



Thirty Years Strong

We find ourselves thirty years after the *histalkus* of my father-in-law, the Rebbe, and one might think that reaching thirty years, we can now stand on our own feet. After all, Chazal say “*Ben shloshim l’koach*,” at thirty years, a person reaches their full strength.

But the truth is, we are connected to the Rebbe today exactly the same way we were on the day after and in the moment after the *histalkus*. As the Rebbe himself said about his father [the Rebbe Rashab], thereby clarifying about himself as well: “The shepherds of the Jewish people will not forsake their flock!”

We need to hold steadfast on the Rebbe’s “*kliamke*” (lit. doorknob) and on to his open door. We must go to his Tziyun and write *pidyonos*, asking for his *brachos* and that he should invoke mercy on our behalf, even asking that he should grant us the proper receptacles with which to receive these *brachos*...

(Shabbos Parshas Yisro 5740; Sichos Kodesh 5740 vol. 2, p. 117)



Yud Shevat 5723. Chassidim gather at 770 to mark the Friediker Rebbe's 13th yahrtzeit.

The room is filled with intense energy as the Rebbe enters the farbrengen. Joyous song bursts forth from the crowd; the Rebbe vigorously encourages the niggun.

To the average onlooker, this might seem strange; shouldn't a yahrtzeit be a solemn time?

As the singing subsided, the Rebbe explained.



In his inaugural maamar Basi Legani, delivered on the Frierdiker Rebbe's first Yom Hilula, Yud Shvat, 5711, the Rebbe stated that all of the Rabbeim, the Alter Rebbe, the Mittlerer Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek, the Rebbe Maharash, the Rebbe Rashab, and the Frierdiker Rebbe, taught that *histalkus* does not mean the Rebbe left us for a higher world, *chas v'shalom*. Rather, he is still with us here in this physical world, albeit in a more elevated manner.

Throughout the years, the Yud Shevat farbrengens progressively took on a more festive tone. Before the farbrengen of Yud Shvat 5723 Chassidim sang a joyful Nikolayever niggun; when the Rebbe entered, he encouraged the singing energetically, which created an atmosphere that felt more like Simchas Torah than a

yahrtzeit. Following the singing, the Rebbe addressed the obvious question: How can we be joyful on such a somber occasion?

While an outside observer might conclude that time runs its course and thirteen years after the *histalkus* there would be a certain distance from the tzaddik, the exact opposite is true. In the first two *sichos* of that farbrengen the Rebbe spoke at great length and in tremendous depth about how our connection to the Frierdiker Rebbe continues to grow, and his presence among us is more real than ever.

In honor of the Yom Hilula of Gimmel Tammuz, we present the following adaptation of the first two sichos of Yud Shvat 5723. For a better understanding, it is recommended to listen to the audio recordings or learn the transcripts of these sichos.



“Yaakov Avinu *Lo Meis*”

The Gemara relates¹ that Rav Yitzchok said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan “עקב אבינו לא מת - Yaakov Avinu did not die.” Rav Nachman challenged this statement. The Torah describes at length and in detail how Yaakov Avinu was embalmed, eulogized, and buried in *Meoras Hamachpeila*. In fact, Yaakov Avinu’s passing is described by the Torah in greater detail than that of any other tzaddik!

Rav Yitzchok answered by interpreting

a *possuk* in Yirmeyahu that mentions Yaakov as well as his descendants, creating a comparison. “מה זרעו בחיים אף הוא בחיים - Just as his descendants are alive, so too, he (Yaakov) is alive.”

The precise articulation of this episode in the Gemara teaches us several important things. Rav Yitzchok’s statement was meant literally, not figuratively, to the extent that Rav Nachman protested that this assertion



contradicted facts recorded in *Toras Emes*. When presented with these facts, Rav Yitzchok did not refute them, nor did he revise, dilute, or reinterpret Rebbi Yochanan's statement. Rather he explained that since Yaakov's descendants are alive, he never passed away.

How does this make sense? Can the past be changed? Can the life of Yaakov's descendants be compared to Yaakov's lifetime during the 147 years before his passing in *Mitzrayim* and subsequent burial in *Meoras Hamachpeila*, as described

in *Parshas Vayechi*?

