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The international weekly heralding the coming of Mashiach  
**BEIS MOSHIACH**

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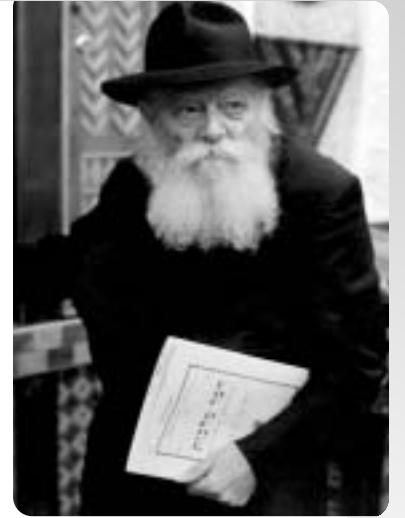
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# RISING ABOVE THE POSSIBILITY OF ERROR

SICHOS IN ENGLISH



## SHABBOS PARSHAS SHLACH; 23<sup>RD</sup> DAY OF SIVAN, 5750

1. This is the final Shabbos of the month of Sivan, the third month, the month associated with the giving of the Torah. (Although the following Shabbos is the 30th day of Sivan, it is Rosh Chodesh Tammuz which indicates that it is associated with a different quality.) The Shaloh explains that the festivals share an intrinsic connection to the Torah portions read during that time of year. Thus, it follows that there is a link between Parshas Shlach and “the season of the giving of our Torah.” On the surface, however, the association of the two is difficult to comprehend.

Firstly, as Rashi comments, the words “Shlach lecha” indicate that G-d did not command Moshe to send spies. Rather, He left the choice to Moshe’s discretion. This appears to run contrary to the giving of the Torah which involves the communication of the mitzvos – “commandments” – which G-d requires us to fulfill.

Secondly, Parshas Shlach relates the narrative of the spies and their transgression of G-d’s will which ultimately resulted in the Jews being

forced to remain in the desert for forty years. These concepts of sin and exile run contrary to the giving of the Torah. At that time, the impurity associated with the sin of the Tree of Knowledge departed from the Jews. They had the opportunity for the ultimate of freedom as our Sages declared, “Had the first tablets not been broken,... no country or tongue could have had dominion over [the Jews.]” Exile and sin are connected with the sin of the Golden Calf which took place in the month of Tammuz. The month of Sivan, in contrast, is associated with positive qualities, the giving of the Torah.

These difficulties can be resolved based on the explanation of the application of the concepts taught by Parshas Shlach in our service of G-d. To explain: In principle, the sending of the spies was surely desirable for it was decided upon by Moshe, himself. Similarly, the individuals Moshe chose were leaders of the people, capable of carrying out the mission on which they had been sent. The positive nature of such a mission is further emphasized by the Haftora which describes Yehoshua’s sending of

spies and the favorable results brought about by their mission.

These positive factors exist because the mission associated with Shlach is symbolic of the soul’s descent into this material world. Each Jewish soul is “a part of G-d from above.” It descends to this material world and enclothes itself in a body to carry out the mission of creating a dwelling for G-d in the lower worlds.[89]

To carry out this mission, it is necessary to “explore the land,” to survey the nature of the service which must be carried out, discovering what conflicts and difficulties will arise and what is the best possible way to transform the land into a dwelling for G-d.[90]

This mission – as was the sending of the spies – is left to man’s discretion. Indeed, as Rashi emphasizes in his commentary on the opening verse of the parsha, G-d allows the possibility of an error, because to create a dwelling for G-d in the lower worlds, man must act on his own initiative, based on his own choice and decision.[91]

This intent is associated with the giving of the Torah. Our Sages

explain that the giving of the Torah represented the nullification of the decree separating the physical from the spiritual. In particular, there were two dimensions to that decree: that the spiritual descend to the physical as it is written, “and G-d descended upon Mount Sinai,” and that the physical be elevated to the spiritual as it is written, “and Moshe ascended to G-d.”

Though the giving of the Torah is connected with both these aspects, of the two, the elevation of the physical, the transformation of the material aspects of the world into a dwelling for G-d, is the ultimate purpose (the descent of the spiritual being necessary, however, to make this elevation possible). This is reflected in the service of a person on his own initiative, or to use a Kabbalistic phrase, “an arousal from below.”[92]

This concept, the importance of service on one’s own initiative as expressed through a person’s positive choice despite the possibility for error, is also reflected in the events connected with the giving of the Torah: After the revelation of Mount Sinai, Moshe ascended the mountain for forty days to receive the Torah.[93] At the conclusion of these forty days, however, G-d allowed the possibility for error – as the Torah relates, “And the people saw that Moshe delayed in descending from the mountain” – a possibility which ultimately resulted in the sin of the Golden Calf and the destruction of the tablets.

Why did G-d allow for such a possibility? Because this is the ultimate purpose of man’s service, to exist in an environment where there is a possibility for error and, nevertheless, to rise above that possibility and, through one’s own choice and initiative serve G-d.

Although this intent was not realized immediately and instead, the Jews sinned, that error was corrected through the Jews’ service of t’shuva. Accordingly, they merited the second tablets whose level surpassed that of the first. Nevertheless, there was no need for this process of descent and ascent. On the contrary, had the Jews overcome the possibility for error and not sinned, they would have received the first tablets which then, would have included the dimension of t’shuva as well.[94] The very fact that they had the possibility to sin – although they actually would not

***G-d allows the possibility of an error, because to create a dwelling for G-d in the lower worlds, man must act on his own initiative, based on his own choice and decision.***

have sinned – would have enabled them to attain the advantage of the service of t’shuva. Had they overcome this challenge, all the peaks reached in the entire 120 day[95] cycle, would have been realized within the initial forty days.

The advantage that can be attained through service within the lower levels of existence is also expressed in the narrative of the revelation of Mount Sinai. Our Sages explain that after hearing each of the Ten Commandments, the souls of the Jewish people expired. Their existence was maintained because

G-d revived them, using the dew with which He will resurrect the dead in the Messianic age.

Why did their souls expire? Because their bodies could not contain the immensity of the sweetness and pleasure experienced when hearing G-d’s word. When G-d returned their souls after each commandment, the same process was repeated at the revelation of the following commandment. Each time, the Jews experienced a deeper and more encompassing revelation causing their souls to expire again.

This explanation, however, is somewhat problematic. Why after hearing the first commandment, “I am the L-rd, your G-d...” did the Jews experience such powerful feelings after the second commandment, “You shall have no other gods”? Seemingly, it is merely a restatement – in negative terms – of the first commandment. Similarly, in regard to the final commandments. They are basic human rules of behavior. Why did their revelation cause the Jews’ souls to expire?

These difficulties can be resolved within the context of the concepts explained above. Since the second commandment applies in a place where the possibility for error exists, it represents a greater expression of G-d’s oneness than the first. Similarly, the latter five commandments, represent an even further descent, extending into the realm of interpersonal relations. This implies an even higher and greater revelation.

Based on the above, we can appreciate why Parshas Shlach is read on the last Shabbos in the month associated with the giving of the Torah. As mentioned, the giving of the Torah emphasizes service within a realm where the possibility for error exists, the same theme as

Parshas Shlach, which centers upon the importance of service on one's own initiative.[96] In this manner, when despite the possibility for error, one perseveres and remains steadfast in one's commitment to G-d, one reaches the highest levels.[97]

The above is relevant at present, when we are in the midst of the forty days after the giving of the Torah. This is an opportunity to reach the highest peaks, to combine the great spiritual peaks that accompanied the first tablets with the advantage of service on one's own initiative.

These concepts are also reflected in the Torah portion we begin to read at Mincha, Parshas Korach. When noting that the Torah does not mention Korach's descent from Yaakov, Rashi states that this came as a direct result of Yaakov's prayer, "Let my honor not be associated with their community," but he was associated with Yaakov in the Book of Chronicles as it states, "the son of Aviasaf, the son of Korach, the son of Yitzhar, the son of Kehos, the son of Levi, the son of Yisroel." Korach had a great potential. He was "the son of Yisroel" and a clever man. Furthermore, his desire – to be the High Priest – was fundamentally spiritual in nature.[98]

To express these qualities in the fullest degree possible, however, there had to be a possibility for error and challenge. The intent was not for Korach to err, but to feel a challenge and overcome it. Unfortunately, Korach was not able to overcome this challenge and therefore, entered into a dispute with Moshe. His error was corrected by his sons, who repented and merited to recite songs of praise to G-d.

2. This week's chapter of Pirkei Avos contains the teaching (3:14):

"He [Rabbi Akiva] would say: Beloved is man, for he was created in G-d's image... Beloved are the people Israel, for they are called children of G-d... Beloved are the people Israel, because they were given a precious article..."

The first clause refers to the gift of knowledge which was granted to all mankind, even gentiles; the second, to the unique potential possessed by the Jewish people, and the third, to the peaks which a Jew can reach through Torah study.

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These three clauses reflect three phases in Rabbi Akiva's own life. His parents were converts and "for several generations, the descendants of converts are considered as converts." Also, for the first forty years of his life, he was unlearned. Even then, he was "modest and productive" as obvious by the fact that Kalba Savua's daughter desired to marry him. Afterwards, when he saw how drops of water could make a hole in stone, he dedicated himself to Torah study, and reached the

third level, to the point that "Everything (the entire Torah) is taught according to Rabbi Akiva."

The teachings which follow in Pirkei Avos relate to the concepts explained above. The following Mishna states: "Everything is foreseen, yet freedom of choice is granted." This relates to the conversion where, in the most complete sense, "freedom of choice is granted." There is no command to convert and thus, conversion represents an expression of service on one's own initiative.

Rabbi Akiva teaches that this quality of service can also be experienced by a native-born Jew because "freedom of choice is granted." Though "everything is foreseen," within the context of a person's activities in this world, he is given free choice – and thus, the possibility to err – regarding his behavior.

Rabbi Akiva concludes these teachings with the statement, "Everything is prepared for the feast," emphasizing that whether one overcomes the challenge of the possibility of error or not, ultimately, one can merit "the feast" by correcting one's error through t'shuva. Furthermore, this statement can be interpreted, "Everything" – even the challenge that presents the possibility for sin – is "prepared for the feast." The negative and challenging factors were created only to bring about the ultimate reward received through service on one's own initiative.

3. The above concepts must affect our behavior, bringing about an increase of positive activity. In general, the mission of each Jew is connected with the Torah.[99] Every time, a Jew studies Torah, the words he recites are the words of G-d as the verse relates, "My tongue will repeat Your statements." The

“statements,” the words of Torah, are G-d’s, and the person is merely repeating them.

Furthermore, each Jew has the potential to bring about the giving of the Torah anew. This is reflected in the verse which precedes the Ten Commandments: “And G-d spoke these words, saying...” Generally, the word “saying” implies that the words spoken should be related to others. This was, however, unnecessary at the giving of the Torah since every Jew (including the souls of the future generations) were present. Accordingly, in this context, the word “leimor” means that, by giving the Torah, G-d granted the potential that whenever a Jew studies Torah, G-d will join him and relate again the words of Torah which the Jew is studying.

In this context, it is worthy to

***Each Jew’s involvement in his personal shlichus will hasten the coming of Moshiach. Adding the number ten (symbolic of the ten powers of the soul) to the numerical equivalent of the Hebrew word “shliach” produces the numerical equivalent of Moshiach.***

mention the campaign which is a matter of immediate necessity, the establishment of public Torah shiurim (study sessions) and for each man, woman, and child to play a contributory role, heading a shiur himself. These shiurim should preferably include ten students or at the very least three.[100]

Each Jew’s involvement in his personal shlichus will hasten the coming of Moshiach. Adding the number ten (symbolic of the ten powers of the soul) to the numerical equivalent of the Hebrew word “shliach” produces the numerical equivalent of Moshiach. May we not have to wait any longer for Moshiach’s coming, but rather see how he comes immediately, not in forty days, nor even forty minutes. Rather, may this very moment be the last moment of exile and the first moment of Redemption.[101]

NOTES:

89. This is reflected in the fact that the purpose of the spies’ mission was to prepare for the conquest of the Land of K’naan and its transformation into the Land of Israel, a land permeated with holiness and Yiddishkeit.

