

# אמרי אברהם

לעבן מיטן רבין

## SHABBOS PARSHA BE'HAALOSCHA, 9 SIVAN

FOLLOW-UP TO SHAVUOS – 5744

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### אמונה

דער אלטער רבי האט אויפגעטאן אז די אמונה וקב"ע שלמעלה מן השכל זאלן דורכנומען דעם מענטשן אינגאנצען, ביז אז זיי גופא זאלן אראפקומען און נתאחד ווערן מיט גליא דנשמתא: אין שכל גופא זאלן זיך אפלייגן און דערהערט ווערן די ענינים שלמעלה מן השכל.

(לקוטי שיחות חס"ו וישלח ג'–י"ט כסלו)

### לע"נ

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During the entire Shachris that Shabbos morning, the crowd of Chassidim anxiously anticipated the Rebbe's signal that there would be a Farbrengen later that day, as he would normally do so on a Shabbos following Shavuos (a custom dating back to the year 5726), but no such signal came.

Hoping that there was a mere misunderstanding on his part, the Gabbai, when making his usual set of announcements following davening, hesitantly began to announce the time for the Rebbe's Farbrengen that afternoon. The Rebbe looked towards him startlingly and raised his hand slightly, indicating that there would not be a Farbrengen at all. (Indeed, this would be the only year from 5726 through 5751 in which the Rebbe would not hold a Farbrengen on the Shabbos after Shavuos).

*Monday Night, 12 Sivan (conclusion of Yemei Tashlumin)*

Following Maariv, the Rebbe held a Farbrengen in honor of Yud Beis Sivan. While the crowd sang after the first Sicha, the Rebbe turned to the basketball coach, Mr. Abe Sacks and waved and clapped his hands towards him, generating a very vibrant response from all the Chassidim present as well!

Towards the end of the Farbrengen, the Rebbe mentioned the old custom in Lubavitch that referred to Shavuos as "*Chag Hama'tzos*" ("*Morei Tzedek*"), since it was of the one of the only Yomim Tovim when the Rabbonim, who were normally serving their communities, were able to travel to the Rebbe (since the observance of Shavuos does not usually bring about such complicating *Sha'alos*, unlike most Yomim Tovim).

Therefore, the Rebbe continued, we will distribute Mashke from this Farbrengen to all the Rabbonim who have come here to join us for this year's Yom Tov. But being that there are many Rabbonim present and we don't have enough Mashke to accommodate each of them individually, we will hand the bottles to those who have arrived from Eretz Yisroel, for them to distribute in turn throughout the land.

After concluding with a special *Brocha*, the Rebbe poured a drop of Mashke from each of the bottles into his cup, and then from the cup back into the bottles, and then asked, "Where are all the Israeli Rabbonim?"

One by one, the Rabbonim approached and received their bottles from the Rebbe while saying a brief *Le'chayim*.

Then the Rebbe said: "We have with us here the '*Sar Hamashkim*' of Eretz Yisroel; whenever there is a Chassidisher Farbrengen he provides plenty of Mashke, and gladly so. Let him approach and receive a bottle of Mashke now as well."

Reb Yona Mendelson approached, and the Rebbe told him "You are not a Rav of a community, but you do produce Mashke; see to mix some Mashke from this bottle into the Mashke which you produce."

After singing some Niggunim, the Rebbe continued:

"All of the above was only about the Rabbonim from Eretz Yisroel. There are present, however, many Rabbonim who, for the time being find themselves in other places; let them say *Le'chaim* as well, and with a great *Shturem* – a '*Rabbonisher Shturem*'!"

While all the Rabbonim present began saying *Le'chaim*, the Rebbe added: "If someone is in doubt whether or not he can be considered a Rav, he is also to join in and say *Le'chaim*!" And then turned around to some of the elders behind him indicating that they should also say *Le'chaim*, saying, "You could have also been Rabbonim, had you wanted to..."

As it seems, the Rebbe was anticipating that a joyous Niggun would accompany the *Le'chaim* (especially considering that he had specifically instructed that it be done with a "*Rabbonisher Shturem*") but the Shul remained relatively silent, so the Rebbe said: "We know that Tzddikim are likened to their Creator, all the more so Rabbonim. Therefore, they act like Him in a sense that even a most quiet voice ("קול דממה דקה") is considered a loud roar, capable of breaking through mountain and stone. We however, are *Ballei-batim*, not Rabbonim; we will therefore make a 'true noise!' With that, the Rebbe began his father's Hakofos Niggun, and encouraged the singing with vigor.

