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ערש"ק פרשת במדבר ר"ח סיון תשע"ג

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Shavuos 5743

By Rabbi Zalmon Jaffe

As in the past, when the Rebbe arrived for the service, we gave him a rapturous welcome by singing lustily and vehemently (on Yomtov, generally, Vesomachto). After the Service we again sang - even more rapturously, when the Rebbe left the Shul.

The Rebbe had indicated that all the children, even babies in arms, should be brought to Shul to hear the reading of the Ten Commandments. In response to those instructions, the Shul was

K.A.H. full with little children, as well as of course, Men, Women, boys and girls. The babies, especially, made certain that their presence was heard.

Up until recently, practically all the Kohanim congregated around the Rebbe for duchanning (the Priestly Blessing). But, nowadays, I have noticed that the Kohanim have been spread along the whole length of the Mizrach side.

Ho'aderress Ve'hoemuna, and all the usual tunes during Hallel and other parts of the Service were sung, as they have now been for many years. And the Rebbe always reads the Haftorah. Until last year the Warden standing on the Bimah used to stretch out his hands and take off the Silver Crown from the Sefer Torah whilst it was being carried towards the Bimah for layenning. The Rebbe expressed his wishes that they should wait another few minutes and lift off the Silver Crown in a dignified manner on

the Bimah. Now they followed what the Rebbe had said.

After Mincha, most of the Lubavitch men and boys from Crown Heights and beyond, had gathered outside 770 to make up and form the procession which was to march to Boro' Park - where they would then divide into many groups in order to speak at different shuls and "Make Jews happy on Yomtov" as the Rebbe had requested.

The Rebbe appeared at the door of 770 to wish the thousands of marchers great success - and off they all went, escorted, as usual by Police Motorcyclists, who ensured the safety of the procession on its long walk to Boro' Park.

When the main party had disappeared around the corner, there were many old man and even young boys who were still loitering in front of 770 (besides the thousands or so girls and ladies who had gathered to watch the Rebbe "take the salute"). The Rebbe was taking no nonsense this year and he strongly urged and spurred on all these idlers and coaxed them to take part in the march too.

After Maariv that evening, Hindy and I waited outside for the Rebbe, who would be going to his temporary Yomtov abode at the Library next door to 770.

The area around 770 was almost deserted - nearly everyone was in Boro' Park. The Rebbe emerged and descended the steps. I intended to wish the Rebbe a good Yomtov, but Hindy whispered in my ear, "Sing Vesomachta". So I commenced that Nigun. The Rebbe waved his arm and off we went down Eastern Parkway, with the Rebbe leading and conducting my "one man band" which was following behind.

We were joined by half a dozen boys and the Rebbe strode up the steps to the door of the library, still waving encouragement to me to continue my singing. The Rebbe opened the door and entered - then he turned around and gave me an extra emphatic wave to make sure that I continued with the song.

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ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

בברכת קבלת התורה
בשמחה ובפנימיות

Overview of Veyadaata Moscva

Certain mamaarim are regarded as classics Chassidic texts. The very mention of their names evoke satisfying memories of the clarity of insight one received from studying that particular Maamar and perhaps the exhausting hours spent on achieving that.

From the time that it was recited in 5657 onward, the maamar, VeYadaata has certainly been regarded as one of these classics. The Rebbe Rashab selected it as the maamar which he would frequently recite publicly to "purify the air." Among mashpiim, it is renowned for its simple, yet profound explanation of the oneness of Hashem. For many students of Chassidus, it is remembered as their first experience of Haskalah, a maamar that challenges and develops one's intellectual comprehension of concepts in Chassidus.

The Frierdiker Rebbe describes the circumstances surrounding its recital:

In the beginning of the winter of 5657, because of his ill health, my father, the Rebbe [Rashab], traveled with my mother and myself to Moscow for therapeutic purposes. In Moscow, the Rebbe delivered the maamar VeYadaata HaYom, which the chassidim refer to as "VeYadaata of Moscow."

This is true until today, "Veyadaata Moscva" has become a standard expression in Chassidus Chabad, a term that every Bochur should be familiar with.

The maamar, opens with and focuses on the Possuk VeYadaata - "And you shall know today and take it unto your heart, that Havayah is the E-lokim in the heavens above and the earth below, there is nothing else." Hence its name VeYadaata.

Both Havayah and E-lokim are names which refer to Hashem. As explained in Kabbalah and in Midrash, the different names of Hashem represent different manifestations of His Middos. The maamar analyzes the difference between the qualities expressed by these two names. More significantly, it explains how

Havayah, which is identified with the revelation of Elokus, and E-lokim, which is identified with the attributes associated with His concealment, are united to the point we can say, "Havayah is the E-lokim."