The answer to both questions is yes. Though time is linear and what's past is past, *Yidden*, through Torah and *Avodas Hashem*, can access a level that transcends time and retroactively change the past. And, though life is typically understood as the presence of the *neshama* in a physical body, there is a special category of people for whom the definition of literal life is broadened.

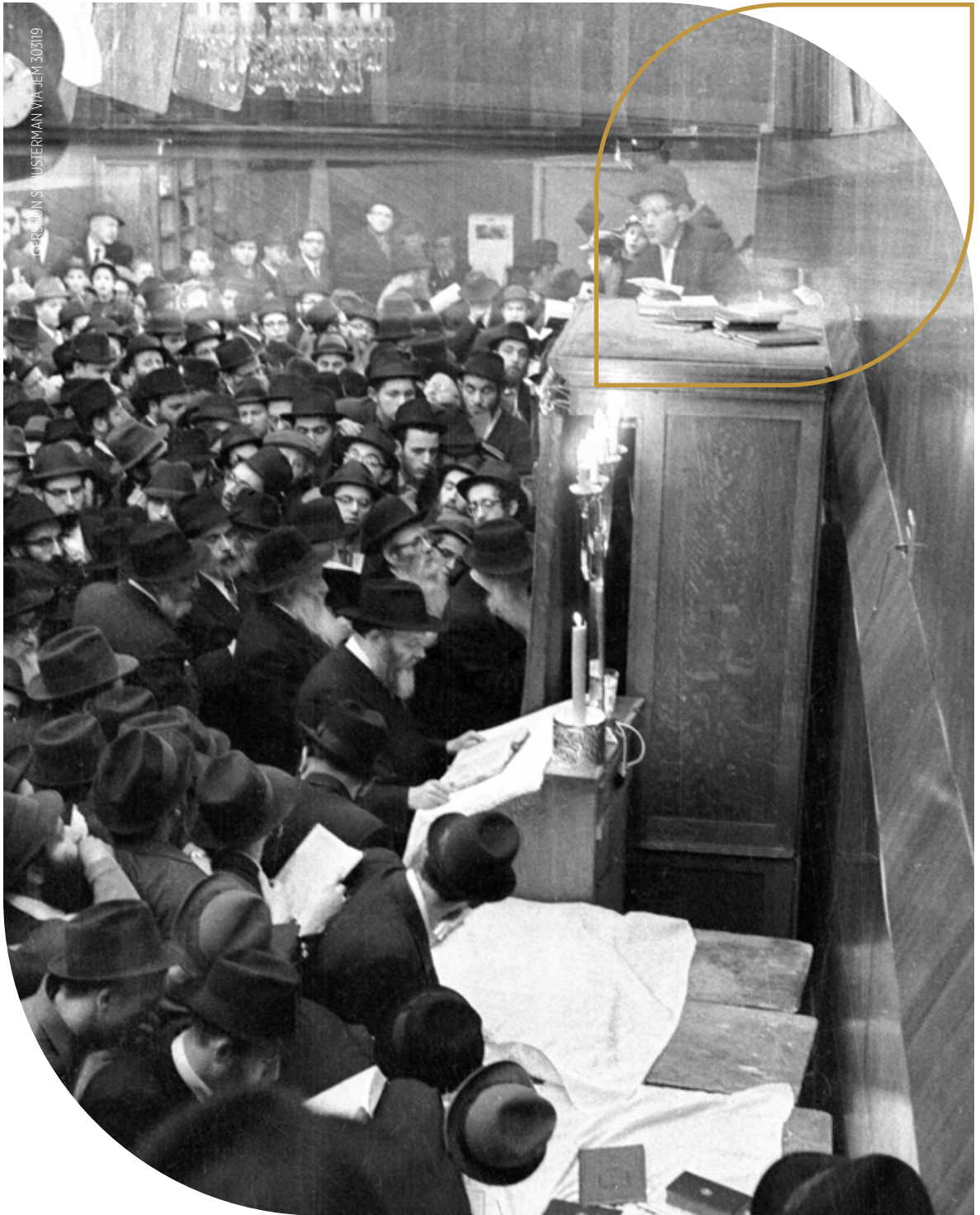
Let's explore these two novel ideas as they are explained in Torah.



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Changing *the* Past

Chassidus explains the era of Moshiach, and more specifically the era of *Techiyas Hameisim*, as the ultimate purpose of creation.² *Techiyas Hameisim* is the reward for our *Avodas Hashem* from the time of creation until the coming of Moshiach.