90. The ultimate purpose of the spies’ mission, the transformation of the material world into a dwelling for G-d, is alluded to in the closing verse describing Moshe’s charge to the spies, “And it was the season of the ripening of grapes.” Grapes possess a unique quality. In contrast to other fruit, the peel of the grapes reveals, rather than conceals the content of the fruit. Similarly, the material world in which we carry out our service can reveal – rather than conceal – spiritual content.

91. Indeed, to reveal the positive aspects of man’s power of choice, G-d allows for the possibility of error.

92. Accordingly the Divine influence granted in response to “an arousal from below” is of a higher quality than the influence granted from above independent of the service of man.

93. During these forty days, G-d taught Moshe the Torah, the Written Law and the Oral Law. Thus, this period can be considered as a continuation of the giving of the Torah.

94. This would reflect the ultimate level of

completion, service which parallels that of the Messianic age when Moshiach “will motivate the righteous to do t’shuva.”

95. Trans. Note: Moshe spent 120 days on Mount Sinai; forty days to receive the first tablets. When he descended, he discovered that the Jews had made the Golden Calf. After destroying the idol and punishing its worshipers, he ascended Mount Sinai again and spent forty days in prayer asking G-d to forgive the Jews. When this period was completed, G-d told Moshe to prepare to receive the second tablets. These were given after a third forty day period, culminating on Yom Kippur.

96. Through such a service, the heights which are reached through the service of t’shuva are attained without sinning. To explain this in the context of Parshas Shlach: Though through t’shuva, Moshe atoned for the sin of the spies, the intent was that they would overcome the challenge and not transgress G-d’s will. Had they done this, they would have achieved the same heights as attained through t’shuva.

97. The concept of service within the lowest aspects of existence is also emphasized by the concluding verse of Parshas Shlach, “I am the L-rd, your G-d, who took you out of the Land of Egypt;” i.e., a Jew is found within the boundaries and limitations of this world

(Egypt) and through the revelation of a transcendent level of G-dliness goes beyond those limitations.

98. Also, as Rashi mentions, this desire was shared by Moshe himself.

99. Each Jew, even a young child, brings about such a revelation through his Torah study. In fact, our connection to Torah begins at the beginning of our existence. Therefore, it is customary to hang a Shir HaMaalos in a child’s room as soon as he or she is born and to name girls at the first Torah reading after their birth. May this practice be publicized and spread throughout the Jewish people.

100. In an expanded sense, even a single person studying Torah has an aspect of a public Torah session. He is joined by G-d, who, as above, repeats what the Jew is studying and by the Torah itself (thus, making three). Thus, when studying Torah, a person becomes a teacher of G-d, as it were.

101. This clarifies the interpretation of the statement, “I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Moshiach and... each day, wait for him, that he come.” This does not mean that each day, we wait for the time when Moshiach will ultimately come, but rather, each day, we wait for him, expecting him to come that day.

# HOLY NONSENSE!

BY RABBI CHAIM ASHKENAZI  
MASHPIA, YESHIVAS TOMCHEI TMIMIM, LOD

TRANSLATED BY MICHOEL LEIB DOBRY

*In order to build the Mishkan, we must conduct ourselves in a manner of “shtus d’k’dusha.” However, we must be careful to distinguish between “shtus” that is beyond logic and reason, and “shtus” that is below logic and reason. Similarly, we must be careful not to sanctify the “shtus” and be dragged into irresponsible conduct in the guise of “shtus.” When we are commanded to do everything in all available ways and means to prepare the world to greet Moshiach, every attempt to stop the activities with the claim that this harms the “honor of Lubavitch” is an excellent example of irresponsible conduct in the guise of “shtus.”*

## SHTUS ON THE ONE HAND, NONSENSE ON THE OTHER

In many of his maamarim, particularly those connected to Yud Shvat, the Rebbe MH”M explains why they built the Mishkan specifically out of acacia wood (*atzei shittim*). It’s true that there was a need to build

the Mishkan from material grown from the ground, as is explained in chassidus, but what was the reason that the Mishkan had to be built specifically out of *atzei shittim*?

In fact, there is a deep and basic message here. The purpose of the Mishkan was to draw down G-dliness

to dwell in the world, and this was brought about through the conduct of *shtus d’k’dusha* (“nonsense” of holiness). Therefore, the instruction was that the walls of the Mishkan, which connected the ceiling to the floor, i.e., the higher with the lower, must be made out of *atzei shittim*, derived from the same root as “*ruach shtus*” (a spirit of folly).

What is the meaning of *ruach shtus* in matters of holiness? We understand from the maamer that there are three general approaches, and thus, three modes of conduct in connection with *shtus*: a) below the aspect of knowledge, i.e., without knowledge; b) according to knowledge; c) higher than knowledge.

These three modes of conducts can be connected with the three souls that affect the body of man. The animal soul draws towards the conduct that is below the aspect of knowledge, the intellectual soul is associated with the middle road according to knowledge, and the G-dly soul is inclined towards conduct that is higher than knowledge.

## HAKAFOS AT “N’ILA”

The following story serves as an illustration of the difference between

these three approaches among the souls:

One Erev Yom Kippur, a certain chassid became aware of a Jewish family that was imprisoned in a pit by a landowner over a huge debt they had accumulated. The landowner refused to release them until they paid the debt in full with interest. When the chassid heard about this, he ran from person to person to collect funds, but he only succeeded to raise a relatively small portion of the required amount. He didn't know what to do – how can he leave this family in the pit? Then, he passed by a tavern and saw a group of Jews playing cards. He approached one of them and requested a sum of money for *pidyon shvuyim*. The Jew told him, “Drink a large cup of 96% alcohol and I'll give it to you!” And so he did. Afterwards, he went to the next person, and again, the same deal was made – drink a full cup and you get the money. Even though the mashkeh was very potent, the chassid drank and drank until he had acquired the full amount. With his last drop of strength, he went to the landowner, redeemed the family, and then staggered towards his Rebbe's beis midrash. Of course, he had no time to make any preparations for the holy day of Yom Kippur – not even to eat. As the time for Kol Nidrei arrived, he fell on the floor into a deep sleep, lasting until N'ila. As the congregation held by the lofty moments of the N'ila service, the chassid suddenly opened his eyes and screamed, “*Ata Hareisa!*” Naturally, everyone wanted to silence him, and even throw him out of the beis midrash. But the Rebbe turned to those assembled and told them not to touch him, and added, “He's already holding by Simchas Torah.”

A normal person needs to go through an orderly and precise avoda of five t'fillos on Yom Kippur, followed by the days between Yom

Kippur and Sukkos, the Yom Tov days of Sukkos and Chol HaMoed with all the pertinent mitzvos, e.g., sukka, lulav and esrog, beating the aravos, Krias HaTorah, Hallel, etc., Shmini Atzeres, and only after only that, he comes to Simchas Torah. However, through his wondrous conduct, this chassid skipped these steps to reach in a single moment the level of “me and the King alone,” the innermost aspect of Simchas Torah.

***The command is clear: We must publicize throughout the world that we are privileged that G-d has appointed a prophet in our generation, whose prophecy is “Here comes Melech HaMoshiach” and he instructs all of us to get ready and greet him.***

#### THE OPINION OF THE SOULS

This is an example of the conduct of the G-dly soul. Since this chassid heard about an imprisoned family, he understood that he had to do everything in order to get them out, even turning to Jews sitting in a tavern on Erev Yom Kippur. If this requires drinking mashkeh – no problem... Chassidus explains that

Avrohom Avinu accepted upon himself to publicize G-dliness in the world. If carrying this out demanded self-sacrifice along the way – no problem. That could be displayed at the appropriate moment. This chassid wasn't looking for self-sacrifice, but he was faced with a holy mission: saving a Jewish family from the pit. If this required conduct in the form of *sh'tus* – no preparations for Yom Kippur, just drinking several large cups of mashkeh – no problem.

If he were to act according to the intellectual soul, the approach would be quite different. It's true that there is a family that needs to be saved, but first of all, it's Erev Yom Kippur. This is a great and holy day for which we have waited the entire year, and we have to prepare ourselves accordingly. So if you say that there is a case here of saving lives – nu, in any event, you *fast* on Yom Kippur, so it's not so terrible if this family stays imprisoned one more day. After Yom Kippur, I'll check and see what I can do, or to put it more accurately, I'll find wealthy people with connections in high places and get them to deal with it. I'm just a little guy. I'm not wealthy, and I have no connections, so this simply doesn't apply to me. I'll say more T'hillim for them.

What about the approach of the animal soul? We learn in *Tanya* that the animal soul of a Jew also possesses a sense of humanity and innate good, and therefore, it is certainly pained to hear about such a thing. However, it immediately says to itself, “Sure I would do something if I could. But since I have no such possibility, this has no relevance to me. Are Jews in want of suffering in the world? Even if I get this family out, there are dozens, even hundreds, of other families languishing in prisons due to the craziness of certain landowners. What can you do? This is a result of the galus in which we live and we have to deal with the

situation.”

## EVERY SOUL AND ITS VANTAGE POINT

If so, we have a variety of different approaches. According to the G-dly soul, the question is “What does G-d want from me?” Thus, it is clear that when he hears a rumor that a Jewish family is in prison, he interprets this as meaning that he must do everything in his power to bring this matter to a successful conclusion. This is called *shtus d’k’dusha*, utilizing his “I” for holiness and the fulfillment of G-d’s will.

The intellectual approach checks a person’s ability and possibilities, according to which he does what G-d wants. In other words, he is not faced with a Divine mission, rather an objective determined by his ability based upon personal considerations. This approach is intellectual: on the one hand, there are natural limitations; on the other hand, there is an order, and he has to see which is more prevalent.

The third approach is below the aspect of knowledge, as the person places his “I” before himself as the only viable path by which he can fulfill the command.

(This is in contrast to a non-Jew who doesn’t see the command at all, only “me.” In our case, we’re dealing with the animal soul of a Jew, which possesses some level of good. The Gemara explains that when a Jew gives tz’daka from the aspect of his animal soul, e.g., so his son should live, he still gets credit for a mitzva. Whereas, when a non-Jew gives charity with this motivation, it is not considered as a mitzva, for if his son will not live, he will regret that he gave the charity.)

Why is this called “*shtus* below the aspect of knowledge”? Because he is comparable to an infant who sees everything through his ego. If he

conducts himself in such a manner when he reaches adulthood, this will seriously hamper his development. He will be looked upon as a fool who acts without intellect, not beyond intellect.

## WHAT TYPE OF SHTUS IS FITTING?

Let’s take the Talmudic example of Rabbi Shmuel, who danced with hadassim before a bride at her wedding. Even in this case, the three aforementioned approaches are applicable. The G-dly soul understands that marriage is an act that draws G-d’s infinite power into this world, and therefore, he danced before the young couple, utilizing his ability to juggle hadassim to add greater joy to the event. He saw before him the objective of fulfilling the mitzva of *simchas chassan v’kalla*, and he used all his talents towards that purpose.

However, if this had been achieved through the intellect, he would have been satisfied to dance before them a little, as such a display is more fitting for those whose perform for a living in taverns. This is similar to Michal’s complaint against Dovid’s conduct when he danced before the Holy Ark. Michal was the daughter of Shaul HaMelech, who acted according to reason and logic, in a manner of *rechovos ha’nahar* in connection with the power of *bina* (understanding), as explained in *chassidus*.

As for the animal soul, it would be enough just to appear at the wedding with no need to dance, as the very fact that he comes is reason enough to be happy. Rabbi Shmuel has arrived – what more could you ask for?

