

B"H

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Levity



Cheder
Levi Yitzchok
חינוך על טהרת הקודש



LETTER FROM
THE REBBE

detail in previous letters.

As has been emphasized many times in the past, the Torah teaches us to use every possible means to bring about an increase in the love and fear of Gd even when this involves using an interpretation that has no explicit source in existing Torah texts. This is especially so because the love and the fear of Gd are the source for all the 613 mitzvos. This also includes the Rabbinic commandments, Jewish customs, and the entire scope of Jewish behavior.

Accordingly, it is appropriate to focus on the allusion provided by the name of this year, תשפ"ו whose letters serve as an acronym for the Hebrew words meaning, "This year will be a year of miracles." This acronym, which is becoming known in ever widening circles throughout the international Jewish community, provides us with a lesson applicable to our conduct throughout the year.

Both miracles and nature are expressions of Gdliness. Nature too emanates from Gd. He created and fixed the laws of nature and uses them as a means to control the world. What distinguishes miracles from nature is that miracles are out of the ordinary, a higher order of existence than Gd usually reveals. The Hebrew word for miracle, מוֹפֵת, also means "uplifted," raised above and exalted. Thus, a miracle is an occurrence which introduces a higher frame of reference into creation, elevating the world beyond its natural limitations.

These two approaches, the natural and the miraculous, must be reflected in the behavior of every Jew. We must exhibit both a natural pattern of behavior and a miraculous pattern of behavior.

Even a Jew's natural pattern of behavior involves absolute adherence to the directives of the Torah. However, inasmuch as it is his ordinary conduct, it is limited by the bounds of his human potential.

Gd, however, grants a Jew an additional potential to serve Him through a miraculous pattern of behavior, allowing him to transcend his natural limits. This does not mean that a person merely improves himself slightly or even greatly, in the spirit of the directive that "in holy matters, one should always ascend higher," by increasing his commitment to sessions of

A Year of Miracles

By the Grace of Gd
6th of Tishrei, 5750

To The Sons and Daughters of Our
People Israel, Everywhere
Gd Bless You All!

Greeting and blessing:
It is customary to "open with a blessing," in this instance, a blessing for a chasima and g'mar chasima for a good and sweet year.

It is after Rosh HaShanah and we have already entered the new year. At all times, even when a person's knowledge and actual conduct are satisfactory, he should constantly strive to invest his time in further study, and thus to improve his conduct (his thought, speech, and action). Surely this applies at the threshold of a new year, which reminds us that it is necessary to strive toward a new and more elevated level of perfection in our daily life.

This, therefore, is an appropriate time to consider the unique dimension which distinguishes this year from other years, in addition to the significance implied by the celebration of Rosh HaShanah on Shabbos which was explained in

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a miraculous pattern of behavior on the part of a Jew arouses a miraculous pattern of Divine behavior

Torah study, undertaking a new hiddur in the performance of a mitzvah, or the like. Rather, it means that he changes entirely, adopting a totally new and more elevated pattern of behavior.

This is the unique allusion and mission contributed by this year, that “this will be a year of miracles.” As we proceed from the year תשמ”ט which recalls the command to nullify debts, we can assume that all the undesirable influences which might attach themselves to a Jew have been nullified. Thus, his entire being and the totality of his conduct will reflect a life of Torah.

“All Jews are presumed to act in an upstanding manner.” Thus, we can assume that each Jew utilized the month of Elul, the month of stock-taking for the year תשמ”ט, to correct all his deeds of the previous year and to elevate them to the level of completion and perfection.

We can also assume that he was granted a full measure of pardon, forgiveness, and atonement, and was inscribed — and that inscription was sealed — for a good year in all matters. Yet over and above this, we are instructed that “this will be a year of miracles,” implying the need for a new pattern of service in this new year.

It is now demanded of each Jew — man, woman, and child — that he work with himself and elevate himself to a plane so new and so high that his conduct in this year will be miraculous when compared to his conduct in the previous year.

This miraculous pattern of behavior — serving Gd (through Torah, prayer, and mitzvos) in an unlimited manner —

must pervade every aspect of our conduct, including the mitzvos between man and Gd, the mitzvos between man and his fellowman, beginning with the mitzvah to “love your neighbor as yourself,” and also the mitzvos that are connected with non-Jews and with the world at large.

Gd relates to the Jewish people “measure for measure.” Accordingly, it is understood that a miraculous pattern of behavior on the part of a Jew arouses a miraculous pattern of Divine behavior and draws down unlimited Divine blessings upon himself, both as an individual and as a part of the Jewish people as a whole, and upon the world at large.

May each individual’s acceptance of firm and powerful resolutions regarding all the above be considered by Gd as if these resolutions have already been carried out. In particular, this is true, since we have already experienced several days of the new year and one can assume that the above has already begun to be carried out. And may the meaning of the acronym resulting from the name of this year be fulfilled quite literally, so that “this will be a year of miracles.”

Surely this will be — and has already begun to be — a year of miracles, in which each Jew will see Gd’s miraculous pattern of behavior, including טו, miracles of a truly miraculous nature.

May it also include the most vital miracle, the miracle of the true and complete redemption led by our righteous Mashiach, when there will be even greater miracles than those which occurred during the exodus from Egypt. Thus our Sages interpret the verse, “As in the days of your exodus from Egypt will I show you wonders” — the miracles of the Messianic age will be “wonders” when compared to the “days of your exodus from Egypt.”

May Gd fulfill the heartfelt prayer of each Jew and of the Jewish people as a whole — “May my prayer come before You, turn Your ear to my supplication” — and bring the true and complete redemption in the immediate future.

Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

Source: Chabad.org



FROM THE CHAIRMAN

MR. ELIEZER KORNHAUSER

The Rebbe’s alternative paradigm for education

The Previous Rebbe, through his own personal experiences in Spalerka Prison, demonstrated that, in the spirit of the vort of the Baal Shemtov, a person exists in the place to which his mind projects — retreating into the recesses of one’s mind can be liberating, certainly for the spirit.

In an echo of that story, one month until Rosh Hashanah and in search of reprieve from our severe lockdown, I sought comfort in my favourite memories of Tishrei.

The camaraderie of Hatoras Nedorim. The quiet solemnity of the davening on Rosh Hashanah. The soaring niggunim of Kol Nidrei. Napoleon’s March and the crushing dancing which follows. The seudas and farbrengens of Sukkos. And the thrilling achdus of those final moments of Simchas Torah.

However, there is another memory, perhaps the first amongst equals, which is truly unique to Chabad communities around the world, and a source of swelling pride for any card-carrying Lubavitcher.

THE MIVTZOIM OF TISHREI.

