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"His Problem Is His Mother"

A Gimmel Tammuz farbrengen reveals the essence of being a Lubavitcher today.

Rabbi Eliyahu Alloy

Do you really want to know what that bochur's problem is?" asks the Rosh Yeshivah.

"Yes, I do," says the camp director. "I need to know. I can't give him a job in my camp until I understand why he looks and acts the way he does."

The Rosh Yeshivah sighs, then speaks as if it hurts him to say the words. "He is a good bochur. He has a good head and can learn. He wants to do what's right; he's not rebellious. It's just that – his problem is his mother."

His mother? The camp director is shocked – and puzzled. He knows the boy's parents. They're happily married and would do anything for their children. How can this boy's mother be his problem?

"She doesn't understand the inner life of a bochur," explains the Rosh Yeshivah. " She doesn't realize that by buying him a gift of a cell phone with internet, she is ruining him. She doesn't realize that by sending him clothing that is different from what bochurim normally wear, she is making him 'cool' with all that comes along with that. When he was younger, she would have him wear a baseball cap over his yarmulke when they went to the mall or the park, so he would not appear overtly frum. She is busy making him worldly, when she should be making him other-worldly."

The camp director smiles sadly in understanding. "This world will find him. It's the other world we have to make sure he's attached to."

It's not so difficult or mysterious for us women to raise our daughters; after all, we were girls ourselves once. But when it comes to raising sons, we need help. We need insight. We need direction. To that end, the N'shei Chabad Newsletter invites you to listen in on a boys' farbrengen with Rabbi Eliyahu Alloy of Crown Heights.- Ed.

I was sitting and farbrenging with a group of young bochurim. Here is what I asked them:

"There's Reb Pinye, a well-known mashpia, a chassidishe Yid, separated from olam hazeh in every way, like a person who lived long ago. He is not wealthy. All he has in his life is davening, learning, and doing what the Rebbe wants. He is totally botul to the Rebbe's will. Many (but only those) who have a chassidishe mindset would point to him as a success.

"Then there is a second man who is also successful in a sense. He has a flourishing career as a Jewish leader, and has positively influenced many through his job in high office. He dresses well and is highly presentable. But he has obviously polished his image, and he is very cognizant of, and very much a part of, olam hazeh."

So I asked the bochurim: "Which of these two would you like to become when you reach adulthood?"

Most of the boys chose the second individual.

The fact that they feel this way reflects a general misconception and a common mistake concerning the avodah of this generation that many have. It's an easy mistake to make, but it is a mistake.

At a second farbrengen a few weeks later, with the same bochurim, I described another two men: Reb Zalman Dovid Hamliner and Reb Leib Sheinin.

REB ZALMAN DOVID HAMLINER

Reb Zalman Dovid Hamliner was a chossid of the Rebbe Rashab. He was in Yeshiva Tomchei Temimim in the city of Lubavitch. Reb Zalman Dovid's mashgiach in nigleh was upset with him because he davened so long that he missed the entire seder nigleh.

When the yeshiva moved from Lubavitch to Kremenchug at the end of WWI, Reb Herschel Gurary, a gvir in Kremenchug, gave the bochurim a place to live, and supported them fully. The gashmius was much better than it had been in Lubavitch. But the boys were dressed very simply. Here in Kremenchug they stood out because of it, but no attention was paid to that "problem."

Reb Hershel's uncle, Reb Shmuel, asked the Rebbe Rashab for permission to buy the bochurim new clothing. He explained that in Lubavitch it was okay to appear almost in rags, but in Kremenchug, a big city, the standard was higher and the boys needed better clothing.

The Rebbe Rashab pointed to Reb Zalman Dovid Hamliner, who was passing by at the moment, and he asked, "*Voss fahr a tzureh vet Zalman Dovid hoben, oizgeputz*?

"What kind of impression will Zalman Dovid make, all dressed up?"

REB LEIB SHEININ

Reb Leib Sheinin learned in Lubavitch, and later became Rov of Dokszycs. The Rebbe Rashab once said, "It is bochurim like Leib Sheinin who make Tomchei Temimim what it is."

After meeting his future wife and deciding they would get married, Reb Leib returned to yeshivah and immersed himself completely in learning and davening to the point that the Rebbe Rashab had to remind him to go back, find out which date had been set for the wedding, etc.

TODAY'S HERO

Let's take a Shliach today, a guy we'll call Yanky. As a bochur he learned and davened and did what he had to do. Now, as a Shliach, he spends his time putting on tefillin with other Yidden, or bringing them the mitzvah of the day, or visiting Yidden in prisons and hospitals, or preparing and giving shiurim. His fundraising responsibilities are a heavy burden. Still, he makes sure to learn every day, and tries to daven properly.

I asked the bochurim: Who is more removed from olam hazeh – the two bochurim in Lubavitch, Reb Zalman Dovid Hamliner and Reb Leib Sheinin, or this Shliach, Yanky?

