



לזכות
הת' שמואל שיחי'
לרגל הגיעו לעול המצוות
ביום י"ב תשרי ה'תשע"ז

נדפס ע"י הוריו
הרה"ת ר' יוסף יצחק וזוגתו מרת אסתר
שיחי
מרזוב



The Real World

*Our approach to "ballebatishe hanachos"
—shunning the ways of the world*

כותב לי אחד שרצונו, שבנו ידע אך ורק אודות
מציאותו של הקב"ה, מציאותה של "ליובאוויטש", ותו
לא מידי ("מער גארניט")!... וזוהי כל תכליתו. כל שאר
הענינים הקיימים בעולם אינם מציאות, כי אם דמיון
("א פארבלענדעניש"), אחיזת עינים. . . הילד צריך
לדעת - כך כותב אלי - אודות מציאותו של הקב"ה,
והקב"ה ברא את "ליובאוויטש", וכל שאר הענינים
אינם במציאות!

**Someone wrote to me that he wishes for his son
to know of nothing other than Hashem and the
existence of Lubavitch. That's it. This is his entire
objective. Everything else in the world is not a
true reality; just an illusion. The child only has to
know about Hashem, and that Hashem created
Lubavitch. Everything else does not exist!**

(Chof-Daled Teves 5712)

What Does a Rebbe Do?

The officials had already come attempting an arrest. It was only a matter of time before they returned to take the Alter Rebbe to prison. Late at night, there was a knock at the door.

"Who's there?" the Alter Rebbe asked.

"A Yid!" came the reply.

The Alter Rebbe recognized the voice. It was his Chossid, Reb Shmuel Munkes.

Reb Shmuel came inside and the Alter Rebbe began telling him of what had happened that day. "You know Shmuel, they want to arrest me."

Reb Shmuel was unfazed.

"Nu; so what?" he said to the Alter Rebbe. "If you are a Rebbe, no bullet will harm you. And if you are not, then you deserve it. Who gave you the right to take away the pleasures of this world from thousands of Yidden?!"¹



Above anything else, Chassidus came to teach us that the only true reality is *Elokus*. The whole

of our physical world only exists because Hashem hid away His infinite presence in order to create what looks like an independent reality. The truth is that *olam hazeh* only conceals Hashem's ever-present life within it.

This is the inner meaning of the *possuk* "אין עוֹד מַלְבָּדוֹ" as explained in Chassidus. Not only that there is no other authoritative power in the world other than Hashem, but that there is actually no true existence in the world other than Hashem Himself.²

When understanding and contemplating this concept over and over again, we realize that the *gashmiyus* of this world in and of itself has no value at all.

It is only that Hashem placed us in this world in order to do our job of making a *dira b'tachtonim*. This is the reason to engage with the world.

But to become submerged in it and enjoy ourselves merely for the pleasures of the world is counterproductive and negates everything we learn about in Chassidus!

"When we realize that at the essence of everything in this world is the G-dly life creating it; the physicality is merely a byproduct of that *chayus*, we will automatically want to connect with the source of life and ignore that which is only secondary..." the Rebbe Rashab explains. "We will only want the physical as a means to connect to Hashem [through Torah and mitzvos in the physical world]."³

As the Rebbe sums it up in Hayom Yom, quoting the Chossid Reb Mordechai Horodoker, who heard from the Alter Rebbe:

"וואס מען טאר ניט טאר מען ניט, און וואס מ'מעג דארף מען ניט..."

"That which is forbidden [by the Torah], is certainly forbidden. And that which is permissible—is unnecessary..."⁴

For this reason, our Rabbeim taught us that the *הנחות העולם* (or in Yiddish *הנחות העולם*), i.e. the ways of the world, the way worldly people assert and perceive things, have no place in our circles.

We disdain the notion of the "*ballebatishe*" approach. The Rebbe writes in Reshimos that to be considered a "*ballebos*" is a lowly level.⁵

NO BALLEBOS!