Scene #1 - It begins minutes after the conclusion of an extended and exhausting Shachris on Rosh Hashanah. The Rebbe’s soldiers leap into Mincha, followed by a rapid-fire seudas Yomtov, to enable them to march through the streets “hunting down in love” those Jews who may not have had the privilege to hear tekios shofar in Shule.

Scene #2 - Sukkos. While the rest of the community of Orthodox Jews are luxuriating in their sukkahs, regaling themselves with delicious food and countless l’chaims, the troops have exited stage right at the first opportunity, brandishing their ‘weapons of peace’, hoping to find Jews to perform the mitzvah of the day and to warm their souls with inspirational teachings and stories.

Scene #3 - the afternoon preceding Simchas Torah. Jews everywhere are gathered to celebrate the happiest day of the Jewish calendar. And Moishe’s men have once again taken to the streets in desti-

nations throughout Melbourne, to bring joy and song to these small communities.

WHAT INSPIRES THIS ASTONISHING SELF-SACRIFICIAL DEVOTION?

Almost certainly, it’s the inspiration from a leader with a breathtaking vision for a new social order, as we shall see.

Anyone familiar with the Rebbe’s maamorim will know how often the Rebbe drew upon Chapter 37 of the Tanya to remind us that the ultimate completion of the Messianic era...., which is the revelation of the light of the Infinite, is dependent on our work (mitzvos) and toil (davening) throughout the era of Exile....

As Chaim Miller explains in *The Practical Tanya*, the simple meaning of this passage is that during the period of Exile, when the forces which oppose GD are most potent, so too our service of GD is capable of having its strongest neutralising impact on those forces.

This vital connection between our activities in Exile and the times of Moshiach, seems to be understood by the Rebbe in a manner which entirely transcends the performance of mitzvos by any individual. Rather, the Rebbe’s vision, as he has exhorted his chassidim on countless occasions, is that the coming of Moshiach and the quality of the revelations we will experience at that time, are dependent upon how life — in the fullest sense of that word — is transacted today.

BUT WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN PRACTICE?

In the recently published *Social Vision*, author and sociologist Philip Wexler boldly contends that the Rebbe was intent on influencing a gradual compelling shift to Chassidism as the underlying social vision for the United States, which as the dominant world power, would then export this new societal model to the rest of the civilised world.

The “Protestant Ethic” upon which the United States had been founded, has undoubtedly encouraged a supercharged form of enterprise; an entrepreneurial spirit which gives rise to unprecedented creativity, achievement and prosperity. But, as the ethic has become more secularised, and in the headlong pursuit of material accomplishment, man as an individual and society as a collective have become increasingly trapped in what the philosopher Max Weber described as “an iron cage”. A soul



A luminous Embassy where the Rebbe's directions for education are applied

The Rebbe wanted the Chassidic ethos to become the new foundation for a sacralised global society, providing an entirely new paradigm for individual and community life.

numbing environment where meaning, fulfilment and righteousness have been utterly annihilated by obsessive consumption, greed and hedonism. As a society, we are increasingly prosperous and undeniably less happy.

According to Wexler, the Rebbe intuited “precisely as a result of the catastrophic upheavals of the modern era that the Jewish people in general, and the Chassidic movement in particular, were now afforded the opportunity to broadcast a universal message. In America especially, but also in other democratic societies, [Jews] were not only free to practice their own faith, but also have the right to bring their own perspective onto the stage of public discourse”.

Moreover, “infusing Jewish life with the transformative culture of Chassidism, was a first step toward a more universal vision; [the Rebbe] wanted non-Jews too to consciously participate in the cosmic union of worlds, souls and divinity. The Rebbe wanted the Chassidic ethos to become the new foundation for a sacralised global society, providing an entirely new paradigm for individual and community life. For social institutions and for political norms”.

A NEW PARADIGM FOR EDUCATION
At the core of the Rebbe’s vision for the transformation of American Judaism, and society more broadly, was a game changing approach to education.

In an interview with sociologist and educator, Gershon Kranzler, mere months after assuming the leadership of the Chabad movement, the Rebbe offered the following astonishing perspective on the need for a new societal model, spearheaded by the education we offer our children:

“America’s great genius has been in the development of the individual, of the pioneering and self-man made type. Although this helped in developing our potentialities by demanding every last ounce of ingenuity and perseverance, it has on the other hand focused too much attention on egoistic aims and interests. Personal goals have dominated. Only in our spare and leisure time, after we have carved our groove in terms of econom-

ic or social success, have we dedicated some time and effort to philanthropic and communal affairs. We have been social workers on an amateur, after-working-hours basis. This pattern of life has been no less characteristic of American Jews than of other Americans.

But it is at this point that there must be a change of basic outlook and concomitant redirection and reorganisation of our existence as a community and as individuals. Primarily we must live the life of social beings, with the responsibility and dedication of our best efforts for the klal, the community. Only then can we afford to invest in our own individual aims and goals”.

According to the Rebbe, to precipitate the dream of a Messianic era requires us to live the life of benevolent social beings at the darkest point of our bitter Exile. Nothing short of systematic and widespread altruism can shatter the iron cage of avarice and selfishness which

has been, and which continues to be, the cause of so much misery and despair.

And while selflessness might indeed be intrinsic to the nature of the Jewish people, to realise this exalted potential requires an emphasis and a reinforcement in a highly particularised form of education – Chinuch Al Taharas HaKoidesh – where “making a living” is overshadowed by “making a (benevolent) difference”.

So really we shouldn’t be amazed by the magnificent altruism of the Rebbe’s soldiers. It’s precisely what an education suffused with holiness is programmed to deliver.

Let us hope and pray that the cumulative effect of all of our acts of love, kindness and sensitivity, inspired by the Rebbe in service of others, enable us to experience a glorious Tishrei with the Rebbe and our pantheon of heroes and loved ones, with the immediate coming of Moshiach Now!



FROM THE PRINCIPAL

RABBI DOVID RAHMANI

At Home

The Gemara in Yevamos states that a person without a home is so lacking in one of the basic human needs, that they can barely be called a person. A home protects us from dangerous weather, animals, criminals, and the like. But more importantly, home gives us a sense of belonging. Our home is where we can let down the walls of insecurity, our inhibitions, the façade that we assume is required to blend seamlessly into society, and just be ourselves.

When we venture outside home, we enter the public domain, governed by rules, both explicit and implicit, that limit what we can and cannot do, say, or perhaps even think. A real home provides a safe space to let all of that unravel, facilitating the expression of the truest (or at least a less inhibited) version of ourselves.

