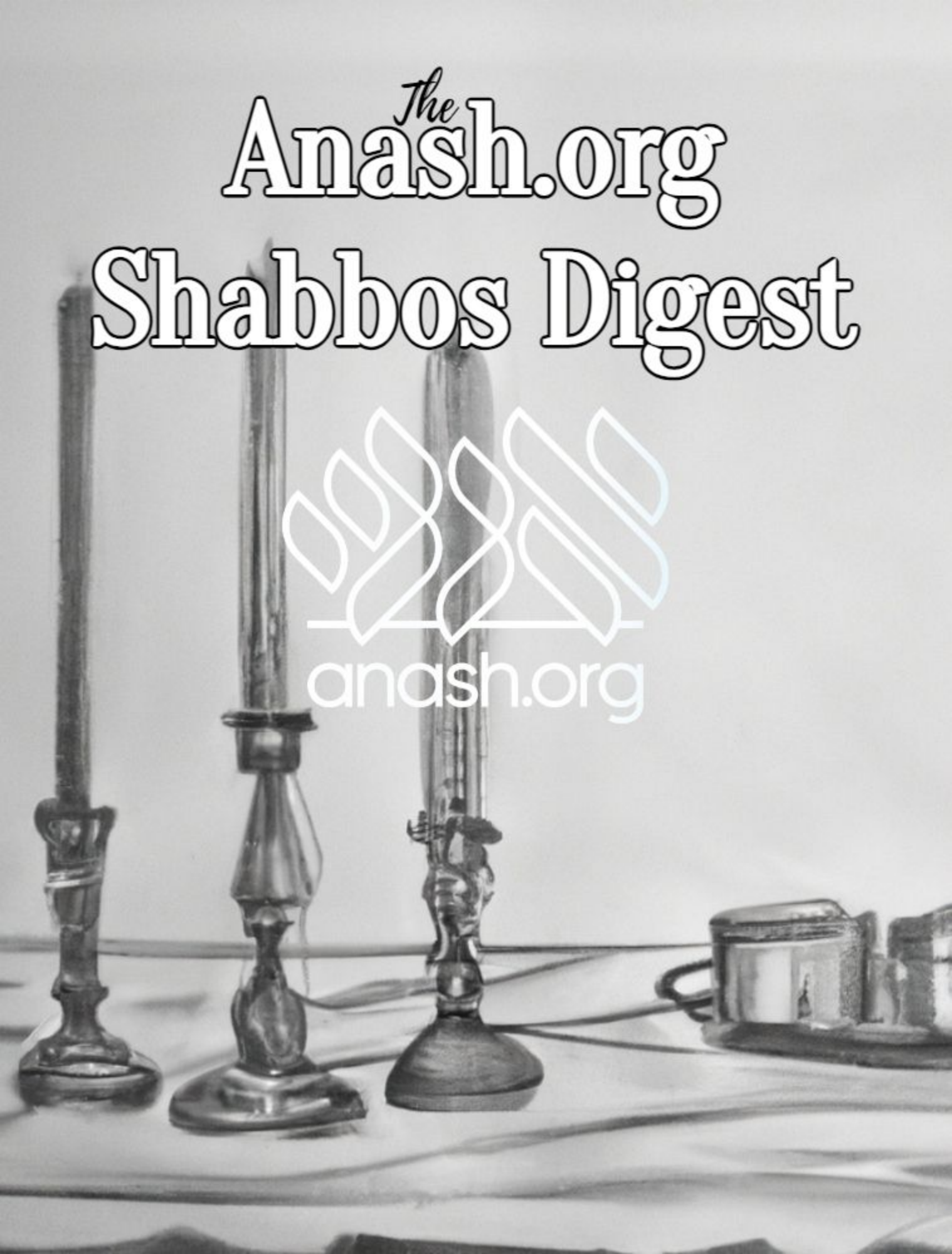


*The*  
**Anash.org**

# Shabbos Digest



# SAVING OUR CHILDREN, ONE PHONE AT A TIME

NEWS ח' אב ה'תשפ"ג - JULY 25, 2023



**Highlighting Our Own: Parents worldwide feel the responsibility and pressure of raising wholesome children despite the rampant phone addiction culture. One organization has an actual, practical, and effective, solution for the epidemic.**

*By Anash.org reporter*

A big challenge the parents of our generation are facing is trying to raise children who are tempted daily with an addiction that hasn't been around in the past: the smartphone. With M.U.S.T. 'Mothers Unite to Stall Technology', they can now breathe a sigh of relief.

"The dynamic force called technology, could hold a family hostage in their own home," says Mrs. **Simcha Minkowitz**, a concerned mother and active M.U.S.T. volunteer.

Previously, most of the prevalent addictive substances weren't really a concern for parents of young children, they were more concerned about those things with their teenagers and young adults. Now, parents of children as young as second and first grade are shocked and baffled when their kids come home from school begging for a phone.

In a speech to the community, Dr. **Eli Rosen**, a pediatrician for over thirty years who knows the intimate ins and outs of thousands of families in Crown Heights shared his close-up views.

"I see hundreds of our children who come to my office. I'm there in the trenches. All of a sudden, I'm seeing something I never saw before, and it's frightening: I'm seeing an epidemic of anxiety in children. The most important cause of anxiety is disconnection. It's at the root of this epidemic, and one of the most powerful drivers of disconnection is the cellphone."

In the sea of worry and darkness, appeared a group of brave mothers who formed the organization M.U.S.T. – Mothers Unite to Stall Technology. The organization acknowledges the power technology has on us and isn't attempting to ban it, just to push it off as much as possible.

Started by Mrs. **Michal Klerer** and Mrs. **Nechy Eisenstadt**, it then spread to the Chabad community not long after.

"I was at a mental health retreat we do in the mountains each summer about to go to a speech titled "But Everyone Has One" about how to deal with our children's peer pressure regarding devices when the idea came to me. I brought up the idea to the speaker, Dr. **David Pelcovitz**, who is an expert on technology and children. He absolutely loved it," shares Mrs. Klerer. "He was so excited by it, that he told me to present it to the women after his speech and start the organization on the spot. So that's exactly what we did."

