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# T'MIMIM: CANDLES THAT SHINE THE LIGHT OF MOSHIACH

Not only does the faith in the coming of Moshiach shine within the T'mimim in full force, they also impart the belief in Moshiach and the eager anticipation of his arrival to the Jews they encounter. This constitutes the very purpose of Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim.

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Translated by Boruch Merkur

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## THE HARBINGER OF THE TRUE STATE OF BEING

Since we are presently in the era of Ikvisa D'Meshicha, the final and darkest stage of the exile of the Jewish people, when “the darkness shall cover the earth and the gloom will cover the nations,” it is not so apparent, at first glance, that we are approaching a state of redemption. In fact, there are those who conceive that the exile will have *arichos yamim*, longevity, may G-d save us...

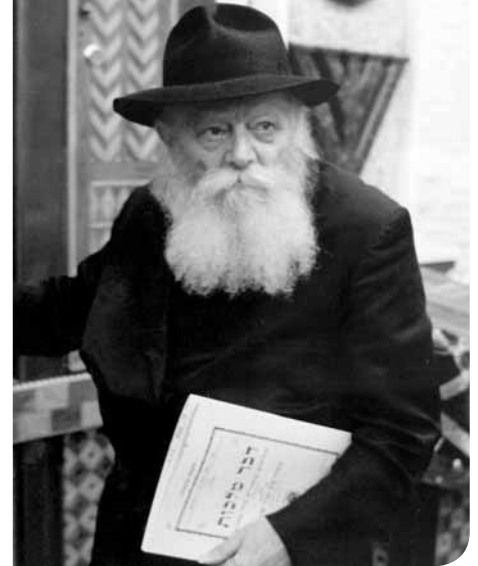
(And on this basis, these people fight against all matters of spirituality in order to focus on acquiring more materiality. Moshiach, however, will be the harbinger of the universal revelation and realization that the true state of being of every creation is the spirituality that extends to it. Were these people to believe that Moshiach is coming literally now, why would they wage war against spirituality?!)

The section of T'hilim said on the 18<sup>th</sup> of the month

concludes with mention of those “who have scorned *ikvos meshichecha*, the heels of Your anointed one.” This verse teaches that not only are there those who **do not eagerly await** the imminent arrival of Moshiach, anticipating the Messianic redemption to literally unfold at once, “*aht aht kumt Moshiach*,” for we are presently in the era of “*ikvos meshichecha*” [and we are standing on the very threshold of redemption] – not only that; they even **scorn** “*ikvos meshichecha*.”

## THE MISSION OF TOMCHEI T'MIMIM

The well known address of the Rebbe Rashab, *nishmaso Eden*, regarding “anyone who goes out to wage the wars of the House of David writes a bill of divorce to his wife” (which was reiterated by the Rebbe Rayatz here in the United States in connection with the founding of Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in America) provides a response to this shocking state of darkness and gloom. There it states that



the mission of the students of Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim (which was founded on Chai Elul, as mentioned above) is to save the Jewish people at large from the state of affairs brought about by those “who have scorned “*ikvos meshichecha*.”

Not only does the faith in the coming of Moshiach shine within the T'mimim in full force, they also impart the belief in Moshiach and the eager anticipation of his arrival to the Jews they encounter (which constitutes the purpose of the students of Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim – to be “candles that shine”).

The final verse of this song of T'hilim are the words, “blessed is G-d forever, *amen v'amen*,” expressing our faith in being victorious in this war (which is the meaning of the word “*amen*,” as stated at the end of Tractate Nazir – that the answering of “*amen*” is an expression of conviction regarding “the mighty who prevail in victory”). And not just a victory in a manner that annihilates the opposition and the scorn against “*ikvos meshichecha*” but one in which the opposition itself is transformed into good.

(From the address of Chai Elul 5745, *bilti muga*)

# THE BIRTH OF A CHASSID

By M. E. Gordon

Sholom was exhausted, but determined not to miss the excitement. It would have been impossible in any case to go to bed. The noise of people constantly coming and going mixed with the sound of niggunim accompanied by banging on the table and was punctuated by the occasional cries of the newborn twins demanding a feed. The babies had been born last Shabbos, Parshas Ki Seitzei. Tonight was the Sholom Zachor and tomorrow morning, G-d Willing, would be a double bris. It also happened to be Chai Elul, birthday of both the Baal Shem Tov and the Alter Rebbe.

"I suppose that having a bris on Chai Elul is almost as good as having the same birthday as the two tzaddikim," Sholom said to himself. "But why do we make a big deal about birthdays anyway? My friend Avi claims that the only birthday celebrated in the Torah is Pharaoh's. Since when did Yidden start getting excited about birthdays?"

Just then the room became silent. Sholom's father was about to speak. From the corner of his eye, Sholom noticed two more people coming in. He tried to figure out who they were. One looked somewhat familiar, but he couldn't remember where he had seen him before. Perhaps they were meshulachim or maybe guests that came in for someone's chassuna. They sat down quietly, careful not to disturb the host who was explaining a Sicha.

"So what is the difference between the time before birth and after birth?" he was saying.


"The person is complete in body and in soul when still in the womb. In fact, in some ways, he is better off before birth. Physically, all of his needs are provided for immediately and painlessly. Spiritually, he learns the whole Torah – rarely does one accomplish this again after coming into the world. Yet one only becomes a real and complete person after birth. Then the body and soul fuse together as one entity."

"Galus is like the time before birth. The Baal Shem Tov revealed Chassidus in general, and the Alter Rebbe drew it down further, into our minds and hearts, preparing the world for Geula."

The two men who had come in nodded in agreement, then the

for true Chassidishe nachas from all of his children. They looked directly at Sholom, and he felt a renewed strength and chayus. It reminded him of what he had learned about Chai Elul bringing a chayus to Elul.

Someone started a lively niggun, and Sholom opened his eyes. The two men were gone, but he suddenly remembered where he had seen one of them before. He ran to the den and looked at the painting on the wall. YES! The younger of the two looked just like the Alter Rebbe! Could it be? He grabbed his older brother Levi and dragged him to the painting. "Did you see the two men who came in when Tatty started to speak? The ones who added to his words? Didn't one of them look like....?"

 **"My friend Avi claims that the only birthday celebrated in the Torah is Pharaoh's. Since when did Yidden start getting excited about birthdays?"**

older one spoke up. "Chassidus gives a person the ability to become a complete entity, one whose whole existence is to serve Hashem. Then he can go on to affect other people, just as the baby can only interact with others once he is born."

The second man added, "Just as the baby starts using all of its limbs and senses after birth, so too Chassidus has to permeate and animate one's mind and actions."

The two men stood up, wished Mazal Tov to Sholom's father, and gave him a blessing

Levi impatiently interrupted, "What are you talking about, Sholom? No new people came in. Besides, you were fast asleep with your head on the table throughout the whole D'var Torah."

Perhaps it was just a dream, but at the bris the next day, Sholom thought that he could feel their presence again. Not surprisingly, the twins were named Yisroel and Shneur Zalman.

*This essay is based on Likkutei Sichos Vol. 24 p. 177-187. The story is fictional.*

# TOMCHEI T'MIMIM IS THE PLATINUM STANDARD

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By Rabbi Akiva Wagner

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I heard the following story from Menasheh Wolf:

The town was in a quandary; the old Rav had passed on, and there was now a need to find a new Rav to fill his place. Two candidates were nominated, and all of the townspeople became involved in the crucial task of choosing between them, the one who would be most worthy of gracing their town with his leadership. There was a fundamental difference between the two candidates. One was an ardent Chassid, following all minhagim of Chassidim and conducting his life in that manner. The second, in contrast, was an avowed Litvak, strictly schooled in the misnagdishe style of avodas Hashem.

It quickly became apparent that the townspeople were divided along party lines. The misnagdim in the city were lobbying for the Litvishe Rav, while the Chassidim naturally favored the Chassid. The town appeared in danger of being torn apart by the controversy, when one day, to everyone's great surprise, a letter arrived from the Friedlike Rebbe advising the Chassidim to vote

for the Litvishe Rav!

The matter was quickly settled, as no Chassid will question the directives of the Rebbe, whether or not he can comprehend them. However, the Chassidim could not contain their astonishment over this unexpected development, and they decided to pay very close attention to the new Rav, to try to discover what the Rebbe may have seen in him to make him deserving of his new position.

One day, as the Chassidim were observing the Rav, a man came with a shaila. Under the communist regime, to abstain from attending work on Shabbos was a matter of life and death. However, as his occupation entailed chilul Shabbos, he was reluctant to go to work on Shabbos, and he approached the new Rav for assistance in resolving his dilemma. The Rav advised him to attend work, but to abstain from actual chilul Shabbos, and he went over certain halachos with him to enlighten him as to just how this was possible.

A few days later, a Chassid came to the Rav with the same

exact question. The Chassid was himself learned, and on his own he proposed to the Rav that he attend work without desecrating the Shabbos, and he got into a complicated pilpul with the Rav to show how he felt this was possible. The Rav, however, was unequivocal in his response. "You may not go to work on Shabbos under any circumstances!"

The Chassidim, who had been surreptitiously observing the conduct of the Rav, were outraged, and they immediately confronted the Rav with the evidence of his inconsistency. They had caught him red-handed discriminating against the Chassid!

The Rav listened to their complaint patiently, and then offered the following explanation. "In Torah we find various levels of tuma and tahara. Yet there is no prohibition against a person becoming tamei. Although on Yom Tov there is an obligation to be tahor, during the rest of the year a person may become tamei. This, however, applies only to a Yisroel; a Kohen may not become tamei at all. In addition, there are varying degrees



of tahara amongst Kohanim themselves, and the ultimate level of purity had to be maintained by those Kohanim who were involved with the para aduma. They had to be raised in such an extreme state of tahara, that special cities were constructed where they were raised, where there would be no chance of them ever encountering even the slightest risk of any impurity.

“Tomchei T’mimim,” concluded the misnagdishe Rav, “is like that city of Kohanim, it is the training grounds for those who have to maintain the most extreme degrees of purity, in accordance with their mission in life. For this reason, I could not sanction for the Chassid, who had studied in Tomchei T’mimim, that he attend work on Shabbos, regardless of the danger involved. For him no heteirim could be employed!”

Since the Frierdike Rebbe supported this Rav’s bid for the Rabbanus, there is surely much that we can learn from his rulings. Indeed, we, who have been fortunate to learn in Tomchei T’mimim, would do well to ponder the message of

“One day, to everyone’s great surprise, a letter arrived from the Frierdike Rebbe advising the Chassidim to vote for the Litvishe Rav!



his response. Tomchei T’mimim is not just another Yeshiva, with different s’darim, more subjects (and perhaps better food ...). Rather, it is a training ground for Kohanim, for those soldiers who will be expected to maintain the extreme level of purity in order to be found worthy to carry out the unique crucial missions with which they will be entrusted.

What is acceptable standard for everyone else is not necessarily acceptable standard for a Tamim. From us is expected ultimate and unequivocal purity; anything less is not justifying the tremendous kochos with which we were imbued. It does not befit us to be satisfied with fulfilling our obligations, with patting ourselves on the back for being on the right side of the law.

For a Tamim, anything less than 100% is not enough. It is falling short of our sacred mission.

We have to re-evaluate our lives. One might say to himself, maybe I’m learning. Perhaps I have a k’vius in nigleh as well as in chassidus. Possibly I can be considered to be fulfilling my obligation in giving tz’daka and performing mitzvos. Maybe after my cheshbon ha’nefesh is completed I’ll even come out looking rosy.

But is this what Tomchei

**“Are you mad? What are you doing on the floor like a vagrant? Not only do you have a valid ticket, your ticket is for first class!”**

T'mimim is all about? Is this what the Rebbeim poured so much blood and tears into us for? Was this what all of the effort was leading up to?

No! There has to be more! Every single one of us has the sacred z'chus and responsibility of ensuring that his life be of a different quality; that we can stand back and look at the way we're living, at the way we're acting, and say: 'Yes! This was what Tomchei T'mimim was aiming for!'

An entire city had to be constructed in order for us Kohanim to live a purer lifestyle. Are we now living that purer lifestyle?

Yankel was a simple peasant. When the world was rocked by the new invention of the train, the horseless carriage that was powered by steam and water, Yankel was also swept up in the excitement. Although in his entire life he had not left the boundaries of his shtetl, he decided that, come what may, he would have to see this phenomenon for himself and experience it.

Yankel had always done well on his farm, and over the years he had managed to accumulate some savings. These he now placed in his wallet, and set off for the big city to realize his new dream. No obstacle, he decided, would stop him from this incredible opportunity.

Yankel arrived at the city and headed straight for the train station. He went directly to the ticket booth, presented his cash, and declared that whatever the cost, he wanted to purchase the

best train ticket available. Some money changed hands, and now he proudly held a train ticket in his pocket.

He excitedly went towards the tracks and approached the train. Now, in a train, we know, there are different sections. There is first class, second class, and third class. Then there is another class – the stowaways, who sneak onto the train and hide in the luggage compartment between the suitcases, trying to get a free ride. Yankel had no clue as to how one goes about riding a train, and he had no choice but to follow his fellow riders. As luck would have it, Yankel happened to be following a stowaway, and ended tucking himself away on a floor between the baggages, thinking that this was the way one rides a train.

Before long, the conductor made his rounds to collect tickets and check for stowaways. Because Yankel was unaware of any need to conceal himself, his legs were sticking out conspicuously, and he was immediately spotted. The conductor grabbed the protruding leg roughly, and unceremoniously pulled Yankel out of his place. "Thief, stowaway!" the enraged conductor began shouting at him. "You just wait until I deliver you to the police."

