



‘OBER BIZ DI KRETCHME!’

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CHANIE WOLF

I am pretty sure there is one thing everyone in our hyper-polarized world can agree on: This has been the most chaotic, frightening, unpredictable year in a very long time. Just as we attempt to find our footing amidst one crisis, there seems to be another one—or two or three—coming at us. Dark humor has replaced carefree joy, and pain, anger and fear are everywhere. Physical health, mental health, family relationships, businesses, children’s education and development, the government and the very fabric of society all seem to be unraveling.

Wasn’t Moshiach around the corner? Behind the wall? In front of our eyes that we needed simply to open? Right now, I am just trying to keep my eyes physically open while I plan, replan, unplan, and plan again, trying to adapt to the latest

incoherent regulations. I feel like I am building on quicksand and wondering why I even try to do anything—like write this article, which will almost certainly be obsolete by the time it appears in print.

We cannot presume to know why anything is happening, and the real pain Yidden are experiencing cannot be justified. At the same time, the Rebbe teaches us to open our eyes to the *Geulah*, developing a perspective that allows us to see it unfolding, believe in its imminence and be motivated to do all we can to finally bring about the revelation of Moshiach. In that spirit, I hope the following perspectives can serve as a source of strength and encouragement as we navigate these final, challenging moments of *galus*.

WHY SO HARD?

In 5723 (1963), Rabbi and Mrs. Chaim Benyamini arrived as *shluchim* to Petropolis, Brazil, with plans to strengthen Torah education. The country was a spiritual wilderness, and the local rabbis mocked what they saw as their naiveté. “Hair will grow on the palm of your hand before a yeshiva opens here,” they told Rabbi Benyamini.

Despite the naysayers, a few years later, the Benyaminis gratefully informed the Rebbe that a yeshiva had been established. But the challenges were, indeed, real. Parents, unfamiliar with the importance of yeshiva for boys or seminary for girls, were resistant to their outreach and hesitated to enroll their children. And there were severe financial difficulties.

At one point, Mrs. Benyamini poured out her heart to the Rebbe. “We are doing all we can and more,” she cried. “Why does it have to be so hard?”

The Rebbe responded: “You are battling widespread assimilation. Your efforts in the yeshiva and seminary are fighting the forces that seek to undermine Jewish identity and observance. These unholy forces are like a candle—when they are about to be extinguished, they suddenly jump and make noise. So too, in your case, the forces of assimilation feel desperate. They see that they are about to be overcome by your activities, so they are jumping wildly and creating a stir, hoping to scare you away. Don’t be afraid; on the contrary, work even harder—you will succeed.”

Today, most of the approximately one thousand yeshiva graduates from Petropolis serve as rabbis throughout Brazil and beyond.¹

REVEALING THE TRUTH

The process of transforming *galus* to *Geulah* is complex, challenging, and has involved pain, sacrifice, and effort spanning thousands of years. But it all comes down to one point: revealing the truth. As Yidden, we are here in this world to create a home for Hashem, a world in which it is obvious that it is His world.

The process of revealing the truth of Hashem’s Oneness—the truth of *Geulah*—consists of learning Hashem’s Torah and fulfilling His *mitzvos*. For each time a Yid contemplates Hashem’s Will or expresses it in speech or action, he or she declares Hashem as Master of the Universe. And when Torah and *mitzvos* are illuminated by the clarity of Chassidus, the process of *Geulah* is accelerated in a most powerful way. When a *mitzvah* is performed not simply by rote but with the clarity and conviction—born of deep understanding—that we have been created to serve Hashem, the light of *Geulah* shines, transforming the world.

For this reason, over the last few centuries, as the time for Moshiach has neared, the inner dimension of Torah, once reserved for only select *tzadikim*, was revealed. Through the dissemination of the secrets of the Torah—the knowledge and understanding of Hashem—*galus* would finally give way to *Geulah*, Moshiach told the Baal Shem Tov. The world needed to learn the truth: G-dliness is everything, and everything is G-dliness.

What began in earnest on Yud Tes Kislev—when Chassidus began to be taught and published widely by the Alter Rebbe—has only grown exponentially in the ensuing generations. Today, Chassidus is studied by women and children. The “Torah of Moshiach” has been made accessible to the entire world through translation to English and then other languages, a plethora of *shiurim* and publications geared to all levels and communities, and the use of technology—radio, television, fax, and then the internet. Today, the *Tanya* and the Rebbe’s *sichos* are studied in all *frum* communities², in Chabad Houses around the world, and through the internet by lone individuals in the most remote parts of the world. The messages of Chassidus are even being shared with and appreciated by non-Jews. Thousands of *chassidim* have begun an incredible project of studying the entire *Likutei Sichos* in honor of the Rebbe’s 70th year of *nesius*. The wellsprings are spreading outward, farther and wider each day.

