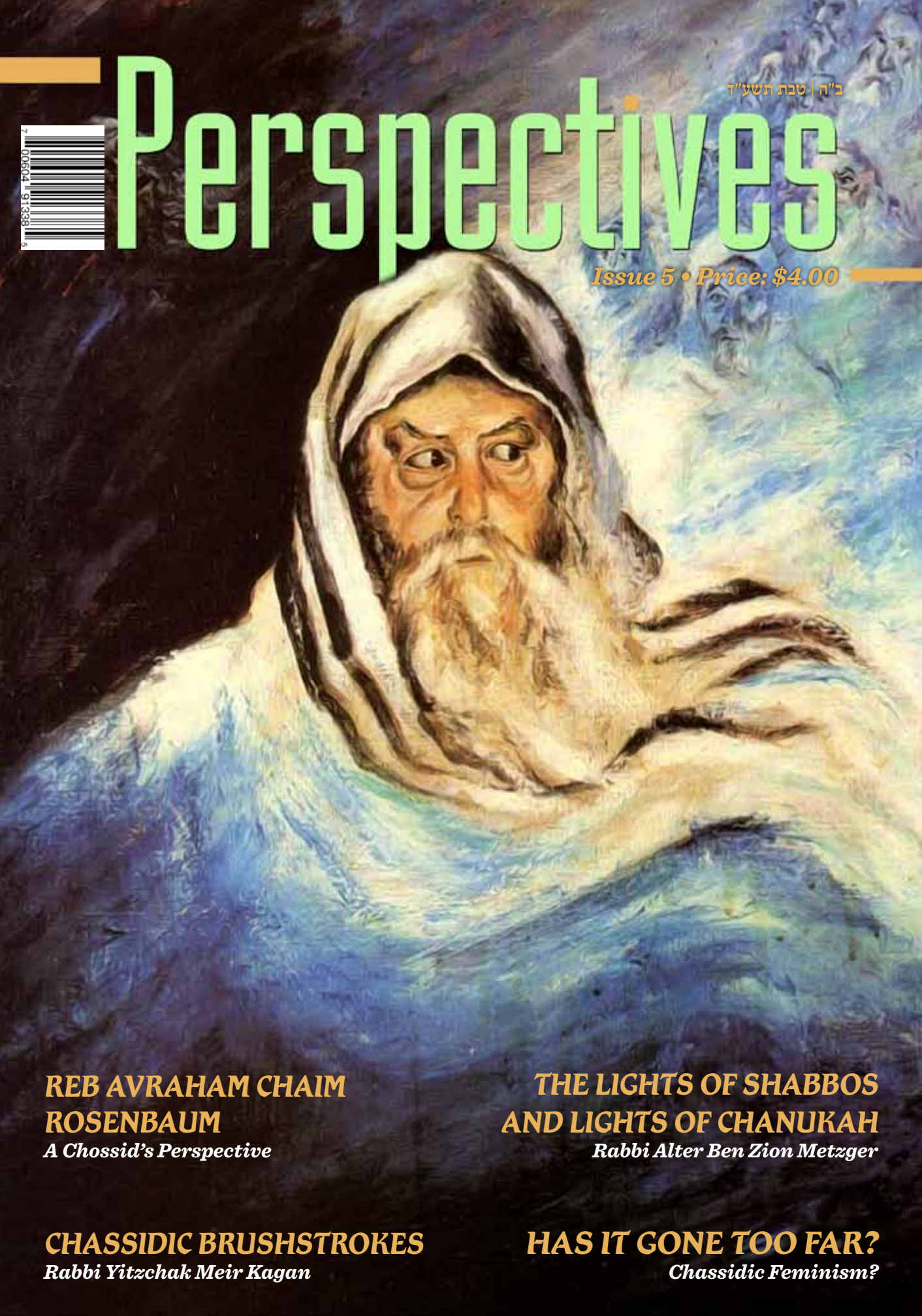
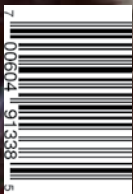


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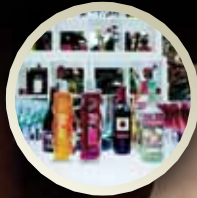


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# - FOREWORD -

Recent years have brought a remarkably positive development in the interest in education. Parents and teachers everywhere wish to improve their skills and techniques.

Not wanting to repeat mistakes that were made on them, these parents and teachers set out to search for the better path. These caring and dedicated individuals look for a new approach that will make them better educators.

However, quite often, instead of turning to the 3,000 years of our educational tradition, they are enamored by the new "educational methods" in all of their various permutations<sup>1</sup>. Like the Israeli backpacker, who wanders in strange and foreign terrain before exploring his own heritage, the aspiring educator flocks to the "professionals" and "educators" of the Western World before exploring his own educational tradition.

As the Rebbe would repeat time and again, Torah is not merely a set of laws for specific situations in life. It is a "*Toras Chaim*" a guide to life itself.<sup>2</sup> Every area of life is addressed by Torah; it is only a matter of finding it. *Hafoch bo vehafoch bo dkeula bo*, "delve in Torah again and again, for everything is in it."

Being true concerning the revealed section of Torah, how much more it is applicable concerning the inner aspect, namely *Chassidus*. The light of *Chassidus* illuminates every area of life, giving a person clear perspective and guidance. However, the only way to gain this insight is by receiving the torch of *chassidishe* tradition, the "*Torah shebal peh*" of *Chassidus*, from those who carry it.<sup>3</sup> We must find those among us who have sustained that tradition and align our perspectives with theirs.

This is one of the fundamental goals of the Perspectives magazine: to discover the time honored *chassidishe* perspective and explore its application to education and other issues of our time.

Let us reassume the characteristic Lubavitch pride, and stick to the straight path of our Rebbeim. Then, we can raise a pure generation, "*al taharas hakodesh*," who radiate the light of Moshiach<sup>4</sup>.

Rabbi Shimon Hellinger  
General Editor

---

1 Sichos Kodesh 5738 vol. 3 p. 170: "While their ancestors were cannibals, the Yidden received the Torah and were following its moral ways... Why should the Yid be ashamed to lead the rest of the world by the light of the Torah?"

2 It was the enlightenment and the Conservative that replaced the classic term "Torah" with the new term "Halacha", limiting the direction of the Torah to the specific laws listed in Shulchan Aruch. Thus, as long as one observed those laws, his life can otherwise mimic that of his neighbors.

3 Igros Kodesh Frierdiker Rebbe vol. 1 p. 615: "Guidance in *Chassidus* can only be transmitted from one chossid to

another, just as one candle is lit from another... My father, the Rebbe Rashab, praised this practice and once told me, "This practice has produced true chassidim! In whom will you find the richness of *Chassidus*? Only in those who, like humble disciples, cleaved closely to *eltene chassidim*. Their perceptions are distinctively superior."

4 Simchas Torah 5752 (*Toras Menachem* vol. 1 p. 149): The education of children must be such that that the children are totally permeated with the essence of Moshiach, so that when we look at them we immediately see "Moshiach" – the revelation of "*ein od milvado*" (there is nothing else besides HaShem).





## The Rebbe's Perspective ■

*Prepared by Rabbi Shimon Hellinger*

**Should we use gimmicks to attract people to Yiddishkeit?**  
**Should we discuss worldly affairs with 'outsiders'**  
**to bring them closer?**  
**What is the unique 'Lubavitch method' in attracting people?**

In this sicha of Shabbos Parshas Vayikra 5741<sup>1</sup> (1981) the Rebbe addressed these questions:

### ■ A SHLIACH OR A "KNACKER"? ■

It is now appropriate to address a matter, which I thought would be self understood, however now I see that it must be spelled out:

Saying that *temimim* are "lamps that give light," means that they must illuminate with the light from within themselves. Aside from its ability to provide light, a candle also has mass, and one can use its weight to outweigh a stone. It must be clarified that this is not the way to go. Rather, one should illuminate using the light of *Pnimiyyus HaTorah*.

Simply said: Upon arriving in a city, one may be inclined to influence the people there in Torah and *mitzvos* by impressing them with his assets; since he has money and power, his opinion will be heeded. He will show them that he is a "*knacker*" (bigwig), savvy in worldly affairs and can speak eloquently. After impressing them, he will conclude by telling them that they should observe Torah and *mitzvos*.

This is indeed a valid approach, using all means to influence a Yid to fulfill Torah and

---

1. Unedited – printed in Sichos Kodesh 5741 vol. 2 p. 648.

*mitzvos*. Moreover, the very reason that he was given his money or power, etc., may be to help influence others in the observance of *mitzvos*.

### ■ THE LUBAVITCH WAY ■

However, this is not the unique achievement of a student of Tomchei Temimim! His mission is to radiate light by teaching a *maamar Chassidus*.

---

■ ■ ■

*If a complete  
maamar is too  
much for the other  
person, teach  
him a chapter, a  
paragraph, or even  
just a few lines.  
When in doubt,  
be stringent and  
shower him with  
Chassidus.*

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■ ■ ■

Indeed he must still utilize all his faculties and try every avenue to bring a Yid closer to Torah and *mitzvos*, however his primary function, the special mission charged to him through his belonging to Tomchei Temimim, is to be a "lamp that gives light" and illuminates the other person with "light," a *maamar Chassidus*.

If a complete *maamar* is too much for the other person, teach him a chapter, a paragraph, or even just a few lines. When in doubt, be stringent and shower him with *Chassidus*. Then it will surely have an effect.

### ■ TEACH THEM CHASSIDUS! ■

There is another similar matter:

When one goes out to accomplish the *mitvzoim*, he must speak to the other person in English. Since for the time being the man doesn't understand any other language, one will not be able to influence him without speaking English. However, it happens that he not only speaks to him in the English language, but he also speaks to him about "English topics"!

If in order to bring him closer it is necessary to discuss these topics, he should indeed do so. However, in truth, one must be a "lamp that gives light," and should be able to influence the other person with "light" alone.

One should relate the *maamar Chassidus* in English. However it should remain topics of Chassidus, whether a *vort* or a *maamar* etc. presented in a manner which is appropriate to the listener.

### ■ IN SUMMARY ■

- Gimmicks and other attractions may be a valid way to draw people to *Yiddishkeit*, but it is not the Lubavitch way.
- Radiating the light of *Chassidus* in an appropriate manner will bring people close.
- Instead of engaging people with worldly topics, relate *Chassidus* in a language and measure that they can understand.



# ***A CHOSSID'S PERSPECTIVE***



## **The Life and Teachings of Reb Avraham Chaim Rosenbaum**

Marking 100 Years Since His Passing

By Rabbi Shimon Hellinger

Reb Avraham Chaim Rosenbaum of Pleshnitz was an esteemed chossid of the Tzemach Tzedek, the Rebbe Maharash and Rebbe Rashab. He was a chossid with multifaceted talents: a phenomenal gaon in nigleh, Chassidus and Kabbalah, a wise and mellow chossid, an outstanding baal middos tovos, an eloquent speaker and writer, a master of many languages, and at the same time, a successful businessman and activist.

He lived the last 20 years of his life (1894-1914) in America and passed away on the first day of Chanukah 5675 (1914).



Edited by R' Uri Kaploun

Reb Avraham Chaim was born around the year 5600 (1840) in the Russian town of Pleshnitz. His father, Dovber, was a local *Gemara melamed*. Little else is known about his youth.

At the age of twenty, he traveled to Lubavitch to see the *Tzemach Tzedek* and it was during that visit, as will soon be related, that he acquired the *Tzemach Tzedek's tallis*.

After the *histalkus* of the *Tzemach Tzedek*, Reb Avraham Chaim became a staunch chossid of the Rebbe Maharash and would often travel to Lubavitch to see him. While there, he would also visit the *Rebbetzin Rivka*, who took an interest in him, and often inquired of others about his wellbeing.

In Pleshnitz, Reb Avraham Chaim lived among a large contingency of Lubavitcher chassidim. At their head stood the famous *mashpia* Reb Chanoch Hendel Kugel, his son Reb Gershon Leib, and his brother Reb Yosef.

In the year 5636 (1876) Reb Yosef passed away, followed a year later by his nephew, Reb Gershon Leib. Reb Hendel then relocated to Lubavitch and Reb Avraham Chaim became their *mashpia*.

Reb Avraham Chaim had at least four sons, Mendel, Yaakov, Schneur Zalman and Yosef, and a daughter, Bracha Slava. This daughter married Shlomo Kugel, the grandson of the Reb Hendel, making these close friends *mechutanim*.

Reb Avraham Chaim owned a successful store. He would travel to nearby towns to purchase the goods, but the day-to-day management of the store he left to his wife and children, while he spent most

of his day learning.

At some point he also owned a liqueur business with a mill, in partnership with Reb Hendel, though that endeavor was not so successful. When they wanted to dismantle the business, a dispute arose between them, and they each committed their claims to writing for the Rebbe Maharash to decide. The Rebbe carefully reviewed them and formulated a detailed compromise, leaving Reb Hendel to choose between two options.

In every small town there was a local government clerk whose job it was to issue various papers and passports. The chassidim, who were eager to secure a permit to build a *chassidisher shul*, desperately wanted one of them to take that position. Finally, in one election they succeeded in appointing Reb Avraham Chaim as the head clerk, and another Yid as his assistant.

Reb Avraham Chaim had no interest in giving up his time for this work and he allowed his assistant to fill out all the paperwork in his

name and use his seal. In an effort to help *bochurim* avoid the army draft, the assistant (possibly with the knowledge of Reb Avraham Chaim) prepared false papers stating that they were only children and were thus exempt from the draft. Individuals who disliked Reb Avraham Chaim reported him to the government, and he and his assistant were both arrested.

Reb Avraham Chaim waited in a prison in Borisov for most of 5648 (1888) until his case was heard, and he was then sentenced to two years' imprisonment in Smolensk. When he was about to be transferred from the Borisov prison, the warden in charge escorted him to the gate in tears,



Reb Shmuel Rosenbaum, nephew of Reb Avraham Chaim, with his two sons



When Reb Avraham Chaim first arrived in Smolensk he was required to do hard labor. Later, the Rebbe Rashab sent his brother the *Raza* to intervene on his behalf with the governor of Smolensk, and he managed to have him discharged from hard work and separated from the criminals around him.

Reb Hendel earnestly wished to visit his friend in order to comfort and assist him. At first Reb Avraham Chaim discouraged him from making the long and costly trip, but later, as his situation worsened, he requested Reb Hendel to come. Reb Hendel brought along a sum of money which Reb Avraham Chaim later used to bribe the guards to ease his workload, and to allow him to bathe on Sunday instead of *Shabbos*. To evade the censor, Reb Avraham Chaim wrote Reb

Hendel an entire report in Aramaic (!), which was no small feat.

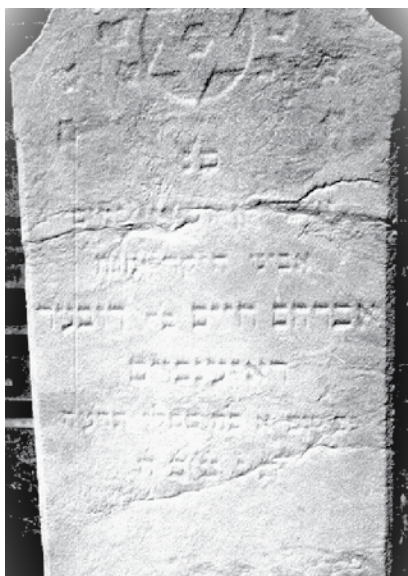
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[illegible]

Reb Avraham Chaim wrote many letters concerning his situation, and even some poems and satire, to ease his pain and lift his spirits. However, most outstanding amongst his writings in prison are the many Torah letters in which he quotes extensively from *seforim* – in *nigleh*, *Chassidus* and *Kabbalah* – that he clearly did not have in front of him.