This can play out in several ways. For example, there are those who ‘come alive’ at home. While out in public they may appear shy, withdrawn, and self-conscious. But once they cross the threshold of their home, they become almost unrecognisably dynamic and outgoing.

Conversely, feeling comfortable to let

down our guard might have an unhappier effect. The parameters set by the outside world force people to conform to a certain set of rules in order to be accepted, liked, employed and befriended. But people who appear to be polite and law-abiding in public may have a very different persona when they retreat into the privacy of their own home. Without the gaze of society, some people revert to antisocial and animalistic behaviours.

Recently, as we have spent the vast majority of time at home, we are seeing people slip into expressions of their uninhibited selves more openly. We have a window into the way people are behaving inside their homes through virtual meetings and classrooms. Bosses, teachers, and colleagues see differently nuanced versions of their employees, students and friends – who sometimes forget the camera is on them. Classmates might glimpse a loving exchange between siblings in an unguarded moment. Teachers may notice parents in the background sitting with their children during their lessons and going the extra mile to ensure it all runs smoothly. We have an unprecedented window into others’ most natural and candid state.

This new reality has forced people to think more carefully about what is within the line of sight of their devices. When no one is looking and you are at complete ease, would you be happy with someone observing your behaviour? It’s a confronting, but important question. Perhaps, instead of concealment to preserve an illusion about who we are, why not, when we are at home, genuinely graduate to the best version of ourselves, prompted by our own wish to do so – not just because we are being observed or conforming to society’s expectations?

And, if you’re willing to align your ‘at home’ self and your ‘outside’ self, are you prepared to show the world the real version of you? With the judgmental nature of social media, people are convinced they need to present a picture-perfect life for others to see. Being forced to stay home may have granted the world the gift of awareness that other people’s lives ‘at home’ are not perfect. And that’s ok. This blend of “perfecting our home self” and “being comfortable to present an imperfect picture to the outside world” may be a gift worth exploring.

Dira B’tachtonim

This concept of feeling comfortable at

If our experience of Sukkah sees us graduate to the best version of ourselves, why leave it?

home can be found in Chassidus, in the idea quoted from the Medrash Tanchuma, that Hashem created the world because of His desire to have a “home” in the lowest of places. Chassidus explains that it is specifically in our physical world that Hashem is able to feel at “home” and express his essence. In the higher realms there are expressions and revelations of Hashem, but they are not “home”. It is only in this lower world that Hashem’s essence can be expressed, and therefore referred to as a “Dira”- a home. It is this presence of Hashem’s true essence that gives physical beings the false sense that they are independent self-sufficient entities, as they indeed are directly rooted in the only truly independent and self-sufficient entity, Hashem.

Home = Identity

Who you “really” are (at home) is an expression of your identity. When you strip away a person’s actions, mannerisms, façade and analyse what lies underneath, you uncover their identity. And identity is not dependent on what we do or how we present ourselves; it runs deeper than that. It is our essence. This is why it tends only to come out where we are most comfortable, when we allow our most innate and natural state to emerge. Which is at home.

There is a famous story of Reb Mendel Futerfas who was discussing incarceration with his fellow prisoners. Each was agonizing over the loss of the life they lived prior to being sent to a prison camp. One bemoaned that he was once an esteemed doctor. Another complained that he was a professor and

now was reduced to forced labour. Reb Mendel responded, “I have lost nothing.” To the puzzlement of the others, Reb Mendel explained, “I am a Chossid. That is what I was before I came to prison and that is what I continue to be, and therefore I really have not lost anything.”

For Reb Mendel, his identity remained unchanged notwithstanding his changed circumstance. He was so in tune with his true self that he was ‘at home’ even in prison.

Sukkah – Our new home

Our awareness of the relationship we have with our home is highlighted in Tishrei, specifically through the festival of Sukkos.

The message of Sukkos is the need to create a new home for ourselves. To leave what we usually consider our home and move into a ‘temporary’ dwelling. However, if ‘home’ represents our truest selves and our identity, it’s difficult to fathom how we might ‘switch’ homes. Our regular homes represent the reality that we have come to accept as real and true. For the vast majority of the population, this is the physical world. This is not to say that we are unable to experience spiritual moments, but these can feel like we are travelling out of our ‘home’ and into a different, potentially unfamiliar realm.

The journey of Sukkos invites us to reverse the narrative. What used to be ‘temporary’ now becomes ‘permanent.’ Spirituality, Kedushah, G-dliness become the home we know, what we feel comfortable to identify with; and the physical world becomes the sphere we must ‘ven-

ture out’ into. It is a time to re-imagine who we really are, where we really live, and what the true reality of our life is.

So why not live in the Sukkah all year round?

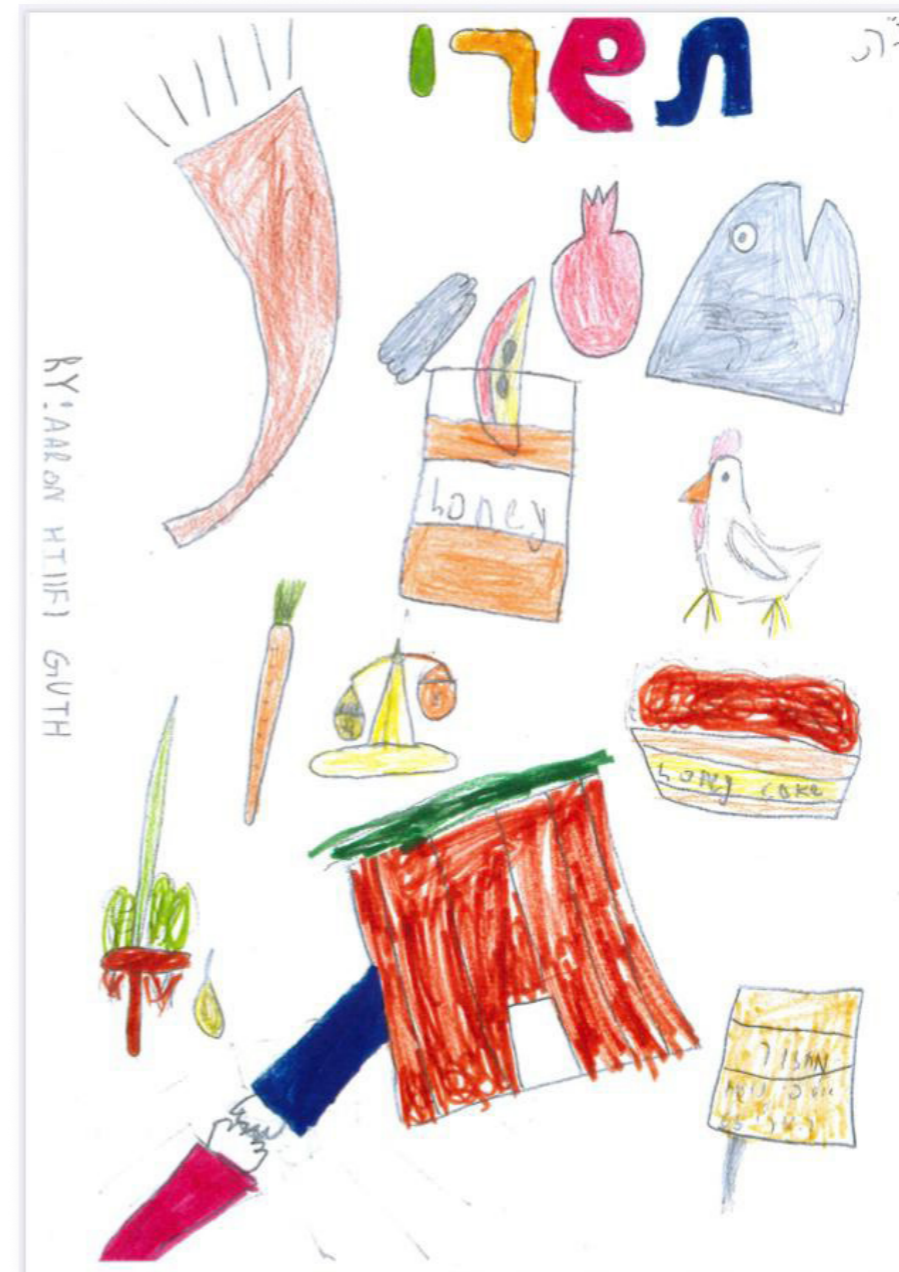
If our experience of Sukkah sees us graduate to the best version of ourselves, why leave it?

