



לזכות  
הרה"ת ר' ארי' יצחק הכהן  
וזוגתו מרת ראשא רוזא  
ומשפחתם שיחיו  
ווינשטיין



# Retirement? Out of the question!

It was in the months preceding Yud-Alef Nissan 5732\*, when the Rebbe would celebrate his seventieth birthday, and the Rebbe began receiving letters from well meaning people suggesting that perhaps the Rebbe should consider slowing down his activities.

This was not an unfounded opinion. In the United States, the customary age for retirement is 65. And it keeps dropping. It is not uncommon to hear of people retiring in their fifties.

At the Yud-Alef Nissan farbrengen, the Rebbe addressed these concerns:

“I have been asked: ‘Now that you have attained the age of 70, what are your plans? It would seem that this is an appropriate time to rest a bit...’ My response to that is that we must begin to accomplish even more.

“On the occasion of entering the seventies, this year we should establish at least 70 new institutions! I will be a partner with everyone who will undertake these projects. We will cover at least 10% of the expenses involved in establishing these 70 institutions. And don’t worry if during this year we will start not 70 but 80, and maybe even 100. On the contrary—may blessings be bestowed upon all those

involved. There will surely be no impediments as far as the 10 percent is concerned...”

This response seems obvious. After all, the Rebbe is responsible for all of *klal Yisroel* and retirement is surely out of the question for him.

But what about a businessman, or a rabbi in a small town. Is retirement really not an option? After decades of hard work, don’t they deserve to take it easy and enjoy the fruits of their labor?

## WHEN YOU’LL BE MY AGE

Rabbi Moshe Rosen was the chief rabbi of Romania beginning in 5708\*. The subsequent years under Stalin were very difficult, and even after Stalin died in 5713\*, being the chief rabbi of a Communist country was fraught with danger.

By 5742\*, he had had enough. He was already 70 years old and felt that the time had come to retire and move to Eretz Yisroel.

He brought this up to the Rebbe in *yechidus*.



JEM 245285

RABBI DOVID MOSHE ROSEN



RABBI PINNY LEW

THE FARBRENGEN OF YUD-ALEF NISSAN 5732\*, CELEBRATING THE REBBE'S 70TH BIRTHDAY.

The Rebbe said that he is surprised to hear of his plan to leave Romania. He brought examples from rabbis in the United States who also wanted to emigrate to Eretz Yisroel but decided to stay and lead their communities.

To stress this point, the Rebbe told him that when the newspapers reported that he was going to leave Romania, a rabbi in South Carolina wrote to him that he is now also planning to retire.

Rabbi Rosen asked the Rebbe, "When can I finally relax with my family?"

The Rebbe responded, "When you'll be my age we can discuss it."<sup>1</sup>

The Rebbe was then 80 years old. Ten years later, when Rabbi Rosen was at the age that the Rebbe had been 10 years earlier, he returned to the Rebbe to discuss the issue again.

This *yechidus* took place on 10 Kislev 5752\*, and it was the last *yechidus* the Rebbe granted to this day.

As a result of this *yechidus*, an 80-year-old Rabbi Rosen returned to Romania and served his community until his passing.

### I'M OLDER THAN YOU

Rabbi Dovid Hollander began his career as a rabbi in 5703\*. Forty years later, when he was almost 70 years old, his congregation had shrunk and his shul was on the verge of closing down.

That year, he came to the Rebbe for *lekach* on Erev Yom Kippur.

While giving him *lekach*, the Rebbe said to him "I give you a *bracha* as a rabbi and as a private citizen."

Hearing the words "private citizen," he got excited. It seemed as though the Rebbe would agree with his plan to retire.

However, when he told the Rebbe of this development, the Rebbe responded, "What right do you have to have such ideas? I'm older than you and I'm taking on new work!"

A short while later, when he went by the Rebbe for *kos shel bracha* on Motzei Simchas Torah, the Rebbe announced, "Remember, *rabbanus* for life!"<sup>2</sup>

Rabbi Hollander went on to serve as a rabbi for another 25 years.

## WASTED TALENT

It is undeniable, however, that situations arise when a person's job simply does not exist anymore. One such person was Rabbi Noteh Zuber of Roselle, New Jersey.

Like many shuls in the 5730s\*, his congregation had slowly dwindled until it petered out.