In the summer of 5650 (1890), when he was finally released from prison, he traveled directly to Lubavitch.

About a year later, Reb Avraham Chaim was informed by the local police chief in Pleshnitz that a new case was being prepared against him. He took the hint and prepared to leave Russia. That Simchas Torah he organized a huge *farbrengen* for all the local chassidim which continued joyfully all day. That night he vanished



from the town, to the surprise of all the townsmen. His enemies tried to catch up with him, but without success.

At first he lived in Germany, where he worked as an editor for a Torah journal. However, since he had no residence permit, he was ordered to leave the country and he relocated to Amsterdam. In 5655 (1894), he arrived in America with his wife Yetta and his two sons, Zalman and Yosef. He settled in New York, and earned a living by selling jewelry.

In 5764 (1904) his wife passed away after a severe illness. He later remarried and resettled in New Haven, Connecticut.

Reb Avraham Chaim passed away on 25 Kislev, the first day of Chanukah, 5674 (1914). He is buried in the Mount Zion Cemetery in Brooklyn NY.

## TOLDOS AVRAHAM CHAIM

The surviving writings of Reb Avraham Chaim were preserved by his nephew Reb Shmuel Rosenbaum and by a chossid from Pleshnitz who later lived near Reb Avraham Chaim in New York – Reb Dovid Shifrin, one of the founders of Agudas Chassidei Chabad in America. They each sent these writings and their recollections of Reb Avraham Chaim to the Frieddiker Rebbe, who much appreciated them.

In 5758 (1998), Rabbi Shalom Ber Levin, Chief Librarian of the Rebbe's library, organized the memories and historical tidbits about Reb Avraham Chaim into a biographical outline, which he published together with all his writings in *Toldos Avraham Chaim*.

However many aspects of his life have yet to be uncovered, particularly about his later years in America: Where did he *daven* and learn? With whom did he associate? What kind of influence did he have on other American Yidden? What kind of life did he have in New Haven? What was it like to live as a Lubavitcher chossid in America in the 1800's?





# CHASSIDIC LETTERS



## A TALE OF TWO CHASSIDIM

The relationship between Reb Avraham Chaim and Reb Chanoch Hendel Kugel (from Pleshnitz and later a mashpia in Lubavitch) is one of two opposites, wise and deliberate as opposed to fiery and emotional. Yet they were closely bound by their shared enthusiasm for *Chassidus* and *avodas HaShem*.

Reb Hendel is often cited by the Frierdiker Rebbe as the epitome of an *oved* of warm spiritual sensitivity. Reb Hendel's emotions would saturate every season's *avoda*, be it *bedikas chometz* and baking *matza*, or reciting *Kinos* and *Selichos*; everything he did with his whole heart. His *davening* was so emotional and drenched with tears, that one *baalabos* in Lubavitch would come to *shul* every Monday and Thursday especially to hear Reb Hendel recite "*Vehu rachum*."

Similarly, *bein adam lachaveiro*, Reb Hendel was the quintessential *baal middos tovos*. He could not bear the sight of suffering and would go to great lengths to supply for others what he did not take for himself.

These two chassidim grew up together in Pleshnitz, partnered in business and later became *mechutanim*. Like old-time *chassidishe* friends, they shared with each other their personal *avoda* and inner struggles.

In these letters we are given a window into the lives, minds and hearts of the chassidim of the Rebbe Maharash.

## ■ TRAVELING TO THE REBBE ■

In this letter, Reb Avraham Chaim explores the purpose of asking a Rebbe for business advice when one's yearly profits were already set on Rosh HaShana. He explains that a *tzaddik* can point out the correct path that has been set out for the questioner to acquire those profits, thus sparing him unnecessary toil and bother. This letter also addresses the significance of asking such advice from a Rebbe in person, a procedure that the earlier Rebbeim insisted upon. This, he explains, was done in order to ward away curious but idle questioners, and also to enable the Rebbe to gaze upon the *neshama* before him.

Your advice to my brother, to invest less toil in business, is generally sound, as is explained in numerous places [in *Chassidus*], and at great length in the introduction to *Derech Chaim* [by the Mittlerer Rebbe]. However, we cannot know exactly how to apply this to specific situations – unless we are counted among those who have the *zechus* that

many "benefit from his advice, and so on" [Pirkei Avos 6:1 referring to a *tzaddik* who learns Torah *lishmah*]. Perhaps the business venture that is now being proposed to him is the one he should choose, especially since he has no real choice. For just as one's profits for the year are set from Rosh HaShana, so too the way they are earned is set from

Above.

You can then ask: If both the amount earned and the manner in which it is earned is predestined, why do *Anash* ask advice in business from our holy Rebbeim in every generation?

Perhaps the explanation is exactly what was just said above. Since *tzaddikim* can see what is relevant to the *neshama* of the questioner, they can spare him unnecessary toil in trying to elevate something that was not designated for him, for if he does try, he will not succeed. Either he won't reach his goal at all, or if he insists on pursuing it, it won't bring him success, either in *gashmiyus* or in *ruchniyus*. This consideration [that is, seeing the *neshama* of the questioner] is the reason why the Rebbeim did not respond to questions sent by mail.

There is also a simple reason – so that people at large should not trouble the Rebbeim with questions from afar. Otherwise everyone, believer or not, would want to hear their advice, since it

would be available without any effort on their part. They could then either accept that advice, which is fine, and if not, they could choose to ignore it. So why should the Rebbeim go to the trouble of giving such advice?

Things are different with a person who is prepared to undertake the hassle and expenses of traveling in order to pose his question personally. Out of concern for his own efforts, he will usually not transgress the advice he is given. Furthermore, this modest act of *bittul*, (traveling to the Rebbe,) gives the Rebbe the power to guide him along the appropriate path, and *HaShem's* plan, which will surely unfold, speaks through his mouth.

Besides all the above, it may be that the reason that a person must actually travel to the Rebbe is that he should stand, with all his faculties, before the Rebbe's eyes. This is alluded to in *Tanya*: "Even the *shefa* that is granted to a person from Above reaches him only through this 'garment.'"



### ■ ACQUIRING THE REBBE'S TALLIS ■

While in Lubavitch, Reb Avraham Chaim acquired the *Tzemach Tzedek's tallis*. This is how it came about:

Reb Maddil, the *Tzemach Tzedek's shadar* (fundraising emissary), one day complained to the Rebbe that his *tallis* was torn. He was embarrassed to appear before *Anash* to ask for money while wearing such a *tallis*, but he could not afford a new one. The Rebbe promptly offered him his own *tallis*, in which he had *davened* that morning.

With the *tallis* in hand he left the Rebbe's room –and met Reb Avraham Chaim. Seeing an opportunity not to be missed, Reb Avraham Chaim offered to buy him a new *tallis*, plus twenty-five rubles, instead of the Rebbe's old one. Reb Maddil agreed. Reb Avraham Chaim was able to identify the *tallis*, having seen it at that morning's *Shacharis*, and was ecstatic his entire life at owning the treasure.

However, he was always afraid to wear it. In fact he wore it only once, for *Kol Nidrei*. He originally planned to be buried in that *tallis*, but as his time drew near, he sent it to the Rebbe Rashab, saying that he "was afraid to appear above in a '*tallis* not belonging to him.'" [This common expression describes someone who presents himself as being holier than he really is, though in this case it was actually a *tallis*.]



## ■ REACHING OUT WITH LOVE ■

When one of Reb Hendel's grandsons strayed from Torah and *mitzvos*, the *chassidisher zeide* was distressed and disheartened. Being the emotional chossid that he was, he would sometimes pour out his pain upon his grandson.

In this fascinating letter, the levelheaded Reb Avraham Chaim guides Reb Hendel in understanding the psychological nature of the younger generation's *nefesh habahamis* and advises him on how to draw his grandson close. His creative analysis demonstrates a revolutionary approach to overcoming temptations in our times.

My sound advice is that you should not surrender. Rather, you should write him letters whose passion is cooled by friendship, not letters that are ablaze with sparks and flames. After all, "the words of the wise are heard *calmly*," and perhaps such an approach will inspire him. *Chalila* that you should show him an angry face, or tell him *chas veshalom* that in his current state he is not a Yid! For then the *Yetzer Tov* is forced to use the *Yetzer HaRa*'s tactic and rationalize that he *is* a Yid, no matter how he conducts his life [which he now understands to mean that he can do as he pleases].

In earlier generations, the *Yetzer Tov* generally led the way, and controlled the 'little city' both in the area of *sur meira* and in *aseh tov*, whereas today, in *ikvesa diMeshicha*, the contrary is true, and the *Yetzer HaRa* is so successful in attracting everyone to follow him.

It could be argued that the reason for this change is that in earlier generations (the "head"), people were able to look ahead into the future and consider the consequence of every matter. When a person considered the reward or punishment he would receive for his actions, he would pursue good and flee from evil.

Things are different in the [generation of] "heels". Today, the wisdom of the *neshama* is ignored, "the snake (that is, the *Yetzer HaRa*) is coiled around the

*heel*," and he knows how to lure people's hearts to his desire. He does so by simply cooling them off. He doesn't *forbid* a person from putting on *tefillin* or doing other *mitzvos*. He just convinces him that it's not a necessity. That's enough to persuade a person from doing the *mitzva*. The same is true of an *aveira*. He doesn't order a person to do it; he only states that there is no loss or danger involved. That's enough for a person to run after something that gives him immediate pleasure.

Perhaps in these days, the *Yetzer Tov* would likewise find followers – if only instead of commanding he would relax, and act simply as an adviser, by saying, "What will you lose by fulfilling this *mitzva*?" or, "There's no need to do an *aveira*; the gain is minimal, even on commonsense grounds." After all, the spirit in today's world is that of a 'free bird that shakes off anything authoritarian.' People do not want warnings, and do not think about the future; everyone does what is good in his eyes, and whatever is sweet to his palate. Whatever is truly good and beneficial, they distance...

As to the kind of guidance that will effectively "return the hearts of sons to their fathers," experience shows that this is the way to proceed. And even if at the outset the sons will go along only externally, out of rote, the *chitzoniyus* will soon draw along some of the *pnimiyus* with it, for the effect of physical action is powerful...



### ■ THE REBBE'S HOLY CHAIR ■

Reb Avraham Chaim would also tell of how once during *yechidus*, he placed his hand on one of the arms of the Rebbe's chair. The Rebbe immediately took hold of his hand and removed it.

## ■ AHAVAS YISROEL: FEELING OR PRACTICE? ■

*Ahavas Yisroel* has always been the lifeblood of *chassidische* life, and it was the focus of Reb Hendel's *avoda*. In an earlier letter, Reb Hendel had complained that he was lacking a true feeling of *ahavas Yisroel* and since the foundation of a Yid is his *middos*, he felt that he was severely deficient. Reb Avraham Chaim replies here by clarifying that a person must only aspire to levels that are within his reach. To experience true love for another – "like yourself" – is possible only for a person whose whole life is his *neshama*. For ordinary people, he writes humbly, it suffices to fulfill the *mitzva* of *ahavas Yisroel* by conducting oneself in a loving manner.

To my respected and beloved *mechutan* ...,  
Chanoch Hendel,

You complain that we are far from the concept of  
"ve'ahavta lere'acha kamocha."

Why must we seek levels in *avoda* that are superior to our current level? For us, as we are now, we must only seek to fulfill our obligations *practically*. As *Chazal* specify in their explanation of this *mitzva*, "That which is hateful to you, do not do to your friend." *Practical* conduct of this kind can be expected of everyone. Besides, we can do it with *kabbalas ol malchus Shamayim*.

By contrast, to have the love for a friend implanted in one's *heart* to the same extent as one loves himself, belongs to a very high level, far above men of our stature. Why? A love that is so lofty cannot exist so long as a person is a *yesh*, and

loves his body which derives from two physical parents. How can he unite with his friend who derives from two other partners? Such a unity can be attained only by a person whose body is lowly and despised in his eyes, so that his only joy is the joy of his *neshama* – because the *neshamos* are all intertwined, all having one Father, as is explained in ch. 32 of *Tanya*.

Now, in order for all the lengthy *hisbonenus* described in the previous chapters to bring a person to this level, he must have the attachment of *daas* with a very strong and dedicated bond and so on, plus the habit of days and years. How, then, can a person fool himself that he has this love?

It follows, then, that for us the meaning of loving your fellow "as yourself" means "just as you are." For the nature of the love depends on the nature of the one who loves, whom he loves, and what

### ■ CLIMBING THE TZEMACH TZEDEK'S CHIMNEY ■

Reb Avraham Chaim once recalled:

"While I was in the Rebbe's *chotzer* in Lubavitch one morning, I noticed the chimney-cleaner's ladder leaning against his house. That gave me an idea. I realized that by climbing it I would be able to peer into the Rebbe's room and watch him *daven*!

"It was after *Shacharis*. The Rebbe was sitting in his *tallis* and *tefillin* and lovingly reading *Tehillim*. When he came to the *possuk* in *kapitl lamed-tes* that begins *Hoidi'eini HaShem*, he sang it to a particularly sweet melody, which he repeated several times.

"I was perched up there delighting in my ploy, enjoying my good fortune at observing the Rebbe at such a moment, when a stern voice surprised me. It was the *Rebbetzin*: 'What?! No embarrassment?! Have you never before seen a Yid *daven*?!'

"Terrified, I escaped immediately, but that *niggun* I will never forget."

That haunting *niggun* has been handed down and is known to this day.



it is about him that he loves: his body and *nefesh habahamis*, or his *nefesh Elokis*.

In truth, however, the word *rei'a* ("friend") in *Lashon HaKodesh* cannot be applied to the body and *nefesh habahamis*. (And by the way: How sweet are the words of R. Avraham Ibn Ezra on the *possuk*, "if a man's ox gores the ox of his friend." He ridicules Ben Zuta, (a Karaite scholar,) who interprets "friend" in the *possuk* as referring to the ox (who is the "friend" of the first ox), and writes, "That ox has no friends – except for Ben Zuta...")

Therefore, the *mitzva* of loving one's fellow *kamocha*, literally "as yourself," is only possible with regard to the *nefesh Elokis*. That is why *ahavas Yisroel* is the foundation of the entire Torah, which is described as both strengthening and weakening [for it strengthens the *nefesh Elokis* and weakens the *nefesh habahamis*].

That will suffice for the wise.

You write that "the foundation of a Yid is *middos*, etc., and therefore what value is there to one's thoughts?"

With all due respect, the implied conclusion is inaccurate. The *possuk* states clearly that "according to his understanding is a man praised." The entire foundation of the seven *middos* is the three intellectual faculties of CHaBaD. It is *mental toil* that fashions the *middos* of the *Nefesh Elokis*, enabling it to rule over the *middos* of the *Nefesh HaBahamis* and subjugate it ("*iskafya*") – and even a little light banishes a great deal of darkness [see next letter].

All the while, the individual must dress himself in the garments of the soul *according to his size*.



## ■ IS CRUSHING DESIRES DESIRABLE? ■

A well-known chassidisher saying states that *chassidim zenen klug* – "Chassidim are clever." This refers to the shrewdness of the chassidim of old in seeing through the pious veneer held up by the *Nefesh HaBahamis*, and recognizing his tricks. At every turn, chassidim have been so cautious of the *Yetzer HaRa* that they are even wary of what truly motivates their own positive inspirations. In this profound letter, Reb Avraham Chaim touches upon some of the most central elements of *avoda* according to *Chassidus*.

