

ב"ה



Farbrenge *with* *the* Rebbe

התוועדות
י"ט כסלו תשד"מ



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קיצורי השיחות נועדים להקל על התלמידים שי' לעקוב אחר השיחה, ופשוט שהוא כולל רק חלק מהעניינים המדוברים, בדרך אפשר וללא אחריות כלל וכלל, ושגיאות מי יבין.

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VAAD TALMIDEI HATMIMIM HAOLAMI
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5777-2017



Summary

Sicha 1.

Introduction:

In every part of Torah (including the geulah of Yud Tes Kislev), two aspects are emphasized:

- 1) The well-established strength of that which is aged.
- 2) The excitement of something which is new. It is as if it was new, and it is also truly new.

Each of these aspects grow from year to year.

Yud Tes Kislev and Chanukah - Hafotzas Hamaayanos

Chanukah is all about the miracle of the oil.

“Oil” refers to the deepest secrets of the Torah.

This level is compared to the taanug-pleasure which comes after “eating the bread and water” - learning *Nigleh*. This choice oil, sealed with the Kohen Gadol’s seal, was used to light up the world. This is what Yud Tes Kislev is all about - *hafotzas hamaayanos* - spreading the wellsprings - the deepest secrets - to the outside.

The novelty of the Alter Rebbe’s *hafotzas hamaayanos* was that it was truly to the outside.

The study of *Pnimiyyus Hatorah* always had an influence on everyone, but the *Pnimiyyus*

Hatorah itself was restricted to specific places.

The Alter Rebbe innovated that these wellsprings be spread outward; because of the increasing darkness in the world, the wellspring itself - *Chassidus*- had to be brought to the outside - to each individual.

In each individual, too, the understanding of *Chassidus* had to be brought to the outermost

level of the person - action. In this way, the study of *Nigleh* would be permeated with the feeling brought by *Chassidus*.

The concept of “ascending in holiness,” which is connected to Yud Tes Kislev and to Chanukah, is connected with *hafotzas hamaayanos*: celebrating in an ever-greater way is made possible by the revelation which will take place when Moshiach comes; a revelation which is above the limits of time and space.

The practical *horaah*: to increase in the study of *Pnimiyyus Hatorah* and in *Hafotzas Hamaayanos*.

Sicha 2.

Yud Tes Kislev - Influencing the Nations of the World

In the Alter Rebbe’s letter written in connection with the *geulah* of Yud Tes Kislev, the Alter Rebbe writes at length about the influence that the *geulah* had “on all the princes and all the nations.” The Alter Rebbe writes this in a way that everyone can understand. This is despite the fact that the letter was written to *Yidden* of special stature, and it contained explanations on lofty matters.

The Alter Rebbe was teaching us that each person’s personal *geulah* must not be limited to Torah and Mitzvos, but must also include all of one’s actions and all of one’s ways. In addition, it’s necessary to be involved in making a *Kiddush Hashem* in the eyes of the non-Jews.

This includes influencing non-Jews to keep the

Sheva Mitzvos Bnei Noach, as the Rambam rules.

There is a claim that the Rambam's ruling regarding the *Sheva Mitzvos* doesn't apply nowadays. This is incorrect, because the Torah never changes. This is especially true of the Rambam's words, which were said with *Ruach Hakodesh* and contain deep secrets of the Torah. The reason that people didn't fulfill this *halacha* in the past was because it wasn't possible then. Nowadays, not only is it possible, but the connection with non-Jews has become stronger; this connection should be taken advantage of to influence them positively.

In truth, there were those who were involved in spreading the *Sheva Mitzvos* in the past, as well. Those who claim that one's own self-improvement must take precedence to improving others have the same claim about influencing other Jews.

The fact that the non-Jews realized that the miracle was from Hashem is a taste of the times of Moshiach, when Hashem's Glory will be revealed. This is why the Alter Rebbe wrote about it at length - because the preparation for the revelations that will take place when Moshiach comes is through our actions and *avodah* now, in this area.

Moment of Silence

There are some Yidden who claim that the "Moment of Silence" goes against the law. Firstly, why are they so concerned with the law? Secondly, it's not in contradiction to the law, because it's merely a moment of silence, and each child will use the time as his parents direct him to. It will influence the child positively.

Since there was a breakthrough in this area, it should be taken advantage of now.

Involvement in these things brings peace to the world, beginning as soon as the decision is made to be involved - even before the actual involvement.

Sicha 3.

The Alter Rebbe - Education through Action

Each of the Rabbeim had *mesiras nefesh* for *chinuch*, a fundamental aspect of life in this world. In *chinuch*, there are two methods: *chinuch* through speech, and *chinuch* through action.

What is unique about the Alter Rebbe is the Alter Rebbe's exceptional involvement in action, as illustrated by the well-known story that the Alter Rebbe went to help a new mother during *davening* on Yom Kippur. To the Alter Rebbe, action was more important than *davening* on Yom Kippur.

The *horaah* for everyone: however involved one may be in lofty matters, it's always possible to do the simple things too.

Yud Tes Kislev - Influencing the Nations of the World (Continued)

The abovementioned concept teaches us an additional *horaah* regarding influencing non-Jews: Even a Jew who is only involved in holy things must influence non-Jews. In fact, the influence of such a Jew is greater, since he doesn't depend on the non-Jew for his livelihood. For such a Jew, this is his test from Hashem.

Involvement in this will bring the *Geulah*, when Yaakov's desire to "dwell in tranquility" will be fulfilled.

Sicha 4.

Chalukas Hashas.

Siyum Hashas - The Principles of the Siyum

The two principles upon which the *siyum* is based are “We end off with good,” and “we connect the beginning to the completion.”

The end of Shas in Mishnayos is about peace, and the end of Shas in Gemara is “Don’t read, ‘halichos,’ but rather, ‘halachos.’” The connection to the beginning of Shas is: the peace which comes through Torah comes by way of the *halachos* - the mitzvos. Krias Shema is all about accepting the yoke of mitzvos.

