



NO EASY WAY OUT

THE MISSION OF LUBAVITCH

The following is an excerpt of a yechidus that the Rebbe held with directors of “Hillel” on 23 Menachem-Av 5719.¹

Rebbe: If I remember correctly, last time we met we discussed that everyone must always go *meichayil el chayil*—from strength to strength. Being that a year has elapsed in between, probably every one of us is more efficient. I would like to hear *besuros tovos* about your achievements.

Q: Why didn't the Lubavitcher movement choose to go to Israel instead of the U.S.?

Rebbe: The Lubavitcher movement came to the U.S. in 1940, when the British Mandate was in full power. If you have a certain amount of energy and it is your intention to use it to a maximum of efficiency, you must apply it where it can be used to maximum efficiency.

Q: Do you mean that there are more Jewish people here that will be helped by your ideals?

Rebbe: There is more possibility to help more people in Brooklyn than in Tel Aviv.

Q: Is that why you chose Brooklyn, and not some other city like Chicago?

Rebbe: The real reason is because my father-in-law wanted a place where he could influence a great number of students. And this can be done more easily in Brooklyn than in Baltimore or Chicago.

Q: If the British Mandate had not been in Israel, would he have chosen Israel?

Rebbe: I don't believe so; you do not have the possibilities there that you have in the United States.

Q: Did the entire Lubavitcher movement come to the U.S. at one time, or did they come as individuals?

Rebbe: Lubavitcher congregations were established in the U.S. over fifty years ago. They invited my father-in-law as a political refugee from Poland, which was under German occupation. The Chassidim in the U.S. intervened through the State Department. They explained to the State Department the advantages of having his leadership here in the U.S., and through the American Embassy in Berlin they were successful in having him leave and come to the United States. But, I believe, that even had there been a choice between the two million Jews in the U.S. or the hundred thousand in Israel, where they had already established *yeshivos* and Yiddishkeit, he would have chosen the harder field to work with and not the most convenient. There was more challenge here in Brooklyn.

Q: Lubavitch is systematic, and the neo-Orthodox in Israel do not have some of the frustrations of the Jews in *galut*.

Rebbe: It has no connection with being Orthodox or systematic. It deals with choosing a spot where you have no help or choosing a spot where you can rest twelve or fifteen hours a day. It doesn't depend upon the ideal but whether the human being is seeking an easy way out or seeking to accomplish something, and in a certain period of time. My father-in-law always sought something that was difficult to perform, that no one wanted to do voluntarily, and began by doing something revolutionary.

In 1940, Orthodoxy in the U.S. was declining. In Israel, it was going up, and in Europe it was at the same level, more or less. When my father-in-law first heard that the Chassidim were trying to bring him to the U.S., his first thought was that this is a place where his energies can best be applied. Neo-Orthodoxy is trying to fight assimilation while it is still only a seed, as it is much easier to annihilate something when it is beginning than after it is fully grown.

OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES

Q: I came across a great amount of children who have expressed bitterness aimed at their parents. Can you suggest an approach to turn this bitterness into love?

Rebbe: Although there is no general remedy that will apply to each individual, there is, however, one common point. In growing up, he must encounter difficulties and obstacles in his way—the world is changing, his body is changing, and this presents him with obstacles. He needs someone to be a scapegoat. The only person who has been with him all his life is his parent, and if he has no strength of character to say to himself that he must overcome these obstacles—even if it is connected with the biggest event in his life—then he must find someone to put the finger on. His road is not easy to travel. He must choose his father and mother to blame, because he knows his teacher for only one or two years and he experienced these difficulties before that. If he can place blame on his mother or father, he has a perfect excuse.

Explain to your audience the real reason they choose their parents for their accusations, but do not stress this point too hard. Tomorrow or the day after tomorrow they will be less bitter. Do not expect them to stand up on the first day and say “*ashamnu*.”

TRANSMISSION OF LEADERSHIP

Q: How is it that I saw that the leadership of Lubavitch was transmitted through a daughter and not through a son?

Rebbe: You probably mean after the son of the Alter Rebbe [the Mitteler Rebbe]. He had two sons, but they begged the son-in-law to take over the leadership.

Q: Is it ideals and not heredity that decides the leadership?

Rebbe: Only ideals. Only someone who has the aptitude in a certain direction. If you have a father who all of his life has consecrated himself toward certain ideals so that it permeates his very existence, it must also permeate his wife and children. If he is permeated by a certain idea, the first subjects to be impressed by it will be his son or his daughter. If the subject is Torah or Kabbalah, the son is more adaptable than the daughter. [Turning to the only woman present, the Rebbe said: “You will excuse me for saying this, as it is not my idea.”] The reason for the leadership is not because he was his son, but because he has a maximum of piety, education, and *hislahavus*; he received it from his father and his environment and thus has a bigger chance.

The Tzemach Tzedek (third Lubavitcher Rebbe) was an orphan from the third year of his life, and the Alter Rebbe took care of his education personally. Thus, he had more chances to receive this education than even the sons of the Mitteler Rebbe.

This is the answer for an intellectual. If you are a Chossid you must accept a more spiritual explanation: An individual's being a Rebbe is not prompted by something accidental or monetary but by something above us. The son of the Mezritcher Maggid, for example, was his successor for only five years, and then he passed away. It is not dependent upon something physical, but something spiritual and divine.

I wish you a *kesiva vachasima tova*, and next year I will ask you more forcefully about your achievements. **T**

1. The *yechidus* can be found in its entirety in *Toras Menachem* (newer editions) vol. 26, p. 203a, and at chabad.org/987922.