As seen in the story of Reb Mendel in the prison camps, the concepts of identity and home run deeper than transient experience or physical spaces. They are the innate and enduring truth of ourselves.

Throughout the year we are indeed encouraged to engage with the outside world, live a physical life and do all the things necessary to be productive members of society. However, if at the start of the year we can align ourselves with the “home” Hashem has set out for us (our unchanging relationship with the Torah) and thereby understand the truest form of our identity, then as we journey through our various interactions with the world, we will recognize that we are merely visiting those parts of our life, and our truest selves is at home somewhere else completely.

Giving children a home

The era of Moshiach is home base for a Jew. Although it is not familiar to us on a conscious level, Moshiach reflects and expresses our deepest essence and truth. It’s a time when our service of Hashem will be unforced and natural. And this is what is expected of us now – like Reb Mendel, to express our homelike behaviours without regard for our surroundings and circumstances. While this is typically difficult for adults, in general we find that children are much more malleable; not as “stuck” in their sense of self and identity. And so, we should look to our children for their example. As we do, the shared role of parents and educators is to build a beautiful “home” for our children and students, where the self they are at home is just as comfortably and identically expressed in the outside world. And vice versa. This requires the provision of an educational diet which eliminates the chaff and focuses on all that is benevolent and holy, giving the student a very strong sense of who they are and where “home” is. An educational model which emphasises the true essence of our children and which inspires them with pride and confidence in the truest version of themselves. This is Chinuch Al Taharas HaKoidesh; a commitment to building a solid and enduring home.



In the Rosh Hashana liturgy we say מטעך "זה היום החילת" – today is the beginning of your creation". The famous question that is asked is, if Rosh Hashana is the 6th day of creation, why do we say that it is the first. The answer that is given is that humans were created on the 6th day of creation, and since everything is created for humans, this is why Rosh Hashana is called the beginning, since before Rosh Hashana (creation of man) everything was worthless.

The Rebbe asks, how can it be that everything before-hand was worthless if the world is ginormous and the human is so small (and seemingly very insignificant as there are more animals and plants than humans).

The Rebbe answers, Rosh Hashana is teaching us an important lesson. Quality is better than quantity. From a point of quantity, humans are less than animals and plants on this planet, but from a point of quality, humans are greater. Stones and the like (דומם) do not have any life. Plants (צומח) have some form of life, so much so, that they can grow. Animals (חי) have more life, that they can walk around. Even though animals have brains, they only know what they want. Their brain is used to assist their desires. Humans (מדיבר) are the highest, they also have a brain, however human do not only use their brains like animals to achieve their desires. Rather, a humans can use his brain for spirituality and G-Dliness till he makes himself nullified to Hashem, by realizing (with one's brain) that he is nothing. Therefore, human is the highest.

A person can look around and see that people that use their brains like animals, just to achieve their desires, can often be very well to do, while people that use their brains like humans, to think about Hashem, could be not so well to do. Rosh Hashana is telling us that the main thing and the main point of creation is humans! People who use their brain like a human, who connect with Hashem.

כתיבה וחינוך טובה לשנה טובה ומתוקה

The sixth day of Creation

By Shneur Gutnick



Collaborating with institutions around the globe to enhance the quality of chinuch



FEATURED EDUCATOR

Rabbi Levi Heidingsfeld

Your father was a famous educator - how has this affected your work as a teacher?

I grew up in a home where there was a big focus on education. My grandmother was the first teacher of the Yeshiva in Sydney and my father is also a well-known

and respected teacher. I could see my father's devotion to his students - how he would go very much out of his way to make sure each of them had exactly what they needed. This role modelling gave me a good foundation for what it takes to be a teacher. I still turn to him for guidance in my teaching.

How are you different today as a teacher than you were when you started teaching?

I now have more confidence, and this helps me to adapt lessons for the needs of classes and individual students in the form of differentiated learning. I've taught many different age groups and each one has helped me develop different skills useful for all ages.

True freedom is self-expression. And that self is your Neshomo which expresses itself by learning Torah and doing Mitzvos

What, in your view, sets Cheder apart from other schools (from the teacher perspective)?

A strength of Cheder is the very close collaboration between all the staff so that we can focus on each individual child. You can walk into the staff room on any day and during their breaks the teachers and other staff will be supporting each other. It's a safe space to air challenges, and rather than being looked down upon, teachers with questions are taken by the hand and supported.

The Cheder has a very clear identity which very obviously guides what we do. Someone recently said to me "In Cheder everyone is happy. The teachers, and the students..."

What is the connection, in your mind, between a child's 'freedom' and the education he receives?

The Mishnah says, אין לך בן חורין אלא מי שעוסק בתלמוד תורה. True freedom comes from learning Torah. True freedom is self-expression. And that self is your Neshomo which expresses itself by learning Torah and doing Mitzvos. We live in a physical world and are influenced by it. Receiving a proper education (al taharas hakodesh) allows for a true perspective on who we really are and how to express ourselves to achieve our highest potential.

