

**We Could Have Danced All Right .....**

*Don't isolate, insulate; how to dance alright.*

**The Beard — the Jewish Man's Dignity .....**

*I don't want to be stereotypical; must I have the cookie-cutter look?*

**Shlichus and Family Matters .....**

*Is working for family a good idea?*

**Fundraising for the Cause .....**

*What am I doing raising funds, I'm not a Schnorrer!?*

## Fundraising for the Cause

Young Shluchim and Shluchos perform miracles. They make deserts bloom and they resurrect the dead. They don't have degrees in social work or business administration, nor have they studied demographics. They work wonders because it doesn't occur to them that it can't be done, so they just do it and achieve the impossible!

These idealistic Shluchim know one thing: the Rebbe has empowered them to transform the world through promulgating Torah and Mitzvos and to bring Moshiach. The world is being transformed—dramatically—and Moshiach is on his way.

*Kol hascholos koshos (Mechilta, Yisro 19)*, all beginnings are difficult. Many young, new Shluchim perceive fundraising as their greatest challenge. Small projects cost money, bigger projects cost more money. Maintaining their own households requires money too. The need to ask others to give them money makes them feel like *schnorrers*. This feeling is disconcerting to some; for others it is debilitating.

The young Shliach might think, “This *balabos*, this potential supporter, doesn't quite understand what we're trying to accomplish; with his limited Jewish background. How could he? And he's a real modern, sophisticated American, Canadian, Tasmanian, etc. And who am I? I'm just a *yeshivah bochur*. I don't have a college degree; my English is unpolished, I don't even know how to knot a tie. Why should he want to write a check from his hard-earned money for my projects, other than out of *rachmonus*? Well, I really don't want people to have *rachmonus* on me; I'M NOT A *SCHNORRER!*”

Let every young Shliach know that he is not a *schnorrer*. He is an ambassador, representing the empire of Lubavitch. As Shmuel hanovi said to Shaul Hamelech: *Halo eem koton atah b'einecha, rosh shivtei Yisroel ata (Shmuel I, 15:17)*. Though you may be small in your own eyes, are you not the head of the tribes of Israel? The young Shliach must carry this awareness with self-respect and dignity, *and* with profound humility.

*The esteemed chossid Reb Shmuel Dovid haLevi Raichik o"h was a loyal Shliach of the Friediker Rebbe and of the Rebbe. Everyone who knew him recognized what a humble person he was. Yet when he was sent to Los Angeles, California, in 1949, while still in his 20s, he was instructed to “Go and sit in mizrach,” in the shul seats reserved for dignitaries, “because of whom you are representing.” It was clear to all that it was not his kovod (honor) that he sought.*

I'm not suggesting that every young Shliach push himself to sit in the *mizrach* section of the shul. I am suggesting that every young Shliach think of himself not as insignificant but as a humble servant of a great master and to be cognizant of the sacred trust that comes with this appointment.

With the above as backdrop, I want to share a perspective that should ameliorate some of these concerns regarding fundraising.

People give because they want to give, not because they are guilt-tripped or manipulated into giving.

Why should a person want to give away his hard-earned money to another person or to a good cause? From a Torah perspective, it is an obligation. In communities of old, people could be taxed to fulfill that which the Rov/community council deemed necessary. *Frum* children today are raised to know that “The Very Best Place for a Penny” is in the *pushka*. There is no observable return for this expenditure; it is simply the fulfillment of one’s duty.

Many would find the attitude that *tzedakah* is simply a duty, noble and admirable, but too altruistic to sustain. People want a return, preferably a tangible one. We, on the other hand, have been raised to perceive that by giving *tzedakah* we are fulfilling a fundamental mitzvah — that is our return.

The Internal Revenue Service knows this too. The IRS mandates that to document a tax-deductible contribution, the text of the thank you letter must state, “No goods or services were provided in exchange for your contribution,” but can include, “An intangible religious benefit was provided to you in return for your contribution.”

Some people can only relate to paying for “goods and services,” but cannot identify with this nebulous “intangible religious benefit.” Thus, where the sense of duty is as yet weak, and the “intangible religious benefit” is, well, intangible, the motivation for one to give must be bolstered by you, the Shliach, providing the return in a manner that the donor can relate to.

So instead of focusing on your needs, think about *your donor’s needs* and how you are actually helping him. Sure, you need money for the project, but your project is one that benefits the Jewish community of Somewheresville, and he, through his donation, can make it happen. Suddenly, you’re not a beggar or a salesman; you’re a broker, giving him an opportunity to make the world better. Furthermore, you will be his steward, making sure that his donation will be spent wisely and not squandered. If you can convey all this, you will have become a dignified facilitator, and he will thank you for having given him the opportunity to support your cause.

Do not think of fundraising as asking for money you do not deserve. Think of fundraising as an exchange; you are doing good works for the local community (via the school, program for college students, Shabbos services and dinner, Friendship Circle, etc.) so you *warrant* the community’s support. Your challenge is to articulate what you are doing and how it helps the community (creates a more moral society and/or stronger families; prepares children to be better people; makes the world a better place; feeds the hungry, fulfills G-d’s master-plan; brings Moshiach) so that the people you are addressing will want to exchange their money for your work. They will pay you to do the work that they appreciate but cannot do themselves.