1 chabad.org/4547217

2 See Moshiach Page of Kislev 5780, “Can We, Too, Open Our Eyes?”

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And we are seeing the powerful effects of Chassidus on the world at large, and on the Jewish community in particular. The Rebbe's *shlichus*—inspired and fueled by the clarity of our mission to create a *dirah b'tachtonim*—has overtaken the globe, returning Yidden to Hashem and His Torah. *Chinuch*, imbued with the vitality of a Chassidic perspective—in all *frum* communities—is thriving in unprecedented ways. Beautiful *mosdos* too numerous to count cater to children of various strengths and needs. Talented teachers who are passionate about transmitting a living Torah and connection to Hashem are invested in better teaching and trying to reach every child. Of course, as with anything in *galus*, things are far from perfect. But the growth and accomplishments are astounding.

THE BATTLE

Meanwhile, during these same generations, the winds of enlightenment and assimilation have been blowing strongly, presenting an unprecedented challenge to Yiddishkeit. When the Rebbe Rashab established Tomchei Temimim, the *Haskalah* movement was capturing the hearts of devout and brilliant yeshiva students throughout Eastern Europe. And now, the widespread translation and dissemination of Chassidus

to ever-growing audiences under the Rebbe's *nesius* has taken place against the backdrop of a skyrocketing rate of intermarriage and assimilation amongst world Jewry, as well as a world at large where traditional norms of morality have been eroding.

While the Rebbeim's extraordinary efforts and achievements in *hafatzas hamaayanos* can be understood as an antidote to the prevailing darkness of the world, like the oil of the menorah burning in the darkness of night, the Rebbe explains³, the reverse is also true:

"We can say that as the arrival of our Righteous Moshiach nears, it is also the reason for the intensification of the darkness in the world—that because of the strengthening of kedushah, the forces of 'the other side' that oppose the arrival of Moshiach are emboldened as well, and it is necessary to battle with the opposition. This is the meaning of '[Moshiach] will wage the wars of Hashem' and ultimately 'he will be victorious.'"

Perhaps, in this context, we can find some meaning in the madness. What are we to make of the serious challenges to *chinuch* these days? How should we look at the severe disruption of *shlichus*? What am I supposed to think when everything I have been working so hard to achieve—in my personal *avodah*, with my family, and in my *shlichus*—has just gotten exponentially more difficult?

The Rebbe has taught us to see challenges not as a step backward or cause for despair, *chas v'shalom*, but as an indication that we are succeeding. The forces that oppose Hashem's Oneness and the holy threesome of *shleimus haTorah*, *shleimus ha'am*, and *shleimus ha'aretz* (the integrity of Torah and *mitzvos*, the Jewish people, and Eretz Yisroel) for which we, as ambassadors of Hashem, battle must be feeling terribly desperate.

When the candle is about to be extinguished, it jumps and makes a lot of noise. It's frightening. But we need to overcome our fear and remember that it means we are winning. We are almost there. Now is not the time to despair and step back; on the contrary, we need to work harder than ever so that the light of Chassidus, the light of *Geulah*, can finally break through—for our families, our students, and our communities, and within ourselves.

EXPOSED

But there is another, deeper point as well.

An explosion of negativity as *Geulah* approaches is

3 Sichah of Miketz 5752, Sefer HaSichos 5752 p. 209

not merely opposition, the Rebbe teaches. It is a necessary part of the process of refinement, both of the world and of ourselves. The Navi⁴ tells us, יתבררו ויתלבנו ויצרפו – “at the end of days, many will be clarified and refined.” Chassidus⁵ explains this to mean that before Moshiach comes, all matters will become very clear so that they can finally be refined.

Everything will come to the surface—the good and the bad. The evil of the world will no longer be obscured by political correctness, deception, or façades of goodwill. The challenges of societies, communities and families will no longer be swept under the carpet. The negative aspects of our personalities will come to the fore. None of this will look pretty.

But knowing the illness is half the cure. What is hidden or unknown cannot be fixed; when a problem is recognized it can be corrected and overcome. When a lie is exposed, it ceases to exist.

Galus and the forces that define it are a lie. Just as Pharaoh declared, “The river belongs to me, and I made myself,”⁶ the world denies Hashem’s will by asserting its independence from Him. It’s not G-d, they say; it’s nature and science. It’s human intellect, personal prowess or the government. It’s democracy, humanism, environmentalism or socialism. It’s hand-washing, masks, social distancing, and vaccines. We’ve got this. We don’t need G-d.

Feeding off this lie of its own power and importance, the world of *galus* denies Hashem’s Will. I can do what I want, it declares. Morality is relative. If we each find our “own truth,” everyone will be happy.