It is well known that a person's *yeshus*, (his undue feeling of self-worth,) is the source of all his desires... and the foremost factor in his *yeshus* is his money. This is especially so in our days, when people invest all their energy in acquiring it.

One should not think, though, that by giving away lots of money one is destroying his *yeshus*. For it can very well be that he is giving in order to gain more *yeshus*, and thus he is arming his enemies, the powers of the *nefesh habahamis*.

This recalls the common expression amongst chassidim, that "when one breaks a *taiva* he is left with two," like any whole object that is broken into two. This comes as a surprise. How can chassidim ridicule, *chas veshalom*, the breaking of *taivos* and

the control of the *nefesh habahamis* when this is the primary *avoda* of a *beinoni* – to do *iskafya*?!

However, chassidim as a whole are clever: they recognize and acknowledge how deep evil can be. They realize that the sly snake seeks to seduce a person, and if he cannot trap him into a clearly-recognizable transgression, he will cloak its evil in various outfits, so that the person will think that what is proposed is really something positive.

Suppose that a negative desire enters a person's heart. If the *Yetzer HaRa* sees that he cannot carry out his plan, he will use the claims of the *Yetzer Tov*, making it seem that he, too – the *Yetzer HaRa* – agrees that the individual should not carry out that wrongdoing. Ultimately, it is of course a good

thing that – whatever the reason – the individual did not actually transgress *HaShem's mitzva*.

However, if we delve into the source of the matter, and recognize the source from which that person gathered the strength to restrain himself, we will appreciate the conduct of chassidim – to denigrate this approach to breaking *taivos*. For if a human heart is bound with chains of love to worldly pleasures in general and lusting for a specific desire in particular, yet suddenly that same heart becomes passionately aroused to fulfill the *mitzva* of breaking a *taiva*, so much so that his entire spirit is preoccupied with it, surely that switch is a red flag.

Now, for people of our caliber who follow the whims of our heart every step of the way, it is a tremendous *chutzpa* to ridicule such a person, who found the strength within himself, and did not physically breach the fence of Torah and *mitzvos*.

However, as for those *baalei nefesh* who serve *HaShem* according to the paths transmitted to us in the words and writings of our holy Rebbeim, they will denigrate such conduct. They will argue that this, too, is one of the tricks of the *Yetzer HaRa*, who wishes to create two *taivos* instead of one. Firstly, his client has not abandoned his original *taiva*, and his mind is still on it even as he

breaks it. Secondly, his desire to crush his *taivos* is also a *taiva*, and he remains intact in his full *yeshus* and sense of perfection. In fact he now expects even more, this fine man; surely he deserves *Olam HaBa*, too!

For in the light of *Chassidus*, which was revealed by the Baal Shem Tov and his *talmidim*, the goal of *avoda* is to uproot the source of the *taivos* through deep thought. Suppose, for example, that a person contemplates the concept that "with You is the source of life," meaning that the source of all life and enjoyment is insignificant and merely subservient to *HaShem* ("with You"); then, after many thousands of descents and contractions it evolved into physical worldly pleasures. When a person contemplates this, he will conclude that all physical desires are really nothing at all! When he thinks at length about this, and about other similar subjects, the light of his *nefesh Elohis* will shine forth, and he will find the strength to overpower the *taivos* of the *nefesh habahamis*. He will feel this effect not only while he is contemplating the matter, during *davening*, but his meditation continues to leave its mark on his conduct throughout the day, in the form of a firm resolve. This is an expression of the *middos* of *Netzach* and *Hod*, which are extensions of the primary *middos*, love and fear, that result from his *hisbonenus*.

### ▪ QUICK WIT ▪

Reb Avraham Chaim once spent Pesach in Lubavitch, and on Isru Chag the Rebbe Maharash was about to leave for Petersburg to have a libelous decree repealed. When the chassidim found out that he was leaving, they walked to the outskirts of Lubavitch to accompany him.

The Russian winter had not yet passed and the river was still frozen over. When the Rebbe's wagon approached the river, the Rebbe asked some *yungeleit* to check whether the ice was still strong enough to hold his carriage. Reb Avraham Chaim quickly responded and, followed by a group of *yungeleit*, crossed the river by foot as the Rebbe watched.

On his return he daringly quipped, "Rebbe, don't rely on us. *Chazal* say that in a place where *baalei teshuvah* stand, *tzaddikim gemurim* cannot..."

Delighted by his wit, the Rebbe asked his *meshares* to bring the cake that the *Rebbetzin* had prepared for the way. The Rebbe made a *bracha*, took a small piece, and handed Reb Avraham Chaim the rest. However, his luck was short-lived, for within a moment the surrounding chassidim pounced on him from all sides and helped themselves to their share.

You should not find difficulty in the concept of *iskafya* as explained in *Tanya* [which seems to contradict the above-mentioned *chassidisher* approach of removing evil through contemplation], for *Tanya* relates to the stage at which the evil is still in its original strong form. And this is the entire *avoda* of the *beinoni* – to overpower and rule over his nature, as explained at length at the beginning of ch. 16. However, as explained there, this is accomplished through the light of *HaShem*

which shines upon the *nefesh Elohis* **in the mind**, to overpower the heart by contemplating etc...

Then, when a person overcomes his *taiva* and abstains from wrongdoing, this is truly called a "complete *avoda*," relative to the level of the *beinoni*. Though the *taiva* will later be reawakened, this is his *avoda* – to spend all his days in an ongoing battle with his *Yetzer HaRa*.



## ■ CHASSIDISHE MESORA ■

In this letter, Reb Avraham Chaim emphasizes the centrality of a strong *mesora*, a live tradition, in setting the norms for chassidisher lifestyle. *She'al avicha veyageidcha, zkeinecha veyomru lach* – "Ask your father and he will relate it to you, your elders and they will tell you." *Chassidische hiddurim* and *minhagim* are set not by words printed in a book, but by observing the mellow conduct of *eltere chassidim*.

"After you left me yesterday," Reb Avraham Chaim once wrote from prison, "I began rethinking about what you said – that there is no obligation for an individual to hear the entire *kerias haTorah*, and it is enough for him to hear only three *pesukim* [and then one can learn during the rest of the *keriah*]. I didn't agree with you, but I did not reply since our time together was limited and I had other important matters to discuss with you. However,

now I find myself obligated to respond..."

After bringing numerous proofs from *Shas* and *Poskim*, he confirms his conclusion with a *mesora*:

"'Ask your elders and they will tell you' – that is, what we have seen with our eyes from the revered elder chassidim. There is no need to tell you of how *vigilant HaRav HaTzaddik* Reb Hillel [Paritcher] was about this. Also *HaRav HeChossid* Reb Shmuel

## ■ A CHOSSID'S HUMILITY ■

In his humility, Reb Avraham Chaim pointed the finger at himself for his suffering. In one calendar entry for *Shabbos* he wrote: "Since I have transgressed the fences set up by the *Chachomim*, I have been forced today to construct a stone fence on *Shabbos*. *HaShem* is righteous – for I have violated His command."

In a letter to Reb Hendel who had inquired about his situation he writes, "Were I not one of those 'who make their body their first priority and whose soul is secondary,' everything would be good. The physical satisfactions that I am lacking here would not disturb me, and as for the soul's desire for His Name and remembrance, 'even an iron wall cannot separate [Yidden from their Father in Heaven].' Since I have not been worthy of being counted among such people, I definitely feel that which I am lacking."



Ber of Borisov would not begin to *daven* until he had heard *kerias haTorah* from beginning to end...

"*Chalila* that we should be lenient about this obligation! – especially after reading what the *Zohar* writes in various places, and especially in *Parshas Vayakhel* (206b): 'It is forbidden for more than one person to read the Torah at the same time. Everyone must listen and be silent to hear the words from the mouth of the reader as if they were receiving them at that moment from Har Sinai.' Whose hair would not stand on end [from these

words], and who would be lenient and not give his full attention to the sound of the reader from beginning to end?

"In truth, it is appropriate for every communal *rov* to guide his flock calmly, so that the *shul* will be calm and quiet during *kerias haTorah*. He should teach them the tremendous obligation entailed, since people act as they do out of ignorance, so the fault lies upon their leaders. May *HaShem* forgive them and all of *klal Yisroel*."



## ■ FINAL WILL ■

In his will, Reb Avraham Chaim expresses what is important to him in *Olam HaEmes*. It is interesting to note his emphasis on the general observance of *mitzvos* by his children, above *mishnayos* and *Kaddish*.

"... Do not allow anyone to deliver a *hesped* for me or write about me in the news. My *matzeiva* should include only the following words: Here lies Avraham Chaim *b"r* Dovber, the date of passing, and תנצב"ה ("May his *neshama* be bound in the Bond of Life)...

"It is superfluous for me to ask you about reciting *Kaddish* and *davening* before the *amud* throughout

the year, and about learning *mishnayos*, as is written in the *Siddur Torah Ohr*... The main thing is that you should be careful in the area of *sur meira* and *aseh tov* (that is, observing all the positive and negative *mitzvos*)...

"Please write immediately to my brother to inform him of the day of my passing and burial, since I want the Rebbe [Rashab] to know this..."



## ■ A HEAVENLY KISS ■

Reb Shmuel Rosenbaum, a nephew of Reb Avraham Chaim, recorded Reb Avraham Chaim's final moments as he heard them described by the attendant:

As Reb Avraham Chaim lay on his deathbed, he told me that the time had come to recite *Vidui*. I rushed to bring him the *Siddur Torah Ohr* and opened it to the page with the *Seder Vidui*, which is normally recited by a dying person. Reb Avraham Chaim declined the offer. "That's a '*veltisher vidui*,' he insisted.

Instead, he began to recite with fervor the passage of *Pasach Eliyahu* that is recited every *erev Shabbos* before *Mincha*. (This is the passage that describes *HaShem's* attributes and the heavenly realms.) He recited it from beginning to end with incredible pleasantness and sweetness. That is how his *neshama* took leave of his body.



*Rabbi Alter Ben Zion Metzger*



# The Light of Shabbos and the Light of Chanukah

Rabbi Alter Ben Zion Metzger is a professor of Jewish Studies at Stern College. He has written widely on Chassidic thought and history and is a sought-after lecturer and teacher. He served on a team of simultaneous translators of the farbrengens of the Rebbe for 18 years, and his column "The Golden Chain" appeared for over two-and-a-half decades in "Di Yiddishe Heim." He is also the author of "The Heroic Struggle" and "Chassidic Perspectives."

A hushed silence pervades the Jewish home. The mother stands, face covered with her hands, whispering the *bracha* and silent prayer over the flickering candle flames. One can almost perceive the whispered words, ascending Heavenwards, transferred into beseeching angels of mercy. She lowers her hands, turns to the members of the household, and gently says "Good Shabbos." All know that the Shabbos Queen has descended into this Jewish home.

The Gemara in Shabbos (23b) states: *Omar Rav Huna – haragil b'nair havyan lo banim talmidei chachamim*, Rabbi Huna declared: "One who is accustomed to a *neir* will have children who are rabbinic sages." The word *neir*, although usually associated with a candle in our times, frequently described a small flame-producing lamp in the time of the Gemara. The lamp consisted of an earthen vessel and a wick suspended in oil.

At first glance, it seems difficult to comprehend how habituation to an object producing a small flame, can bring about having sons that are erudite in Torah and zealous in the fulfillment of its commandments.

The Rabbeinu Bechaye al Hatorah explains that it is customary to offer prayer during the performance of a mitzvah so as to affect Divine compassion, and response. The Jewish mother, when preoccupied with the mitzvah of producing radiance for the Sabbath table, offers up a silent prayer that she be worthy of bearing and raising children who will be illumined by and with the teachings of the Torah.

■ ■ ■

Another possible interpretation may be based upon the Zohar quoted in Tanya (chapter 53) –

“And this is what the Yenuka meant when he said that ‘the Supernal light that is kindled on one’s head, namely, the Shechinah, requires oil.’ That is, to be clothed in wisdom, which is called ‘oil from the holy anointing,’ as is explained in the Zohar, (requires) that ‘these are the good deeds,’ namely the 613 commandments which derive from His blessed wisdom.”

The Alter Rebbe explains that a lamp has great symbolic spiritual significance. The wick is compared to the human soul, the flame to the Shechinah or Divine Presence. In order for the Shechinah to rest upon the individual, there must be an abundance of oil, or wisdom – namely, the 613 commandments of the Torah. By means of observing the 613 commandments in thought, speech, and deed, the wick or animal soul, having been transformed as a result, “from bitterness to sweetness and from darkness to light,” is changed into an object which casts light with the brightness of the Divine Presence.

There are some Jews who try to exist as wicks without oil. They speak of a “Jewish heart,” and “feelings of loyalty to Judaism.” They respond with all sincerity in a moment of crisis for the Jewish people. But, like wick which leaps into high flame for but a brief moment when kindled, these people show intense devotion for short periods of time, but the major part of their lives is characterized by “the slumber of the G-dly soul.”

Thus, another possible interpretation of the Gemara in Shabbos may be that a person who contemplates the fact that the wick or animalistic soul requires oil, i.e. the 613 commandments of the Torah, in order to sustain constantly the ‘flame’ or Divine Presence, will exert every effort to provide the oil or wisdom of Torah

in great abundance for his children, so that they may be dedicated bearers of the G-dly luminosity and radiance.

■ ■ ■

Rashi, in interpreting the Gemara, states that this adage is based upon the Biblical verse: *For a commandment is a neir, and the Torah is light*, and by means of the *neir*, – fulfilling the commandments of Shabbos and Chanukah, there shall come the light of Torah.

The Alter Rebbe in Chapter 49 of Likkutei

Amarim, Tanya, discusses at length the significance of the blessings recited prior and subsequent to the ‘Shema,’ and delineates their spiritual implications. The primary purpose of the Shema is *kabolas ol malchus shomayim* — complete submission to the will of G-d, “renouncing everything for the love of G-d.” How can one achieve this exalted lofty state? The first blessing of Yotzer Ohr, describes the transcendence of Hashem, how He is beyond all worlds. “The Angels, ‘standing at the world’s summit’ ... proclaim the greatness of the Holy One Blessed Be He ... all of them are nullified in His blessed light and ... declare in fear, ‘Holy’...” The word “*Kodosh*,” translated as Holy, also means separate, and in this context, beyond all worlds. None of G-d’s beings can begin to understand His greatness — “for they neither know, nor do they apprehend His place, as we say ‘For He Alone is Exalted and Holy.’”

The second blessing of the Shema describes, as it were, the descent of G-d within the realm of worldly existence. This is caused by His great love for the Jewish people. The bond of relationship is established by Israel’s observance of the Torah.

■ ■ ■

*The Jewish  
mother, when  
preoccupied  
with the mitzvah  
of producing  
radiance for the  
Sabbath table,  
offers up a silent  
prayer that she be  
worthy of bearing  
and raising  
children who  
will be illumined  
by and with the  
teachings of the  
Torah.*

■ ■ ■



Thus, the infinite is linked to the finitude of man by the medium of Torah study and observance.

Contemplating profoundly upon this matter of G-d's relationship with the world, there is evoked in Israel, a reciprocal love for G-d. 'As water mirrors the image of a face,' the Jewish soul strives to ascend to G-dliness, "to cleave unto Him ... and to be absorbed into His light with an attachment and longing..."

The attachment of the human spirit to the G-dly spirit is effected by the union of *ChaBaD* with *ChaBaD*, by means of intellectual and oral Torah study. The *ChaBaD*, or wisdom (*chachmah*), understanding (*binah*), and intellect (*daas*) of man, is joined with the *ChaBaD* of the Holy One blessed be He.