However, Yankel was equally outraged. "What do you mean by accusing me? I have a perfect right to be here! I paid for a ticket." The conductor was shocked at such shameless lying. "What do you mean you have a ticket? I just saw you with my

own eyes stowing away!" But Yankel, indignant, reached into his pocket, and triumphantly handed over his ticket.

The conductor looked incredulously from the ticket to Yankel and back, and exclaimed, "Are you mad? What are you doing on the floor like a vagrant? Not only do you have a valid ticket, *your ticket is for first class!*"

To be sure, for someone who is homeless, there is no shame to sleep on the floor and live off handouts. But not for a first class customer!

Tomchei T'mimim is first class. If you learned in Tomchei T'mimim, regardless of what you think about yourself, you're carrying around a first class ticket. You can't be on the floor, living like some homeless person. You have to live up to the fare that was paid for you.

In 5747, when 15 Elul was on a Friday, the Rebbe reprimanded Chassidim sharply during the Shabbos farbrengen the next day. He said, "I was certain that when I come back from the ohel (Friday afternoon), 770 would be CHODOROM! Instead it was 'sha shtill.'"

If you learned in Tomchei T'mimim, you have to know, and live up, to what that demands from you. And the first step is to attach the proper importance to Tomchei T'mimim and your relationship with it. If someone values the time he spent learning in Tomchei T'mimim, then his natural reaction on days closely associated with Tomchei T'mimim, is to get excited, to reach beyond himself, to create a feeling of *chodorom*!

When one attaches that kind of significance to the time he spent in Tomchei T'mimim, then it is much more probable that he

will feel compelled to ensure that his being a Tamim should affect his entire lifestyle.

So get out there and *chodorom*! Sure, you could get away with a little *farbrengen*’l, a little *l’chaim*, a *chassidishe* remark after davening. You could tell yourself that you duly marked this special day.

But that’s not the way we do it in first class. In first class, it is a whole different lifestyle; here we are *chodorom*.

What, in fact, is *chodorom*? Wikipedia couldn’t help me (they apparently haven’t studied in Tomchei T’mimim), but I remember being told at the time is that it means “turned over.”

And that, my friends, is

the essence of what Tomchei T’mimim is all about. Not just some more learning, not just furthering our education. It’s not even about spending a few pleasurable years in an inspiring atmosphere.

Rather, Tomchei T’mimim is about “*chodorom*”, it’s about turning over. If you learned in Tomchei T’mimim, if you are a Tamim, then that fact has to have turned over your life. We have to constantly be checking ourselves to see to it that it is continuing to turn over our lives, that we are *chodorom*’ing.

This, then, was what the Rebbe demanded from us on that Shabbos, 26 years ago. If we have the proper appreciation for

Tomchei T’mimim, then it has to express itself and manifest itself – in what the essence of Tomchei T’mimim is all about, in being *chodorom*!

L’chaim! May we live up to the tremendous expectations and hopes and *kochos* that were invested in us by being *chodorom*, and since the Oibershter also has to be *chodorom*, may He fulfill this as well by turning over the whole world and transforming the darkness of *galus* to the light of *geula* and with the ultimate *chodorom*, the *hisgalus* of Melech HaMoshiach Teikef U’miyad Mamash!

*From a written farbrengen directed to the alumni of Yeshivas Lubavitch Toronto.*



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# ELUL

## IN LUBAVITCH

What does Elul mean to a Chassid? Is this a month of soul-searching or a month of the King in the Field? Is it a month of tears or a month of simcha in which the Rebbe Rayatz got married? How did the Rebbeim speak of this month? We have the description by the Rebbe Rayatz of Elul in the town of Lubavitch and the Rebbe's observations about the details in his description.

\* Elul in Lubavitch is a Chassidishe Elul.

By Menachem Ziegelboim

### THE ELUL ATMOSPHERE

**ELUL!** This chilling cry is not only in the court of those who study Musar. Elul in Lubavitch was a time of preparation, awareness, seriousness, and thoughts of cheshbon ha'nefesh.

If one would read Lubavitch history he would understand that Elul was a lofty month, not a depressing month. It was a month of preparation and self-refinement in preparation for the coronation of the King of kings. The Rebbe Rayatz said that by

Shabbos Mevarchim Elul the atmosphere had already changed.

"One could already sense the fragrance of Elul; a scent of t'shuva began to waft in the air. Every Jew became more contemplative and began to forget all mundane matters.

"After Shabbos Nachamu, they already began to learn after Maariv, to fulfill what it says, 'arise and sing at night.' And on Shabbos Mevarchim Elul one already began to sense the Elul atmosphere. With great anticipation they waited for

'L'Dovid Hashem Ori V'Yishi,' for the sound of the shofar, for the first blasts that announced the opening of the gates of mercy. The maamarei Chassidus of Shabbos Mevarchim Elul, with the usual opening words, 'Ani L'Dodi V'dodi Li,' the first letters of which are Elul, or 'The Heavens are My throne,' or 'See, I give before you today,' were saturated with the atmosphere of Elul."

Chassidus, as opposed to Musar, approaches Elul with







Blowing the shofar after Shacharis in the month of Elul. Painting by R. Zalman Kleinman

a spirit of love and merit as the most propitious time for approaching G-d. This is illustrated by the story that is told about how in the month of Elul the Baal Shem Tov went to a busy inn and spoke to the visiting travelers. When he finished, he lovingly told the crowd, “Jews, don’t despair. Even if you veered off the path and neglected Torah and mitzvos, the holy spark is hidden within you. If you only turn back to the straight path and improve your ways, you will be able to quickly attain everything.

This is what the prophet says, ‘Return, wayward children’ – even when you are wayward, you are Hashem’s children. Return, repent, because the path to t’shuvah is open wide in the month of Elul.”

The atmosphere of Elul was one of z’chus and simcha, tinged with somberness. There was simcha over the z’chus of preparing to coronate the King and to renew His Malchus in the world. This lofty avoda must be approached with the proper

gravity, at least as much as one would have when approaching the coronation of a physical king.

There is a well-known sharp vort the Mittler Rebbe said when he was a boy and he heard R’ Avrohom the Doctor say, “We are already deep into Elul, and I still did not prepare the leeches.” In those days they put leeches on a sick person to draw out his blood as this was considered therapeutic. These leeches were readily available in the summer months, but not in the winter.



why that sense of seriousness accompanied the great simcha over the privilege of being with the King in the Field and then following Him into the palace.

The story is told about the gaon and Chassid, R' Yosef, the Tzemach Tzedek's uncle, who was once sitting at a farbrengen in the beginning of Elul. One of the people present sighed and said, "Gloomy days have begun." R' Yosef was astonished by this pronouncement, and he said, "Why? On the contrary, happy days have begun! In Elul the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy begin to shine and the King goes out to the Field – the concept of the light-source drawing close to the spark. So, happy days have begun."

In the introduction to *Pokeiach Ivrim* it says that the avoda of Elul in general is to rectify thought, speech and action, while the avoda of the days of Slichos are to rectify the deeper layers of the soul, the middos themselves. Still, Chassidim were particular to avoid an atmosphere of melancholy even when the days of Slichos began. This is why, on Shabbos Slichos they held a large Chassidishe farbrengen, which was joyous and inspiring.

The Rebbe Rayatz said in one of his sichos that one time Chassidim were farbrenging on Shabbos Slichos and drank a lot. So when it came time for Slichos, some of them tottered as they walked. The Rebbe MH"M referred to this story and said, "This is an aspect of *nimna ha'nimnaos* (the paradox of concurrent opposing realities that is inherent in the belief in G-d's Omnipotence)."

**“He resolved that from then on, if he would see Ramash on the street he would cross over to the other side.**

This is why they had to be collected while it was still warm.

That day, when the child returned home, he came across a group of Chassidim who were sitting and talking. Every now and then he heard laughter. The boy said sharply, "We are already deep into Elul and you still haven't prepared the leeches; that is why you are laughing!"

The Chassidim were deeply affected by this, and on Rosh Hashanah of that year the floor of the beis midrash was wet with tears because of what he said.

Years later, a certain Chassid heard the Rebbe Rashab say to himself as he was sitting down to a meal, "Ah, it's Elul in the world, and the time goes by unnoticed." The Chassid was seized with fear and when he related this to his fellow Chassidim, they told him, "What don't you understand?

The Rebbe was referring to you!"

There was an incident with another Chassid who cried on Simchas Torah. The Rebbe Rashab saw him crying and said that since he hadn't cried while saying Al Cheit on Yom Kippur, he was making up for it now, but this was not the time for it. "Hashem gave everything a specific time and the time for t'shuva, for making a cheshbon, is the month of Elul."

It is said that one time, during a Chassidishe farbrengen during Elul, a certain Chassid turned to his friend, a renowned "maskil" in the study of Chassidus, and said, "They say that in the month of Elul everything trembles – the fish in the river, the animal in the field, the bird in the tree – everybody but you and me; you with your haskala and me with mine. Gevald! What will become of us?" Thus, it is clear

## A TIME FOR CHESHBON HA'NEFESH

"The days of Elul are completely unlike the rest of the days of the year," writes the Rebbe Rayatz. "When you lie in bed at six in the morning and hear the sunrise minyan in the beis midrash finishing their prayers and blowing the shofar, the shofar wakes you up; it's Elul in the world! One rushes to get dressed. The person is dissatisfied with himself. Why did he sleep late? He then thinks about Moshe Rabbeinu a"h who was on the mountain and how these days are the *yemei ratzon* in which one can achieve an entirely different level. He must be a mentch and he cannot waste time."

A cheshbon ha'nefesh was definitely an integral part of the Elul atmosphere in Lubavitch. Its purpose was not to afflict as much as it was to uplift and lead to positive results in drawing close to G-d.

At one of the Friday night meals, the Rebbe Maharash spoke about cheshbon ha'nefesh and said: "There is a set time for cheshbon ha'nefesh, and the set time depends on the relevant period. For the period covering the individual day, it's when you recite the bedtime Shma. For the week, it's Thursday night when reciting the bedtime Shma. For the month, it's Erev Rosh Chodesh, and for the year, it's the month of Elul. Those who miss out all these times for cheshbon ha'nefesh have one final time to do it, the days of Slichos."

When the Rebbe Maharash finished speaking, he began singing one of the old niggunim with tremendous d'veikus. After the niggun he added, "The truth of the matter is that the days of Slichos are not a time of



R' Berel asked whether the Rebbe suffered much from these pains and the Rebbetzin said, "He is not afraid of pain; he is afraid of Rosh HaShana."

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cheshbon ha'nefesh, but a time for t'shuva. It is just that those who procrastinated with their cheshbon ha'nefesh can make up for it at this time. The main task of the days of Slichos is the avoda of t'shuva."

On Shabbos Mevarchim Elul 5710, the Rebbe spoke at length about the cheshbon ha'nefesh of Elul and cried copiously.

## ELUL IN TOMCHEI T'MIMIM

It would seem as if Elul received a new "interpretation" after Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim was founded in Lubavitch. The Elul of a balabus (householder) was not the same as the Elul of a Chassid; and the Elul of a Chassid was not like the Elul of a Tamim.

"In the courtyard and the yeshiva you could sense that an awesome day was approaching and all faces were drawn in full seriousness," described the Chassid, R' Yehuda Chitrik in his memoir.

"The atmosphere of Rosh HaShana could be heard from the first shofar blast of the month of Elul. There were many guests for Rosh HaShana. During the first week you could see ziknei Chabad from various cities coming for three months or more, delving into avodas Hashem during this auspicious time and tasting from the 'tree of life' and breathing the air of Beis Chayeinu. Some came only for Rosh HaShana and sufficed with two days before Rosh HaShana, the days of Rosh HaShana, and two days after Rosh HaShana. Then there were the 'mechanized

Chassidim' who came by train and only wanted yechidus for their material or spiritual affairs, and then they went back home by train."

## HE IS AFRAID OF ROSH HA'SHANA

For the Rebbe MH"m, Elul was not only a preparation for the Yomim Nora'im; it also had its own unique substance. Although its primary purpose is preparation, it itself contains a deep avoda that stands alone.

It is told how in the 1930's, the Rebbe went to Poland to spend Tishrei with his father-in-law. It was the end of Elul when the talmidim of the yeshiva found out that the Rebbe's son-in-law, Ramash, was about to arrive for the month of Tishrei. Since the son-in-law was modest and hardly anyone knew who he was and how great in Torah he was, the bachurim did not know how to treat him.

The Rebbe arrived before Slichos and was welcomed by R' Mordechai Mentlick (who later became the Rosh Yeshiva of Tomchei T'mimim in 770) with a lighthearted remark. However, the Rebbe remained solemn; he was in a mood that they described in yeshiva as being "in an Elul mood."

One of the talmidim went out to buy something. Upon his return to yeshiva he met the Ramash who gave him a look that caused him to tremble in fear. He resolved that from then on, if he would see Ramash on the street he would cross over to the other side.

Indeed, the Rebbe demanded of the T'mimim a high level of preparation as he himself instructed the members of the administration of the yeshiva in 770 several years later. They came to his room at the end of Av 5716 and he said: "When Elul comes, the time of *ori v'yishi*, a time of t'shuva in the world, this must be reflected in the talmid and in his learning of these matters," referring to learning matters which pertain to Elul like *Derech Chaim*, *Shaar HaT'shuva*, *Shaar HaT'filla*, *Likkutei Torah* (which, starting with Parshas D'varim, speaks about t'shuva), and *Ateres Rosh*.

