

Proceeding Together



The Earliest Talks
of the Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

WHAT DO THE LINKS OF HISKASHRUS CONSIST OF?

...In¹ the² well-known Epistle 27 in *Iggeres HaKodesh*, written to offer redoubled consolation to “the smitten, who are sighing and groaning,”³ the Alter Rebbe writes that a *tzaddik*⁴ “leaves over life... to every living being, that is, to the soul of every living being who is bound to his soul..., in each and every individual, corresponding to the degree of his genuine bond [with the *tzaddik*] and his true and pure love of him.”

It is explained in *Inyan HaHishtat'chus*⁵ that “even as to those who did not know or recognize [the *tzaddik*] during his actual lifetime but only studied the holy books that he left over as a blessing, and who bask in the radiance of his Torah teachings and are thereby invigorated in their service of G-d,... it is certain that they too are called his disciples,... for they believe in that *tzaddik* and from him they receive the light of his Torah teachings;... the branches are drawn back to their roots.”

So, too, my late revered father-in-law the Rebbe [Rayatz] explained in a letter⁶ that [a chassid] “is able to satisfy his strong desire for a bond [with his Rebbe] only by studying the *maamarim* of *Chassidus* which the Rebbe delivers or writes; merely beholding his face is not enough.”

Another letter⁷ states explicitly: “You ask, what does your bond with me consist of, since I do not know you by face....

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1. *Hiskashrus* means the soul-connection between Rebbe and chassid.
 2. The above letter, dated Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5710 [1950], almost three weeks after the passing of the Rebbe [Rayatz], appears in *Sefer HaMaamarim 5710*, p. 139, and in *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. XI, p. 205. See also *Igros Kodesh* (Letters) of the Rebbe, Vol. III, Letter 696.
 3. On the connection between the Heb. words *ne'enakim* and *naakah*, see *BeOr HaTorah* (by the Tzemach Tzedek), *Parshas Shmos*, p. 64.
 4. *Iggeres HaKodesh* of the Alter Rebbe, Epistle 27; see *Lessons In Tanya*, Vol. V, p. 166.
 5. *Maamarei Admur HaEmtza'i — Kuntreisim*, p. 28.
 6. *Igros Kodesh* (Letters) of the Rebbe Rayatz, Vol. IV, p. 978.
 7. *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 1207.

True *hiskashrus* is attained by the study of the Torah. If you study my *maamarim* of *Chassidus*, read the *sichos*, associate with my friends (the members of the chassidic brotherhood⁸ and the *temimim*⁹) in their studies and in their *farbrengens*, and fulfill my request concerning the daily recital of *Tehillim*¹⁰ and the observance of fixed times for Torah study, — in *this* lies *hiskashrus*.”

When we will study the Torah teachings and the *sichos* [of the Rebbe Rayatz], and will walk in this³⁴ “straight path which he has shown us,” then¹¹ “‘as in water, face [answers to face: so is the heart of man to man’], and¹² ‘spirit rouses spirit and brings forth spirit.’ For his *Ruach*¹³ remains truly in our midst...; that is, even in this world of action — [of which it is written],¹⁴ ‘This day: to do them’ — [the departed *tzaddik*] is found more [than in his lifetime].” And just as here he stood and dutifully served, there too he stands and dutifully serves....¹⁵

Menachem Schneerson



BEIS IYAR: REBBE AND CHASSID

4. Being Connected. In the customary wording of the *pidyon* in which people request the Rebbe [Rayatz] to arouse Divine compassion on their behalf, I would, if I could, delete the following words: “...from the Source of Mercy..., as in the

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8. In the original, *Anash*; an acronym for *anshei shlomeinu* (lit., “the men of our peace”).
 9. I.e., the students of the Tomchei Temimim Lubavitch Yeshivah.
 10. When this letter was first written, the daily study cycles of *Chumash-Rashi* and *Tanya*, as instituted by the Rebbe Rayatz, were not yet publicized. See *Sefer HaMinhagim: The Book of Chabad-Lubavitch Customs* (in English translation: Kehot, N.Y., 1991), p. 38-43.
 11. *Mishlei* 27:19.
 12. *Zohar* II, 166b, *et al.*
 13. Lit., “spirit”; one of the five levels of the soul.
 14. *Devarim* 7:11.
 15. Cf. *Sotah* 13b.

prayer beginning *Machnisei Rachamim*,¹⁶ as explained in the responsum of *Mahariv Zal*.¹⁷ There are two reasons for this:

(a) The appended words (“as in... *Machnisei Rachamim*, as explained in the responsum of *Mahariv Zal*”) cite *why it is permissible* (when it might otherwise appear to involve an intermediary) to address a *pidyon* to a Rebbe; this is explained in the responsum of *Mahariv Zal* on the recitation of *Machnisei Rachamim*. These appended words are thus not appropriate in the wording of a *pidyon*, which is a *request for compassion* (as in its opening phrase, “I request that you arouse abundant mercies”), and not an exposition of why this is permissible.

(b) As to the phrase *miMekor HaRachamim* (“from the Source of Mercy”), there is no need to supply the Rebbe [Rayatz] with an address from which to arouse Divine compassion: he knows that himself... In fact, he may wish to arouse Divine compassion from a level of Divinity which *transcends* the level known as *Mekor HaRachamim*.

It is true that the Rebbe [Rayatz] himself used to use this wording.¹⁸ That, however, was his own practice; it does not indicate that we, who do not understand Rebbe-things, should do likewise.

A few days ago a young man walked in and told me excitedly that my father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], had once told him that by being bound to him, he would thereby be bound to Him to Whom he (the Rebbe himself) was bound....