The blessing recited at the conclusion of Shema speaks of the departure from Egypt and the redemption of Israel. *Mitzraim*, the Hebrew word for Egypt, is interpreted in the teachings of Kabbalah and Chassidus as implying the term *maitzer* or boundary, limitation, finitude. The Jewish soul desires to depart from the limitations and restrictions of corporeal materialism and to ascend to G-dly spirituality. The first two blessings before the Shema describe the descent of G-dliness from above-below, and the final blessing speaks of man's attempt to re-ascend to his Divine source.

Utilizing this concept, we may perhaps gain insight into Rashi's emphasis on the *neir* of Shabbos and the *neir* of Chanukah. The *neir* of Shabbos is symbolic of G-d's descent within the framework of worldly existence and its unique relationship with Israel. G-d is beyond time, yet He creates the dimension of time,

and designates one specific part of time — a day — as holy unto Israel. The Shabbos, according to Talmudic law, is only related to the Congregation of Israel.

The *neir* of Chanukah symbolizes the great love and dedication of Israel to their "merciful Father." Oppressed, persecuted and humiliated by the idolatrous Syrians, the Jewish people clung with ardent tenacity to the faith of the Patriarchs, and with self-sacrificing martyrdom, battled against a numerically superior adversary. Sustained only by dedicated faith, they ultimately evoked Divine compassion and achieved the rededication of the Holy Temple.

The light of Shabbos parallels the first two blessings of the Shema in term of G-d's love for Israel. The light of Chanukah is congruent to the last blessing, and expresses the enduring love of the Jewish people for Hashem.

■ ■ ■

*False and  
counterfeit values,  
like an illusory  
mirage, beckon  
and try to cause  
flight from that  
which is authentic  
and truly Jewish.  
By the spiritual  
lights of Shabbos  
and Chanukah,  
we must learn  
at great length  
to distinguish  
between the pure  
and impure, the  
holy and the  
profane.*

■ ■ ■

■ ■ ■

*Haragil b'nair havyan lo  
banim talmidei chachomim.*

A person may know that it is necessary to have an abundance of oil in order to sustain the fame of the Divine Presence, and provide a thorough Jewish education for his children. How will this person act, however, in a period of difficulties, confronted by all kinds of obstacles and hardships? Can he then regard himself as absolved from sacrifice and from dedicated effort? Thus Rashi informs us that we must contemplate profoundly on the *neir* of Shabbos and on the *neir* of Chanukah, the love of G-d

for Israel and of Israel for G-d. Pursued by ruthless evil enemies, committed to either the physical or spiritual annihilation of Israel, faced at times with

incredible financial hardship, in what manner should the Jewish parent respond? Can he free himself of all responsibility, with the thought that this is too excessive an obligation, nor demanded of him by the Creator?

The light of Shabbos and the light of Chanukah bear radiant witness to the selfless, uncompromising commitment of the Jewish people to the study of Torah under all circumstances. By means of these two lights we gain great insight into the heroism of our father Avrohom, the martyrdom of Rabbi Akiva, the long-suffering endurance during the many periods of tyranny experienced by the Jewish people in Israel and the Diaspora.

The lights of Shabbos and Chanukah impel us to constant rededication, to self-scrutiny and

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■ ■ ■

*There are some  
Jews who try to  
exist as wicks  
without oil. These  
people show  
intense devotion  
for short periods  
of time, but the  
major part of  
their lives is  
characterized by  
"the slumber of the  
G-dly soul."*

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■ ■ ■

introspection. The influence of an alien and external environment permeates the fabric of Jewish life. False and counterfeit values, like an illusory mirage, beckon and try to cause flight from that which is authentic and truly Jewish. By the spiritual lights of Shabbos and Chanukah, we must learn at great length to distinguish between the pure and impure, the holy and the profane.

If we zealously dedicate ourselves to this task of banishing the darkness of evil with the light of Torah, "for a small amount of light can dispel a great deal of darkness," then we shall all be worthy of having children who are truly Talmidei Chachomim,

dedicated with the completeness of their being to the fulfillment of Torah and Mitzvos. May we merit thereby the hastening of the coming of Moshiach with great mercies.





*Rabbi Yitschak Meir Kagan*



# Chassidic Brushstrokes

## MEMORIES OF FETTER HENDEL

Rabbi Yitschak Meir Kagan was born in London, England where he received his early education. He continued his studies at the Lubavitch Yeshiva in Lod, Israel, at 770 Lubavitch Headquarters and at the Rabbinical College of Montreal, Canada. In 1967 Rabbi Kagan joined Lubavitch of Michigan and later became its associate director until his untimely passing in 2001.

Rabbi Kagan compiled "A Thought for the Week", and was author of the English translation of the Hayom Yom. He was the Jewish Learning Institute's senior curriculum author, and he played a leading role in developing its courses.

With his depth of knowledge, combined with pure love for his fellow Jew, Rabbi Kagan powerfully impacted everyone he met. With his gift of language, he set about writing and speaking; transmitting the message of Torah and Chassidus to worldwide audiences.

*Editor's note: Chanoch Hendel Leiberman was born in White Russia, 14 Nissan 5661 (1901). Even as a young child he displayed an incredible aptitude for art and the walls in his home were filled with his earliest drawings. As he matured, he put aside his desire for drawing and delved into his learning of Torah and Chassidus. The clash between Chassid and artist became more apparent as the years went by and this caused him great anguish.*

*Following the Frierdike Rebbe, and the Rebbe's guidance, he learned to use his art for the service of Hashem, and eventually the conflict that had raged within him for so many years was resolved. Reb Chanoch Hendel had the privilege of maintaining a warm and personal relationship with the Rebbe. He passed away on the 8th of Adar II, 5736 (1976).*

*More than a stream of precious memories, this memoir presents a vivid portrait of the life and struggles of a chassidic artist. What reverberates throughout this article is the Rebbe's emphatic belief that art and creative expression can serve to draw hearts closer to G-dliness; each brushstroke can be dedicated to the greater goal of disseminating the wellsprings of Torah and Chassidus.*

■ 1950. STAMFORD HILL, LONDON,  
ENGLAND ■

I'll never forget his beard. As a child of eight, it seemed to me to be brighter and a more flaming red than any I had seen. Beneath bushy



eyebrows were a pair of laughing eyes. He was a *chassid* - that was obvious. But my father told us that he was an artist; the combination seemed a little odd to my brother and me. He was our uncle from Russia - so we were told - and he had just arrived from Paris; we were to call him Fetter ("uncle" in Yiddish) Hendel.

My brother Moshe and I begged him to draw something for us. Laughing; he pulled over a newspaper and, sitting across the table facing us, began to draw a series of short lines all going in the same direction, parallel to each other. Since he was facing us across the table, we assumed that the picture would appear upside down to us and that Fetter Hendel would then turn the paper around. Mystery upon mystery; what could this mass of short parallel lines be? Suddenly, we gasped. Staring at us from the newspaper margin, facing the right way up towards us, was the face of a smiling Rabbi with a long beard!

Other memories from that era flit across the screen of my mind. He left a number of paintings in our house, in my parents' bedroom. One that I remember vividly was a *kiddush levana* scene in a small Russian village near a well. If I close my eyes, I can see it clearly; the deep purple - blue sky, the brilliant yellow moon punched cleanly through the middle, shedding its light upon the upturned faces of the bearded *chassidim* in their *kapotas*.

Years later, family and friends were to fill in some of the mystifying details of this unusual man's life. He and my grandfather (my father's father, Reb Sender Friedman, of Leningrad) were brothers-in-law. My zayde had married Chaya Devora, and Hendel had married Bryna, daughters of Reb Hillel Menashe. A deeply emotional and moody individual, my great uncle was profoundly attached

to his wife and their two young daughters. He came close to losing his sanity when they perished in the Holocaust. Only his attachment to the Rebbe (the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitschak Schneerson, of blessed memory), was able to pull him through that traumatic period of his life.

In 1950 he was making his way from the devastation of post-war Russia, via Paris

and London, to be reunited with the Rebbe in New York. It was not to be. While in London, the shocking news of the Rebbe's passing reached him. He stayed in his room for a week, drawing, sketching, and mourning. One result was *Histalkus* ("The Passing"), a stark, powerful pencil drawing portraying a desolate wilderness

with bare, twisted trees, and as far as the eye could see, black-hatted *chassidim* sitting on the ground with their hands held to their heads in an agony of grief. In the sky area of the drawing, there appeared the face of the Previous Rebbe enwrapped in a *talis* and depicted with an ethereal spiritual aura that defies description; beyond him, reaching back into the heavens, he had drawn dimly-seen faces of the Previous Rebbe's predecessors, the Rebbe'im of Chabad, welcoming the soul into heaven.

Hendel later produced an acrylic painting with the same title, depicting only the top portion of the picture; for me, it is one of his greatest works.

## ■ 1962. CROWN HEIGHTS; BROOKLYN, NEW YORK, U.S.A. ■

I had just arrived in America. As a twenty-year-old *yeshiva-bachur*, just transferred from a year at the Lubavitch Yeshiva in Lod, Israel, I found New York disconcertingly strange. My first



stop was, of course, to visit my uncle, the only relative I had in the States. His apartment, near Nostrand Avenue, was filled with other *bachurim*, like myself students at “770” - the central Lubavitch Yeshiva. Almost all the red in that once flaming beard was gone, replaced by white. Fetter Hendel was gregarious and out-going as usual, waiting on his young friends and lodgers with a smile. To my amazement I heard a number of them address him as “Fetter Hendel.” I turned to him and asked, in some puzzlement, “are these my cousins?” Fetter Hendel laughed out loud; “Here, everyone calls me ‘Uncle!’”

I moved into Fetter Hendel’s apartment surrounded by oil paintings, pastels and drawings, with other unfinished drawings jammed behind his couch and in every conceivable corner. He loved people, especially *bachurim*, and he loved to talk. He would cook for us and encourage us to eat heartily, though he himself would only take a few pecks at his food.

He had undergone a radical abdominal operation, in which most of his stomach was removed. As a result, his capacity for food was minute, and that small amount was further restricted by a stringent diet. So he let his culinary skills be practiced on us - sometimes with disastrous results. His *cholent* on Shabbos, for example, had the usual ingredients of beans, potatoes, etc. - but it was cooked in a liquid containing huge amounts of chopped- up garlic cloves, pepper, and who-knows-which-other spices. The boys and I called it “dynamite juice”. Fetter Hendel assured us it was the best part of the *cholent*, but we devised a strategy whereby one of the fellows would engage him in conversation while two of us surreptitiously poured the potent brew down the sink.

Sitting at the Shabbos table he would say *l’chayim* on a small glass of vodka, and after one more small glass, he would become voluble: “I was conscripted into the Russian Army as an artist, and was compelled to travel from city to city and do public painting. I would spend months on end lying on my back at the top of a huge scaffolding, painting the interior cupolas of domes in public buildings. It was under military orders. I had no choice. It required phenomenal discipline - but it was great training for an artist.”

“Do you want to know what an artist is? I’ll tell you. You know I sit right behind the Rebbe at the *farbrengens*? By the time the Rebbe has begun his second *sicha* (informal talk, usually lasting between thirty to forty-five minutes) I have entirely forgotten what he just spoke about in the first *sicha*; but I remember a pattern of light and shade underneath the Rebbe’s chair for forty years!”

‘I was orphaned at a very early age and spent some time raised in the house of the Rebbe Rashab (Rabbi Shalom Dovber of Lubavitch, 1860-190, father of the previous Rebbe) Each of the guests in the household were given an obligation or job as a *zchus* (“merit”) for them. My job was to smooth out, with my hands, the *spodik* (round fur hat) worn by the Rebbe on Shabbos. I tell you, that through all the bitter years of suffering, physically and spiritually, it was this smoothing of the Rebbe’s *spodik* that kept me going; I would not have made it through, were it not for that!”

One person who shared the apartment with me was Yuda Keller. To this day we still laugh when we remember how he was “awoken by the rooster”.

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■ ■ ■

*On his arrival in America he had attempted to give up art completely, fearing that it might drag him into unwanted associations. The Rebbe emphatically instructed him to return to art, but to dedicate his art to the promulgation of Torah and Chassidus.*

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We had gone to bed one Friday night, tired from the whole week's efforts at yeshiva. Early Shabbos morning, it must have been about 4:00 a.m., I was awakened by an enormous thump followed by a yell so startling that I jumped out of bed and ran into the next room to see what had happened. Yuda was sitting on his bed rubbing his head. An oil painting that hung just above his bed had fallen down with devastating accuracy. What was the painting? - a proudly crowing rooster!

Another painting I remember so well was an acrylic portrait of a severe-looking man in his sixties with a typical Russian peaked cap and his hands folded in his lap. Fetter Hendel told me that this was his father-in-law, my great-grandfather Reb Hillel Menashe. My father (Reb Yosef Avraham, *alav hashalom*) had bought the picture from him in London in 1950, when Hendel had been anxious to sell some paintings to raise money. Later, in New York, he wrote to my father and asked him to send it to him "on loan" for display in an exhibition. My father did so, but Hendel held on to the picture, unwilling to part with it. As he put it to me wryly one time, "it is your father's picture, but it's father-in-law, and I can't part with it."

Hendel talked, true enough. But most of his life was not known to me; it was a mystery which I gradually unraveled from other sources, but not from his own mouth. I discovered that on his arrival in America he had attempted to give up art completely, fearing that it might drag him into unwanted associations. But he was unsuccessful at anything else. He became frustrated and depressed. He sought the advice of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson. The Rebbe

emphatically instructed him to return to art, but to dedicate his art to the promulgation of *Torah* and *Chassidus*. For Hendel a new era in his life began, rejuvenated with new spirit. Several years later, depression again set in, and the Rebbe wrote him a long letter encouraging him to continue with his art.

In 1963 my former classmate from Lud, Israel, Baruch Nachshon, a "*Chabadnik*" who was a gifted Israeli artist, came to Brooklyn with his young wife, Sarah, to see if he could improve his art, for he had had no formal training and had limited himself almost entirely to Israeli landscapes, which he loved. The young couple was penniless. They went in to see the Rebbe, who took an enormous interest in Baruch's future and advised him to show his portfolio to Fetter Hendel and seek his counsel. Baruch spoke virtually no Yiddish. My uncle spoke

little English or Hebrew.

I went along with Baruch as interpreter. Hendel looked at all the pictures that Baruch showed him and explained to him that he was indeed extremely talented, but that he was missing much training.

"Here, let me show you" he said; he picked up a pencil, and in one small, swift motion he penciled in a tiny bird in the corner of one of Nachshon's skies. "Look," he said, pointing to the

picture, and even to my untrained eye the picture had acquired a new dimension of depth because the bird, flying at a distance, had somehow brought the eye to a perception of distance. "What is more," continued Fetter Hendel, "the one or two people that you draw are really inadequate; you must learn anatomy; you must learn how to draw the human form." Baruch protested. As a *chassid* how could he





study anatomy It raised serious questions of violating the *halachic* precept of modesty. Hendel's eyes lit up and walking over to a chest of drawers, he opened one drawer and pulled out a wooden jointed doll. He chuckled. "Let me introduce you to my *mentscheleh* ('mannequin') and with that marvelous twinkle in his eye, he proceeded to explain how the problem of anatomy- study could be overcome, even by a *chassid*.