Around that time, his niece, Mrs. Chana Sharfstein, was in *yechidus* in honor of the *bar mitzvah* of her son.

Suddenly the Rebbe asked about her uncle, Rabbi Zuber.

She responded that he had just retired. The Rebbe said, "Retired, what does that mean?"

Thinking that the Rebbe was unfamiliar with the term, she started explaining that his shul had closed and as a result he was no longer working.

There is no such thing as retiring, answered the Rebbe. Sometimes a situation arises that necessitates a change of occupation and one must make adjustments, but retirement does not exist.

The Rebbe then suggested several options that would enable him to utilize his talents and continue to contribute to the Jewish community.

The reason that retirement does not exist, the Rebbe explained on another occasion.

The moment a Jewish person is born he is enlisted in *tzivos Hashem*, the army of Hashem. This position as a soldier in Hashem's army accompanies a person from the moment he takes his first breath until he breathes his last. A Jew does not have permission to "resign his post" and retire from *tzivos Hashem*!

If a situation arises where he has extra time due to his previous occupation being too strenuous, that is just a sign that he must find a different way to serve Hashem.

When someone gets older and can't work, not only is he not freed from a life of meaning and purpose, on the contrary! He now has extra time to devote to serving Hashem.<sup>3</sup>

## AGED WISDOM

How different this attitude is from secular culture, where age is looked at as a weakness and old people are considered a burden.

"What do the old people know," goes the thinking. "They're stuck in the past and have nothing to contribute."

Torah tells us, though, "*Rov shanim yodiu chochma*," many years bring wisdom.<sup>4</sup>

This is why a prerequisite to joining the Sanhedrin was being over 70 years old.<sup>5</sup>

True, an older person can't move as quickly, but the experience he has is priceless. As smart and quick as a young person may be, there is only one way to gain experience: time.

In the world of business, such experience is invaluable. A new employee can waste weeks figuring out how to approach a certain issue. If he



RABBI DOVID HOLLANDER  
VISITS THE REBBE FOR LEKACH,  
HOSHANA RABBA 5749\*.



would just ask an older person with experience, he would have the answer instantly!

This explains why the mitzvah of *mipnei seiva takum*—to stand before old people—applies even to older people who aren't Torah scholars. Their age and experience has given them wisdom that is impossible to replicate without living that long.

It is truly sad that the value of older people is not appreciated. The greatest *bracha* the Torah gives is למען יאריכון ימיה, a long life.



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Indeed, the *bracha* for long life is a reward for כבוד את אביך ואת אמך, honor your father and mother. The message is clear: eventually you will be that age, so you should treat your parents like you would want to be treated.<sup>6</sup>

### USEFUL UNTIL THE END

There was an older shliach who served faithfully for many decades under very difficult conditions.

As he got on in years, he repeatedly wrote to the Rebbe asking for permission to move back to Crown Heights, and he never received a response.

Later, a colleague of his was in *yechidus* and asked the Rebbe on his behalf if he could leave his post after all these years.

The Rebbe answered, “What should he move to Crown Heights for? So that he can sit on a bench on Eastern Parkway and say Tehilim all day?”

The message is clear. Even in a diminished capacity, one must maintain a life of meaning and purpose.

In a letter to Mr. Mel Landow, a famous philanthropist who was considering retirement after his business took a turn for the worse, the Rebbe writes:

“With reference to retirement, it is self-evident that you should continue actively in the business world, which obviously will be good for your self-confidence and in general, as well as for your wife and family.

“There is also a further point to this. You have been successful in business for many years, having put to good use the capacities and talents which G-d has bestowed upon you in a generous measure. It would therefore not be right, to say the least, not to utilize them fully in the future, for it would be tantamount to rejecting something which G-d has given you to make good use of. In other words, it is not merely a personal problem but one that also has other far-reaching implications.”

For the Rebbe, retirement, from any field, is a grave mistake. 📌

- 1 Admorei Chabad V'yahadut Romania, p. 31.
- 2 “My Encounter” Living Torah Disk 25, Program 98.
- 3 Farbrengen Rosh Chodesh Elul 5740, sicha 4.
- 4 Iyov, 32:7.
- 5 The Rambam says that an old person cannot answer questions in *halacha*. But he is referring to someone exceptionally old, who can no longer function.
- 6 Farbrengen Rosh Chodesh Elul 5740, sicha 4.