These two rules apply to the *siyum* of *Maseches Brachos*. In Bavli, it’s about peace, and in Yerushalmi, it’s the passuk, “and all your children shall be students of Hashem, and your children’s peace shall increase.” (The reason for this differentiation: Bavli is more specific. In addition, in Yerushalmi, it’s not necessary to end off with something as great.) The connection to the beginning of the *Masechta* is that *Krias Shema* is connected to the *Shul* and *Beis Medrash*, which is what the saying at the end of the *Maseches* is talking about.

These two rules apply to the *siyum* of *Seder Zeraim*. In the Mishna, it’s about the *kodshim* of the *Mikdash*. This is connected to the beginning, where it discusses the *Kohanim* eating their *Terumah*. In Yerushalmi, it’s “His righteousness endures forever.” This is connected to the beginning, because both are discussing something which is an obligation, and something which is a safeguard.

The reason the Yerushalmi doesn’t end with something positive is because the order of the *Masechtos* in Yerushalmi is different.

These two rules apply to the *siyum* of Rambam. The beginning and end of *Sefer Hamada* discuss knowing Hashem. So too, the entire *Sefer Hamada* ends off with the same topic.

Maamar “Zeh Hayom Techilas Maasecha”

Sicha 5.

Saying “Hareini Mekabel” and “Ach Tzadikim”

Conclusion:

Niggunim and a distribution for tzedakah.

Sicha 6.

The Reason for the Beginning of the Maamar

The *Maamar* began with the passuk, “This is the day of the beginning of Your Creation,” because this is more in fitting with the day of the week - Friday - on which Yud Tes Kislev falls out this year.

Conclusion

Niggunim and a distribution for tzedakah.

Mivtzoim.

Who is a Jew:

Jew recently announced that for the good of Judaism, the decree about “Who is a Jew” need not be rectified. They aren’t embarrassed to publicize this. May it be Hashem’s will that they change their stance and admit to the truth. This will bring peace.

Sicha 7.

Mivtza Chanukah.

Sicha 1.

Yud-Tes Kislev – Old but New Celebration

This gathering celebrates the liberation of the Alter Rebbe, author of the Tanya and Shulchan Aruch, from Czarist imprisonment. The liberation occurred many years ago, yet it is celebrated anew every year. This dichotomy is present in all matters of Torah and mitzvos: On the one hand, they are ancient, existing unchanged for centuries, the idea of “this Torah shall never be changed.” On the other hand, Torah itself commands, “Every day they should be as new in your eyes.”

There are advantages to each aspect. That something has passed through the vicissitudes of time- unscathed and unchanged shows that it has integrity and durability. The longer the testing period, the greater the strength it is shown to possess. On the other hand, a new thing commands greater enthusiasm and fervor for its implementation. Torah possesses both properties simultaneously. It is unchangeable and unchanging; and yet must be observed as if new.

So too with the Alter Rebbe’s liberation: On the one hand, it possesses the strength and durability of constancy, present and celebrated every year. On the other, each year must see a new element in its celebration. And because it is Torah which demands this new element, a Jew certainly has the ability to fulfill it.

Both aspects of the liberation — the “old” and the “new” — increase every year. The more years that have passed, the greater the tenacity and durability. Likewise, not only must the liberation be celebrated as new, in a manner as fresh as the original event, but each year must see an increase in that newness. As Torah commands: “In holy matters, ascend!” — one must always rise higher every year.

Yud-Tes Kislev and Chanukah – Increasing Light

The command, “In holy matters, ascend!,” is cited as the halachic reason for kindling an extra light each night of Chanukah. Yud-Tes Kislev (the 19th of Kislev — the date on which the Alter Rebbe was freed from prison) and Chanukah have

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a common bond: both are associated with the revelation and dissemination of the esoteric aspect of Torah.

How is Chanukah associated with the esoteric aspect of Torah? The Jews, after defeating the Syrian-Greeks who had endeavored to prevent them learning Torah and performing mitzvos, cleaned up the Bais HaMikdash (Temple) which the Greeks had defiled. When they wanted to light the Menorah, they could not find any undefiled oil. After much searching, they found only one flask with the High Priest's seal intact. The flask contained only enough oil to light the Menorah for one day, but a miracle happened, and it lasted for eight days.

Now, the source of everything in the world is the Torah, which is the "blueprint" for creation. Thus all substances in the world are paralleled in Torah. More specifically, bread, water, wine and oil correspond to different levels in Torah. Water (and bread) allude to the exoteric aspect of Torah; wine, a higher level than water, alludes to the secrets of the Torah, the esoteric, as stated, "when wine enters [a person], secrets go forth;" oil, which is higher even than wine (oil floats on top of wine), corresponds to the "secrets of secrets" of the Torah.

Oil, then, alludes to the innermost secrets of the Torah, and oil is also the miracle of Chanukah. The function of oil is to provide light, to shine forth to the outside. Indeed, the Chanukah lights are placed "at the entrance of one's house on the outside." Thus Chanukah is the idea of the revelation and dissemination of the Torah's secrets to the outside.

In greater clarification: Oil in general corresponds to the Torah's secrets. The oil that figured in the miracle of Chanukah was of a loftier level still, for it was stamped with the High Priest's seal. All Jews are members of the "holy nation," and the seal of an ordinary Jew would also have sufficed to assure the purity of the oil necessary for the Menorah. That it was stamped with the seal of the High Priest — the person who represented the ultimate in holiness of the holy people — emphasizes the lofty nature of this particular flask of oil.

The miracle, however, was not just the finding of this flask of oil, but that they lit the Menorah with-it for eight days. In-other words, the purpose of this oil was to illuminate the Bais HaMikdash and thereby the whole world, for "from it, light went forth to the whole world." This is the same concept as the dissemination of

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the esoteric part of Torah, Chassidus: the loftiest secrets of the Torah — “the flask of oil which was stamped with the High Priest’s seal” — are used to illuminate the spiritual darkness in the world.