I did not want to cool his ardor, but the truth is, that to Whom the Rebbe is bound is not our concern. We are bound to *him*, and we have nothing higher than that.

By way of analogy: It could legitimately be said that a particular organ derives its vitality from the liver, or (higher)

16. The prayer appears toward the end of the *Selichos* read in the days preceding Rosh HaShanah. The quoted phrase refers to the angels who “usher in [prayers for] compassion.”

17. See sec. 275. (*Mahariv* is an acronym for R. Yitzchak [ben Avraham] Wanneh, a Yemenite kabbalist.)

18. See the *Igros Kodesh* (Letters) of the Rebbe Rayatz, Vol. X, p. 432, and Vol. XI, p. 4. See also the *Igros Kodesh* (Letters) of the Rebbe Rashab, Vol. IV, p. 145.

from the heart, or (yet higher) from the brain; it could not be said (or thought) that any organ derives its vitality from the brain of a different body. A living organ that desires to survive and not to wither, G-d forbid, has to derive its vitality from its own brain.

The same principle applies to *hiskashrus*, to one's bond with the Rebbe, who is the head (the brain, so to speak) and the transcendent crown (the *Keser*) of our generation.

5. Receiving Essence, Repaying with Essence. Receiving spiritual benefits from the *Nasi* of the generation obliges one to repay, just as a borrower obligates himself to repay a loan. This does not mean that once he has repaid he simply crosses off the debt; rather, on receiving his repayment, the creditor gives him a further sum on credit.¹⁹ Likewise in the analog, the individual beneficiary is endowed with further spiritual energy, which in turn he is obligated to repay, and so on.

[At this point the Rebbe turned to the *temimim*, the students of the Tomchei Temimim Lubavitch Yeshivah, and said:]

Each one of you should know that he is obligated to make his repayment to my father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], with the innermost and essential faculties²⁰ of his soul — his *Chayah-Yechidah*.

Firstly, all the various benefits that my father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], directs [to you] — delivering *maamarim*, answering queries and so on, and including even the granting of stipends and the like — share a common characteristic: they spring from *his* innermost and essential soul-faculties, from his *Chayah-Yechidah*.

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19. As explained in *Kuntreis Chai Elul 5709* [1949], reprinted in *Sefer HaMaamarim 5709* [1949], p. 216ff.

20. In the original, *kochos atzmi'im*.

By the way:²¹ I was recently asked, in what way was the greatness of the Rebbe [Rayatz] expressed by comparison with other great figures. I answered that each of the *gedolei Yisrael* had a particular field in which he engaged and in which his greatness found expression; the Rebbe [Rayatz], by contrast, engaged in *all fields*, from the loftiest to the most prosaic. (In the idiom of our Sages,²² “What is meant by ‘a great subject’? — the Celestial Chariot [in the vision of Yechezkel]; what is meant by ‘a lesser subject’? — the legal debates of Abbaye and Rava.”) These fields ranged from the uncovering of the most hidden mysteries in the teachings of *Chassidus*, to a concern that fellow Jews should put on *tefillin* and observe *Shabbos*, to utterly material matters such as organizing financial support for the needy. And in every one of these fields he dedicated himself with his entire essence, with his *Chayah-Yechidah*.

(The above question was asked by two young men — both ordained with Rabbinical *semichah*, no less — and when they heard the above reply they took out a notebook, wrote it down, and commented, “Now we know what the Rebbe is.” So you see, now they’ve got the Rebbe down on paper....)

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As we were saying: The above-mentioned common characteristic — that all the benefits spring from *Chayah-Yechidah* — relates to the giver, to the *mashpia*. However, with relation to the *hashpaah* itself, that is, to the downflow of spiritual energy, and likewise, with relation to its recipients, there is a variety of levels.

In this respect the *yeshivah* students have a distinctive advantage: they receive the Rebbe’s *Chayah-Yechidah*, and are therefore obligated to repay with their own *Chayah-Yechidah*.

One might argue that the repayment which they make with *their* soul-levels of *Chayah-Yechidah* cannot be compared

21. This interpolation (of two paragraphs) appears in *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. II, pp. 508-9.

22. *Sukkah* 28a.

with the *Chayah-Yechidah* of my father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz]. This objection can be answered by considering the following point made in the teachings of *Chassidus*.²³ When the Torah commands a Jew,²⁴ “You shall love the L-rd your G-d... with all your might,” it is true that this involves no more than “all *your* might.” Nevertheless, this very endeavor empowers the finite individual to draw on G-d’s true might, which in essence is infinite. An analogous principle applies to the repayment which the *temimim* make with *their* soul-levels of *Chayah-Yechidah*, in response to the spiritual input invested in them from the *Chayah-Yechidah* of my father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz].

6. A Little Different from the World. Repaying this debt with one’s *Chayah-Yechidah* finds expression in the way in which one frees himself from constraints — both from his own inbuilt constraints, and also (and how much more so) from the constraints imposed by worldly considerations.

Apart from the particular spiritual tasks that are certainly expected of each individual student here, there is one universal task that is relevant to everyone — to separate oneself from worldly considerations, in the spirit of the verse,²⁵ “I and Your people shall be differentiated.” When any one of the students of Tomchei Temimim walks down the street, it should be apparent that he is somewhat differentiated from the world around him.

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When my father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], arrived in the United States, there were complaints — not against the actual study undertaken in the Tomchei Temimim Yeshivah which he founded here, but against the fact that it was conducted without the conventional forms of order and authority. He was told that this was a chaotic kind of conduct, which

23. See *Torah Or, Parshas Mikeitz*, p. 39c ff.; *Derech Mitzvoosecha*, p. 122b ff.

24. *Devarim* 6:5; in the original, בכל מאדך.