■ 1967. DETROIT,  
MICHIGAN ■

In my first year in Lubavitch of Michigan we organized an exhibit of Chassidic Art at the McGregor Institute of Wayne State University. The two artists exhibiting were Fetter Hendel and a pupil of his, Zalman Kleinman. The week of the exhibit was preceded by an elegant dinner at which the guest of honor was the world-famous sculptor Jacques Lifschitz. The Lubavitcher Rebbe wrote a letter to the opening, an excerpt of which follows; I can think of no more fitting conclusion to my scattered memories of a lovable person, a brilliant artist, and a "warm" *chassid*:

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■ ■ ■

*"I tell you,  
that through all  
the bitter years  
of suffering,  
physically and  
spiritually, it was  
this smoothing  
of the Rebbe's  
shpodik that kept  
me going; I would  
not have made it  
through, were it  
not for that!"*

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■ ■ ■

its highest level.

Indeed, this is the ultimate purpose of the Exhibition, which hopefully will impress and inspire the viewers with higher emotions and concepts of Yiddishkeit imbued with the spirit of Chassidus, and make them, too, vehicles of disseminating Yiddishkeit in their environment, and particularly through the educational institutions."

"... I would like to take this opportunity to make a further point., that those who have been Divinely gifted in art, whether sculpture or painting and the like, have the privilege of being able to convert an inanimate thing, such as a brush, paint and canvas, or wood and stone, etc., into living form. In a deeper sense it is the ability to transform to a certain extent the material into spiritual, even where the creation is in still life, and certainly where the artistic work has to do with living creatures and humans. How much more so if the art medium is used to advance ideas, especially reflecting Torah and Mitzvoh, which would raise the artistic skill to





## ***A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE***

# **SECURING A JEWISH FUTURE**

**Rabbi Bentzion Avtzon**

### **■ AMERICA AFTER WORLD WAR II\* ■**

It was the end of the year 1945, and the mood in America was one of boundless euphoria. America has finally proven victorious in the bloodiest war in world history; after close to four years of fierce battles and countless casualties the boys are finally coming home. A nation that at first was reluctantly drawn into the fray would finally be able to enjoy a measure of peace and normalcy.

While every American partook in this celebratory atmosphere, there were those Americans - primarily of the minorities - who had added reason to celebrate. For many of America's minorities who had forever been marginalized, the end of the war promised a new phase in their relations with their country. They too, together with all of America, were welcoming back their sons who had served in America's armed forces, a fact that gave them every reason to believe that the time had finally come for them to be viewed as equal citizens.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, some historians would later observe that the end of World War II marked a turning point in the social realities of America.<sup>3</sup> A country that had been famously suspicious of its immigrant newcomers,<sup>4</sup> ever reluctant to allow any outsiders to be included in its cherished institutions, would experience a dramatic shift. It would evolve into a pluralistic nation, a nation where all could feel genuinely at home.

### **■ THE JEWISH AMERICAN: IN SEARCH OF AN IDENTITY ■**

Up until then, the Jewish people who resided in America hadn't been able to take full advantage of the American Dream. While it is true that for so many of the immigrants America was known as the "*Goldene Medine*", a country that was in any case considerably more desirable than their country of origins, they still struggled to gain total acceptance in their new homeland.

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**NOTE:** This historical background is based mainly on the book "A Time for Healing: American Jewry since World War II" by Edward S. Shapiro, and on selections of "The Jews in America" by Arthur Hertzberg, "America is Different" by Stuart E. Rosenberg and "Agenda for

America Jews" by Eli Ginzberg. It does not purport to be a comprehensive historical analysis or to posit a definitive historical opinion but rather to provide a brief background for the immediate benefit of the reader.

Now, their children could make the “American Dream” their own. Sure enough, with impressive alacrity they established themselves in many aspects of American life, in many cases exhibiting the creative and resilient spirit that they would eventually become renowned for.

In many ways, the Jews were remarkably adept in taking advantage of the newly afforded opportunities of postwar America. By successfully harnessing the possibilities that lay in the American Dream they earned the respect of all those who were trying to do the same. With their newly found success and standing they finally found it possible to achieve something that had proven elusive for their parents, to be fully integrated into American society. To a considerable extent that is exactly what they did. The Jews in America were Americanized like never before.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, as much as Jews had always wished to be accepted in America, and as much as they had finally been successful in doing so, they still chose to stay closely together,<sup>6</sup> clearly identifying themselves as Jews. This behavior perplexed many observers: While it was natural for there to be tension between the Jews and their fellow America due to their vastly different reactions to World War II - the Jews obviously saw the carnage in Europe from a far more personal viewpoint - nevertheless, the reluctance of the Jews to seize this unprecedented opportunity of assimilation was mysterious to most observers.<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps one can argue that when the opportunity to assimilate actually presented itself the Jewish people’s innate pride coupled with their sensitivity to the tremendous sacrifices of their people in times past, especially of their brethren in Nazi Europe, held them back from taking full advantage

of this opening.<sup>8</sup>

However, this is not to say that American Jews were not experiencing significant questions about their identity. Their unwillingness to fully abandon their religious identity notwithstanding, their newfound material and social success demanded that they reevaluate how they would view themselves. Thus American Jewry assumed a complex posture. On the one hand they were Americans like never before. On the other hand they remained proudly Jewish.

Precedents from previous times and lessons from previous generations had little meaning to a generation that had successfully embarked on a journey to new horizons. What they needed was a fresh vision and imagination. What they needed was leadership that would not harp on the past but articulate a future.

What made this daunting task of articulating a Jewish future yet more challenging was the emotional blow dealt by the horrors of the Holocaust. As hard as it would have anyways been to speak of a Jewish future, it became that much harder with much of the Jewish past had been decimated and the Jewish present entirely in flux.

As one observer cynically noted, “In most places, [American] Judaism doesn’t seem to be about anything. It is a holding operation – an effort to wring one more generation of allegiance from people who are no longer sure what being a Jew is all about.”<sup>9</sup>

## ■ THE AMERICAN DREAM VS JEWISH EDUCATION ■

Nowhere was American Jewry’s conflicted identity more apparent than it was with regards to the education of their children. Many parents

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[American]  
Judaism doesn’t  
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anything. It is a  
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– an effort to  
wring one more  
generation of  
allegiance from  
people who are no  
longer sure what  
being a Jew is all  
about.”*

■■■



insisted that their children go to public school for that was where their children could become true Americans. However, the allure of the public school system was not reserved to the idealistic parents who sought an American future for their children. Some parents simply saw no other realistic way to provide their children with the means to achieve financial success.<sup>10</sup>

Notwithstanding their belief in public schooling, it was clear that surrounding their children with so many gentile friends posed a grave risk of intermarriage and assimilation. To address this issue, Jewish congregations responded with a supplementary school system.<sup>11</sup> But while this effort attracted unprecedented numbers of Jewish children the education itself was lackluster. Focusing mainly on younger children, especially in the few years before their Bar or Bas Mitzvahs, a flimsy Jewish education was deemed sufficient. All it had to do was provide the children with basic Jewish knowledge, and most importantly, prevent the dreaded possibility of intermarriage.<sup>12</sup>

It was no secret then that this Jewish education was entirely secondary to that of the public school, and that as a result, the lessons imparted in public school would play a far more dominant role in these children's future lives. Yet, this did not seem to perturb their parent in the slightest; if anything this order of priorities in their children's education was but a reflection of the priorities in their own lives: Americans first and Jews later.<sup>13</sup>

This worrying trend was not lost on the astute observers of that time. Eli Ginzburg, an acclaimed observer of American Jewry, in his book "Agenda for American Jews" which was published in 1949, warned of a Jewish community that spent the vast majority of its financial resources and energy on everything

besides for education. It is telling however, that despite the urgency he ascribes to the issue of education he still does not go so far as to suggest that a Jewish educational system could actually be built.<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, when searching for a reason to be hopeful for the Jewish future, Dr. Ginzburg notes "that there are signs, however, that the low point in cultural indifference was reached and passed some time ago and that we are currently at the beginning of an upward spiral."<sup>15</sup> With such a "hopeful" viewpoint, it is no wonder that he did not believe American Jewry was ready for an articulated vision of a Jewish future.

## ■ THE REBBE'S SPEECH IN 1946 ■

On one Sunday evening in 1946, the Rebbe addressed the annual benefit dinner for the Beis Rivka educational movement. Founded by the Rebbe Rayatz, this movement was the arm of Merkos L'inyonei Chinuch that concerned itself exclusively with education for Jewish girls. Like all other projects of Merkos, it too was overseen by the Rebbe, or as he was known then, the Ramash, the esteemed son-in-law of the Rebbe Rayatz.

On that spring evening, he addressed those who had assembled to support this fledgling organization. When we read how this movement described itself, we find that they had much to be proud of.<sup>16</sup> Founded only a few

years earlier, the movement already accounted for numerous day schools and afternoon Hebrew schools in different cities across the United States. Sure, many of them had an enrollment still in the single digits, but that could hardly take away from their sense of accomplishment.

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*"Nowadays,  
the purpose of  
providing girls  
with a Torah  
education is  
not a matter  
of acquiring  
knowledge per  
se; rather it is the  
only means of  
ensuring that the  
girls should be  
"Yiddishe Kinder"  
– Jewish children."*

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Remarkably, the Rebbe recorded a brief transcript of his address in his journal, a remarkable treasure trove of insight that would later become famously known as the *Rshimos*. Why he chose to record this particular speech from the many others will remain a mystery. In any case, when we study this address against the historical backdrop of its times, it assumes an entirely new dimension. No longer is it simply an address to that particular crowd, nor is it relevant only to that specific time in history. Instead, it is a window of insight into many of the focal points that the Rebbe would champion throughout his years of leadership. Far be it from us to compare it to other addresses that the Rebbe gave at other occasions, but given the unusual times and situation in which this address was given, it would be well worth our while to note the unique insight that it provides.

The Rebbe begins by discussing the controversy surrounding Jewish education for girls. However, to understand the Rebbe's argument we first need some additional historical background. Somewhat ironically, this controversy stemmed from two entirely different corners of the Jewish community. On the one hand, there were the "traditionalists", who maintained that Jewish education for girls was something that was not entirely compatible with the time-tested traditions of *Yiddishkeit*. Pointing to the *Gemara*, they argued that this practice had always been discouraged. The truth is that nobody argued if that had been the practice during the Talmudic era. The question was if the time had come to change.

Of course, it would be easiest to discount these people as "fundamentalists", to say that they were simply being intransigent. But that wouldn't tell the full story. For many people, it was simply a matter of feeling that times were moving too fast. Only a

few generations removed from the *shtetl* and the *alte heim* ("the old home"), many people felt that such a development had been hurried, without the cautiousness usually found with such change. Whatever the case, this group of people passionately opposed the idea for which the Beis Rivka schools were established.

On the other hand, there was a very different group of people who opposed these schools just as passionately. This group was headed by those who sought to begin a new way of Jewish life in America. To them, the notion that Jewish children would be isolated from the rest of American society reminded them of the ghettos from which they had fled. They wanted their children to become part of the "American dream", something that they felt was only possible if they were part of it from childhood.

Thus, what the former group saw as too radical of a change and overly ahead of the times, this latter group saw as depressingly regressive and too old-fashioned.

The Rebbe begins by addressing the former group of opposition. To their claims that such practice was discouraged in Talmudic times, he points out that this cannot be understood as a blanket rule that discourages any type of Torah study for girls. To the contrary, the *Gemara* itself points out the many instances where such study is to be encouraged.<sup>17</sup>

In any case, the Rebbe continues, such an argument may well be missing the point. In his words:

Nonetheless, upon properly assessing our current circumstances, this discussion concerning Talmudic precedents of Jewish women studying Torah is inapplicable to our current situation. Nowadays, the purpose

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*"... engrave into  
the hearts of its  
students that they  
are "B'nos Yisroel"  
– daughters of  
Israel; to explain  
to them the  
sanctity, goodness  
and purity  
associated with  
this distinction,  
as well as  
elaborating on the  
responsibility it  
entails..."*

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■■■

of providing girls with a Torah education is not a matter of acquiring knowledge per se; rather it is the only means of ensuring that the girls should be “*Yiddishe Kinder*” – Jewish children. Typically, either they live in an environment of people engrossed in earning a livelihood, or amongst those who are going about “having a good time”.<sup>18</sup>

Due to these circumstances, it is no wonder that they fail to be conscious of the uniqueness of their Jewish identity that distinguishes them from other people, referred to in the Torah as “*v’niflinu*”<sup>19</sup>, as it is stated in the verse: “Then I and Your people will be distinguished from every other nation on the face of the earth”. Judaism for them is closely associated with limitations and boundaries, appearing to them as a religion whose sole aim is to deprive one of life’s pleasures.

This argument clearly addresses both camps of opposition. To the traditionalists, the Rebbe reasons that the challenges facing Jewish children are entirely different than those faced previously. The children’s very identity as Jews is at stake, the Rebbe maintains. Surely, any course of action that can enrich their sense of identity is to be encouraged. To the modernists, he addresses what stands at the very heart of their position. As we pointed out previously, they did not want their children to fully assimilate. Indeed, they would take many measures to ensure that their children retained a basic Jewish identity, married Jewish, etc. Still, they felt that Jewish identity could be retained without an emphasis on Jewish education. This, the Rebbe argues, is a false hope. Without the education that would inspire these children with pride in the Jewish heritage and values, the culture of the “street” would ultimately prove to be too alluring, potentially resulting in complete

assimilation.

But how, you might ask, would Jewish education be able to “compete” with the exciting things these children saw outside? The Rebbe continues:

The objective of Beis Rivka, which was established and is directed by my father-in-law, the Rebbe Rayatz, is to engrave into the hearts of its students that they are “*B’nos Yisroel*” – daughters of Israel; to explain to them the sanctity, goodness and purity associated with this distinction, as well as elaborating on the responsibility it entails...

Our goal is that every single Jewish girl should recognize her personal responsibility, both as a member of the Jewish nation as well as a future builder of a Jewish home in her capacity as a Jewish mother.

What is most interesting about these few lines is the repeated emphasis on how Jewish education

would provide these girls with a sense of responsibility to their people. Instead of looking for ways to “compete” with the allure of a “free” and “fun-loving” society, the Rebbe suggests that the focus be on the extremely different idea of “responsibility”. When children learn of their Jewish heritage, they become aware that their decisions affect not only themselves, but the entire Jewish nation. Each child can one day be the cornerstone of a Jewish family, a family that will be part of ensuring the continuity of the Jewish people. Thus, what they do up to that point goes far beyond their own personal concerns.

However, while all this might have satisfied the skeptic from a logical standpoint, there were still some very difficult emotional issues that had to be dealt with. In those years after the Holocaust, when so many were still mourning the destruction of the past, such talk of ensuring a Jewish future seemed dreamy and unrealistic.

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■ ■ ■



After all, what difference could it possibly make to educate a few Jewish girls when millions of Jewish children had just perished in the Nazi gas chambers? This wasn't just bitter frustration, but a deep philosophical question that many were asking, and few dared to address. The Rebbe thus concludes his address by turning to this point:

By the Torah juxtaposing the portions of *Bechukosai* and *Bamidbar*, the *Tochecho* of the Jews in *Bechukosai* is immediately followed by the Torah relating in *Bamidbar* how the Hashem counted each and every Jew, which is expressive of Hashem's deep love for His people.

The same holds true today: [Despite the destruction,] we must invest all our efforts in rescuing even a single Jew who is straying from the path of Torah and Mitzvos.

Despite the terrible suffering of the Jewish people as a whole, the Rebbe emphasizes that one cannot forget the importance of the individual. As he pointed out earlier in his address, each and every individual ultimately contributes to the entirety of *K'lal Yisroel*. It may be difficult for one to focus his attention on the one person but it is the only way that the future of the Jewish people can be ensured.

