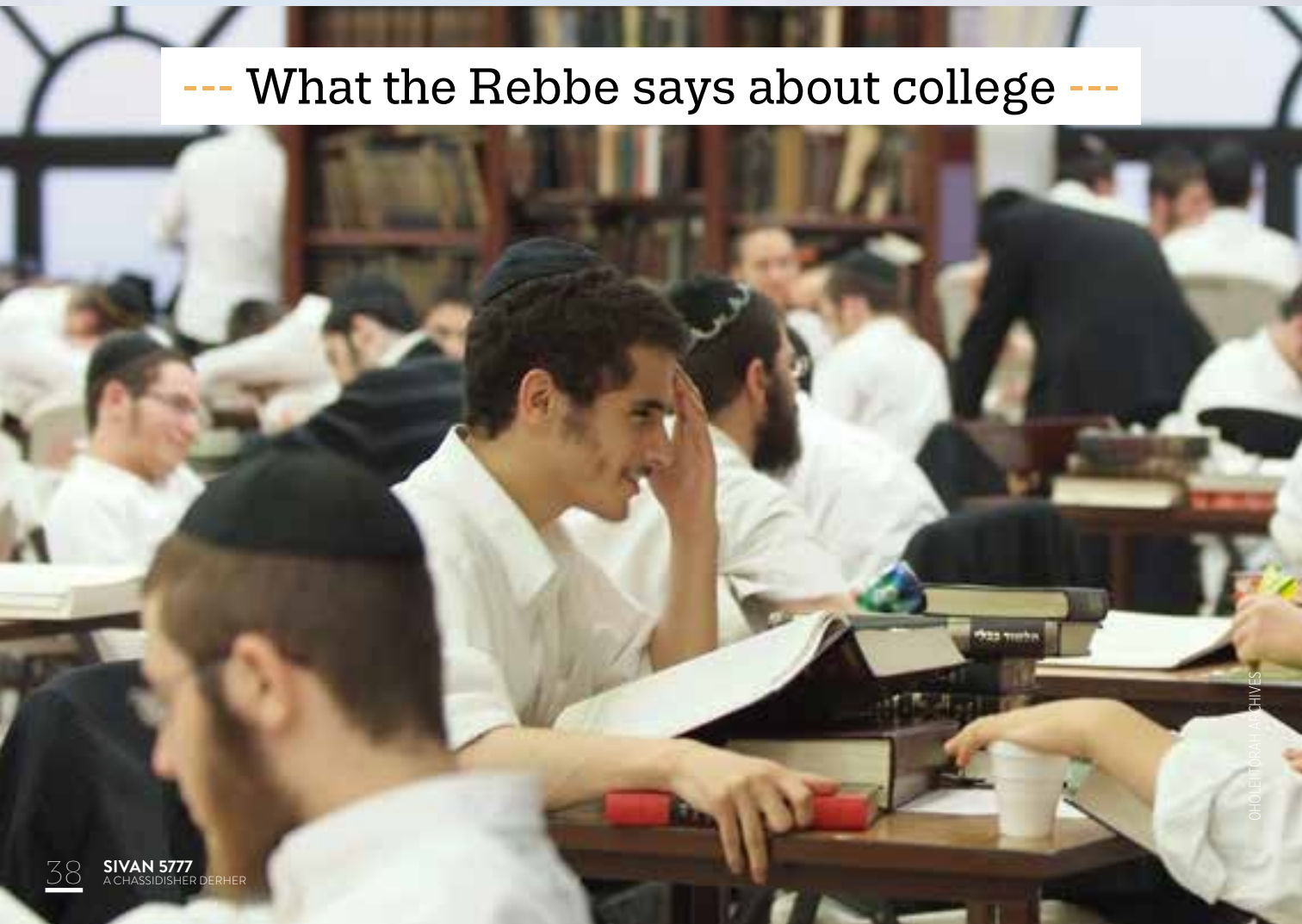


HOW TO MAKE A LIVING

--- What the Rebbe says about college ---



לע"נ
מרת חנה לאה ע"ה
בת הרה"ת ר' שמעון ע"ה
ברוק
גלב"ע ז' טבת, ה'תשע"א
תנ"צ'בה

נדפס על ידי ולזכות משפחתה שיחיו
משפחת ברוק, באנון, דייטש.
ניו יארק. פלארידא.
מאנטאנא. מאנטרעאל.



Over the past century, attending college has evolved from a luxury for the wealthy to the norm for most people. Parents who want their children to “make it” in life place a high priority on getting them into the most prestigious schools; the pressure in high school and even earlier is often intense. Conventional wisdom dictates that—aside for some exceptional cases—the path to success leads through college.

This notion has become so accepted, so normal, that almost everyone buys into it. People might end up rejecting a college education on technical grounds—lack of ambition, opportunities in other areas, religious issues—but few question this basic narrative.