We draw down G-dliness in the world specifically through the conduct of *shtus d’k’dusha*, as in the Mishkan and the Beis HaMikdash,

because G-dliness is essentially higher than reason and understanding. Therefore, it is only possible to be connected to G-dliness through removing the limitations of created existence.

Furthermore, since the reason for the world’s creation was because “G-d desired,” as the Alter Rebbe said, you don’t ask questions on desires. If so, this represents a kind of *shtus* on G-d’s part, a desire beyond all reason and understanding. Therefore, the only way to satisfy this desire is through *shtus d’k’dusha*.

## DON’T SANCTIFY THE NONSENSE...

There is another situation that is most problematic – when a person tries to “make the *shtus* holy.” This is not *shtus d’k’dusha*; he is acting neither as a man nor a realist, rather, he is simply dressing it up in holiness.

*There is another situation that is most problematic – when a person tries to “make the shtus holy.” This is not shtus d’k’dusha; he is acting neither as a man nor a realist, rather, he is simply dressing it up in holiness.*

There are countless examples of this mode of conduct in our daily lives, e.g., someone who doesn’t go out to work to make a living and justifies this in virtue of his faith that G-d will send him what he needs. Even if he utilizes his available time sitting in shul, going to holy places, even doing mitzvaim, he is essentially shirking his responsibility of making a parnasa. Perhaps it is because he’s lazy and he doesn’t want to commit himself to a daily work routine, or because he can’t get along with bosses or supervisors. Of course, he’ll never admit this, and therefore, he comes with his excuse: faith in G-d.

As is known, there is a fine line between faith and irresponsibility. It’s true that there have been people who



lived this way for generations, but they also did so in connection with their own personal needs. They didn't even go to a doctor due to their faith in G-d. If so, that's fine. But if he doesn't possess these characteristics, then when someone takes something that belongs to him or insults him, he won't display his faith in G-d, nor will he say that it's all in the hands of Heaven.

Similarly, we find when someone buys an apartment when he doesn't have a grush and doesn't even know where he'll find the money. (NOTE: *This does not refer to a person who receives an explicit instruction from the Rebbe shlita to buy an apartment, and hears about concepts such as "L'chat'chilla Aribber," "Cast your burden upon G-d," etc., and thus, he has faith.*) In effect, this is shtus and irresponsibility, however, the person displays this as a form of holiness. Yet, we can determine if he also conducts himself this way in his personal life – would he walk across Eastern Parkway on a red light because of "L'chat'chilla Aribber"?

### ACTS OF SHTUS DISGUISED BY THE GARB OF HOLINESS

Another case is when someone takes out a loan and knows that he has no way to pay it back. Yet, he tells the lender, "Giving a loan is a mitzva, and you have to help..."

Similarly, when a yeshiva *meshgiach* tells a certain student that he has to leave, he responds that the yeshiva belongs to the Rebbe, and thus he doesn't have to listen to him, this is an example of irresponsible conduct in the guise of holiness. When a student decides to learn at night because it's quiet and he can study more deeply and then sleep during the day, the Rebbe shlita once told a student that such a path will lead him to the lowest level. Furthermore, when a student doesn't want to listen to the yeshiva

administration because he has been accustomed for years with this trait, he finds all types of logical explanations to prove that the administration is not connected to the Rebbe shlita enough.

We also find this in the case of a husband who doesn't lift a finger to help in the house, claiming that according to the Rebbe shlita's sichos, education is the responsibility of the wife because she is the *akeres ha'bayis*. As for him, he is busy with classes and farbrengens, and therefore, he doesn't

***While it's true that we learn from Pesach Sheni that "it's never too late," this doesn't mean that it can never be late. When we create delays, we realize afterwards that we will have to work double, triple hard to achieve results.***

have to help in the organization and order on the domestic front, since prominent chassidim were accustomed to be occupied in matters of Torah and avoda. So when he is busy fulfilling various mitzvos to provide assistance to others, he is thus unable to help his wife.

A further example is someone who attacks or abuses anyone who he doesn't like. He justifies this conduct by saying that it is an acceptable practice at genuine chassidic

farbrengens not to speak in flattering terms.

There are those who like to grab the amud for davening or take Maftir, claiming that they have a *chiyuv*. There is the well-known interpretation based on the words of Eisav, "the days for mourning my father will approach, and I will slay my brother Yaakov." At first glance, why does Eisav need to wait until the days of mourning for his father in order to kill Yaakov? If he didn't want to cause anguish to his father, wouldn't it be enough to say "the day of my father's death"? It is explained that the intention here is, "when I will be obligated in the customs of mourning, I'll throw out anyone who wants to take the amud, Maftir, etc."

And so it goes with other matters of authority where the person claims that only he is willing to do them with proper and Heavenly intentions, not like others who do so out of greed, prestige, and selfishness. Similarly, someone who loves to tell *lashon ha'ra* and slander comes with the (baseless) excuse that he wants to save others from hurting themselves.

There's a story about someone who meets a midget on the street, and he has to make the bracha of "m'shaneh ha'brios" (Blessed are You who changes the creations). But since he wants others to have the privilege of saying "Amen," he quieted everyone on the street, lifted the midget for all to see, and made the bracha. Just imagine to yourselves the damage he inflicted...

We also have the example of a stingy person who give someone a cup of tea without sugar, and tells him, "You need a little *iskafia*." And the examples go on and go on....

### THE TEST OT SHTUS – "ASEH LECHA RAV"

What is the common element in *shtus d'k'dusha*? There is a Divine

command as revealed by the *Shulchan Aruch*, the Rebbe, or a mashpia, i.e., “*aseh lecha rav.*” Thus, the G-dly soul utilizes all its strengths to carry out the command, even if the world looks upon this as utter nonsense, as natural perceptions fail to grasp it. Nevertheless, the G-dly soul is certain that there is a clear order, and its only desire is to fulfill it. As such, nature will become secondary and eventually assists in the effort.

However, when the order of the day is fulfilled by the animal soul, which wants nothing to do with the yoke of Torah and mitzvos, the yoke of home and family, the yoke of raising and educating children, the yoke of helping others (including one’s own wife and children), the yoke of getting along with people, the yoke of bosses and supervisors, the yoke of changing one’s personal traits – it unleashes a barrage of expressions in chassidus, chassidishkeit, and frumkait with the claim that he’s genuinely concerned for the Jewish people and the honor of the Rebbe shlita. In short, it’s trying to sanctify the nonsense.

Thus, since a person can err and also cause others to err, it is most urgent that he chooses a *rav* or *mashpia*, according to the precept of “*aseh lecha rav.*” Naturally, it would be a terrible pity for a person to waste what G-d gives him, e.g., a certain task to fulfill. This leads to confusion in G-d’s order of events, and this person will be the loser every passing day. While it’s true that we learn from Pesach Sheni that “it’s never *too* late,” this doesn’t mean that it can never be late. When we create delays, we realize afterwards that we will have to work double, triple hard to achieve results.

In this light, nothing is more fitting than what the Rebbe Rayatz said: “Chassidim are wise, and all that must and can be done should not be pushed off until tomorrow.”

## SHTUS D’K’DUSHA TO BRING THE REDEMPTION

All of the aforementioned also has relevance in connection with “the most important campaign,” in the words of the Rebbe shlita – preparing the world to greet Moshiach Tzidkeinu.

The command is clear: We must publicize throughout the world that we are privileged that G-d has appointed a prophet in our generation, whose prophecy is “Here

***We must know the truth – this person is merely sanctifying the nonsense. Therefore, we must not be impressed by someone who tries to interfere with all types of shtus, claiming that it’s really k’dusha, “in order to save the honor of Lubavitch.”***

comes Melech HaMoshiach” and he instructs all of us to get ready and greet him.

This is the command, and this is the obligation incumbent upon every Lubavitcher chassid to fulfill, no matter where he may be. When our approach is that we must fulfill the Rebbe’s orders, then it makes absolutely no difference whether it’s day or night, Shabbos or Yom Tov, Erev Yom Kippur or Yom Kippur, comprehensible or incomprehensible.

This order must be publicized everywhere to all people – men, women, and children. It should be done at home and in the street, by car and by foot. Every available method should be used – signs, stickers, slogans, pictures, flyers, and pamphlets.

Since we are going out on this mission from the point of view of our G-dly soul – i.e., the order must be carried out – this is achieved through every possible means, even if it is considered to be *shtus*. This is *shtus d’k’dusha*.

However, if a person takes the attitude of the animal soul, he first looks at himself, and then he determines how to carry out the order without insulting anyone. In such a case, he can come with all sorts of reasons and explanations taken from the world of *shtus d’k’dusha*, and sanctify the *shtus* in order to escape the obligation. Thus, he takes the holy concept of “the honor of Lubavitch” and brings it from *shtus d’k’dusha* to a state of total abandonment, shirking any responsibility to fulfill the command.

We must know the truth – this person is merely sanctifying the nonsense. Therefore, we must not be impressed by someone who tries to interfere with all types of *shtus*, claiming that it’s really *k’dusha*, “in order to save the honor of Lubavitch.”

We have only the words of the Moshe of the generation, who guided us to fulfill the directives of the leader of the generation, and this requires that we walk in the path of true *shtus d’k’dusha*.

In this mode of conduct, we will soon merit to see the *atzei shittim* of the Third Beis HaMikdash with the true and complete Redemption, with our Master, our Teacher, our Rebbe, our King, leading the way.

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## Sivan 28 - Gimmel Tammuz Magbis

B.H. Sivan 15, 5764

**To all Anash, Men and Women, G-d bless you.**

We are soon approaching the very auspicious day, Gimmel Tammuz. And this year marks the tenth anniversary since Gimmel Tammuz 5754.

This day comes in close proximity with Sivan 28, the auspicious day that the Rebbe MH"M and the Rebbetzin arrived in the United States.

Obviously, these are very opportune days, especially when it is connected to the number ten, when one should again evaluate his or her "Hiskashrus" (connection) with the Rebbe, and more important, to utilize these special days to 'strengthen' the Hiskashrus to the Rebbe.

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**With this in mind, we therefore urge each and everyone of anash, men and women to support Kupas Rabbeinu in every possible way.**

In this merit may we be "zoiche" that much before Gimmel Tammuz, the Rebbe will be revealed as Melech Hamoshiach and redeem us from this deep and bitter Golus and lead us all to the true and final Geulo, NOW MAMAOSH.

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# “IF YOU CAN’T DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT THEN DON’T BE REBBE”



Rabbi Yaakov Landau a" data-bbox="708 331 893 346"/>

*A compilation of chassidic stories, as related by Rabbi Yaakov Landau a" data-bbox="60 381 642 609"/>*

## HOW THE QUESTIONS WERE RESOLVED

When Rabbi Landau was told that in order to learn lofty ideas in chassidus you need to be a suitable vessel for it, he said, “If you do a lot of Torah and mitzvos, then you become a receptive vessel as a matter of course.” He related the following story to prove his point:

“Someone went to the Tzemach Tzedek with 36 questions about faith. The Tzemach Tzedek told him that he needed six weeks in order to delve into them, for they were deep questions, and he would do so on condition that the man fully

observe Torah during this time period.

“Six weeks later, the man came back and said that he had only 30 questions at that point. The Tzemach Tzedek told him that since these 30 questions were really very difficult, he needed another six weeks to think about them, with the same condition as before.

“Six weeks later the man returned and said he had only 6 questions. Once again, the Tzemach Tzedek told him that these were the most difficult questions, and he needed six weeks, on the same condition, etc.

“Following those six weeks, the man returned and said all his difficulties were resolved.”

Rabbi Landau commented: even though the mitzvos that Jew performed were for the sake of his questions, and were not done for the sake of Heaven, we cannot begin to estimate the power of mitzvos.