Think of vacuum-cleaner salespeople. Some focus on their vacuum cleaner and how well it works, how long it will last, how little it costs... and why “you should buy it!” Others focus on the potential customer’s home, how nice it is, how proud she is of it and how challenging it is to keep it *really* clean, but that this vacuum cleaner that is available to buy (which works so well, lasts so long and costs so little) will maintain a clean home that she can be proud of. This salesman is not selling a vacuum cleaner; he is selling the homeowner a clean home; her own! If he makes the sale, the buyer is thrilled that her home will now be cleaner and will take less effort than ever before.

The Shliach should be able to articulate to the donor how by supporting the Shliach’s organization, the donor’s Jewish community will be improved and that he will be a greater and better person for it.

*Reb Shmuel Dovid haLevi Raichik was a shadar (shlucha d’rabbana), a major fundraiser for the Rebbe and his organizations. In the 1970s, he used to call me and encourage me in my then-Shlichus, which included some serious fundraising. At a time that the Orange County, CA, Jewish community appeared to be hostile to our work, he used to say to me, “Gershon, s’eez duh Yeeden een Orange County vos betten zich, ‘keem tzee mir; ich veel deer gebben gelt far der yeshivah.’” (“There are Orange County Jews asking for you, saying, ‘Come to me, I want to give you money.’”)*

At that time, I heard him superficially, and perceived what he was saying as hyperbole, not realizing the truth and depth of his words. Only later did I learn how right he was.

Be aware: Fundraising should not be viewed as a necessary evil. Fundraising is part of Hashem’s master plan for your Shlichus, to motivate you to reach out and touch the donor’s heart, to influence the donor to become part of your holy work. Just as it is fundamental to put *tefillin* on one who doesn’t do so regularly, so it is religiously important to touch the heart and soul of a fellow Jew to motivate him to donate to a worthy Jewish cause such as yours.

Here are some very specific practical suggestions to help you avoid some common mistakes:

**You have to ask for it:** Do not think that people will see what you are doing and write a check. Unless asked, people will assume that you have support. For every person who sends you an unsolicited check (and there are such angels), there are ten who would send a check if they were asked.

**Ask for a specific sum:** Whether you need \$100 or \$100,000, do not ask for “support for this most worthwhile cause,” but rather say, “I want you to donate (\$specific \$um) to...” The donor cannot read your mind, and if you’re thinking big he needs to know it. It is much harder to be specific, but if you take your mission seriously, you will be explicit, and the results will be tangible.

Let's say you want \$1,000, and previously the donor gave you \$100. If you put your heart into the non-specific solicitation and the donor increases his contribution to \$250, you will feel let down, and the donor (who can read body language) will be surprised and hurt. On the other hand, if you ask for \$1,000, 1) you may get it; 2) you may get \$500 (which you wouldn't have gotten otherwise); and 3) there will be no hard feelings since everything was on the table and a successful compromise was reached.

**After your pitch, do not say another word!** After you complete your presentation and conclude with your request for a specific sum, be silent. Fundraising masters say, "The next one to speak — loses!" The moment of decision is a very tense one and there is a tendency to want to break the tension with a quip, a further explanation, an apology or a backtrack: DON'T.

I remember the first time I asked someone for a \$100,000 donation and followed this rule; the ensuing 60-second silence felt like an hour, and the tension in the room was palpable. Only when the donor said, "By when do you need it?" did I breathe again.

**Know your facts!** You need to be very knowledgeable about what the project will cost and how the donor's \$100, \$1,000 or \$100,000 will enable it to happen. Your donors are partners in your holy work and are entitled to transparency in the areas in which you want their support. If your presentation and ability to respond to follow-up questions are vague and evasive, the reaction of the donor, too, will be vague and evasive.

**Thank before you bank:** Basic *mentschlichkeit* aside, there is no one so altruistic that he doesn't want and need to be acknowledged. A thank-you note makes the aftertaste of the donation a sweet one (and, thus, primes the pump for the future). Failure to do so jeopardizes your relationship for the future. A good practice is not to bank the check before the thank-you letter is in the mail. Your commitment to this practice will reward you in the years to come.

**Personalize it:** Even if you use a form thank-you letter, personalize it with a few words, handwritten. It doesn't have to be elaborate. "I hope to see you this Friday night," "Have you checked out our really spiffy website?" or, "Your gift really helps," is worth 1,000 words of the form letter.

**And bank it soon:** Deposit it shortly after you receive it even if it is only \$18. If the donor's check isn't deposited during his monthly banking cycle and he notices this when reconciling his account, he may conclude that you don't really need it that much.

