



The Need for Travel

When the Alter Rebbe was arrested for the second time,¹ his release was secured through the intervention of Nota Notkin, an influential businessman from Petersburg (who happened to be a *mishagid*).

Nota had contacts in the royal court and was a personal friend of the secretary to Czar Alexander I. He was able to ensure that the request for the Alter Rebbe's freedom should be one of the first three requests on the Czar's table on the day of his installation, guaranteeing clemency. Tradition held that the Czar would immediately grant the first three requests on his table.

But Nota made one condition: Upon his release, the Alter Rebbe would visit with three non-chassidic *rabbonim* and lay out the argument for the ways of Chassidus.

The Alter Rebbe agreed.

The three *rabbonim* were: Reb Moshe Chefetz

of Chouvas, Reb Yehoshua Ceitlin of Shklov, and Reb Yoel of Amtsislov.

When the Alter Rebbe reached Chouvas, he headed for the home of Reb Moshe.

Reb Moshe asked the Alter Rebbe:

"Why must your Chassidim travel to see you?"

The Alter Rebbe explained that there are certain things they need to hear specifically from him.

"But doesn't the travel time cause them to do *bittul Torah*?" asked Reb Moshe.

The Alter Rebbe explained that they are not required to stop learning; they can learn while they travel.

"But the fact of the matter is, they don't learn while traveling," retorted Reb Moshe. "This is *bittul Torah*!"

The Alter Rebbe answered: "Yes, it is *bittul Torah*. And they will have to do *teshuva* for that."

"If so," asked Reb Moshe, "why should they travel in

the first place? Let them stay at home and not interrupt their Torah learning, and there will be no need for them to do *teshuva*!"

The Alter Rebbe replied: "No. They must travel to visit their Rebbe. And even if they transgress and interrupt their Torah learning, they can do *teshuva* afterwards. In fact there is a Gemara that proves my point!"

Reb Moshe was baffled. He was *boki* in the entire *Shas* but he couldn't understand what the Alter Rebbe was referring to.

The Alter Rebbe explained:

The Gemara says² that if someone has a bad dream that necessitates a fast, he is required to fast even on Shabbos. Later, he has to do an additional fast, as a form of *teshuva* for the *aveira* of fasting on Shabbos.

One can ask: Why not prohibit the dreamer from fasting on Shabbos in the first place, and avoid his additional fast afterwards?

The answer is: If a person has a bad dream, it means they did a big *aveira* that needs immediate rectification. For that he must fast, even on Shabbos. For the *aveira* of fasting on Shabbos, he can do *teshuva* later on.

The same can be said of the Chassidim who travel to their Rebbe.

They have strayed from the proper path of *avodas Hashem* and need to rectify that immediately by traveling to the Rebbe and learning the true way to serve Hashem.

If it so happens that they commit the *aveira* of *bittul Torah* while traveling, they can and must do *teshuva* for that afterwards. ①

(Adapted from *Otzar Sippurei Chabad* vol. 15, p. 138)

1. See *HaYom Yom* 27 Kislev.

2. *Brachos* 31b.