Is there a special innovation you've introduced into your teaching?

I was once speaking with Rabbi Benjamin from New York. He told me how he uses puppets in his classes to engage the boys. I took his advice and started using puppets in my own classes - and it is amazing to see how much more engaged the boys become when the puppets become part of the lesson. They are always looking forward to the next time the puppets are going to come out!

This is not only true in prep. In the afternoon I teach Project TEAM, an innovative program for teaching children proper social behaviours based on Torah sources and the latest research. The program is presented by means of a puppet show and boys throughout the lower primary look forward to it every week because of the puppets.

What are you doing to uphold the Cheder's cherished value of creating lifelong learners, how are you an emblem of this principle?

My own daily learning involves regular shiurim, daily shiurim of Chitas, and Rambam.

Also, when a boy asks a question in class and I am unsure of the answer, I let them know that it is a good question and I will need to look it up to learn more and then get back to them.

On one occasion, a question in Halocho arose. I told the Prep boys that I had looked it up in the morning and seen that there could be a problem using one of our Parsha crafts on Shabbos due to these craft materials being muktze. I asked a Rov and told them his answer. So they saw on a practical level that questions arise that require further learning, and how to go about it. A while after this happened in class, I received feedback from a parent telling me that a different question came up at home, and his young son piped up 'Just ask the Rov'!

Do you have advice for the Cheder about its aspiration for Chinuch Al Taharas HaKodesh in the classroom?

Stay strong to your convictions, all is possible. This Cheder was thought to be impossible, but with much effort and ingenuity it is here and thriving. Keep it going and together with the Rebbe's Kochos we will take it to the next level!



Our alumni become Chabad's future local leaders



To Judge a Snuffbox

AS RETOLD BY YOSSEI GOPIN

It was an almost surprisingly “regular” Rosh Hashanah in the court of the Baal Shem Tov that year. Elul had been a month of Teshuvah, Slichos had been tearful and concentrated remorse, and the holy day of Rosh Hashanah, the day upon which G-d awaits His renewed coronation and our commitment to His kingship, had arrived.

Tens of disciples and even more simple, sincere Jews from Mezhibuz and the entire surrounding region had journeyed to spend the head of the year with the holy Baal Shem. The shofar’s cry had been almost physically palpable, as the throngs of Yidden stood together, pleading with Hashem for a blessed, sweet new year.

The Baal Shem Tov himself could be seen standing by the eastern wall of the Shul, albeit in body only, his spirit clearly far, far away. His face aflame, his body unmoving, deeply immersed in some celestial expedition, surely campaigning, no - storming the heavens for a year of revealed good, for his Chassidim, for all Jews, and for the world at large.

The Besht’s disciples too, were extremely absorbed in their prayers, one standing by the wall, his face tearstained and his eyes shut; another standing on the other side of the Beis Midrash with his head buried in his machzor, others stroking their beards in deep meditation or swaying back and forth with great concentration, as their prayers of utter devotion to the

Almighty neared their crescendos.

Near the back of the big Beis Midrash, sat one particular student, an accomplished scholar and a true servant of G-d. With great passion and fervor, he sat by his Machzor, meditating upon the many deep insights he had been taught to pray with, by the Baal Shem Tov himself. From time to time he would stick his hand into his pocket and make use of a snuffbox he kept there. After inhaling the snuff’s sharp smell, his mind now stimulated to persevere with his service, he would immediately return to deep introspection, despite the accumulated wariness of weeks of Teshuvah and self-reflection and the exhaustive service of Rosh Hashanah.

On one particular occasion, as the student reached to return his snuffbox to his pocket, the box fell, hitting the floor with a soft clink. The student’s mind was already a long way away from his snuffbox, and only noticed its absence when he reached for it once more. When he felt his pocket to be empty, the student (ok, let’s call him Reb Yankel) cast a glance to the floor, found his snuffbox, and after making use of it - returned it to the safety of his pocket.

On the other side of the Beis Midrash, sat a simple, unlearned Jew from Mezhibuz, who enjoyed watching these great Tzaddikim daven, especially on this holiest of days! As he watched the snuffbox scene unfold, he couldn’t help but think, “How could it be!? In the middle of davening on Rosh Hashanah itself, this fellow’s head is stuck in his snuffbox?? This is the prayer of such a great Tzaddik and Chossid?”

He kept his thoughts to himself, but as if with a life of their own up they flew, up, up, all the way to G-d’s Throne of Glory. There, the heavenly prosecution gleefully clapped their hands, seeing an easy victory playing into their clutches.

“Master of the Universe, see! This great Chossid, one of Your most beloved students, can think of nothing but his snuffbox on the awesome Yom HaDin! Physical pleasure!?! Feh! How could you possibly consider vindicating him in judgement this year?!”

The defending angels lowered their heads in pain and surrender, unable to come up with any viable arguments, on behalf of the venerable Reb Yankel. Even the Baal Shem Tov could only watch in trepidation as the Supernal Attribute of Divine Judgement prosecuted his great pupil. Try as he might to defend him, the Besh’t watched all his superhuman efforts go for nothing, as the divine prosecution set its decree in motion.

His holy eyes brimming with tears of mercy for Reb Yankel, the Baal Shem Tov cried from the depths of his soul, craving to find something that would give Reb Yankel another chance. Alas! Drying his sweat every few minutes, the Baal Shem Tov spared no effort in continuing to persevere for the sake of his beloved student’s good year. Until at last, he seemed to have made a small crack in the prosecution’s steel resolve.

Declared the Heavenly court: “If that same Jew who himself passed judgement on Reb Yankel, would reassess the same incident and judge it for good - the decree hanging over Reb Yankel’s head would be averted. But - there’s one condition. Rabbi Yisroel Baal Shem Tov may not reveal anything of this decree or its potential aversion - it must come from the simple

Jew himself.”

The holy Baal Shem sighed. His hands were tied, all there was to do now was to daven.

“Oh, Master of the world! May Your salvation come in the blink of an eye! Lamnatzeyach Mizmor L’Dovid..”

It was the night of Hoshana Rabbo. Once again, the Beis Midrash of the Baal Shem Tov was busy, as the crowd of Chassidim gathered to recite the Tikkun, to make their final requests for the new year ahead. A fierce wintry wind blew outside, but inside it was toasty, the camaraderie and natural optimism of the Chassidim warming them all from deep within.