The liberation of the Alter Rebbe on Yud-Tes Kislev is of similar concept. The Alter Rebbe was, at the time, the foremost exponent of the teachings of Chassidus. Opponents of Chassidism, claiming that Chassidism was a divisive force in Jewry, slandered the Alter Rebbe to the Czarist government. The authorities arrested the Alter Rebbe and investigated the charges brought against him by his opponents.

Parenthetically, Russia was then one of the most powerful nations in the world. It was a world power precisely because the majority of Jews, quantitatively and qualitatively, resided then in that country. As the Midrash (Mechilta Beshallah 14:5) states: “Every nation which rules over the people of Israel... rules over the whole world for the sake of Israel’s honor.” A nation which rules over Jews is elevated to a world power, for it is unseemly that an inferior nation rule over Jews. So it was with Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and Persia — all ruled the world at the time Jews were their subjects. And so it was with Russia: Because at the time of the Alter Rebbe’s arrest the majority of Jews resided in Russia, it became the most powerful nation in the world.

This is also why Chassidus was revealed specifically in Russia. Our Sages state that “when they (Jews) were exiled to Rome, the Divine Presence was with them;” for as long as Jewry is in exile, the Divine Presence is also in exile. Where the majority of Jews are, so there the Divine Presence is principally found. And if the Divine Presence followed Jews into exile, then Torah certainly did — and the revelation of the Torah is also principally where the majority of Jews are to be found. Thus the revelation of Chassidus took place in Russia specifically.

To return to our main point: After the Czarist government had investigated the charges against the Alter Rebbe, they cleared him completely and, freeing him, enabled him to continue to disseminate the Torah’s secrets.

The Alter Rebbe’s Innovation – Wellsprings to the Outside

Although the Torah’s secrets were studied in all generations, it was the Alter Rebbe who initiated its dissemination to the outside specifically. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, for example, author of the Zohar, fundamental text of the Kabbalah,

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studied the Torah's secrets and revealed them to his friends and disciples. Later, in the generation of the Arizal, it became "permitted and a mitzvah to reveal this wisdom." Because the intensity of the exile had increased between the Rashbi's generation and that of the Arizal, a greater degree of revelation of the light of Torah was needed to combat the darkness — and therefore it became a mitzvah to reveal the Torah's secrets.

But even then, the revelation was limited to certain places and certain individuals. It had not yet reached to the "outside" proper. It did have an effect on the world, in general (the "outside"); but this effect was a result of the revelation in those few places. The "outside" itself had not yet been penetrated by the light of the esoteric part of Torah. The Alter Rebbe introduced the innovation that the esoteric part of Torah itself should reach the "outside."

Why was it necessary to increase the dissemination of Chassidus only in the Alter Rebbe's generation, and not earlier? The Alter Rebbe gave a famous parable in answer. "A king's son became severely ill, and the physicians said the only remedy was to crush precious gems, [mix them with liquid], and for the patient to drink thereof. They searched the king's treasury for a gem with this unique property, and could not find any. Meanwhile the king's son grew more ill. One sage investigated and discovered that one gem in the king's crown, a gem unlike any others, possessed the properties necessary to heal the malady of the king's son. But in the meantime, the son's condition had worsened to the extent that the doctors said that even if they will pour the liquid containing the crushed gem into the patient's mouth, it is doubtful if the patient will be able to swallow it — and the most precious gem of the king's crown will be destroyed for no purpose. The king answered and said: The royal crown is indeed precious, a crowning beauty to its maker, and a lofty glory to its wearer; and the precious gem is the chief adornment of the crown. But all this is as nothing compared to the existence of the king's son, for whom it is worthwhile to crush the precious gem just on the possibility that perhaps one drop will reach the son's mouth — and he will be healed of his illness.

The analogy is as follows: The king's son is Jewry. The illness is the weak spiritual state of Jewry, due to the increasing intensity of darkness of the exile and of the world. The precious gem in the king's crown, the remedy for the illness is the Torah's secrets. As long as the king's son's illness was not serious, it was not

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necessary to crush the gem. But once the illness worsened when the situation of Jewry became close to spiritual danger to life — it became necessary to disseminate the Torah's secrets to the outside, the place where the spiritual danger to life is the greatest. For all the greatness of the precious gem is “as nothing compared to the existence of the king's son,” and therefore it is worthwhile to crush the gem on the possibility that one drop will reach the patient's mouth — and he will be healed.

It is for this reason that it was no longer enough to reveal the wisdom of the esoteric only to certain people in certain times. The risk of spiritual death to Jewry had become too great. The medicine had to reach everywhere, and especially to the “outside,” where the danger was the greatest.

The main thrust of this dissemination of Chassidus began after the Alter Rebbe was liberated from imprisonment on Yud-Tes Kislev, when the authorities granted him full freedom to continue — and intensify — the spreading of the Torah's secrets.

Reaching the “Outside” In Man Himself

“Spreading the wellsprings of Chassidus to the outside” has another interpretation besides its literal meaning of spreading its teachings to all people in all locations. A person's soul is comprised of its essence and its manifestations, which include its intellectual faculties. These intellectual faculties are “outside” compared to the inner essence of the soul. The Alter Rebbe presented Chassidic doctrines in a way that they should affect not just the soul's essence (i.e. a superrational, mystical grasp of Chassidus), but that its concepts should be understood by the intellect. Chassidus would now penetrate the Chochmah (wisdom), Binah (knowledge) and Da'as (understanding) of the soul (the first letters of which form the acronym “ChaBaD,” which has become the name for the school of Chassidus founded by the Alter Rebbe).

