



Nothing But the Truth

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In the capacity of the *shlichus* I am blessed to have in Bais Rivkah Seminary, the most poignant day of every year is usually one that comes at the very end: the *chag hasiyum* of Seminary Bais.

Unlike most graduations, this event is for students and faculty only; rather than a public ceremony, it is an intimate and meaningful *farbrengen*. We reflect on a year of learning and growth, with the awesome recognition that this is also the culmination of all their years of formal learning. From this day forward, though learning must never end, they will, primarily, assume their roles *b'ezras Hashem* as builders of the next generation of *Am Yisroel*.

In that context, the highlight of the graduation is when students rise, one after another, to share a specific lesson or insight they have gained from a particular class in seminary.

This past Rosh Chodesh Tammuz, I once again had the *zechus* to celebrate the *chag hasiyum* with Seminary Bais.

Looking around the room, filled with over 150 incredible young women, *ka"h*—literally the future of Lubavitch!—filled me, as it always has, with inspiration, deep joy, and hope. And, more than ever before, I was struck by what these students shared. As they rose, one

by one, to share their personal reflections, one clear and consistent message resounded, no matter which class they spoke about:

Thank you for telling us the truth. What I learned in [fill-in-the-blank] class is that Torah is truly our life; that the Rebbe empowers us to rise above the confusion of this world and live higher; that all of this is relevant to me, today, here and everywhere. Thank you for not compromising and saying what you thought we wanted to hear, for not being afraid of pushback for sounding not politically correct.

COMPROMISE?

The challenges that characterize these final moments before *Geulah* may feel overwhelming. The temptations we are so easily exposed to; the confusion of society and the breakdown of its morality; the rampant crises in mental health affecting young and old; the chaos of global conflicts; financial upheaval; health concerns. And all this while we know the Rebbe is with us but are confronted with the painful concealment of the past 29 years that we could not physically see our *Nasi*. Let's be honest: It's a tough world.

In this context, there is a natural tendency to lower the bar, to fear that the full package of Torah and Chassidus is too much, at least for now. We may be inclined to compromise on the higher standard, thinking if we make *Yiddishkeit* "easier" it will be more palatable to those whom we hope to influence.

Yes, there is an ideal level of *tznius*—but is it worth teaching to our students, or will that make it more likely they drop it altogether? Are they ready to hear that as *chassidim*, our goal is not only to be *frum*, but to be lamplighters? Yes, it would be wonderful if our children or students could grow to love learning Torah and have the skills and motivation to do so inside the *sefarim* in *Lashon haKodesh* or Yiddish—but is that practical in this generation? We need to ensure that they are comfortable and happy so that at least they remain *frum*! Can we afford to dream of authentic *chassidische* values and standards when our youth face "much bigger problems"?

As a parent and educator, I grapple with these questions often.

The social revolutions of the 1960s shocked and alarmed the Jewish leaders of the time. The breakdown of morality, the rejection of all that was normal and

civilized, the widespread chaos—what would be? Amidst the panic, the Rebbe, the *yechidah* of *Klal Yisroel*, saw past the veneers and beneath the surface: Here were pure *neshamos*, protesting a world of falsehood and shallow materialism. Free love, psychedelics, ashrams and antiwar sentiment masked something essential—the youth were searching for Truth.

It was no coincidence that the leaders of the hippie movement were Jewish (this is true of those at the helm of most disruptive movements throughout the generations). For as the Alter Rebbe expressed it¹: "A Yid neither wants nor can become severed from *Elokus*." Thus, when a *neshamah* feels misaligned with its essence, it searches desperately to fill the void.

And it was up to all of us, the Rebbe taught, to reach out and help each *pintele Yid* find expression, by sharing the uncompromised values of *Yiddishkeit*. With love, with empathy for their challenges, with positivity and encouragement, but without diluting the message.

As the Rebbe writes:²

Young people cannot tolerate compromises. Only when they are given the Word of Hashem in its complete and pure form does it capture their hearts. The truth is not as some believe, that leniencies and compromises will win over the trust of the youth. It is by imparting a traditional chinuch without compromises that the recipient is given a life of true happiness, both materially and spiritually.