**Don't neglect small donors:** Small donations add up to large sums. If you can get ten people to give you \$18 monthly, you've raised (10 X \$18 X 12 =) \$2,160 by the end of the year. If, instead of \$18, it is \$100, you've raised (10 X \$100 X 12 =) \$12,000. Small donors usually become bigger donors, sometimes even major donors, especially when you treat them right.

Moreover, today's major donor wants to know that you have a broad support base; that you are not dependent on a few other large givers only, but that they are part of a team. They like to be on top of the pyramid, but, as in a pyramid, they need to feel that there's a broad base below them; otherwise they feel that they are like a tall, slender and lonely reed, swaying in the wind...

**People will say no:** If you don't have people say no to you weekly, you're not asking enough people. Do not internalize the no as a rejection of you or of your cause. Often the person is simply saying, "I'm busy now," "I don't understand what you are doing well enough yet," "I'm conflicted because I'm not Orthodox and certainly not Chassidic," or many other similar, rather innocuous, objections that can be overcome another day. Your reaction to the no is very important. If you take it as "not now" and "not yet" and leave on a positive note (e.g., "Thank you for seeing me; let's meet again in a while to continue the conversation") and with a smile, your foot is still in the door. If you leave crestfallen and, figuratively, slam the door on your way out, you have ended the relationship.

**Remember, people hold you to a higher standard:** Never forget that you are held to a higher standard. Make sure that you are responsible. Arrive on time. Dress neatly. Under-promise and over-perform. By all means keep your word to the letter. People do notice. If you act this way, you will gain entry into people's hearts, homes and checkbooks.

*Rabbi Chaim Mordechai Aizik Chodakov o"h, the Rebbe's right-hand man for over half a century, told the 770 bochurim before going on Merkos Shlichus: "If you make an appointment, people should be able to set their watches by your timeliness. Since people will size you up in their first glance from the bottom up, make sure that your shoes are polished and that the rest of you is neat and proper."*

\* \* \*

A Shliach whose responsibilities include fundraising follows in the footsteps of an illustrious group of *chassidim*. Reb Hillel halevi Paritcher (who raised money for the Miteller Rebbe and the Tzemach Tzedek), Reb Yitzchok halevi Horowitz (known as Reb Itcheh der Masmid) and Reb Shmuel Dovid halevi Raichik were all esteemed *chassidim* and *shadarim*. They were charged with *zaien ruchnius un kleiben gashmius*, sowing *ruchnius* and to harvesting *gashmius*. They would *farbreng* and bring a spiritual message, and they would raise money.

When the Shliach's activities and demeanor convey the core of his mission, he has prepared the soil for his secondary role, that of fundraiser. He will have earned the respect of his *balabatim* and they will have become predisposed to support his valuable activities. Then the Shliach, together with his *balabatim*, will focus on their true mission and will join together in making the world a *dirah b'tachtonim*, with the coming of Moshiach, now!

### **Shlichus and Family Matters**

*A young man was offered a position in a Chabad organization by his shver (father-in-law). Concerned that working for his shver might not be such a good idea, he asked the Rebbe whether to accept the position. The Rebbe smiled and replied, "I work for my shver!"*

This essay is about the wisdom of working in Shlichus for one's parents or parents-in-laws. It is not meant to establish a definitive position pro or con. Rather, it is meant as food for thought.

The Rebbe's attitude to hiring relatives (gleaned from his aides off-the-record) was one of caution; he sometimes answered, "If you feel it can be worked out." The Rebbe often counseled that there could be issues that must be considered and worked out in advance; if that is not done, the option should not be pursued.

Finding an appropriate Shlichus is becoming more difficult and, increasingly, would-be Shluchim look to relatives already on Shlichus for positions. It is worthwhile to explore some of these challenges.

Of course, there are many instances in which family members work together in a way that is mutually beneficial and works out famously.

*The father is feeling his age; his son, having been born and bred on Shlichus, has already had extensive on-the-job training. In addition, he knows everyone in the community and is loved by all. Furthermore, he has just the right character and skills for the position. The junior Shliach is pleased and his father is proud.*

When it comes together this way, it is indeed a match made in heaven.

But other situations are not so harmonious.

*The Shliach and his son are still smarting from the son's difficult adolescence, and there remain unresolved emotional issues between them. They do not have as yet a deep, mutual respect. As can be expected, working together under these circumstances is contentious and difficult. Two-and-a-half years of misery ensue. Finally, the son departs.*

And sometimes...

*The Shliach hires his son, whose capabilities he thought he knew well, only to find out he had misjudged. While the son would make a great mashpia in a yeshiva or teacher in a cheder, he is not adept at Chabad House work and does not do well. He is reassigned to other responsibilities with the same results. The father keeps churning him from position to position; neither is happy, but they feel stuck.*

Though the agreement to work together was undertaken with the best of intentions, time reveals the underlying faults in these situations, and, because of the filial relationship, there is no easy way out. Extricating oneself from this kind of situation inevitably leaves scars.

The fundamental considerations must be anchored in what is best for the cause and only secondarily in what is best for the people involved. The decision whether or not to work together must be based on evaluating whether or not there would be true long-term cooperation.