The organization's goal is to stall the usage of any kind of device until the kids grow up, one year at a time. The way they do it is by uniting mothers class by class to make a pact together to either not buy their children a phone that year, or if the mothers decide it's an age that they can't hold off any longer, they make a pact to forbid social media or have restrictions and filters. The power in this is that the mothers set limits all together so their kids don't feel pressured by their classmates.

Mrs. **Gila Schechter** was the first in a group of Lubavitch mothers to bring the program to Crown Heights.

"I was speaking to my sister, Mrs. **Batya Tenenbaum** about not getting my daughter a phone next year when she gets to ninth grade and she was appalled. 'You're going to turn her into a social pariah- she won't have any friends,' she warned me. I was so disturbed by this and I was discussing it with my friend Mrs. **Chani Morosow** who joined me in researching for a solution; it was then that we discovered M.U.S.T. We didn't even know at that point that it was an organization started by frum women."

Mrs. Schechter teamed up with a group of passionate and motivated mothers, including all the women mentioned above, to create the MUST Crown Heights branch. They hosted events to create awareness, signed up class ambassadors, and spread the word whenever they could.

"It's imperative to begin at a young age, even in kindergarten, before any of the students have phones or tablets. By the time my daughter was in eighth grade, 70% of her class already had phones. By the next year, she would be maybe one of ten girls in a grade of over 100 students to be without a phone. The sooner a class starts, the more potential it has to succeed," she urges.

Amazingly, in the four years since the program hit the Chabad community, thousands of classes have joined. Hundreds of mothers have dedicated their time to become class ambassadors and the classes involved have been met with great success. In last year's Zoom event alone, over 1,000 participants joined.

"It was such a relief when a mother in my daughter's class reached out to us all about the program," shares one mother from LA who asked to be anonymous. "It was always a niggling concern in the back of my mind and when our class mothers met up and signed the

pact, it was like a huge weight was lifted off my chest. It has now been four years of our class signing not to give our children phones, and now, in the eighth grade, I am proud to say, not one child in my daughter's class has a phone or smartwatch."

One of the biggest challenges the organization faces is keeping up the momentum. After an event, people are fired up and ready to take action, but within two weeks, habits kick in and the topic mostly falls to the wayside. Therefore, it is so important to immediately take action; for mothers to step up and be the class ambassador in their kids' classes.

"It's something that all mothers want and something that literally saves lives, it's just a matter of taking the initiative and setting the tone," explains one class ambassador.

"M.U.S.T. prepares everything for you- down to the template of the WhatsApp message to send out to your child's class group chat to start the program in his or her class. Don't hesitate to get involved, even with your five-year-old's class."

Any school and any mother can get involved in creating a group for your child's class. To become a class ambassador, and to sign up your child's class you can visit [Must-CH.org](http://Must-CH.org). With one simple choice, you can improve your children's lives immensely. Get involved today.

***Highlighting Our Own is an Anash.org column that highlights our community's wonderful initiatives and projects.***

For previous installments:

- [MAKING TEENS LEADERS THROUGH ART](#)

- [HOW ONE MAN'S YOUTUBE CHANNEL MADE A CHASSIDUS REVOLUTION](#)

# YESHIVOS SEEK TO BRING BACK TRADITIONAL KASKETS

NEWS אב תשפ"ג - JULY 24, 2023



**A group of 15 yeshivos in Bnei Brak announced that students would be required to wear a kasket and not a hat as until now, quoting the expense to parents and the fragility of the hats.**

*By Anash.org reporter*

In a revolutionary letter to parents, 15 yeshivos in Bnei Brak announced that going forward, all Bar Mitzvah boys must come wearing “kaskets” only, and not regular hats, Charedim10 reported.

In a letter to parents, the administrators wrote:

“The preservation of the accepted Jewish attire has been passed down from generation to generation, and a part of it was the custom to wear a small hat or kasket.

“For some reason, after World War II, the practice of wearing broad hats has

become widespread and the number of kasket wearers has decreased. However, it is difficult for students in yeshivas to maintain expensive hats, and this burdens the parents,”

The administrators, from a variety of Chassidic communities, added: “The cost of the hats is very high. We have heard the distress of the parents who cannot afford the expensive expense when kaskets are much cheaper.”

The administrators of the Torah study schools state firmly: “Boys may come to the cheder only with a kasket on their heads, and keep their hats for Shabbos, Yom Tov and simchos.”

Charedim10 notes that it is common in some Chabad yeshivos for bochurim to wear kaskets, and that some great chassidim – notably Reb **Mendel Futerfas** and Reb **Berkeh Chein** – were instructed by the **Rebbe** to keep their kaskets.

*Should Lubavitcher chassidim switch back to the Russian kasket? Write your thoughts in the comments below.*

# OUR KIDS ARE BEING SHUT OUT FROM ENJOYING CAMP

NEWS | אב ה'תשפ"ג - JULY 24, 2023

*Photo: Illustration*



**From the Anash.org inbox: I've seen how much more the athletic kids enjoy camp than the less athletic ones, and it makes perfect sense. How is a kid expected to enjoy camp when the whole day he's just sitting on the side, waiting for the five minutes he can actually play?**

*By a camp counselor*

As the first month of summer comes to an end in most Chabad boys' camps, I'd like to express my thoughts about an issue that has been affecting our camps, at least since my own childhood – sports.

Now, don't get me wrong, sports are great, and many kids love them. I'd even say some kids come to camp specifically for the sports. My concern isn't sports themselves, but rather the excessive focus, pushing, and hype surrounding them.

There are many kids out there who are just regular children, and they belong in a regular Chabad camp. However, many of these kids end up disliking camp for a simple reason – they're either not into sports or they are, but they never get the chance to participate due to them not being as good. Consequently, the coaches and captains won't put them on the field.

I'm not fully blaming the coaches, and I can tell you that last year, besides being a counselor, I also coached a team in leagues. Yes, it's hard to put kids who aren't good at sports in the game as much as skilled kids. Why? Because there's this overemphasis on sports, and even the coaches feel pressured to win.