Yet the Rebbe—who never shied away from the world and was always so practical in his advice and understanding of human circumstances—went on a virtual campaign against college, dissuading *bochurim*, girls, and their parents, as seen below. This effort was at its most intense in the earliest years of the *nesius*, when the Rebbe was just beginning to set the standards for American Jewry, and for his Chassidim specifically—there are even numerous *yechidus*'n and letters about the issue to some prominent Chassidic families. And it continued throughout the following decades.

In his effort to diminish the influence of college in Jewish life, the Rebbe corresponded with and spoke to a wide variety of people: parents about their children, *bochurim* and girls, teachers, school administrations, writers, students and activists, from all across the Jewish spectrum. Depending on the audience, their background, and the situation at hand, the Rebbe's advice varied. For example, while he often instructed Lubavitcher *bochurim* or members of other Chassidic circles to discard all ideas of college entirely, with others, he told them to at least push it off.

But there was only one exception: when someone had already invested extensive efforts in obtaining a degree, the Rebbe was often adamant that they complete their studies and not allow their past efforts go to waste. Indeed, the passion of the letters to these individuals to finish their degree sometimes mirrors the intensity of the letters to other people against starting it.¹

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Part 1: AN EXERCISE IN FUTILITY

The central pillar of the Rebbe's argument against college, most often reiterated in letters and *sichos*, was an utter rejection of the notion that one needs a degree in order to make a living.

The Rebbe often quoted a Gemara in Pesachim:²

Our Chachamim taught: Seven things are hidden from men. These are they: the day of death...and a person does not know from what he will earn; and when the dynasty of Dovid will return.

The Alter Rebbe quotes this Gemara and points out, "Note, these are similar to each other!" Meaning that the way in which a person will earn a living is so unknowable, that it is compared to the unknowable date of Moshiach's arrival!

Since this is the case, the Rebbe said, it is futile to spend so much time and effort preparing a path for *parnassa*, especially not from the young age that is customary in modern day culture. In fact, he said, it is contrary to basic *emunah* in Hashem, who sustains every living being directly from His hand. This is especially the case since going to college isn't a neutral pursuit—it involves learning *chochmos chitzoniyos*, which defile the mind. In one letter, the Rebbe says it quite pointedly:

One of the issues of our generation, where it is evident just how great is the doubled and over-doubled darkness of galus is that... beginning at a relatively young age, people begin looking out for their physical tachlis [living], at the expense of matters that are necessary for a person's contentment—his true contentment;

*As if every one of us knew the future, and that only if he educates his family in this specific way, or if he arranges his own affairs in this certain way, only then will Hashem be able to give him *parnassa* when the time comes, because this is the only avenue for the *Kvayachol* [Hashem] to sustain him and provide *parnassa* with kindness and mercy!*

The Rebbe added that in no way does this mean that one shouldn't invest in *parnassa*:

It is known that the Torah commands that "Hashem will bless you in all that you do," but everything has a time, and the preparation must be close to the time of the act. Even then, it must not be in a fashion that will disturb the main pursuits of the person.³

In a *sicha* on Simchas Torah 5715, the Rebbe elaborated:

*Everyone knows that the Rebbe, my father-in-law, strongly discouraged learning *chochmos chitzoniyos*. The Alter Rebbe says that it defiles the *chaba*'d of the soul, and thus [my father-in-law] did not hold of it for *Yidden* in general, and for the *talmidim* of *Tomchei Temimim* in particular...*

*...Those who learn *chochmos chitzoniyos* are like a cripple...his *emunah* is in a state of 'limping': he cannot imagine that Hashem can give him *parnassa* any other way, only if he goes to college and learns *chochmos chitzoniyos*!...He forgot momentarily that Hashem nourishes and sustains the entire world!*

*Hashem has been directing the world from when He created it, five thousand, seven hundred and fifteen years [at the time of this *farbrengen*], and He has always fed and sustained everyone, even before college existed. But he believes that the one and only way for Hashem to give him *parnassa* is if he goes to college; Hashem has no other way, *chas veshalom*, to give him the hundred dollars a week he needs.*

*Learning *chochmos chitzoniyos*, something which defiles the mind and is against Torah, that is the only vessel through which Hashem can give him *parnassa*!⁴*

STICKING TO REALITY

The Rebbe pointed out that this is borne out by fact, writing in one letter: "Another point, which is often the subject of misconception, is the importance attached to a college degree from the economic point of view. Statistics show that the majority of college graduates eventually establish themselves in occupations and businesses not directly connected with their courses of study in college. The point is obvious."⁵

Even the administrators of the colleges admit that only a very small percentage of students get their *parnassa* from their studies, the Rebbe added in another *sicha*. On the other hand, the vast majority of those who remained to learn in *yeshiva* and did not learn *chochmos chitzoniyos*, are provided with a generous *parnassa*. Thinking otherwise, the Rebbe said, comes from the willful blinding of the *yetzer hara*.⁶