Hiring one's kin has many positive factors and can be a blessing. It can avoid uncertainty in hiring; since generally one knows one's kin, one usually knows what one is getting. It provides a secure job for the son when opportunities for a good Shlichus position are becoming increasingly scarce. It assures the senior Shliach that the fruit of years of hard work will remain secure because a trustworthy family member, devoted to the longtime family Shlichus, is coming aboard. Also, not to be minimized, the Bubby will have her children and grandchildren nearby from whom to *shep nachas*, and the grandchildren will have the benefits of a Bubby who lives nearby.

There can be negative factors that should be taken into account as well. When working with one's own child, the senior Shliach does not have to *earn* his respect; it is taken for granted. However, earning the respect of one's subordinates by demonstrating leadership, tactfully and wisely, is an essential component in building a healthy organization. If he hires his son, the senior Shliach can, consciously or subconsciously, “control” the junior Shliach and feel that he can get away with it; and he often does, to everyone's detriment.

Parents want what is best for their children. Sometimes, what is best for them is to venture out on their own. Remaining close to one's parents' nest can compromise the son's ability to test his own wings and fly (see *Bava Metzia* 12b: “An adult who is dependent on his father is considered a minor”).

In the forest, the great oaks are territorial. Their own acorns which fall in their shade do not develop into great oaks; saplings need their own sunlight and water supply. Only when the wind blows the young seedling away is the seedling able to develop its full potential and become a great oak itself.

*A Shliach in his 30s had been working in his father's large, successful organization for more than eight years. He was complaining that his father didn't let him make any decisions or do anything significant; he felt stifled and used as a glorified office boy. His bitter cry was, “Do I have to wait for my father to die before I can have some self-respect?!” Ten years later, his father by then in olam haemes, the son was at the helm of the organization, and he breathed new life and vigor into it.*

Sadly for both of them, as long as the father was alive, the son was not allowed to live up to his full potential and the organization was not allowed to be all that it could be.



There is another concern when hiring family. When there are other Shluchim working for the senior Shliach, adding one's own kin to the team fosters the potential for favoritism. The following was taken from recent Dinai Torah:

*A Shliach brings in a young man who works with him for ten years. Then his own child marries and is now ready to “go out.” The area is ripe for opening a satellite branch and, rather than considering who the best person for the new assignment is — the seasoned veteran or the talented neophyte — the position is given to the son as a matter of course.*

*In other instances, the senior Shliach carves out a portion of the veteran's territory and reassigns it to the new arrival.*

Finally, as the senior Shliach's many children marry, need positions, and are set up under his umbrella, it may be perceived that he is running a family business, with the patriarch doling out franchises to his children.

The incoming generation takes its cues from what it observes. When senior Shluchim give the appearance of using their positions for personal gain, it dampens the ardor of the young idealists, and the future of Shlichus is likely to be compromised. Who should want Shlichus to grow and prosper more than those who have made it their life's work, the Shluchim themselves? Surely, to do things that tarnish its golden image is counterproductive.

Shlichus is a sacred trust. The tried and tested senior Shluchim are the fiduciaries to whom the Rebbe entrusted this holy mission. It is driven by altruism, idealism and the passion of three loves: *ahavas Hashem*, *ahavas Yisroel* and *ahavas haTorah*.

Individually, each Shliach has the great privilege and responsibility of being a shining example and an inspiration to his Jewish community. May the Shluchim continue to achieve even greater success by working harmoniously with those who will bring in new energy, talents and joyful enthusiasm. Then, collectively, thousands of points of light all around the globe will dispel the darkness and illuminate the world with the light of Moshiach.

### **The Beard — the Jewish Man's Dignity**

There was a time when wearing a full beard clashed with what was going on in the street. For those living a generation ago in the Soviet Union, it was, at times, downright dangerous. By wearing a beard, one was flaunting one's association with the counter-revolutionaries who wanted to bring down the government. It was enough reason to be arrested and sent to Siberia! And for those living in the United States at that time, wearing a beard meant that one was simply old-fashioned (bad), the antithesis of modern and progressive (good). As a result, in the early 1940s, there weren't many young Lubavitchers who let their beards grow.

There were notable exceptions. Reb Mendel Morozov (who now lives on Eastern Parkway near 770) lived in Chovrineh, a suburb outside Moscow, in the late 1930s. The son of the esteemed Reb Elchonon Dov Morosov *hy”d*, *chossid* and *gabbai* of the Rebbe Rashab and of the Frierdiker Rebbe, Reb Mendel refused to cut his beard despite the danger. When he went outside, he would wrap his face in a bandage, as was done in those days when one had a severe toothache.

At about the same time in Brooklyn, Reb Sholom Ber Gordon *a”h* was the first among his peers to let his newly sprouting beard grow. He endured the stares and sometimes even the ridicule of many who couldn’t understand why a normal young man would allow himself to look so old-fashioned. Many concluded that there must be something wrong with him.