Everyone came for Tikkun, including the unknowing prosecutor (and potential saviour) of Reb Yankel. But that evening, something ever so strange happened. Every time he tried to open up his Sefer and utter the holy words, it was as if the steam in the Beis Midrash entered his head - he just could not manage to concentrate! His mind would race through many random and confusing thoughts, each thought gone before he had a chance to dwell on it. Our sincere friend was totally mystified, he could not understand what was going on!

Finally after what seemed an eternity, his mind finally rested, but not on his Sefer. Before him, in his own imagination (!) he watched the snuffbox scene from Rosh Hashanah unfold. And again. And again. The simple Jew’s mind would not desist from its sole focus - Reb Yankel and his box of snuff. “Why do I keep thinking about this one occurrence?” he wondered to himself. As he dwelled on the story, feelings of regret, even anguish washed over this unlearned, but earnest Jew.

“How could I have been so critical of my own brother?” he demanded. “He surely did what he did for a good reason, certainly the snuff helped him to concentrate on his prayers, and there was I being so judgmental. I must go to the Rebbe, only he will be able to help me fix what I have done!”

It wasn’t long before he was standing before the Baal Shem Tov, tongue tied, ashamed, even standing slightly stooped as he reflected on his severe accusations against Reb Yankel. Unable to bring the words to his mouth, he simply burst into tears, wishing he would have only judged his brother more favourably. Finally, in a choked voice, he unloaded his heart to the Baal Shem Tov, concluding, “Please Rebbe, show me the path to Teshuvah!”

Looking at the Jew with compassion, the Baal Shem Tov was finally able to tell over what had happened - how his thoughts had incited the prosecution, and the terrible decree that had been put in place as a result.

Trembling, our friend listened attentively to the story that was his without even realising.

“Is it really too late?” he asked in a small voice. “Is there no way to correct my mistake, to avert the decree?”

“Now, my child, the decree has been overturned” answered the Baal Shem Tov in a loving voice. “In the merit of your reconsideration of his actions, he will be sealed for a sweet, blessed new year. But my son, be careful in the future. Think only good about all fellow Jews, no matter what.



Empowering our talmidim to spread the wellsprings of Chassidus



If minimising exposure to general studies is setting our children up for failure, then it would stand to reason that if we increase their exposure to general studies we would be setting them up for success.

The argument for giving our children a thorough secular education is so they can get a good mark in their final exams, and then go on to study in a tertiary institution. Without that education, the argument goes, they will be limited to working in Kodesh as a Rabbi, Shochet or Melamed, or in menial work that doesn't pay well.

But do the facts bear this out? What does the data say? Discussions about big issues like this need to be based on research. It's not enough to just throw out an opinion with nothing more behind it than our own feelings. Our positions need to be backed up by hard evidence.

The statistics are in. On the question of secular education leading to good parnossa, I have the data. It's from my Shabbos table.

For many years I have conducted informal surveys at my Shabbos table on this very topic. It all started one Friday night when among our guests was a family whose teenage son was in year 12. He could hardly stay awake at the table. His parents explained that he is falling apart from the stress and pressure of his school work, and the entire family was suffering.

I felt for them. And even more so for the kid. All that worry and stress seemed so pointless. So in an attempt to ease their burden I said to the boy, "What's the big deal? You'll do your best, and if you don't get the highest marks, you'll survive."

The boy looked at me with a blank stare. "Survive? If I don't do well in my exams, I'll spend the rest of my life stacking shelves in Coles. I'll never make millions without a top mark..."

His words struck me. This boy really believed that his fate was being sealed at age 18 by his school marks. I knew this not to be true. To prove it, I turned to the ten or so adults sitting around the table and said:

"I'd like to do a little survey. Let's go around the table, and please answer the following question: What impact did your high school exam results have on your life



"...But would his attendance in college be in his best interests? You think that a college education would give him a greater security economically. Actually, only a small percentage of college graduates directly derive their incomes from their college degree. In the final analysis, however, one cannot make calculations and plans about the future without taking Gd into account. For after all, Gd is not only the Creator of the world, Whose direct Providence extends to every individual and detail, and success or failure is from Him; but He is also the Giver of the Torah, and it would be obviously illogical and impossible that when a Jewish boy dedicates a few years to the exclusive study of Gd's Torah, it would lessen his chance for happiness in life...."

From a letter of the Rebbe, 23rd Sivan, 5718

today? Who here can say that their mark actually matters to their life 10 years on?"

We went around the table and gave everyone a turn to answer. It was fascinating. Almost everyone said something like:

"My marks made no difference to my life today whatsoever."

"I did well, studied law, hated it, and now I'm in business. All those years of study were a waste."

"I did shocking at exams and I'm better off for it. Had I gone to uni I would be making less than I am today."

"I didn't finish high school and I'm richer than my friends who did."

Then there was one dissenting opinion,

who said:

"For me, my results made all the difference. I am a doctor today. I

never could have got into medicine without the marks I got."

But then, the guy next to him said, "Well I disagree. I did hopelessly in high school, and I'm a doctor too. It took me a little longer and a bit of a roundabout route, but I got there."

So I turned to the Year 12 kid and said, "You see, is it really worth stressing about? Work hard and do well, but don't believe your final exam mark defines your future success. It doesn't."

Over the years I have asked the same question many times, always with the same results. There seems to be little direct correlation between success at general

studies and financial success. Ok, perhaps this isn't such scientific data. It's only anecdotal evidence. But I ask you the same question. Did your secular education get you where you are today? For some professionals the answer is absolutely yes. But for so many more of us the answer is no. So why would we think a secular education is the ticket to financial success?

We certainly have an obligation to teach our children the basic skills they need to make a living. But they can be taught those within the framework of a Torah education. Is that being done well in our schools? That's open for debate. As for the argument that a solid secular education is the only path to making a good living, that idea was buried at my Shabbos table long ago.

DOES CHINUCH AL TAHARAS HAKODESH DEPRIVE OUR CHILDREN OF LIFE OPPORTUNITIES?

By Rabbi Aron Moss
Rabbi of the Nefesh Community in Sydney



An orchestrated symphony of joy, chayas and love



DOES CHINUCH AL TAHARAS HAKODESH DEPRIVE OUR CHILDREN OF LIFE OPPORTUNITIES?

By Rabbi Avrohom Bergstein

the timeless wisdom of the Torah and the ideas of modern science and discovery. In doing so, compromises and adjustments have been made to school curricula with the aim of satisfying both secular and religious perspectives.

Some schools offer a dialled-down selection of subjects whose seemingly benign nature poses no overt contravention to the truths of Torah.

But consider the approach to chinuch that communicates our most deeply held values in the purest and most sacred way possible, known as chinuch al taharas ha-kodesh. The form of education consistently espoused by the Lubavitcher Rebbe

as the ideal model of Jewish education especially for young children.¹ The operative principle being that Jewish children ought to be fully submerged in an environment that is entirely in consonance with their true identity as Jews.