In a yechidus with a distinguished mashpia, the Rebbe said, "It would be proper that the inyanim of Chassidus that you learn, whether on your own or with talmidim, be matters that pertain to this time. For it is known to what extent it affects the manner of avoda of these days. For example, when Elul comes to the world and you learn the inyanim of the month of Elul as they are explained in Chassidus, it's an altogether different sort of Elul!"

We have no understanding whatsoever of the Rebbe's own spiritual standing and Elul preparations for the Days of Judgment. The very fact that during Elul the Rebbe did not receive people for yechidus shows that he devoted all his time to concentrated preparation. Still, a small albeit powerful story reveals a tiny drop to us and enables us to catch a glimpse of the Rebbe's preparations for Rosh HaShana.

It was the 25<sup>th</sup> of Elul one year when the Rebbetzin told R' Berel Junik about the doctor's visit to check on the Rebbe who had been experiencing pains at the time. R' Berel asked whether



The Rebbe addressing the women

the Rebbe suffered much from these pains and the Rebbetzin said, "He is not afraid of pain; he is afraid of Rosh HaShana."

## TO ELEVATE EVERY JEW IN ELUL

Every year, the Rebbe mentioned the Alter Rebbe's parable about the King in the Field, and every year the Rebbe highlighted a different detail and derived a lesson from it for everyday life. The Rebbe spoke about the closeness of a Jew to G-d when He is in the field and smiling at us and fulfilling our requests. The Rebbe also emphasized that the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy are illuminated in this month. It seems as though with his sichos, the Rebbe sought to elevate every Jew to a higher level, and draw him close to G-d.

In one of the Rebbe's letters, he writes, "I was very surprised by the pessimistic tone of your letter . . . and if at no time of the year could there be a justification for this line of thinking, it is certainly out of place at the present time in the month of Elul, which is a month of special G-dly grace and kindness. The significance

of this month is brought out in the famous parable of the Alter Rebbe."

. . .

In the month of Elul, the Rebbe held two gatherings, one for children returning from camp and one for N'shei U'Bnos Chabad. Some years there was a farbrengen on Chai Elul, and from that point on, people felt that 770 had moved into high gear for Tishrei.

The atmosphere in 770 was always different and special in Elul. Most years, people in New York are still vacationing when Elul begins. In 770, only a few bachurim would remain, mainly the bachurim from Eretz Yisroel on K'vutza. Many of these bachurim have reported that this period was like having "the king in the field." Suddenly there was no pushing and crowding around the Rebbe. Each person had plenty of room near the Rebbe at all times, on Shabbos, at the Chai Elul farbrengen (those years when a farbrengen was held), and in more recent years, even during weekday t'fillos.

There weren't so many Chassidim flocking to the Rebbe for Tishrei as there were in the past few decades, starting in the 80's. Those davening in 770 on Yom Tov were mainly Crown Heights residents, Chassidim from the United States, and a few Europeans. Here and there were a few Israeli guests. The first charter with a large group of Chassidim from Eretz Yisroel came in 1960 but thousands weren't showing up yet.

The big change took place in two stages. The first stage was when R' Mendel Futerfas arrived to be mashpia in Kfar Chabad in the 70's. At a farbrengen to prepare for Elul, R' Mendel banged on the table and

announced, "Elul! The time has come to think about ..."

The bachurim thought they knew the ending to that sentence: cheshbon ha'nefesh, iskafia, davening with avoda, etc. But then, R' Mendel surprised them. He concluded the sentence with the words, "traveling to the Rebbe!"

People began seriously preparing to spend Tishrei with the Rebbe. The phenomenon of the bachurim, the girls, and entire families traveling, picked up speed. R' Moshe Yaroslavsky's renowned hospitality to these guests blossomed.

Elul in 770 underwent a major change. Instead of fewer people than usual, the guests started streaming in towards the end of the month. Starting from Chai Elul, the bachurim and the locals had to struggle to hold on to their set places.

In more recent years, the Rebbe spoke a lot about a joyous Elul. Along with the serious atmosphere, the Rebbe devoted many sichos to the King being in the Field, which is why this month's mood is one of closeness and joy. On Parshas Ki Seitzei

5748 the Rebbe emphasized the motif of simcha and associated it with the marriage of the Rebbe Rayatz in this month.

• • •

The men would leave the large zal; women and girls would fill the room for the Kinus where the Rebbe addressed them with a sicha. This was followed by the Rebbe giving out dollars for tz'daka.

At the Kinus for children, the Rebbe always reviewed the point about the King in the Field and the ability of every child to approach Him and make his requests.

At the Kinus in 5741, the Rebbe suggested that every child send Shana Tova cards to all his/her friends. "In addition to wishes for a good year, it would be fitting to add some words about Torah and mitzvos. The main thing is, it should be words that come from the heart and your behavior should be such that you are a dugma chaya (role model)."

• • •

On the morning of Erev Rosh HaShana, the Rebbe would go downstairs for Slichos and

## T'HILLIM SEASON

When R' Avrohom Pariz learned in Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Lubavitch, he was the gabbai of the Pidyon Shvuyim organization, which worked to free the bachurim from army service, and would often meet with the Rebbe Rashab.

One time, in the month of Elul, the Rebbe told him to travel to Vitebsk for Pidyon Shvuyim matters and while there, to buy him a T'hillim, "Because now is the season for it."

Shacharis. Throughout the day, the Rebbe would receive *panim* from thousands of people. The ziknei ha'chassidim then submitted a *pan klali*. Afterward, the Rebbe would spend a long time at the Ohel reading the sacks full of panim.

Chassidim knew that with all the preparations and avoda they did throughout the 29 days of Elul, on the Yom HaDin, Rosh HaShana, the Shepherd of Israel would stand before the Throne of Judgment and Mercy and beseech on behalf of every one of them for a "good and sweet year," materially and spiritually. May it be so this year too.

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# A SLICHOS ECLIPSE

The following is a transcription of an address given by Rabbi Yosef Yeshaya Braun, Mara D'Asra of Crown Heights, at the Chai Elul 5770 farbrengen in 770.



**R'** Yosef Yitzchok Pevsner, who spoke before me, mentioned that on Chai Elul we say, "Gut Yom Tov."

Today I heard that years ago, R' Efraim Wolf arranged a large farbrengen in Eretz Yisroel in honor of Chai Elul, and he invited many Rabbanei Anash. For various reasons, none of the rabbanim he invited could attend. After the farbrengen, R' Wolf wrote a report to the Rebbe. Since a *duch* to the Rebbe has to be absolutely accurate, he noted the fact that the rabbanim did not show up.

Within a short time, an answer was issued by the secretaries that the Rebbe wanted a detailed report from each rav stating why he did not attend the farbrengen.

One wrote that he had a wedding; another wrote that he had been at another important event. Each one had his reason for not attending, and each one wrote a letter with his name and mother's name, stating his reason.

I did not hear this firsthand,

and so I am not certain that this is completely accurate, but I heard that in one of the letters received by the secretaries, one of the rabbanim had written the words, "*Yom HaBahir Chai Elul*." The Rebbe circled these words and wrote, "This is the opposite of the content of your letter." In other words, how is one able to refer to the day as a special day when in his letter he excuses himself for not attending the farbrengen?

Chassidim would say, "*A kasha iz a klipa; a tirutz is a sheretz*" (a question [i.e. one that challenges a Torah precept] is a klipa and an answer [i.e. excuse] is an impure creature). R' Mendel Futerfas a"h would say that there is a story behind each part of this aphorism.

In any case, Chai Elul is very significant, and the rabbanim learned that they could not miss attending a Chai Elul farbrengen ever again.

## R' CHATSHE CRIED TWICE IN HIS LIFE

That was by way of

introduction, to explain the importance of Chai Elul in general, and of attending a Chassidishe farbrengen on Chai Elul in particular; this is especially true when we are in a holy place, a place of Torah, t'filla, and g'milus chassadim. Surely this is a big segula for effecting yeshuos in all we need — personal yeshuos and the collective yeshua — the true and complete Geula.

R' Mendel said that his mashpia, R' Yechezkel (Chatshe) Feigin, was a brilliant man with a heart of iron. They said, regarding the contrast between him and the Chassid R' Yisroel Noach Blinitzky, that when R' Yisroel Noach merely placed his tallis over his head, he would start to cry. [Chassidim would say that whoever has a head like R' Avrohom Eliyahu Plotkin, the heart of R' Yisroel Noach, and the bittul of R' Nissan Nemanov, would be a complete and perfect person.]

However, there was two times in his life that R' Chatshe cried. The first time was during Tishrei 5681/1921, right after

the passing of the Rebbe Rashab. The Rebbe Rayatz wanted him to travel on a mission in Russia on hafatza-related activity, but R' Chatshe did not really want to. He preferred sitting and learning Nigleh and Chassidus. After all, he was one of the "lions of the group" (leading scholars). The Rebbe told him to stay for Tishrei, and they would see what to do after that.

At Mincha on Yom Kippur, during Maftir Yona, it was extremely crowded. R' Chatshe pushed with all his might in order to hear the Rebbe read the Haftara. The Rebbe leined the Haftara, and R' Chatshe heard a story that reminded him of his own situation. There was a Jew by the name of Yona the Prophet and this Jew was sent on a mission to Tarshish, but he tried to wiggle out of it and fled. There was a huge storm and the ship was in great danger. The captain asked Yona the eternal question all roshei yeshivos ask: Why are you asleep?

R' Chatshe was standing facing the Rebbe when the Rebbe looked up and gazed at him as he leined the words, "For he fled from before Hashem." Chatshe burst into tears. That was the first time.

The second time he cried was in 5627/1927, after the arrest of the Rebbe Rayatz. R' Chatshe served as the Rebbe's secretary and was involved in communal work all day, distributing money to underground yeshivos, sending out melamdin, and more. R' Chatshe, who was a scholar in both Nigleh and Chassidus, and who was a Chassid who davened at length, realized that he was only able to learn the barest minimum every day, and as for davening at length, forget about it. He began to feel that his life

wasn't worth anything.

He had yechidus with the Rebbe and asked permission to learn half an hour of Chassidus a day. He didn't want to ask for too much so he only asked for half an hour. The Rebbe told him, "We lack a cheider there and a shochet here, and what about the mikva over there ..."

He understood the answer and burst into tears. He realized that what he called "living" was not to be his lot. He cried and the Rebbe began crying along with him. They cried together for some time and then the Rebbe asked, "And what will be with the *kavana elyona* (lit. Supernal intent, i.e. Divine plan)?"

That was the second time R' Chatshe cried.

## WHAT ARE SLICHOS FOR?

Chai Elul is a day of *cheshbon ha'nefesh* (spiritual stocktaking). In Chassidus it explains that this avoda entails examining one's good points and his weaknesses. One ought to be aware of what a Jew is and what a Jewish neshama is, while being cognizant of where he is holding spiritually.

When speaking about t'shuva, a Jew can think, "Who am I? What am I? What connection do I have to t'shuva?" I can understand a t'shuva of *merirus* (bitterness), but how can I relate to a t'shuva of simcha, to a Chassidishe month of Elul?

However, when we know that a Jew has a neshama that is literally a part of G-d above, and that even if it's a bit sullied it's just some dirt that can easily be removed, this knowledge enables us to feel that we can do more. We realize that it's not just a z'chus to have such a neshama, but a big responsibility.

May Hashem help us fulfill the *kavana elyona*, each in his way, that we do all the Rebbe's inyanim.

The Rebbe would always say in the month of Elul, literally with *osiyos porchos* (lit. flying letters, i.e. seemingly incomprehensible heavenly utterances) that every Jew is *b'chezkas kashrus* (a presumption of propriety). This must surely be so in the month of Elul when we hear the shofar and recite extra T'hilim, and all the more so following Chai Elul.

One year (in 5746 or 5747) the Rebbe said on Shabbos Slichos that we are already past Chai Elul, so what do we need Slichos for?

When we heard this each of us wondered: to whom is the Rebbe referring? Is he speaking to me? To all of us? How could we *not* have a connection to Slichos!

The truth is that when you think positively, you discover that this is really the truth. In the parsha we read about Vidui Maaser (the confession relating to maaser). What is the content of Vidui Maaser? "I did not transgress Your commandments and I did not forget; I did not eat from it while in mourning." The Jew says all kinds of good things about himself – what sort of confession is this? It should be called Yeshus (arrogance) Maaser!

However, when a Jew says, "I did not transgress Your commandments," it just serves to highlight the demand made of him as a Jew; it underscores the great responsibility he has.

May Hashem help us to merit fulfilling all the mitzvos and may we see the Rebbe *teikef u'miyad mamash!*

# FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE BAAL SHEM TOV AND THE HOLY TANYA

The way of Chassidus that the Baal Shem Tov founded is about consideration for the other person. If he's hungry, feed him. If he's thirsty, give him a drink. When a person follows this path, he fulfills Hashem's will of making for Him a *dira ba'tachtonim*. \* The following is excerpted from a speech given by Rabbi Abergil (see about him and his work, *Beis Moshiach* # 674) at a rabbinic conference held on Chai Elul 5769.

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Rabbi Yoram Abergil

Nasi of the Rav Pe'alim institutions in Netivot

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**T**radition tells us that R' Eliezer, the father of the Baal Shem Tov, had the enormous *z'chus* of bringing the soul of his son down into this world as a result of a special act of hospitality.

In their old age, R' Eliezer and his wife Sarah turned their home into a hostel for wayfarers, just as Avrohom Avinu and Sarah Imeinu did. They were quite elderly and nevertheless they worked hard for their guests' sake. One Shabbos, a peculiar pauper showed up, carrying bags and sundry *muktza* items.

The man was obviously desecrating the Shabbos and had come from outside the halachic boundaries. The guests looked in surprise at this man while R' Eliezer said nothing critical.