I remember once I took my best player off the field for a few minutes, and we ended up losing the game because of it. Later that day, a fellow counselor told me, "C'mon, you should know. Never take your best player off."

Now, tell me, why does the kid who's good at sports deserve to have a more enjoyable summer than a less athletic kid? Go ahead, explain! Some may claim "That's just the way it works," but I genuinely don't see that as a fair argument. Why is that the way our camp system operates? Why is a coach considered "generous" for putting a less athletic kid in for a "full quarter of a game"?

I believe there are two solutions:

1. Camps should have more teams with fewer children per team, allowing more kids to play. (I actually heard that in the BMD of one of the major Chabad camps, that was an emphasis this year.)
2. Camps should offer alternative options other than sports.

I've seen with my own eyes how much more the athletic kids enjoy camp than the less athletic ones, and it makes perfect sense. How is a kid expected to enjoy camp when the whole day he's just sitting on the side, waiting for the five minutes he can actually play?

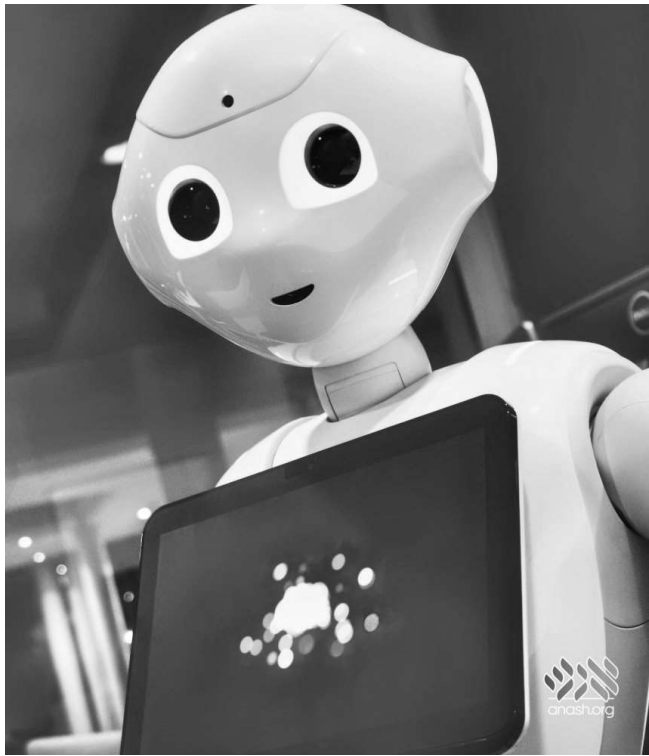
I hope camps hear and understand this letter and take it to heart.

Sincerely,

A Counselor in a major Chabad Camp

# AI PASKENING HALACHA

NEWS יולי 30, 2023 - אב ה'תשפ"ג



## Ask the Rov: Can Artificial Intelligence (AI) that is trained in halacha be relied upon?

By **Rabbi Chaim Hillel Raskin** – Rov of Anash in Petach Tikvah

Aside from the fact that AI is in its early stages and makes many errors, there are several reasons why AI could not replace real *rabbonim*.

To *pasken* a *halacha*, one must know three things: (1) The halachic sources from the Gemara down to the *poskim*; (2) the details of the *shaila*; and (3) how to apply the halacha to the particular situation, the circumstance (*l'chatchila, b'dieved, sh'as hadchak*), and the observance level of the one asking (the *shoie*l).

While AI can help collect information, it is limited in its ability to know and assess the questioner's level. Even with previous technologies — phone or text — *rabbonim* have been reluctant to answer certain *shailos* without knowing the *shoie*l since much of a *psak* depends on the situation of the one asking.<sup>1</sup> (In fact, *rabbonim* would often give conflicting *psakim* on the same *shaila* based on different situations.)

Much of *psak* is transmitted as a *mesorah* from *rav* to *talmid* and absorbed through *shimush* (internship), and each community has its own *mesorah*. Furthermore, when forming a *psak*, a *rov* will sometimes combine various *shitos*, even those not ordinarily relied upon, and a *rov* must be trained in the nuance of which *shitos* are used and which are not.<sup>2</sup>

Whenever something is assumed to be prohibited, a kosher witness (*eid echad*) is needed to inform us that it is kosher. Similarly, when an item is in question, we need a living *rov* to permit it. Even if AI will prohibit, it is wrong to prohibit unnecessarily and a leniency can sometimes result in a related scenario (*chumra d'asi lidei kula*).

More significantly: The Torah instructs us to bring halachic questions before the *dayanim* living "in your days," as the Torah was given to *am Yisroel* whose Torah leaders have the power to decide *halacha*.<sup>3</sup> We also find that the function of communicating the



Torah's ruling was given to Moshe Rabbeinu who transmitted the word of Hashem.<sup>4</sup> This can only be done by a *neshama* in a body, not a smart computer.

When an upstanding and G-d fearing *rov paskens* a *shaila*, he is given *siyata dishmaya*, heavenly assistance to rule correctly. The Rebbe would relate a story about the Noda Biyehuda who was challenged as a young *rov*, and he answered every *shaila* correctly except for one that was fabricated, for which he did not have *siyata dishmaya*.<sup>5</sup> For this reason, *shailos* must be brought before a *rov yerei Shomayim*, not just a knowledgeable person or computer.

[See Sources](#) (open PDF)

From [The Weekly Farbrengen](#) by Merkaz Anash

# A LIFE OF CHASSIDUS: REMEMBERING REB YOEL ON HIS 2ND YAHRZEIT

NEWS | אב ה'תשפ"ג - JULY 24, 2023



**Monday, 6 Menachem Av, marks the second yahrzeit of Reb Yoel Kahn, who served as the Rebbe's chief *chozer*, and who taught Chassidus to tens of thousands as the foremost *mashpi'im* and teachers of Chassidus.**

*By Anash.org reporter*

Monday, 6 Menachem Av, marks the second yahrzeit of Reb **Yoel Kahn**, who served as the **Rebbe's** chief *chozer*, and who taught Chassidus to tens of thousands as the foremost *mashpi'im* and teachers of Chassidus.