25. *Shmos* 33:16; in the original, ונפליני אני וימך.

cheapened the entire environment. One gentleman — in fact, a G-d-fearing individual — wrote to him that the actual studies in the Yeshivah were fine, and that as far as he was concerned the young men there could study even twenty hours a day. At the same time, he argued, they should study with more *decorum*. Why, for example, did they have to *sway*²⁶ as they studied? Why did they have to argue out their studious debates so *loudly*? Why should they not follow the custom of raising a finger before asking a question? And so on.

As was said above, however, the students of the Yeshivah are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that is *differentiated* from the world, that transcends constraints.

7. A Good Start. This day, *Beis Iyar*,²⁷ adds its own impetus to these efforts. My father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], chose to begin the writing of the *Sefer Torah* with which to greet *Mashiach*,²⁸ on this day, whose *Sefirah* is *Tiferes shebeTiferes*. (There is also a letter written by my father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], and dated 2 Iyar, 5702, which I will pass on for copying and publication.²⁹)

As is well known,³⁰ every Jew has a letter in the *Sefer Torah*. This is hinted at in the five Hebrew letters which spell *Yisrael* (ישראל), and which serve as an acronym³¹ for the words, *יש ששים ריבוא אותיות לתורה* — “There are 600,000 letters in the Torah.” Accordingly, this day, *Beis Iyar*, the day on which the writing of the *Sefer Torah* began, serves as a kind of birthday, and therefore as a beginning for the divine service, of every individual Jew.

26. In the Yid. original, *shoklen-zich*.

27. The birthday of the Rebbe Maharash (1834); see *HaYom Yom* (with English translation: Kehot, N.Y., 1988), entry for 2 Iyar.

28. See *Sefer HaSichos 5702 [1942]*, p. 118. In English, see *From Exile to Redemption* (Kehot, N.Y., 1992), Vol. I, pp. 94-97.

29. *Igros Kodesh* (Letters) of the Rebbe Rayatz, Vol. VI, p. 280ff. See also *From Exile to Redemption*, *loc. cit.*

30. See *Sefer HaMaamarim 5706 [1946]*, p. 46; *Sefer HaMaamarim 5709 [1949]*, pp. 41 and 64; *et al.*

31. *Megaleh Amukos*, Ofen 186.

8. Networking. Getting down to practicalities — for with my father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], what mattered most was actual, practical *avodah* — I would like to propose that every one of the students present undertake two things:

(a) With regard to himself, an activity by means of which his *hiskashrus* with my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], will be strengthened;

(b) With regard to others, an endeavor to bring at least one fellow Jew — whether a single student or a married adult — close to the Rebbe [Rayatz] and to the spiritual lifestyle of *Chassidus*, so that he will delve deeply into its teachings and meditate upon them at length as he engages in the *avodah* of prayer.³²

9. Mere Miracles. When one sets out to bring a fellow Jew close to the Rebbe [Rayatz] and to the spiritual lifestyle of *Chassidus*, one can begin in many ways, including the recounting of miracles, and the like. The ultimate aim, however, should be to bring him close to the study of the teachings of *Chassidus*, for this is the *essential* aspect³³ — the *Chayah-Yechidah* — of the Rebbe, whereas miracle-working is merely an outward reflection³⁴ of the Rebbe.³⁵

Hiskashrus, one's bond with the Rebbe, is basically unconnected to miracles and the like. Indeed, *hiskashrus* neither needs miracles nor is benefited by them — in both directions: seeing miracles adds nothing to one's *hiskashrus*, and not

32. This task is required not only with respect to those who are distant (spatially, and even more so in a spiritual sense). Even with respect to those who are nearby, and even within the Yeshivah itself, students should make a point of lending each other help and support.

The above note is taken from the unauthenticated record which one of those present made of a statement by the Rebbe.

33. In the original, *inyano haatzmi*.

34. In the original, *hispashtus*.

35. Concerning the following passage, see also *HaTamim*, Vol. II, p. 56ff.; *Igros Kodesh* (Letters) of the Rebbe Rayatz, Vol. II, p. 361ff.

seeing a miracle (for a day, or a week, or a month) detracts nothing from one's *hiskashrus*. The fact is, that if one were so to desire, he could see that my father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], related to him even in his natural affairs in a manner that involved miracles day-by-day — but there is no need for this [awareness] at all, nor should one be overawed by it.

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By way of illustration: An³⁶ *agunah*, a deserted wife, accompanied by her son, who was dumb, once set out to request the blessing of the *Tzemach Tzedek*. Try as she might, however, she was unable to gain admission to his study, even after having pleaded with the *rebbitzin* (as was the custom of the women visitors of the time). An enterprising chassid advised her to write out her request and give the note to her son. Then, when no one was in the room, he would hide under the table in the room where *yechidus* took place, and when the *Tzemach Tzedek* entered, he would hand it to him. And that is exactly what happened.

When the *Tzemach Tzedek* received the note, he said: "Go and tell your mother that your father is in such-and-such a place." So both of them were helped — the boy began to talk, and his mother found her husband.

When chassidim came and excitedly told the *Tzemach Tzedek* that by relaying this message the boy had spoken for the first time, he replied: "But how was I to know that the boy was dumb?..."

When his *rebbitzin* heard this story — and she, like all the daughters of the Mittlerer Rebbe, was a woman of mellow understanding — she showed no signs of amazement. She simply quoted the words of her grandfather, the Alter Rebbe: "In Mezritch [at the court of the Maggid], miracles used to roll about under the table, but no one found the time to bend down and pick them up...."