Just as the goal for the proud, powerful nation of Mitzrayim and its arrogant leader was “And Mitzrayim shall know that I am Hashem”⁷—a recognition it came to slowly over the course of the makkos—the entire world must come to accept the truth: it controls nothing. *Ein od milvado*—there is no real existence other than Hashem. And we are all here to serve Him.

Part of the process of bringing the world to that place is exposing the lie it has held onto for so long. Revealing the cracks in its foundation and demonstrating the chaos, corruption, pain and evil it can produce. Allowing all the ugliness that had been neatly camouflaged for

generations to be revealed to the point of revulsion. So that it can all be refined and transformed.

Today, the big lie is imploding like never before, leaving a world raw and vulnerable – and open to the truth.

This same process is playing out on the personal level as well. In a world of lockdown, stress and uncertainty, what once seemed to be mild challenges in marriages or parent-child relationships are painfully coming to the surface. Mental illness is on an alarming rise, and learning difficulties are being exacerbated. For many, it seems as if life is falling apart. There is so much pain, and it is heartbreaking.

Perhaps, as we grapple with these very real challenges, it can be helpful for us to consider this the process of *birurim*. Perhaps these were matters that needed to be attended to all along? Perhaps by exposing the imperfections we had managed to keep hidden or low-profile we are given the opportunity to refine that which was waiting to be corrected and grow to places we were always meant to reach? What if we could recognize all of this as a wake-up call to ourselves, our families, our schools, our communities, and the entire world, to finally let go of our *galus* mentality? What if we could look at all the negativity and clearly see the necessity of turning to Hashem with true *emunah* and *bitachon*, recognizing that all the safety nets within which we’ve built our lives are a lie?

Then not only will the challenges we are facing not stop us from our mission to bring the *Geulah*; indeed, they might serve as the catalyst for even greater growth and progress. We will see this new refinement in a deeper, more personal connection to Hashem. We will see it in our marriages. We will see it in the *chinuch* of our children. We will see it in our communities. And we will see it in the world around us.

We will see the *Geulah* we have been longing for.

OBER BIZ DI KRETCHME

And yet. As important as it is to maintain perspective and recognize the birthpangs of Moshiach for what they are, we cannot accept the pain it involves. Hashem can bring Moshiach without the pain too!

The Rebbe once said regarding the terrible suffering Yidden have experienced in *galus*: “My father-in-law the

4 Daniel 12: 10

5 Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos 5747 Vol. 2 pp. 627

6 Yechezkel 29: 3

7 Shemos 7: 5

[Friediker] Rebbe once said that we should not defend Hashem too much...⁸”

In Adar 5752 (1992) even as miraculous events in the world clearly demonstrated the unfolding of *Geulah*, and the Rebbe spoke at least once a week about preparing to greet Moshiach, a terrible tragedy occurred. Mrs. Pasha Leah Lapine, a young wife and mother, was murdered *al kiddush Hashem* in her home in Crown Heights. The Rebbe joined her *levayah*, visibly expressing deep pain. On the final day of her *shivah*, the Rebbe spoke with intense emotion:

“What has occurred... is utterly incomprehensible! There is no one to whom to turn for an explanation... Enough is enough! Have we not sufficed with all the martyrdom we have experienced until now? ...Another day passes, another week passes, another moment passes... and Moshiach still has not come! We say and we think and we cry out ‘*Ad masai?!?*’”

Yes, the *Geulah* is unfolding before our eyes. Yes, the chaos we are experiencing must certainly be part of that process of a world being transformed forever. Yes, we must be encouraged that we are almost there and continue doing all we can despite—and through—the challenges.

But that isn’t enough. We need Moshiach now, and we need to demand that!

The story is told of the Rebbe Reb Dovid of Lelov. He was once traveling on a wintry day accompanied by his *chassidim*. As they trudged through the snow and shivered from the frost, the *chassidim* remarked, “Rebbe, we are almost at the inn. We will soon be able to sit near the fire and warm up with a cup of whiskey!”

Their Rebbe replied, “*Gerecht, ober biz di kretchme!*” You are correct, but *until* we reach the inn, we also need a drink!

Yes, the *Geulah* is near. We are getting there. But until we do, we need Hashem to take care of us.

May we, our families, our community and all of Klal Yisroel know of no more pain and suffering. May the *Geulah* continue to unfold *b’chessed uv’rachamim*. And may it be today. *Ad mosai?!*

Chanie lives with her husband Rabbi Yitzchok Wolf and their children in Crown Heights. A teacher and assistant principal at Bais Rivkah Seminary, she is passionate about Geulah, Chassidus and their relevance to the lives of Lubavitcher women and girls.

8 Sichah of Acharon Shel Pesach 5717

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