# DEVOTION OF CHASSIDIM

Based on *Lekutei Dibburim* Vol.2 p. 21

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Here, then, is the story, as my grandfather [The Rebbe Maharash] told it to my father [the Rebbe Rashab].

\*

When I was in Marienbad I decided that I would travel home discreetly through Vienna and Warsaw. Accompanied only by Pinchas Leib, we visited Berditchev on the way.

Arriving in the early morning in Berditchev, I drove off to a hotel to daven *Shachris*, and then went to the resting place of the Rav of Berditchev.

When I left the *ohel*, I went to see the *shtiblach* of the local Polish chassidim. In the first little *shul* I found quite a number of people sitting and studying while others conversed and exchanged stories about chassidim. From there I visited a second and third *shtibl*, again finding old and young men studying or spending their time in positive talk. The same was true as I wandered from one *kloiz* to the next; engaging a few individuals here and there in conversation, I would ask questions as to their current studies, often receiving in-depth and thorough answers.

With a few hours to spare before my train was due to depart, I was about to return to my hotel to rest, before a peculiar scene caught my interest. Several elderly chassidim with white beards were carrying a big bucket of water, their long coats tucked up, and nothing more than socks and shoes to protect their feet from the cold. Their younger companions offered their help but the elderly chassidim were stubborn in refusing, and continued to converse excitedly amongst themselves. I could tell that these were no common water-carriers.

Tailing them from a short distance, I followed them into an alley, where, a few houses down, I saw several more elderly chassidim washing the floor and walls of the house.

Approaching a couple of those who had brought the water, I found out that this was a *shtibl* of Tolna chassidim, and the 'not so ordinary' water-carriers were indeed real Torah scholars. I was further informed that, anticipating the Tolna Rebbe's arrival the following day, the chassidim were cleaning the *kloiz* and making sure it looked respectable.

My curiosity though, didn't subside, and I asked why the elderly chassidim insisted on doing the work themselves – "after all," I reasoned, "young people need to be brought up in the ways of chassidim, and so, for their sake, the elder chassidim should have some *mesirus nefesh*."

Their answer baffled me even more:

"The reason we are doing this ourselves instead of hired workers," they said, "is that we want to have healthy angels to help out the

advocating angels who come out of the *tekios*, out of the blasts of the *shofar*."

Seeing that I had not understand, one of them offered an explanation:

"You know that the *Yehi ratzon*, which is said after the *tekios* of RoshHashanah, and mentions 'the angels that are formed from the blowing of the *shofar*, and from the *tekiah*, the *shevarim*, the *teruah*, and the concluding *tekiah*, and finally from the קשר" [the initials of the four Hebrew names to the various sounds of the *shofar*]? Well, on Rosh Hashanah, the holy Rav of Berditchev said: "Sweet Father, compassionate Father! Just in case the angels that are born of the *shofar* that Levi Yitzchak son of Sarah has just blown are weak angels, then let them be replaced by the holy, healthy angels that were created by Your people's work in preparing for Pesach; *kartzen* (scouring), *shobben* (scraping), *reiben* (rubbing), and *kasheran* (making kosher)!" [For the initials of these four Yiddish words are likewise קשר" ]

"As for us," the elderly chassid concluded, "we are doing all of this in the sake of His name, and for the sake of his servant, our Rebbe (*May he be blessed with good health!*)."

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[At this point in the story, my grandfather, the Rebbe Mahrash, resumes his recollections.]

The scene left a remarkable impression on me, and, as I turned to leave, I noticed that right next to the *shtibl* was a well.

"Why did you have to bring the water from so far," I asked, my curiosity returning, "if there is a well of water right here?"

The same old man answered me:

"Reb Baruch Yossel, one of our well-to-do chassidim, promised that if we would not take water from the well – both today, in preparation for the Rebbe's arrival, or tomorrow, the first day of the Rebbe's visit – then, in honor of the Rebbe, he would prepare a lavish meal for all the chassidim at his expense."

\*

Having finished recounting this incident as he had heard it from his father, the Rebbe Maharash, my father commented:

"The concern for detail when my father re-told the story shows the extent of how the incident impressed him. Also, upon completing his narration he said to me: 'Here we can plainly see what spiritual forces the Baal Shem Tov drew down in this world, both for the Rebbes and the chassidim, so that both the mentors and their recipients should – and shall indeed – ready the world for the coming of *Moshiach*, speedily, and in our own days, Amen!'"

For a long while my father then remained silent, deep in thought, until he said:

"The elder chassid's answer, as to why they did everything themselves instead of through hired workers was good, but he made no case for explaining why the younger chassidim weren't given to participate. Such a *mesiras nefesh*, of setting oneself aside for the sake of some young man, is the distinct contribution of *Chabad Chasidus*."