He was busy making his guest comfortable, treating him with the same respect as he did all the other guests.

R' Eliezer regularly asked his guests who would come to him for Shabbos to stay until Sunday afternoon. At that point, he would send them on their way, wish them well, and escort them with great honor. He did the same with this odd guest, saying not a single negative word, not wanting to embarrass him or make him feel bad.

Before the eccentric mendicant went on his way, he asked to speak to R' Eliezer privately. When they went off to the side, he revealed to R' Eliezer that he was Eliyahu HaNavi. He said that in heaven it had been decided to grant R' Eliezer and his wife the great merit of bringing down the *neshama* of the holy Baal Shem Tov to this world. However, due to heavenly objections and accusations raised by the prosecuting angels, they had sent him in order to test R' Eliezer. If he passed the test, he would merit bringing the holy soul of the Baal Shem Tov down into the world.

R' Eliezer and his wife passed the test, having welcomed the guest cordially and hence, they merited to become the parents of the Baal Shem Tov.

From this story we learn that the *neshama* of the holy Baal Shem Tov came to the world as a



Rabbi Yoram Abergil on a visit to 770



result of a test in Ahavas Yisroel. Before R' Eliezer passed away, he conveyed two messages to his young son. "Yisroel my son, do not fear any creature, only fear Hashem and love every Jew." This is because there are three loves: love of G-d, love of Torah, and love of Jews.

There is another version that lists the three loves in reverse: Ahavas Yisroel, Ahavas Torah, and Ahavas Hashem. This is because Ahavas Yisroel is the greatest of all.

Any churban-destruction that the Jewish people suffered in the past, including the churban Beis HaMikdash and the destruction of k'hillos in every generation, is due to lack of love for one another. By negating others we lose everything, because the main thing is missing.

The Baal Shem Tov came to the world in order to strengthen this pillar of Judaism, to love every single Jew, even those at the lowest spiritual levels. We need to go out to them, lift them up,

**“From this story we learn that the neshama of the holy Baal Shem Tov came to the world as a result of a test in Ahavas Yisroel.**

and return them to their Father in heaven. The Baal HaTanya merited to actualize these teachings. Whoever understands the essence of the Tanya is immediately strengthened in his love for every Jew, from the greatest in Yiras Shamayim to the smallest in Yiras Shamayim.

The way of Chassidus that the Baal Shem Tov founded is about consideration for the other person. If he's hungry, feed him. If he's thirsty, give him a drink. When a person follows this path, he fulfills Hashem's will of making for Him a dira ba'tachtonim. This is what is asked of every one of us. Every observant Jew must reach out to other people and share a good word with them. HaKadosh Baruch Hu longingly awaits our accomplishing the task of taking the lofty lights that have

been granted to us and bringing them down into their intended vessels, so that we may realize the actualization of "And I will dwell within them," within each and every Jew.

Who will do this if not the dear rabbanim who are on an exalted level, and whose very essence is love for the other! The entire being of a rav is to bring honor to others and to raise them ever higher with joy. This is what we received from the Baal Shem Tov, that love for Hashem, love for Torah and love for another Jew, are all one thing.

On this day of Chai Elul, a great light shines upon each of us. May we use this auspicious time and make good resolutions, to start more and more shiurim, and all in the way founded by the Baal Shem Tov, in ways of pleasantness and wisdom.

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# THE FIRST SLICHOS IN MY LIFE

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**In this third chapter, R' Yehoshua Dubrawski tells us of the first time he went to Slichos. • There, near the eastern wall of the one remaining shul in town, next to his illustrious grandfather, stood little Heishke. • Said his Zeide, "It is necessary to want and to accept wholeheartedly that tomorrow be a lot better than yesterday."**

## IN SEARCH FOR FORGIVENESS

We remember "firsts," especially from childhood. When I was six or seven years old, I went with my grandparents for the first time, after midnight on Motzaei Shabbos, to the "old shul." That was the only remaining shul still open after the Red Government confiscated the other two shuls.

That Shabbos, my grandfather (my father was not at home), R' Mendel Dubrawski, told me, "You are no longer a child. It would even be permitted for you to study a daf Gemara. To run and caper about from courtyard to courtyard, you can do that already, like a big boy. So you are certainly able to get up and go

to Slichos at night like all Jews." Zeide had already explained to me previously what Slichos are about, that we ask Hashem to forgive us for the sins that we did and in the merit of this, Hashem will bless us with a good year.

I was thrilled by this news. First, it was an adventure to go to shul with Zeide like all the adults! Second, my older sister had already caught me red-handed – she once saw me turning pages in the old Siddur too quickly during Shacharis. She told me that even Zeide could not read Lashon Ha'kodesh so quickly and I was definitely skipping entire paragraphs of the davening. "That's a big aveira," she castigated me with a wagging finger.

Unfortunately, I knew that she was almost "on target." Furthermore, I knew about another aveira that weighed on my conscience. I had nearly "killed" my mother. My mother bought pears and hid them in the dining room for the Shabbos guests. I smelled the treasure and carried out no small "demolition" job. When my mother discovered the "tragedy" and called me in for interrogation (my sisters would never do anything like this), I stammered fearfully and obstinately, since I was quite the bungler in my attempts at prevarication. This made my mother very upset, not so much because of the pears but because I had not spoken the truth. I felt like a hardcore criminal (I probably had other similar crimes on my conscience). Nu, since G-d forgives sins like these during Slichos, I was very eager to go.

My mother agreed to let me go to Slichos on condition that I go to sleep earlier, and Zeide promised to wake me up. I lay down earlier but Zeide did not have to wake me up. I was too excited to sleep, and I had no idea how to go about doing t'shuva.

Nonetheless, I felt that I had to ask my mother for forgiveness since I had practically lied to her. I was ready to jump out of bed and run to her and confess, but I didn't do it. I decided to postpone it for later when I would be about to leave for shul and then I decided to delay until after Slichos.

## NIGHT WITHOUT REST

With a serious demeanor my Zeide roused me and told me to wash my hands. My grandmother was already standing in the hallway with a demeanor of holy awe and her thick Siddur with Yiddish taich. It was a Siddur with Techinos, Slichos, and lots of prayers.

It was a chilly autumn night. Outside in the street it was perfectly still. However, due to the turmoil in my heart it seemed to me that something was lying in wait behind that peculiar frozen stillness that would shatter the tense silence. It seemed to me that the sky was bigger, higher, and deeper than ever, and in honor of Slichos night, many more stars twinkled. Were they twinkling deliberately at me?

I felt puny in an odd way in comparison to the vastness of the sky that hovered above us with so many stars. In the intimidating quiet and darkness of the night, my grandparents who also happened to be short, looked shorter than usual. Even the biggest house in town with three floors did not look as imposing as it usually did.

All the way to shul, Zeide mumbled something. I could not hear what he was saying. At the threshold of the shul he paused, caressed his peios and beard, and said – partly to himself and partly to me – something like this, “Whether you understand



Furthermore, I knew about another aveira that weighed on my conscience. I had nearly “killed” my mother.

properly or less so what you will be saying, it is necessary to want and to accept wholeheartedly that tomorrow be a lot better than yesterday.”

At the time I didn't absorb all that well the idea buried in those words. However, the single word “tomorrow” offered some relief and encouragement in my then terrified state of mind. If you could postpone something for tomorrow, that already provides some relief.

## THE T'SHUVU OF A CHILD

In the shul it was not that quiet. On the one hand, I felt at home; on the other hand, the trembling in my heart intensified. The shul was full of Jews, but those whom I knew looked different to me.

Shmuel Ber Zakorsky, who always had to pinch my cheeks, only patted my cheeks and said, “How nice, you came to say Slichos, very nice.” Yisroel the grocer and Dovidov the blacksmith were already swaying with pale faces, faces that were usually dark and swarthy.

Shortly after we arrived at the shul, it became quiet. Hillel the shochet went over to the chazzan's lectern. “Hillye” the shochet was a small man with a small red beard, but his voice was extremely powerful. This always made me wonder – how could such a small man have such a loud voice? He thundered the words “*Ashrei yoshvei veisecha*,” and the entire shul became filled with voices and cries.

I stood next to Zeide on the eastern wall. My grandfather was

the rav of the town although it was forbidden to say so. As far as the government was concerned he was a proletariat who worked in a factory that manufactured shoelaces, which incidentally were never available for sale in our town. I said the words along with Zeide from the same book of Slichos. But as hard as I tried to say every word, I kept getting confused and didn't know where we were up to. Something seemed to cramp inside me and the words danced before my eyes. This was going on as everyone around me shouted out in tearful voices, some literally bawling, all of them beseeching Hashem to forgive them. Even my strong and always happy Zeide davened in a choked voice, and I could see tears emerging from his closed eyes. When everybody was quiet, because the chazan was singing the final words of the Slicha, you could hear sobbing, sighs, and tears from the women's section. I knew that the loudest crying was from my Bubbe, since she wept when she davened and said Techinos year round. If Zeide was crying silently now, Bubbe was certainly crying loudly.

My heart felt like it was being squeezed inside me. Suddenly, like the cannonball shot from the mouth of a cannon, a sob burst forth from my throat. I don't quite know why. Fortunately, nobody heard me, because at just that moment the walls shook from the roar of “*Shma Koleinu*” or “*Keil Melech Yosheiv*.” I hid my face under Zeide's

Continued on page 24

# REUVEN DUNIN ON EDUCATION AND PROPER CONDUCT

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Beis Moshiach is pleased to present yet another excerpt from the seifer “So That The Rebbe Should Smile,” containing more than five hundred brief stories and recollections on the illustrious chassid, R’ Reuven Dunin of Haifa.

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Collected and Arranged by Chanoch HaLevi Shachar

Translated by Michael Leib Dobry

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## EVEN IN LUBAVITCH

Reuven entered the dining hall in the Ramat Aviv yeshiva on a Friday night, and the students started singing a niggun. Reuven quieted them and said, “R’ Mendel [Futerfas] said that ‘even in Lubavitch,’ there was quiet by the fish [course]. Make kiddush, wash for bread, eat the fish, and only afterwards sing niggunim.”

(Rabbi Eliezer Wilschansky)

## SLEEPING ON SHABBOS

During a farbrengen on Shabbos, one of the participants stood up and told Reuven that he has to go to sleep. Reuven gave him a piercing look and made a half-turn of his hand, as if to say, “What is this?” Undaunted,

the Chassid replied, “*Sheina B’Shabbos Taanug* (sleep on Shabbos is a pleasure). “There’s a kabbala from the Arizal,” Reuven replied, “stating that *Sheina B’Shabbos Taanug* means – one who sleeps on Shabbos, his pleasure goes to sleep.”

(Chanoch HaLevi Shachar)

## YOU SHALL RISE BEFORE A VENERABLE PERSON

At a farbrengen in Lud, Reuven began by saying, “After the damage has already been done, parents come and cry that their child is ‘on the fence’ and he doesn’t want to learn, etc.... How can it be that there are elder Chassidim with white hair who are standing on their feet while

small children are sitting in the first row?”

(Rabbi Lior Rosenbaum)

## THERE ARE NO DEFECTIVE CHILDREN

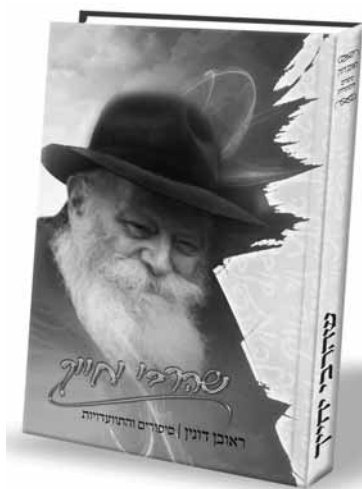
During a discussion on children’s education, Reuven told one of the parents complaining about his sons, “There are no defective children; there are only defective parents.”

(Eliyahu Hecht)

## ONE MUST LISTEN TO THE RAV

I once took Reuven to visit an afternoon yeshiva program in Kfar Chabad for wayward youth. When I learned that the bachurim who studied there came from Chabad homes, I was stunned. I asked Reuven how was it possible for bachurim raised in Lubavitch to reach a state where they deviated from the path of Torah. “I’ve been crying out over this for a long time already,” Reuven replied. “It all starts from the parents. The parents don’t do what they’re supposed to do, and they don’t listen to the rav. So what’s to be surprised about?”

(Rabbi Lior Rosenbaum)



## SHALOM BAYIS

In holy matters such as domestic harmony, Reuven did not take sides. Once during a conversation with a married couple, Reuven said the following: “Gan Eden and Gehinom exist around each individual. Putting a kippa on your head doesn’t turn you into a pious Jew. First, let’s get down to the basics!”

Reuven turned to the husband and then to the wife. “Sir, which one of you cleans the cholent pot on Motzaei Shabbos? Madam, are you aware of the high percentage of men who suffer from angina? Get off your husband’s back! If there is no sacrifice involved in a relationship, there won’t be any closeness. Just as this is true in spiritual matters, it applies with equal measure in the material realm. If you don’t give of yourself, you can’t get closer to someone else.”

(Avraham Pesach)

## THE REBBE SMILED

Reuven said that once during lekach distribution, his friend whispered in his ear that the line was about to be stopped, and he suggested that they cut their way through. Reuven considered

“Listen my friend, the first person whom G-d told not to steal was Moshe Rabbeinu, and he didn’t get insulted. What are you getting so upset about?”

his options. On the one hand, he wanted very much to receive lekach, but on the other hand, it wouldn’t be fair to others. As a result, he didn’t cut the line. In the end, the line didn’t stop, and Reuven told his learned friend, “When Dunin passed, the Rebbe smiled.” (Reuven saw a smile of approval because he remained in his place in line.)

