



Yud Tes Kislev Farbrengen

with

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It's About the Will

We have to want to be chassidim. Though we're far from being true chassidim, yet by holding on to the “door handle” (*kliamke*) of the Baal Shem Tov, the Alter Rebbe and the Rebbe – with that we can be chassidim.

The Rebbe Rashab once asked a Slonimer chossid to repeat a vort from his Rebbe, and he shared the following vort.

On the word *va'eira*, “and I appeared,” Rashi comments “to the Avos.” The Slonimer Rebbe offered a deeper explanation: The word ‘*ava*’ means to will something. Hashem appears to those who will Him.

[The Rebbe Rashab like the *vort* so much that he called for the Frierdiker Rebbe and asked the Slonimer chossid to repeat it again for him (*R. Mendel* p. 299).]

Chassidim were once farbrenging on Pesach Sheini and a *misnaged* passed by and mocked their celebrating the “*yom tov* for the impure.” To which they responded, “Yes, but it's for those who *want* to become pure...”

Chassidus is About Hashem

R. Aizil Homiler said about the Alter Rebbe’s liberation, “*LaHashem Hayeshuah*,” the salvation was for Hashem. Yud Tes Kislev is a Yom Tov for Hashem.

A person can be “Ultra-Orthodox,” but still be in the darkness, without any light. He might read Shema with exactitude and repeat each *possuk* several times to make sure that he's *yoitze*, but it has nothing to do with Hashem.



Mesiras nefesh means to give up your physical body and, as the Alter Rebbe adds, to give up your will. Both are necessary. But saying words meticulously has nothing to do with that.

Here is how you can test it: If this person is ridiculed, he will get very upset. However, a chossid who is *misboinen* in *achdus Hashem* won't care. Say what you want, but it won't bother him.

Without Chassidus a person cannot have life in *mitzvos*. We can't look at a person's outer appearance, since one can have a good-looking body with a sick heart or head.

The Light of the Torah

Reb Mendel Futterfas once shared the following:

Shloime “*der geller*” wanted to learn Chassidus in soviet Russia, but he had no *seforim*. Looking in the *shaimos*, he found three random pages of Chassidus, and he started learning. Reb Mendel asked him how he could learn like that. He explained that there are three ways to learn: 1) To know the material, 2) for *avoda*, 3) to connect with the light of Torah.

Reading from three random pages won't help you know what you've read or even to become a better person. But if you are looking to connect to Hashem, it doesn't matter. Any word of Torah will do. By contrast, you can learn a lot and even write great *seforim* without connecting to the light of Torah.

Think About Hashem For At Least One Minute

A German Yid once told the Rebbe Rashab proudly how he had mediated during Echad for “almost one full minute!” The Rebbe explained that it is contradictory to practice the total dedication of *mesiras nefesh* in Shema for a defined amount of time.

At the very least, we should think about Echad for as long as that German Yid. We need to close ourselves in a room, turn off our phones and think about Hashem.

The real problem today is not that we don't believe in Hashem. The problem is that we don't believe that we have *emunah* inside of us as described in Chassidus.

A Yom Tov for Everyone



Some ask why we consider Yud Tes Kislev a “Chag Hageulah” for all Yidden and not just for Chassidus Chabad? When the Ruzhiner was released from prison, it was not considered a Yom Tov for everyone!

The question comes from ignorance of the history.

The Russian government wanted to arrest all the leaders of Chassidus, since they claimed that they were starting a new religion, which was illegal. The Alter Rebbe could have easily exempted himself by saying that the Baal Shem Tov’s representative is in Mezhibuzh – the Baal Shem Tov’s grandson, R. Boruch.

But the Alter Rebbe chose to say that he is the Baal Shem Tov’s representative. His release was a victory for all of Chassidus and for all of Yiddishkeit, since Yiddishkeit would not last otherwise.

Yiddishkeit Can't Survive Without Chassidus

In Western Europe decades ago, there were Jewish communities – Leeds, Liverpool and so on – which had a significant population and prominent *rabbonim* who authored seforim. Yet, little remained of them, since they weren’t connected to Chassidus. In London and Manchester, those who held strong to Yiddishkeit were those who were connected to Chassidus.