Conversely, what *parnassa* does depend on is Hashem, who, as we say in *birkas hamazon*, is the One who is "זן לכל ומפרנס לכל"—provides nourishment and sustenance for all" [a quote that the Rebbe often paraphrased in his *sichos*

and letters], and His blessings are best received through fulfilling His will.⁷

INNER PEACE

In one fascinating letter, addressed to the father of a *bochur* whose hand kept on shaking when he tried doing his *shechita* job, the Rebbe performed an in-depth psychological analysis of the boy, concluding that an underlying concern about career—propagated by today’s society—was what lied at the bottom of it all:

*...To my sorrow, the same is true regarding your son sheyichye. It seems that for several years now, for whatever reason, he has been thinking about what will be his tachlis and how he will find his parnassa. This worry reached the depths of his soul, and caused an inner kivutz [pinch, pressure]. Due to the depth of this worry (even though he himself may not imagine in **his conscious understanding** how much he’s worrying about it) he views the shechita profession as if it is the single factor on which his entire future depends. This buried thought also brought him to the situation that he laments. As mentioned above, this may not be consciously clear even to your son sheyichye, but in my opinion this is the issue and this is the cause.*

*Understandably, it is impossible to change his entire worldview with one conversation, especially since it is buried deep in his heart for years now, to the extent that he doesn’t even realize just how much this is the **opposite** of bitachon. Upon straightforward reflection it is obvious that this is also **against** the belief in hashgacha pratis, that Hashem can do anything—because, if he had come to this understanding, he would have fought this worldview out of yiras Shamayim.⁸*

The Rebbe then gave several suggestions to ease him out of this issue.



Part 2: THE CURSE OF CULTURE

Perhaps more than anything else, the Rebbe rejected the notion that in order to be a *mentch*, “an upstanding member of society,” a person needs to go to college and “get an education” and needs to learn *limudei chol*. He saw it as an expression of some Jews’ lack of self respect and pride in their own selves—of running after *goyish’keit*.

This was broader than just college. Over the years the Rebbe campaigned that *limudei kodesh* in schools should be given the respect it deserves, saying, among other things:

- *Limudei kodesh* teachers should be paid at least as much as *limudei chol* teachers, and they should be paid on time. (The Rebbe even established a *gemach* for teachers to deposit head-checks.)⁹
- Students should be recognized for *limudei kodesh* achievements at least as much as for *limudei chol*.¹⁰

This campaign took place on a number of different forums, including public *farbrengens* and letters to conventions of *rabbonim* and *askanim*.

In one *farbrengen*, following a *sicha* about *shleimus ha’aretz*—where the Rebbe lamented the lack of self-dignity and the abject fear that the Israeli government expressed in their dealings with the world—the Rebbe said that this phenomena is expressed in the *limudei chol* issue as well. He went on to relate an incident that had occurred in *yechidus*:

...There was a father who was trying to get me to convince his son to learn limudei chol. So I asked him, “Why is this so important to you? You are a frumme Yid (who puts on tefillin, davens three times a day, wears tzitzis, and fulfills all the mitzvos), so why are you so passionate that your son should take an hour during which he could be learning Torah (where it speaks about your tefillin, your tzitzis, your kashrus, and your Shabbos, etc.), and instead go learn limudei chol?!

He says, “If my son only learns Torah, he will indeed become a great talmid chochom, a great lamdan in Torah, but he needs to be a “mentch,” and for that he must learn limudei chol.”

He said it with a temimus [sincerity]!

He knew that he wasn’t talking to someone else; he was trying to convince me. How did he try convincing me? Through saying that his son won’t be a mentch, chas veshalom, but through learning limudei chol he will become a mentch!

He said it so sincerely, I started laughing.

Then he started laughing too, and he realized that this was where his whole effort had fallen through!

In another *yechidus*, to students, the Rebbe explained a key distinction. Although, as we saw above, the Rebbe was against going to college for any reason, even for *parnassa*,





THE SMALL ZAL IN 770, EARLY 5710S.

because he saw it as an exercise in futility, still, if a person goes to college purely for the technical value, in order to get a degree, that's one thing. However:

...If he's going into these studies in order to be associated with the higher class, to learn the culture, to know Shakespeare and the theories of Einstein; so that he'll be able to mix into every argument and offer his opinion—such learning is bittul Torah and is prohibited according to Shulchan Aruch.¹¹

WHICH SUBJECTS ARE INCLUDED?

The Rebbe was once asked how to define the exact meaning of the term חכמות אומות העולם—secular knowledge as explained by the Alter Rebbe in Tanya perek 8. Does this apply to philosophical subjects only, or are all of secular subjects included?