To explain this concept properly, the Rebbe Rashab begins with a Moshul from the functioning of our conceptual powers. When we conceive a concept, two forces are at work simultaneously, a power of revelation and a power of formation. We take the concept in its fullest and rawest form and limit it in a way that we can properly grasp it. Despite their opposite nature, these two forces work as one.

Nevertheless, this Moshul is not sufficient, for the functioning of the power of formation in fact places limits on the revelation of any given concept. And in the Nimshal, the interrelation between Havayah and E-lokim, the name E-lokim does not, by contrast, place any genuine limits on the revelation of the name Havayah. For were that to be the case, the oneness of Hashem with our material world would not be complete.

To show how, in truth, the process of concealment brought about by the name E-lokim does not limit the revelation of the name Havayah, a Moshul is drawn to the process of communication between a teacher and a student. A teacher does not reveal his full appreciation of a concept to a student. Instead, he communicates it in a concise form and uses analogies. But through these methods, he communicates the totality of his understanding of the idea.

There are three points in this Moshul:

1 – Even though the teacher needs to limit and conceal the depth of the concept when he gives it over to the student, this does not prevent him from perceiving the totality of the original concept as it is enfolded and concealed within the analogy,

2 – The teacher communicates to the students the germ of a concept that they would otherwise be incapable of understanding,

3 – He gives the students the potential that, through labor and effort, they can perceive the totality of the idea as understood by the teacher himself.

In the same manner, in the Nimshal:

From Hashem's perspective, the limitations of our material existence do not restrict Him; for Him, there is no concealment in our world.

We receive life energy, and through our Avodah, we can perceive how Elokus is the source of this life energy.

And the third point; by toiling with body and soul, we can come to a realization of the inner dimensions of the Elokus vested in our worldly existence.

After having explained these concepts, the Rebbe Rashab explains how these ideas apply to our everyday lives. Each one of us faces challenges which appear to conceal Elokus. Nevertheless, in principle, these challenges are, like the teacher's analogies mentioned previously, mediums to bring us to a deeper awareness of Hashem.

As one can clearly see, this maamar is packed from start to finish with core and basic concepts of Chassidus; ideas that change the way we look at the world around us. The above paragraphs merely scratch the surface of this.

But the maamar does not merely discuss challenges that we face in our Avodah, on the contrary, it focuses on the challenges which we face in our day-to-day living, e.g., maintaining honesty in our business dealings and setting aside time for the study of Torah and sincere prayer despite the pressing demands on our time. Through meeting these challenges, we are able to perceive the "Or Eloki" invested in creation, and bring the world to Yemos HaMoshiach when the oneness of Hashem will be revealed throughout all existence.

Shavuos In Our Lives

a letter from the Rebbe

By the Grace of G-d
Rosh Chodesh Sivan, 5715
Brooklyn, N.Y.

...it is surely unnecessary to elaborate on the close relationship between the physical and the spiritual, which even modern science has become convinced of.

Physically, at this time of the year, we find Nature again in full bloom. After a period of hibernation, it springs back to life with renewed vigor and vitality, faithfully reproducing the same elements which characterized the same period a year ago, and two years ago, and all the way back to the first seasons of the Nature cycle.

In our religious and spiritual life, also, we have the seasons and festivals which recur year after year, and reproduce the same spiritual elements which first gave rise to them. Thus, at this time of the year, with the days of Sefirah connecting the festival of Passover (physical freedom) with its culmination in Shavuoth (spiritual freedom), we can—if we are sufficiently prepared and attuned to it—relive the experiences of our ancestors who actually witnessed the Revelation and accepted the Torah at Sinai.

What a long way our ancestors covered in the course of but 50 days; from the abominations of Egyptian “culture,” in which moral depravity and polytheism reigned supreme (as recent archeological discoveries have amply brought to light)—to pure monotheism at Mount Sinai, where the Jew receives the Torah with the call of Na’aseh v’nishma. Na’aseh first, i.e., complete surrender of man to G d.

Through the medium of the Torah, G d “descends” on Mount Sinai, and the Jew ascends to G d—the soul is released from all its fetters tying it down to earthly things, and, on the wings of fear of G d and love of G d, unites with the Creator in complete communion. It is then that it can fully appreciate the inner meaning of “I am G d thy G d, Who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage,” and the rest of the Ten Commandments, till “Thou shalt not covet,” i.e., not only refrain from taking what is not yours, but not even desire it.