Because the study of the Torah's innermost secrets would now affect a person not just in a general way, but permeate a person's faculties, it follows that every fiber of a person is affected. Through learning the esoteric part of Torah, a Jew is filled with love and awe of G-d — even when learning the exoteric part of Torah (civil and criminal law, etc.). In the words of the Rambam: “What is the way to attain love and fear of Him? When a person contemplates His wondrous and great deeds

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and creations, and he will perceive in them His limitless wisdom, immediately he... will greatly desire to know the great Name." The Rambam, in other words, emphasizes that the way to love and fear of G-d is knowledge, comprehension and understanding — the study of the esoteric. In the words of Scripture: "Know the G-d of your fathers."

The Rambam gives a similar ruling at the beginning of his Mishnah Torah: "The foundation of foundations and the pillar of wisdom is to know that there is a first cause ..." One must not just believe in G-d — one must also know it. It must penetrate a person's intellect in his physical brain.

The understanding of G-d and G-dliness is only possible through parables and illustrations drawn from the world — "from my flesh I will see G-d." This is obviously a descent from the "pure" grasp of the Torah's secrets (i.e., a grasp not in an intellectual framework, but in a mystical, super-rational way) — analogous to the crushing of the precious gem in the king's crown in the above noted analogy. Yet it is done — for the king's son must be saved, and there is no other way.

This, then, is the connection between Yud-Tes Kislev and Chanukah: both emphasize the idea of "your wellsprings shall spread forth to the outside." The miracle of Chanukah, we have explained, is the oil, symbolizing the innermost secrets of the Torah; and the purpose of oil is to be lit and to give forth light to the outside. Yud-Tes Kislev sounds a similar theme: the revelation of the Torah's secrets should illuminate a person's entire existence, his every fiber, even the "outside."

Now we can more fully understand that which we noted previously — that the command "In holy matters, ascend!" cited in connection to the Chanukah lights, applies to the celebration of Yud-Tes Kislev every year. Since both Chanukah and Yud-Tes Kislev share the same theme — the dissemination of Chassidus (the esoteric part of Torah) — the command, "In holy matters, ascend!" is associated with both events.

Revelation of Chassidus as Prelude to the Coming of Moshiach

We can further posit that the idea of "In holy matters, ascend!" is itself associated with the idea of "the dissemination of Chassidus." The founder of Chassidus, the Baal Shem Tov, once ascended to heaven and there asked Mashiach "When will

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the master come?” The answer given was “when your wellsprings shall spread forth to the outside.” The spreading forth of the wellsprings of Chassidus is similar to the situation that will prevail in the Messianic age, as the Rambam rules: “The Sages and prophets only desired the Messianic days so that they should be free [to engage] in Torah and its wisdom,” for then, “Jews will be great in wisdom and will know the hidden matters and they will comprehend the knowledge of their Creator as far as humanly possible, as it is stated, ‘the earth will be full of knowledge of the L-rd as L-rd as the waters cover the sea.’”

Not only will Jews understand G-dly matters, but “the earth will be full of knowledge of the L-rd” — even “earth” matters, one’s personal, mundane affairs, will be permeated with the revelations of G-dliness. This is stated explicitly in Midrash (Midrash Tehillim 73): “In this world, when a person goes to gather figs on Shabbos, the fig says nothing. But in the future, if a person goes to gather a fig on Shabbos, it cries out and says ‘it is Shabbos today In other words, even physical things will be permeated with the revelation of G-dliness.

What does this teach us in regard to the idea of “In holy matters, ascend!” vis-a-vis Yud-Tes Kislev? A person may wonder how he can celebrate an event that happened over one hundred and fifty years ago in the same manner as originally — and even more, in a higher manner (“in holy matters, ascend!”). But because Yud-Tes Kislev marks the revelation of Chassidus, similar to the future era when “the glory of the L-rd will be revealed and all flesh will perceive that the mouth of the L-rd has spoken,” it transcends the temporal-spatial limits of the world. Thus changes in time and place wreak no effect on its concept, and it can be celebrated in the same fresh manner as if it happened now. Indeed, the changes in time lends added qualities to its celebration — Yud-Tes Kislev is celebrated in greater fashion from year to year.

Because “deed is paramount,” is paramount,” we must derive a practical lesson from all of the above. When Yud-Tes Kislev approaches each year, “these days are remembered and kept.” The AriZal commented that when an event is “remembered” properly, then it is also “kept” it is reenacted as it was originally.

In our case, Yud-Tes Kislev is the concept of “Your wellsprings shall spread forth to the outside,” and therefore we must resolve to increase in our study of the esoteric part of Torah (Chassidus), the “soul of Torah.” And because soul and

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body are inseparable, we also as a result increase in the study of the exoteric part of Torah, the "body of Torah."

This study should not be just for oneself, but in the manner of "Your wellsprings shall spread forth to the outside" — one must disseminate Torah (both the exoteric and esoteric parts) to others. And because "study is great for it leads to deed," the dissemination of the study of Torah leads to the spreading of the fulfillment of mitzvos.

Through the spreading of Chassidus we hasten the fulfillment of Moshiach's promise that he will come "when your wellsprings shall spread forth to the outside." Then, "those who lie in the dust will arise and rejoice," with the Alter Rebbe among them. And all of us together will go to our holy land, the "land which ... the eyes of the L-rd your G-d are continually upon it from the beginning of the year until the end of the year" the eternal heritage given to the eternal people through the eternal Torah. In Eretz Yisroel itself, we shall go to the holy city of Yerushalayim, to the Temple Mount, to the Holy of Holies in the Bais HaMikdash "the Sanctuary which Your hands, O' L-rd, have established.



Sicha 2

Results of the Liberation Effect the Mundane

A full understanding of the import of the Alter Rebbe's liberation can be gained by studying the Alter Rebbe's comments on his liberation. He wrote a letter to R. Levi Yitzchok of Barditchev, of the greatest of the Maggid's disciples, and to R. Boruch of Mezhibush, the Baal Shem Tov's grandson and a Rebbe in his generation, in which he described his liberation. Because the Alter Rebbe made this letter public, it indicates that it contains lessons not just for these individual Torah greats, but for all Jews.