The Rebbe explained:

“You wish to differentiate between philosophy, which contains anti-religious sentiment and is therefore forbidden according to *halacha*, whereas a subject like Mathematics etc. [should be permitted].

“It is obvious that this is not the case. Firstly, the Alter Rebbe uses the term ‘*chochmos*’ in the plural form [indicating that he's not referring merely to philosophy]. Secondly, he specifically categorizes them as ‘*klipas nogah*,’ indicating that they are not forbidden ideas of heresy which stem from *shalosh klipos ha'meios*. As well, the Alter Rebbe states that one may use these subjects as a medium for *avodas Hashem* [and he nevertheless categorizes them as *chochmos umos ha'olam* which contaminate the intellectual faculties of the *neshamah*.”

(*Igros Kodesh vol. 11 p. 403*)

Part 3: VALUE SHIFTING

On a more practical level, the Rebbe warned that the atmosphere of college—the intellectual culture, which is predicated on non-belief in Hashem, coupled with the corrupt modesty values—creates a moral test to which no person is permitted to subject himself.

In a letter, the Rebbe lays out his outlook:

Theoretically, a college and its faculty should not try to impose any particular views, much less a way of life, on the students. Actually, however, the student cannot help being impressed, on the conscious and subconscious level, by the views and outlook and way of life of his professors. These, as well as the whole atmosphere of a college, are unfortunately not compatible with the Jewish way of life, and frequently if not always quite contradictory to it. This is so even in colleges which are theological, or having so-called religious studies. Needless to say, the whole atmosphere of college is in violent conflict with the Shulchan Aruch way of life, whereby the Jew is totally committed—in every detail and aspect of his personal daily life—to the Torah and mitzvot and the service of G-d, as is written “You shall know Him in all your ways,” to which a whole chapter in Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim (Ch. 231) is devoted; note there.

In other words, the Jewish boy (or girl) entering college, yet desiring to retain the Jewish way of life in accordance with the Torah, finds himself tossed about in the raging waves of conflict between two contradictory worlds. He is at a further disadvantage in finding himself in the minority camp, since those sharing his views and convictions are few on the college campus, while the forces pulling in the opposite direction are overwhelming; forces he must confront at every turn—among the student body, faculty members, textbooks, newspapers and periodicals. It is very doubtful whether even an adult and mature person who is subjected to such “shock treatment” day after day would not be shaken; how much more so a teenager.¹²

THE PROFESSOR EFFECT

In a *yechidus* with Rabbi Zelig Pesach Oritz, a *mechanech* from Brooklyn who was involved with college students, the Rebbe went into more detail about the subconscious effects of a college education, explaining that it isn't only an issue of deliberate brainwashing or

terrible morals: the mere fact that a person spends so much time with teachers whose priorities and values lie in other intellectual pursuits necessarily affects a change in their values:

You should know that the colleges are making a churban of everything! The unifying theme of all the colleges is the destruction of klal Yisroel.

The reason for this is because if a student hears a smart idea—he gets bought by it. He is tempted into thinking that “others” have wisdom as well...

...Furthermore: The students end up going to the professor’s house, where they spend time together and form a relationship. They gain a special respect for their professors—something which will bring about terrible results.

On a side note, the Rebbe added that the world of academia simply does not come close to the world of Torah.

They believe that they are people with brilliant minds. But I myself knew several gedolim in Torah who were ten times more profound than Einstein, and I’m not referring specifically to a rosh yeshiva like Reb Shimon Shkop; even simple roshei yeshivos... But these professors believe that everything exists by them, in university.¹³

I KNOW WHAT’S GOING ON THERE!

The Rebbe emphasized that these weren’t theories. This opinion stemmed from intimate knowledge of what was going on:

Needless to say, I am aware of the argument that many Yeshivah boys attending college, or even college graduates, remain loyal to the Torah and Mitzvoth. The answer is simple. The number of such students and graduates who have not been seriously affected is relatively small indeed, much smaller than imagined. They are so exceptional that the wonder of it attracts attention, since those that go astray under college influence are taken for granted, while the one that still puts on Tefillin calls forth amazement. One may use the analogy of the shoe-shine boy who became a millionaire and everyone talks about him. It is not because he was a shoe-shine boy that he attained success, and no one will suggest that in order to become a millionaire one should start in the

shoe-shine business. The greater the exception and sensation, the greater is the proof of the rule.

Some people ask if there is really such a conflict between attending college and remaining an observant Jew. I can speak from experience and personal knowledge, having attended various colleges and seen the painful inner upheavals of Jewish students, and having for many years been the confidant of Jewish students who are otherwise reluctant or ashamed to open their hearts. I can therefore state with the fullest measure of conviction and responsibility that he who sends his child to college during the formative years subjects him to shock and profound conflicts and trials, and invites quite unforeseen consequences.¹⁴



RASKIN FAMILY ARCHIVES

Part 4: NIGHT COLLEGE

Although most of the above arguments apply whether one attends college on a full or part time basis, the Rebbe had occasion to specifically address part-time college. In the 1950s and 1960s, it was quite common that, after high school, *bochurim* from prestigious yeshivos such as Torah Vodaas, would attend college in the evenings in preparation for a career.