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36. See *Igros Kodesh*, *op. cit.*, p. 93ff.

Nevertheless, if there is a need, then as far as others are concerned, one may begin to bring them near by this means too — by recounting miracles. The ultimate aim, however, as explained above, should be to introduce them to the study of the teachings of *Chassidus*.

10. Holy Excuses. Let no one be perturbed by the argument (for example) that if, in addition to his own spiritual tasks, he undertakes responsibility to help his fellow, the lost time will weaken his own *avodah*.

First of all: A man who sees his friend drowning in the sea doesn't pause to make calculations; he makes every effort humanly possible to save him. The same applies to spiritual outreach: when a man has to be saved, there's no time for any calculations whatever.

Secondly: Not only is one's own *avodah* not affected adversely by activities for the benefit of one's fellow; quite the contrary, these activities actually enhance one's own efforts at self-improvement. This is stated explicitly by the Sages³⁷ in their exposition of the verse,³⁸ "G-d illumines the eyes of them both": G-d grants enlightenment not only to the Torah student, but to his teacher too.

Besides: Exerting oneself for the sake of another is extolled by the Sages in these terms:³⁹ "Whoever teaches Torah to another's son is regarded by Scripture as having brought him into the world."

Both directions have to be pursued — on the one hand, studying *Chassidus* and laboring at self-refinement, and on the other hand, working at outreach.

I once told a learned young man who came to see me that we have to extinguish the conflagration that is running wild in the streets. The learned young man replied that this was a

37. *Temurah* 16a.

38. *Mishlei* 29:13.

39. *Sanhedrin* 19b.

fit occupation for businessmen and diamond dealers; as for himself, he ought to engage only in the study of the Torah. After fifteen years of industrious study he would be “a famed *posek* among Jews,” and then Lubavitch would have whom to be proud of....

In response I told him that when a fire is raging, you don't stop to make calculations. As to his concern that our community should also be graced by eminent scholars,⁴⁰ the Alter Rebbe's blessing will certainly be fulfilled — that “it is in the chassidic community that eminent scholars will be found.” This can be proved by a *kal vachomer* argument, *a fortiori*: The Alter Rebbe did *not* want impudent folk among his chassidim, and yet they are present; how much more is it certain that eminent scholars, whom the Alter Rebbe *did* want among his chassidim, will be present....

11. To Make One More Jew. My revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], once told me a story about the Alter Rebbe⁴¹ which is most instructive on the subject of exerting oneself for the sake of another's spiritual advancement.

One Yom Kippur, after *Shacharis*, the Alter Rebbe took off his *tallis* and *kittel*, walked to the edge of town, chopped wood, and cooked some soup for a woman who had just given birth. (When he was asked why he had to do this himself when he could have sent along someone else, he replied that when a life has to be saved⁴² by an apparent desecration of *Shabbos* or *Yom-Tov*, the law stipulates that the *mitzvah* devolves upon the person of highest stature⁴³ — and he found no one more eligible.)

The Rebbe [Rayatz] concluded by commenting that this story was not always spoken of [by the preceding Rebbeim]

40. In the original Heb./Yid., *lomdim*.

41. See also *Sefer HaMaamarim — Melukat*, Vol. I, p. 7.

42. In the original, *pikuach nefesh*.

43. In the original, *mitzvah begadol*. Cf. *Yoma* 84b; the Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 328:13.

— sometimes yes and sometimes no, but they certainly had no desire to publish it.

He nevertheless told me this story, knowing full well that I would not succeed in withholding it from other Jews, together with some explanation of its message.

In terms, of *avodah*, then, this story may be understood as follows:

The level at which the Alter Rebbe functioned while garbed in his *tallis* and *kittel* (resembling an angel⁴⁴) on Yom Kippur, after the morning prayers, can only be guessed at. Despite this, he took off his *tallis* and *kittel*, and made his way to the last cottage at the edge of the town, near the fields. Fields are an allusion to the lowest level within the realm of holiness, a level which neighbors the *kelipah*, as in the verse,⁴⁵ “Esau... was a man of the fields.” And why did the Alter Rebbe go through all this? — In order to help a woman in confinement and her infant; in other words, *to make one more Jew*.⁴⁶

From this episode everyone in the chassidic community can learn the crucial and indispensable importance of working with others. Let every individual therefore resolve to intensify his endeavors — both with regard to himself, and with regard to introducing others too to the teachings of *Chassidus*.⁴⁷



44. The Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chayim* 610:9; 619:9.

45. *Bereishis* 25:27.

46. At this point the Rebbe went on to expound additional components of the story likewise in terms of *avodah* — chopping the wood, cooking the soup — but no record of this continued exposition is extant.

47. According to an unauthenticated note made by one of those present, the Rebbe concluded the above talk by saying: “The truth is, that people should be going out into the streets and crying out, ‘*Gevald, Yidden!* For heaven’s sake, fellow Jews! There exists something called the teachings of *Chassidus*, which G-d wants Jews to study so that *Mashiach* will come!’ ”

PESACH SHENI: STILL TIME TO CONNECT

5. A Bond of Unfailing Love. With regard to our present situation,⁴⁸ the above concept⁴⁹ serves as an instruction, a directive, and a source of strength.

Despite the concealment that the *histalkus* entails, and the ascent that has taken place, we need to know that the bond⁵⁰ and the cleaving that existed until now — with those who were privileged to see the Rebbe [Rayatz], whether often, or rarely, or once, and even with those who were only privileged to receive a letter from him, and with those who heard of the Rebbe [Rayatz] by studying his *maamarim* and *sichos*, — with them this bond endures in all its intensity, with no possibility of weakening....