In the letter, the Alter Rebbe writes: "G-d has magnified and made great His great and sacred Name... in the eyes of all the king's men and all the peoples in all the king's realm — that also in their eyes the thing is wondrous indeed, and they said of it that it is from the L-rd..."

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“The day on which G-d dealt wondrously with us is the day on which ‘it was good’ was said twice [Tuesday], the 19th day of Kislev... And as I was reading in the Book of Psalms the verse, ‘He has redeemed my soul in peace,’ before I began the next verse I was liberated in peace.”

The latter half of the letter describes the profound nature of the liberation — that it is associated with Tuesday, on which “it was good” was said twice, and with the verse “He has redeemed my soul in peace.” The first half of the letter, in contrast, dwells at length on the effect of the liberation on non-Jews, the princes of the court.

This letter, we have said, was written to two giants of Chassidus, who appreciated the meaning the Alter Rebbe’s liberation had for the Chassidic movement. But what is the import of the first half of the letter, the effect of the liberation on non-Jews — and how can it compare to the profound implications of the liberation itself and its meaning for the Chassidic movement?

But the Alter Rebbe weighed carefully every word he wrote. Indeed, the Tzemach Tzedek described the Alter Rebbe’s language as “golden,” implying that every word was worth its weight in gold. We must therefore conclude that there is a connection between the two topics discussed in the Alter Rebbe’s letter — that the liberation allowed Chassidus to be disseminated, and its effect on the peoples of the earth — and that there is a lesson to be derived from it.

In this letter the Alter Rebbe teaches us two general principles: one in regard to a Jew’s personal service to G-d, and the other in regard to a Jew’s relationship with his fellow.

We learn from the liberation in general that a person must liberate himself from his innate constraints and rise above all limitations. Had the Alter Rebbe written only the latter part of his letter, concerning the effect of the liberation on the dissemination of Chassidus, one might have thought that this personal “liberation” applies only to Torah and mitzvos. For since a Jew’s task is to transform himself into a sanctuary for G-d [as stated, “Make Me a Sanctuary and I will dwell within them” — “within them, within each and every Jew”], a Jew may think that Yud-Tes Kislev teaches only that he must spread Chassidus within his personal sanctuary, to his “outside” (as above).

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The Alter Rebbe, in the first section of the letter, warns that this is not enough. Just as the liberation on Yud-Tes Kislev Yud-Tes Kislev affected not just 'the esoteric part of Torah but non-Jews also, so one's personal "liberation" must be not only in Torah and mitzvos, but also in one's mundane actions. In short, one's "liberation" must also be in the fulfillment of the commands "All your deeds should be for the sake of heaven" and "In all your ways know Him:" one's everyday matters, "your" deeds" and "your ways," should also be sanctified to G-d, and subjected to the "liberation" from limitations. That is, one should know G-d in one's ways, and do one's deeds for the sake of heaven, not just according to the strict letter of the law, but above and beyond the minimum, with special enthusiasm and meaning. It should be subjected to the influence of "the soul of the Torah," the study of Chassidus.

Furthermore, the idea of going beyond the minimum letter of the law was considered, in the times of the Talmud, as a pious act. In our times however, because of the increasing intensity of darkness in the world, more light was needed — and the concept of going beyond the minimum has now been incorporated as part of Jewish law. It follows, then, that one's "liberation" in the realm of "All your deeds should be for the sake of heaven" and "In all your ways know Him" demands that one go beyond even the minimum as incorporated in Jewish law.

The Alter Rebbe's Implication: Inspire the Nations

Another lesson to be derived from this letter concerns one's interaction with one's surroundings. A Jew's work ("your deeds" and "your ways") in the era of exile brings him into contact with the nations of the world, for it is they who rule over the countries in which Jews reside in the exile. It is only when there is peace between the nations that Jews can also have peace. In the words of Scripture: "For in its peace will be peace for you." This is why it is a halachic ruling that "the law of the government is [Jewish] law" — i.e., the law of the land is binding upon Jews with the force of Torah, Jewish law. [However, if the "law of the government" should be in opposition to halachah, this rule does not apply, for Torah is not subject to exile. It is unchanging.

A Jew, in his dealings with non-Jews, may think it is sufficient to just follow the "law of the government" which has the force of Torah law (acting as any citizen) — and that his Jewishness has no role to play.

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An episode related in the Midrash teaches otherwise, that a Jew must act in a way that sanctifies G-d's name (Kiddush Hashem). R. Shimon ben Shetach, who lived in the times of the Bais HaMikdash and was one of the greatest Torah Sages, bought a donkey from a non-Jew (an Ishmaelite). His students came and discovered a precious stone suspended from its neck. R. Shimon ben Shetach said, "I have purchased a donkey, but I have not purchased a precious stone," and went and restored it to the Ishmaelite. The Ishmaelite then exclaimed, 'Blessed be the L-rd G-d of Shimon ben Shetach.'" Thus Rabbi Shimon ben Shetach sanctified G-d's Name.

This teaches that we must go beyond the strict letter of the law ("the law of the land") also when dealing with non-Jews, thereby causing G-d's Name to be sanctified. This type of behavior is called doing business "honestly and faithfully." It is not enough to appear just. One must be totally honest, faithful, going further than the law demands. And because it is Torah which demands that one deal honestly and faithfully — and the ways of Torah are "pleasant ways" and its paths are "paths of peace" — such conduct influences others pleasantly and peacefully.

In slightly different words: It is not enough for a Jew to personally observe the mitzvos of the Torah. He must also influence the nations of the world to act decently and justly. In the words of Scripture. "Seek the peace of the city to which you were exiled and pray for it" — and true peace is possible only when the city or country acts consonant to the Torah's dictates.