In a letter to someone who had asked the Rebbe to convince his son to begin attending college part time, the Rebbe reiterated many of the above arguments, and added that there were real dangers with mixing yeshiva and college education:

If, as we have said, the material benefits of a college degree are doubtful, there can be no doubt, however, as to the obvious dangers when a Yeshiva boy is subjected several times during the week to such radical changes of atmosphere and ideology as exist between the Yeshiva and the college, where the majority of students are gentiles, and the majority of the Jewish students are unfortunately not religious, etc....Now that you are fortunate that your son does not want to do it but rather devote his time to the Yeshiva and to remain in its healthy and conflict-free atmosphere, surely he should be encouraged in his wise determination.

Then the Rebbe wrote a particularly strong few lines:





I am aware, of course, that there are boys who together with their Yeshiva education attend college. I have occasion to meet with them, and I can assure you that very few come out unscathed from the tremendous conflicts involved. Even those who on the surface appear to be wholesome have no peace of mind, and very, very few indeed of those who mixed Yeshiva with college have remained completely wholesome inwardly as well as outwardly.¹⁵

The Rebbe urged that, at the very least, “every single *bochur* and *yungerman* in this country should dedicate at least a few years to learn our holy Torah without *limudei chol, lehavdil*.”¹⁶ This is “in order to obtain the maximum insurance against all risks and dangers that their future life may hold, when they attain adulthood and settle down to a family life.”¹⁷

IT'S NOT FOR YOU

Today a veteran shliach and *mechanech*, Rabbi Shmuel Lew grew up in New York as the son of a religious lawyer, and had been planning on entering his father's profession. However, by the time he graduated high school in Torah Vodaas, he had become quite close to Lubavitch, and he asked the Rebbe whether he should enroll in night-school (as many *bochurim* did at the time), or go to yeshiva full time, at least for the following year.

The Rebbe told him, “I think you should invest [ארייניליגען] all your energies in *limudei kodesh* for another year—as you wrote—and perhaps even longer.”

He eventually made the decision to continue the following year in Tomchei Temimim, but a problem had arisen. “My father wasn't happy with my decision to go to yeshiva full time, instead of starting college in preparation

for a career in law,” Rabbi Lew related. “I asked the Rebbe what to do.”

The Rebbe answered in a handwritten note: הדיבור עם אביו שיח' מיוסד על תוכן נוסח ברכת הזן [the conversation with your father should be based on *birkas hazan* (the first *bracha* in *birkas hamazon*).]

“What was the Rebbe referring to?” Rabbi Lew says. “Rabbi Hodakov explained it to me: We say in *birkas hamazon* that Hashem feeds every single one of his creations. If Hashem gives *parnassa* to the 3 billion people of the world, He can provide *parnassa* for you as well, even without a college degree.” [As seen above, this is a nearly verbatim repetition of the Rebbe's explanations in letters and *sichos*.]

But the story wasn't over yet.

“My father wasn't happy with my choice to learn in yeshiva full-time instead of attending college in the evenings. And he was even more upset that I had gone to a yeshiva out of town.”

When he visited home on Yud Shevat the following year, Rabbi Lew spent Shabbos with his parents instead of in 770. But, “the atmosphere at home was a bit tense.”

In the *tzet'l* he handed to the Rebbe in his *yechidus* during that time, he wrote about the difficulties he was having at home, and the Rebbe advised him on how to deal with the situation.

Among other things, the Rebbe told him: “Go back to Montreal as soon as possible. Don't enter into debates, גיט, קוועטשען אין קארנער [“don't squeeze them into a corner”], and don't get into a *machlokes*.” The Rebbe repeated this a few times. The Rebbe also instructed him to “ask the *hanhala* to send a report [to your father] about your progress in learning, etc. When he sees your success in [yeshiva], he will realize that college is not for you.”¹⁸

Part 5: DRAGGING THE REBBE WITH YOU...

In the first years of the Rebbe's *nesius*, one of the shluchim considered attending college.