Reb Yoel was born in the Soviet Union, on 16 Shevat, 5690 (1930) to Reb **Refoel Nachman** and **Rivkah Kahan**. His father was a *tomim*, having studied in the original Yeshiva Tomchei Temimim, in the town of Lubavitch, White Russia. Later on in his life he authored *Shemu'os VeSippurim* an authoritative and multi-volume

compilation of historical accounts and anecdotes, culled from the traditions handed down by reliable Chassidim of earlier generations and his own experiences.

At a young age he emigrated to Eretz Yisroel together with his family, and studied in Yeshiva Achai Temimim in Tel Aviv under the tutelage of the famous mashpia Reb **Chaim Shaul Brook**. During his teen years he also studied privately with the famed mashpia and teacher of Chassidus Reb **Moshe Gourarie**. He also knew and was influenced by Reb **Nochum Goldshmidt** and to a lesser degree, by Reb **Shlomo Chaim Kesselman**.

On 11 Shvat 5710/1950, unaware of the histalkus of the **Friediker Rebbe**, he ascended a boat to travel to New York, to continue his studies in the yeshiva at 770. Arriving in New York, he quickly became attached to the Rebbe, and was part of the group of Chassidim who did all in their power to have the Rebbe accept the *neius*.

As soon as he arrived in 770 his unique talents were recognized and he immediately began to write *hanachos* of the Rebbe's mamorim and sichos. Elders Chassidim who were still chozrim of the Rebbe Rashab marveled at his special power both in understanding and in memory.

On 15 Elul, 5714, he married Luba Leah, the daughter of Rabbi **Shneur Zalman Butman**, and the Rebbe was mesader Kiddushin. Shortly afterward he was appointed *mashpia* in one of the branches of the Chabad Yeshiva in Crown Heights, and was later appointed head *mashpia* in the central Tomchei Temimim 770.

For decades, Reb Yoel served as the Rebbe's chief *chozer* and *maniach*. Starting from the Rebbe's first farbrengen, Reb Yoel, who was renowned for his phenomenal memory, would memorize the Rebbe's sichos and ma'amarim. Following the farbrengen, usually held on Shabbos or Yom Tov when no recordings are allowed, Reb Yoel would hold a *chazara*, where the Rebbe's words would be repeated and transcribed. As a *maniach*, he prepared the Rebbe's edited maamorim and sections of Likkutei Sichos for publication. His magnum opus is Sefer HoErkim Chabad, an encyclopedia and analysis of Chassidus concepts.

In his role as the head mashpia of the Tomchei Temimim Yeshiva at 770, Reb Yoel guided thousands of students in the teachings of Chassidus. He also traveled far and wide to give shiurim in Chassidus and to farbreng. His audio recordings, and books, are used by many more around the world.

VIDEO: Chai Elul Farbrengen with Reb Yoel:

Reb Yoel Kahn singing Nigun R' Zalman Zlatopolski's Niggun:

*Below is a collection of photos from the life of Reb Yoel Kahn. Photo Credit: JEM, Hassidic Archives, Rebbe Drive, Berel Meyers, Mendy Kurant, Anash.org Photographers*

# WHERE HAVE WE GONE WRONG?

NEWS ח' אב ה'תשפ"ג - JULY 25, 2023



**Oped: “Get a 500k Credit Limit! No Credit or Financial Statements Needed!” was the advertisement I received today on a popular Whatsapp Group. Immediately, I thought: “Where have we gone wrong?”**

*By @Craftsmanbob*

“Get a 500k Credit Limit! No Credit or Financial Statements Needed!” was the advertisement I received today on a popular Whatsapp Group. Immediately, I thought: “Where have we gone wrong?”

Allow me to backtrack:

When I was a bochur, shortly before I got married, the infamous Sterling Electronics

and Toner Inc scandals came to light. Many of my friends and other members of the frum community across all ages allowed a stranger to swipe tens of thousands of dollars, some well into six figures, of *their* money, money they did not even have, to earn credit card points and airline miles. When they were told that they weren't being paid back, they were stuck with the debt. Many are still feeling the repercussions today. They are in court, in debt, fighting bankruptcy, have destroyed credit, and spend their time chasing away creditors. They are unfortunate victims of an evil scheme.

Yes, perpetrators of financial fraud exist in every community, but somehow, in our communities, so many more “regular” people seem to get caught up in them.

So I ask again: “Where have we gone wrong?”

Another example: A number of years ago a well-meaning friend of mine recommended to me a popular “accountant”.

It was my first time ever filing taxes and I did not know much about the process, pricing, etc. He called himself a “tax filer” (which I later discovered is not an actual accountant) and told me he charges a percentage of the refund. My taxes that year necessitated something a little more complex than the standard filing, and he did not know how to do it.

He assured me that he is still able to make my refund larger than if I were to go to someone else who does it “properly.” He told me all sorts of “tricks” he can do. Was I actually eligible

for these “tricks” he suggested? Was I truly eligible to make certain deductions? But then again: I am not the expert; he knows what he’s doing. But something told me to do some more digging. He says he charges a percentage of the refund so that he is incentivized to get me the largest refund possible. But the flip side of that is that he is incentivized to lie in my name with no risk to himself so that he can make the most money. I also realized that the 10% fee can very quickly become exorbitant.

On the IRS website, it says: “Taxpayers should avoid tax return preparers who base their fees on a percentage of the refund or who offer to deposit all or part of the refund into their own financial accounts. Be wary of tax return preparers who claim they can get larger refunds than their competitors.”

Wise advice.

After doing some more digging and asking around I discovered that this same individual, who has many kollel yungeleit as clients, will utilize certain tax credits for them, sometimes even to their own detriment, by taking advantage of limited tax credits that are not best utilized in kollel.

“My clients only get audited about 5% of the time,” he told me. At least he was honest about that.

In truth, a large part of why this seems to affect us so much is actually due to one of the frum community’s most enviable qualities. The close-knit community and high level of trust we have for one another allows cunning people to take advantage of this and prey on members of the community. Something good will always be taken advantage of by bad actors.