The Talmud² records a masterful exchange of metaphor and wit between the Wise Men of Athens and the great Rebi Yehoshua ben Chananya after he audaciously asserted before the Roman emperor that “We are wiser than they.” Taken aback, the emperor challenged him to debate the sages. The prize? The victor could coerce his opponent into adopting his way of life.

After defeating the Athenian sages, Rebi Yehoshua returned to Rome with his opponents in tow, but not before passing the place of the “disappearing waters,” some of which he collected in a barrel. Standing before the emperor, Rebi Yehoshua compelled the Athenians to fill the barrel with ordinary water. But alas, the barrel would not fill. The sages tried in vain to fill the barrel with water, but the water they poured in simply “disappeared.”

What message does Rebi Yehoshua convey through this anecdote?

Water is a metaphor for wisdom, the precious commodity we all seek to retain. But the foundation of wisdom cannot be “disappearing waters” because if it is, anything introduced into these waters ultimately “disappears.”³

Let us use a mikveh to enhance the analogy. A kosher mikveh must contain forty se’ah (approximately eighty-eight gallons) of rain water. Once this quantity of water is in place, the mikveh will not be invalidated by adding even great quantities of ordinary water. However, should the forty se’ah of original rainwater be lacking, no measure of ordinary water can salvage the validity of the mikveh.⁴

Rebi Yehoshua sought to impart that while he could impose the practice of Judaism upon his opponents, it would be an exercise in futility because their foundation and original frame of reference – their ‘seed water’ – is composed of ordinary water within which all waters “disappear”. The “Waters of Wisdom” of the Torah cannot truly be sustained unless it is they that form the bedrock upon which all else is built. The absence of this critical foundation yields a scenario where any “waters” that are introduced ultimately “disappear”.

The foundation of heavenly wisdom is our submission to a Higher Power, and a sense of humility born of the recognition that we are fortunate to be privy to divine wisdom that is essentially beyond human

grasp. Conversely, the guiding principles of manmade wisdom are circumscribed by empirical evidence, logical analysis, and confidence in human intelligence and prowess to discover the truth.

One must first lay a rock-solid foundation derived from the “Waters of Wisdom” of the Torah, and internalise a submission to G-d Almighty. Only then can one attempt to digest other forms of wisdom without detracting from the purity of the seed waters that are “heaven made” (so long as they are studied with the proper motives and intentions). Otherwise, the “waters” ultimately disappear.⁵

For a Jew, this is his ticket to success. Which leads us to address the main question of this issue of Cheder’s Identity magazine.

Are we denying our children success in life by minimising secular learning during their youth?

To answer this question, let us first attempt to establish a definition for success. Real success is not merely the mastery of a given skill or the attainment of wealth, but of actualising the virtues and values of the core of our being. These are the virtues that define character, guide the relationships we form, illuminate the households we create, motivate honesty and faithfulness, and the like.

When we have carried out our most deeply held ambitions; when we practically attain those things that are valuable in life, without being distracted by all the hubbub around us – that is success. When, from this most secure posture, we engage people and pursuits in a healthy fashion and with a greater sense of presence and purpose, we have the clarity of mind to make better decisions and avoid being torn by unnecessary diversions and sideshows.

It is interesting that the only individual designated by the Torah as an “Ish matzliach,”⁶ a successful person, is Yosef

Ha-Tzadik. What was Yosef’s secret to success? What were his most cherished ideals? What can we glean from Yosef’s mindset that can be emulated in our own children?

His formula was simple: “Hashem was with Yosef,” meaning, “he was always conscious of the presence of G-d before him.”⁷ Yosef was always intimately mindful of the Divine, which afforded him the ability to remain both unimpeded by the trivialities and distractions of materialism, and at the same time be fully engaged in attaining the truly important things in life.

At the core of every Jew lies a natural consciousness of the Divine. From this vantage point, seeing G-d’s Hand within the slightest blade of grass is not a novelty but an experience of reality;⁸ where the attainment of material prosperity is not a measure of success but merely a function of the Divine intent; where truth and virtue inform the decisions of ordinary, daily living and help navigate the complexities and moral dilemmas of the workplace. And it is this core identity of a Jew whose nurture and expression is critical early on in one’s life.

When the true identity of a child is able to blossom during his formative years by total immersion in an atmosphere that is G-dly and good (as “good” and “G-dly” are defined by the Torah), he is best positioned to lead a successful life because he has not compromised his deepest truth, his seed “Waters of Wisdom”.

If we wish to see a generation of Jews whose lives can be defined as truly successful, chinuch al taharas hakodesh is the way to go.

Rabbi Avrohom Bergstein serves as a Chabad emissary to Fair Lawn, NJ together with his family. He attended Cheder Oholei Yosef Yitzchak – Lubavitch in Detroit, Michigan and served as dean of JLI’s Machon Shmuel Research Institute.

The debate regarding secular knowledge has raged for centuries and is showing no signs of relenting. Generations of scholars and laypeople have wrestled with the tension that issues from the collision of two diametrically opposed worldviews –

1. The Rebbe’s position on this issue is well documented and appears in many of his talks and correspondence.

2. Bechoros 8b

3. Atzas Yehoshua (ibid. 47b).

4. Shulchan Aruch Yore Deah, 201:1.

5. See also Toras Menachem vol. XXXI p. 204-207. The Rebbe cites the pasuk (Yirmiyah 2:13) “For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the spring of living waters, to dig for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that do not hold water,” and asks rhetorically: what greater wrongdoing can there be beyond forsaking G-d, the spring of the living waters? What greater gulf can one create between himself and the Almighty other than by abandoning Him? To this the pasuk responds, “By digging broken cisterns that do not hold water.” If a student of Torah lacks the passion and inspiration to study Torah, he has in a sense “abandoned G-d.” But the evil inclination persists further and persuades him not only to abandon G-d but to fill his intellect with secular wisdom, “broken cisterns that do not hold water” and these are only detrimental.

6. Breishis 39:2.

7. Abarbanel, ibid.

8. Tanya, Sha’ar Ha-Yichud Ve’Ha-Emunah, ch. VII; Torah Or, Hosafos Ki Sisa (111b); Derech Mitzvoseach (65a); Likutei Sichos vol. IV, p. 1206; Vol. X, p. 103, note 24.



The Esrog Throughout History

By Aryeh Leib Hoch

The Torah commands us that on the festival of Sukkos we should take a “pri etz hadar”. The chachamim explain that this refers to the citron, or the esrog as we call it. Throughout history, esrogim were quite accessible for the Sephardi Jews, as these fruits grow in the areas around the Mediterranean. For Ashkenazi Jews however, it was always a difficulty to find esrogim and they usually had to be imported. Sometimes a single esrog would be shared by an entire community or even a few.