How can the city, country, or indeed the entire world, be stable and at peace, acting decently and righteously? Only when they keep the Seven Noachide Laws, which, together with their ramifications, are the foundations of a stable society. Thus the Rambam rules: "Moshe Rabbeinu has commanded from the mouth of G-d to convince all the inhabitants of the world to accept the mitzvos that were commanded to the sons of Noach." Every Jew is obligated to influence non-Jews to observe the Seven Noachide Laws.

Others have argued that the Rambam's words were meant for the Messianic age or in the times of the Bais HaMikdash only — although such an interpretation completely contradicts the plain meaning of the Rambam. Proof of their position, they say, is that Torah greats of earlier generations were not seen to try to influence non-Jews to keep the Seven Noachide Laws.

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Besides the fact that it is a legal dictum that proof cannot be drawn from not seeing something, there are other answers to these people who wish to place difficulties in the dissemination of Judaism.

First of all, all of the Rambam's rulings are part of the immutable Torah, and it is therefore impossible to say the Rambam wrote a ruling that does not apply for our times. This is particularly so considering the lofty nature of the Rambam's writings. Not only are they legal rulings, but they also encompass matters pertaining to the Torah's secrets. Moreover, the Rambam's words, accepted as they are by all Jewry, fall into the category described by R. Yonason Eibshitz as "the spirit of the L-rd sparkles within them." As such, works which have spread to all sections of Jewry and been accepted by them, receive the full authority of Torah. Similarly, the Rebbe Rashab said that "I heard in the name of our Rebbe that all authors until and inclusive of the Taz and BaCh composed their works with Divine spirit." Thus the Rambam's ruling that Jews are obligated to convince the inhabitants of the world to keep the Seven Noachide Laws has the full authority of Torah. And because Torah is immutable, the ruling applies to all times.

As to the above question of why Torah greats of previous generations did not follow the Rambam's ruling, the answer is obvious. It was simply not possible for them to do so. This does not mean the mitzvah is void; it simply means it cannot be fulfilled at a certain time. Mitzvos that are associated with the Bais HaMikdash for example, cannot be fulfilled when the Bais HaMikdash is destroyed — but the mitzvos still exist.

In previous generations, Jewry (living in ghettos, etc.) was in no position to talk to or convince non-Jews about religious matters, and were therefore absolved of the obligation. But today, when it is possible to do so, the Rambam's ruling most certainly applies. Thus, although a Jew has much to do to bring his own — and other Jews' — spiritual situation up to par, the Rambam's ruling still applies. And because "I (G-d) ask only according to their (Jews') abilities," it follows that Jews have the appropriate strength to fulfill this task.

We can go further and posit that not only do the Rambam's words apply also in our times, but, because we are in the period immediately prior to the redemption, it applies especially to our times. In these latter years Jews and non-Jews have come into contact as never before. Sometimes, because G-d has given a Jew free

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choice, this contact has been misused, in that Jews imitate the non-Jew and non-Jewishness. But simultaneously, the opportunity exists to use these contacts to influence non-Jews to observe the Seven Noachide Laws.

This choice to utilize contact with the nations of the world for good or bad is paralleled by the Torah's statement: "See, I have placed before you life and good and death and evil ... choose life" This choice applies to all aspects of life, including the Torah itself. A Jew's approach to Torah can be with the intention to humbly know what it demands of a person ("life and good") or with the intention to pervert Torah's words for one's own use — which Torah then becomes "death and evil." Those who wish to twist the Rambam's words and say they weren't meant for our times, are "revealing facets in Torah that are not according to halachah."

After the above preamble, we can now understand why the Alter Rebbe wrote at length concerning the effect of his redemption on the peoples of the world. The Alter Rebbe is thereby telling us that his liberation had a good effect not just on Jews, but also on non-Jews — consonant to a Jew's mission of not only spreading Judaism to Jews but also to influence all peoples to keep the Seven Noachide Laws. The liberation convinced the government officials who were involved that they "are but as an axe in the hand of the-hand of the hewer," and that "this was from the L-rd, it is wondrous in our eyes."

We can draw a parallel between the imprisonment of the Alter Rebbe in Czarist Russia to the exile of Jews in Egypt. Pharaoh, when approached by Moshe Rabbeinu to release the Jews, answered, "I do not know the L-rd." "L-rd" refers to G-d as He is transcendent. Pharaoh was saying that this level of G-d applies only to Jews; non-Jews know G-d only as He is immanent in creation. Transcendent G-d ("L-rd") is not revealed to non-Jews, said Pharaoh. [Only in the future era will the level of "L-rd" be revealed to non-Jews, as stated, "The glory of the L-rd will be revealed and all flesh will together perceive that the mouth of the L-rd has spoken."]

On Yud-Tes Kislev, however, non-Jews also realized that the L-rd had wrought wonders, as the Alter Rebbe wrote of the government officials' reaction: "This was from the L-rd, it is wondrous in our eyes." This revelation had an effect even in the lowest regions, as the Alter Rebbe wrote: "G-d has done wonders and greatness ... in the earth" — "earth" referring to the lowest levels. Yud-Tes Kislev had this

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effect because it was a "taste" of the future redemption, when, as noted above, all people will see the revelation of the L-rd.

Moment of Silence

This is also the appropriate time to once again mention a matter we have talked of many times in the past. The proper education of children in public schools in the U.S. demands that they have knowledge of G-d. It is a matter of spiritual life and death.

In the past, such an idea was opposed by government leaders. Today, the nations' leaders, including its President, are in favor of amending the law and allowing G-d's Name to be mentioned in school.

Unfortunately, we are witness to the fulfillment of the verse, "Your destroyers and wreckers will come forth from yourselves." Jews, who lack the proper Jewish upbringing, falsify the facts and try to prevent the passage of such a law with the claim that it is against the Constitution.