In fact, Chazal tells us that even our holy Torah, an elixir and our source of life, can be an elixir of death when weaponized.

I fully understand the financial challenges we as a community face. However, we still need to be vigilant about who we trust.

But it’s more than that. It’s not only corrupt people taking advantage of the vulnerable.

It’s also us. The regular folk. The everyday person. Well-meaning people who find excuses why they don’t need to be *fully* honest in this scenario or another.

I will not go into specifics, instead, I will simply quote a Gemara in Yoma: “...One who reads Torah, and learns Mishna, and serves Torah scholars, but his business practices are not done faithfully, and he does not speak pleasantly with other people, what do people say about him? Woe to so-and-so who studied Torah, woe to his father who taught him Torah, woe to his teacher who taught him Torah. So-and-so who studied Torah, see how destructive are his deeds, and how ugly are his ways.”

The Torah is meant to elevate us to be upright and honest in **everything** we do. If we have become desensitized to the opposite, to the point that no one bats an eyelash, then it is truly, "Woe onto us."

This takes me back to the advertisement I saw today on WhatsApp.

I saw this ad soon after a frum influencer was paid to publish ads in frum magazines and run a social media campaign encouraging people to give their money to an investment firm that was later discovered to have not been fully honest. (I wonder why they didn't advertise in the Wall Street Journal ...) This was immediately followed by a story of a "frum" fraudster pardoned by Trump who was caught *again* allegedly swindling people. So when I see this ad, I'm sure now you can understand my reaction.

We are supposed to be an Am Chochom v'Novon, and an honest and upright people, commanded by Hashem to engage with others and our government honestly.

Where have we gone wrong? What is wrong with us?

Tanna Debei Eliyahu Rabbah:

"Hashem Said to Bnei Yisroel: My Beloved Children, All I ask is that you love one another, honor and be reverent of one another. Don't sin, don't steal, and don't do anything objectionable that will lead you to be blemished forever."

*Part 2 to follow.*

***The views expressed in op-eds are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent or reflect the views of Anash.org.***

# LITVISHE ROSH YESHIVA COULDN'T CONTAIN HIS EXCITEMENT AFTER TESTING CHABAD BOCHURIM

NEWS הי"אב ה'תשפ"ג - JULY 23, 2023



**Rabbi Sholom Ber Sorotzkin, Rosh Yeshiva of the Ateres Shlomo yeshiva network, couldn't contain his excitement after testing Bochurim of Tomchei Temimim Vienna, Austria on the entire Maseches Avodah Zarah.**

*By Anash.org reporter*

A special guest visited Tomchei Temimim Vienna's Yeshivas Kayitz: the head of the "Ateres Shlomo" network of Torah institutions, Rabbi **Sholom Ber Sorotzkin**.

The Bochurim of Tomchei Temimim Vienna, Austria, led by Rabbi **Chaim Fieldsteel**, recently finished a special summer program held at the beautiful facilities of Chabad of Milan, Italy. They spent day and night learning Torah, reaching a comprehensive mastery of the

entire Maseches Avodah Zarah.

For a lengthy hour, Rabbi Sorotzkin spoke with the Talmidim in learning. He began with a shiur on the masechta, then moved on to testing the Bochurim orally. Marei Mekomos flew swiftly, going from the sugya of business on gentile holidays to the sugya of Bitul Avodah Zarah, and back again.

At the end of the test, Rabbi Sorotzkin expressed his immense admiration for their knowledge of the mesachta, especially in light of the fact that some of the Bochurim are Ukraine's war refugees.

Ashreichem Yisrael! Ashreichem Shezachitem! Such special Bochrin," Rabbi Sorotzkin exclaimed with great excitement. "I can tell you, I've had tens of thousands of young men passing by me over the years, but to see Bochrin who are knowledgeable in an entire Masechet at such a young age, and in such circumstances of being *'Meorchei HaMilchamah'*, finishing Masechet Avodah Zarah specifically in Italy – Ashreichem Yisrael. To see the Yiras Shomayim, to see the Torah, on their face – Ashreichem Shezachitem!"

# WHY I BROUGHT 10 YOUNG JEWISH PROFESSIONALS TO GUATEMALA

NEWS הי אב ה'תשפ"ג - JULY 22, 2023



**Article by Rabbi Chaim Lazaroff: “You went where? That—or something like that—is the question I get often when people hear that I took a group of young professionals to Guatemala.”**

*By Rabbi Chaim Lazaroff, Chabad Young Professionals Houston*

“You went where?”

That—or something like that—is the question I get often when people hear that I took a group of young professionals to Guatemala.

It’s a fair question. As a *shliach* for young professionals tasked with bringing them closer to Judaism, it would make sense to lead a trip to Israel or Crown Heights.

Judaism is natural and organic in these places, and bringing people there to experience it first-hand has obvious benefits.

But Guatemala? What were we looking for there? Why schlep a group of inspired young Jewish adults to this Central American spot?

Yes, Chabad Young Professionals International at Merkos 302 was offering to take care of all the logistics, and they created a truly enticing program that raised our young professional’s eyebrows and was hard to turn down. But still, why Guatemala?

I’ll tell you why. On such a trip, I readily saw how these young Jews experienced *Yiddishkeit* in a real-life way that could never be had in their regular lives—not even in my Chabad house. Over the course of a few days in that exotic location, the lessons of *Yiddishkeit* went far beyond anything that could be learned in any classroom.

Here are some of the lessons we learned.

## **1. *Emunah* is a Real Thing**

Of course it is, right? We all believe in G-d, is that not so?

Well, sort of.



It's true that many believe in G-d in their minds, but in reality, on the gut level of everyday life, it's not so easy to really feel it and see it. I have taught concepts of *Emunah* for decades, to varying degrees of success, but there in Guatemala, the lesson landed so much deeper and truer.

Imagine witnessing a volcano erupt in the middle of the night, with thundering noises that shake the very earth beneath you, and then seeing a shower of lava sparks dazzle the night sky. We saw all that—and then immediately loudly and emotionally declared the *brachah*, “עוֹשֵׂה מַעֲשֵׂה בְרֵאשִׁית—the Creator of all nature!” We took our time saying the *brachah*, reflecting on the awesomeness of what we just witnessed and realizing that it comes from an almighty G-d that is far greater than anything we can ever comprehend.