After laying out “the situation as I see it”—that this person is a shliach of the [Frierdiker] Rebbe, and is completely and utterly invested with the Rebbe's *kochos* in order to lead his community, especially through leading by example—the Rebbe wrote:

After all the above, if, Heaven forbid, the report I heard concerning your desire [to study] in college is correct, it will lead to several consequences:

- a) A large portion of your time, which is in any case limited, will be spent on [other matters and not on] the fulfillment of your mission;*
- b) A certain amount of your time will be spent on matters that run contrary to your mission;*
- c) Your example will be noticed and followed, to an even greater degree, by the members of your congregation. They will say: if, after studying in yeshiva for several years, the shliach of the*

Lubavitcher Rebbe, זצוקללה"ה, נבג"ם, זי"ע, הכ"מ, finds it necessary to study the teachings of a college to become a mentch, why should we then live in error? Preferably, then, we should send our sons and our daughters to receive such an education at the outset;

d) And this is of greatest consequence: What do you have against the Rebbe that you must drag him into the college? The powers of the Rebbe are invested in you. When your body goes to college, your G-dly soul which is confined in your body must also go. And, as a result, the powers of the Rebbe which are en clothed in [your] G-dly soul— for, as mentioned, they are part of the essence—[must also accompany you]. And so you are, as it were, dragging the Rebbe along with you.

I do not want to elaborate any more, nor do I see a need to do so, for certainly the above is more than enough.

I do not know if this is such a severe challenge for you. But regardless, my hope and my trust is that you will withstand the challenge. Then you will certainly see that this is the nature of challenges: that they are really of no substance—as is well known, the difference between birurim and nisyonos.¹⁹



A few months later, after receiving no response, the Rebbe sent this shliach another letter, reiterating that by going to college, he is dragging the Rebbe with him. The Rebbe added that although he might think there was another way to resolve this issue by (temporarily) ceasing to being a Chossid—thus freeing himself from the obligations involved thereof—this was no longer possible, for a Chossid cannot disconnect himself from the Rebbe. And the Rebbe concluded:

...I do not want to elaborate on this because I am certain that “a staff that is thrown into the air will land on its base,” and there will be a revelation of your root and source, i.e., the connection to my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, הַרְבֵּנוֹ, through proceeding “in the straight course that he has shown us, following his paths,” and you will send me good news regarding the above.²⁰ ⓘ

1. See, for example, Igros Kodesh vol. 28 p. 339-340
2. 54b
3. Igros Kodesh vol 10 p. 319-320
4. Chukas Balak 5715, Toras Menachem vol. 14 p. 166-167
5. Letter from Adar 1, 5722
6. Chukas Balak 5715, Toras Menachem vol. 14 p. 167-168
7. See Igros Kodesh Vol 7 p. 163; vol. 19 p. 439
8. Igros Kodesh Vol 10 p. 319-320
9. See, e.g. Toras Menachem vol. 40 p. 321-326
10. See, e.g. Toras Menachem vol. 34 p. 181-182
11. *Yechidus* to students in an Israeli trade school, 5 Adar 5727; Kfar Chabad issue 652 p. 25
12. English letter from Adar 1, 5722
13. Kfar Chabad issue 860 p. 50
14. English letter from Adar 1, 5722
15. English letter from Sivan 23, 5718
16. Igros Kodesh vol. 18 p. 532-533
17. English letter from Adar 1, 5722
18. Derher Cheshvan 5776
19. Igros Kodesh vol. 3 p. 473-474, translated in “I will write in their Hearts” vol. 6, letter no. 755.
20. Igros Kodesh vol. 4 p. 52, translated in “I will write in their Hearts” vol. 6, letter no. 809.

For further reading see:

Igros vol. 9 p. 265-266; vol. 10 p. 53-54; vol. 12 p. 141; vol. 13 p. 256-258; vol. 13 p. 256-258; vol. 18 p. 76; vol. 18 p. 85; vol. 18 p. 92.; Toras menachem vol 27 p. 103-106. Sichos Kodesh 5733 vol. 2 p. 80-81; 84-85; Sichos Kodesh 5735 vol. 1 p. 453-454; Toras Menachem vol. 31 p. 201-209; Sichos Kodesh 5732 p. 125-132



THE PROFESSORS WILL AGREE

When Rabbi Sholom Ber Hecht graduated high school, his parents, Rabbi Yaakov Yehuda and his wife, tried convincing him to take the entrance exams for college, just in case it would be useful in the future, although he was still planning on continuing in yeshiva.

Subsequently, they brought this idea up to the Rebbe in *yechidus*. (This was the earlier years, when the Rebbe’s opposition to college wasn’t as well known.)

As they were asking the question, they realized from the Rebbe’s expression that he wasn’t happy about it. Rabbi Hecht immediately apologized for even suggesting it, but the Rebbe continued responding to the inquiry.

First, the Rebbe asked whether they had told Sholom Ber about the idea, and they answered in the affirmative.

Then the Rebbe said: “The answer that I am saying is not only for a Lubavitcher child; it is appropriate for every child at this stage. Until now, he learned *limudei kodesh* and *limudei chol*, but from now on, he should learn only *limudei kodesh*.”

Later in the *yechidus*, Rabbi Hecht apologized again, and the Rebbe replied, “The day will come when the professors themselves will oppose college. Even though it will cut off their source of income, they will oppose college because of the education it gives.”

Obviously, the proposal was off the table.