In New Haven around 50 years ago, I met Rav Leizer Garelik, a great *talmid chochom* who was the *mesader gittin* of Connecticut. He told me, “I recall many frum people in this area, but now they’re all gone. Lacking Chassidus, they found all sorts of leniencies in halacha. For example, they didn’t build a sukkah since *goyim* would ridicule it and one who is uncomfortable is exempt from sukkah... An entire generation thus grew up without knowledge of a sukkah, and eventually there was little left of Yiddishkeit.”

In the same way, the entire area between Crown Heights and Borough Park was settled by American Yidden who considered themselves Orthodox but knew very little. In their mind, Hashem is difficult and angry, and we appease him by torturing ourselves for by sitting outside for a week in the fall and by not eating bread for a week in the spring. The Rebbe sent them chassidim on tahalucha to explain what Pesach and Sukkos are really about!

Such thinking would never result from Yidden who were influenced by Yud Tes Kislev.



Iskafya

Your level davening depends on your *iskafya* and limiting yourself.

Iskafya doesn't mean sleeping on the floor. That's what the *yetzer* (as the Rebbe would often refer to the *yetzer hara*) says to discourage you. He tells a person that Ahavas Yisroel means to give away everything, and since you can't do that, you don't do anything.

Likewise, *iskafya* can be something very small. Push off eating for a minute. Don't say what you really want to say. Don't read that kosher newspaper.

Reb Elya Chaim Roittblat would come to a Yud Tes Kislev farbrengen and share two lines: "Today is *Rosh Hashana LaChassidus*. What is Chassidus? *Nit ich*, not I."

Pay a Price

The Rambam writes in Hilchos Melachim that one should not delve into exactly when Eliyahu Hanavi will come since it won't increase our love or fear of Hashem. Certainly, then, the Rambam would say that one shouldn't spend extra time on Sunday's breakfast...

In general, one must pay a price for expensive things. It's not easy to become a chossid. There has to be *לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך*. If you want to stay where you are, then fine. But if you want to be elsewhere, you will have to "go."

Giving of yourself isn't the same as **taking** from Chassidus. To take some nice things from Chassidus isn't becoming a chossid; it's enjoying chassidic philosophy. You must **give** from yourself.

Yiddishkeit Isn't About Feel-Good

A teacher told me, "I asked the kids: 'Can you tell me one thing Hashem did for you today?' And no one knew what to answer." That's *golus*, but it's our job to spread Elokus.

There are many things that can conceal Elokus: Nice 'programs' that make Yiddishkeit 'nice' and 'emotional.' They appeal to us, but they don't reveal Hashem. Someone told me, "On Tisha B'Av, while the old-fashioned people were sitting in shul, we went in a boat on the lake and sang a heartfelt '*Al naharos Bavel*'..."

Yiddishkeit isn't something nice or emotional for you. It's about Hashem!



Davening

Rivka was worried about her pregnancy. When passing a shul, one wanted to go out and when passing a house of idol worship, the other wanted to go. Shem told her it's twins.

There's a vort that asks: Perhaps it was just one child who was apikores who enjoyed both Torah study and *avoda zara*!

The answer is that it says when she passed a shul, not a *yeshiva*. An *apikores* might enjoy learning, but not davening. You won't find a Tehillim yid who is an *apikores*.

Mesilas Yescharim

There are things in Mesilas Yescharim that aren't in line with Chassidus. He was a special person and the Tzemach Tzedek quotes his *Kaballa*.

What he wrote in Mesilas Yescharim was to teach the people in his generation. They didn't have Chassidus yet, so he wrote about being in touch with Above in wording they could relate to.

If you look in his works that were printed after his passing, you'll find that what he wrote was way more in line with Chassidus than what he published for the masses. This is something that answers a lot of similar questions.

Hanachos Ha'olam

We don't go with worldly *hanachos*. A Jewish home doesn't have a set time for breakfast lunch and supper just because 'that's the time one eats'. It can't be 'holy'.

When people get overworked, they need a vacation. But when you're not overworked, you don't need to go on vacation just because that time of year everyone does that.

The same is with all worldly values. Things might be necessary, but it must be without an official *seder*.

You don't need to know what's going on in Washington, or in Tel Aviv for that matter. Do you already know what's doing in *atzilus*? Why start with finding out what's happening in Tel Aviv?



Torah Chinuch

Chinuch must be practices as we received at Matan Torah, not as "professionals" tell us to do.