At that moment, G-d was very real. A thousand sermons couldn't match that.

## **2. We Have so Much to be Thankful For**

Guatemala's natural beauty is really something to behold. But the physical comfort of many of the people who live there doesn't come close to the level of beauty around them. Spending time in this luscious atmosphere and seeing the contrast of that backdrop to the people living there was a powerful lesson in gratitude.

We all say “Thank you” every day. Each morning, we begin our day with *Modeh Ani*. But how many of us reflect on what we're saying? How many of us truly appreciate what G-d gives us? Is it possible that we're taking a lot of what we have for granted?

Well, after hiking the entire night up a mountain and then setting up camp on top, the conversation around the bonfire with the volcano thundering in the background wasn't trivial. Drawing from the Rebbe's deep teachings in *kuntres inyanan shel toras hachassidus (on the essence of Chassidus)*, we spent a long time reflecting on every word of *Modeh Ani*, hammering home the depth and breadth of how much gratitude we ought to feel.

Once again, the ideas came to life, far greater than if I had taught them in just an ordinary setting.

## **3. We're One People with Shared Identity**

Guatemala is a tourism hot spot, drawing people from every corner of the globe. Over Shabbos in the Chabad House, we spent time with every type of Jew imaginable. And despite the many different cultures, languages, and ethnicities, we all felt like family.

We talk a lot about Jewish unity, how every Jew is family, and how we're all connected. But ensconced in our daily lives and boxed into our fixed environments, we often don't really feel that way. There are even some Jews we may feel we can't relate to—for whatever reason. But in Guatemala, that all dissipated.

The *Lecha dodi* was the same. The *Shalom aleichem* was the same. Whether it was Moroccan fish or gefilte fish, it was the same thing: a bunch of Jews keeping Shabbos and its

customs. That feeling was very palpable.

#### **4. Happiness Doesn't Come from Stuff**

As I mentioned earlier, the Guatemalans aren't very well off by Western standards. For many of them, it can be said that they live in squalor.

And yet, as we walked around, took ATVs around the Mayan villages, and generally interacted with the locals, one thing was obvious: on the whole, they're quite happy. No latest smartphone, no penthouses, and no fancy cocktails. And yet, they're simply content.

I asked the young professionals with me why they think that's so. Again, the classroom answer is printed in the books. But that's hard to relate to when you think you need a nice car and a lucrative career to be happy. But in the dusty narrow roads of Antigua and its surrounding villages, the answer became clearer: A sense of purpose, community, and family. These people are connected to something, to each other, and to their families. That makes them happy.

This is in stark contrast to the millennial culture so prevalent today. So many are clamoring to stand out, to divorce themselves from their families, their communities, and their past, so as to be successful and distinguished. Many isolate for months at a time, cultivating a fake online persona meant to impress others and ostensibly bring them happiness. This is a mistake. And there, in Guatemala, it was a lot easier to bring that point home.

As Jews, we have a shared family, a natural community, and built-in sense of purpose. The more we lean into that, the happier we'll be.

#### **5. We Have a Sense of Purpose**

Building on the theme above, the general camaraderie we shared and the sheer exuberance we experienced together coalesced into one overarching theme: we have an inborn sense of purpose, and we would do well cultivating it, it's fun, relaxing and meaningful.

We're *Yidden!* Hashem gave us so much to work with and lead purposeful, happy lives. Of course, there are hardships and challenges, but with patience, a little work and a bit more wisdom, we can learn to ignore those hardships and focus more on the purpose of it all, in peace.

The euphoric *Yiddishkeit* we experienced for those few days, with a healthy dose of (Shabbos) relaxation in Guatemala, provided just that purpose. As they say locally, *tranquillo*.

# REB YOEL'S LEGACY IS FLOURISHING IN BORO PARK

NEWS | אב ה'תשפ"ג - JULY 23, 2023



**Two years after the passing of Reb Yoel Kahn a"h, the Rebbe's *chozer* and preeminent teacher of Chassidus, a new center for studying and spreading Chassidus in Boro Park is continuing the work he began.**

*By Anash.org reporter*

During his lifetime, Reb **Yoel Kahn**, the **Rebbe's** chief *chozer*, dedicated countless hours, indeed his entire life, to the study and spread of the wellsprings of Chassidus. Two years after his passing, his legacy is growing with a new center in Boro Park which bears his name.

The plan for 'Beis Reb Yoel' was **first announced** just weeks after his passing

on 6 Av, 5781. Nearly two and a half million dollars were raised in a subsequent campaign, thanks to the generosity of Reb Yoel's students and anash from around the globe.

As Reb Yoel second yahrzeit is marked on Monday, the new center is up and running, continuing to spread Chassidus to the Yidden of Boro Park, as he did for many decades.

The impressive brand new 4,000 square foot, Beis Reb Yoel Center for Torah and Chassidus is a spacious and aesthetically pleasing center. Since it opened, the center has generated great excitement in the community and quickly became a hub of activity.

First and foremost among the center's draws is the one-of-a-kind Heichel Halimud, filled with seforim of all areas in Nigleh and Chassidus. The Heichel also hosts multiple weekly shiurim and farbrengens for *yemei depagra*. In another section of the building is a popular seforim store that carries all Sifrei Chassidus Chabad, which are not available in other nearby locations. The center is also home to Heichel Menachem of Boro Park, who, among their myriad other projects, are the architects of the acclaimed Chassidus via Telephone and Chassidus Mevueres projects.

Open from 6:00 AM each morning until midnight, Heichel Menachem – Bais Reb Yoel draws serious *lomdei Torah*, *rabbonim*, *maggidei shiur*, businessmen, *yungerleit* and bochurim alike, its halls constantly filled with the sweet sound of Torah. On an average evening, one can find 50 Yidden immersed in this special atmosphere, which is especially conducive to in-depth learning.