(Kfar Chabad issue 678 p. 41)



Like Your Namesake

DR. NAFTALI TZVI BERG

Dr. Naftali Tzvi Berg was born in the 1940s to secular parents in Chicago. As a child, he became close to Yiddishkeit with the help of a Lubavitcher rov in his area, and eventually went on to learn in Lubavitcher yeshivos, developing a very close connection to the Rebbe.

His parents weren't happy with his newfound path in life, and when he got older, they constantly pressured him to learn *limudei chol* and prepare for a career. The Rebbe guided him on dealing with his parents, and was in contact with them as well.

After Naftali completed his studies to become a rov and *shochet*, he asked the Rebbe if—considering his mother's constant pressure—he could go to university and receive a diploma. The Rebbe's answer was definitive: "Had you wanted to go to university strictly for *parnassa*, that would be one thing. But since there is intellectual enjoyment involved as well, you should tell your mother that a few generations ago there was a person also named Naftali Tzvi, the Netzi"v of Volozhin; he did not attend college, and nonetheless he was a great person in Torah and *chochma*. 'His great name went before him...'"

Only years later, the Rebbe finally agreed—*bedieved*—for him to go to college, setting several conditions for this. (Kfar Chabad issue 636 p. 30-35)

No More College!

RABBI AVROHOM MENDEL FRIEDLAND

As a young *bochur*, Rabbi Avrohom Mendel Friedland became close to Lubavitch, eventually enrolling in Tomchei Temimim in Montreal. His father, a member of the religious community in Toronto, had expected his son to become a professional—a doctor or a lawyer—and when he realized that his son was straying from this chosen path, he decided to take it up with the Rebbe.

"The *yechidus* took place around the time of Yud-Beis Tammuz 5722," Rabbi Friedland related. "When we walked in, the Rebbe extended his hand to my father. I shrunk back, and the Rebbe smiled as his hand remained outstretched. From that point on, I stood on the side and didn't mix in—although I was the subject at hand."

After first speaking about another issue, the Rebbe and his father began discussing college. "The Rebbe brought an example from a professor who had come into *yechidus* before us, who, notwithstanding his scientific studies, dedicates time to learning Torah. The Rebbe was bringing it as a type of proof: Even though this professor was so involved in science—as soon as he became closer to Yiddishkeit he realized the importance of learning Torah and began dedicating time to it. A Jew who has already begun learning Torah will surely not decrease his Torah-learning for *limudei chol*.

"My father continued contending that he wanted me to receive some type of diploma, and brought up, in a nice way, that the Rebbe himself had mentioned earlier in the conversation that he had attended college..."

"The Rebbe replied, 'I was twenty eight years old at the time, and also married. When your son reaches that age, he will already have several "diplomas" in the four sections of Shulchan Aruch...'"

The next time his father came to the Rebbe, during the *farbrengen* of Simchas Torah 5723, the Rebbe turned to my father between the *sichos* and said: "Friedland! Don't bother your son with talk about college!"

"My father answered, 'Okay, only a year, two years, three years.'

"No more college!' the Rebbe declared.

"From far, I saw the Rebbe scanning the crowd looking for someone, and I had a feeling that it was connected with me. When the Rebbe's gaze met my eyes, he stopped his scanning, and a broad smile spread across his face..."

Do it—With Simcha

MRS. SHAINDEL TIECHTEL

Mrs. Shaindel Tiechtel is the principal at Beis Rivka High School. When she graduated from elementary school, the high school had just been established, and her parents expected her to go. But she wanted to attend Beis Yaakov, as her sisters had done.

They decided that she would write to the Rebbe. “Maybe it was a little bit inappropriate to write this, maybe I had no right to, but I was a teenager and very independent in my thinking. I wrote the letter in Yiddish but I used an English expression: ‘*Ich vil nisht zein a guinea pig.*’ I don’t want to be a guinea pig. (Definitely not the right kind of words...)”

“The Rebbe crossed out the words ‘guinea pig’ and wrote ‘*chalutza*’—pioneer. The Rebbe knew how to reach a teenager with one word. You tell me to be a pioneer? I’ll climb the mountain, fore the river, I’ll do anything! So, of course, I was part of the pioneer class of Beis Rivka High School.

“A few years passed, and I graduated from high school. I wanted to do something special, to become a journalist; my goal was to have a byline in the New York Times. I took different tests, and I was accepted to Columbia University. And my parents were okay with it, in a sense. I was so excited.

“One day, the phone rings. Rabbi Hodakov said he wants to speak to my father. When my father went to his office, Rabbi Hodakov says, ‘I hear your daughter wants to go to university. We don’t think it is the right thing for her to do right now.’ My father didn’t ask any questions, he comes home and says, ‘You’re not going.’ I was devastated.