Excerpted from a forthcoming book on the Rebbe's notes in their historical context.<sup>20</sup>

## ■ NOTES ■

2 "Cultural pluralism in all its ambiguities and complexities is the critical legacy of World War II in respect to American identity" (Gleason, *Americans All: World War II and the Shaping of American Identity*)

3 There are differing views as to what was the main impetus for this change. Edward S. Shapiro in "A Time for Healing" suggests that it was in large part due to the shared sacrifice of all Americans during World War II. Dr. Stuart Rosenberg in "America is Different" argues that by the 1940's the immigrants who had been part of the large wave of immigration in the late 1800's had passed on, leaving their children and grandchildren who had been by now largely "Americanized". Either way, it is clear that whereas before the war minorities had been viewed as outsiders, in the period after the war this sentiment had changed dramatically. )See also chapter "The Present American Mood" in "America is Different" by Stuart Rosenberg for an analysis on this subject.(

4 In 1915 the then former President Theodore Roosevelt famously said: "There is no such thing as a hyphenated American (Irish-American, German-American, etc) who is a good American. The only man who is a good American is the man who is an American and nothing else."

5 "The most important aspect of recent American Jewish history has been the transformation

of American Jews into Jewish Americans. The price of their remarkable economic and social ascent had been the attenuation of Jewish identity." Shapiro, *A Time for Healing* p. 254

6 "Even those Jews who affirmed neither religious nor ethnic identity admitted that they were most comfortable with other Jews. Even the most "anti-Jewish" Jews reported that at least four out of five of their friends were Jews. Hertzberg, *The Jews in America*, p. 325.

7 "This accounted for one of the most puzzling phenomena in the history of postwar American Jewry – a largely secular population exhibiting a respect for religion." (Edward S. Shapiro, *A Time for Healing* p. 149) There are, of course, various suggestions as to why the Jews in fact behaved in this fashion; one of the commonly mentioned ideas is that as a result of the rapid pace of changes during the years after the war many Americans were left feeling insecure, leading them to join congregations for social and emotional stability. See note 6.

8 It is worth quoting an excerpt from an exchange between the Rebbe and Yitzchak Rabin, when visited the Rebbe during his tenure as the Israeli Ambassador to the US: With regards to the verse "It

is [the Jewish nation] a nation that will dwell alone” (Bamidbar 23:9) the Rebbe asked, “What is in fact the reason for this solitude?” He explained that there are two contributing elements, the positive and the negative: The Jewish people are alone both by virtue of the *positive* values espoused by the Torah as well as by virtue of the inherent, but sometimes invisible, separation imposed on them by gentile nations.

9 Chafets, *Members of a Tribe: On the Road in Jewish America*, p. 250

10 “Established Jews saw the public schools as their allies in efforts to transform immigrant children into model Americans. The established Jews set out to modernize these children and give them religious enlightenment, teach them the vocational skills needed for the contemporary economy, replace their Yiddish with English, rid them of “oriental” superstitions, beliefs, and lifeways, and through all these, they believed, facilitate their successful integration into American society.” Brumberg, “Education of Jewish Girls in the United States”.

11 The intention here is not that there was no such “supplementary schooling” before the war, but that with the increase of size of Jewish communities, which was a direct result of their aforementioned “togetherness”, this educational system swelled in size. There is another, more fundamental, difference between before and after the war: Before the war the Jewish community could not afford to build its own private school system thus they had little choice in the matter, whereas after the war they could well afford it yet they specifically chose not to. Hertzberg, p. 332, *The Jews in America*.

12 “What the mass of the parents wanted, apart from a decent performance at bar mitzvah, was that the school impart to their children enough of the sense of

Jewish loyalty so that they would be inoculated against intermarriage, that is, that they should remain part of Jewish togetherness. Once that inoculation had supposedly taken hold, the Jewish child could then be launched on his next task, to succeed in being admitted into a prestigious college.” Hertzberg, p. 332, *The Jews in America*

13 “The situation with respect to Jewish education can be epitomized in these terms: For the large number of parents who have at best only a moderate interest in Jewish values there is little incentive to place Jewish education high on the list of leisure time activities for their children; piano lessons, sports and other activities take precedence.” Ginzburg, *Agenda for American Jews*, p. 39.

14 Hertzberg, *The Jews in America*, p. 332

15 Ginzburg, *Agenda for American Jews*, p. 41

16 Levin, *The History of Chabad in America*, ch “Beis Rivka, Beis Sarah”, (Hebrew)

17 The Rebbe continues to discuss the finer details of this point but for the sake of brevity we will have to leave this particular part of his address for another time.

18 These are apparent references to the two extremes in Jewish society at the time; the new immigrants who were still struggling and those who were already properly established.

19 “*V’niflinu*” is a Hebrew word that is roughly translated to mean “distinguished”. However, like many words in the Hebrew tongue there is no English equivalent that fully expresses its meaning. “*V’niflinu*” is a combination of distinguished, elevated and sanctified.





*A. Yerushalmi*



# Has It Gone Too Far?

The following essay first appeared in *Di Yiddishe Heim*, Winter 5738 (1978) under the name A. Yerushalmi.

**I**t all started during the 1960's, with the civil rights and other "self-expression" movements. It proved, moreover, to be the most successful survivor of them all. For the Women's Liberation movement is presently growing in numbers as well as in importance. As is the case with many social movements, the leadership is Jewish, far beyond our numerical proportion in the general population.

The Jewish leadership is, of course, not the reason for the movement's survival and growth. The other social movements did not survive despite their heavily Jewish leadership. Rather, the secret of its survival can be traced mainly to two factors: One, because the women's fight for equality professes to speak in the name of the bigger (and better?) half of the population, and secondly, because the movement embraces every kind of society, philosophy, and lifestyle.

The religious and chassidic communities are no exception. Its women are also heeding the call for Women's Liberation and equality on their own terms. These women are too gentle and too knowledgeable to expect quick radical changes within the religious and communal structure. They

laugh at the suggestions from their more "modern" sisters that they fight for positions of prominence in the synagogue or for changes in the marital laws. They know very well that aside from legal opposition to these changes from the Torah point of view, they simply do not make any practical sense. They know that they will not get acceptance and respect from the males, not to mention the females, in their community by forcing themselves into these positions. What is more, many orthodox and chassidic women already hold important and responsible positions of leadership in the educational sphere which is, from the Torah point of view, at least as important as the synagogue.

Economically, too, women have gained positions of importance, not because of the current fashion, but mainly because of financial necessity. The religious community is usually a middle class group whose members find it difficult to make ends meet. Every additional source of income is appreciated whether it be from a man or a woman.

## ■ THE CHASSIDIC COMMUNITY ■

However, this does not mean that the orthodox and chassidic woman has nothing to fight for.



The agitation and propaganda from the outside (and the women writers of the movement as well as their many strong adherents know how to speak to the hearts of their feminine comrades extremely well, not unlike the serpent of old) are much too strong and too enticing for the average woman to resist outright. Especially when they keep telling her that some forms of subjugation and “enslavement” are so subtle that they can hardly be noticed and their subtlety makes them that more dangerous and blinding. So arise from your slumber and start fighting for your rights. Right on!

Even those women within the chassidic community who do not get to read their installments of women’s magazines (and there are very few of them) get the feeling that something isn’t right with their life by reading Jewish (religious) publications and hearing religious leaders — rabbis and teachers — preach to them that they are already not only equal but even superior to their menfolk. And the women ask themselves — as some have asked me — if everything is so good how come it’s so bad?! What they mean is simply this: If they are truly equal, and even superior in some ways, why is it that their teachers and rabbis keep preaching to them about it so often, so much, and so apologetically?

In short, many women want to know why it is necessary to explain away so much if there is really nothing wrong with their position in the first place. Why then be defensive?

### ■ THE JEWISH WOMAN’S LIB MOVEMENT ■

In some orthodox circles an attempt is made “to take the bull by the horns”. The women in those

communities are encouraged to adopt a leadership position in the home—guide their husbands’ behavior in the proper direction, as well as lead the community at large.

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They are sometimes encouraged by the famous Talmudic dictum “*Eizo hee isha ksheira? She’osa ritzon b’aaloh!*”—the righteous woman is she who does her husband’s will. This is interpreted also as meaning that the righteous woman “makes” i.e. creates the husband’s will; she makes him want the right thing. Very encouraging, but some may perhaps not be aware, unless it is emphasized, of the *p’shat* — plain meaning — of this saying; the righteous woman abides by her husband’s will. Surely the example brought to illustrate the validity of the above statement proves that the intention of this piece of wisdom is to emphasize the importance and great merit of listening to the husband and following his directives. It relates the episode of how a great sage allowed a woman to spit at him and even blessed her for it when she explained to him that in doing this she was abiding by her husband’s wish and honoring his strange request.

It goes without saying that encouraging women to take the initiative towards husband and children is made with the best of intentions. Yet that aforementioned defensive attitude has yielded questionable results for many orthodox women, who feel that they truly possess all rights as long as they don’t opt for religious and legal changes. Naturally they try to make the most of it, so as not to be ‘behind’ the times in relation to their more progressive sisters across the street, the town, or across the country. This of course leads to many clashes and even ‘explosions’ within the home, as will be explained soon.

Hence the advantage seen by the approach which is a form of 'if you can't fight 'em, join 'em' attitude. "Join them" in this context means let them — the women — assume roles of leadership in the positive sense, instruct their husbands how to behave, insist that children take the course of action which seems right in their eyes whether the husband likes it or not, spend as much time and energy as they think necessary working for many organizations, and in leadership for Torah causes!

And to be perfectly humble about it, who can dare criticize them for such selfless dedication to high ideals? Surely not the husband, even if he feels deprived and secondary (almost an after-thought in his wife's list of priorities) for he will then be pitting his selfish needs against the needs of Am Yisroel and the cause of Torah.

#### ■ THE PRICE BEING PAID ■

What are some of the consequences of this phenomenon of the religious (chassidic) woman on the go? Some are rather funny, others really sad. If the woman keeps the husband from going to a shiur, "I'm sorry I must go to a meeting to help Russian Jewry", it's a little funny because her husband now sympathizes with the Jews in Russia by the very treatment he receives for their benefit. When a woman asks her husband why he failed to put the children to sleep while she was out attending to community needs, it's also a bit funny, for why should he suffer when she abandons her own immediate home community to render some service to the community at large?

But when the husband comes home and finds that the house is in a messy state because his wife went somewhere to increase her level of 'yiras shomayim,' it is rather sad. It's even sadder when because of her precious, newly gained rights, a

woman becomes involved in a cycle of never-ending activities and responsibilities which make her a nervous wreck. It is even more tragic when her tension from the pressure of outside and inside duties causes an increased number of arguments which get more and more intense.

It becomes truly regrettable when this condition deteriorates into a state of constant strain and disharmony which inevitably leads to a feeling of estrangement culminating in the ultimate solution. This is to be witnessed not just in the rising number of divorces in orthodox homes, but it can even be observed in homes where the angel of discord is knocking on the door in ever louder bangs but his divorce solution is rejected for the sake of the children, or even just to maintain the couple's social standing.

#### ■ UNHAPPY MOTHERS ■

If this problem would exist only in those families where the wife is overactive in "holy" outside activities, it would also be tragic, even if something is being accomplished by her for the great Jewish causes of Torah and *ma'asim tovim*. The problem, however goes even further. It exists in other common home situations, also the products of the current women's drive for self-expression.

There are homes where the woman is not capable of doing much for communal or Torah causes. She knows, however, that 'just sitting home' is derogatory and a waste of life, G-d forbid. So she gets enraged at her bad luck, venting her anger at husband and children for being the cause of her "misery". How does she know that staying home and taking

tender loving care of its inhabitants is not a blessing? Well, the answer is simple — ask anyone! In fact, even the orthodox lecturer that she hears in

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■■■

her Tuesday evening class says that women must go out and accomplish a lot . . .

And what about the other women in the community, the important “movers and doers” that everyone admires and cites as examples, they sure don’t sit home! Whenever the husband comes home he finds her sulking and bemoaning her bitter lot. After a day’s work he must be in the proper cheerful mood to comfort her and offer his help with various household chores to compensate. For after all, he is lucky; he is on the outside where life is, where the action is, and she? She is just “cooped up” in the house with those terrible creatures, otherwise known as kids. One can cut with a knife the thick jealousy which keeps accumulating in this home. And by some strange metamorphosis, the binding force between these two adults is the sense of jealousy and rivalry that has since long replaced the love and mutual understanding which once dwelt therein.

Unbelievable as it may sound, many mothers have come to regard G-d’s greatest blessing — children — as something less than desirable, since it inevitably burdens them and interferes with opportunities for “personal achievement”. Some actually avoid, by legal means, medical treatment to enable them to have more children because they simply do not want to face the prospect of these “burdens” again. Some may protest to feel no kinship to “women’s libbers” who scream for universal, government-paid, twenty-four-hour-a-day care centers and abortion on demand. What is to be said, then, about religious women who shrug off all documented proof of the superior benefits of a mother’s care over even the best run nursery, and without the slightest guilt or compunction send off their precious little ones, even toddlers in diapers, to any old day-care center, so they can be “free”.

The husband in a way helps to perpetuate this

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situation by his own quest for peace, and instead of dealing with the cause he responds to the symptoms. Rather than explaining clearly to his wife how wrong this attitude is and how their life is deteriorating under these conditions, he opts for . . . peace. He buckles under, hoping that the anger and feeling of deprivation will pass. Perhaps for a while it seems to . . . but just watch for the next encounter, tomorrow or next week, and it is the same all over again. He does not realize that this is an epidemic of tremendous dimensions. Even under good conditions, husband and wife are considered “antagonistic” to some extent. Consequently, there is plenty of work for a

couple to build up and deepen their relationship. They should at least be spared the agonies caused by outside forces.

### ■ THE JEWISH APPROACH ■

Perhaps an approach could be suggested which seems new but is really as old as Judaism itself. In a letter to the 2nd Annual Convention of Neshei Ubnos Chabad, and in other teachings, the Rebbe Shlita clarifies this approach. He explains that the Torah compares the woman to the heart, while man is compared to the brain. It therefore exempts women from many *mitzvos* which must be done at a specific time, in order to enable them to be free and available at all times to attend to their particular obligations to family and home, for which they have been endowed by the Creator with unique qualities and talents. Women, like the heart, have been blessed with great emotional stamina and abundant patience so they can more easily give birth, sustenance and guidance to their children.

Since it is their major obligation and privilege to excel in the *chinuch* of their children, women are also blessed with an increased sense of intuition and insight into the quality of the human character.



On the other hand, says the Rebbe, precisely because women approach things and events more emotionally with love and kindness than men, they cannot be fully objective and give a fully objective judgment and testimony in court, except in certain rare cases, for in these areas a cool and dispassionate view is needed. Men are more suited for these activities and qualified for them.

Of course, the Rebbe points out, there are surely some men who are more emotional than women, and some women who are less so, but obviously a legal system — Torah — must be established on the basis of the majority of people and commonly prevailing conditions. This dichotomy of “heart” and “brain” is not expressing a higher quality of one over the other, but only explaining and differentiating between them in relation to their respective functions.

It is therefore futile to argue which is more important. One must have them both to live. However, it is clear that for a proper system of life to be maintained, the Torah tells us that the brain receives its lifeblood from the heart and bids us to take directions from the brain. What is more, the heart itself must follow the instructions of the brain in order to operate properly. Of course it is not very unusual for the brain and the heart to have some conflict. This is human. As a matter of fact the Torah specifically refers to this human conflict and urges us to get the heart to listen to the mind.