The Gordon family tells a story:

*When it came time for Reb Sholom Ber Gordon to find his basherteh (destined one), the young chossid was in his early twenties. The shadchan felt that, because of his full beard, his marital options were limited. He set him up with a woman a few years his senior who was also having difficulty finding her destined one. The shadchan figured that since they each had their “handicap,” it would be a perfect match! The young man phoned the woman and arranged a meeting. When she answered the door, he introduced himself by saying, “Hello, I am Gordon...” The woman replied, “Yes, your son called me,” assuming, because of his beard, that he was the father of her suitor!*

Rabbi Gordon did not end up marrying this woman. The woman he married, not in any way “handicapped,” had been brought up with true Jewish and *chassidische* values, and the appreciation of a full beard as the Jewish man’s dignity.

Today, things are quite different. One can dress any way he wants to, wearing his hair or beard as he pleases, without anyone giving him a second glance.

So why do some *yungeleit* who sincerely want to identify as Lubavitchers, and want their children to identify so as well, cut corners when it comes to their beards? Some, who cannot bring themselves to actually put a cutting instrument to their beards, pull the hair of their beards out, slowly but surely.

In trying to make sense of this, I did some research. I found that there is often a correlation of the beard-styles (natural vs. trimmed) to hair-styles (short vs. longer and styled). I knew I was on to something.

Since the top and the bottom of where the hair grows is connected by the head itself, I postulated that this has something to do with the brain, which is the nexus located directly between the hair on the head and the hair on the chin!

The brain is where our intellect, emotions and values are articulated. It decides our beard/hair style, based on how we want to be perceived in the eyes of those whose opinion of us is important to us.

To get to the bottom of this, we need to understand what is playing out in the young *chossid's* brain.

One possible mind-set might be expressed as follows: “The untouched beard is anachronistic and it is also conformist. Do I have to look as if we all came from the same cookie-cutter?” He is saying, “I don't want to be like everyone else,” but what he really means is, “I will go farther in the business world if I don't look like a Lubavitcher.”

Truly, it doesn't help to try to camouflage who we are. Let me explain with an anecdote:

*A chassidisher Yid from Yerushalaim spent some time at the home of a Chabadnik in an American suburb near one of the Mayo clinics. His wife was there to receive medical treatment that was not available in Eretz Yisroel. When Shabbos came, he wore a shtreimel just as he did back home. Before he left to the hospital to spend time with his wife, he took off his shtreimel and put on his regular wide-brimmed Yerushalmi hat. “I don't want to stand out,” he explained to his host. The American-born host shrugged, realizing that his guest's face, beard, payos, hat, kapoteh, shoes, white knee-socks and everything else about him proclaimed his differentness so emphatically that removing his shtreimel did not help conceal his identity one iota.*

One might argue that here in the United States we don't dress *Yerushalmi*-style, we dress American-style, and we can camouflage who we are much better than a *Yerushalmi* in suburbia. Although we *think* we can, truly we cannot.

When I visited Tzfas (the small city in northern Israel famous for the Kabbalists who lived there) the first time in the 1980s, I longed to see a real Kabbalist. From my early childhood I had fantasies about Eretz Yisroel, imagining its many holy places. Now I was there. I met *chassidim* but no Kabbalists. So one morning I got up very early, *toiveled* (immersed) myself in the Arizal's freezing *mikveh* and went to daven in the Arizal's shul. I figured that this was as good a place as any to meet a real live Kabbalist. Sure enough, I saw a few men who, I was sure from their appearance, would qualify.

One man particularly intrigued me. He was tall and thin, had a long graying beard and *payos* and a wise face. He seemed to me exactly what a Kabbalist would look like. Throughout the *davening* my eyes often drifted in his direction. He was standing, he was *shokeling* (swaying), he was sitting, he was *davening*, oh, so deeply. Here was the Kabbalist of my dreams.

After *davening* he was conversing to a few men while they were wrapping up their *teffilin*. I wanted to hear what he was saying, so I sidled up to the table where they were standing. I heard his gentle, mellifluous voice speaking, but I didn't understand a word.

What was he saying? Why could I not understand him? Was he speaking a different language? And I realized, yes, it was a different language. He was speaking FRENCH!

I inquired, who is this man who masquerades as a Kabbalist and speaks French? I was told his name, that he was a long-standing *baal teshuvah*, from Paris, no less, and that he was a well-known and successful artist whose gallery was located just around the corner. My bubble burst! I had been duped, or rather, I had duped myself!

Later, I told my wife of this interesting encounter and how I had duped myself into thinking that this man was a Kabbalist. She asked me, what was so different about him that made me think what I had thought? I answered by describing his caftan, his hat, his beard and *payos*, etc. He doesn't look like he is part of the modern world, I told her. My wife asked me: And what do you think *you* look like? Have you looked in the mirror lately?

I realized that although I do not wear a caftan or the velvet, short-crown, wide-brim-up hat my almost-Kabbalist was wearing, but rather a regular suit and a fedora (known as a Lubavitcher hat), to the average person I am *just as exotic-looking* as the artist from Tzfas.