In our common and mundane reality, the compensation one receives for hard work does not necessarily have any connection with the content or theme of the work. There is no thematic connection between money and mowing a lawn, doing laundry, or babysitting. But in the truthful and wholesome reality of Torah, the reward for a mitzvah is directly connected to the theme and content of the mitzvah.

For example, the reward for

giving tzedakah is wealth (*Asser b'shvil shetis'asher*—give *maaser* in order to become rich). When you give away your hard-earned money for Hashem's causes, He, in turn, gives you back the same thing, only in His measure, which is many times-fold.

In the same vein, since the reward for our *Avodas Hashem* is *Techiyas Hameisim*, it follows that everything we are expected and empowered to do today is a type of *Techiyas Hameisim*.

Physicality, by its very nature, is limited in every way. When a person desires physical pleasures, it is obvious that the pleasure associated with them is temporary. It is only a matter of time before all physical things are no longer pleasing or enticing.



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It may take a day, a month, or years, but eventually, all physical things come to an end because everything in *olam hazeh* is bound by time; limited by definition.

Torah defines life as eternal. The classic halachic example is the water mixed with the ashes of the *Para Aduma* to purify a person or vessels from the most severe form of *Tum'ah - Tum'as Meis*. The Torah calls this water "*Mayim Chayim*" - living waters - and the Mishna states that water from a spring that dries up once in seven years cannot be used for this purpose. It is

not considered "living," because life denotes eternity, and the water for this purification must have an element of eternity.

When we apply the Torah's definition of life to physicality in general, it follows that all material objects are conceptually dead since they will eventually end. While they certainly exist by Torah's standards, their inevitable termination renders them not truly alive — by the Torah's definition of life — even now.

Our mission in this world is to take these



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“lifeless” physical objects and transform them into everlasting divine entities. When a Yid gives physical money to tzedakah in accordance with Hashem’s will, the money becomes a conduit for divine energy, revealing Hashem’s will in the physical world. When the physical money becomes connected to Hashem and His infinitude, what was limited and “dead” is transformed into eternal expressions of

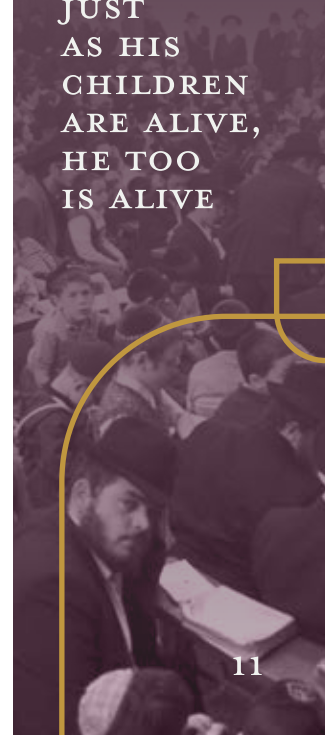
the divine. It becomes alive.

Furthermore, the mitzvah act which was done at a specific time and in a specific place, lives on forever. As the Alter Rebbe says in Tanya (ch. 25): “ויהודי זה למעלה הוא” —נצחי לעולם ועד [between the *neshama* of a person doing a mitzvah and Hashem] is everlasting in the heavenly spheres, forever!”

In other words, every mitzvah

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we do is an act of *Techiyas Hameisim!*

