



Clerk Versus Executive

By the Grace of G-d
11th of Chechvan, 5721
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

I received your letter of Monday, Parshas Noach, and the two preceding letters. Although I have discussed the matter at length with your husband, who will undoubtedly convey to you my thoughts, I wish to put down in writing at least several points, in the hope that this letter will contribute to a happier outlook on the various matters about which you wrote in your letters.

First of all, in regard to your question, “whose ship is it?” I am surprised that you should have any doubts about it, since, obviously, the ship is that of my father-in-law of saintly memory, our Nossi and the Nossi of our people. It is explained in the Zohar and in the Tanya at length that Tzadikim continue to participate in our world, even in after-life, and, moreover, in a greater degree than during their life on this earth, since, in their exalted state they are free from physical limitations. Happy are they whom he has enrolled in his crew and has assigned to them various tasks. The more responsible a task is, the greater is the reward, of course, both in this world and in the world to come.

You mention other points in your letters, concerning opinions and attitudes of other

people, the lack of appreciation, etc., all of which you seem to have taken in a rather sensitive way, which gave rise to your thoughts on the relative advantages of your husband's present position by comparison with his previous one. As I have emphasized to your husband, the difference between his present work and his previous work is not a difference of place or surroundings, but a difference of the essential quality and character of the work itself. For previously he was in the capacity of an employed “clerk”, and as such, there were certainly a number of advantages. A clerk has definite hours, and upon completion of his day's work he can dismiss it from his mind, knowing that the responsibility lies squarely on the shoulders of his superior. He need only to do the task given to him, in his best way, and he can then feel no worries, responsibilities or other commitments. Furthermore, such a job arouses a minimum of envy, less nervous strain, etc.

On the other hand, when one has the task of an executive, upon whom the full responsibility rests, all the more so being at a great distance, and having to make decisions, and especially when he takes up such a job willingly and enthusiastically and is successful, it is bound to call forth envy. And envy is such a mental state that it evokes various

feelings in the envious person and expressions, which frequently are inconsiderate and unjustified and very often the envious person himself regrets them. It is also obvious that such a position entails greater personal commitment, nervous strain, etc.

Obviously, one whose capacity limits him to a secondary position, such as that of a clerk, there is little he can do about it, as this is all that he can accomplish. On the other hand, one who has the capacity to be an executive and in charge of a responsible undertaking, if such a person should confine himself within the framework of a clerk's job, it would be a gross injustice even to himself, not to mention to the cause. It is written, “More knowledge, more pain,” and the more knowledgeable and advanced a person is, [he is] inevitably involved in more complicated things. One can say “I don't want to be on the higher level, so that I can be spared the pain.” But this would be like a person saying “I don't want to be a human being; I want to be like an animal and be spared all the pain associated with human life.”

Aside from the above general considerations and principles, if one considers the specific work of disseminating and strengthening Yiddishkeit, the outlook assumes new dimensions. For our Sages say that the first

word of the Torah, *Bereishis*, indicates that the whole of creation is for the sake of the Torah, which is called *Reishis*. Considering further that the work concerns education of Jewish boys and girls, which is not only of vital interest to themselves but also to posterity, for all generations to come, we arrive at a further dimension, namely, the second interpretation of *Bereishis*: “For the sake of the Jewish people, who are called *Reishis*.”

Furthermore, there is the added dimension in that the work is carried on in a country where Judaism is still in its infancy, requiring a real pioneering spirit to transform

As for what can actually be accomplished, I mentioned to your husband the experience in a somewhat similar situation, when the father of my father-in-law sent two Jews to Gruzia (Caucasia), a remote and neglected region. The two emissaries so transformed Jewish life there, that even now, 45 years later, we find grandchildren of those native Jews in New York who are strictly religious and devoted Chassidim. There is this difference, however, that those two Jews who revitalized Jewish life in that remote region, were the only pioneers and had no helpers. They had to start from scratch, whereas you and

have complete freedom of action now, as before you set out for Australia, when you were in Brooklyn or Buffalo. You have the freedom to decide whether you wish to continue your work in Australia at the end of the three year period, with all that it entails, or return to an easier job in this country. As a matter of fact, the job at the Yeshiva which your husband held before would undoubtedly be available to him in the same capacity as before, [which is that of the category of a “clerk”, with all the “advantages” indicated earlier]. Furthermore, I assured your husband that there is no implication of *kapeida* or reproof from my point, whatever decision he and you make. The important thing is that if the task is to be done successfully, the work must be carried on willingly, without compulsion and without considering it as penal servitude or deportation. On the other hand, I would be amiss of my duty if I were not to point out the essential differences between one job as against the other, in the light of the quotation mentioned above, “More knowledge, more pain.”

May G-d grant that you make your decision in a way that will be truly good for you both, materially and spiritually, and that you have good news to report.

With blessing,
M. Schneerson

What has been said in regard to your husband’s work applies also to your work in disseminating Yiddishkeit among the women and daughters of Chabad, although perhaps not to the same extent, since among the women of Chabad there are a number of persons who have an American English background. Needless to say, however, you have the advantage of having been in the proximity of my father-in-law and having imbibed directly from his fountains; whereas the other women in Australia could do so only from a “second or third” vessel.

Just received your letter of 10 Mar Cheshvan.

THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT IF THE TASK IS TO BE DONE SUCCESSFULLY, THE WORK MUST BE CARRIED ON WILLINGLY

the whole of Jewish life in that remote continent, what a challenge and opportunity such work offers to the qualified person!

Finally, and this is the most basic consideration, it is necessary to bear in mind that “G-d directs the steps of man and finds delight in his (His) way,” as explained at length by the Baal Shem Tov and the Alter Rebbe. When individual Divine Providence leads a Jew, man or woman, in a certain direction, and in a way that G-d finds delight in His way, it is to be expected that the Yetzer Hora will seek ways and means to lessen the enthusiasm and dampen the spirit. For the greater the accomplishments in the realm of holiness, the greater is the opposition on the part of the “other side.”

your husband came to Australia, finding there a group of Anash, who have, to a considerable extent, already prepared the ground, except that many phases of the work have still to be accomplished and could best be done by people who have an American English background, since, basically, the Australian society is similar to that of the English American society.

I hope that the above lines will suffice to form a basis for further reflection along the lines suggested, for, needless to say, the subject is by no means exhausted.

After all these reflections, I explicitly told your husband that as far as he and you are concerned, and as far as the continuation of your work in Australia is concerned, you