The bochurim replied unanimously that the bochurim of long ago are more removed from olam hazeh.

After all, the Shliach has to dress properly. He has to polish his shoes. He has to know some current events in order to be successful in his Shlichus. He certainly relates more to the world than the chassidim of old. Right?

NULLIFYING THE BALABATISHKEIT

Herein lies the myth — the mistake that is unfortunately made by many. Notwithstanding his outer appearance, the Shliach is/should be and *has* to be far more removed from the material world than even the chassidim of long ago. Here's why:

Reb Zalman Havlin, one of the first temimim in Lubavitch, was, briefly, a mashpia in Horoditch, where there was a branch of Tomchei Temimim.

The gvir of Horoditch very much wanted Reb Zalman Havlin to come to his house and farbreng. He wanted his children to see a true chassidishe farbrengen; he was hoping it would have a strong influence on them.

Reb Zalman Havlin replied that he would do it on one condition. First he would have to pour the kitchen trash all over the house.

The gvir was hesitant to agree to this condition, and asked Reb Zalman to please drop it, but Reb Zalman insisted that without this condition, there would be no farbrengen in the gvir's home.

Finally the gvir agreed.

Reb Zalman came with his talmidim. The kitchen trash was strewn all over the house. Then they sat down to farbreng.

The farbrengen was a true chassidishe farbrengen and it left a profound and lasting impact on the gvir's children.

Later, Reb Zalman explained that Chassidus is certainly not about dirt, disorder, and filth! But the gvir was a little too attached to his house, his image, his gashmius. Chassidus can only affect someone who is somewhat detached from olam

hazeh. Reb Zalman knew he had to somehow nullify the balabatishkeit of the gvir a little bit; otherwise the farbrengen would not accomplish anything.

A critical component of Chassidus and chassidishe thinking is that olam hazeh, and the balabatishkeit that comes with it, is *ayin vo'efes* – completely nothing and doesn't really exist. For a chossid there is only one reality – the Eibershter, His Torah, and His mitzvos.

SEEING WHAT IS TRUE AND ETERNAL

I heard the following from Reb Meilech Zwiebel of Morristown, NJ, about one of the commentators learned even by beginners: the Maharam (Moreinu Harav Meir).

The Maharam often used the expression, "*Makshim ha'olam*." It means, "The world asks."

How could he attribute a question on Tosfos to "the world"? It is only Gemara students who are concerned with this question. Why would he assume that "the world" cares or wonders or has any questions at all about Tosfos?

To the Maharam, "the world" consisted of those people who sit and learn, or at least care about, Tosfos. The rest almost didn't exist for him.

There was once a chossid who visited Moscow, and then came to Lubavitch. The Rebbe Rashab asked him, "What's doing in Moscow?" He replied, "I wasn't really in Moscow, I just visited Reb Boruch Sholom Kahan."

The Rebbe Rashab replied, "What is Moscow? Reb Boruch Sholom is Moscow." Reb Boruch Sholom and his avodas Hashem is the true reality of Moscow. Everything else is null and void.

WHO IS SANE?

Reb Leib Sheinin was once davening shacharis all the way til minchah time. At that point people began to gather for minchah, and soon there were ten people in the shul including Reb Leib.

Reb Avrohom Paris was passing by, so they asked him to come and be the tenth man. When he came in and saw that there were already ten men, he asked, "Why do you need me?" The men pointed to Reb Leib Sheinin



and indicated that they doubted his sanity and therefore didn't think they could count him in the minyan.

Reb Avrohom Paris smiled at this misunderstanding, and tried to show them their error. He asked, "Who is truly sane? The worldly perspective, which conflicts with Torah, views everyone else here as normal. But I know, with the mindset of Torah and Chassidus, that in truth it is davka Reb Leib Sheinin who is truly sane."

THE FOUNDATION OF A CHOSSID

The chossid Reb Nison Nemanov used to say that the first requirement to be a chossid is to feel that it's a given that G-dliness is what's real and obvious, and the physical world has a questionable existence and only exists because it is discussed in Torah (*Elokus b'pshitus; olam b'hischadshus*). Every chossid might be at a different level and stage of the journey, but this attitude has to be everyone's foundation.

The Mitteler Rebbe explains in his hakdamah to his sefer Imrei Binah that the whole purpose of Chassidus Chabad is that people should internalize achdus Hashem (the Oneness of G-d) and realize that the world is just an extension of Hashem, with no independent existence and therefore no importance. The thousands of books and manuscripts that make up the Chabad library are really all just in order to help us internalize this one idea.

THE CONCEPT IS ETERNAL

The seventh Rebbe, our Rebbe, in the first maamar that he said as a Rebbe (Bosi Legani), explained that we are the seventh generation from the Alter Rebbe, and our avodah is to continue what the Alter Rebbe started (shvii lorishon).