This great rise from the abyss of Egypt to the sublime heights of Sinai was attained by pure and simple faith in G d, from the day when parents and children, women and infants, several million souls in all, set out on the trek through the desert, not dismayed by the irrationality of it, but simply obeying the Divine call with absolute trust. This won special Divine favor, in the words of the Prophet: “I remember unto thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy betrothal, thy going after Me into the wilderness.” It is this faith that carried the Jews through the ages, an insignificant physical minority in the midst of a hostile world, a spot of light threatened by an overwhelming darkness. It is this absolute faith in G d that we need nowadays more than ever before.

It is said, the whole sun is reflected in a drop of water. And so the whole of our nation is reflected in each individual, and what is true of the nation as a whole is true of the individual.

The core of Jewish vitality and indestructibility is in its pure faith in G d: not in some kind of an abstract Deity, hidden somewhere in the

heavenly spheres, who regards this world from a distance; but absolute faith in a very personal G d, who is the very life and existence of everybody; who permeates where one is, or what one does. Where there is such faith, there is no room for fear or anxiety, as the Psalmist says, “I fear no evil, for Thou art with me,” with me, indeed, at all times, not only on Shabbos or Yom Tov, or during prayer or meditation on G d. And when one puts his trust in G d, unconditionally and unreservedly, one realizes what it means to be really free and full of vigor, for all one’s energy is released in the most constructive way, not only in one’s own behalf, but also in behalf of the environment at large.

The road is not free from obstacles and obstructions, for in the Divine order of things we are expected to attain our goal by effort; but if we make a determined effort, success is Divinely assured, and the obstacles and obstructions which at first loom large, dissolve and disappear.

I wish you to tread this road of pure faith in G d, without over[unclear in original]introspection and self-searching, as in the simple illustration of a man walking: he will walk most steadily and assuredly if he will not be conscious of his walk and not seek to consciously coordinate the hundreds of muscles operative in locomotion, or he would be unable to make his first step.

Wishing you success in all above, and hoping to hear good news from you and yours,

With the blessing of a happy Yom Tov of Receiving the Torah with inner joy,

Sincerely,

Continued from page 4

with the physical reality in which it is placed, rather it clothes itself in three ‘garments’ (levushim) by means of which it can communicate with - and affect the world. These garments, namely thought, speech and action are the avenues through which the neshomo performs Torah and Mitzvos.

Except then he says something rather counterintuitive; at first glance it would seem that the levushim of the neshomo, are nothing more than a technical medium to allow for two entities to relate to one another, whereas the alter Rebbe says that “their quality, nevertheless, is infinitely higher and greater than that of the nefesh, ruach and neshamah themselves.”

In this spirit, several maamorim² in Chassidim demonstrate both the power and the importance the levushim possess, and their ability to effect change in the very fiber of one’s neshomo.

Since, as we know, the physical reality of the world evolves from the spiritual reality, it is clear that the same holds true with regards to our material garments as well.

Conclusion

What emerges from all the above is that while in Chabad we do not place an emphasis on a strict dress code, it is nevertheless important to

maintain an appearance which highlights -to ourselves primarily, our adherence to the timeless values of Torah, which do not fade with passing fashions and trends, and to Chassidim in particular.

To be careful not to seek to dress for society, yet nevertheless not to be menial about our choices even in the opposite direction, because as stated above, after all clothing are but an outer aspect of our person.

And finally a bochur must always be cognizant that wherever he goes, he inevitably represents Chabad as a whole, and the Rebbe personally, and this places on his shoulder a paramount responsibility to make sure that the beholder is pleased with what he sees, rather than chas vhesolom the opposite.

When you get dressed in the morning, ask yourself: “Do I look as a chossid of the Rebbe should?”

¹ Since the Alter Rebbe’s times, chassidim were meticulous to only wear white silk garments so as not to run into the problems of shaatnez. The famous portrait of the Tzemach Tzedek illustrates just that.

² ד"ה ולא יכנף עוד מורוֹךְ תשי"א, ד"ה וישלח הישוע תשל"ו, ועוד

Q & A

What is the Chassidische Levush of Lubavitcher Chassidim?

QUESTION;

"Whats with the hat and jacket?" You've certainly been asked that at least once on mitzoyim. Did you have a ready answer? Perhaps you've asked yourself this question, and weren't sure...