ONE WITH THE KING

This message is deeply related to Yom Kippur. As Chassidus³ teaches us, Yom Kippur is a day that highlights the awesomeness of a Yid. Every Yid. You. Me. Her. No matter what nonsense we fall for daily, what great challenges we face, and what attitude we may project.

We are the Aibershter's children. And His servants. And His wife. And our relationship is likely to be in need of repair. Chances are, we have deeply disappointed the One we love and are committed to. And that's no simple matter.

But on the deepest level, we are not only *connected* to Hashem; we are literally one with Him, and thus inseparable.

One wintry, snow-filled evening, my father-in-law, Rabbi Aron Wolf, may he be well, of Chicago Mitzvah Campaigns, received a call from a local hospital. A middle-aged gentleman asked if he would come help his

1 See *Hayom Yom*, 21 Sivan and 25 Tammuz

2 *Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 13, p. 195

3 *Likutei Sichos*, Vol. 4, *Yom HaKippurim*

Mere hours later, the phone call came: The elderly man had passed away.



ailing, elderly father lay *tefillin*. As it was already dark, my father-in-law assured him he would be there early the next morning.

When he arrived, he was greeted by the son who had called him. The man explained in bewilderment: “It doesn’t make any sense. All his life, my father ridiculed religion and wanted nothing to do with it. But over the past few days, in his semi-conscious state, he has been making a motion of wrapping around his arms. He is getting increasingly agitated as he does so. Implausible as it seems, he is clearly asking for *tefillin*. That’s why we called you!”

Rabbi Wolf wrapped *tefillin* on the elderly patient and said *Shema* with him; though the man was clearly not fully aware, a sense of peace now radiated from him.

Mere hours later, the phone call came: The elderly man had passed away. Clearly, his *neshamah* had been crying out in that critical moment, pleading to fulfill the *mitzvah* just one time before returning to its Maker. After years of being obscured, the truth emerged. A Yid is a Yid.

Yom Kippur brings this truth to the fore, as evidenced by the way that the average Yid whose daily life does not seem in alignment with Hashem’s Will is motivated to

“act Jewish” on Yom Kippur by fasting and coming to shul. Why?

Because on Yom Kippur, the *pintele Yid*, the *yechidah*, shines brightly. Just as the *Kohen Gadol* would merit to enter the *Kodesh Hakadoshim* on Yom Kippur to be alone with the *Shechinah*, we too are each privately “locked inside” with the One Above.⁴ In this reality, in this space, sin and disconnection are foreign concepts. Of course we’re showing up and doing what He wants! And as such, “*Itzumo shel yom mechaper*”⁵— the essence of the day atones for us.

And like every special day on the calendar, the goal is for this inspiration and awareness to permeate our lives throughout the year.

Yom Kippur reminds us that we, as well as our children, our students, and all Yidden with whom we come in contact, are essentially one with Hashem. Torah is the air we yearn to breathe, the water we are thirsty for. *Mitzvos* are not burdens, *chas v’shalom*; they are the expression of who we truly are. With this clarity, we are empowered to lift ourselves, and all those over whom we have influence, to unimaginable heights.

SPARK OF MOSHIACH

And as we tap into the essential unity of the *neshamah* and its Source, we, and those we have touched, enter a new reality: *Geulah*.

Chassidus⁶ teaches us that the *yechidah* of every Yid is the spark of Moshiach within them. Experiencing the personal *Geulah* of revealing it in our daily life, by proudly promoting truth without compromise and without fear, hastens the revelation of the “comprehensive *yechidah*,” *Melech haMoshiach*, ushering in an era when the *yechidah*, the Oneness of Hashem, will finally be revealed throughout the entire world.

Together, let us bring about the eternal Yom Kippur: a time when we will enter into a space of revealed unity and intimacy with the Aibershter—forever. ❄

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4 Especially during *ne’ilah* which means “locking of the gates.” The five *tefillos* of Yom Kippur correspond to the five levels of the *neshamah*, with *ne’ilah* correlating with the *yechidah*.

5 *Yoma* 85b

6 See excerpts of *sichos* on this topic quoted in *From Exile to Redemption*, Part 4, Chapter 3