A prominent roster of dedicated *magidei shiurim* and *mashpi'im* deliver *shiurim* in Chassidus and lead farbrengens at Beis Reb Yoel for large crowds of local Yidden. Delivering *shiurim* on a regular basis are Rabbi **Leibel Altein**, Rabbi **Fishel Oster**, Rabbi **Berel Korf** and Rabbi **Shimon Dexter**, along with a long list of distinguished guests who come on special occasions.

But the impact of Beis Reb Yoel isn't only felt in Boro Park. One monumental achievement of Bais Reb Yoel is its central database, with thousands of hours of Reb Yoel's recorded *shiurim* and farbrengens, as well as *shiurim* and farbrengens from various other renowned *mashpi'im*. For those who frequent the center, they can access shiurim in USB format. For them, and for anyone around the globe, the list of shiurim can be viewed on a [catalog](#), which lists over 15,000 shiurim, and every one of those shiurim can be listened to on the 'Chassidus via Telephone' program.

And even with all the ongoing programs, a host of new projects are set to be launched in the near future. A kiosk loaded with all the above shiurim will soon be set up at Beis Reb Yoel, allowing all visitors to download all of them at no charge. An especially exciting development is the development of a new app to host all the shiurim for chassidim and Yidden around the world to enjoy.

The Heichal Halimud is also preparing to set up an Otzar Hachochma program for visitors in addition to their well-stocked library.

Another new and well-received project of Bais Reb Yoel is the monthly publication, '[Siach Chassidim](#)', which is printed and distributed to all Shuls in Boro Park, Crown Heights, and in various communities across the globe. It is also emailed to thousands of individual recipients.

"Reb Yoel dedicated his life to the Boro Park community for over 50 years, and stood at the helm of Heichel Menachem since its inception. Well into his later years, Reb Yoel painstakingly traveled, twice weekly, to Boro Park to deliver shiurim, imbuing his listeners with concepts of Achdus Hashem and of Ahavas Hashem," Rabbi **Yisroel Stern**, administrator of Heichal Menachem told Anash.org.

"Chazal teach us that '*kol hamelamed es ben chaveiro Torah, ma'ale alav hakasuv ki'ilu yoldo*' – ne who teaches his friend's son Torah, is considered as though it were his own son. The hundreds and thousands of students Reb Yoel taught, and who were profoundly influenced by the Rebbe's Torah, can be called his children," he said.

"Today, as we mark two years since his passing, we can confidently say that the physical edifice of Beis Reb Yoel is continuing that holy work, expanding the reach of Chassidus in ever-broadening venues," he said.

The heads of Heichal Menachem – Beis Reb Yoel asked to use the opportunity to thank the many that helped them reach this point.

"We are filled with tremendous *hakoras hatov* to the Aibershter, and are immensely grateful to every donor who has participated in this extraordinary, living legacy for Reb Yoel.

"We extend our utmost appreciation to our key supporters, whose steady support and exceptional generosity have enabled the monumental vision of Beis Reb Yoel, to become a reality.

Reb **Yisroel** and Reb **Yosef Zajac** and family – who have dedicated the Cheder Halimud in memory of their father, Reb **Meir Zajac a"h**; a dear and longtime friend and supporter of Heichel Menachem.

Mr. **George Rohr**– who has dedicated the Chassidus Mevueres Suite and the digital learning – download center.

Mr. **Yitzchok Mirilswili**

Reb **Yitzchok Michaan**

Mr. **Yeshaya Boymelgreen**

Mr. **Yossi Popack**– who has dedicated the spacious room where the Shiurim are held

Mr. **Avi Shaulson**

And many more הרוצים בעילום שמתם

"May Hashem bless them with everything they need and with *hatzlacha* in all they do," they said.

# THE WATCHMAN WHO WENT ON TO BECOME LUBAVITCH'S LEAD MASHPIA

NEWS הי"אב ה'תשפ"ג - JULY 22, 2023



**A legend of Tomchei Temimim, R. Shmuel Groinem Esterman was the first and foremost *mashpia* in Lubavitch. His insights and stories set hundreds of *talmidim* in the ways of Chassidus, and continue to enlighten today.**

R. Shmuel Groinem Esterman was the first and foremost *mashpia* in *Tomchei Temimim* and set hundreds of *talmidim* in the ways of Chassidus. He was educated by the chossid Reb Avraham, *rov* of Zhebin ("Reb Avremkeh Zhebiner"). Hundreds of stories and anecdotes were heard from

him and transcribed by his students. He passed away in the year 5681 (1921).

\*

Reb Avremke Zhebiner was a businessman, and only after his business failed did he agree to accept a position of *rabbonus*. When he was invited to Zhebin he told the *baaleibatim*, "The normal procedure is that the *baaleibatim* test the *rov* to see whether he is fit for the position, I, however, intend to test the townsmen to see whether this position is for me." He requested that every single one of the townsmen come before him so he can speak to each one individually.

The last person to pass by was a poor man who worked as a watch guard of orchards. He told Reb Avremke how he had studied in depth all of *Likutei Torah* and *Imrei Binah* and he knew them by heart, but he had some questions, and he looks forward to asking the new *rov* his questions.

Reb Avremke then called together the community leaders and told them, "After having spoken to all the townsmen I concluded that this town is no place for me, and I had decided to move on. But at last, when the watch guard came to me with his request I decided to remain."

That watch guard was Reb Groinem.

\*

Every year, Reb Groinem would travel to Lubavitch to be with the Rebbe for Rosh HaShana. One year he was warned that the infection on his foot would become dangerous if it were

not kept dry. One of his *talmidim*, Reb Shaul Ber Zislin, sensed that Reb Gronem wanted very much to *toivel* on *erev* Yom Kippur despite the risk, so the young boy decided to ask the Rebbe Rashab on his behalf. The Rebbe was opposed and said: “*Nu*, so he won’t *toivel!*”

When Reb Shaul Ber relayed the Rebbe’s words, his teacher was not happy that he had asked. Now that the Rebbe had said he should not *toivel*, he was afraid to do so.