(Efraim Bernstein)

## BASIC CHASSIDIC TEXTS

At my third meeting with Reuven at the Herzl Street Chabad House in Haifa, when I asked him which s’farim would be appropriate for me to buy, he told me, “First of all, you should purchase the three basic chassidic texts: Kesser Shem Tov, Maggid D’varav L’Yaakov, and Tanya.”

Later, I asked Reuven which would be preferable, Likkutei Dibburim or a second seifer that I named. “I can’t decide for you which one is better,” he said. “I can only tell you that in Likkutei Dibburim...every word is a pearl.”

(Chanoch HaLevi Shachar)

## DO NOT STEAL

“A person has to know his place and not deceive himself. All of us have some degree of connection to all of the sins listed in the Torah. I don’t know if I’ve ever told you this before, but...I once came to a certain shiur, and I quickly understood that I had nothing to do there. I don’t know why, but ‘G-d opened the mouth of the donkey,’ and I spoke that

night about how it is forbidden to steal. It just came out that way.

“After a few moments, one of the participants spoke up. ‘Rabbi Dunin, we came here to learn. Why are you talking to us about stealing?’

“I said to him, ‘Listen my friend, the first person whom G-d told not to steal was Moshe Rabbeinu, and he didn’t get insulted. What are you getting so upset about?’ The person got up and left. Even in the most subtle way, such matters exist within all of us.”

(Audio transcript – courtesy of the Kol Mevasser Institute)

## THE PROPER ORDER OF THINGS

During a class in Kuntres Heichaltzu in the home of R’ Yosef Chitrik, Reuven told his host, “Yossel, there’s a custom in Haifa that the one who provides the gashmius says something about ruchnius inyanim as well.”

(Audio transcript – courtesy of the ‘Kol Mevasser’ Institute)

## QUESTIONS ABOUT CHABAD CUSTOMS

Reuven once told me, “When I was in 770 prior to my wedding, I asked the Rebbe, ‘Should I wear a silk kapote after the wedding?’

“The Rebbe replied, ‘It depends how you feel about it.’ When I continued to ask him again for clarification, the Rebbe told me, ‘Ask Leibel Groner. He knows the customs well.’ And so I did.”

(Rabbi Lior Rosenbaum)

## NOT BEING NOTICEABLE

Reuven made certain not to be conspicuous. He would customarily stand whenever he would hear a review of a maamer of the Rebbe. However, to avoid standing out when everyone else remained seated, he would get up, as if he was leaving to use the restroom and stand in the corner.

He was extra careful about leaving a farbrengen quietly, as per the instructions of R' Mendel. Anyone who went around looking for a minyan for bentching at a farbrengen in order to leave early, Reuven called him 'klipa.'

(Chanoch HaLevi Shachar)

## I REQUEST

Reuven's home at 3 Borochoy Street was a school in politeness

and civility. When one of the children or guests wanted something, he was told to say "Ani mevakesh" (I request), and those who didn't say, didn't get. Reuven uprooted the expression "Ani rotze" (I want), and replaced it with "I request" (see *HaYom Yom*, Teves 10).

(Chanoch HaLevi Shachar)

## A GEMARA QUESTION

Once on a Shabbos afternoon, Reuven sat with one of the children in a side room and taught him Gemara. As they were reviewing the Gemara his son said, "And Rashi had a difficulty."

Reuven stopped him and said, "Nothing was difficult for Rashi. One of the main differences between us and the Litvaks is this basic outlook. Chassidus uses

the expression 'And one must understand', and not 'there is a question', when something is not understood. First of all, look into yourself. It stands to reason that the lack of understanding is within oneself, not Rashi. Do you think that authors would trouble themselves to write whole s'farim about differences of opinion among the Tanaim? There are no differences of opinion in the Gemara. All the seemingly divergent opinions in the Gemara are the words of the living G-d, but they contain great mysteries. All such matters are whole teachings in Avodas Hashem, and chassidus explains it all. Now, go and learn again the sugya of 'one who exchanges a cow for a donkey.'"

(Chanoch HaLevi Shachar)

## Continued from page 21

shtender (lectern) so nobody would see how I sobbed, but my grandfather, who noticed everything, saw me. He did not say anything; he just pushed his handkerchief into my hands. It was only after I cried that I remembered my sins, and I was very curious to know, to have some proof and sign, that Hashem had forgiven me.

Each time they opened

the Aron Kodesh, I waited in trepidation, seeking some indication that would serve as proof. After all, I was saying Slichos along with everyone in shul!

It's odd, but the conclusion of my first Slichos remains murky in my memory, as if I had been very emotionally overwrought. However, I did get a sign, since on my way back from Slichos with my grandparents I felt at

ease. The intimidating skies were no longer so frightening, and the millions of stars that "looked down" with a joyful twinkle became closer and seemed to wink in friendship.

Also, my sister would see that surely someone who already went to shul to recite Slichos would never again skip in the davening or lie to mother, father, and ... likely wouldn't lie to anyone; no, he *surely* would not lie to anyone.



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# THE KEY TO HAPPINESS

By Rabbi Yisroel Harpaz

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There was once an aspiring young rabbi — let's call him Rabbi Black — who, upon graduation from rabbinical college, sought a prestigious position in an established synagogue. The only problem was that established synagogues were not looking for young rabbis with no experience.

Eventually, the young rabbi settled for a low profile position in an obscure, outlying town with a small community, figuring he would work his way up to his dream of being a big city rabbi.

But as the years passed, the opportunity never presented itself. He felt trapped, and started becoming depressed. And, as is often the case, the depression started him down a slippery slope of emotional and psychological pessimism in which he questioned his faith, his theology, and life itself. He spiraled out of control, completely despondent, even suicidal. To make matters worse, he felt he had no one to turn to: He did not want to burden his family; his congregants would certainly relieve him of his position if they knew his inner struggles, and his mentors would defrock him. For whatever reason, Rabbi Black felt the only person he could confide in was the Rebbe, even though he was not his student or follower.

He called the Rebbe's office and, without disclosing his identity, introduced himself as a Jew from a small town in Connecticut who was struggling with his faith and wished to schedule a private meeting with

the Rebbe. He was informed that meetings were currently being scheduled six months in advance. When he said that his situation was urgent, even desperate, Rabbi Black was placed on hold as the Rebbe's secretary consulted the Rebbe. After what seemed like an eternity, the secretary returned with the following answer:

The Rebbe is not able to see you in the coming days. But you need not despair. There is a gifted rabbi living in your area — a tremendous man with an intellect that can answer all your theological questions and the sensitivity to help you overcome your inner struggles. His name is Jacob Black, and you can rely on him.

Needless to say, this phone call changed Rabbi Black's life. It suddenly clicked. He realized who he was and why he was there. And he felt immediately empowered. The Rebbe trusts him.

A man calls the Rebbe in dire straits, and the Rebbe refers the man to him. He suddenly realized his own significance and purpose, and proceeded to re-evaluate his life in a new light.

Like Rabbi Black, I often find myself seeking happiness outside of my current reality. I tell myself that when I get to the next stage or achieve the next milestone or the next piece of the puzzle falls into place, then I can settle down and appreciate the beauty of life, then I will be able to live my ideal life, to live the way I know I really can and should. Instead of coming

to terms with the monumental meaning of now, I try to shield myself from the overwhelming storm of life by denying the power and purpose inherent in every moment, convincing myself that the present is somehow an aberration, a glitch in the system, a shaky bridge leading a stable future. But I do myself a great disservice, for the waters of this storm contain the greatest blessings for growth.

I need to learn, as Rabbi Black did, that trust is the key to happiness. True happiness comes from embracing the moment, no matter how painful or challenging that moment may be. It is no trick to see the beauty and destiny of life in retrospect. The trick is to sense the meaning and beauty right now, while it's being lived within the chaos of life's labyrinthine turns — to appreciate the big picture within the moment.

This requires a tremendous amount of trust— trust that the world and my reality and my purpose are being created exactly as they should, trust that I am endowed with the strength and tools necessary to see this through, and, ultimately, trust that everything is good, even perfect.

So instead of denying the power of the moment, I resolve to embrace its perfection, to allow it to consume me, shake me up and challenge me. It may force me to change direction, or become strengthened, or open myself up to new horizons and new modes of living, but it will bring me closer to the purpose of my existence. For I am right here, right now, because this is exactly where I need to be.

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Exodus Magazine*

# THE REBBEIM'S PREPARATION OF THE WORLD FOR MOSHIACH

## Part II

By Rabbi Gershon Avtzon

Dear Reader Sh'yichyeh,

This article will focus on the work of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the Alter Rebbe, whose birthday we celebrate today, Chai Elul.

### A NEW NESHAMA

From the day that the Alter Rebbe (18 Elul, 5505) was born, it was clear that he would one day blaze a new path towards Moshiach. The Baal Shem Tov told his followers that the newly born child had a "Neshama Chadasha," a new soul, which was sent down to the world for a new unique mission.

The name chosen for him with the Ruach HaKodesh of his parents expresses that mission. His two names are Shneur Zalman. The word Shneur can be read as Shnei-Or, translated to mean two lights. It represents the two revolutions that he would make in the two parts of Torah. These were his Chiddushim in the revealed parts of Torah in his Shulchan Aruch and the tremendous effect that he caused with his explanations of the

esoteric part of Torah, namely the Tanya. His second name is Zalman, which has the same letters as L'zman, means "to time." His mission was to draw down the light of G-dliness and reveal it within the limitations of time, i.e. the physical world. This was to prepare us for the time that "the world will be filled with knowledge of Hashem."

This theme is seen in all of his works. While in the previous generations, the authors of the Shulchan Aruch and Mishna Torah merely wrote down the laws that a Jew is obligated to fulfill, the Alter Rebbe wrote the laws with their reasoning. This enables the one who is studying them to properly grasp and internalize the laws of Hashem.

### THE TORAH SH'BICHSV OF CHASSIDUS

However, his biggest contribution by far to the Jewish people was the Seifer HaTanya. It revolutionized the way that a Jew previously perceived himself and his service of Hashem. While his holy predecessors – the Baal



Shem Tov and the Maggid – taught pearls of Chassidus, this seifer of the Alter Rebbe is a curriculum for Chassidus. It is known as the Torah Sh'Bichsav (bible) of Chassidus.

In many ways, the Tanya itself, as well as its content, expresses Moshiach:

- It was printed in the year 5556 (1796), which is the numeric value of "Pedusainu," our Redemption.

- In chapters 36-37, the Alter Rebbe defines that which we are yearning for when we anticipate Yemos HaMoshiach and how to achieve it.

- He explains at length the concepts of Achdus Hashem, which will be revealed when Moshiach comes.

The Tzaddik Rabbi Zushe of Anipoli declared (Kitzurim VeHaoros LeTanya, page 125) that "With the learning of the Tanya, we will greet Moshiach!" The Rebbe strongly wishes that every Jew learn the Tanya. To realize this vision, he had the Tanya printed in nearly every city and translated into many languages, including Braille, so that any Jew, no matter where he may be, can learn from a Tanya printed in his town. The evil forces, the Klipa, were very distressed with the printing of the Tanya, because it is the key to their total demise that will occur with Yemos HaMoshiach. This is the reason why the Alter Rebbe

**“The Alter Rebbe wrote the laws with their reasoning. This enables the person studying them to properly grasp and internalize the laws of Hashem.”**



had to sit in jail for 53 days, one day for each chapter of Tanya!

## THROUGH THE “GENERAL GATE” TO MOSHIACH

The Alter Rebbe also compiled a siddur for the layman. The uniqueness of the Siddur is that it is totally based on the ways and teachings of the Arizal. Regarding this special Siddur it is written (introduction of the Shaar Ha’kollel): “There are various versions of the prayer services. These differences are a result of the fact that ‘there were thirteen prostrations in the [Beis] HaMikdash paralleling the thirteen gates which will be in [the Beis HaMikdash of] the Future Era.’”

Twelve of the thirteen gates are for the twelve tribes, one gate for each tribe. The thirteenth gate is the general gate, for the entire Jewish people without distinction. Nowadays, when we no longer pray in the Beis HaMikdash, but instead we pray in a synagogue, this refers to a version of the prayer service, which is applicable to all Jews.

“The evil forces, the Klipa, were very distressed with the printing of the Tanya, because it is the key to their total demise that will occur with Yemos HaMoshiach. This is the reason why the Alter Rebbe had to sit in jail for 53 days, one day for each chapter of Tanya!

It is true that there is an advantage for each tribe to follow the prayer service appropriate for it, entering through its individual gate. Indeed, “at the time when every individual knew the tribe to which he belonged, it was preferable that every individual enter through his [tribe’s] gate.... At present, however, when [by and large] we do not know to which tribe we belong, it is preferable to enter through the general gate. [This applies] even to select individuals such as priests and Levites, who know the identity of their tribe. This general gate refers to the version of the prayers authored by the Arizal, but specifically to the Siddur of the Alter Rebbe!”

The Alter Rebbe was able to take the lofty concepts and

teachings of the Arizal and make a Siddur that would reach and elevate even the simple layman. The compilation of this siddur was definitely a key preparation for the times of Moshiach, when everyone will be on an elevated level of serving Hashem.

Another tremendous contribution towards the bringing of Moshiach was the birth of his eldest son Rabbi Dovber, the Mittlerer Rebbe. We will elaborate about his unique role in our next article IY”H.