In general, worrying or even caring about how one appears to others is really unproductive and often counter-productive. As a wit once said: When I was twenty, I was very concerned about what people were thinking about me; when I was forty, I stopped caring about what people were thinking about me; when I turned sixty, I realized that nobody was thinking about me.

On a more serious note, the committed Lubavitcher who functions in the professional or business world might argue that trimming one's beard and looking trendy will help one become more successful. Even if that were so, would it be worth compromising one's identity and image for this success? The truth actually is very different than this mistaken assumption. In fact, one is sabotaging the very success that one is trying to achieve by attempting to modify the look that honestly reflects who he is. How?

To achieve success one needs a combination of *seichel* (sense, common or specialized), *mazal* (which we call *siyata d'shmaya* — Hashem's providence), *chein* (grace), and a *keli* in *derech hateva* (a vehicle, such as a profession or business and a plan).

*Seichel* is a good foundation, but it has serious limitations. *Lo lachachomim lochem* (the smart do not [necessarily] have bread) (*Koheles* 9:11), was said by Shlomo Hamelech, the "wisest of all men" (*M'lochim I* 5:11). Look around. Are the successful people you know any smarter than those who are less successful? So it's not brains. As a matter of fact, sometimes brains make it harder to succeed! Why?

*Seichel* is risk-averse. People with lots of *seichel* often analyze and re-analyze and see the potential risks in each possible avenue and pursue only the most conservative paths, which guarantee conservative results. That is not the stuff of success. This is why many

successful people are not too smart. They didn't know that it couldn't be done, and so they did it and succeeded, with a little bit of...

Mazal (*siyata d'shmaya* — Hashem's providence) is undoubtedly the most important ingredient to succeed at anything. One would want to be on the best possible terms with Hashem so that He would look kindly upon us and our ventures.

*When Albert Reichman, the world-renowned philanthropist from Toronto, was asked to what he attributes his family's business success, he answered: "To seichel and mazal; 10% seichel and 90% mazal. And if I could have traded in a few percent of seichel for a few more percent of mazal, I would have!"*

In order to succeed one could use, in addition to *seichel* and *mazal*, a good dose of *chein*, the ability to easily connect with the other person (the customer, the buyer, the seller, the patient, the student, etc.). Some of this can be developed, but much of this is beyond our ability and actually comes from on high. We conclude the *birchas hamazon*, where we ask Hashem for our daily bread, "*Vinimtza chein v'seichel tov b'einei Elokim v'odom*" (May we find grace and good understanding in the eyes of Hashem and man). To find grace in the eyes of man, it is vital to find grace in Hashem's eyes first. Doing Hashem's will graciously, uncompromisingly, evokes grace.

So we can clearly see how trying to succeed by changing one's appearance in a way that is less pleasing to G-d can be counterproductive to success.

On the spiritual level, we petition Hashem for His providence and help every day when we daven and do mitzvos. We search for ways to influence the One in charge. Well, we can certainly "pull strings" above just by letting our beards grow! The beard corresponds to the Kabbalistic thirteen *tikkunei diknah* (rectifications of the beard), which open the path for the deliverance of Hashem's mystical Thirteen Attributes of Mercy. One who recognizes this would not want to place an obstacle in the path of that mercy. Certainly one would not attempt to achieve business or professional success, which requires Hashem's grace and mercy, by trimming one's beard, thereby compromising the very Source of grace and mercy.

*A Lubavitcher law school graduate was interviewed for a position at a prestigious law firm. His grades and resume were impressive enough to get him the interview. While the interview generally went well, he sensed an uneasiness in the interviewer, which the chossid attributed to his religious appearance. In the following days he reflected on his life and his future with this prestigious firm, and decided that he must trim his beard. He had no choice, he told himself. This was his life, and he had better make the best of it. When he was called back for a second interview a few weeks later, he was thrilled. He assumed he had the job; why else would they call him for a second meeting? When he was ushered into the room with the senior partners, he detected a look of surprise on their faces. The partners excused themselves and stepped outside for an impromptu meeting in the hallway. When they returned a few minutes later, the young man was told that he*

would not get the job. They explained that they had asked him to come to the second meeting to tell him that the job was his. Though some of the other interviewees had better qualifications, they had chosen him so that they could show how unbiased they were in their hiring practices, how committed they were to diversity, because they had hired a real *chossid*, beard, *tzitzis* and all. But now that he had modernized his appearance to the point where he looked just like everyone else, they decided to give the position to another, more qualified applicant.

There's a story about a *chossid* of the Rebbe Maharash by the name of Reb Avrohom Harofei (the doctor) who wasn't really a doctor but a "*felsher*" (the equivalent of a paramedic). Since Lubavitch did not have a real doctor, Reb Avrohom ministered to the sick people. One day he saw the Rebbe Maharash across the street beckoning to him. He immediately crossed the street. The Rebbe said to him: "You know, I don't hold doctors in high esteem; they are like blind horses. The difference between a good doctor and one who is not so good is like the difference between a blind horse by day and a blind horse at night. For you, however, I have high regard. You have a full beard, and when you see a patient, you stroke your beard, the right side of which is *Atik*, the left side of which is *Arich* (mystical terms referring to the Divine inner and outer aspects of *Kesser*), and when you stroke your beard, you bring down Hashem's mercy upon your patients, and that helps them get healed."