Yet Reb Groinem could not conceive of the possibility of not *toiveling* on *erev* Yom Kippur, so when an opportunity arose, he told the Rebbe that he had an intense desire to *toivel* in the *mikveh*. The Rebbe replied, “If so, *toivel*, and with the help of the One Above there will be no harm.”

Reb Groinem did as he was told and indeed no harm befell him.

\*

Reb Groinem once spent *Shabbos Zachor* in a town where there was no *mikveh*, and the river was frozen. Unable to imagine not going to the *mikveh* on *Shabbos Zachor*, he searched the river until he found a hole in the ice, that had been made to enable people to draw water for the animals. He undressed in an abandoned mill, and walked barefoot on the ice until the hole.

Before he immersed he told the river: “You should know that you have no permission to harm me, because the Baal Shem Tov taught that one *tevila* will do no harm!” Due to the severe cold, he was unsure if his head had fully submerged under the water, so he *toiveled* again.

He then headed back to the mill, his wet bare feet sticking to the ice, but the event did not harm his health.

Such was the *emuna* of chassidim of old: They trusted the Baal Shem Tov’s assurance with complete faith and even risked their life for it.

\*

Reb Sholom Reb Hillel’s, so called because he was the dedicated *talmid* of the eminent *chossid* Reb Hillel Paritcher, once related the following to Reb Groinem, the *mashpia* in Lubavitch:

Reb Hillel once said that he did not understand what *Chazal* meant when they said that *Moshiach* ben Yosef would be killed in a war. Perhaps, Reb Hillel said, they were telling us that the light of *Chassidus* will not shine so strongly in the days before *Moshiach*. And while saying this, Reb Hillel broke into tears. When Reb Sholom told this story, he too cried.

When Reb Groinem would repeat the story he would conclude, “But we don’t cry...”

\*

At a farbrengen, R. Groinem once turned to a bochur who had a hard time being accepted to Tomchei Temimim, though eventually was admitted, and said:

"Do you remember when you stood crying outside the door when you weren't accepted? It was not you crying; it was your *neshama*. Even when one moves a finger, our *Chazal* say that it happens only because it was announced on high; surely so for a soul that yearns to enter *Tomchei Temimim*."

\*

R. Groinem said:

It is written in the *siddur* that it is proper to know the exact time of the *molad* (renewal of the new moon) before *bentching* the new month. Though the *siddur* only states that it is "proper" everyone runs to the calendar to check the time. Yet, strangely, when it comes to an explicit command of the Torah, "*Da es elokei avicha*" – know the G-d of your father, which is accomplished through the study of *Chassidus*, people aren't running...

\*

One of his students recalled:

At his farbrengens, R. Groinem would bring out his points with many stories. He had a special talent to bring his episodes to life. He would describe the main character of the story in such a way that we felt as if we had met him. Likewise, in describing the happenings of the story in a way he made us feel like we had experienced it ourselves.

We sensed that the point of it all was to ingrain within us *middos tovos* and deeper sensibility to life, which would then enable us to properly appreciate the uplifting and pleasurable ways of *Chassidus*.

\*

There is a common *chassidische* refrain in Yiddish, describing someone as being a "*chassidische beindel*," which literally means: a chassidische bone. R. Groinem explained that elder chassidim used this phrase to describe a true *chossid* to his essence, since the Yiddish word "*beindel*" (bone) is translated to Hebrew as "*etzem*", which also means "essence".

There is a principle that the essence is something that cannot change. Likewise, a *chossid* at his essence is someone who is set on the path of Chassidus that he will not leave it and he will certainly continue to grow in its ways.

\*

Reb Nochum Gorelnik related:

"As a *bochur* in Lubavitch, I had the merit to stay in R. Groinem's home. One of the other boarders, a tall and broad fellow, had come to Lubavitch straight from a secular school. His



parents weren't chassidim, but a local Lubavitch family drew him close, and convinced him to drop his school and go to Lubavitch.

"Interestingly, in Lubavitch as well, he maintained some of his lifestyle. Each morning, after saying *brachos*, he would put out a mat, remove his shirt, and begin a series of exercises – lifting and turning his hands, legs, back and belly. Not once did R. Groinem make a comment to him about this 'un-Lubavitcher' custom.

"Years later, I heard that this young man suffered from hunger, yet he refused to defile himself with non-kosher food, and he died for Hashem's honor."

\*

The *Tzemach Tzedek* once said, "The level of *chassidishkeit* has gone down."

He went on to explain that in the days of the Mittlerer Rebbe, first the *melamdim* were admitted for *yechidus*, then the *rabbonim*, and finally the *baalei-batim* would take their turn. Now, he said, the *baalei-batim* enter first. (After all, they have important matters to discuss; besides, they are the ones who support the *melamdim* and *rabbonim*....) Only afterwards are the *rabbonim* and *melamdim* admitted.

When the legendary *mashpia*, Reb Groinem, related this story, the *temimim* in Lubavitch asked him why the *Tzemach Tzedek* did not reverse the order to the way it had been in the past. Reb Groinem, in true chassidic tradition, explained with a story:

"There was once a villager, a simple *yishuvnik*, who would occasionally visit the *rov* of the nearby town and ask him all his *shaylos*. One day he arrived at the home of the *rov* and found him at a meeting discussing a serious matter with his colleagues. When the meeting ended, the villager presented his *shaylos*, and then asked the *rov* if he could know what was the matter of such great concern.

"The *rov* explained that since it hadn't rained for a while, they were deliberating whether they should declare a day of fasting and *davening* for the much-needed rain, to save them from possible famine. The villager, astonished, offered his counsel.

"I have a far simpler solution,' he said. 'Whenever my cat runs into the house and crouches near the oven, rain begins to fall shortly after. All we must do is grab the cat, place it near the oven, and the rain will surely follow!'"

The *mashpia* concluded: "In the days of the Mittlerer Rebbe, the *baalei-batim* admired and respected the *melamdim* and *rabbonim* and gave them precedence. But now that the situation has declined and they no longer respect them, rearranging them in the correct order is no more helpful than putting the cat near the oven to bring the rain...."

For sources, visit [TheWeeklyFarbrengen.com](http://TheWeeklyFarbrengen.com)