*Rabbi Avtzon is the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Lubavitch Cincinnati. Recordings of his in-depth shiurim on Inyanei Geula u’Moshiach can be accessed at <http://ylcrecording.com>.*

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# DESTINATION: EARTH

By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton,

Mashpia in Yeshivas Ohr T'mimim in Kfar Chabad



**T**his week's Torah portion contains a lot of curses, 98 to be exact, awaiting the Jews if they sin. A cursory glance will reveal that many of them are unspeakably grotesque, but surprisingly there is no mention of hell or the afterlife!

It is hard to make sense of this. The Talmud explains that even one instant in hell is more painful and horrendous than seventy years of all the curses mentioned here together. Why doesn't G-d at least give hell an honorable mention here, or for that matter, anywhere else in the Torah?

To understand this, here is a story (Sichos HaShavua #1233):

Our story takes place in the city of Berditchev some 250 years ago. One day a strange case was presented to the Rabbi of the city, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak, who besides being a Torah genius, was also known for his knowledge of Kabbala and his ability to do great miracles.

The plaintiff was a young man named Avraham. Following his marriage he sat at home for several years and learned from the holy books: Talmud, Halacha, Midrash and more. However, twenty years and several children of marriageable age later he realized he had no choice but to look for some means to pay for their weddings.

He had a knack for business, and the idea fell into his mind to

become a broker, linking sellers with potential buyers.

He began his work slowly and made a few deals, albeit very small ones but sufficient to provide a bit of money and a lot of optimism.

He got into the custom of taking a daily stroll near the docks to see what was being imported, hoping he could pick up some business. His patience paid off. One day, he noticed twenty carriages laden with shipping crates that had been sitting idly in a corner of the docks for over a week.

Avraham smelled opportunity. The owner's name, a very rich importer, was written on all the shipping crates. He probably hadn't found a buyer. At that moment, the name of a big buyer popped into Avrohom's head. But Avraham was no fool. He knew that this was out of his league and such tycoons would probably pay no attention to him, so he decided he would go to a known broker by the name of Reb Shmuel and ask his advice.

This Reb Shmuel was a real wheeler and dealer, friendly with everyone and a shrewd businessman who could sell anything to anyone. In a worst-case scenario, Avraham could give Reb Shmuel the idea, let him make the connections and it would net both of them a nice profit. Who knew, maybe they would become partners! In any

case, this would be a chance for Avraham to break into the circles of 'big' business.

But when Reb Shmuel heard the idea he wasn't excited. "Listen, Avraham, you're still young and fresh. Big business deals like these are set up months in advance and don't need either of us. But it's good that you are thinking! That's the way to do it! Keep up the good work!"

So Avraham dropped the idea. But imagine his surprise when two days later he happened to hear that Reb Shmuel had approached the two wealthy merchants, made the connection, consummated the sale and took the broker money, which amounted to quite a huge sum, all for himself!

But when Avraham approached Reb Shmuel, the latter claimed that he didn't know what Avraham was talking about! "Your idea? Why, that's insane!"

Reb Shmuel claimed the idea was his own; he'd been thinking about it for days, and even if it was Avrohom's idea, so what? After all, who did all the work, the running around and talking? And in any case Avraham was just a beginner and could never have cinched the deal. And since when do businessmen get paid just for inventing ideas?

Reb Shmuel gave Avraham twenty dollars 'charity', patted him on the shoulder and told him to go away or he'd call the police.



Avraham threatened to go to court, but it didn't seem to affect his adversary at all. A few weeks later he found out why.

When, in fact, he took him to the rabbinical court and they decided that Reb Shmuel was wrong, Shmuel calmly announced that because the judges had no concept of business and certainly not of such big enterprises, he refused to accept their verdict and would not pay a penny! The rabbinical courts back then had no means of enforcing their decisions and policies. Thus, poor Avraham had no choice but to refer his case to the great and holy Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev.

Shortly after Rosh Hashanah, Reb Shmuel received his subpoena to appear in Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's presence. He assumed that the Rabbi would be as helpless as the other court to enforce his decisions and perhaps would even decide in his favor. Reb Shmuel, figuring he had nothing to lose, decided to appear.

**“I took a closer look and saw they were filled with sins and transgressions produced by the Jews! I knew that if presented properly they could be a very precious commodity to G-d.”**

The next day they stood before the Rabbi. Avraham in awe and trepidation, and Reb Shmuel half bored and half curious to see how things would turn out.

The Rebbe heard both sides, and when they finished presenting their cases and answering questions, he turned to Reb Shmuel and said, “I understand and appreciate your rejection of the Rabbis’ decision. You are certainly right that they have no experience in business, especially in matters of such big business as yours.”

Reb Shmuel was pleasantly surprised and a warm smile covered his face, especially when he noticed how Avraham was sinking into despair.

“However,” the Rebbe continued, “I *do* have experience! In fact just a few days ago on

Rosh Hashanah, I just closed a deal that was much greater than any you have ever seen!”

Avraham began to regain his composure, and Reb Shmuel again went into his scoffing mode.

The Rebbe continued. “Just before the holiday, I happened to be strolling in heaven and noticed thousands of wagons filled with some sort of wares. I took a closer look and saw they were filled with sins and transgressions produced by the Jews!

“I knew that if presented properly they could be a very precious commodity to G-d. After all, G-d doesn't want such things to fall into the hands of the accusing angles, and there is nothing more valuable to Him than true repentance.

“Anyway, after much effort I

managed to get through to G-d and ask Him what He would be willing give in return for the Jews' repentance for all these sins? G-d replied that He was willing to give total forgiveness and great spiritual merit in both this world and the next.

"But I held out for a higher price. I convinced G-d that the Jews deserve a higher payment for returning to Him. He has to throw in blessings for health, wealth and children as well. Are you listening Reb Shmuel?"

Reb Shmuel had been looking alternately at his watch and at the door, clearly not impressed by any of this, but when the question caught his attention, the Rebbe continued.

"Anyway, it worked! I had to work hard and it took a lot of talking, patience, and prayer, but I finally convinced all the Jews in the area, even the biggest sinners, to regret their sins, return to the Torah and resolve to do only good things in the future.

"So I delivered the goods to G-d, and G-d kept His part of the deal! He both forgave everyone's sins and promised to bless them with health, money and good families in this world.

"But then G-d reminded me that I was owed a broker's fee; I had worked hard, both parties got what they wanted and were satisfied, and now I should set a price for my efforts.

"I answered that from the Jews I don't expect any payment, but if G-d so desires He can give me whatever He thinks is fair. So

you know what He said?" At this point, Reb Shmuel was trying not to fall asleep, but managed to shrug his shoulders. "He said that I can have the power to control the blessing of health, children and earnings and decide who would get these things. And so it was!

"So you see that I am just as an experienced broker as you are, right Reb Shmuel? So you have no excuse not to listen to my decision. And my decision is you must pay Avraham what he demands. Do you hear me Reb Shmuel! And please remember that in this case I am both the judge and the policeman; I have the power to decide if you deserve health and wealth, for G-d just gave it to me. So, if you want to remain healthy, then pay what you owe!"

Reb Shmuel looked at the Rebbe, shook his head incredulously as though to say, "You really want me to take this seriously?" He then stood up, slowly made for the door and didn't even look back as he waived over his shoulder and said, "Good luck Rebbe! Don't hold your breath for the money."

He slammed the door behind him, but to his great dismay, after a few minutes his face and limbs started twitching, and by the time he made it home they were contorted like a pretzel. He tried to tell his horrified family something, but his tongue wagged around in his mouth and all he could get out of his mouth were the words, "Pay, Rabbi, rarrgullll!"

When they figured out what he meant, his wife took all the money in their safe, rushed to Rabbi Levi Yitzchak, and paid the entire debt. When she returned home, she found a repentant, humble and healthy husband. It seems that Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was a better broker than Reb Shmuel had reckoned.

This answers our questions. Hell is certainly a terrible punishment but it is not mentioned anywhere in the Five Books of Moses because it de-emphasizes this physical world. The point of the Bible is to stress the importance of our mundane, material, temporal existence.

It is *here* that G-d wants us to serve Him, make blessings and transform this darkness into a meaningful heaven on earth, while the heaven and hell that are beyond our physical senses are but temporary abodes for souls awaiting their return to bodies, either through re-incarnation or in the raising of the dead.

As we saw in our story, nothing is more precious to the Creator than repentance in this world and no reward is greater than freedom to serve G-d in this world without the distractions of disease, poverty and the like, ch"v.

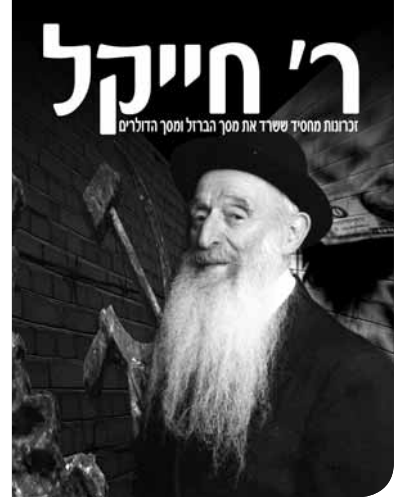
This is how it will be in the days of Moshiach (Rambam, Kings 12:5), and this is what we pray for on Rosh Hashanah. We beseech G-d for a good, healthy, happy, successful new year, namely that G-d should reveal Himself until all mankind exclaims that "the G-d of Israel is King and His kingship is over the entire Creation!"

It all depends on us to make it happen. One more good thought, word or deed can tip the scales and bring...

Moshiach NOW!

**“He tried to tell his horrified family something, but his tongue wagged around in his mouth and all he could get out of his mouth were the words, “Pay, Rabbi, rarrgullll!”**

At first my father could not understand what an “army rabbi” was; the title sounded oxymoronic. He did not imagine that due to this acquaintance, the director of the Vaad (Committee) in Germany would visit the DP camp in Poking and aid the Chassidim by supporting the yeshiva and providing siddurim, Chumashim, Mishnayos, Gemaras, and other s’farim.



By: Rabbi Shneur Zalman Chanin

Translated by: Menachem Har Tzvi

# FROM GERMAN ARMY WAREHOUSES TO THE JEWISH REFUGEES IN THE CAMPS

## THE U.S. ARMY SUPPLIES HOLY BOOKS FOR THE REFUGEES

My father told me a number of times that he would travel to Munich every week to visit the offices of the various refugee organizations. He walked from office to office to receive allocations, food, and in some instances cash, for the yeshiva students, heads of the yeshiva, and the staff in Poking. In

addition to material aid, my father worked diligently to acquire *s’farim* for Yeshivas Tomchei T’mimim in Poking.

It is not hard to understand the pain of the heads of the yeshiva and the students who were teaching and learning without *s’farim*. This scenario was not limited to Poking; all over Europe G-d-fearing Jews were attempting to return to normal life and establish yeshivas and study halls.

I found a letter of Rabbi Shalpuvsky (*halachic* authority, judge, and member of the Kovno rabbinate) that expresses the refugees’ great longing for *s’farim*:

“The days are passing without spiritual work, because we do not have any holy books here. However, during the last few days an American Rabbi brought a certain tractate (of Gemara) and I had great joy. We are waiting that someone from



Rabbi Sneig, one of the leaders of the Vaad Hatzalah



Standing, from the right: Rabbi Mendel Raskin, my father, Rabbi Chaikel Chanin. Seated, second from the right: Rabbi Nossan Boruch and Rabbi Avrohom Eliyahu Plotkin

**the outside will come to our aid, because ‘a prisoner cannot release himself from prison.’”**

As I have written previously, my father became friends with Rabbi Sneig (one of the leaders of the Vaad Hatzalah, the Agudah rescue committee) and he attempted to fulfill all my father’s requests. During one of my father’s trips, Rabbi Sneig suggested that he meet Rabbi Nossan Baruch, who served in the U.S. Army and was the director of Vaad Hatzalah in Germany.

At first my father did not understand what an “army rabbi” was. The title sounded oxymoronic. He had never heard of anything like this. And if so, what was the connection with *s’farim* for yeshiva students?

He did not imagine that due to this acquaintance, Rabbi Nossan Boruch would visit the DP camp in Poking and meet with the rabbis and heads of the yeshiva led by R. Avrohom Eliyahu Plotkin. Subsequently



From the right, Rabbi Naftali Junik, Rabbi Mendel Raskin, his father, Rabbi Yaakov Yosef Raskin. Fourth from the right, Rabbi Mordechai Schusterman

he would help the Chasidim in Poking sustain the yeshiva and provide *siddurim*, *Chumashim*, *Mishnayos*, *Gemaras*, and other *s’farim*.

It is known that a short while after the liberation, the U.S. Army discovered in the warehouses of

the SS approximately 300,000 *s’farim*, hundreds of manuscripts, and Torah material that was looted from various places. However, since the U.S. Army had not yet resolved the fate of this newly discovered treasure, it was considered ownerless

property. Consequently, in 1946 a very small amount of the *s'farim* was transferred for the use of the survivors.

The U.S. Army sent Jewish chaplains to be in close proximity with the Holocaust survivors and to aid them. The military rabbis, understanding the importance of *s'farim* to the survivors, were the ones who provided the first *s'farim*. At times they supplied their own or illegally took them from the warehouses and gave them to the survivors.

The survivors sent letters to Jewish communities throughout the world, asking for *s'farim*. Slowly a small amount began to arrive; however, not enough to satisfy the thirst for Torah study among the survivors.

The following is a quotation of a survivor, a Gerrer Chassid, describing the great emotion experienced when the first Gemara arrived at a DP camp near Rome.