“My next choice was to go to Israel for seminary, to a very good non-Lubavitch school. I wrote to the Rebbe, and he answered that I should stay in Beis Rivka Seminary. This was a second situation where I felt that all my hopes, dreams and aspirations were going down the drain. I believed the Rebbe knew what’s best for me, but when I went into a *yechidus* a bit later, I wrote a long letter of all my anger, frustration, and everything else, and offered a third choice of what I wanted to do: to travel the world. I asked the Rebbe if could go to Israel and stop in

Europe on the way. And...the Rebbe said I can do it. At that time, no girls got permission from the Rebbe to go to Eretz Yisroel.

“When I told my parents about it, my father said, ‘You are not going. A girl traveling around Europe herself? Going to Israel herself? Maybe you didn’t understand the Rebbe’s answer...’”

“A few months later, my father went into *yechidus* for his birthday, and at the end he said, ‘My daughter thinks that the Rebbe gave a *haskama* for her to go to Eretz Yisrael, with two stops in Europe.’

“*“Zee hut noch nisht geforen?”* the Rebbe replied. She didn’t go yet? Of course, My father came home and said, ‘Go! Just go, go, go!’”

“The Rebbe understood that I needed this; it helped me accept the reality of not going to university or seminary. [A few years later, when I met my husband-to-be, I had one major problem: I was an American and he was an Israeli—how can we get married?! The Rebbe answered in one sentence: ‘Weren’t you in Eretz Yisrael already?’ Five years earlier, the Rebbe as *nossi hador*, had the foresight that I would meet somebody from Israel...]

“A number of years later, I still had this great desire to go to college and get a degree. I felt it was a gap in my image of myself. I asked the Rebbe a number of times—after I was married and had children—and every time I asked the Rebbe told me not to.

“Ultimately, I had the opportunity to get a master’s degree in a very simple way, by writing a few papers, and I asked the Rebbe once more. I am going to say this even though it’s a very personal thing because I think it’s important for people to understand the Rebbe’s attitude. The Rebbe answered me something which could have perhaps been understood differently by someone else, but because of the closeness of feeling I had for the Rebbe, I took it in a way that showed how much he cared. The Rebbe said to me: “Can’t you accept my answer *be’simcha*?”

“And so I understood it was not my place to go...”

(Interview with JEM’s “My Encounter”)

You don't have time

MRS. BASYA GARELIK

Basya Posner (now Mrs. Basya Garelik, shlucha in Italy) was sixteen years old when she completed her high school studies in Beis Yaakov in New York. Although her parents were on shlichus in Pittsburgh, PA, she chose to remain in New York to attend seminary. Since seminary classes were only half day, most girls would work the rest of the day. This did not interest her and she contemplated the idea of attending college classes to fill her time.

Every Motzei Shabbos she would go to a friend's house to hear *havdalah* and spend some time in conversation with the family. She once mentioned her intention to attend college and a member of the family expressed shock at the thought. What do you mean? How can you go to college when the Rebbe is so against it?!

She had never heard about the Rebbe's opposition to attending college, but the objection was so vehement that she decided to write about it to her father, Rabbi Sholom Posner. In her letter she described her interest in going to college, but added that if the Rebbe was opposed to it, she would drop the idea, since she wished that "*der Rebbe zol mir firen in lebben*—the Rebbe should guide me in life."

She did not receive a response from her father on the topic. A little while later she received a letter from the Rebbe:

Your father has conveyed to me your inquiry as to what my attitude would be to the idea of you going to college. Incidentally, I was pleased to note that you are in an environment where the idea of you going to college is met with surprise, and I am somewhat surprised myself that you did not fully share the same attitude as that of your environment.

The Rebbe explained that every Yid has the utmost responsibility to fulfill his mission in life of illuminating the world with Yiddishkeit. No person has the right to

waste his time in matters that will not assist in, and even hinder, the fulfillment of this mission, especially after so many Yidden had been lost in the Holocaust. The Rebbe continued:

One of these matters would be to spend several years in college, and especially in a college environment. While it is true that in recent years, in certain colleges, especially in New York, there are groups of orthodox Jewish students, young men and women—and may G-d help them to come out of it unharmed, at any rate not worse than they were when they entered college—we have a rule not to rely on miracles. It is certain, however, that college will not help fulfill the true and inner desire of the Jew to carry out his above mentioned task and purpose in life, so that even at best it would be an irretrievable loss of time and energy.

Then the Rebbe concluded:

It is therefore my sincere hope that you will discard the idea, and do so not only because—as you told your father—you wish to be guided by me, but also because you will recognize that the idea does not represent your own true thinking and desire. I hope, moreover, that you will use your good influence in this direction with your friends who might entertain a similar idea in the mistaken belief that it might be a good idea.

With blessing,

She later discovered that her father had sent her letter, as it was written, directly to the Rebbe. She, of course, dropped the idea.

(From an interview with A Chassidisher Derher)