In relation to husband and wife, the Torah says that G-d said to Chava, “*vhu yimshol boch* — he shall rule over you!” But at the same time it says that the man is in need of the help of his wife: “*E’sah lo*

*eizer*” — woman should help her man. We should not be apologetic about it, any more than we have to be apologetic about any other directives of the Torah. G-d has decreed that this be the natural arrangement within the family circle. Changing it will only yield negative results as is always the case when we violate rules of nature and disrupt the natural order.

## ■ COMMON UNDERSTANDING ■

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■■■

True, this “simple” approach may be ineffective for some couples who are set in their ways because of present social trends. Even though many women would probably admit, in all honesty, that their newly acquired positions have brought little satisfaction with a great deal of misery to themselves as well as to those around them, they will nevertheless be reluctant to give them up. But perhaps we can still accomplish something for the coming generation of men and women, husbands and wives. Let our teachers teach and our rabbis preach that the woman is the heart of the family. That she is the one who supplies the life-carrying blood to all the limbs of the family unit, including the brain. Let her know that when the heart becomes jealous of the brain and decreases its blood supply in the process, it may cause severe damage to the entire body as well as to itself. Let her realize that the emotional warmth and strength which every family needs desperately

is completely in her hands. Tell her and teach her that the supply of life from the heart must be given on a full time basis; there is just no other way to avoid danger. Inculcate in her the principle that it is best for the heart to expect and accept instructions and impulses from the brain. If she rejects those

messages, she causes damage to herself even more than she does to the brain.

The men, too should be taught that the brain must not be too “demanding” on the heart. That the mind must find ways and means to lighten and lessen the heavy burden that the heart carries. That the impulses and directives emanating from the brain must be reasonable ones. That he may not take advantage of his position within the life unit. The children, too, as the limbs of this living body, the family, will get proper guidance and feel authority emanating from the brain, from the father. At the same time they will receive their emotional warmth and life building power from the heart, the mother.

All the above must be supported by a change

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of attitude on the part of community leaders. They must make it clear to those under their influence that it is not the Jewish way for a woman to look for her fulfillment and see her goal, outside of the family, be it in teaching, in hospital work, in social welfare, or communal activities. The conveniences of modern life surely allow for free time and energy for the woman to engage in outside activities, but this should be kept to the level that does not infringe on her primary responsibilities, except in cases where the woman has little or no obligations at home.

The need for change is urgent. Let us not abandon our sense of truth and obligation vis-a-vis ourselves, lest we neglect the well-being of future generations.





## To Give to the Community

Society, explains *Chassidus*, is interdependent.

It would be impossible for a person to make his own bread, from the plowing through the harvesting and then the actual baking, and still find time to tailor his own garments. Especially considering the shearing, spinning, weaving and everything in between. And so, the farmer and tailor provide for each other.

And that's how the builder and the butcher, the craftsman and the carpenter, the painter and the porter all give. And take.

The 'give and take' principle becomes all the more elementary with the structure of the *am yisroel*. Yidden, as limbs of one body, compliment and provide for each other; the Kohen for the Yisroel, Zevulun for Yisochar, the rich for the poor, and vice versa. This is the very tapestry of the *yiddisher kehilla*: to give and to take.

The taking part is easy. Here's how one family gives:

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In a spur of inspiration after the tragic passing of their son, the Liberow family founded the Sa'adya

Shmuel book lending-library.

Through its modest beginnings, already filling a shelf at their home during the *shivah*, the library has since had to relocate twice due to its expansion, and now boasts close to three thousand books.

Although little has been invested in publicity, the good word has spread and has seen tremendous success. The family project, a non-profit organization, relies on the assistance of like-minded community volunteers who donate their time, organizational skills, and obviously their books.

But Reb Zalman had more in mind than just providing quality reading time for the community. His heart bleeds for the *chinuch*. In his measured words, "All too often, we see people taking their kids, or youth going themselves, to the secular libraries. Unfortunately, there's a lot inappropriate material out there, and if we don't provide alternative literature, we will suffer the consequences..."

The library also boasts a Yiddish department with hundreds of books, for all ages. The selection of books is based on demand, and the Yiddish language is still very vibrant.



Giving develops an appetite for more; *Mitzva goreres mitzva*. Lag Ba'omer comes around, and the family prepares a now annual community event. With a great bonfire as the centerpiece, music, refreshments and an attractive program, hundreds attend.



And here again Reb Zalman's sensitivity is apparent. "We have seen great *hatzlachah*, *boruch HaShem*, with the atmosphere. We make sure there are no stores or stands on site, so the pure overtone is not affected, and the results are apparent.

"Many have stepped forward and volunteered with permits, etc. The police and fire departments know and recognize us. I am sure the Rebbe derives much *nachas* from the rich *chassidishe* program, with *sheves achim gam yochad*."

Additionally, a unique *teshura*-memento is published and distributed at the event, filled with stories of Lag Ba'omer with our Rebbeim, special miracles associated with *Rashbi* and in connection with his teachings, give people something in their hand to take home.



*Bein Hazmanim*, the break from *yeshiva*, provides another opportunity to give.

*Bochurim* are looking for structure, and there are great dangers if they don't find one. And so, the *Yeshivas Bein Hazmanim* was born.

For six years, and going strong, during the months of Nissan, Tishrei, and any other lapse in the *yeshiva* schedule, *Bochurim* can learn undisturbed, at Reb Getzel's Shul on President Street, beginning with *Chassidus* in the morning, followed by *shacharis*, and a hearty breakfast, followed by *seder nigleh* and ending with lunch. Fresh pastries and free *mikva* passes are provided.

Reb Zalman concludes, "It definitely starts the day off right. Once the morning is on a good start, the rest of the day is sure to follow."



Crown heights has thousands of families, dozens of *shuls*, wonderful *mosdos* and *gemachs*. What is there to add? Which niche is still left to fill? What could my limited time and funds give to a flourishing community?

Ask the Liberow family.





# A Celebration of Torah

It was more than a fundraiser or an evening of gratitude to supporters. It was a celebration. A celebration that electrified the atmosphere.

On *motzei Shabbos parshas Vayeiztei*, hundreds gathered at the Oholei Torah ballroom for a unique evening. Yagdil Torah held its annual *melava malka* both to benefit its activities in spreading Torah, and to invigorate anash in their own learning.

I felt it immediately upon entering the room. There was no common denominator between those present, learned or simple, young or middle aged, affluent or struggling financially, other than the allegiance. They came to celebrate together the resurgence of organized Torah study in Crown Heights.

And there is nothing like an evening when everyone is present for the same purpose. The warmth, the genuine involvement and *achdus*. Indeed, Torah does much more than stimulate the mind.



Reb Oren Popper, a long-time supporter of Yagdil Torah and an honoree, shared his thoughts on the importance of learning Torah for *baalei batim*. No matter how active and successful one is in business, he must set times for learning. He then showed two videos of the Rebbe where he demands of businessmen to increase their learning. The first was Reb Berel Weiss of California of whom the Rebbe demanded a gift – not money, but the learning of the entire *Shas*! The second was Mr. Shmuel Rohr whom the Rebbe also encouraged to increase his Torah study.

He also spoke of how we are waiting for Moshiach to come momentarily, we ought to prepare by

learning Torah, since that is what will be doing all day when Moshiach comes.

Reb Moshe Feldman, known to many as "Dr. Feldman," was honored for his commitment to the community. He made note of the beautiful *achdus* and unity revolving around *limud haTorah*.

Another honoree, Reb Gershon Selinger, a successful *kriah melamed*, was honored for his work in spreading Torah. He recounted the famous *vort* of Reb Zusha of Anipoli that Above he will only be asked why he wasn't 'Zusha.' Similarly, we are each expected to learn Torah according to our abilities.

The keynote speaker was Rabbi 'Dayan' Levi Raskin from London. Rabbi Raskin began by pointing out the revolution Yagdil Torah has created in making *limmud haTorah* a popular *mitzvah*, and that their influence has extended far beyond their direct activities.

Rabbi Raskin highlighted the importance of regular *shiurim* in general, and *halacha* in particular. He said that besides the need of knowing what to do, there are many side benefits in attending a shiur. Thus, every "self respecting *shul*" should have a *shiur* in *halacha lemaseh* in which every "self respecting *baalabus*" should participate.

Rabbi Raskin also touched on the name Yagdil Torah. The Gemara says that although the Torah could have sufficed with telling us that a kosher fish must have scales, since every fish that has scales has fins, yet the Torah added this so that "*yagdil Torah ve'yaadir*," the Torah should be greater. The Rebbe explains this in *avoda*. Scales protect; fins propel. Should the Torah have only mentioned scales we might have concluded that so long that you are protected from harm then you're doing fine. The

Torah says that you need fins too! Dare not stagnate; you must push yourself to conquer new frontiers!

Rabbi Raskin thus wished Yagdil Torah and its beneficiaries “Yagdil Torah veYaadir,” that they have much *hatzlacha* in their continued efforts to increase *limmud haTorah*.

The evening was accompanied by quality *Yiddishe* entertainment. The renowned *badchan* Reb Yankel Miller, entertained the crowd with traditional *Yiddishe* humor. Classic chassidishe melodies were played by musicians Yossi Cohen and Yehudah Piamenta.

The *chassidishe chazzan*, Reb Berel Zaltzman, sang a fascinating old-time Yiddish song of a bottle of *mashkeh* telling its story. At first he finds himself among Russian peasants who drink and party, and he cries about his fate. Later he lands at a *chassidishe farbrengen* and they recite a *bracha* and are inspired to serve Hashem, and he rejoices.

■ ■ ■

All present had only good things to say. One supporter says that although he doesn’t owe his learning to Yagdil Torah he still feels the need to come.

“To support?” I ask.

“Oh, no! I’ve come to gain,” he insists. “There’s nothing like sitting down with your *chavrusa*, with the knowledge that at the same time there are hundreds of pairs like you throughout Crown Heights homes, delving in Torah.”

Rabbi Shimon Hellinger, director of Merkaz Anash, expressed strong support. “In our working with *anash* for five years, we’ve seen the tremendous impact Yagdil Torah has had. Often what begins as a weekly *shiur* through Yagdil Torah has seen the homes atmosphere transformed.”

“Don’t the two organizations, Merkaz Anash, and Yagdil Torah, overlap?” I probe.

“Indeed,” Rabbi Hellinger smiles, “the Rebbe teaches that Torah learning seeps through everything we do. But while Merkaz Anash addresses the family and the *chinuch*, Yagdil Torah focuses solely on learning. And focused work shows results.”

Rabbi Levi Browd, director of Yagdil Torah, sums up the evening, “The *melava malka* is a beautiful gathering of solidarity for *limud haTorah*. *Boruch HaShem*, during the last seven years we have succeeded in raising much awareness about the centrality of learning Torah and its essentiality to the *yiddishe* home and raising *frum* children. The *melava malka* inspires many to grow in their commitment to making Torah study a central pillar in their life.”



# COUNTER PERSPECTIVE

## RESPONSES TO PREVIOUS ARTICLES

### The Rebbe's Perspective on College (4)

Rabbi Hellinger,

In the last issue of *Perspectives* you quoted a *sicha* of the Rebbe about not attending college even for the sake of acquiring a degree to earn a living. In the *sicha* the Rebbe seems to categorically outlaw college since it "contaminates the intellect of the *neshama*."

Can you perhaps explain how to reconcile this with the numerous directives to many individuals to attend college?

An avid reader in Miami

#### RABBI HELLINGER RESPONDS:

Thank you for pointing out this apparent contradiction. While a complete explanation would require an extensive discussion of the nature and effect of secular studies, I will attempt to resolve it here in short (IY"YH a full article will follow in a forthcoming issue).

Secular studies, by definition, is knowledge and information that is on the surface disconnected from *HaShem* (though, of course, in reality everything is connected to Him). Thus, the acceptability of the study depends on the perception of the learner. If the studying is done for the sake of serving *HaShem* it is not "secular." If

it is studied as independent un-G-dly information it separates one from *HaShem*.

Nevertheless, even one who learns it for a good end, (i.e. for the sake of earning a living according to Torah, as opposed to studying it as part of understanding a concept in Gemara), is likely to be affected by the "un-G-dliness" in the material. Only very great tzaddikim are able to study seemingly un-G-dly information and see the *Elokus* (as the Alter Rebbe writes in Tanya at the end of chapter 8).

There is another difference between one who studies a trade for immediate need and one who studies it for future use. When studying for the immediate future, it is easier to stay focused on the goal, while when studying for future use, the focus will be on the secular material itself (see the various levels enumerated in Igros Kodesh vol. 3 p. 124).

The Rebbe said that since one is negatively affected by this study, it is impossible that it is the **only option** that *HaShem* made to earn a living. One who thinks that college is the path for him, must not go ahead with it without first consulting a *mashpia*.

Also bear in mind that the *sicha* was addressed to *bochurim* of Tomchei Temimim who **left yeshiva**

to plan for the **future** (as mentioned throughout the *sicha*).

It is important to note, the study of secular subjects is not prohibited according to *halacha*, though abstaining from it should interest every Yid who wishes to be connected to *HaShem*. As the Alter Rebbe explains in Tanya, the secular studies is '*klipas noga*' – like material pleasures, just for the intellect, and as such it is even more damaging. This is why this demand was made particularly of

*temimim*, as emphasized in the *sicha*.

It is superfluous to add that the above is only relevant to the academics of secular information, and is unrelated to the spiritual challenges and dangers caused by spending time and mingling in a secular environment. This concern must be evaluated and analyzed on a case-by-case basis, depending on the specific setting and the individual's susceptibility to external influence.



## Where Did You Get That From? (4)

Dear editors,

Thank you very much for the last issue of Perspectives. The content was phenomenal, especially the rich *farbrengen* with Reb Mendel Futerfas.

I would, however, like to point out two points that I think need to be addressed.

On page 61 you printed an article by a "Mechanech in North America" on the atmosphere in a *yiddishe* home. Without getting into the specifics of the article, I believe that such an innovative article must have a valid real name. If you want to make a positive impression on me, who has my own brain, mindset, and *hashkafos*, to try to get me to change for the better, I need to know who you are.

For a person whose life is carefully guided by *mashpiim* and *rabonim*, it is not fair to inject new ideas without a basis. We only can accept new ideas from those who are worthy of guiding others. The

name will give me the validity and authenticity to seriously consider your suggestion to alter my life style and habits.

My next point is concerning G.R.'s musings on page 63. At first glance it sound very nice and idealistic, but after further thought I think he is very wrong.

There is a need to balance deep chassidishe concepts with practicality. The Rebbe and the Frierdiker Rebbe both wanted teachers to get training, and they did not set up special Jewish training colleges. Of course we need to take from the *goyim*, at least one trainer must do so. I am sure that the writer reads books on computer programming etc. for his job. We cannot possibly expect that such things should be only from *frum yiddishe* sources.

Sincerely,

RZ

Montreal





# A Farbrengen with Reb Mendel Futerfas<sup>(4)</sup>

Dear Perspectives staff,

*Yasher koach* for the beautiful article, “To Keep Focused - A Farbrengen with Reb Mendel Futerfas.” It brought back so many wonderful memories of hours of public *farbrengens* and private discussions with my eternal *Mashpia* during my *yeshiva* years in Kfar Chabad.

I read out parts of the article to my children at the Shabbos table, and it literally brought tears to my eyes. My children could not believe it. Neither could I. Suddenly a different part of their tatty arose, as if from a slumber, and I began to share with them memories from my *yeshiva* years.