Rabbi Landau told the following story:

“There was a story with chassidim of the tzaddik Rabbi Dovid Moshe of Tchortkov, who said l’chaim over wine and not mashke, while on their way to their Rebbe, because they were poor. A Jew who had gone off the Torah path made fun of them for drinking wine, etc.

“They said to him: Come to the beis midrash in Tchortkov and you’ll become a baal t’shuva. He remained silent.

“He decided to take them up on it and as soon as he saw the tzaddik he began to cry and asked for a tallis and t’fillin.

“The tzaddik said he didn’t see anything to grab hold of in order to

elevate him, except that one time this man had entered a home where they were eating special foods for Shabbos and he ate it too, even though he knew nothing of its significance.”

Rabbi Landau concluded: “We must be careful to do a mitzva in the most perfect way possible. I always think that when it comes to something we lack materially, we immediately become *ois-mentsch* (hysterical). If this is so, then how much more should we be careful when it comes to fulfilling Hashem’s will that it should be done b’hiddur and b’shleimus.”

### THE TZEMACH TZEDEK RELEASES 30 AGUNOS IN ONE DAY

The Tzemach Tzedek visited his wife, who was sick, and asked her how she was, but she didn’t answer him. The Tzemach Tzedek sat down on a chair in her room.

His son entered the room and when he asked how his mother was feeling, his father said that he didn’t know since she didn’t answer him. The son approached his mother and asked her why she wasn’t responding. Was she angry at his father?

She said: Why should I speak to him when he is the one who makes me ill! I have 36 agunos who need salvation!

Said the Tzemach Tzedek: What can I do?

She said: If you can’t [do anything about it], then don’t accept [the position of Rebbe]!

She was a daughter of the Mitteler Rebbe and an intelligent woman, and she wasn’t afraid to say this.

The Tzemach Tzedek brought all the agunos to his room and

(miraculously) told thirty of them where their husbands were. To the other six he said he couldn’t help them because although he knew that their husbands had died, this was not a *heter* according to Torah, because you cannot rely on ruach ha’kodesh in halachic matters.

In order to explain why the Tzemach Tzedek didn’t tell the agunos what they needed to know to begin with, and the Rebbetzin had to force his hand, so to speak, Rabbi Landau told another story:

When the Rebbe Maharash passed away, his son, the Rebbe Rashab was 22. Somebody went to the Rebbe Rashab and asked for his help. The Rebbe Rashab said he

***“Why should I speak to him when he is the one who makes me ill! I have 36 agunos who need salvation!”***

couldn’t help him, and the man left and cried.

The Rebbe Rashab’s older brother, known as the Raza, passed by and asked the man what was wrong. When he heard what had happened, he went to his brother and said: How could you not help him?

The Rebbe Rashab said the man should come back in and he blessed him and the man was helped.

Apparently, said Rabbi Landau explaining the two stories, the people involved needed to have that extra measure of *agmas nefesh* in order to be helped.

### A GREAT MERIT

A chassid who had a tremendous understanding of chassidus was told by the Rebbe Maharash in yechidus that the reason he merited this was because he generously gave tz’daka to the poor before davening.

### T’SHUVA AND TIKKUN

There was a story with a balabus who went off the path and had children with a gentile woman. At the same time, he paid for a melamed to live in his house and teach his Jewish children.

One time, the man heard the melamed learning *Reishis Chochma* with his sons about the severity of the sin of someone who has children with a gentile woman. He became very upset.

When the melamed went to his Rebbe, the Baal HaTanya, the balabus asked to join him. He went into the Alter Rebbe’s room and cried bitterly.

The chassidim standing outside heard him crying and thought that his crying was enough to achieve his atonement, but the Baal HaTanya only stopped his crying after a long period of time had gone by. In order to complete his t’shuva, he told the man that when he got home he should stand naked in the snow and say all of T’hillim. When the melamed heard this, he thought the balabus was doomed to fail as it is humanly impossible to withstand such cold.

The melamed and the balabus returned home and the balabus went outside to say T’hillim as the Alter Rebbe had told him to do. At some point, the melamed went out to see what was going on and he saw how the balabus was sweating, and this was wondrous.

The story ends that as the balabus said T’hillim he was told

that one of his gentile sons had died, and he didn't answer, but continued reciting T'hilim until he finished it. Then they came and told him that during the funeral, the second son tripped, fell, and also died.

### WE SLEPT IN THE REBBE'S ROOM

Rabbi Landau once told someone that he was amazed that the Rebbe sent him printed maamarim on the very day they were published.

The man asked: Did you know the Rebbe years ago?

Rabbi Landau answered: Certainly! We slept in the same room in Moscow.

### INCOMPARABLE

Rabbi Landau related: The mesader kiddushin at my wedding was the Rogatchover Gaon. We chose the city of Dvinsk to get married in so that he could be our mesader kiddushin.

When I was a very young rav he asked me: What's with *Orach Chaim*?

I told him that I remembered all of *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* (I knew it better than I do now).

The Rogatchover answered: That's fine.

### THE WILES OF THE YETZER

Rabbi Landau once spoke about the tzaddik Rabbi Hirsh Leib of Alik, who was very wise. Once, during Slichos, he said: *Slach lanu Avinu, emes ki chatanu, aval derech ha'av limchol l'ben, im kein, Ata mechuyav lisloach lanu* (forgive us Father, it is true that we have sinned, but a father forgives his son, therefore, You must forgive us). This made a tumult in the heavens, causing the prosecuting angel to become incensed, and so he played a trick.

A man who had come to him for Rosh HaShana received a letter from home that said his house had burned down with all it contained. The man wanted to see the Rebbe immediately in order to tell him what had happened, but it was Rosh HaShana and the gabbai didn't allow him to enter, saying: Don't you know that you can't speak with the Rebbe on this holy day?

The man persevered, but the gabbai kept refusing him. On Motzai Rosh HaShana the man couldn't take his sorrow any longer, yet the gabbai still did not allow him to enter, saying there were many Jews who had waited on line ahead of him. The man made a ruckus outside the tzaddik's room, and the gabbai called upon the tzaddik's son and told him that a man was making a commotion and it was disrespectful to the Rebbe.

Being zealous for his father's honor, the son slapped the man. This didn't stop the man from carrying on, and the Rebbe came out and asked what was going on. They told the Rebbe that his son had hit one of the men and the tzaddik said: Call my son to me.

The frightened son entered his father's room reluctantly, but his father received him warmly and said to him: You are the same son to me as you were before.

Afterwards they looked at the man's letter with the bad news and they saw that the page was blank. They understood that it was a trick of the yetzer ha'ra in order to arouse the tzaddik's anger at his son, so he would punish him, which would cancel the tzaddik's prayer about Hashem, the Father, who forgives his son.

Since the tzaddik was so wise, he understood what it was all about and he showed his son great love, and this made his prayer that much more potent.

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# HAIR-DO OR HAIR-DON'T?

## *A Halachic Perspective on Sheitels with Indian Hair*

BY HA'GAON RAV SHALOM DOVER WOLPO  
TRANSLATED BY ALEXANDER ZUSHE KOHN



### PART 1

**F**or the past few weeks, many fine and upright Jewish women have found themselves confronting a most difficult challenge. The wigs upon their heads have suddenly become a source of anxiety and confusion, and have given rise to a torrent of questions that now threatens to drown them.

First, there are the practical questions. What are we supposed to do now? What should we wear on our heads when we go out on the street? Or when we go to school to teach? Do we have to burn the wigs, or is it enough to throw them in the garbage? How can I determine whether my wigs contain Indian hair? Who is going to give me a *hechsher* on the new wigs I want to buy?

Then there are the introspective questions: Have I actually been walking around all this time with *avoda zara* on my head? Is it possible that my desire to fulfill G-d's commandments in an enhanced manner has led me to transgress? Can it be that my connection to the Nasi HaDor, Melech HaMoshiach, has caused me to violate one of the three

commandments that may not be violated even at the risk of death?

Chabad women in particular find themselves in a difficult dilemma: *If I go outside with a wig, I'll be accused of disregarding a serious prohibition. On the other hand, I can't go out with a tichel, G-d forbid, because the Rebbe insists on sheitels! Many women of anash have thus opted to do the 'disappearing act,' confining*

*Certainly, those who possess such wigs do not have to run and burn them.*

themselves to their homes, in the spirit of the verse, "*The glory of a princess is within.*" Those who do have to leave their homes in Yerushalayim or Bnei Brak, go into town and see all the posters proclaiming, "*You shall burn out the evil from your midst.*" Then they meet their neighbors, who have suddenly adopted unusual modes of dress, and feeling uncomfortable, the first thing they do when they get back home is grab the

phone and call a Chabad *rav*, whom they hope can save them.

**I** don't know if this essay can resolve the whole issue, but perhaps, it may serve to relax some of the tension, and lower the level of stress. Primarily, we shall attempt here to understand the issue at hand, and the questions and doubts surrounding it.

First, I wish to note a positive element in all of this: It has been clearly shown that the rabbinic authorities of the overwhelming majority of *chareidi* women, consider wigs a fine, or superior covering for the hair. For if these *rabbanim* forbade the wearing of wigs, then, just as the women are now hastily removing the wigs, they would have made sure not to wear them in the first place.

The whole issue thus demonstrates unequivocally that the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach's campaign to have Jewish women cover their heads *specifically* with a wig has met with incredible success, and has permeated virtually all factions of *chareidi* Jewry.

Moreover, even after the halachic rulings were publicized, and

hundreds of women went to teach in the *chareidi* schools with *tichels*, the *rabbanim* of those institutions instructed that they come back specifically with a wig. (One of the respected Gerrer *rabbanim* sent a message to all the *moras*: “This is not a recovery room!”) Knowingly, or unknowingly, the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach’s directive that only wigs should be worn, has become widely accepted within the *chareidi* communities!

So who are the ones behind the current commotion? And who are the ones fanning these flames of controversy? Undoubtedly, it is the same people who have been waging war against wigs in general. When these people saw that their campaign was not succeeding, and Jewish women were continuing to replace their *tichels* with wigs, which are preferable in terms of *tznius*, they found a back door through which to wage their war.

Even before the *rabbanim* ruled on what should be done with the wigs from India, these groups proclaimed widely that according to Torah law wigs must be burnt, and that on a certain day, after evening prayers, all G-d-fearing Jews would gather together for a wig-burning ceremony.

These people are guilty of *gezel* in all of its ramifications.

Those among us who (for some strange reason) continue to listen to the radio programs known as “*Arutzei Kodesh*” [*Holy Broadcasts*], may have noticed how pleasantly the speakers on these programs address their listening audience. Phrases like, “my brother,” “my precious soul,” “praised be His Name,” “may you live long, pleasant years,” and the like, flow freely from their lips. But when they address those women who insist on wearing wigs as the most effective means of covering their hair, the very same speakers suddenly outdo each

other in their attempts to win the slander-spreading contest, even going so far as to articulate the opposite of blessings.

Therefore, gentlemen, without making light of the problem of wigs

*The fact that the Rebbe was aware of the problem, and still did not create an uproar about it – though he may have quietly given some individuals a few instructions in this regard – proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that notwithstanding the fact that one should take extra precautions when it comes to this, it does not involve the transgression of any Biblical prohibition...*

originating in India (as we shall soon discuss), there is no doubt that the healthy senses of our Chabad women, who feel that the problem is somehow being blown out of proportion, are right on target. (The women also sense that the very fact

that longtime opponents of Lubavitch are suddenly reveling in their victory proves that the wearing of a wig, even one that stretches from “Hodu [India] to Kush” does not involve any prohibition of substance).

In order to properly understand the issues involved, we must analyze the matter from a halachic standpoint. First, however, it must be pointed out that the Rebbe already noted this problem more than thirty years ago.