Even though nowadays the application of our avodah might sometimes be different from previous generations, and we are obligated to be "out there," part of this lowly world, in essence we are the same as them and our goals are identical.

Kuntres Eitz Chaim was written by the Rebbe Rashab, describing what the Yeshivah Tomchei Temimim should look like and how it should operate. The Rebbe pointed out that the Frierdiker Rebbe printed Kuntres Eitz Chayim here in the U.S., which proves that here too the same

rules and goals must apply. And in the year 5751 (1990), the Rebbe distributed this kuntres to be learned by all of us.

Whatever is basic to the Chassidic mindset has not changed. The foundations are the same: Achdus Hashem, bitul ho'olam, negation of balabatishkeit and understanding that Elokus is the only true and important reality. These are all concepts that remain fundamental to a Chabad chossid.

MAKING THIS WORK IN DOR HASHVII

On a practical level, in our generation we have been asked by our Rebbe to bring Chassidus and the truth of Elokus into the wider world. To achieve this, we must get ourselves out there; engage in olam hazeh; be involved in material activities more than previous generations.

But this does not in any way mean that our attitude to "veltishkeit" has suddenly changed. It does not mean that we have suddenly decided that it is important (or even permissible!) to integrate into the world around us. On the contrary! In order to achieve this mission we must be more detached (in our minds and hearts) from the world than previous generations.

Other communities have chosen to remain sheltered from olam hazeh. Often we smile and declare that we are different. The lifestyle that the Rebbe carved out for us makes us more part of the world. For us, we might say, the world is more important.

But in fact the exact opposite is true. To follow the Rebbe's directives the world has to mean less, be less important to us, and we have to be completely detached from the world (notwithstanding that we operate within it!). Those Yidden who isolate themselves might be scared of "velt." To them the world is still a force – a place that has the ability to negatively affect them. To do the Rebbe's Shlichus and reveal Elokus in olam hazeh, the world must really mean nothing. We need to be able to exist in the world but live in a totally different mindset and reality – the world of Elokus.

DON'T MAKE THE MISTAKE

If someone goes on Shlichus and says, either out loud or in his heart, "We go on Shlichus because unlike others who say the world is not important, we feel it is important and we must integrate ourselves into the world," then he has simply and profoundly and tragically missed the point

That attitude isn't even remotely connected with the seventh generation. It is the introduction of a new and foreign derech, G-d forbid.

Dor Hashvii means to take the eternal truths taught by the Alter Rebbe, the Mitteler Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek, and reveal them to the "chutzah" — the wider world.

Our world is and remains Ein Od Milvado. That is why we are able to go to a place where there is terrible klipah and stay fully and strongly connected with our Shlichus and the mishale'ach, and disconnected from the world we see around us.

GOAL

If you believe that the world is not important, that Chassidus is what matters, and everything is Elokus, then, first of all, there is no need for anyone to toss trash on your floor, and, second, you are a Chabad chossid and your Shlichus can be almost anything: Being a mashpia... teaching Torah and Chassidus... raising a family properly... opening your home to those in need... reaching out to our fellow Jews. One can fulfill any Shlichus as long as one has internalized that everything is Elokus and the world doesn't matter. In fact, it barely exists.

Our model is Reb Pinye, to whom the world is nothing. Our model is not the polished, worldly, well-groomed dignitary.

We might need to operate differently from Reb Pinye. Everyone's Shlichus, madreigah, talents and abilities are different. We all do different things, but we must all live in the same reality – Ein Od Milvado.■

Post Script: Some members of the N'shei's advisory board warned that this article was not right for the N'shei. What's this about throwing garbage on the floor, they said, and what's admirable about wearing old clothes? Why would we encourage girls to not care about appearance, about surroundings?

They're right. This article is not about raising girls. Women and girls should care about their clothing and their appearance; in fact the Rebbe davka wanted there to be mirrors in the dormitory of Machon Chana, and in Eishes Chayil we hear praise for the woman who wears – not a torn and faded housecoat, G-d forbid, but — fine linen and purple (shesh v'argaman levushah).

And, yes, women who spend the time and energy to create clean, comfortable and organized homes are to be praised. The Rebbe said that a woman's investment in the physical aspects of the home – from cleaning to cooking to caring for children to preserving the home's aesthetic beauty – is elevated to holiness on par with the work of the kohen gadol.

But we women are also raising sons. And so we have to know:

For our sons these pursuits are different than they are for our daughters. We disagree with modern psychology or women's lib or any other ism that says there's no difference between raising boys and raising girls. Of course there is a difference, but it is still all l'shem Shamayim, not because the gashmius is important in and of itself.

G-d forbid any Rosh Yeshivah should say about our sons, "His problem is his mother." –The Editors

The N'shei Chabad Newsletter thanks Rabbi Michoel Gourarie for checking this article.