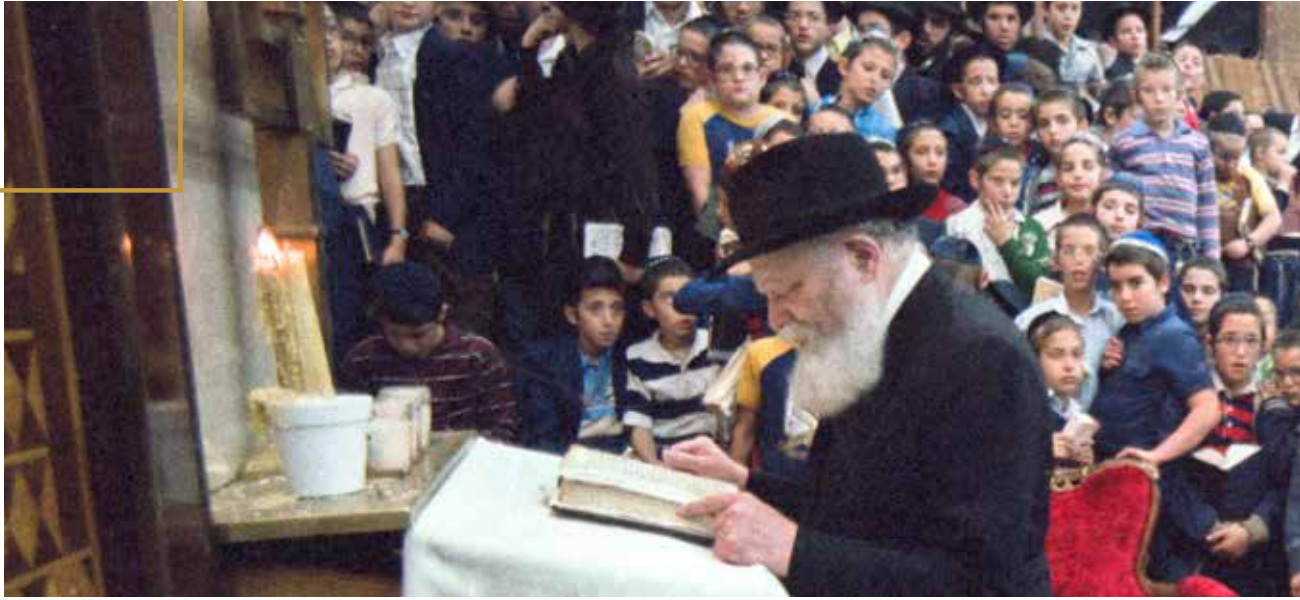
To take this a step further, Chassidus reveals that the everlasting “life” that infuses the physical objects with which a Yid does a mitzvah is not only relevant after the holy act was performed. Since the beginning of creation, every physical object has the potential to be used in some capacity for a mitzvah, which means that every limited and “lifeless” physical object always had the potential to become “alive” and eternal since the beginning of time. When a Yid finally does a mitzvah with it, its potential is revealed and retroactively makes the object a living and eternal object *from the beginning of time*.

The object’s history is rewritten! Whereas a moment ago, it was “lifeless,” after the Yid did the mitzvah, it now registers in the Torah reality as something that has been truly alive since the beginning of creation. The past is transformed.

By reorienting our understanding of time, we can clearly see that even if mistakes occurred in the past, they can be retroactively changed. To understand how this works, we must better understand how Torah defines human life.







The body *as a* Garment

Human life is comprised of a body and a soul. In addition, every person owns belongings with varying degrees of closeness and relevance to them. Clothing is specific to a person's size, style and stature, shelter is less so, and personal accessories and tools are even further removed. Certainly, the *neshama* is the essence of the person, but for the duration of life in this physical world, the *neshama* is intrinsically bound to the body as every function and expression of the *neshama* happens through the body. This relationship is so strong that sometimes the body's needs and desires take supremacy over the needs and desires of the *neshama*.



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It is even possible for a person to do something seemingly beneficial for the body to the detriment of the *neshama*!

Clothing, on the other hand, are much further removed from our essence. Although they can have a powerful positive or negative impact on a person, they are not intrinsically connected to the person. For this reason, when someone removes clothing from their body, although the important advantages of clothing may be momentarily absent, one can immediately don a different set of clothing, perhaps of

higher quality than the previous one, and the few moments of nakedness become irrelevant.

No one would ever prioritize an article of clothing over the *neshama*. It is inconceivable for someone to sacrifice the *neshama* for the benefit of a jacket because everyone understands that a jacket is merely a tool to be used in life, not life itself. But most people perceive the body as life itself, and their way of life reflects that perception.

This is what sets tzaddikim apart. They live life in a way that sees the body as similar to



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clothing: a mere tool to fulfill the neshama's mission in this world. For them, the only reason the body exists is to carry out the will of the *neshama*, observing mitzvos that must be done with the physical body, such as wearing tefillin on the arm and head, giving tzedakah with the hand, and so on. For such a tzaddik it is impossible to consider the body as on par with the *neshama*; the body is just a means to an end.