Since that Shabbos, our discussions often move towards those never-before-visited stories. It has

since then moved on from Reb Mendel to other *chassidim*, to stories of my father *olov hasholom*, and naturally to my family's experiences with the Rebbe.

In short, I would like to thank you for bringing that out in me, and giving my children something they would never have gotten.

Additionally, I want to suggest to the dear readership to do the same. You could never know what kind of springboard this could be for the *chinuch* of your children.

Yours truly,

Binyomin S.



## A Joyous Simcha

Dear editor,

I read the article “A Joyous Simcha” in last issue, and I agree with the principle of spending within ones means. However, the other side of the coin must also be brought to light:

A *chasunah* is a once in a lifetime event, and should be celebrated as such. The descriptions of weddings of old, where the mother's friends would get together and prepare food, may be very nice for family stories but in our day and age it just wouldn't fly.

We also have to understand how difficult it is for a girl to get married. It is an emotional upheaval and a difficult adjustment. To add to the pressure by having her be embarrassed of her wedding would be a disaster.

Yes, true, it costs. But what is money for, if not to make our children happy?

With wishes for all to have much nachas,

Esther Goldstone

Brooklyn, NY



Dear editor,

Firstly, thank you for the quality magazine. Perspectives stays on our sofa the longest of all publications!

In your Tishrei issue, an article titled “A Joyous

Simcha”, by Yanky Kesselman, caught my attention. The points were well presented, and the writing superb.

However, what stood out was the collection of anecdotes and *sichos* of the Rebbe. These were very informative and highly enlightening. I find it

amazing that as a Lubavitcher, for more than thirty years in the community, I never knew the Rebbe's approach to this topic!

What bothers me more is that there are surely so many more areas of discussion in our communal lives, where the Rebbe expressed his view and I am not even aware of. And I am sure that I am not alone.

I would like to suggest that an English language book, or booklet, be prepared with the Rebbe's directives on these and similar issues. I cannot think of another more appropriate candidate for the job than Merkaz Anash. As our holy Chazal say, "*hamaschil bemitzvah, omrim lo gemor!*"

Looking forward to next issue,

Yaron Feldman



## Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor and Editorial Staff of Perspectives:

I have thoroughly enjoyed reading each issue that you have so meticulously put together. Each article is well thought out, loaded with important information and solid values, as well as interesting.

In the last issues, I especially appreciated the article about Rabbi Chodakov, "The Educator of Educators". Everything that was said there was so clear and succinct and practical. When my daughter complained about Sunday school, I read it to her as well.

In the article, "The Torah Our Life", and the article "Is Real Davening Within Our Grasp", I

found encouragement and support for continuing to believe that we CAN accomplish these values even in this society. Sometimes, we become discouraged by everything that is going on, and by the fact that the times are different. But these articles show that there are others that still hold fast to these values, and despite the advances in technology and etc. WE CAN daven and learn like Chassidim are supposed to.

Thank you all for your efforts and chizuk. May we merit the coming of Moshiach NOW!

Mrs. Yaffa Rabin

Oak Park, Michigan



Dear Perspectives staff,

Firstly, I would like to thank you for the wonderful magazine that we really enjoy, as well as all the other projects that you do.

I would like to point out something that was perhaps overlooked:

It is a very good idea for Merkaz Anash to have a website for those who use the internet. However, is there really a need to put a full page ad just to advertise the website and all its virtues? Do my children have to see that? Personally I feel that

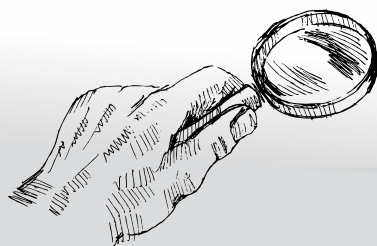
it's bad enough that the Merkaz Anash has/needs such a site, do you have to rub it in? I educate my children that a *chassidishe* home has no use for the internet, but this gives them the opposite impression.

With others I don't even bother, but I expect more from Merkaz ANASH!

*Hatzlacha Rabba & Gmar Chasima Tova,*

A member of Anash

Crown Heights



# *my* PERSPECTIVE

## Bridging the Gap

*Chaim Ber*

*Mesorah*, Tradition, is undoubtedly *Yiddishkeit's* most instrumental tool for survival.

It's our strongest asset. No other nation has kept such detailed documents so intact. Yemenite *yidden*, from whom we have been separated for millennia's, still carry the same basic laws, the exact same texts of Tanach, and almost identical versions of the Gemaros and the Midrashim.

Indeed, even the names of the transmitters have been kept. It is most common to find a passage of Talmud attributed to one *amora*, who quoted the teaching in the name of his *Rebbe* and a line of *amora'im* before him, sometimes five or six generations. We take it for granted, but we are the only such well chronicled nation.

*Yiddishkeit* is unique with its eight-day festival dedicated to *vehigadeta lebincha*, telling our offspring the accounts of our forefathers. Our tradition glorifies our leaders, not as priests or saints, but rather as *Rebbe* and *Rav*, meaning teachers and transmitters of tradition.

Indeed, this is the secret of our survival. Despite Egypt's pharaoh and Rome's Titus, Spain's Isabella and Ukraine's Khmelnitsky, Germany's Hitler and Iraq's Saddam, we have out lived their mighty armies with the empire of tradition.



Tradition is much more than passing on information. It means to communicate a life, a lifestyle.



If the body of Torah literature, the *yiddishkeit* of strict *halacha* which could be printed and read, is so reliant on tradition, how much more so is the soul, the life provided by *Chassidus*, rooted in tradition.

When transmitting a tradition of life, a message of the *neshama*, every breath must be exact. Nuances are crucial. This is the secret of Chassidim.

Sitting among Chassidim, singing the same soul language, the *niggun*, as they sang it two hundred years ago, is a *neshamah* tradition being transmitted. Being elevated by the tune, reaching a crescendo, is linking us with a bygone *chossid* on the same note.

*Chassidisher* life, a *chassidisher vort*, can only be understood from a mentor. One can sit for fifty years studying *Tanya* and *Likutei Sichos*, and just never get it. The elder *chossid*, the *Mashpia* at a *farbrengen*, play the most prominent role in the life of *Chassidus*.

In our own *chassidishe* lives, our most inspiring moments have most likely been from human interaction. Sure, without independent learning, these experiences would be baseless and meaningless. But the light of *Chassidus* in our experience, more often than not, came from a *shiur*, a *farbrengen*, a story or a *niggun* from a person who, in a similar manner, was touched by a *chossid* who heard from others – all the way back to the establishment of *Chassidus*.



And this is where we come in.

The Frierdiker Rebbe once wrote: “Among Chassidim, there was never an idea of youngsters approaching the elders to hear from them. The elder Chassidim would approach the youth before they had a chance!”

On countless occasions the Rebbe chastised the *mashpiyim* who wait for the students to approach him.

We are all *mashpiyim* in our own homes; we are the bearers of tradition to our offspring.

If we want our children to be *Chassidim*, we must invest in them. We must pass on the torch to our families. It is our duty as Chassidim not to break the chain.

Only through constant communication with our families will we achieve this. By inviting them into

our lives, by sharing with them our values and role models, will they begin to think like us. There has to be the personal touch, a transmission. It's up to us to make them familiar with our *mashpiyim*, with the characters and the culture of *Chassidus*.

We have lots of competition out there, with the media and the streets clogged with garbage. It's a race. If we want to win, we've got to make it happen.



And the most important factor in passing the tradition is to assure that our children see true Chassidim.

To find the *chossid* davening *ba'arichus* in *shul*, and bring our child to listen for a minute, is our responsibility. The Chassidim are there, we only have to utilize their company.

How difficult would it be to take our children into 770, and show them where our place was at the Rebbe's *farbrengen*? We could get our *shver*, brother or grandfather, to do the same. To describe those experiences, those feelings of being with the *Nossi Hador*. To give these deprived children a taste of what once was.

When we walk down the street with our kids, it should be our business to point out *chassidisher yidden*. To look at the way they walk, talk and laugh. That's tradition.

If we are blessed with *chassidishe* grandparents, our children should not be deprived of their own heritage. If we have a neighbor who is a true *chossid*, it's a shame not to make our children familiar with his life, his humor and his memories.

What are we to expect from a child who was never given the opportunity to observe an elder *chossid*? What greater gift could we give our child, than linking him up with generations?

Indeed, there is a generation gap. It's up to us to bridge it.





# Can We Transcend Americanism?

*Shalom Ber L.*

We fancy ourselves the product of our own independent inquiries, and we insist that our specific *Weltanschauung* is inextricably bound to our unique identity. More so for the pious Jew, who must contend with the menace of the given pervasive, encompassing yet alien culture; he is in fact likely to define himself on the basis of the numerous counts on which he diverges from the putative norm. Surely then, environmental factors play an insignificant role in Judaism's grander scheme, and scrutiny should indicate they yield little appreciable impact on man and thought.

Yet consider this: With Islam in a vortex of regression and the unavoidable effects of the Renaissance kicking in, modern enlightenment is typically correlated with European Jewry, while Oriental Jews are associated with staunch traditionalism. But throughout Christianity's Dark and Islam's Golden age, culture and philosophy were conversely rife in Muslim territory, all while Geonim and Eastern Rishonim sniped about the backward ways of the Jews of Edom. Even *Sefer Chasidim*, the classic work eponymously titled after a pietistic movement in Germany which lacks much for positive sentiment towards gentiles and their ways, dryly notes that "כמו שמנהג הנכרים כן מנהגי" היהודים ברוב מקומות, כגון אם הנכרים גדורים בעריות כך יהיו בני "היהודים הנולדים באותה עיר". A Yiddish aphorism sums up: *Vi es Christelt zich, azoy Yidelt zich*. Who then serves as whose example?

Another mystery wrapped in an enigma: if Chabad in Russia was historically typified and defined by the staid, brainy sort with a rigid noetic discipline and protracted devotional exercises, in what context

does their American transformation into edgy, hip pitchmen who collect holy keepsakes and live in the moment, belong? A serious student of history struggles to trace the metropolitan and sometimes superficial dynamism back to the unhurried contemplativeness that characterized a meditative movement. Is someone to blame?

Or is it just the air? Chabad teachings account for all inexplicable geographic differentiations ranging from weather patterns to national inclinations with the depiction of a spiritual power grid; this is God's tool by which he plots a nation's environment and character down to its finest minutiae. Jews then, aren't being helplessly impacted by capricious fashions; it is God who deliberately scattered them from pole to pole with the aim of tailoring Judaism to every region's unique design. Every language, custom, and temperament is enlisted in the scheme and is ultimately permeated with the timeless G-dliness that Jews and their Torah pack.

Russia then (and its 'der Litvak'-headed movement), was initially designated for its particular aptitude where apprehending and crystallizing these complex conceptualizations was concerned, while America (from which 'Mivtzoin' were unleashed), admittedly flawed in certain respects, has perfected the task of channeling boundless energy and the art of global conquest. It is those particular qualities which are crucial for the final leg, where a methodically executed agenda attains culmination. We must simply allow for that essence at our core to transcend its American packaging, not, Heaven forefend, the other way around.



# Exploring the Causes

Levi B.

I am writing this letter to address our desire to grow and to raise our family to be *yerei Shomayim*. As we unfortunately know, many children nowadays are leaving the path despite great efforts by parents. At times, it is adults who fall greatly and suddenly realize how far they have strayed.

There can be many roots for a child's rejection of Yiddishkeit. In this letter I would like to explore some significant causes and possible advice that could help rectify it:

## ■ CAUSE 1: LACK OF ENJOYMENT IN YIDDISHKEIT ■

This can stem from negative peer pressure of people who exhibit coldness, scoffing and the like towards Yiddishkeit.

Reasons:

A) ***Emunah*** – apathy towards Yiddishkeit can originate from several sources. Someone can be confusing the child with questions in *emunah*. A confused child should be taught the foundations of Yiddishkeit in a firm long-lasting manner. He should be taught not to debate certain topics simply for the sake of avoiding unneeded confusion (not that he is closing his mind to reality).

B) ***Indulgence*** – over indulgence in worldly pleasures can dull his sensitivities and caring for Yiddishkeit. A child caught up in *gashmiyus* needs to decrease the importance given to worldly matters in necessities like food, clothes and belongings. This is certainly true of those matters that are excess such as news and sports.

C) ***Unhappy*** – a child could be unhappy and lacking peace of mind or he could have not been taught a way of serving Hashem with enjoyment. Set up his day in a way the he will have peace of

mind. De-clutter his schedule. Even if he works less in order to relax, what he does accomplish is longer lasting. Don't make Yiddishkeit a stress. Make sure he's eating sufficiently, is healthy, comfortable, and sleeps enough. Have him learn subjects that he enjoys. Teach him Chassidus before davening and help him understand the words of *davening*. Work on the positive inter-personal relationships around him so he finds joy in them.

## ■ CAUSE 2: NEGATIVE INFLUENCES ■

When people find themselves in a situation contrary to Yiddishkeit, they find it hard to detach from it and they fall further. When parents work hard to keep the house clear of negative influences they can unfortunately seep in from friends. There is no guarantee against bad stimulus, but the more it is avoided the better.

A request to watch a "general" video usually comes from pre-exposure. The desire to watch the video can stem from a time he viewed it without your knowledge or from a friend who convinced him it's more interesting than Chassidishe videos.

The remedy to this situation is involving yourself in your child's social life. Organize good friends so they have a good place to be *before* any negative influences come about. Investigate the standards of any family you allow your child to visit. Even after all seems clear, keep a vigilant eye where your child may be at any given time. A child who is already friendly with negative peers needs to be disconnected through rewards and incentives and needs clear boundaries set out for them of what is permissible. Obviously it is necessary to replace bad friends with good ones.

With the responsible effort on our side, we hope to merit the necessary *siyata diShemaya* in raising our children to be fine *chassidishe* adults.



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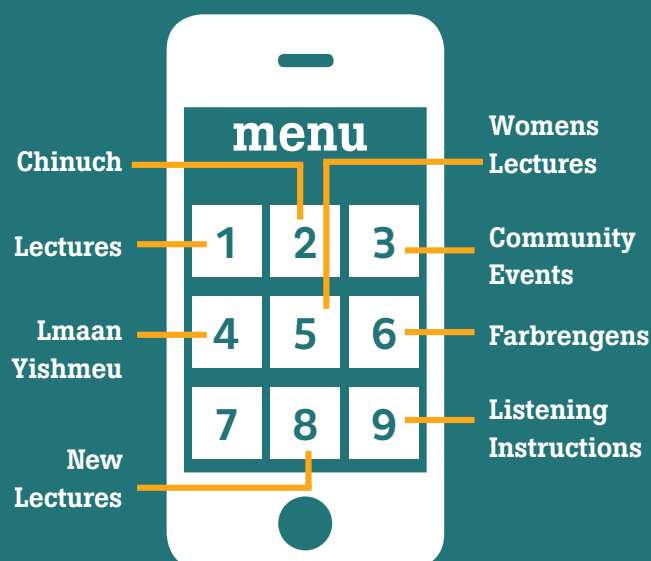
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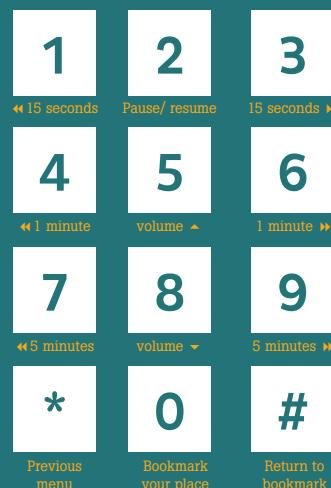
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