Doctors, with all their knowledge of medicine, are but agents for Hashem's healing powers. Bypassing Hashem's will in order to attain success cannot bring good results. Being true to Hashem's will makes one a true vessel for success.

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**SIDEBAR:** Of course, this encouragement "not to touch one's beard" is not meant to preclude being neat, clean and well-groomed, which would include brushing one's beard. This is quite acceptable as the Rebbe explicitly states in a number of letters. For many, in fact, it might be necessary. Dignity is appropriate and combing one's beard is not a compromise.

Rabbi Chodakov a"h (the Rebbe's esteemed chief aide for over forty years) used to tell the *bochurim* before they went traveling on *Merkos Shlichus* that during the next few weeks they had to pay attention to their shoes. Yes, their shoes had to be polished. Since they would encounter people who would judge them by the state of their shoes and who might not wait around to hear their words, they had to make sure to appear clean and presentable. Since there are those who might be under the misconception that *chassidim* are slovenly, *chassidim* should make an extra effort to disabuse them of this image by being well-kempt. There is nothing chassidish about being a *shlump* (sloppy).

In fact, when the Rebbe prepared to say a formal *maamar*, he would go through certain motions that appeared as if he was preparing to be in the presence of someone special. These motions included straightening his tie, brushing his beard on both sides with his

hands and repositioning himself in his chair. While I don't presume to know the inner meaning of this behavior and can only guess at whom the Rebbe was expecting to be present at the saying of his *maamar* (though obviously not visible to us), this behavior was visible to all.

**Postscript:** There was a *bochur* who emigrated from the Soviet Union after the war and was learning in 770 in the 1950s. He was a real *chassidisher bochur* and didn't pay much attention to his personal grooming; his head was in higher things. When it came time for him to do a *shidduch*, he went to the Rebbe for *yechidus*. The Rebbe said to him that he should begin brushing his teeth and combing his beard. The *bochur* immediately bought a comb, toothbrush and a tube of toothpaste and, lest he mess up on the Rebbe's instruction, carried them all in the lapel pocket of his jacket. Unaccustomed as he was to cleaning a toothbrush, he ended up with a streak of toothpaste down the entire left side of his jacket, and since it got on his comb, too, there was toothpaste in his beard, as well. It took a while until he got the hang of it. (He eventually married a fine young woman who saw his true qualities, and together they raised a beautiful, *chassidische* family, *boruch Hashem*.)

**Note to be affixed at the bottom of the first page of the article:** The Beard — the Jewish Man's Dignity.

The exhortation to maintain one's full beard uncompromisingly is addressed to a particular audience: Lubavitchers, to whom living a Lubavitcher lifestyle is essential. It is not directed to the many *erliche Yidden* from other holy circles —be they modern Orthodox or Litvish-oriented, or even newcomers to Lubavitch— who do not have full beards (by trimming or shaving). It is meant to educate the younger Lubavitcher men how important it is (and has always been) to Lubavitchers to maintain the *hadras ponim*, the Jewish beauty and chassidic dignity, of a full beard.

Many believe that it is permitted to trim with scissors (and scissor-like shavers), and that it is a *hiddur* or *chumrah* (self-imposed stringency) to maintain a full beard. It is simply not so. The vast majority of *halachic* decisors are of the opinion that cutting/trimming is forbidden. Furthermore, electric shavers, in contrast, are categorized as (not scissors, but the *halachic* equivalent of) razors, according to the overwhelming majority of *poskim*, including non-Chassidic greats such as the Choftez Chaim, the Chazon Ish, the Steipler Gaon and Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach.

The Rebbe Rashab issued a proclamation [his *Igros Kodesh*, vol. II p.927] addressed to the entire *Klal Yisroel*:

*Since there are many who allow themselves to cut their beards with scissors declaring that they are acting thus in accordance with the halachah as stated in Shulchan Aruch, it is our obligation to announce publicly that they are in error, for this is an absolute transgression of Torah law (Mid'orayso), as many of the Rishonim and Achronim (earlier and later Torah giants) have proven and clarified.*

See *Likkutei Sichos* XII pages 206-8; and most comprehensively in *Sefer Hadras Ponim* — *Zokon*.

### **We Could Have Danced All Right**

Since I live in California, I do not attend many New York weddings, which gives me the benefit of viewing things as an outsider, “who comes for a while and sees for a mile.” Recently I’ve noticed a change that has been taking place —slowly and insidiously— and, to the locals, perhaps imperceptibly. But it is taking place, and it must be addressed. Immodest and inappropriate dances have infiltrated our most joyous events — the chassidishe weddings of our children.