Why does the Constitution bother them when it doesn't bother the President? These people are usually the first ones to claim that Jews, because they are such a small minority, should go along with the majority. Yet in this case they are willing to oppose the President, thereby showing that nothing deters them when it comes to "principles." Principles? Every Jew was commanded at Mt. Sinai — before they were born in the U.S. — to keep Torah and mitzvos. The Torah is the founding law of all Jews, an eternal law which cannot be amended (unlike the Constitution of the U.S.). And yet these people somehow have the audacity to oppose the Torah?!

Moreover, the proposal we are talking about is not even against the Constitution. We are not suggesting that a prayer be said, which would involve problems of what to say, and which would be enmeshed in the issue of separation between state and religion. We are merely proposing that a moment of silence be held at the beginning of the day, and a child will ask his parents or grandparents what to think about in those 60 seconds. This way the teacher or principal will not interfere, and the Establishment Clause of the Constitution will remain inviolate. Similarly, those parents who do not wish their children to think of G-d or pray in the minute of silence, can instruct their children to think of the basics of justice and righteousness (the Seven Noachide Laws).

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The benefits from a moment of silence in the schools are obvious. When a child at the beginning of each day, when he is fresh and alert, thinks of goodness and righteousness, it is etched in his soul and has an effect on the rest of the day's studies. Before he begins to learn those subjects which will enable him to make a career, he must remember that he must deal honestly with another child. The factual information he learns in school is secondary; the main thing is that the world be a productive, decent place in which to live.

Most important, a child should know that he should behave properly not out of fear of punishment, but because it is contrary to the tenets of justice and righteousness. And, because education in this country comes mostly from the school and not from the home, thinking about these things in school has a tremendous effect.

May it be G-d's will that efforts in this direction bring peace to the world, for true peace can only eventuate through righteousness and justice. Today we are witness to a situation when "nations quarrel one with another" in a frightening manner, with international strife escalating from day to day. The only thing that can bring peace is when "you walk in my statutes and keep my mitzvos." It is not enough to think good thoughts; one must act in spreading the observance of the Seven Noachide Laws among the nations of the world, and Judaism (particularly Chassidus) among Jews.



Sicha 3

The Alter Rebbe – Education by Example

Yud-Tes Kislev is the liberation of the Alter Rebbe from Czarist imprisonment, and it therefore behooves us to learn a lesson from a concept peculiar to him (and not just associated with the liberation).

The Alter Rebbe's unique aspect lay in the realm of education. Education is the basic foundation in man's fulfillment of the purpose of his creation, which is to serve his Creator. G-d has let man know how to serve Him through the Torah, which gives clear directives for every facet of life. But to know what is in the Torah, a person needs education. And that is why education is so crucial in man's life.

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Besides the duty of a father to teach his children, it is also the duty of every Torah sage to teach Torah to the Jewish people at large. Some discharge their duty in this respect only to the minimum obligation, while others are ready to sacrifice everything to ensure that Jews are educated properly. Tanna D'Vei Eliyahu relates that the Sanhedrin "should have girded their loins with chains of iron, hoisted their garments above their knees, and travelled throughout all the cities of Israel ... and teach Israel." "Chains of iron" were needed because the journey would be very long, and ordinary ropes would not suffice. Because it is the Sanhedrin's task to worry about the education of every Jew, such measures were necessary — and they could not wait until Jews came to the Sanhedrin to learn. Moreover, this self-sacrifice on the part of the Sanhedrin was not just physical, but primarily spiritual. The Sanhedrin's authority to rule on capital cases existed only when they were in their official residence. Yet, to teach Jews, it is worthwhile to forego this spiritual advantage and travel all over Israel.

This was also the approach of the Rebbeim to education. But this itself, as in education in general, was displayed in two different ways. One way of teaching is by speech — teaching Torah, speaking about good conduct, etc. The second way is through deed — by serving as a living example to others of the path to follow. Among the Rebbeim, some followed the first way mainly, and others the second way. In similar fashion, the Baal Shem Tov travelled far and wide among Jews, whereas the Maggid dwelt in one place and taught Torah.

The Alter Rebbe was unique in that he combined both approaches. He taught Torah, both the exoteric aspect (he authored a Shulchan Aruch) and the esoteric (he authored the Tanya). Simultaneously, he taught by deed: He himself was the reader in the Torah; and when he wished to ascertain the exact measurements of things in Torah, he himself weighed and measured; and he himself showed shochemim (ritual slaughterers) the proper way to act.

Never Too High – A Story

This singular conduct of the Alter Rebbe is expressed most vividly in the following story. Once, on Yom Kippur (another version — on Shabbos), the Alter Rebbe interrupted his prayers in the synagogue, took off his tallis, and went to the outskirts of the city to help a woman (who had recently given birth) who had been left alone when the other members of the household went to the synagogue.

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The Alter Rebbe had been in the synagogue, together with other people, and he need not have gone himself to help the woman. Moreover, he was then in the middle of praying — and we can imagine the lofty nature of the prayers of the Alter Rebbe, who was wont to say when praying, “I do not want anything; not Gan Eden (Paradise), not the World to Come; I only want You alone.” And, on this particular occasion, he was in the middle of the prayers of Yom Kippur!

Yet, in the middle of such lofty matters, he found the time to sense that a woman at the outskirts of the city needed help — and did something about it in concrete deed!

Although we cannot compare ourselves to the Alter Rebbe, the Moshe Rabbeinu of his generation, nevertheless, because this story has been passed on to us, we can and must derive a lesson from it for our service to G-d.

A person may believe that because he is engaged in profound matters, it is impossible to engage in simple matters in concrete deed. The above story with the Alter Rebbe teaches otherwise: No person will fool himself into thinking that he is on a loftier level than was the Alter Rebbe in his prayers of Yom Kippur. And if the Alter Rebbe could leave his prayers to go to a woman who needed help, this person most certainly can help others!