Click, click, tik, tik.

The sound of one man video – photographer Levi Freidin hums in the background. The only official photographer in 770 for many years. Reb Levi had a special relationship with the Rebbe, one where he could speak his heart, a combination of affection, love and respect.

The truth is, Reb Levi was at first shunned by the Chassidim. Many people didn't appreciate an "outsider" photographer pushing between them, bumping and jabbing them with the many cameras hanging from his neck, his flashes disturbing many of the pristine moments with the Rebbe.

A quiet niggun, a maamor, the erev Yom Kippur Brochah, a moment of peace and calm when suddenly, a snap of the camera and the accompanying flash jars them out of their reverie.

There is good reason there was no official photographer before Reb Levi arrived. (All videos and photos from before had been amateur attempts or hobbyists. This meant that many months could go by without so much as one picture. Some farbrengens were filmed but none of the day to day activity in 770.)

When Reb Levi arrived for Tishrei 5736 he wasn't exactly greeted with open arms. "The Chevrah really abused me", Reb Levi retold later, "They had no idea the Rebbe had given his permission".

However he soon made his way over to the Bimah where the Rebbe noticed him, and the hubbub surrounding him. The Rebbe smiled and motioned for Reb Levi to say L'chaim, and with that Reb Levi was in.

#### From Russia to Israel

His story started as a new immigrant from Vilna who had made it to Eretz Yisrael. Although holding degrees in photography and after years of professional experience, he had no idea how to turn that into a paying job.

Reb Pinya Althoiz, one of the leading Askanei Chabad in Eretz Yisrael, in one of his reports to the Rebbe mentioned that the grandson of Reb Levi Yitzchak Viyetka (one of the elder Chassidim from Russia and Reb Levi's namesake) had arrived in Eretz Yisrael. The Rebbe asked him to help Reb Levi out.

Using his connections with Rabbi Efroyim Wolf, the chairman of Chabad in Eretz Yisrael, Reb Pinya arranged for Levi to become the official photographer for Chabad activities in Eretz Yisrael.

Reb Levi felt a great responsibility in his work and labored devotedly to capture Chabad of Eretz Yisrael on film. As he got to know Chabad he built up a desire to see the Rebbe, but he felt that he couldn't abandon his post. His son, seeing his yearning, pushed him to travel to New York. Reb Levi went to Rabbi Wolf to ask permission to go to the Rebbe for Tishrei. Rabbi Wolf happily agreed and promised to arrange tickets for him and his son. Reb Levi had one more request, "Please arrange me a 'work permit' for 770", Rabbi Wolf promised to see what he could do. Two weeks later Berke Wolf, Reb Efroyim's son, informed Reb Levi that permission had been granted, he would be allowed to operate in 770.

"I don't know if the permission came from the secretariat or from the Rebbe himself, but either way I was ready for my visit to New York", said Reb Levi after receiving the news.

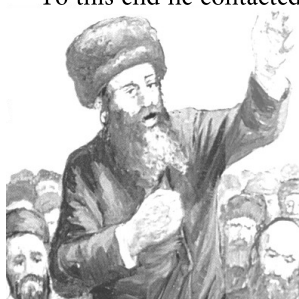
There was another reason Reb Levi wanted the permission to film and photograph in New York. He planned to make an exhibit about the Rebbe and his court in 770. This exhibit would be displayed in the large art exhibition in Eretz Yisrael, drawing large crowds and giving them a glimpse into the world of Chabad Lubavitch.

To this end he contacted the great exhibitions, Beit Shklov in Tel Aviv, Heichal Shlomo and Bar Ilan University to display his exhibit on his return. They agreed to display his work.

In 5736 Reb Levi Freidin together with his wife, came to New York for the month of Tishrei. They stayed by Reb Gavriel Schapiro for that first Tishrei, and for all the years since.

As soon as he came he wanted to see the Rebbe. "I lost my father at a young age", Reb Levi explained, "The Rebbe is now my father". On his return from his first Farbrengen he emotionally told Gavriel Schapiro, "It doesn't make a difference if my pictures come or not, the main thing is, I saw my Rebbe. The meeting has lifted me."