**“R. Laibel Silberberg could not contain himself. He grabbed the Gemara from my hands, sat on the floor, and began to sweetly sing in the ancient tune ‘Zogt di Gemara – says the Gemara.’ The group gathered around him. Laibel Kutzner took the Tractate P’sachim and began to teach loudly “on the eve of the 14th we search for chametz . . . . Others crowded around a third Gemara, almost tearing it because of their tremendous desire.”**

This was a minor Simchas Torah.



### PUBLISHING S'FARIM IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS

The spiritual desire and necessity for *s'farim* brought about the idea of publishing in the DP camps. In many camps, the survivors seized the initiative and established printing presses that produced *Chumashim*, *siddurim*, a commentary to the Megillas and the Hagada, works of the Rishonim, classic works of *musar* (ethics) such as *Mesilas Yesharim* by the Ramchal and *Ohr Yisroel* by R. Yisroel Salanter, works of Chassidus (such as *Letters of the Gerrer Rebbe-Landsberg* 5706-1946, and a collection of writings of the Slonimer Chassidim, Vindsheim 5708-1948), and works of *halacha*. Also published were new works related to the Laws of Family Purity (by Rabbi Sneig, Munich 1946; Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Meislish, Bergen Belsen 1948).

The Lubavitcher Chassidim did not remain idle. When the

Rebbe MH”M, director of Kehos, visited Paris to greet his mother Rebbetzin Chana, he appointed R. Dovid Bravman to publish many works of Chassidus for Anash and T’mimim—among them the *Tanya*, *Shulchan Aruch* of the Alter Rebbe, *Shaar HaEmunah* of the Mitteler Rebbe, *Seifer HaMaamarim* 5670-1910, *Siddur T’hillas Hashem*, *Biurei HaZohar*, *Torah Ohr*, *Likkutei Torah*, *Sipurnu*, and others. The Rebbe also funded the publishing of Chassidus by Kehos in Germany.

On a side note, Rabbi Nosson Baruch, his friend R. Eliezer Bronstein, and Rabbi Sneig had the great merit of preparing a new generation of rabbis, *shochtim* [kosher slaughterers], and *sofrim* [scribes] in the DP camps. Also, they established Talmud Torahs and schools for girls, distributed holy objects (such as *t’fillin* and *mezuzos*), and provided kosher food for the Jewish refugees. However, their crowning achievement was the publication of the Talmud by the U.S. Army.

Around Shavuot 5706/1946 (one year after the liberation), the two tractates Kiddushin and Nedarim were published by Rabbi Rose and Rabbi Sneig. The two rabbis from Kovno, who were staying at a hospital in a DP camp near Dachau, had by Divine Providence found the two tractates in a monastery, which served as a hospital. With funds from the Vaad Hatzalah they photographed and published the two tractates, which they subsequently distributed in DP camps throughout Europe. Whoever studied during this period in one of the Yeshivos in the camps, study halls, or individually, studied these tractates.

**“However, since the U.S. Army had not yet resolved the fate of this newly discovered treasure, it was considered ownerless property.**



Students of Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim Lubavitch learning Torah in the refugee camp in Peking

The success of this printing, the joy it brought to the learners, and the need for more Gemaras energized Rabbi Sneig, Rabbi Rose, Rabbi Nosson Baruch, Rabbi Bronstein, and Rabbi Klausner to conceive the daring plan of publishing the entire Talmud in Germany. A rabbinic delegation approached the commander of the American Zone in Germany, General Joseph McNarney, and requested his aid in the project.

McNarney, a philo-Semite (lover of Jews) understood the symbolic significance of their request. Despite the severe paper shortage he approved the funding of the publication of the Talmud in Germany.

The project was not easy. Unfortunately a complete set of Talmud could not be found in all of Germany. Enlisting the aid of American Jewry, the rabbis asked for two sets of Talmud (different editions) as a source for the publication. Because of many difficulties, the publication of 500 sets of the Munich Talmud took two years.

This event was highly

meaningful and historic. The U.S. Army published a Talmud for the Jews on the soil of accursed Germany, which had desired to annihilate Jews, Judaism, and Jewish culture.

### A STRANGE TELEGRAM

I do not know if my father had additional sources to receive *s'farim*. However, I received one of the telegrams that my father sent to R. Yitzchok Goldin in Poland regarding Gemaras he received.

**77 Munich 61 29 3 5:14 PM=VIA WUN**

**12 RELIGIOUS BOOKS RECEIVED MAY 18<sup>th</sup> stop RABBI NOT YET ARRIVED stop STUDIES IMPOSSIBLE stop IMPERATIVE YOU TAKE STEPS AND ADVISE = CHANIN**

To me the telegram seems a bit strange. My father did not write or speak English, so who wrote the telegram for him? Why was the telegram written in this language? What is written between the lines? For whom is the telegram intended? If the

religious books arrived, why is study impossible? To what steps is he alluding? What sort of advice is he seeking, and in relation to what?

Unfortunately, I do not have the answer to these questions. I would be happy if any of the readers provided me with information related to this. However, the facts are that the telegram was sent and that my father was involved in the delivery of the *s'farim*, something he never related.

• • •

### “SURELY ANASH ARE HELPING MY MOTHER”

I received an interesting letter from R. Sholom Dovber Friedlander, which was found in the archives of his grandfather, R. Sholom Mendel Kalmanson. The letter is addressed to the heads of the yeshiva in Peking and written by R. Sholom Mendel on *Motzaei Shabbos Parshas Toldos*, 29 Cheshvan 5707 (1946).

In the beginning he reports that he received their letter with the lists of the students,



heads of the yeshiva, and all the Anash refugees in Peking, and had already sent the letter to the Rashag (son-in-law of the Rebbe). However, after sending everything he received a letter from R. Hillel Pewzner, stating that he should not send it . . . .

During the course of the letter, R. Sholom Mendel relates the good news that 58 Chassidim had left Russia on Thursday, *Parshas VaYeira*, and that with the help of G-d they succeeded in crossing the border into Austria. R. Sholom Mendel met them at the border and received regards from Anash in Russia.

The difficult period of the holidays, when it appeared that passage out of Russia was sealed and they could be seized by the NKVD, had passed. Now there was an additional breach in the Iron Curtain, and G-d willing, additional groups of Anash were planning to leave in the near future.

Unfortunately the material state of those who had left Russia was severe, and obviously it was the same for those who had not yet left. R. Yitzchok Goldin sent 10,000 dollars. However, “a handful does not satisfy the lion.” The funds that the Rebbe’s son-in-law received from the Joint were spent, and there were no funds to support the ongoing escape from Russia.

R. Sholom Mendel adds that he intends to tell R. Itche Goldin to ask the Chassidim on the other side of the border to borrow money, relying on funds that my father R. Chaikel Chanin and R. Peretz Mochkin will send. I will relate this in a future chapter, G-d willing.

R. Sholom Mendel continues that the sentence of Chaim Ber (known to all as Berke Chein) was changed to a milder punishment.

R. Berke Chein, who was seized in Lvov just before boarding a train to flee Russia, was sentenced to death. Afterwards his sentence was changed to 18 years of hard labor. Subsequently this was changed to “only” ten years of imprisonment.

He mentions the young Miss Hadassah Perman Garelik, who played a major role in the escape from Russia, and he conveys that the American consul in Prague is giving visas for students and that they agree to include young couples and children, whereas in Germany even students cannot receive visas to the U.S. According to the letter he received from R. Yisroel Jacobson, approximately 150 affidavits were sent for the students.

R. Sholom did not receive any letters from the Rebbe Rayatz. Rather, R. Binyomin received a letter for Anash and for R. Hillel. The Ramash (as the Rebbe MH”M was known before becoming Rebbe) sent a letter requesting help for his mother by sending her name as it appears on her false papers, and by sending her temporary address. He adds, “In general, I am waiting with great anticipation for an answer from her.”

At the end of the letter, R. Sholom Mendel copies a letter he received from Rabbi Jacobson in which he demands in the name of the Rebbe Rayatz that the refugees not remain in Czechoslovakia but rather travel to the American Zone in Germany. In addition, efforts were made to send American papers for yeshiva and Beis Rivka students. He stresses that whoever has the opportunity to settle in Europe shall do so because it is not known when permission to immigrate will be

granted.

**B”H**

**Motzaei Shabbos Kodesh  
Toldos 5707**

**His Honor HaRav  
HaChassid HaRav HaTamim  
Moreinu**

**HaRav R. Avrohom  
Eliyahu Plotkin and R. Nissan  
[Nemanov]**

**Greetings and Blessings**

After greetings of peace, at the end of last week I received the lists and the letter for the Rashag and sent them. Afterwards I received a letter from Hillel [Pewzner] that it was not necessary to send the letter, but it was too late.

I already wrote to you that on Thursday, *Parshas VaYeira*, 58 of Anash arrived, and on Wednesday of *Parshas Chaya [Sarah]* they entered Austria. I saw them at the border and received regards from them. At first they were, Heaven forbid, hopeless because they thought that it was all known to them [NKVD]. However, now we anticipate that a significant number of Anash will arrive one of these days.

Their material situation is obviously very difficult. The sum of ten was already sent by R.Y. [Goldin] to them [the activists in Lvov] and he already received a receipt from them. However, they notify that this is not enough. Similarly with regards to the funds that Rashag received from the Joint . . . . However, the matter is in my hands . . . .

I intend to tell R.Y. [Goldin] to notify them that they should borrow and rely on Chaikel [my father] and Peretz [Mochkin], who notified Hillel. We already notified the Rashag that this is necessary. Perhaps they will



The title page and introduction of the Munich edition of Seifer HaTanya

influence more.

Regarding Chaim Ber [R. Dovber "Berke" Chein] I was told that his diagnosis [punishment] was changed to something much milder, and there is hope that he will soon be healed [freed].

Hadassah is currently still with R.Y. [R. Yitzchok Goldin in Poland]. I told her to return. Nothing came out of her trip to Vilna. R.Y. told me that they themselves [Vaad Hatzalah activists in Vilna] approached him, requesting that he help them.

The consul here gives visas for students. One can bring only the wife and children, no other relatives. However, I heard that students cannot travel from Germany at all.

R.Y. Jacobson wrote that they sent affidavits for 150 students. We did not receive any letters from the Rebbe. Binyomin said that he received a letter for Anash and for Hillel.

I received a letter from

R. Menachem Schneersohn [Rebbe MH"M]. He writes that surely Anash are helping his mother and that he will compensate along with a soulful shout of grace. He also sent a letter requesting that she send her name and address. He concludes by stating that he awaits her answer with great anticipation.

Peace to you,  
Your friend,  
Sholom Mendel.

Regarding your aid—I wrote many times, also to R. Binyomin. However, I do not know if he can help you.

I am copying the letter that I received from R. Yisroel Jacobson.

"I had great pleasure from your detailed letter regarding the situation. It is imperative to extend efforts through Mr. Greifel and others that, in any way possible, Anash should not remain in Czechoslovakia. Although all the details will be

written directly by the Rebbe, I want to notify all the details as an individual.

Affidavits were sent for the students . . . We are attempting to make it possible to bring girls and young women as students in Beis Rivka. It is also likely that with the help of G-d it will be arranged for yeshiva teachers, rabbis, and relatives. The Rebbe's opinion is that whoever has the opportunity to settle in Europe should do so. Because in the present situation it is unknown when the families can travel and in which countries they can properly settle as people, not as strangers in tents.

The Rebbe received a letter with the list of Anash. Those currently arriving, cross over immediately and do not wait or tarry in Poland or Czechoslovakia. However, according to the Rebbe's directive mentioned above, perhaps they can be brought from various locations in the American Zone in Germany . . ."

# CHAI ELUL

## Birth of the Baal Shem Tov and the Alter Rebbe.

Compiled by Rabbi Levi Stolik

Translated by Yaakov Paley

### A BRIEF HISTORY

The 18<sup>th</sup> of Elul is a luminous day of truly immense proportion. The Hebrew number eighteen spells Chai, “life,” and on this day two lofty souls entered this world to introduce unprecedented G-dly light and life.

Reb Yisroel Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Chassidism, was born on the 18<sup>th</sup> of Elul 5458 (1698). On the 18<sup>th</sup> of Elul 5484 (1724), the prophet Achiya HaShiloni began teaching the Baal Shem Tov, and on the same auspicious date in the year 5494 (1734), the Baal Shem Tov revealed himself and his teachings to the world.

the good of Chassidus and whose accomplishments will usher in the era of Moshiach.”

### GIVE YOUR DIVINE SERVICE A FACELIFT

- From the 18<sup>th</sup> of Elul onward, we should increase all aspects of our Divine service of Elul to the extent that it is as if a brand new nature of service has begun.

### ESSENCE OF ELUL - UNITING WITH HASHEM

- We can achieve this through introducing the “life-force” of Elul into every area of Divine

“The self-accounting that we make on Chai Elul and the final days of Elul primarily addresses our essential bond with Hashem and the amount and manner of its revelation within our actual service.

The Alter Rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, founder of Chabad Chassidus, was born on the 18<sup>th</sup> of Elul 5505 (1745), whereupon the Baal Shem Tov proclaimed, “A new soul has descended into this world, and it will illuminate the world with the light of the revealed parts of Torah and the light of Chassidus; it is a soul that will offer itself for

service, in a manner that makes discernable and emphasizes the essential *soul* of all service. In other words, we reveal and highlight the core connection that unites the Jewish people with Hashem in every aspect of our service.<sup>1</sup>

**In this Sichah, the Rebbe defines two aspects of our Divine service:**

1) The *essence* which is equally present in each area of Divine service; this is the vivifying force behind all service and uniformly includes all the myriads of detail that emerge on the practical level.

2) The *details* and compartmentalized realms of practical service, e.g., the mode of prayer, study or charity etc.

While the details must necessarily differ from each other, yet they share the same essence and *soul* that, by definition, must constantly fill their every particular.

