for I am together with them, in the same barrel!"

CONSIDER

Is feeling another's suering an end in itself or is it a means to motivating a person to help his fellow?

Is there benefit in expressing sympathy if you can't eliminate the suering?

EXPRESSING SYMPATHY

When Moshe Rabbeinu was growing in Paro's palace, he would be hearing Yidden...

the city and sell some merchandise - but rst a wheel broke, then the horse broke a leg, and finally his merchandise was stolen. "Rebbe," Reb Eliyahu continued, "to help him?" And...

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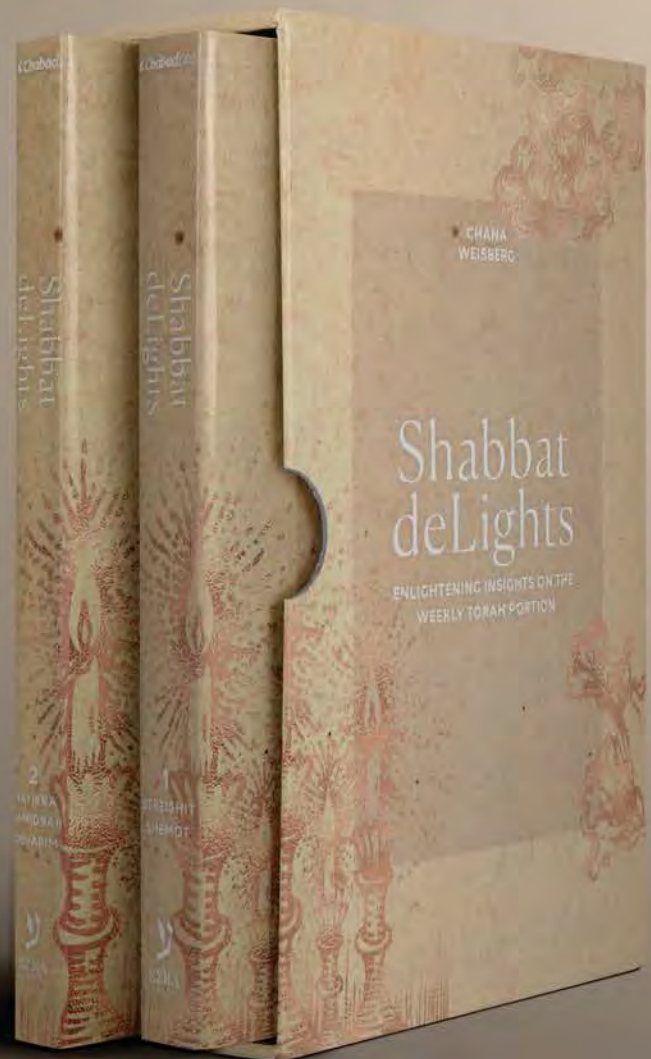


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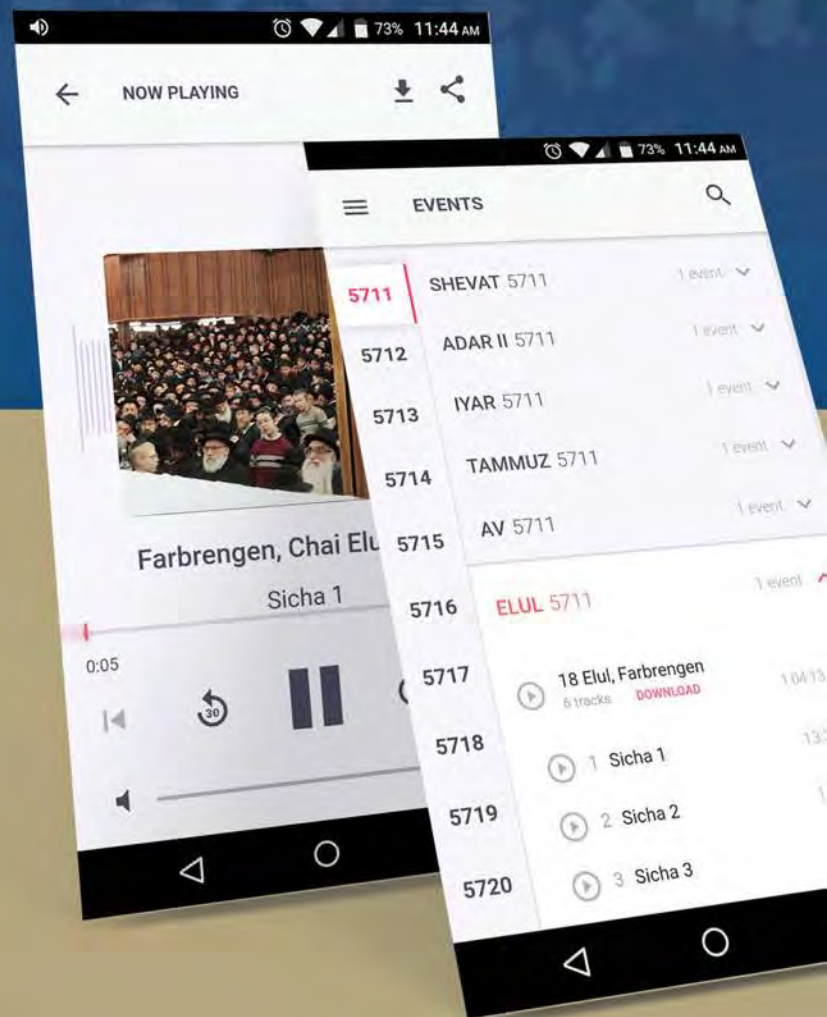
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