The [Friediker] Rebbe related that when he lived in Rostov, his father, the Rebbe Rashab's apartment was on the second floor, and he lived on the ground floor.

On certain occasions, the Rebbe Rashab would have *kiddush* and a *farbrengen* in his son's apartment.

At one such *farbrengen*, the Rebbe Rashab said to his son, "L'chaim, *ballebos*!" [Referring to the title "*baal-habayis*" in the literal sense; they were sitting in *his* house.]

The [Friediker] Rebbe asked his father not to refer to him by this title again. "A *ballebos* is an unclean thing (דבר מזוהם)," he said.

(*Sicha Shabbos parshas Miketz 5713*)

In countless *sichos* at *farbrengens*, the Rebbe bemoans what has become almost inevitable in America, that even the most Chassidishe homes pursue extravagance and luxury.

"You were born and raised in a small town in Russia," the Rebbe once said. "All you had was the bare minimum of bread and water. You never even dreamed that you would one day have your own living space, and certainly not that the floor would be covered in carpet. Perhaps you never even knew that something called a carpet existed! But now you're in America. Over here you think we have to follow all the customs of the place.

"True, by *hashgacha pratis* you were brought to America. But as the Baal Shem Tov explains, the reason you are directed to a certain place is in order to spread G-dliness there. Not so that you can follow the silly customs of this place...

"You spend hours and days exerting so much effort just to attain a carpet that covers the floor from wall-to-wall. The finest and nicest carpet available.

"What do you have to do with things like this?!"⁶

WHAT IS PLEASURE?

The story is told of two brothers; one was *frum* and very poor, while the other was rich and not *frum* at all.

The poor brother had many daughters that needed to get married but he had no money to offer for dowry, so he traveled to meet his rich brother hoping to get some help.

The rich brother greeted his brother warmly and began showing him all his extravagant possessions. He took him for a tour of his mansions and beautiful dwellings, relishing in all the details and showing off his great wealth.

The poor brother had little interest in the riches he was seeing, but he knew he had no choice but to follow along until he would get some money.

Noticing that his poor brother was not moved at all by the affluence he was seeing, the rich brother finally asked, “Nu; what do you say?”

The poor brother answered apathetically: “If you’ll give me some money for my daughters; good. If not, I’m ready to go back home!”

“How can this be?” the rich brother asked. “Aren’t you impressed by all the things you’ve seen?”

The poor brother responded:

“There is a certain animal which I would rather not call by name. Her enjoyment in life is simply to lie in the mud all day. That is her dwelling; that is her food; that is her pleasure in life.

“There’s only one thing in the world that bothers her: she can only lie in the mud until her nose. If she could sink into the mud even deeper; now that would be her ultimate pleasure!”

(Sicha Yud-Gimmel Tammuz 5715)

Let it Shine

At the beginning of the year 5702, a group of *temimim*, refugees from war-torn Poland, arrived in Montreal, immediately founding Tomchei Tmimim there. The Frierdiker Rebbe sent the venerated *mashpia*, Reb Shmuel Levitin, to assist and guide the *bochurim* in their new home.

In a letter to Reb Shmuel, the Frierdiker Rebbe explains how the atmosphere amongst *temimim* is supposed to be:

First and foremost, our own *daled-amos* need to stay clear of “stormy waters” of the world. We need to realize the absolute truth; that the reality of everything in this world is *Elokus*.

Our inner circle is altogether different than that of the rest of the world. We must open the “windows” of our *beis midrash* and let the light of Torah and *avodah* illuminate the darkness of the world. The darkness blinding people into thinking that they must carefully follow the latest fashions.

“I once said at a farbrengen,” the Frierdiker Rebbe recalls, “that I would wish to see some of the youngsters be meticulous about the mitzvah

of tzitzis as they are about the color of their tie, or the handkerchief in their outer pocket...”