ANSWER;

From the three virtues mentioned by Chazal, which deemed the Jews worthy of being rescued from Mitzrayim, one is the fact that they didn't change their attire. They didn't adopt the Egyptian fashion in dress, rather remained faithful to their fathers' tradition.

Indeed throughout the generations Yidden always had a specific dress code which was characteristic of their Jewish identity, thereby making them recognizable to one another, and to goyim as well.

With the advent of Chassidus, a new garb came along with the philosophy - and thus Chassidim, whether deliberately or not, crafted for themselves their very own levush or dress code!

Today, myriads of different types of shtreimelach and bekishes populate the chassidische neighborhoods, where a seemingly most minute difference in the shape, material or color of the item is indicative of one's adherence to different chassidische courts.

As for us, Lubavitcher Chassidim, who follow the Rebbe's own ways, there are no long bekishes nor shtreimelach, rather a simple 'fedora' hat and blazer jacket.

The questions which begs to be asked is, what importance is attributed to the levush in Lubavitch? Is it -unlike in other circles- wholly disregarded? And if it is meaningful, what role does it play in the life of a Chossid?

It has been argued that given that in Chabad philosophy the emphasis is always placed on "what's inside", i.e. the feelings and understanding, rather than the physical motions, it follows logically that no leading role would be assigned to one's clothing, since they are but a cover for the body. And while that may be partially true, the reality nevertheless is that one's bearing is very telling of his personality, his character and other more internal traits.

Don't Get Caught Up

The task therefore is to maintain a healthy balance of neither overdoing the importance of clothing, neither underestimating it; because in truth more than clothing tell others about ourselves, they actually tell us about ourselves. Since one's clothing are often defining a state of mind and mode, they automatically condition a person to behave as a consequence of what his attire has him representing.

Reb Yisroel Jacobson once related that in 5692 a group of Temimim from Europe came to the United States, and he started a shiur in Chassidus for them.

One particular boy had, as he always did, a regular 'caskett' which was the accepted headwear for young boys in Europe. In America however it was the norm to wear a fedora, so a short while later his father bought him one as well.

On one occasion the boy came to Reb Yisroel's house for Chol Hamoed Pesach, but felt embarrassed by his new piece of clothing and hid in the hallway. Reb Yisroel went out to him, and explained that the concept of 'dressing in style' in a way that is unfit for a chossid, is strictly dependent on the time and place where one is; in America it is not considered especially luxurious and fancy to wear a fedora, and to make an effort to stick to the Russian way of dress is more of a 'belitah' - an unnecessary attraction of attention, something which in Chabad is disparaged. "The main thing, explained Reb Yisroel, is how 'caught up' in it one is; if the American fedora is in your mind just as simple as the Russian beret, than you need not worry about wearing the fedora, as everyone else does."

Who Are You?

A story is told of a Chossid of the Rebbe Maharash who made a point every year to make

the long journey from his hometown Petersburg to Lubavitch, to be by the Rebbe for the Yomim Tovim. This fellow was a successful businessman and when not in Lubavitch he wore a short jacket as other laymen did. However out of respect for the Rebbe and the Chassidim, he would wear a kapota on his visits to Lubavitch. This tradition endured for years, when once, while preparing for the journey he decided that the inconsistency in his behavior was nothing short of an inconsistency in his character. 'Who am I fooling?' - he thought, 'If the Rebbe is indeed a Rebbe he surely knows that all year round I don't wear a kapota, and for me as well -if I never wear it, why should I wear one when in Lubavitch just to please the Rebbe?! If this is who I am, then so be it!' And he set out with his jacket which he wore during the year.

Towards the end of his stay in Lubavitch, he went into yechidus with the Rebbe, as he was always wont to, to get the Rebbe's brochos for his family for the upcoming year. Immediately the Rebbe addressed the noticeable change in his garb, and asked the chossid to explain what had prompted the makeover.

He ensued to describe the thoughts he had had before undertaking the trip, and concluded saying "This is who I am year round, why pretend for one month while I am here?"

The Rebbe smiled and said: "Ha! Here I thought that year round you were pretending, and one month a year you were acting the way you really are..."

This story speaks volumes of just how deeply our clothing affect us, and the profound powers they possess notwithstanding their secondary importance.

Clothing in Chassidus

At the very beginning of Tanya the Alter Rebbe explains what the spiritual makeup of the person is, and how one interacts with his surroundings.

In Perek Dalit, the Alter Rebbe expounds upon the lofty roots of the ten kochos hanefesh, and higher yet, the five layers of the neshomo, and he explains that this neshomo, in virtue of its spiritual form, cannot connect

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