[At this point the Rebbe wept, then resumed:] My father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz] once said:⁵¹ “The teachings of *Chassidus* brought about a situation in which the Rebbe is not solitary, and chassidim are not solitary.” This means that the Rebbe [Rayatz] watches over and cares about every detail in the lives of the chassidim. Now, too, when he is on a higher plane, he watches over and cares about every detail in the lives of the chassidim (as discussed above⁵²). Accordingly, we are being given the strength to carry on with all the tasks which the Rebbe [Rayatz] demands and expects of us.

Indeed, since the purpose of the concealment is the consequent revelation, we should now engage in all the tasks which the Rebbe [Rayatz] demands of us, *with redoubled energy*.⁵³

48. This *sichah* was delivered two months after the passing (*histalkus*) of the Rebbe Rayatz on *Yud Shvat*, 5710 [1950].

49. Viz., that the ultimate intent underlying the Divine self-concealment expressed by *Gevurah*, is the revelation expressed by *Chessed*.

50. In the original, *hiskashrus*.

51. *Sefer HaSichos 5700* [1940], p. 111ff.; *HaYom Yom*, entry for 22 Iyar.

52. *Sichah* of the last day of Pesach, 5710 [1950], sec. 1ff. (p. 35 above).

53. See also the *sichah* of *Shabbos Parshas Terumah*, 5710 [1950], sec. 5 (p. 20 above).

6. A Slap in the Nation's Face. During the [Second World] War, when many people from other circles used to come to speak to the Rebbe [Rayatz] about the situation in Europe, he would urge them not only to express their gratitude to G-d that they were not located in that Vale of Tears, but at the same time to do whatever was possible to help their fellow Jews there.

One day a certain thinker of renown asked the Rebbe [Rayatz]: "If the ultimate intent of the entire Creation is in fact the Jewish people, how can G-d possibly allow that execrable villain to burn great numbers of Jews at the stake, and indeed their most superior individuals?"

The Rebbe replied: "When one wants to strike a man in such a place that his whole body will feel not only the pain but also the indignity, one slaps him in the face..."

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It has been retold that when the Rebbe [Rayatz] himself was a little boy studying in *cheder* under the *melamed* Reb Shimshon, he had to suffer for all the other little pupils. Whenever one of them misbehaved, the *melamed* would call the [future] Rebbe to the front and threaten to punish him, explaining himself as follows: Even though the Rebbe had done nothing wrong, nevertheless, when his classmates saw what he was undergoing, they would be awestruck and would mend their ways....

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The present slap in our collective face we should feel *in our entire body*, and this should lead us to invest increased vigor in all the tasks that the Rebbe [Rayatz] demands of us.

7. Never Too Late. There is a well-known teaching of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz],⁵⁴ that the message

54. See the *sichah* of Pesach Sheni, 5701 [1941], sec. 5, in *Sefer HaSichos 5701 [1941]*, p. 115; see also *HaYom Yom*, entry for Pesach Sheni.

of Pesach Sheni⁵⁵ is that⁵⁶ “there is no such thing as too late.” One can always rectify things. Even if one was impure, or⁵⁷ “on a distant road *of yours*” — even if a man was at a distance of his own choosing — he can still rectify things.

This teaching is also instructive in relation to our bond with the Rebbe [Rayatz].

There are people who were never in the presence of the Rebbe. There are others who technically *saw* the Rebbe, and not once but many times, yet since this had no effect on them, they never really were in the presence of the Rebbe. Since they sensed nothing, they only imagined that they saw the Rebbe.

This being so, such people might think that their opportunity is forever lost.

At this point the message of Pesach Sheni reminds us: Even one who did not offer the sacrifice on the eve of the first Pesach, and even when the fault was his own (“on a distant road *of yours*”), he can correct the past by offering the sacrifice of the Second Pesach. Here, too: Even those who until now were lacking the above-mentioned awareness and sensitivity⁵⁸ can experience it now, and in this way correct the past as well.

This is possible because, as explained above, “the Rebbe is not solitary, and chassidim are not solitary.” By virtue of the power of the Rebbe who is to be found among his chassidim, even those who in the past did not experience the above-mentioned sensitive awareness can experience it now.

8. Recalling a Face: Recalled by a Face. One of the ways of arriving at this, is to picture to oneself the Rebbe’s countenance.

55. See footnote 256 above.

56. In the Yid. original, *es iz nito kein farfahn*.

57. *Bamidbar* 9:10.

58. In the Yid. original, *derhern*.

Whoever visited the Rebbe at *yechidus* should recall how the Rebbe appeared when he entered his study for *yechidus*. Those who did not see the Rebbe should visualize his face by means of a picture.

By⁵⁹ visualizing the Rebbe's face one in a sense beholds him. In a certain way this is superior to studying his teachings, just as seeing is superior to hearing.⁶⁰

By contemplating a picture of the Rebbe such people will now be aroused, even if never before, to a sensitized level of apprehension.²⁸⁰

9. Forty Years of Hindsight. Surely, one might object, this is paradoxical — that when one used to face the Rebbe at *yechidus* and the like, one did not arrive at this degree of sensitive awareness, yet it should be attainable now?!

A solution may be found in a parallel teaching of the Sages:⁶¹ “No man plumbs the profundity of his mentor's understanding until forty years have elapsed.” This implies that once forty years have elapsed, he can do so. This does not mean that now, forty years later, he has to see his Rebbe and hear Torah teachings from his lips, and then he will understand them in all their depth. Rather, it relates to the teachings he heard forty years ago: though when he saw his Rebbe and studied under him he did not appreciate their full weight, it is now granted him to do so.