Yaakov Avinu exemplified this. All of our Avos were called *Merkava* - a chariot to Hashem - because during their lifetimes in this physical world, their bodies submitted completely to their *neshamos* and the will of Hashem - like the submission of a chariot to its rider.

Such tzaddikim are never bound by the limited life definitions of the body, because when the time comes for the neshama to disengage from the physical body, it can seamlessly transition into a new and more elevated type of garment with which to engage with this physical world.

What is this alternative garment?

Each one of the Avos personified a unique type of greatness and each one bequeathed to Klal Yisroel a distinct legacy in *Avodas Hashem*. Avraham Avinu embodied kindness through his legendary hospitality, Yitzchak Avinu found G-dliness in the physical world - expressed in his digging of wells, and Yaakov was the paragon of Torah study. Yet the most important accomplishment all three share, and the most appropriate title for them, is that they are Avos of Am Yisroel - the fathers of the Jewish nation.

Educating and inspiring their children to continue in their ways, of serving Hashem and bringing the brilliant clarity of *Elokus* to the world, was the most important pursuit of their lives. This was all that mattered to them, certainly more than their physical bodies.

When his descendants are firmly established as "*Zaroi*" - identified as the descendants of Yaakov Avinu *who continue his work in this world*, then Yaakov continues to live in this physical world through them, no less potently than when he was encloded in a physical body.



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The Alter Rebbe explains this concept in more detail in Tanya, Iggeres Hakodesh Siman 27 (“זך”), and applies it to great tzaddikim throughout the generations. The most important aspect of a tzaddik’s life is not inhabiting the physical body, but rather the spiritual pursuits of *emunah*, *yirah*, and *ahava*. But not just for themselves. They are dedicated to implanting these essential tenets of *Avodas Hashem* in others. When their disciples continue in their path even after their physical *histalkus*, these tzaddikim continue to live.

Now we can better understand the teaching of Rav Yitzchok in the name of Rebbi Yochanan. True, Yaakov Avinu experienced *histalkus*, the separation of his *neshama* from his body. The embalming, eulogizing, and burying of his body, as described at great length in the Torah, was entirely appropriate and necessary. However, this did not compromise Yaakov’s life in this world. After all, his life was never defined by his physical body. When the time came for his *neshama* to disengage from his body, his *neshama* had the potential to immediately transition into a different and more elevated garment — his descendants. Once his descendants rose to the occasion and embodied his lifelong teachings and inspiration, Yaakov Avinu continued living in this world through them. This worked retroactively, so there was never a moment when he was not living in this world.

Yaakov Avinu never passed away.





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Exponential *Impact*

Now that we have clarified Rav Yitzchok's overarching message, we can gain further insight by exploring why the teaching was articulated in such a specific way *מה זרעו בחיים אף הוא בחיים*.

Since, even after his physical body's demise, Yaakov Avinu continues to live through his children and the students who follow his path, perhaps it would have been more appropriate for Rav Yitzchok



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to have used the term תלמידיו - his students - or a similar title which refers to people who learned from Yaakov Avinu. The term זרעו simply means descendants, which could be limited to biological children, while meaning students only in a metaphorical sense.

The word “zaro” also means his seeds. When someone plants seeds they never do it to grow just one seed or a few more seeds. As Chazal state, “A person plants one kav of seeds to reap many

kurim of produce.” One kur is 180 kavim. Seeding is an investment with an outsized return.

This means that Yaakov Avinu established the Jewish nation in a way that his children would expand his *avoda* of revealing *Elokus* in this world after his *histalkus*.

The word נשיא is an acronym for ניצוצו של יעקב אבינו - a spark of Yaakov Avinu. Every Nossi implanted within their children and followers



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the ability to influence many others to follow in their ways.

The [Frierdiker] Rebbe, *Nessi Doreinu*, worked tirelessly and with great self-sacrifice to provide a proper education to all Yidden. He invested equally in both students who were capable of understanding the deepest secrets of the Torah, along with those who did not even know

Aleph-Beis. His intention was not only that the students learning Aleph-Beis should eventually reach the level of understanding the secrets of the Torah, but that all of the students, no matter their level of understanding, should, in turn, go out and teach many more, exponentially growing the number of students.

Time Does Not Cause Distance

The term “*zaroi*” teaches us another important lesson.