There’s a Jew living in Beitar named Rabbi Yitzchak Dubovik. (He is a member of a non-Chabad chassidic following, but in his youth, he had a close relationship with Chabad.) Prior to his wedding, Rabbi Dubovik (who used to live in Rhode Island) and his *kalla* went in to *yechidus* to receive the Rebbe’s blessing. One of the things the Rebbe said to him (I spoke to him on the phone about this) was: “I presume the *kalla* will not wear a *tichel*, but a wig. You have to be careful when you buy wigs because there are problems with the wigs from India.”

(A rumor has been circulating to the effect that there was a directive from the Rebbe concerning wigs from India to Freeda Wigs. I called Mrs. Freeda Kugel (who is from Crown Heights) in Deniproptrovosk, where she has a branch that manufactures wigs from Ukrainian hair, and she told me that it is completely untrue.)

However, the fact that the Rebbe was aware of the problem, and still did not create an uproar about it – though he may have quietly given some individuals a few instructions in this regard – proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that notwithstanding the fact that one should take extra precautions when it comes to this, it does not involve the transgression of any Biblical prohibition, nor the transgression of *tikroves avoda zara* (idolatrous





offering), nor for that matter, any prohibition of substance. Certainly, those who possess such wigs do not have to run and burn them.

**B**efore we examine the issue from a halachic standpoint, I wish to point out that the thoughts that follow have been written in the absence of a clear halachic ruling from Chabad *rabbanim*. (Many people urged me to put some of my thoughts on the matter down on paper, and I yielded to the pressure.) However, the moment the *rabbanim* issue a ruling, everyone should follow it, whatever

its position.

Let us begin with a portrayal of the problem, which I have based on my conversation about this matter with Reb Betzalel Kuptchik – a shliach in India – and on a number of newspaper essays I have read, written by respected newspapers, and carried by sources regarded as reliable:

The leaders of a certain cult of idol worship in India have been publicizing throughout the world that any woman in need of salvation, deliverance, or blessing, will have her requests granted if she comes to a certain place of idol worship and

shaves her head as an “offering” to the idol. This head-shaving is also supposed to bring her atonement for all her sins, thereby causing her to be reborn, and making her fit to “pray” to the idol.

This cult has many houses of worship throughout India. The most “important” of these are located in the town of Tirupati. According to the essays, there is a building there accommodating 600 barbers, who shave the heads of some 50,000 women a day. Now, the shaving does not take place in the presence of the idol; instead, after the women have

had their heads shaved, they walk a considerable distance to pray in the presence of the idol.

From this temple, hundreds of tons of natural Indian hair are sent to distributors all over the world. Approximately 80 percent of all the hair coming from India originates in these temples of idol worship, and this 80 percent makes up about 20 percent of all natural hair sold throughout the world. Moreover, on occasion, wig manufacturers will mix some of this Indian hair into wigs that are (officially) made only of European hair, or hair of some other nationality.

We have thus presented the facts. Let us now examine their halachic ramifications:

## 1. BENEFITING FROM AN "IDOLATROUS OFFERING"

In *Hilchos Avoda Zara* 7:2, the Rambam writes as follows: "It is forbidden to benefit from false deities, their accessories, their offerings, and anything made for them, as it says, 'You shall not bring an abomination into your home.' One who benefits from any of the above, receives two measures of lashes: one for 'You shall not bring an abomination into your home,' and one for 'No part of the banned item may adhere to your hand.'" Accordingly, the *Shulchan Aruch*<sup>1</sup> rules that, "it is forbidden to benefit from false deities, their accessories, and their ornamentation<sup>2</sup> ... As for an **offering** to [a false deity], once it has been brought before the deity and made into an offering, it becomes forbidden."

In light of this, it would appear to be forbidden to benefit from wig hair originating in India, since this hair is presented as an offering to the deity, and once an object is made into an idolatrous offering, it is forbidden *even after it is removed* from the temple of the deity. As the Rambam

states, *ibid*, 15: "[Once they are brought as offerings], they remain **forbidden forever**, even if they are later removed [from the temple]."

## 2. NULLIFICATION OF AN IDOLATROUS OFFERING

But this needs clarification: While it is true that merely removing an idolatrous offering [from the temple of the deity] does not render it permissible – it remains forbidden forever – in the case of the hair from India, the priests removed the hair from the temple *with the purpose of selling it* [for commercial use], an act that nullifies its status as *avoda zara*<sup>3</sup> Hence, it should **not** be forbidden for benefit!

In truth, however, this is not a question, for in chapter 8 (Law 9), the Rambam rules that although the *avoda zara* status of the deity itself can be nullified, as well as the *avoda zara* status of its accessories, ornamentation, and so on,<sup>4</sup> "the [avoda zara status of an] **idolotrous offering** can never be voided."<sup>5</sup> The *Shulchan Aruch*<sup>6</sup> concurs with this, ruling that: "Its **offering** can never be nullified."<sup>7</sup> Since the hair from India is presented as an offering to the deity (but see further), it has the status of an idolatrous **offering**, and remains forbidden forever!

## 3. THE HAIR IS NOT ACTUALLY PRESENTED AS AN OFFERING

It is still not clear, however, why the hair is forbidden. The fact of the matter is that although the hair from India is shaved in a **temple associated** with a false deity, it is not actually offered to the **deity itself!** Rather, immediately after the shaving, it is placed in an idolatrous vessel, and taken to be packaged and distributed. It should thus be permissible, for the Rambam<sup>8</sup> rules that "it is not forbidden to benefit from meat, wine, and fruits that were **prepared** as

offerings for idols, even if they were brought into the temple of the deity; they are **not** forbidden unless they were [actually] **offered** to [the deity]."

As stated above, the *Shulchan Aruch* concurs with this, stating that the item is forbidden only "once it has been brought before [the deity], and made into an offering." The Taz there,<sup>9</sup> explains the meaning of 'has been brought': "This means that it was brought **as an offering**, as implied [by the *Shulchan Aruch*] in Law 3, where it says, '[It is forbidden] if it was **placed before the deity** as an offering.'" This is also implied in Law 6, where the *Shulchan Aruch* states: "When you see an item being brought into [the temple of] a false deity, if it has not yet been brought inside, it is permissible, because **it has not yet become an offering.**"

Now, if **preparing** an item as an offering to a false deity and **bringing it into the temple** as an offering do not render it an actual offering – it is only considered an offering when it is **actually** offered – then in the case of the hair from India, where no one has any intention of **actually** presenting the hair to the deity as an offering,<sup>10</sup> but intend only that it should be shaved and then sold, the hair should surely be permissible!

## 4. HAIR DOES NOT QUALIFY AS AN OFFERING IN THE HOLY TEMPLE

Furthermore: The *Talmud* states explicitly (*Avoda Zara* 51a) that in order for something to become forbidden as an idolatrous offering, it must be "like in the Holy Temple." As interpreted by Rashi, this means that the only items that become forbidden as idolatrous offerings are the kinds that were brought as offerings to Hashem in the Holy Temple – e.g., meat, fine flour, oil. This is derived from the verse, "*Offerings to the gods shall be destroyed; only to Hashem alone,*" which implies that only such

items as were brought as offerings to Hashem [in the Holy Temple] become idolatrous offerings when brought as offerings to a false deity; all other items do not attain the status of idolatrous offerings, and are not forbidden for benefit – *even if they were brought to the deity as an offering!*

Now, since hair is not valid as an offering in the Holy Temple, it cannot attain the status of an idolatrous offering, and does not become forbidden for benefit.<sup>11</sup>

## 5. IDOLATROUS ORNAMENTATION

There is room to argue that the hair from India should be forbidden from a different angle: The *Shulchan Aruch* rules<sup>12</sup> that “**candles** which were lit [for a false deity], or nice clothing and items that were spread before a false deity as ornamentation,” are forbidden for benefit, despite the fact that such items were not brought as offerings upon the altar in the Holy Temple! We thus see that even items that were not valid as offerings in the Holy Temple can become forbidden if they were used in a specific manner for an idol!

There are two answers to this: 1. These items are not prohibited as idolatrous **offerings**, which **cannot** be nullified, but as idolatrous **ornamentation**, which **can** be nullified. Thus, in the case of the hair from

India, its status as idolatrous ornamentation becomes nullified the moment it is removed from the hair-cutting complex to be sold. 2. The hair that is sold is, in fact, not used as ornamentation for the actual deity, and thus, never attains the status of idolatrous ornamentation.

Even from this angle, then, there is no room at all to prohibit the deriving of benefit from Indian hair!

## 6. THE RAMBAM'S VIEW

Perhaps the case can still be made to prohibit Indian hair: Though we stated earlier that according to the Talmud, as interpreted by Rashi, an item becomes an idolatrous offering only if its kind was valid as an offering to Hashem in the Holy Temple, **the Rambam**<sup>13</sup> does not rule this way; he rules that even something that is **not** fit for an offering in the Holy Temple can become forbidden as an idolatrous offering. Indeed, the Shach to *Shulchan Aruch* *ibid*, note 3, says that “a devout person [*baal nefesh*] should be stringent [in this matter],” in consideration of the Rambam's opinion!

In truth, however, this is not a problem, because even the Rambam agrees that an item becomes an idolatrous offering only if it is brought **inside** the **place of worship**. As the *Shulchan Aruch* puts it (*ibid*, Law

5), it must be brought, “**beyond the partition that is spread before [the deity].**” In the case of the hair from India, we already stated that the hair is shaved **at a distance** from the [temple of deity], and it is not brought afterwards as an offering to the deity. Hence, it never attains the status of an idolatrous **offering**, and would thus be permissible even according to the Rambam. (Moreover, even if it **would**, in fact, be brought to the deity afterwards as an offering, which would make it forbidden according to the Rambam, it would still be impossible to prohibit women from using it, since the *Shulchan Aruch*<sup>14</sup> does not rule in accordance with this Rambam, but rather, maintains that an item that was not valid as an **offering** in the Holy Temple – e.g., hair – **is** permissible even if it was brought to the deity as an offering. (As for the Shach's statement that “a devout person [*baal nefesh*], should be stringent [in this matter]” – this does not justify banning it to all women. To illustrate: some people are careful not to eat *mezonos* dough that was kneaded in fruit juice, since the Alter Rebbe writes that “a devout person” [*baal nefesh*] should eat this only as part of a meal for which he has “washed,” for there is a *possibility* that one must recite over it the *HaMotzi* blessing.)

*(To be continued.)*

### NOTES:

1 Yoreh Deah 139:1

2 “Noyah.”

3 A gentile can nullify an idol's status as Avoda Zara.

4 See there, Law 10, for an explanation of what constitutes annulment.

5 I.e., Even if the gentile undoes its Avoda Zara function.

6 *Ibid*: 2

7 See Taz footnote 4, and Perisha footnote 4 for an explanation of why the idolatrous

offering has a different halachic status than the deity itself and its ornamentation.

8 *Ibid*:15.

9 Note 2 (sif katan “beis”).

10 In fact, in the ads of the cult (which are easily obtainable), as well in the abovementioned essays detailing the manner in which this deity is worshipped, there is no mention at all of the hair being brought to, or offered to, the deity.

11 (As for the head-shaving of a nazir — this is not an considered an offering to Hashem, but an act of purification for the nazir. See

Rambam, Hilchos Nazir, 8:3, where he rules that it is forbidden for the nazir to have his head shaved opposite the entrance of the Azara, “because this is disrespectful to the Holy Temple.” And even after the Nazir's hair is cut, it is not brought as an offering, but is thrown under the pot in which the peace-offerings are cooked in Lishkas HaNezirim, in the Ezras Nashim.)

12 *Ibid* 3.

13 *Ibid*, 7:16

14 *Ibid*, Law 6.