The same is true in our context: Though at the time spiritually unresponsive to the Rebbe's presence, a person may now — by means of a picture that enables him to see the Rebbe in the mind's eye — attain the appropriate sensitivity now.

59. This comment, based on the notes made by one of those present, was later added to the record (*hanachah*) of the *farbrengen* as originally drafted and distributed.

60. See *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. VI, p. 121, and the sources indicated there.

61. *Avodah Zarah* 5b.

At any rate, whether this finely-honed awareness is attained or not, this is not our primary concern. Our task is to do what is expected of us.

Be what may, it is clear and certain that the intent of the Rebbe [Rayatz] will be realized. However, in order that this should take place in a spirit of Divine lovingkindness and compassion, we should endeavor to do what the Rebbe seeks and demands of us, to meditate and to meditate again. For⁶² “there is a sworn promise that exerted endeavor... will never be futile” — and this applies too to exerted endeavor that relates to oneself. Ultimately, then, this meditation will yield the sensitive awareness that had been lacking.

10. Self-Sacrifice at No Cost. In addition to the comprehensive message of Pesach Sheni, viz., that it is never too late,⁶³ we can derive another directive by considering the *cause* of the impurity that prevented certain people from offering the Pesach sacrifice at its proper time. The Torah writes,⁶⁴ “There were people who were defiled by contact with the dead and were unable to offer the Pesach sacrifice on that day,” and the *Gemara*⁶⁵ records various opinions as to the actual cause of their impurity.

Let us consider the directive that can be derived according to the opinion that⁶⁷ “those people... had been occupied in the burial of a *mes mitzvah*.”⁶⁶ In the case of⁶⁷ “any Jew who was found (slain) lying by the roadside with no one to bury him,” the law prescribes that⁶⁸ “[even] a *Kohen*⁶⁸ who encountered him on his way is obliged to defile himself by contact with

62. *HaYom Yom*, entry for 12 Tishrei (*et al.*), where the context relates to one’s endeavors in disseminating *Yiddishkeit*.

63. See sec. 7 above.

64. *Bamidbar* 9:6.

65. *Sukkah* 25a-b.

66. Lit., “the dead [whom it is] a *mitzvah* [to bury],” because he has no known relatives to do so.

67. *Rambam, Hilchos Avel* 3:8.

68. Cf. *Yayikra* 21:1 (and *Rashi* there) and v. 2.

him, and even a *Kohen Gadol*⁶⁹ is obliged to defile himself by contact with him, and to bury him." This obligation applies even if the *Kohen* is on his way to slaughter and sacrifice his Pesach sacrifice, which he will now be unable to do because of his defilement — as in the opinion cited above.

A similar obligation applies on the spiritual plane: When one encounters out in the street a fellow Jew who is (G-d forbid) spiritually dead, one is obliged to get involved with him (even if this entails a measure of impurity) in order to get him out of his present situation. One is obliged to actively encourage him in basic matters like putting on *tefillin* and observing *Shabbos*, even if one's own divine service will suffer as a result — so that (for example) one will not be able to apply himself with due concentration to the study of *Chassidus*, or *daven* at length with appropriate meditation — just as those who were occupied with a *mes mitzvah* were unable to offer the Pesach sacrifice.

* * *

In passing, one could derive an additional directive concerning one's involvement with a person who is spiritually dead, from the laws of *eglah arufah* (i.e., the heifer that was to be killed in expiation for an unsolved murder),⁷⁰ for there too⁷¹ we find the term *chalal* ("one who is slain").

[When measuring the distance from the cities which are nearest to the body in order to determine whose *Sanhedrin* is obliged to fulfill the *mitzvah* of the *eglah arufah*, one consideration is *rov* (lit., "majority"; i.e., Whose population is more numerous?), but] the law also takes into account the counter consideration of *karov* (lit., "near"; i.e., Which city is nearer?), for the verse says,⁷² "Then, as for the city which is nearest...."⁷³

Translated into spiritual terms that relate to the fellow Jew described above: One should not be overawed by the fact that

69. Cf. *Yayikra* 21:11 (and *Rashi* there).

70. See *Devarim* 21:1-9; *Rambam*, *Hilchos Rotzeiach U'Shemiras Nefesh* 9:1ff.

71. *Devarim* 21:1, as in the above-quoted law of the *mes mitzvah*.

72. *Loc. cit.*, v. 3.

73. On the subject of *rov* vs. *karov*, see *Bava Basra* 23b.

this individual is “slain”, that for the *major*⁷⁴ and overwhelming part he is evil. Rather, one should perceive him as he is with regard to his soul, which is [irremovably] *near*⁷⁵ to Divinity (as described in the phrase,⁷⁶ “clinging and cleaving to You”). This being so, there is a possibility and an obligation to bring him near to Divinity.⁷⁷

* * *

To resume the above comment on possible loss to one’s own spiritual labors: In fact, however, nothing will ultimately be lacking in one’s own *avodah* because of one’s involvement with a *mes mitzvah*. For this is the central message of Pesach Sheni, the *Second Pesach* — that even those who had become defiled because they were occupied with a *mes mitzvah* should be enabled to offer their Pesach sacrifice.

In the spirit of the above assurance, an incident has been handed down about a certain individual who was related to the family of one of the Rebbeim. He was a man of modest intellect, and in addition a *shlimazl*: every enterprise that he tried proved luckless. One day his friends collected a sum of money that would enable him to invest in some sort of business. Before he got started, however, he met a man from a nearby township who told him that he urgently needed a sum of money for a dowry so that he could marry off his daughter, and he promptly gave away every penny for *hachnassas kallah*....

