



# THE ATOM BOMB



It was the summer of 5705 (1945), the final stages of WWII. On 27 Menachem Av (August 6) a US Air Force plane dropped the most lethal weapon known to humanity on the Japanese city Hiroshima. Three days later, a second atom bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. The devastation was gruesome and severe. 129,000 people were killed by the blasts, and the resulting firestorms caused many more casualties. Days later, the Japanese accepted the terms of an unconditional surrender, bringing an end to the worst world war in human history.

The American use of nuclear weapons to end the war revealed the top secret war of discovery that had been fought between the Germans and the Americans. Scientists on both sides had been working tirelessly to develop the atom bomb. As the dust of war began to settle, nations that had fought side by side competed with each other to develop their own nuclear arsenals. A new world order had been set, one in which nuclear nations hold the true power.

Since then global and domestic events revolved around nuclear power. Alliances and treaties were based on it. At times, the world teetered on the brink of World War III as a result of the nuclear standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union. It has come to define the world we live in.

Obviously, nuclear weapons pose a serious threat to society with potential destruction of epic proportions; use of such capabilities should ideally be avoided at all costs.

In fact, the Rebbe pointed to the decision for nonproliferation of nuclear weapons as the fulfillment of the *nevuah* “וכתתו חרבותם לאתים”—swords shall be beaten into plowshares; a sign of Moshiach’s imminent arrival.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, over the years the Rebbe pointed to the discovery of nuclear power as a source of profound lessons in *avodas Hashem*.

## QUALITY ABOVE QUANTITY

*Following the devastation of the Holocaust, many frum yidden and Chassidim ended up rebuilding their lives in cities that had an extremely small number of likeminded Yidden. Many felt isolated and helpless. At the Purim farbrengen of 5711 (the first weekday farbrengen after Yud Shvat 5711) the Rebbe proclaimed that these situations are a powerful mandate.*

A common challenge to living a Torah lifestyle is twofold. A) *B’nei Yisrael* are a minority within humanity, and even within the Jewish community the numbers of those that live according to Shulchan Aruch are quite low. Is it possible for our way of life to withstand the pressures of the majority? B) Even if we can preserve what we have, how can it be expected that we encourage others to join our ranks?

On a more personal level, even a *frum* Yid dedicates the vast majority of his time to mundane matters of eating, drinking, sleeping and making a living. The time invested in *kedusha* is a mere pittance in comparison. Is

לזכות  
החייל בצבאות ה'  
ישראל זאב שיחי'  
לרגל הולדתו ביום ט"ז חשוון ה'תשע"ז  
נדפס ע"י הוריו  
הרה"ת ר' איסר וזוגתו מרת חי' מושקא  
ומשפחתם שיחיו  
ניו



it practical to believe that *kedusha* should permeate his entire being?

The recent scientific breakthroughs in atomic research provide the answer to this dilemma. Previously it was believed that quantity determines quality and in order to effect major change one needed access to huge amounts of resources. Atomic research revealed that even a single atom contains astronomic amounts of quality—as long as its fullest potential is utilized.

In order to tap into the awesome energy of the atom, it needs to be split. This represents the idea of *bittul*—breaking of the ego. The way to unleash your hidden power is through exercising the power of *mesirus nefesh* (the ultimate self-nullification) inherent in every Yid.

The success of Avraham Avinu clearly illustrates this point. אחד היה אברהם—He was one single person sharing the knowledge of Hashem to the entire world. Despite the immense challenges he encountered, he conquered the entire world.

This is a clear lesson and mandate for every Chossid. One single Chossid

in a city or a community has the power and responsibility to transform the Yidden he is in contact with. Not only to ensure that they do not become weaker in their commitment to Yiddishkeit, but also to bring them all closer to the light of Chassidus and *darkei haChassidus*!<sup>2</sup>

## THE COUNTER-BALANCE TO THE COLD WAR


*The early 5740s saw an increase in tensions between the US and the USSR. These years came to be known as the Second Cold War. The two nations engaged in an arms race that horrified many and created a reality of uncertainty in the world of international diplomacy. On Yud Shevat 5746 the Rebbe addressed this global state of affairs and how it relates to the content of the maamar Bossi Legani.*

The primary theme of the *hemshech* is that this world is the beautiful garden of Hashem; a place where the *Shechinah* is meant to be revealed in its infinite glory. However, the frightening state of affairs in today's world make it difficult to comprehend how this very same space can become a *dira*

*betachtoinim*. The world's superpowers are currently engaged in a historic struggle of epic proportions that can result in global devastation.