Dance is a profound human expression. Consider the *novi*’s description of Dovid Hamelech’s ecstatic dancing while the ark was being brought into Yerushalayim (*Shmuel II* 6:14; 16). What a person is, he expresses in his dance, with his entire being. Indeed, each *frum* community has its own dances, consistent with its ideology and style.

But there is one universal constant in the *frum* world, which is *tznius*, which usually relates to the requirement that a woman’s body be covered appropriately: long sleeves, high neck line, low hemline, and so on.

But *tznius* is a much broader issue which applies to men as much as it does to women, and deals with attitudes and values. And self-respect.

Although *tznius* is commonly translated as modesty and concealment, it has as its backdrop a sense of circumspection and reserve, privacy and inwardness. These deal with the soul and inner being, not merely one’s outer appearance. This is what is meant as one who is *hatznaya leches* (see *Micha* 6:8). It addresses body language, demeanor and deportment (see *Yishayahu* 3:16) as much as modest dress. Indeed, one’s modesty should flow naturally and harmoniously from one’s inner dignity. (See *Rambam, Dayos* 5:1: Just as the *chochom* is recognized by his wisdom, so should he be recognized in his [mundane] activities).

There are matters in which the only difference between *tznius* and *pritzus* (uncouthness), between right and wrong, is whether it takes place in private or in public. For example, while eating at home is fine, “He who eats [bread] in the marketplace is like a dog (*Talmud, Kiddushin* 40b).” An individual, and certainly a community, must pay special attention to its public persona.

There is a big, *goyishe* world out there with values that are alien to us at best — and downright immoral by Jewish standards (and certainly by chassidishe standards), at worst. We work very hard to balance our relationship to that world so that we are insulated, though not isolated.

Well, it seems that a breach has occurred and the street’s garbage has been infiltrating.



I do not go to discotheques, nor do I watch MTV, but I am aware that these are the sources of some of the dancing taking place at our chassidische weddings. I've observed it (and its increase) on the men's side of the *mechitzah*, and I'm told that the same is taking place on the women's side.

Chassidische dance is almost universally a group dance, with the dance's focus not on the individual, but on the harmony and togetherness of the group, or, at the very least, on the interaction between one dancer and the other.

Even when one is dancing alone (as in the paintings of a solitary *chossid* dancing), the focus is on the expression on his face which reflects his joy and ecstasy, not on his body.

These goyische dances, even when a group is involved, focus on the individual and his body and often on body parts that gyrate. There is a clear statement, "Look at me; I'm expressing myself, I'm letting myself go." Let's face it, these dances are meant to be, and are, provocative. Enough said; they're not *tzniusdik*.

We need to be staunch Lubavitcher chassidim—to make the personal and communal *cheshbon hanefesh*, to review and ameliorate the things that need correcting. The fainthearted will deny that the problem exists or will attempt to minimize it. The courageous will acknowledge the obvious and will set in motion corrective measures.

In decrying the dancing, I realize that I'm merely addressing a symptom and not its cause. However, A) this behavior is wrong and needs to be protested. We cannot wait and hope that it will change from within. B) It's a public affront; to tolerate it is to condone it. C) It's an important place to begin.

Here are a few practical suggestions:

Think about this, discuss it with a friend and/or your spouse, decide that this is simply wrong, and generate a sense of outrage! Then discuss it with the young people in your family and with your young Shabbos guests (who are very likely engaging in these dances).

When these dances are taking place, do not stand around and watch and clap; you are aiding and abetting a misdemeanor. If you have the strength and courage, speak out (before, during and after)! If not, simply express your disdain by walking away.

"Why me?" you ask. Because you care, and "in a place where there is no *mentch*, try to be a *mentch*" (*Ovos* 2:5).

When you are making a wedding, decide, with the agreement of the *chosson* and *kallah* and the *michutonim*, that this type of dancing is unacceptable. Period. Then communicate to the musician—clearly and unambiguously—that this class of music is not to be played (even if it is Israeli music). And if during any of his pieces some of the guests start

to dance inappropriately, he should change the music immediately. Remember, you are paying the bill!

Why does the *chassunah* meal have to be *glatt* kosher, but not the *chassunah* celebration?

What happened to the “*V’niflienu*” (*Sh’mos* 33:16); to the sense of being distinguished, and special? When we were growing up, we knew that we were different from the world ... and we cherished that difference. There was no need to imitate the ways of the world, certainly not to emulate them. After all, we were proud and secure in the knowledge that we had “the real thing.” We need to inculcate this in our homes.

Where this is lacking, it is inevitable that the outside pressure will find its way in to fill the vacuum.

We need to convey the *ashreinu, mah tov chelkeinu*, (how fortunate are we, how good is our lot; *siddur*) as Jews and as *chassidim*, with the attendant dignity and pride. Then we have the capacity to make choices and decisions based on principle and the ability to be critical (even of ourselves). And we will make the correct choices for the sake of preserving our integrity as individuals and as a community. This is the real wisdom which accompanies *tznius*, as it is written: “...and with those that are *tzanuah* is *chochmah* (*Mishlei* 11:2).”