He was ultimately recompensed from heaven, and indeed he became one of the greatest magnates in the whole of Russia.

74. Cf. the above-mentioned consideration of “majority”.

75. Cf. the above-mentioned consideration of “nearness”.

76. From the liturgy of *Hoshaanos* for the third day of Sukkos (*Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 327). See also *HaYom Yom*, entry for 17 Tishrei.

77. There is no record extant of the explanation that was given at this point on the subject of *rov* vs. *karov*.

11. Carrying the Ark of Yosef. Let⁷⁸ us now consider the directive that can be derived according to an alternative opinion — that⁷⁹ “those people [who had been defiled by contact with the dead] were those who carried the coffin of Yosef [out of Egypt].”

The Sages here specify “the *aron* [i.e., the ark, or coffin] of Yosef.” Since a coffin is not used for burial,⁸⁰ one would have expected them to echo the language of the Torah, and to refer instead to⁸¹ “the *bones* of Yosef.” In fact, however, the phrase used by the Sages accords with the teaching of the *Zohar*,⁸² that “no one should be placed in a coffin except for a *tzaddik* who knows within himself... that he has never sinned with regard to the *bris* — the sign of the holy covenant — but has guarded it as he ought to do; if not, a person should not be placed in an ark [i.e., coffin] and thereby blemish it,” [for] “the side of holiness [in the universe] is called *aron habris* — the ark of the covenant... What does the Torah say regarding [the burial of] Yosef?⁸³ — ‘He was placed in an ark....’ Because he guarded the [sign of the] holy covenant..., he was worthy of being placed in an ark.”

To relate this to our subject: When we are speaking of the “ark of Yosef” — i.e., the directives and instructions of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Yosef Yitzchak], the Yosef of our generation — the task at hand is to carry this ark forward, regardless of all obstacles. Even when it sometimes *seems* to us that for holy reasons, such as the observance of the *Shulchan Aruch*, we should conduct ourselves otherwise, such considerations do not concern us: our task is to carry forward the ark of Yosef.

(It should be noted that a person’s calculation that he should conduct himself otherwise is perhaps false, an instance of deceit in his divine service. Indeed, one of the

78. See the first paragraph of sec. 10 above.

79. *Sukkah* 25a-b.

80. See *Tur Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah*, beginning of sec. 362.

81. *Shmos* 13:19.

82. II, 214b.

83. *Bereishis* 50:26.

interpretations of the phrase⁸⁴ *yonasi tamasi* (lit., “My dove, My perfect one”) relates the former word to *onaah* (“deceit”)⁸⁵ — to the self-delusion that one’s desired conduct is prompted by holy motives.)

Though carrying Yosef’s ark sometimes requires one to arrive late for the delivery of a *maamar* (a chassidic discourse), or an educational parade, this is no reason to be disturbed, since at this time one is fulfilling the mission and directives of Yosef.

At the same time, the fact is that when people fulfill the will and the mission of the Rebbe [Rayatz] they lose nothing, just as the men who carried the ark of Yosef [out of Egypt] were given the singular command of Pesach Sheni.

Thus, for example, when the Rebbe [Rayatz] first delivered the *maamar* beginning *Taamu U’Re’u* on 13 Tishrei 5693 [1932],⁸⁶ some of the young men whom the Rebbe had sent out on a certain mission did not return in time to hear it. When they finally arrived, the Rebbe repeated the *maamar* especially for them. From this we see that when one goes out to fulfill the mission of the Rebbe [Rayatz], one loses nothing.⁸⁷

84. *Shir HaShirim* 6:9.

85. See *Or HaTorah, Parshas Behar*, p. 190ff.

86. *Sefer HaMaamarim — Kuntreisim*, Vol. I, p. 251a ff.

87. At this point the Rebbe went on to discuss the teaching of the Sages (*Midrash Tehillim* 1:8) on the verse, *Yihyu leratzon imrei fi...* — “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to You, G-d, my Strength and my Redeemer” (*Tehillim* 19:15). On this verse the Sages comment: “[King David asked G-d that Jews over the ages] should read [and study] his Psalms and be rewarded for this, just as they are rewarded for the study of *Nega’im* and *Ohalos*.” [These two abstruse Talmudic tractates, the preserve of the scholarly elite, deal respectively with the various categories of ritual impurity contracted through certain kinds of leprous ailments and through certain degrees of proximity with the dead.]

“Why,” asked the Rebbe, “did David HaMelech ask specifically for a reward such as this, rather than some other reward, such as the ‘310 Worlds’ of Divine revelation which the righteous will enjoy in the World to Come?”

“In whimsical vein,” answered the Rebbe, “one could offer the following explanation. If the *Tehillim*-readers over the generations were to be granted some other reward, certain persons would no doubt protest: ‘Whatever will come of *lomdus*, of abstruse erudition? Who will be qualified to grant *agunos* legal

12. Mitzvos and Takkanos. The directives of the Rebbe [Rayatz] resemble the ordinances (*takkanos*) that Moshe Rabbeinu ordained for the Jewish people; for example,⁸⁸ “Moshe Rabbeinu ordained that Jews should enquire and give expositions concerning the subject of the day — the laws of Pesach on Pesach, the laws of Shavuos on Shavuos, and the laws of Sukkos on Sukkos.”