In the early years when Jews started settling in America, they didn't need to import esrogim. They had the native Caribbean esrogim. Many poskim held that these esrogim were completely kosher. They explained that the reason these esrogim appeared different than the common European esrog was because they had not been grafted and mixed like was done in Europe. Indeed, these esrogim were actually more original. Some held, on the other hand, for various reasons, that these esrogim were ineligible for the mitzvah.

In general, there are four main sources for esrogim : 1) the typical Ashkenazi esrog. This is the yanover esrog, which is

not particularly tasty and is of average size. It, in many ways, resembles a lemon. 2) Eretz Yisrael also started exporting esrogim in the 1800's. Many Rabbanim consider it a hiddur mitzvah to purchase an esrog from Eretz Yisrael. 3) the Moroccan esrog which comes from the Atlas Mountains. It is tall, with a perfect pitom and usually seedless. 4) The huge and unusual Yemenite esrog. This is considered to be the most ancient of them all. It has very little pulp, and it's mainly made up of its skin. When eating such an esrog, one basically just eats the white part. Each esrog has its tradition and are all eligible.

However, many Esrogim were grafted and may not be eligible. Therefore, Chabad prefers to use the Yanover Esrogim because these have the strongest mesoro going back all the way to Rashi and the Baalei tosfos. In truth this tradition goes even further back to Moshe Rabbeinu himself. The Alter Rebbe said that in the desert, Moshe sent a Malach to collect Esrogim from Calabria.

Nowadays, we are lucky that we have a wide variety of all four types of esrogim, so that everyone can have their own esrog for Sukkos.



BIOGRAPHY OF THE TZEMACH TZEDEK

By Shneur Gutnick

- BIRTH & PARENTS -

Rabbi Menachem Mendel was born on Erev Rosh Hoshana 5549 (September 9, 1789) to Rabbi Sholom Shachna and Rebbetzin Devorah Leah, in the city of Liozna. He was the maternal grandson of the first Chabad Rebbe, The Alter Rebbe. His father's father was the son of Reb Nachum Altshuler, who was a chosid of Reb Menachem Mendel Horodoker (Vitebsk) who was also the Rebbe of the Alter Rebbe for a short while. His mother was the 2nd child of the Alter Rebbe.

- EARLY CHILDHOOD -

At the tender age of 3, Menachem Mendel became an orphan. On Tzom Gedaliah (3rd of tishrei 5553) 1792 his mother passed away in the stead of her father, the Alter Rebbe. She was only 26 when she willingly gave up her life to allow the continuation and development of Chassidus. This affected little Menachem Mendel greatly. However, the Alter Rebbe had agreed to personally raise little Menachem Mendel. In fact only 8 days later, on the 11th of shevat (as soon as they got up from shiva for Rebbetzin Devorah Leah), Menachem Mendel started cheder, under the guidance of his grandfather, the Alter Rebbe.

Even as a child, Menachem Mendel was very close with the Alter Rebbe. From the age of 8 he was learning at an extremely advanced level. His chavrusa was a chosid by the name of Reb Nechemye Dubrovno. It was at this age that the Alter Rebbe suggested he should one day get married to his first Cousin Chaya Mushka, the daughter of the Mittler Rebbe.



- YOUNG ADULthood -

In the year 5562, around the time of his Bar Mitzvah, the Tzemach Tzedek began to write his chidushei Torah in both Niglah and Chassidus. Only a year later, on the 5th of Kislev 5563, at the age of 14, the Tzemach Tzedek got married to his cousin, Chaya Mushka. In the year 5566 the Alter Rebbe appointed his older brother the Maharal (not to be confused with the Maharal) and the Tzemach Tzedek as the 2 people who would oversee answering all halachic questions sent to the Alter Rebbe. The Tzemach Tzedek was only 16 years old! In 1812, Chabad lost its first Rebbe. The Alter Rebbe passed away on chof daled Teves 5573. Only a year later the Mittler Rebbe, uncle and father-in-law of the Tzemach Tzedek agreed to become Chabad's next Rebbe. In the year 5578 (approximately) the Tzemach Tzedek began writing the most famous of his works, Shaalos Utshuvos Tzemach Tzedek.

Between the years 1814 and 1827 the Tzemach Tzedek spent most of his time in solitude learning diligently by himself.

- REBBE LIFE -

On Tes Kislev 5588 just less than a year since he was freed from prison (some sources say just less than 2 years) the Mittler Rebbe passed away. It was around this time as well that new decrees were being made about taking Jewish kids away to serve in the Russian army until about the age of 30. This decree was known as the decree of the

cantonists.

For a year and a half the Tzemach Tzedek declined the position of Rebbe, pointing to the son of the Mittler Rebbe, Menachem-Nachum, to assume the role. However after a year and a half of persistence from the Chassidim, on Shavuos 5589, at the age of 39, the Tzemach Tzedek finally agreed to become the 3rd Rebbe of Chabad. The main focus of Tzemach Tzedek during his time as Rebbe, was fighting the Haskalah movement and freeing agunas, women whose husbands had disappeared and thereby could not remarry according to Jewish law. The Tzemach Tzedek also established a group called chevre techiyas hameisim. Their purpose was to rescue kids from the hands of "snatchers" who would take them to the Russian army. In the year 5597 (1837) the Tzemach Tzedek printed Torah Ohr, a collection of mammarim from the Alter Rebbe on Seforim Bereishis and Shemos. This was followed by the other half (Likutei Torah) 11 years later in 5608 (1848).

In the year 5603 (1843) the Tzemach Tzedek was invited to Petersburg for

a Rabbinical commission. There he argued against the Haskalah movement and his demand to be allowed to print all Seforim, including Chassidus and Kabbalah. For this, the Tzemach Tzedek was constantly being put under house arrest. In the end, he won the battle! His demands were fulfilled. In the year 5616 (1856) a terrible calamity struck Lubavitch. A terrible fire broke out destroying many houses (including the Tzemach Tzedek's) and 5 chests full of his manuscripts. These manuscripts were lost forever.

- PASSING -

In the year 5620, in the month of Kislev, the Tzemach Tzedek got sick. This sickness lasted for six years. In 5626 on the eve of the 13th of Nissan, at 12:30 am (this time was determined based on a fabrenge of the Rebbe), at the age of 76, the Tzemach Tzedek returned his holy soul to the maker. He was survived by his 7 sons. His youngest son, Shmuel, became the next Rebbe of Chabad.





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