The Frierdiker Rebbe even goes so far as to say that he could have come to America ten years earlier, after his visit in 5690 (תר"ץ).

“I could have saved myself so much heartache had I moved here then,” he confesses. “But I could not bring myself to move here until I was forced to [because of the war]. I saw how the custom of this country is to be so drawn after the *hanachos ha'olam*, the predisposed ways of the world...”⁷

Urgent!

Another point that the Rebbe taught us is that we don’t have time to indulge and explore the pleasures of the world.

Every moment is precious. We are at the final moments of *golus* and we need to do all we can to complete the last things needed to bring Moshiach. The world is thirsting for G-dliness. Yidden are waiting to hear a *vort* Chassidus. How can we be lax and enjoy ourselves in a time like this?!

“Our Rabbeim considered *ballebatishe hanachos* a loathsome thing,” the Rebbe writes in a letter. “It is precisely this ‘comfortability’ that they disdained. This ‘good’ feeling has the nature of quicksand, trapping you inside and dragging you ever lower...”

“...Rumor has it that people [*anash*] feel like they have reached it all. They are content with their lot in spiritual matters (learning and davening) and they are satisfied with their ‘huge’ accomplishments in *hafatzas hamaayanos*. And, being that every living thing must grow, they found an area where to progress: they constantly add conveniences for themselves, and sleep peacefully and pleasantly.

“Is this the reason why their *neshama* had to descend from on high to this lowly world; in order to achieve ‘ascension’ like this?”⁸

The Rebbe assures us that the truth will prevail; it’s just a matter of time:

“Since Chassidus despises the notion of ‘*ballebatishe hanachos*’ so much, we can be certain that eventually this will be accepted practice by all the Jewish people. Because, as the [Frierdiker] Rebbe says in the name of the Alter Rebbe, Chassidus does not belong to one specific party or group. Chassidus is for all the Jewish people!”⁹ **T**

1. Reshimas HaYoman p. 171
2. Shaar Hayichud V’Hoemuna perek 6 et. al.
3. Sefer Hamaamrim 5670 (ע"ר) p. 19 (original edition)
4. HaYom Yom 25 Adar II
5. Reshimas HaYoman p. 266
6. Based on sichas Leil Zos Chanukah 5746
7. Igros Kodesh RaYyaTZ vol. 6 p. 84
8. Igros Kodesh vol. 19 p. 419
9. Sicha Shabbos parshas Miketz 5713

NUCLEAR ARMS RACE

Your father and grandfather only had a few dollars to their name, yet they lived a happy and content life. They didn’t have to deal with all the issues we have today: nervous breakdowns, mental crises, and so on. They didn’t feel the pressure to earn hundreds of dollars each week, without which they wouldn’t feel like a normal person.

Today however, one can earn a decent living very easily, live a normal life, and have plenty of extra time to help others, to learn Torah, and to spend time properly educating one’s children.

The problem is that the world today has a “nuclear arms race”—each country is trying to outdo the other in obtaining weapons of mass destruction. Because of this we need to expend all our resources and tax the citizens even more, just to bring this matter under control...

We have a similar issue in our community:

As soon as you hear of a neighbor down the street who obtained a special antique three-hundred-year-old chair, you cannot sleep at night until you get two of the same thing; for you need to outdo your neighbor! Or perhaps you can even find a five-hundred-year-old chair!

Chasing luxuries in this manner is eating away at us!

It takes away your entire mind and heart. You’re constantly thinking about what’s going on with your neighbor.

You don’t have one moment’s rest. No time to think about the purpose for which your *neshama* came down to this world in the first place. No time to spend educating your children. No time to turn your home into a holy place.

Your mind is preoccupied, because you read in the New York Times that so-and-so has reached the bracket of paying ninety-eight percent taxes, while you have yet to be written about in the paper...

(Sicha Purim 5723)

FURTHER READING:

Shabbos parshas Beshalach 5724, sicha 1

Shabbos parshas Ki Sisa 5725, sicha 2