The professionals learned from some professor in Boston who only knows about a *nefesh habehamis*. Not only doesn't he know about our *nefesh ho'elokis*, he doesn't even know about our *nefesh habehamis*, since theirs is from *shalosh kelipos hatemei'os*, while ours is from *klipas nogah*. How can he teach us how to live if he doesn't understand us?

Look Up!

Moshe made a copper snake and people had to look up to get cured. Looking up means to look at how it would look through heavenly glasses. Not your own. Chassidus says that everything is different than how it appears to us.

Even when there are real problems, you can look up and then there are no problems. Learn *Lehaskilcha Bina* and transport yourself to *alma d'iskasya*.

Everyone believes. You just have to believe that you believe.

Be Happy!

We must always be happy, no matter where we are holding. The Tzemach Tzedek said that a person should fake it until it becomes real.

Reb Aharon "Hagadol" of Karlin lived barely 30 years. When someone asked the Alter Rebbe about him, he said, "Imagine someone tied to a tree being shot at who sees the arrow coming his way about to hit him. That type of fear was Reb Aharon's fear of Hashem 24/7." This R' Aharon once said, "Dance, and you'll stand a *tefach* above everything."

A Fire for Life

There needs to be "*ubacharta bachaim*," the choice of life, before beginning *avoda*. You can't roll out of bed and be in a mood where you want to *daven*. It takes preparation, and that's why we learn Chassidus first.



Mussar is a manual. But that doesn't help, since you already know what's written there. Chassidus turns on a fire.

Chassidus is not about knowing information. If you're suffering from a clogged mind and heart, you need to beg Hashem for mercy.

It's called "*kabalas ol*," accepting the yoke, not placing the yoke. You can't be told or tell others to have it. It needs to come from the person himself.

What Are You Busy With?

During the winter, there are weeks of 'Shovavim' (Shemos through Mishpotim) when many have the custom to fast. When the Rebbe spoke about how today one should not fast Shovavim, tens of Lubavitcher chassidim came to be *matir neder*, despite the fact that Shovavim isn't discussed in Chassidus Chabad. Not everything has to be official.

In the past, many people fasted without anyone knowing. Chazal refer to the *yetzer hara* as "*menuval zeh*," this dirty one. Chassidim would say, "*zeh*" in Yiddish means seeing. If others must see the good that you're doing, that itself is dirty.

A person shouldn't be thinking whether he's good or bad, a *tzadik* or a *rasha*. Don't think about yourself; think about what's Above. Then you won't have any of these issues.

Teshuva is not about DOING *teshuva*. It's about getting closer to Hashem and being united with Him. To come closer, you must walk, ride a bike, or climb a mountain; whatever it takes. Then, the *teshuva* should happen by itself.

Beyond Materialism

R' Yochanan Gordon and Mendel Deitch were both businessmen and very close friends. One day, they stopped talking. One of them didn't want to have anything to do with the other, since he found out that he had opened a savings account!

The world will tell you that the normal and responsible thing to do is to have a savings account. That chossid felt that any extra dollar needed to go to *tzedaka*. That's what it means to be "above the world."



R Meir Simcha Chein - a businessman- was told a fire had broken out in his house. He walked over calmly to check out the situation. Upon arrival he found out it wasn't his house but the neighbor's. That's when he started screaming. Yiddishe gelt is burning! Do something!

Although these chassidim were down to earth businessmen who lived fairly recently, we can't expect to be on that level. But we can learn how to be a little higher than the world.

Connection to the Rebbe

It's foolish to ask, "Who needs a Rebbe?" It's like saying who needs *rishonim* since I can *pasken* straight from the Gemara.

If you're not connected, you'll fall down. There are people who learn Chassidus for a while, and then cool off and stop. Later, they pick up and learn for a while. Without being connected to a Rebbe even good things won't hold long. An individual *neschama* must be connected to the general *neschama*, and be subservient to it like a hand to the head.

A Rebbe can be a shoemaker or have any other profession. That's doesn't stop him from being a Rebbe. There were Rebbes who were well-known and had a community and had many stories about them. Reb Zushe Anipoler didn't have any of that. We have very little Chassidus from him and few stories. He wasn't even a community leader. Yet he's Reb Zushe!

Once at the Rebbe's farbrengen, someone asked me if there was a *mashgiach* to make sure everyone came. I didn't understand what he was talking about! Everyone came because they wanted to be there.