What is this “essence”? The Rebbe defines it as *the connection between the Jewish people and Hashem* that is generated by any mode of Divine service:

**Our existence is our connection with Hashem**

“The entire month of Elul represents the Jewish people’s “general” Divine service [since each moment within Elul has an effect and can rectify the entire service of the previous year, as well as prepare for the entire coming year]. On Chai Elul, however, there is added an emphasis on the very *life-force*, the inner-self and essence of this general service, namely, *the bond between the Jewish people and Hashem*. In fact, this bond is also the life-force and essential existence of the *Jewish people*, (i.e. the Jew who performs the Divine service,) for “the Jews are one with the Holy One.”

**Cheshbon Nefesh – before and after Chai Elul**

“The self-accounting that we perform during the first part of Elul, *prior* to Chai Elul, focuses mainly on the *generalized* entirety of our Divine service; it is an inclusiveness that by default includes the many details of the service we performed during the entire past year. [In other words] we contemplate the state of our *total* service of Torah, prayer, charitable deeds, and our conduct as expressed in thought, speech and action.

“Conversely, the self-accounting that we make on Chai Elul and the final days of Elul primarily addresses our

1) Parshas Ki Savo 5750; Hisvaaduyos p.259.

## BOND THROUGH PRAYER

- Since Chai Elul represents the bond of Jewry with Hashem, we should specifically increase our service of prayer from Chai Elul onward, for prayer, by definition, is the bonding of the Jew with his Creator.<sup>2</sup>

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*essential bond with Hashem* and the amount and manner of its revelation within our actual service. In *this* self-accounting, the detailed aspects of the service – whether Torah study, charitable deeds or the like – are not felt to such a great extent. Rather, our main focus is on the essential connection of the Jew to Hashem which is the Chayus, “life-force,” of all service.” (ibid, p.253-254)

### Spread the good news: each moment of Elul is priceless

“Elul is the month of reckoning concerning the outgoing year and the month of preparation for the coming year. Within Elul itself, we are currently within the last twelve days, which, one day per month, correspond to the twelve months of the past year.

“This does not merely relate to each individual day alone – it is true of each *moment* within each of these twelve days! With this knowledge we can appreciate the value and significance of each moment of these days – to the extent that it is of great importance to inform every Jew that we meet [of the necessity to cherish and utilize each moment of Elul]. It was for that reason, that we devoted the central theme of this farbrengen to the value of time within Elul.” (Roshei D’varim, Parshas Ki Savo 5751)

2) Ibid, Parshas Ki Seitzei.

### Shmonch Esrei corresponds to the spine

“Note that it is explained in Likkutei Torah how the spine is a parable for prayer. [As our Sages state, “The eighteen blessings of the Amida correspond to the eighteen vertebrae that form the spine.”]”

### Chai Elul: the spine of Elul

“The reason for this relationship is because [the spine] supports and establishes all the other limbs of the body, and it is through the spine that life-force is drawn from the brain to all the limbs. [The parallel to the function of the “spine,” i.e., the Amida, within

## FOCUS ON THE CONNECTION OF PRAYER

- In addition to our general enhancement of our prayers throughout the month of Elul, we should now lay fundamental emphasis on (not merely using prayer to appeal for Heavenly pardon, but rather on) our attachment with Hashem.<sup>3</sup>

## WHEN RECITING T'HILLIM

- Each of us should reflect this particular mode of prayer in our daily recital of T'hillim, when reciting both the three chapters that we add during Elul as well as the regular daily portions. We should do likewise regarding the additional prayers of Elul, for Chai Elul contains particular significance for *all* forms of prayer, as mentioned earlier.<sup>4</sup>

## LEARN ABOUT THE FESTIVALS

- From Chai Elul onward, we should add in the general study of Torah, and particularly in topics pertaining to Elul, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkos.

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the month of Elul, is Chai Elul. It is then that the bond between the Jews and Hashem, the bond that constitutes the very life-force of our Divine service and likewise of our souls, is emphasized – Ed].” (ibid, footnote 56)

### Eighteen: vertebrae, blessings and Chayus

“This is alluded to in the number of vertebrae within the spine, and the corresponding number of blessings in the Amida, which total *eighteen* (Chai)!” (ibid, in the sub note to footnote 56)

3) Parshas Ki Savo 5750; Hisvaaduyos p.255. See *a Call to Action*, “The Month of Elul”.

4) Roshei D’varim, Chai Elul 5751. See also below, for the full text of the Roshei D’varim.

## NIGLEH AND CHASSIDUS

- This addition should be in both Nigleh and Chassidus, the revealed and the inner part of Torah.

## FOCUS ON UNION WITH HASHEM IN STUDY

Moreover, our study should reflect the aspect of prayer<sup>5</sup> that is achieved through the study of Torah, namely, the union of the Jew with Hashem.<sup>5</sup>

## PROVIDE FESTIVE NEEDS

- From Chai Elul onward, we should add in the performance of charitable deeds in general, and particularly to the effort to provide the needy with their festival requirements – in generous and ample proportions.

- The provisions we provide should include necessities for Rosh Hashanah, Erev Yom Kippur, Motzaei Yom Kippur, and all the more so, for “the time of our rejoicing,” Sukkos and Shmini Atzeres.

## YOM TOV HOSPITALITY

- Our preparations should include the Mitzvah that is basic to Yom Tov:<sup>6</sup> general hospitality (Hachnasas Orchim), and specifically the form of hospitality universally known as Eishel (אֶשֶׁל, the Hebrew acronym for the provision of “eating, drinking and sleeping” requirements).

*A full version of this column in both Hebrew and English is available at*  
*iChossid.com.*

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5) Parshas Ki Savo 5750; Hisvaaduyos p.260.

6) “See Torah Or, beg. of Parshas Chayei Sarah, and in many other locations.” (ibid, footnote 113)

# THE ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

By Rabbi Heschel Greenberg

Founder and Director of the Jewish Discovery Center of Buffalo, NY



## WAITING FOR A THANK YOU

A Jew begins his or her day with *Modeh Ani* to express gratitude to the Almighty for having restored our soul to us. This is but the first of numerous prayers and blessings recited throughout the day in which we express gratitude for each and every aspect of G-d's kindness to us. When we take care of our biological needs we thank G-d for the incredible, wondrous, and intricate workings of the human body. We thank G-d for the rooster that wakes us up in the morning, and we thank Him for the gift of life itself. There is nothing major or minor that escapes our attention.

If gratitude—or *Hakaras HaTov* as it is called in Hebrew—is so pervasive in our Jewish lives, we would have expected to find this imperative mentioned explicitly in the Torah as a commandment.

But search far and wide; there is no explicit statement in the first four books of the Torah that orders us to thank G-d. The closest we get to this Mitzvah is in the fifth book of D'varim-Deuteronomy. In the beginning

of this week's parsha, Ki Savo, we are commanded to bring our first fruits—Bikkurim—to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem and express gratitude for the Exodus from Egypt to the Land of Milk and Honey and for the first fruits that we bring to the Temple. In truth, there is one other place where the Torah commands us to express gratitude to G-d. But this commandment—to thank G-d for the food we eat—is also first mentioned in the Book of Deuteronomy. One could ask the obvious question: Why does the Torah wait until the last of the five books—the Book of D'varim (Deuteronomy)—to inform us of the obligation to show gratitude to G-d?

It is true that the Torah has previously indicated where the lack of gratitude incurred G-d's anger. The first example is when Adam blamed his wife for his sin, thus displaying a lack of gratitude for the gift of a wife. Likewise, the Jewish people incurred G-d's anger when they complained about the Manna from heaven. We also find many references to individuals, as well as the Jewish nation as a whole, who thanked G-d. But one would have expected to have the

Torah teach us the importance of gratitude directly by way of a Biblical commandment.

## THE ANATOMY OF GRATITUDE

The answer to this question is that really there is no need for the Torah to command us specifically to show gratitude because that is the underlying ethos of the entire Torah. There is no need for a specific statement to command us to be thankful, for this is what pervades all of the Mitzvos.

To understand this point we must first define the anatomy of gratitude. Saying thank you is not just a social nicety; it is what underlies a human being's ability to know his or her place in the cosmos.

When a person shows gratitude they are acknowledging that there is someone or something else “out there” that exists and upon whom he or she depends. It is our way of showing that we have graduated from the infantile obsession with self. It is the most rudimentary form of recognition of the other.

It is no wonder that the Hebrew root for thanks “hodaa” is the same as for the words “submission” and “concession.” It is our way of declaring that the world does not revolve around us, that there is a G-d and other people with whom we share this

“One would have expected to have the Torah teach us the importance of gratitude directly by way of a Biblical commandment.”

world.

## THANKFUL TO WHOM?

One of the expressions that some find irritating is, “I am thankful” without the speaker “filling in the blank” and stating to whom the gratitude is directed. The whole point of expressing gratitude to G-d or to others—who are G-d’s messengers in “delivering the goods”—is to acknowledge that there is something or someone beyond us to whom we pay homage. By leaving out the object of our gratitude—although to be fair it might just be shorthand for the phrase “thankful to G-d”—we have not made that leap from self-absorption to the acknowledgement of the other.

We can now appreciate how the entire body of Torah literature conditions us to be grateful. The Torah and its commandments are in their entirety about acknowledging and respecting the existence of G-d and of others. Wherever we look, the Torah focuses on the other. No one can seriously adhere to the Torah’s commandments and believe that the universe revolves around him or her.

## WHY THE NEED FOR A COMMANDMENT?

The question now reverses itself. If the need for gratitude underlies all of the Torah, why was it necessary for the Torah in the last book of D’varim to specifically address this issue and command us to express gratitude for the first fruits and for the consumption of food?

The answer to this question relates to the new phase that the Jewish people were entering into. In place of the miraculous

liberation from Egypt and the continuation of the miracles in the desert, the Jewish nation was about to enter the Promised Land, (seemingly) changing their status to a natural order. Once we get into the routine of life—even in the Holy Land prior to the final Redemption—we can observe the Torah’s commands and be oblivious to its underlying message of surrendering the self to a Higher entity.

This is especially true in the period of Galus/exile—which Moses constantly alluded to in his exhortation to the Jews that were to enter the Promised Land. In exile we can take the most sublime spiritual experiences and



**Saying thank you is not just a social nicety; it is what underlies a human being’s ability to know his or her place in the cosmos.**

turn them inside out. One can, for example, perform the selfless act of tz’daka/charity thinking only about one’s own goodness and righteousness and acting condescendingly towards the recipient and others. In this all too common scenario the object of the Mitzvah becomes the giver and not the recipient.

This phenomenon of engaging in an act that expresses one mindset even as one is obsessed with the opposite mindset is a psychological condition called “cognitive dissonance.” In Hebrew the term for this malady is galus. Literally it refers to the geographic alienation of the Jewish people from their homeland. Metaphorically and spiritually it refers to alienation from your own positive behavior. You can do good actions and yet your mind can be in foreign territory.

Moses, therefore, provides future generations—including the ones in exile—with a more direct approach to gratitude. Some people cannot get the hint from all of the Torah’s commandments to be grateful to G-d and to sincerely acknowledge the existence of others. They have to be told clearly and directly.

## DON’T BE AN INGRATE!

Moreover, for the galus tainted mind one has to begin with the first step. One has to be told first to not be ungrateful, even if it means just paying lip service to gratitude.

With this premise we can

understand how Rashi—the principal Torah commentator—describes the underlying sentiment of gratitude of the Jew who brings his first fruits. On the introductory words “and you shall say to him” Rashi observes: “that you are not an ingrate.” It is remarkable that instead of accentuating the positive—to be grateful—Rashi chooses the negative, “that you are not an ingrate.” Is that the extent of the Mitzvah of bringing first fruits just to not be an ingrate?

There is a parallel to this negative way of making a point in the Mitzvah of loving your fellow as yourself. The Talmud recounts how a prospective convert came to Hillel and asked to be taught the entire Torah while standing on one foot, Hillel replied with the legendary words, “What is hateful to you don’t do to your fellow.” Here

too Hillel did not mention the Biblical commandment to “Love your fellow as yourself”, phrased affirmatively, but, rather, chose the negative way of phrasing it, “what is hateful to you don’t do to your fellow.”

The simple reason Hillel chose to phrase the admonition to love one’s fellow in the negative

form was so as not to impose the highest standards on the prospective convert at that time. This convert, Hillel understood, was incapable of digesting such a lofty ideal as feeling the love for another as much as one loves oneself.

Analogously, when someone is making his or her first step

towards developing a healthy appreciation for others—of growing out of the selfish, infantile mindset—he or she must take incremental, baby steps. One must begin with not being ungrateful. Little by little we begin to develop the skill of “going out of ourselves.”

## MODERNDAY-MIRACLES

Based on the above analysis of gratitude, it is no wonder that our Sages tell us that in the future Messianic Age the only private offering we will still bring to the Temple will be a Toda/Thanksgiving offering. It is only in the Messianic Age when all the forms of dissonance will cease—including cognitive dissonance—will we be fully capable of expressing the highest and sincerest form of gratitude.

One way of preparing for the ultimate Toda/ Thanksgiving offering is to condition ourselves to give thanks to G-d for all of His abundant blessings as well as expressing gratitude to all those who contribute to our own well-being.

In this spirit, the Rebbe also encouraged us to recount the modern day miracles that we as individuals and as a people are experiencing. This exercise is one that elicits and exhibits our awareness of and appreciation for these miracles, which are a prelude to the future Redemption. Both the miracles themselves and our expression of gratitude for them pave the way for the ultimate miracle and era of gratitude—the final and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach!

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