It will be noted that the Sages here chose to use the verb *tikken* (“ordained” or “instituted”), rather than (say) *tzivah* (“commanded”). For *mitzvos*,⁸⁹ whose authority is rooted in the Torah, derive from and depend upon a source above; *takkanos*,⁹⁰ by contrast, whose authority is rooted in the words of the Sages, derive from and depend upon a source in this world below, and their purpose is to correct and perfect this world below, to complete and perfect the soul of the individual observing them. This is why they are called *takkanos* — from the concept of *tikkun*, which means correction or restitution.⁹¹

permission to remarry, and the like?’ And that is why David HaMelech asked that the *Tehillim*-readers be rewarded ‘just as they are rewarded for the study of *Nega’im* and *Ohalos*’ — so that the claims of *lomdus* won’t be overlooked....”

[Note by the publisher of the Hebrew edition: The above comment evidently came as a continuation of the theme that those who carry the ark of Yosef will lose nothing — including attainments in *nigleh*, the revealed and legalistic plane of the Torah.]

88. *Megillah* 32a.

89. This noun corresponds to the verb *tzivah*.

90. This noun corresponds to the verb *tikken*.

91. The Rebbe here added that the above concept allows us to appreciate (a) the comment of *Rashi* on the above quotation, and (b) the relevance of the above quotation to *Megillah*, the tractate which it concludes, [for] “we are still the servants of Achashverosh” (*Megillah* 14a).

[Note by the publisher of the Hebrew edition: (a) The above statement perhaps refers to *Rashi*’s concluding comment on this tractate: “[The Jewish people] accepted and retained the reward for the *mitzvos* for themselves and for their children, in this world and in the next.” For this comment highlights the divine service initiated by those in the world below, in the spirit of the above discussion of *takkanos*. (b) As to the relevance of the above quotation to Tractate *Megillah*: The need for *takkanos*, for the rectification of the world below, is felt most during the time of *galus*, when “we are still the servants of Achashverosh.”]

In fact, of course, *mitzvos* too emphasize the task of refining⁹² the world below; indeed, this is why they must be fulfilled within the parameters of nature.

This principle enables us to understand a well-known episode that took place during the Alter Rebbe's imprisonment.⁹³

One night, as one of his captors was ferrying him across the river, the Alter Rebbe wanted to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *Kiddush Levanah* [by reciting the appropriate blessing over the waxing moon].⁹⁴ When the ferryman, who was a villain of a man, refused the Alter Rebbe's request to stop the boat for a little while, the boat stopped of its own accord. When it resumed its voyage the Alter Rebbe repeated his request, and after many refusals the ferryman finally obliged. Only then did the Alter Rebbe recite the blessing.

Now since the Alter Rebbe was able to stop the boat at will, why did he have to beg favors of the ferryman?

The answer to this question is provided by a study of *Chassidus*:⁹⁵ It is a major principle in *avodah* that a *mitzvah* should be fulfilled [not metaphysically but] in its natural garb — for the sake of refining and uplifting the materiality of this world below.

This principle is even more evident with respect to *takkanos*, whose entire source is in the world below, and whose entire purpose (as explained above) is the rectification of the world below.

92. In the original, *beirur* — the task of sifting the materiality of this world in order to extricate and elevate the divine sparks embedded within it.

93. The narrative is retold in full in *Likkutei Dibburim*, Vol. IV, p. 1504 (and in Eng. translation: *Likkutei Dibburim*, Vol. V, in the chapter headed "Yud-Tes Kislev, 5632").

Visitors to Petersburg today can see the very cell in the Peter-Paul Fortress overlooking the River Neva, where the Alter Rebbe was incarcerated under capital sentence in 1798 until his liberation on 19-20 Kislev.

94. For the Sanctification of the Moon, see *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 238ff.

95. Cf. *Likkutei Dibburim*, Vol. IV, p. 1505 (and in Eng. translation, *loc. cit.*).

By way of illustration: A certain chassid once entered the study of the Rebbe [Rayatz] in order to ask his advice as to how to rectify a certain matter in his spiritual life. In response to the Rebbe's advice, however, he argued that he would find the proposed course of action difficult to follow; he would prefer *easier* advice, in the spirit of the episode⁹⁶ in which the Alter Rebbe once healed an entire community by means of a piece of *shemurah-matzah* and a glass of water....

The Rebbe [Rayatz] responded: "Why resort to fancy exploits⁹⁷ when one can manage without? Indeed, *Chassidus* teaches us that one's *avodah* should be done specifically *within* the parameters of nature."

* * *

To return to the quotation at the beginning of this section: Just as³¹⁰ "Moshe Rabbeinu laid down ordinances for the Jewish people," so too are there ordinances (*takkanos*) instituted by the heads of the Jewish people in every generation, by the⁹⁸ "extension of Moshe in every generation." The function of these ordinances likewise is to complete and perfect the souls of those who observe them — to bring them to a state of *tikkun*. This applies too to the *takkanos* instituted by my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe [Rayatz], the extension of Moshe in our generation; for example, the *takkanah* that instituted the daily study cycles known by their acronym as *Chitas*⁹⁹ — *Chumash-with-Rashi, Tehillim* and *Tanya*.¹⁰⁰



96. See also *Sefer HaSichos* 5701 [1941], p. 102; *Sefer HaSichos* 5702 [1942], p. 91; *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. XV, p. 285.

97. In the Yid. original, *kuntzn*.

98. *Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun* 69, pp. 112a, 114a.

99. See *Sefer HaMinhagim: The Book of Chabad-Lubavitch Customs* (Kehot, N.Y., 1991), p. 38ff.

100. The Rebbe went on to speak of those who shave their beard by chemical or other means, and stated that even though there are opinions that this practice is permitted according to the law, it is self-evident that it does not accord with conduct that is guided by the *takkanos* of the Rebbe [Rayatz].