# TO BE A REAL CHASSID

*Ariel Bibi describes the ups and downs he experienced before he committed to living an observant life. \* Profile of a baal t'shuva.*

It began with an invitation to attend a chassidus class at the *Chut HaMeshulash* center in Yerushalayim. I went and enjoyed it very much. When I approached the lecturer, Rabbi Ron Kolton, I was surprised when he offered to learn chassidus privately with me. He realized that I found chassidus interesting and wanted to help me. I began learning, even though I didn't keep Shabbos or wear a kippa.

My father, Shabtai Bibi, who is presently retiring from his job as director of the radio program *Moreshet*, always enjoyed a warm relationship with Chabad. I got to know Chabad when I served in the army in a combat unit in Lebanon. Chabad chassidim would come with their Mitzva Tank to the front, cheer us up, and enable us to do mitzvos. I was amazed that they came to such a dangerous area just to enable us soldiers to put on t'fillin or shake a lulav.

My first significant encounter with Chabad was on Pesach in Thailand. It was after my army service, when I went touring abroad. My trip began in

Europe and Australia and then I went to the Far East.

Although I come from a somewhat traditional family – we fasted on Yom Kippur and my father made Kiddush on Friday night – it was hard to keep anything while traveling, even these few things. I didn't make Kiddush since there was no wine, and it was generally impossible to go to shul.

As Pesach approached, I began to think about how I was going to celebrate the holiday in Thailand. In my heart of hearts, I feared this would be the first time I would eat chametz on Pesach. But the Rebbe looks out for every Jew, and one day we heard that Chabad bachurim had come to Bangkok to make a public seider. This was fifteen years ago, and there was no permanent shliach there at that time.

Hundreds of Israeli tourists crowded around long tables on Pesach night in Thailand. The bachurim gave us a great time. At the head of each table stood a Chabadnik who explained what we needed to do. He answered questions and read the Hagada with us.

How surprised I was when I got matzos for the entire Pesach from these Chabadnikim! That year, and the next year when I was in Thailand again, I did not eat chametz thanks to the Rebbe's shluchim.

After I returned to Eretz Yisroel, I opened a store in Hertzeliya that sold Jerusalem stone. This lasted only a short time because I missed Yerushalayim, and so I closed the store and moved back to my hometown, Yerushalayim.

That's when I heard about the chassidus class, and after I attended that class, I went to the rabbi's house once a week to study chassidus one-on-one.

What attracted me? The esoteric descriptions of seider hishtalshlus fascinated me. I had heard about those who teach baalei t'shuva, who, after just one class, ask for commitments for keeping mitzvos, who know how to scare people with severe punishments.

Rabbi Kolton didn't do this. He explained the significance of mitzvos and the halachos, but didn't yell at me when he saw I wasn't ready to keep mitzvos. That was perfect for me, because I knew that the first time he would start pressuring me to keep mitzvos, I was out of there.

A period of time went by in which



(Right) Ariel Bibi 'before' (in the Philippines) and (left) 'after'

I didn't fully keep mitzvos. I learned about mitzvos but hadn't yet accepted to do them. I was also very uncomfortable with the idea of what my friends would say. I imagined how I would look with a kippa and tzitzis showing, and it didn't thrill me in the least.

I began keeping a few mitzvos secretly. I wore tzitzis but hid them, but I did not take on the yoke of mitzvos. Then...

It was almost Lag B'Omer, five years ago. I heard that thousands of people head for Miron to daven at the gravesite of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. I heard about miracles that took place there, and about the tremendous rejoicing on Lag B'Omer. I asked Rabbi Kolton and he encouraged me to go to Miron.

I went to Miron and was astounded by the scene. Tens of thousands of people, of all backgrounds, came to the gravesite of a man who had died thousands of years ago, and they prayed and celebrated and believed in this tzaddik. I decided to push my way through to the gravesite, though this was no easy task on that day. I stood there and felt a tremendous spiritual

awakening. I prayed that I should go on the right path.

When I left the gravesite, I was a new man. I bought a kippa, which I

***My friends' reaction did not cool me off, though some of my childhood friends went into a panic: "You're going to do t'shuva and forget about us. That's not right. Take off the kippa and stay with us."***

put on with the commitment to accept the yoke of Heaven.

I returned to Yerushalayim wearing

a knitted kippa. My friends' reaction did not cool me off, though some of my childhood friends went into a panic:

"You're going to do t'shuva and forget about us. That's not right. Take off the kippa and stay with us."

That's what one of my friends said to me, honestly expressing his fears. I told him that even with my new way of life, I would not cut off ties with my friends, and they relaxed.

Family is usually another obstacle for baalei t'shuva, but this wasn't the case with me. My parents, who had been traditional, with time became very religious. My brothers didn't disappoint me either. I already had a brother who had become a chassid, and after my changeover, my two younger brothers became more religious too. One of them is a talmid of Rabbi Kook, and the other one is a Breslover chassid.

But after this rise came the fall.

\* \* \*

When I felt strong enough, I wanted to get married. I got engaged and we began planning the wedding,

but things didn't work out and we broke the engagement. I was very hurt. My world had come crashing down. I was angry at people, and even more, at G-d.

Here I had worn a kippa, I kept Shabbos, I davened three times a day with a minyan, and did all I could, so why did I deserve to be punished? My enthusiasm for mitzvos dissipated.

I went through the motions without any chayus. I stopped davening with a minyan. I was lost, on the personal level and from a religious standpoint.

It took a long time until I absorbed the message that it was a big test from Hashem. I discussed things with Rabbi Kolton, and he understood me. After giving me moral support, he suggested that I wrote to the Rebbe through the *Igros Kodesh*.

This was the first time I was writing to the Rebbe, and I was very excited. I poured out my heart in a long letter. I put the letter into a volume of *Igros Kodesh* and the answer was to enroll in a Chabad mosad.

I decided to drop everything and to throw myself into my learning. I realized that although I kept mitzvos, I didn't know much. I was keeping Shabbos though I had a lot to learn in terms of halacha. I left my job and went to the Chabad yeshiva in Katamon.

I became a different person in yeshiva. I switched to wearing a black yarmulke and started growing a beard. Learning was the only thing I cared about. I was the oldest bachur in yeshiva. Getting into the yeshiva routine at the age of 34 is not easy, but I was spurred on by the Rebbe's answer to learn in a mosad Chabad.

As Tishrei approached, Rabbi Tamir Kastel, the rosh yeshiva, told me that all the talmidim were going to 770 for Tishrei. He said, "If you want to be a real Chabadnik, you need to go."

I tried pushing him off with the excuse, unfortunately true, that I had no money to buy a ticket, but he dismissed that and said there would be no problem with money. He gave me the feeling that Hashem would send me the necessary amount in time.

A few more days went by and the entire yeshiva was focused on the trip to New York. Talmidim began buying tickets, and they all spoke about going, but I still didn't have the wherewithal to buy a ticket.

I called my father and said, "Abba, they're all going to the Rebbe. If you give me the money for a ticket, I'll be able to go to the Rebbe." My father said, "Ariel, buy a ticket and I'll pay for

***I arrived at 770 for Rosh HaShana, as a talmid of a Chabad yeshiva. The truth is, I had no idea what I was getting myself into...***

it. Good luck."

I arrived at 770 for Rosh HaShana, as a talmid of a Chabad yeshiva. The truth is, I had no idea what I was getting myself into. My whole worldview was still different. The first thing I noticed was the hachnasas orchim. I saw thousands of guests getting food morning, noon, and evening. They also made sleeping arrangements for everyone.

I was amazed by this huge operation. I had toured the world for two years and knew what it meant to sleep in unsuitable places or to spend lots of money for a night in a hotel. And here it was all given for free, as

though I had paid ahead of time.

The davening on the first day of Rosh HaShana was a nightmare. I tried to concentrate on the davening but I couldn't. It was impossible to stand straight; thousands of chassidim were squashed together. I felt so utterly strange there and wondered what I was doing there. In Yerushalayim, I had davened all my life in shuls where there were places to sit, where you could hear the chazan, and there was good air conditioning. What did I have here? Crowding, the likes of which I had never experienced before.

The next day I found another shul in Crown Heights where I davened in comfort, without the pushing and the tumult.

I thought of davening on Yom Kippur in a Sefardi shul in the area. When I went to sleep Yom Kippur night, I decided that if I managed to wake up at dawn, I would go to the Sefardi shul, and if I didn't get up on time, that would be a sign to go to 770.

The Rebbe wanted me in 770 because I got up late. I arrived at 770 apprehensively, but this time I found myself a place to sit in a corner. I felt much better about being there and I davened with kavana. The entire time I wondered why all these chassidim were here, and why I was there.

I got the answer at the Simchas Beis HaShoeiva. I joined in the dancing and danced all night. Every so often, I said l'chaim and continued dancing, without noticing the crowding, the sweat, and the heat. The simcha I felt overshadowed everything else.

By Shacharis I was on a spiritual high. At night, I felt the bittul of the chassidim. There was no ego at the dancing, as there is at other places; everybody danced because the Rebbe said to do so, and they truly rejoiced, breaking through all my barriers. I took the lulav and esrog to begin



Ariel introduced his father, Shabtai Bibi (left) to his teacher, Rabbi Tamir Kastel (right)



Ariel Bibi and Rabbi Tamir Kastel

reciting Hallel, and tears came to my eyes, tears of emotion that burst forth after two weeks of frustration over having come to the most crowded shul in the world.

I finally surmised that the crowding wasn't because each chassid wanted to push in further, on the contrary – they all stood in utter unity. They all stood ready to receive and draw upon the Rebbe's kochos for the entire year.

I continued to cry. They finished saying Hallel, while I decided that from now on I would be a chassid of the Rebbe; I would be a real Lubavitcher chassid. A loyal chassid.

I returned to Eretz Yisroel knowing that I had found my way. Now I

needed to find a shidduch. I asked the Rebbe for a bracha, and the answer I got in the *Igros Kodesh* was that there would be special instance of Divine providence. In the meantime, I continued learning, and after a while, I began studying for smicha.

Two years went by from when I opened to the letter about special Divine providence, and the waiting was unbearable. All the suggestions for shidduchim fell through and I was on the verge of despair. I said to Hashem in my heart: I have been doing all I can for two years to find my shidduch. I have done all I can; I beg You to do Your part.

That evening the phone rang at

Rabbi Kastel's house. It was a Lubavitcher woman from the north of the country who wanted to give a message to a certain bachur, whose name she said. Rabbi Kastel said he didn't know anybody by that name in the yeshiva, but the woman insisted and explained that she had to give him a message not to meet the girl since she decided she wasn't interested in him.

Rabbi Kastel smiled and said it was Divine providence because he was looking for a shidduch for someone, and maybe she would be interested ...

A few weeks later I got engaged, and we married on Yud Shvat in Yerushalayim.



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# WHY DID THE REBBE TALK ABOUT THAT?!

BY NOSSON AVROHOM



It happened in the middle of a farbrengen that took place on Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan, a farbrengen the Rebbe had announced at the end of a farbrengen that took place a few days earlier, on Shabbos Parshas B'Reishis. The Rebbe suddenly began talking at length about the need to be careful to dry one's toes after immersing in a mikva, in order to prevent certain negative consequences.

Many participants at the farbrengen wondered why the Rebbe picked this topic, all the more so since the Rebbe spoke about his personal conduct in this regard.

This mystery was solved by Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelevitz shliach in Beit Shaan, some time later, while he was on a serendipitous visit to Yerushalayim. An incredible story.

\* \* \*

The many years that had passed since the story took place, didn't diminish the excitement and amazement he felt. The year 5743 with the Rebbe was a special year. That year marked 100 years since the passing of the Rebbe Maharash and the Rebbe made a big deal of the aphorism associated with the

Rebbe Maharash, *L'chat'chilla aribber*. Nearly every topic that came up in the sichos was connected to this inyan.

"In Tishrei of that year," says Rabbi Shmuelevitz, "my friend, Rabbi Yisroel Gliss (shliach in

*"The Rebbe spent a surprising amount of time discussing immersion in a mikva, and quoted 'a Poilisher seifer' that one should be careful to dry one's toes after immersing..."*

Dimona), and I were in 770 and experienced the special atmosphere of Tishrei with the Rebbe. We couldn't help but be amazed by it, and we felt it every single moment.