Some rationalize that all the above can be relevant during the first twelve months after the *histalkus*, when Halachically, we behave in a manner that expresses our connection with the departed

tzaddik. Perhaps in the second year as well. But as the years go by, doesn't our connection with the tzaddik naturally diminish?

Another element of planting gives us a new perspective on this obvious question.

Some plants grow shortly after



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seeding, and others take longer. The better the produce is, the longer you need to wait for the fruit to be ready. In the meantime, the crop must be carefully tended for as long as it takes to ensure that the best produce eventually grows. The Gemara gives us examples of produce that grows after fifty-two days, twenty-one days, or a fruit tree that takes up to seventy years to produce its delicious fruits.

A person is compared to a tree. Sometimes it takes seventy years for the tree to produce its fruits, as the possuk says, “*Tzaddik katamar yifrach*,” a tzaddik will sprout like a palm tree—which takes seventy years to grow. The number seventy represents a

full lifetime, “*Yemei sh’noseinu . . . shivi’im shanah...*” even though a person might live more years than that. The number seventy encapsulates a full life because it signifies the seventy steps of *Avodas Hashem* that a person should complete in their lifetime.

It follows that the progression of time further and further from the *histalkus* and the time the tzaddik was engaged in this world through his physical body is no reason for our connection to the tzaddik to wither or diminish in any way. On the contrary, the nature of his impact is such that the “greatest return on his investment” only begins to materialize and be revealed as time goes on.



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We Can *Do It All*

There is one difference, however, between physical seeds and the “*zaroi*” of a tzaddik:

In the physical world, each seed produces only the intended grain, vegetable, or fruit, and nothing else. Spiritual seeding, however, is not limited to one type of “produce.” As mentioned earlier, the amount of time it takes for seeds to ultimately produce their grain or fruit is an indication of the quality of the produce. The longer it takes,

the more valuable it is. Applying this to spiritual seeding, it follows that each progressive year, we can and must progress and upgrade the type of spiritual fruits we produce, bettering and elevating our *avoda*.

This is possible because the *neshamos* of all Yidden are interconnected, and we can therefore grow any type of “fruit,” which means we can do any type of *avoda*, even that which is not necessarily

the primary type for our *neshama*. Every Yid can and is expected to be involved in every type of *avoda*. Chazal state that a person must ask himself, “When will my deeds reach those of my forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov?” Although each one of the Avos excelled in a distinct type of *avoda*, as mentioned earlier, we are expected to emulate them all.

A Yid is royalty; a *ben-melech*. A king has no limitations—a king breaks through all barriers. In this sense, a Yid is not bound to one form of *avoda* or another. He may begin with something as basic as Aleph-Beis, but he can achieve greater levels of *avoda*, until he reaches the most complete and wholesome form of *avoda* of the seventy-year sprouting—*tzaddik katamar yifrach*.

This is what the Frierdiker Rebbe expected of all his Chassidim: to encompass all forms of *avoda*, both with one’s self, through learning *nigleh* and Chassidus and teaching others, and to also find time for giving *tzedakah*, both materially and spiritually, helping those around him. The Rebbe doesn’t expect the impossible. Certainly, we were given the ability to fulfill this task. As he explains in the Maamar he published for his *Yom Hilula* (Basi L’Gani 5710), vast spiritual treasures are provided to us to help us win the spiritual war of *galus* and bring

Moshiach. They are given specifically to us, the foot soldiers, since we are the ones who will bring about the ultimate victory.

A soldier follows orders, no matter what the assignment. He goes wherever he is sent and does what he is told to do. Whether he needs to shoot a rifle as an infantryman, ride on a horse in the cavalry, or shoot a cannon in the artillery, he relies on the instructions of the general, confident that his efforts will bring about the desired victory; whether it takes fifty-two days, or in some cases, seventy years.



Ultimately it is up to us - *Zaroi* - the Rebbe’s children, students, and seeds to live up to this expectation and be prepared to continuously grow in our *Avoda* from year to year, quantitatively and qualitatively. We are empowered to ensure that *Yaakov Avinu Lo Meis* - that the Rebbe continues to live in this world through us, in a way that grows stronger and more impactful from year to year, preparing our world for the ultimate *Geulah*, when the purpose of creation will be realized. This dark and terrible *golus* will end, and we will merit the coming of Moshiach, וימלכנו בראשון!

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1. Taanis 5b.
 2. Tanya ch. 36.