This also teaches another lesson, concerning the aforementioned necessity to convince the nations of the world to keep the Seven Noachide Laws. A Jew must know that though he may be engaged in lofty matters, he must realize that there are non-Jews in the world that do not know of the Seven Noachide Laws — and therefore he must do everything in his power to ensure that they know of them and observe them. Indeed, it is specifically those who are engaged solely in holy matters who have the greatest chance of success in this mission. A person who is not tainted by any suspicion of self-interest (financial or otherwise, since he has had no prior dealings with non-Jews), will be respected by others as being a sincere and truthful man. When he will suggest to a non-Jew that it behooves all peoples to act honestly and fairly in consonance with G-d’s will, his suggestion will be received more readily than will another’s.

May it be G-d’s will that Jews endeavor to do all the above with joy and a good heart — for joy “breaks through all barriers.”



Sicha 5

Added Prayers Combat Instability

The state of instability in the world is serious. "Nation quarrels with nation," and international tension and friction escalate from day to day. Jews, too, have in some measure been drawn into this situation.

Of particular concern is that recently Jews have not been acting properly among themselves. Instead of love and unity reigning amidst Jewry, the opposite is true.

What can Jews Do About It?

Everything in the world revolves around and is dependent upon Jews and their conduct. A Jew's service to G-d has tremendous repercussions, and therefore the appropriate response to the increasing trouble in the world is to increase service to G-d. Our Sages note that, "The Holy One, blessed be He, says, 'Whoever occupies himself with the study of Torah, and with deeds of loving kindness, and prays with the community, I account it to him as if he had redeemed Me and My children from among the nations of the world.'" As long as G-d is in exile among the nations — they do not recognize His sovereignty — they do not act consonant to His will. When Jews, through an increase in their service, redeem G-d from exile, the nations will automatically behave properly.

What Form should this Increase in Service Take?

The most appropriate response is to add to our prayers, our requests to G-d. Any good word uttered by a Jew has an effect; words of Torah and prayer certainly do, as our Sages note: "The voices of Torah and prayer that ascend above rend the heavens."

In prayer itself, the additions should be associated with (a) the general idea of prayer; (b) with the above two areas that need correction: Ahavas Yisroel, and peace and quiet, the antithesis of war and quarrels.

The suggested additions are:

(I) As a preface to the morning prayer, before "Mah Tov", to say — "I hereby take upon myself to fulfill the mitzvah, 'Love your fellow as yourself.'"

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(II) At the conclusion of prayers, after the verses “Al Tirah”, “Utzu Eitzah” and “V’ad Ziknah”, to say the verse, — “Indeed, the righteous will extol Your Name; the upright will dwell in Your presence.”

How do These Phrases Fulfill the Above Criteria?

(a) Association with idea of prayer in general

Prefacing prayers with a declaration of intent to love one’s fellow induces G-d to fulfill the requests made in prayer. Just as a father is happy when all his children live together in harmony and love, and hastens to fulfill their desires, so G-d complies with our requests in prayers when His children — all Jews — live in peace and brotherly love.

Commentators explain the connection between prayer and the verse, “Indeed, the righteous will extol Your Name; the upright will dwell in Your presence,” according to a passage in the Talmud. The tractate Berachos states that from this verse we learn that “One who prays should wait an hour after his prayer.” The verse first states, “Indeed the righteous will extol Your Name” — referring to prayer; then it states, “the upright will dwell in Your presence” – referring to a period of calm and contemplation after prayer.

(b) Association with Ahavas Yisroel and peace

The utterance of “I hereby take upon myself to fulfill the mitzvah, ‘Love your fellow as yourself’” is obviously an expression of love and unity between Jews. In addition, because events in the world depend on Jews’ conduct (as noted above), an increase in love and unity between Jews can effect peace between the nations. Moreover, the exile was caused by hatred between Jews. When the cause is eliminated, the effect automatically follows. By loving all Jews the exile will come to an end.

The word “dwell” in the phrase “the upright will dwell in Your presence,” connotes serenity and peace — as in the verse, “Ya’akov dwelt,” which Rashi interprets to mean “to dwell in peace.” Further, prayers today substitute for the sacrifices in the times of the Bais Hamikdosh. An increase in prayer serves as a preparation to the future redemption, when we will once more offer sacrifices “in accordance with the command of Your Will.” We will then witness the literal

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fulfillment of the verse “the upright will dwell in Your presence,” — for at the pilgrimage to Yerushalayim, “all your males shall appear before the presence of the L-rd G-d.”

Aren't These Additions Unprecedented Innovations?

There is nothing new in the above suggested additions, for eminent authorities through the ages have already included these phrases in the prayers. Let us examine each prayer separately:

“I hereby take hereby take upon myself to fulfill the mitzvah, ‘Love your fellow ‘Love your fellow as yourself. “

This is found in the writings of the AriZal, the AriZal's Siddur, in the Magen Avraham, and in the Alter Rebbe's Siddur (which was made for all Jews equally).

“Indeed, the righteous will extol Your Name; the upright will dwell in Your presence.”

This is found in the Rambam, the BaCh, the TaZ, Responsa from the RaShal; in the Siddurim of the AriZal, the Alter Rebbe, and in the Siddur “Seder Avodas Yisroel.”

There is therefore nothing “new” in these additions, and no need to worry that one would thereby be changing one's usual text of prayer. What is being proposed is that Jews should provide the antidote to the unusual world circumstances by following the suggestion of the above cited authorities. Thus it has always been in Jewish history: An increase in darkness and evil was met by increasing in light and goodness — Torah and mitzvos.

Prayer occupies a unique place in this. The Rambam rule that “It is a positive commandment to pray... to ask for the needs that one requires.” New needs demand new, extra prayers.

May it be G-d's will that this proposal be adopted, and that its very adoption bring good results — as the Shulchan Aruch rules, that the resolution to undertake a good thing itself brings success in the desired effect. And then, may we very soon merit to appear before G-d's countenance in the third Bais Hamikdosh in the true and complete redemption.



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