Once, during a niggun at a Farbrengen, the two sides of 770 were singing two different niggunim. (Other versions maintain it was the same niggun but one side was singing faster). Seeing this the Rebbe mentioned that Negginah needs to be in an organized manner and later commented, "Such is the nature of a Yid; one greets him *"Sholom Aleichem,"* and he replies exactly the opposite, *"Aleichem Sholom."*



# Hashgocha Pratis — השגחה פרטית

## Part 2

# Q&A

We spoke last week about the Rambam's opinion regarding Hashgacha Pratis, that only Yidden who follow Torah and Mitzvos have Hashem directing every detail in their lives. For other people however, and this includes all other species, Hashem only directs the overall thrust of their lives and the general events that take place.

The Baal Shemtov put forth a radical new idea, that **everything** in the world is *B'hashgacha Pratis*. Even a leaf fluttering to the ground, with all its turns and twists, is planned and directed by Hashem. Nothing in this world is by chance, not a gust of air, not a grain of sand, moves without Hashem's will. This is also the foundation of many of his later teachings.

Someone once asked the Alter Rebbe whether there is a source for *Hashgacha Pratis* in *nigla*. The Alter Rebbe answered that it is a clear Gemara: Rabbi Yochanan, when he would see a *shlach* (a pelican) he would say "Your justice is in the depths." Rashi explains, "Your [Hashem's] justice is even in the depths. You take this specific bird to do justice and to avenge your vengeance among dwellers of the sea, and to kill those that are set to die." This shows that on every single fish, there is a personal judgment. From this is understood that there is *Hashgacha Pratis* on all creations and not only people.

Even before the *chiddush* of the Baal Shem Tov, and particularly after, the idea of *Hashgacha Pratis* has been challenged from a number of angles. The following is a synopsis of two of the more famous questions, and some of the answers.

The first is a more technical philosophical question: If Hashem is infinite, how can He have any connection with a finite world? This question is not limited to Hashgacha. They were asking even on the possibility of Hashem knowing about the world. How is it possible for Hashem to know limited thing?

The Alter Rebbe in Chap. 2 of *Shaar HaYichud* explains that the original premise of the question is flawed. There **must** be a connection between Hashem and this world; for the world to exist, Hashem has to constantly re-create it *yesh meayin*. Re-creation is obviously an interaction between finite and infinite. [The way Hashem - who is infinite - can connect with the finite is beyond the scope of our discussion, but it has to do with the *tzimtzum*.]

The second question is one that will occasionally confront you, and one the Rebbe addressed multiple times:

Hashem supervises the world; everything is according to his plan and ultimately all is fair and just. Why then does the world look so random? More so - terrible events have happened and are happening all the time: the Holocaust, murders, terrorist bombings etc. etc. How could such terrible things have happened - and continue to happen - right under Hashem's supervision?! Some Holocaust survivors famously - erroneously - stopped keeping yiddishkeit because of this question.

One explanation for this is that we simply do not have the perspective to understand the world. Think about this: you see a quick shot of a person laying on a table, a man standing over him slowly and methodically cutting off his leg. It looks like savagery. The camera

zooms out and you see that it's an operating room. We do not have the perspective to understand Hashem's ways - in this world we only see our little world, and we definitely have no clue about other worlds and the spiritual side of things.

There is a deeper perspective. A little child listens to an advanced shiur in Chassidus. It is impossible that he understand an iota of what is going on. The problem is not that he does not know enough, that he doesn't have a full picture, rather, his brain is simply not developed enough to comprehend, or to even grasp a sliver of, these concepts. Not only do we not have a full perspective of the universe. Our entire idea of logic and understanding, being finite, is simply nothing compared to Hashem's, infinite logic, hence there is no way we can expect to understand anything of his ways. It is foolhardy to try to ask questions on Hashem's ways. The question is not why we do not understand Him, rather how we can achieve some understanding of His ways.

This *chiddush* of the Baal Shem Tov is the basis of another Torah: everything that you see has a lesson for *you*.

It says "כל העולם לא נברא אלא לשמשני, ואני לא נבראתי אלא לשמש את" קוני "The whole world was created only to serve me (yidden), and I was created only to serve Hashem."

At first glance, it seems that this *posuk* is saying that everything serves Hashem's *kavanah* in some way. Some occurrences and objects have a connection to you; others are connected to other people. However, the Baal Shem Tov explained, that everything that you see has a lesson for *you*. Not only does everything in the general world have a purpose, everything that you perceive has a purpose: you saw, heard, smelled, or touched for a reason; everything in *your* world has a purpose. If the purpose of this object were for another person, *you would not have seen it*.

This radical new interpretation of Hashgocha Pratis that the Baal Shem Tov revealed has become embedded in the very fabric of Yiddishkeit today, across all segments of the Yiddishe population. It gives us a deeper understanding in the happenings of the world around us, the deep involvement of its Creator, and our mission to fulfill His Will.

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