"After Tishrei, the Rebbe held a

farbrengen on Shabbos afternoon of Parshas B'Reishis. The Rebbe began speaking about the mitzva of tz'daka. The Rebbe asked why we don't say a bracha for this mitzva as we do with other mitzvos, and explained it as follows:

In yeshivos and chadarim, they would explain, in a humorous vein, why we don't say a bracha before giving tz'daka as we do for all mitzvos. If we would be obligated to say a bracha before giving tz'daka, when a poor person would ask for tz'daka, we would begin making spiritual preparations to fulfill this mitzva. Since we would need to say a bracha, first we would need to go to the mikva, and before that to learn the spiritual intentions that pertain to mikva – he couldn't go to the mikva like a "wild man," because he's a "chassid!" After learning the kavanos of mikva, he would go and ask a friend for additional points about kavanos of mikva, and only after all these preparations could he fulfill the mitzva of tz'daka.

Who knows what could happen in the interim with the poor man who is waiting for tz'daka! And this is why we don't say a bracha before giving tz'daka. The first thing to do

is to actually fulfill the mitzva. Then, if he wants to, he can learn the kavanos of mikva, etc.

“Then the Rebbe spent a surprising amount of time discussing immersion in a mikva, and quoted ‘a Poilisher seifer’ that one should be careful to dry one’s toes after immersing in order to prevent harm from occurring to one’s feet if they are not dry.

“At the end of the farbrengen, the Rebbe announced that since ‘parting from you is difficult,’ three farbrengens would take place in the coming days, one for men, one for women, and a third for children of Tzivos Hashem.

“The first of these three farbrengens took place on Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan. I’ll never forget the great excitement that we all felt. Many people who were not present on Shabbos B’Reishis, made sure to be there on Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan. Long before the farbrengen began, 770 was packed with people.

“There was silence as the Rebbe entered and began saying a sicha. The Rebbe quoted the Alter Rebbe about needing to live with the contents of the daily Chumash, and then began explaining the verse, ‘these are the offspring of Noach,’ at length.

“After some time went by, the Rebbe stopped speaking about the parsha and in continuation of what he had said on Shabbos B’Reishis, he began speaking about immersing in a mikva.

“The Rebbe began by saying that after the farbrengen he had been asked why he had quoted a Poilisher seifer about drying toes after the mikva when we see this in the Alter Rebbe’s halachos of “*Shmiras HaGuf V’HaNefesh*.” The Rebbe gave some reasons and then said:

If I would have said what it says in the Gemara and *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* about being careful to dry one’s feet, the question would have arisen: How is it that so-and-so doesn’t do that; T’mimim, ovdim, maskilim, roshei yeshivos, mashpiim, and rabbanim don’t do that?! To this question there is no answer except what was said earlier (from the *Machatzis HaShekel*) – that the world is not particular about this and Hashem protects simpletons.

That is why it was quoted from a

*If I would have said what it says in the Gemara and Shulchan Aruch HaRav about being careful to dry one’s feet, the question would have arisen: How is it that so-and-so doesn’t do that?!*

Poilisher work, so I don’t need to answer why people don’t follow what it says in this work.

“During the rest of the farbrengen, the Rebbe spoke a great deal on this topic. Twice the Rebbe laughed as he continued to talk about this, emphasizing that nowadays, most chassidim are not particular about drying their toes.

**Whoever goes to the mikva tomorrow can look and see whether people are particular about drying their feet well (not just the sole of**

the foot which can be easily dried, but also the toes and between the toes, etc., which entails extra bother), or they’re not particular about it. And we’re talking about Jews who immerse in a mikva every Shabbos, or every day – in other words, Jews who try to be careful about all areas of Torah and mitzvos, including going in the ways of the Alter Rebbe, “and we will go in his ways forever.”

I once went to the mikva along with rabbanim and the like, and I didn’t see that they were careful about this! ...

As was said, everybody knows how he conducts himself in this regard. And my intention in this is to allude to the fact that I too am not careful about this! ...

We see in actual fact, “maaseh rav,” that chassidim and anshei maaseh, g’dolei chassidei Chabad, are not particular about this, and Hashem protects the simple. Since this is the case, they can conduct themselves in this way l’chat’chilla, to begin with, too. As it’s explained in the Responsa of the Tzemach Tzedek regarding those matters entailing danger, about which the Gemara says “Hashem protects simpletons,” that they can conduct themselves in this way to begin with, and not only when he behaves like a simpleton (after the fact) does “Hashem protect simpletons.”

“Many participants at the farbrengen wondered about this topic that the Rebbe was bringing up yet again, especially when the Rebbe discussed it so thoroughly.

“Rabbi Gliss, who stood next to me, whispered in surprise that he saw his uncle, Rabbi Shimon Cohen of Yerushalayim. He was so taken aback because he hadn’t met him until that point and hadn’t been told of his arrival. Rabbi Cohen stood at some distance and the crowding was



intense. We decided that when the farbrengen was over, we would go right over to him.

“At the end of the farbrengen, the Rebbe called for all the tankistim to go up, and he gave each one of them a bundle of dollar bills in order for them to give them out to the crowd. It was chaotic. After the Rebbe left, the crowd sought after tankistim to get a dollar.

“In the chaos that ensued, we lost sight of the uncle. My friend was terribly disappointed because the next afternoon we had to leave New York. We began searching for him,

but despite our efforts we couldn't find him.

“A few days later, after we had arrived back in Eretz Yisroel, Rabbi Gliss and I met again. This time it was in Yerushalayim. After we took care of the things we needed to take care of in Yerushalayim, Rabbi Gliss suggested we go to his uncle's house since we hadn't met him in 770. I agreed, and the two of us went to his house.

“His wife, Chava Cohen (whose picture handing the Rebbe a tambourine with “Yechi” on it, became famous) opened the door.

“After a brief conversation, I asked where her husband was, and told her what had happened in 770. She said he was out, but since we were asking, she would tell us something amazing. She said:

‘A few days before he left for the U.S., which was a Sunday and Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan, my husband got eczema because of the perpetual dampness on his feet after going to the mikva. It quickly grew worse, reaching the point where he couldn't stand, and he lay in bed in great pain.

‘He wondered whether he could

fly in his condition. A few hours before his flight he went to a doctor, who checked his feet and was shocked by the way they looked. The doctor gave him a prescription with a list of medications he had to buy in a drugstore.

‘Despite his condition, my husband made a snap decision that he couldn’t forego his trip to the Rebbe, no matter what. He promised himself that he would buy the medication as soon as he arrived in New York. He quickly packed and went to New York that same night.

‘A relative who lives in Crown Heights was waiting for him at the airport. He told my husband about the special farbrengen that was taking place in 770. My husband was very concerned about the

crowding he would have to endure in his condition.

‘The relative drove straight to 770 and my husband hobbled in. The crowding was incredible, with thousands of people standing in pyramids and in every possible space. After finding himself a spot, he began listening to the sicha and was astounded to hear the Rebbe discussing the topic of drying one’s feet after getting out of the mikva and the diseases that one could suffer from if one’s feet were not properly dried. And that nevertheless: **“Hashem protects simpletons”**; **“they can conduct themselves in this way to begin with...”**

‘And you know what happened? Although my husband entered 770

in great pain with every step, a few minutes later he forgot about his pain and could walk normally. He even pushed towards the tankistin to get a dollar. On his way out, after he felt much, much better, he threw the prescription the doctor had given him into the garbage. From that point on, he was cured.’

\* \* \*

“That’s when,” concluded Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelevitz, “I understood what the Rebbe meant.

“It had happened from time to time that in the middle of a farbrengen the Rebbe spoke about unusual topics and most people didn’t know why. Evidently, the Rebbe sees and addresses issues that mortal eyes don’t see...”



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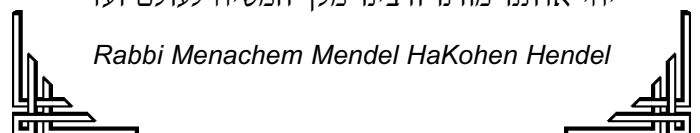
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# A FARBRENGEN?! HERE? IN THE HOSPITAL?

BY F. KAMINKER

It was 7:30 in the morning when the peaceful atmosphere of Afula, where I live, was disturbed by wailing. Sirens from police cars and emergency rescue vehicles could be heard everywhere. My first thought was, *pigua!* We were attacked!

No, I'm not a pessimist by nature. I generally follow the statement of our Rebbeim to think positively, yet Afula has suffered many attacks, and that is why my first thought was: oh no, not again!

It turns out, I was right. From neighboring homes, I could hear the radio reports announcing an attack at the Megido Junction near Afula. A few minutes went by and the announcer reported about an Egged bus, #830, that left Tel Aviv an hour and a half ago, that was blown apart by a bomb. Dozens were injured.

What's going to be? I wondered. The situation is unbearable. People are afraid to go out in the street, and now another attack!

I tried to get back to my daily routine because I had a lot to do, but it was too hard. My heart was at the Meggido Junction, together with the dozens of wounded and their stunned families.

The phone kept on ringing with friends, acquaintances, and relatives

calling to know if we were all right. I told all of them that we were fine and asked them to say T'hillim for the injured.

Another phone call, a few minutes later, left me frozen in place. It was from Zahava Malka, one of the active Chabad women in Afula-Alit.

"Did you hear what happened?" she worriedly asked me. I told her that I did.

"No, I mean about Avi."

Avi? I asked. What happened to him?

I found out that the bachur, Avi Malka, a graduate of the Talmud Torah Chabad in Migdal HaEmek and Yeshivas Ohr Simcha Chabad, was critically wounded in the attack. His family, who live in Givat-Hamoreh near my neighborhood, are very close with Chabad, and his parents regularly attend the chassidus classes.

The day before the attack he was in Kfar Chabad to participate in a friend's wedding. He got ready to leave early in the morning and boarded the #830 bus from Tel Aviv to Afula. When the bus started moving he fell asleep, and then came the attack.

The situation didn't lend itself to much contemplation. Action had to be taken. Zahava, as a mekusheres to the Rebbe, immediately wrote a long letter describing what happened to her nephew, and asked the Rebbe for a bracha for a refua shleima in a supernatural manner.

A volume of *Igros Kodesh* was opened and the Rebbe's answer was very encouraging. The letter had been written to someone who had told the Rebbe about a difficult situation he was in and the Rebbe promised him a speedy improvement, as it says, 'his word runs swiftly.'

In another letter on the other side, the Rebbe wrote about making a farbrengen for a child who was becoming bar mitzva. This second letter made us wonder. Bar mitzva? Avi had celebrated his bar mitzva years before. After some thought, we concluded that since Avi's bar mitzva had been celebrated modestly without a chassidic farbrengen, the Rebbe was asking that he make up for it with a farbrengen.

I quickly announced to Chabad around the world that T'hillim should be said for Avi, and at Mincha that very day, T'hillim was said for him in 770.

In the meantime, the doctors at

the hospital were fighting for Avi's life. He was taken quickly to the operating room in order to stop the hemorrhaging that could take his life within minutes. If he remained alive, said the doctors, they would have to mend his battered limbs.

The doctors didn't offer much hope. They said Avi was critically injured and they didn't think he would make it. The family sat nearby, constantly saying T'hillim, looking terrified while Avi's mother sat there looking calm. "I rely on the Rebbe's answer. I'm sure his condition will change for the better. It's just a matter of time."

The next day, we put another letter into a volume of *Igros Kodesh* and the answer amazed us. The Rebbe wrote about a joyous farbrengen which would bring about an amazing, supernatural recovery. I rushed to the hospital with mashke and cake.

The family looked at me and what I had brought and wondered: a farbrengen?! Here? In the hospital?