To counterbalance this historically troubling reality, Hashem caused a transformational scientific discovery to occur just prior to the onset of the Cold War. Nuclear weapons are designed in a way that one single person can press one button and cause tremendous damage to millions of people thousands of miles away. The development of this technology caused a paradigm shift in humanity. Whereas in the past it was believed that to effect global change one would need access to large amounts of weaponry and man-power, it is now clear that one single person can cause a revolution. If this is the case with regard to destruction, then it is surely the case regarding positivity.

This is a clear *halacha* in the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah*<sup>3</sup>: *One is obligated to view himself and the world as equally balanced. Doing one mitzvah tips the scales and brings salvation to the entire world.* Whereas a Yid has absolute *emunah* in the truth of this



*halacha*—today this reality is proven by scientific discovery and can be appreciated even by the skeptics!

Notwithstanding the fact that mighty nations are creating an environment of chaos—change for the good is within the capacity of every individual!<sup>4</sup>

## THE POWER OF ACTION

*The idea of encouraging Yidden to do a single mitzvah regardless of their current commitment to Yiddishkeit was initially questioned by many. The following is a response to this skepticism.*

One does not need to be a nuclear scientist to operate a nuclear bomb. Following instructions and pressing the right buttons in the proper sequence has the power to change the world. This is a major cause for concern, were these weapons to fall into the hands of unbalanced people bent on causing destruction to the

world. This dynamic is definitely true with regard to ability of man to cause good in the world.

This is a fascinating illustration of the advantage of *naaseh* over *nishma*. By *matan Torah* the standard was set for all of humanity. It all boils down to action. Intellectual appreciation is secondary and unnecessary to get the job done.<sup>5</sup>

## LESSONS IN EDUCATION

*Mr. Julius Stulman was a prominent businessman, philanthropist and thinker. During the 5700s he developed a strong connection with the Rebbe and there was a fascinating correspondence between them. In a letter dated 8 Tishrei 5709 the Rebbe acknowledged with appreciation his effusive praise for the work of Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch (of which the Rebbe was chairman) and responded to a beautiful analogy he wrote about the atom bomb and the energy it released.<sup>6</sup>*

Among the main issues faced by the scientists involved in attempting to split the atom—issues upon which the success of the endeavor was dependent—were the following:

- Chain reaction—that, in a desirable context, one should be able to ensure that the first parts of the atom that are split should explode several other atoms, which would in turn explode a greater number of atoms, etc. In other words, that the energy should continuously grow.

• Where unwanted, it had to be possible to ensure that the number of atoms being affected should continually decrease.

• The outlay (both in energy and money) that was invested in splitting the atom had to be smaller than the return from the energy that would be freed as a result. This was because the goal of all the research in this area was not for theoretical purposes, but rather practical applications to improve the quality of life. The lesson is self-understood.<sup>7</sup>

Editor's note: Although not clearly spelled out in the letter, we will present several lessons regarding education.

- The purpose of education is that the student should be inspired to the point of teaching others.
- It is necessary to ensure that the knowledge imparted to the student be used in the proper direction. Furthermore, it is important to take the proper steps ensuring that the student is able to counter negative influences in the future. (As the Rebbe often spoke of "preventive medicine.")
- True education leads to concrete and practical results that benefit society and the world. Compared to the effort expended, the results will be so much greater. **T**

1. See Sicha Shabbos parshas Mishpatim 5752; Sefer Hasichos 5752 p. 364

2. Sicha Purim 5711; Toras Menachem vol. 2 p. 313. See also Igros Kodesh vol. 8 p. 168.

3. Hilchos Teshuvah 3:4

4. Sicha Yud Shevat 5746; Hisvaaduyos 5746 vol. 2 p. 454

5. Ibid. p. 458

6. The translation of this letter is from "Mind Over Matter"

7. Igros Kodesh vol. 3 p. 1