*The family looked simultaneously hopeful and in despair. On the one hand, the doctors had told them it was hopeless; on the other hand, the Rebbe's answer sounded promising.*

I told them about the Rebbe's answer and about his promise that the refua would be miraculous following a farbrengen.

Plastic cups for the mashke emerged from somewhere, and together with the cake I had brought, these were the refreshments for the farbrengen. The family

looked simultaneously hopeful and in despair. On the one hand, the doctors had told them it was hopeless; on the other hand, the Rebbe's answer sounded promising.

Every few minutes the door opened and our hearts jumped, fearing that the doctors had come to report bad news. Each time someone walked in, we scanned their faces. It's hard to describe the scene. And there we were, with plates of cake and smiles, begging them to eat something and say l'chaim in Avi's merit. This is what the Rebbe had said and this was our secret weapon against the odds.

Little by little, people warmed up. We announced to all those gathered there about our reason for being there. We told them about the T'hillim being said for Avi in 770. Everybody recalled a miracle he had experienced or heard about with the Rebbe, and farbrenged. People spoke in low tones, as you would expect in an emergency room.

We left them with warm wishes



A bus after an attack (for illustration purposes)

that we'd merit to return in order to take Avi home after a miraculous recovery. And we gave them a Chitas and a pushka.

A few days went by and Avi showed the first signs of consciousness in a miraculous way. The doctors were amazed. Avi became fully conscious and he drank water and ate food that was appropriate for him in his condition. He didn't remember anything that had happened since he had been sleeping when the attack had occurred.

The doctors, who were encouraged by the success of the first operation, got ready for a second operation. This was also unusually successful, and Avi began physical therapy to help him walk again. Avi's lower body was injured, and he had to undergo a series of operations on his legs, a long recovery period, and difficult exercises. After he completed all this, the doctors could try to predict what the future held for him.

Avi was transported to Hadassah Hospital in Yerushalayim, and his medical treatment continued there.

The days flew by and his birthday was approaching. You'll remember that in the first letter we had opened to the Rebbe asked for a bar mitzva farbrengen, but suddenly his condition took a turn for the worse.

It turned out that during his

operation they had left an internal wound untreated and this had become infected, and he spiked a fever. There were two possible courses of treatment: using antibiotics or draining the infection surgically.

Avi's mother, Sarah, immediately called Zahava, who put a letter for her into the *Igros Kodesh*. The answer

***Everybody recalled a miracle he had experienced or heard about with the Rebbe, and farbrenged. People spoke in low tones, as you would expect in an emergency room.***

was: Do the operation as the doctors decide; by having an operation you can make an immediate improvement.

And that is just what the doctors said to do!

They did another operation and from that point on, Avi's recovery was very quick and he soon found himself released from the hospital

and on his way home.

Naturally, a Seudas Hodaa would take place, as the Rebbe had asked, "on the day of his bar mitzva." The first plan was to have the farbrengen in shul, but since the miracle was so amazing, they decided to rent a hall.

Relatives and friends, who had supported the family throughout the ordeal, gathered in the hall. There was a catered meal and a band. Avi walked on his own two feet, accompanied by his family. How thrilled we all were to be together on this joyous occasion. The band began playing "Yechi" and Avi was hoisted up on a friend's shoulders.

A member of the staff at the hospital, a sister of the aunt Zahava, described the day of the attack from the professionals' perspective. 'I was on the nursing shift, when we were told about a high alert. Yet another attack, with many dead and injured. We quickly learned that one of the critically injured was Avi, my sister's nephew. I used my position on the staff to rush over to the emergency room and to ask the medical team how Avi was doing. They asked me what connection I had with him, and I explained that my sister was his aunt. They told me: We are waiting to go out and tell the parents the worst.'

A year went by and in Sivan, a year after the attack, Avi is back at the hall. It's his simcha again; this time it's his wedding!"



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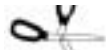
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# FREE WILL TAKEN AWAY

BY SHAI GEFEN

## WITHDRAWAL FROM SHARON'S GOVERNMENT

The world watches as the Israeli Prime Minister – who up until a few months ago did well in the polls and made significant achievements in the last elections – loses it all. His government is crumbling and he himself waits anxiously for the decision of the Attorney General. His rivals within his own party are trying to inherit him in his lifetime. He has even fired two of his ministers in a desperate bid to have his way.

Sharon's political woes are not merely the result of unsuccessful political maneuvers, because he has proven himself in this arena. If you carefully examine what has been going on the past few months, you can see that his precarious position coincides with the presentation of his withdrawal plan.

Although nobody asked him to do this, Sharon decided to make this unilateral concession. He called for a referendum of his Likud party, for the purpose of gaining support for his plan. But thank G-d, he sustained a decisive defeat. Sharon himself has since said that perhaps he erred in calling for a referendum of his party.

The truth is, he did not err. As we have quoted here before, the Rebbe told Rabbi Efraim Yolles a"h, that the only solution is to take their free will away from the leaders, so

they would fail in their plan to give away land. That is precisely what happened in Sharon's calling for the Likud referendum.

Another thing is clear to us. The P.M. won't be able to get his plan passed and certainly won't be able to implement it. These days, he is a plaything in the hands of others. The one who prided himself on his power is forced to accept his party's referendum results, while promising to uphold what his party decided. Sharon's leadership style and his firing his ministers testifies not only to increasing pressure, but to a man who takes anti-democratic steps, a leader who tries to force his position on others.

For years, people have felt helpless, that nothing could be done against leaders who tried to give away land. Yet we have just seen how a grassroots effort to convince people to oppose Sharon's plan worked!

From Heaven we are being shown that when it comes to shleimus ha'Aretz and the security of the Jews of Eretz Yisroel, we must all get involved. When we go with the truth, we see results.

## CHUTZPA

In this week's government session, Sharon referred to the results of his party's referendum and said, "Perhaps I erred in going to a referendum, and I take responsibility

for this mistake. But the referendum results are not binding. They are definitely a serious recommendation that deserves attention, but not in isolation; rather, in conjunction with other important considerations."

He went on to say, "The members of Likud are an important segment of Israeli society, but they are only a segment. We are the government of all the people, and we must listen to the position of all the people, most of whom want to see the plan implemented."

You have to remember that before the referendum, Sharon spoke very differently. Back then, he said that the results of the referendum would obligate him and all the Likud ministers and Knesset members. Now he sings a different tune and says that what counts is what a majority of the entire nation wants.

What nerve – to twist the referendum results in his favor. Didn't he say, before the referendum, that most of the members of Likud were in favor of his withdrawal plan?

And if Sharon is certain that most of the nation is with him, then by all means, let's have a referendum of the nation and see the results. Top political analysts maintain that we will see similar results in a national referendum as we saw in the Likud referendum. This is the real reason why Sharon is not asking for a national referendum. Even those

who want to make concessions know that Sharon's plan spells disaster.

And if despite it all, Sharon calls for a national referendum and he loses, then what? Sharon definitely does not have a mandate to carry out his political plan, and the only choice he has left is to resign and go home.

### EGYPT'S ROLE

More details emerge daily, regarding what is happening on the Egyptian-Israeli border in the area of Rafiach. Huge arsenals of weapons are pouring into the hornet's nest, known as Gaza. Yet, for all these years, Israel has kept quiet and hasn't dared to openly accuse Egypt of breaking their agreement.

Only recently has it been discovered that on the Egyptian side of Rafiach, vast stockpiles of weaponry await the terrorists, including katyushas. Everybody knows what katyushas in Gaza signify. We were all witness to what happened in Kiryat Shmoneh and Shlomi when tens of thousands of people entered their bomb shelters daily because of katyushas coming from Lebanon. That's just what's being planned for the south of the country.

Yet the Israeli leadership says nothing about Egypt's role in backing our enemies. The ships that were caught smuggling weapons were on their way to Egypt. Another arms-carrying ship on its way to Egypt was caught last week. From there, the weapons were to be passed on to the Palestinians.

The Rebbe is the only one who protested against the Camp David Accords. The Rebbe said that Egypt would back the terrorists and would ultimately fight us openly. The Rebbe also cried out about how Israel tried to conceal the breaches

in the agreement on the part of the Egyptians.

Even when the chief of staff and the defense minister revealed a little bit recently (while hiding a great deal) about how Egypt is aiding the terrorists, they did so meekly; not as one would expect when a country that promised peace, helps destroy us!

A few months ago, one of the papers said that a certain Admur said that the Lubavitcher Rebbe was right when he fought against autonomy in Yehuda, Shomron, and Gaza, but he still doesn't understand why the Rebbe fought against the Camp David Accords, because we see we have had peace with Egypt.

Well, the latest news about Egypt explains why the Rebbe said what he said. It's not just that Egypt became a power to reckon with, but that the current problems in Yesha can be attributed directly to Egypt.

### EVIL WILL COMMENCE IN THE NORTH

The first unilateral withdrawal was not conceived during this period of Sharon's breakdown; he was preceded by Barak, the one who kept telling us how he was going to bring us peace, who then fled from Lebanon, while leaving millions of dollars of equipment there for our enemies. Who doesn't remember that ignominious withdrawal, which was done solely to show the Israeli public that Barak carried out his election promise to leave Lebanon within a year?

This week marks four years since we fled Lebanon, and it's clear that this is what led to all the dramatic changes in the Middle East. We broadcast to all the terrorists that guerilla warfare against us will lead to victory. Just four and a half months after we left Lebanon, is



*The truth is, he did not err. As we have quoted here before, the Rebbe told Rabbi Efraim Yolles a"h, that the only solution is to take their free will away from the leaders, so they would fail in their plan to give away land. That is precisely what happened in Sharon's calling for the Likud referendum.*

when the El-Aktza Intifada began. Arafat learned the system. He not only learned it, but actively helped the Hezbollah in its war against Israel within the territories.

Everybody knows that our flight from Lebanon was one of our most serious mistakes, and that we will still have to return to Lebanon, and not only there, but also to Syria, in order to remove the long-range missile threat from our settlements in the north.

Commander Benny Gantz was interviewed last week, and he gave an overview about the dangers directed at us from the north. He did not negate the possibility of our entering Syria in order to remove the threat. The interview with Gantz brought up serious facts, which may explain the severe damage we sustained in that shameful flight. Gantz said that the collaboration between Hezbollah and Syria was strengthened since then, and that the organization operates within Israel today. By leaving Lebanon, Israel gave them a definite moral victory.

Now they want to give terrorists an additional prize by our leaving Gaza, despite the fact that we know the consequences ahead of time.

***Unfortunately, not too many of the rabbanim understood the seriousness of the situation at the time, and only those who regularly fought for shleimus ha'Aretz and who focused on siman #329 in Shulchan Aruch, signed the announcement.***

Before Israel withdrew from Lebanon, this magazine ran an ad from the Rabbanei Chabad that expressed their opposition to the withdrawal, which said that the withdrawal also opposed *Shulchan Aruch*. It was the *Matteh L'Shleimus Ha'Aretz* that got the signatures then.

Unfortunately, not too many of the rabbanim understood the

seriousness of the situation at the time, and only those who regularly fought for shleimus ha'Aretz and who focused on siman #329 in *Shulchan Aruch*, signed the announcement.

Today, everybody sees what fleeing Lebanon accomplished, and how the terrorists triumphed; how it is the *Shulchan Aruch* that establishes what's what, and the rest is history.

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What has the chareidi world been busy with the past month? Why have the phones of every single rav rung off the hook?

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Where are all those rabbanim when the issue is *shfichas damim* (bloodshed), which is just as serious as *avoda zara*? Why is it that when the government destroys yishuvim and endangers millions of Jews with insane concessions to our enemies, that the same rabbanim aren't *tumeling*? Why is there a commotion about a *sfeik sfeika* (a possible doubt) of *tikroves avoda zara* and not about Jews being murdered in the street?

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