

ב"ה

Guidance & Leadership

מרכז אנ"ש
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5

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ליבות

הוותיק והסיד הר"ר רחמים יהושע חי בן עדינה

ויוגתו אודליה הודיה בת אסתר

בתם אורלי אסתר בת אודליה הודיה

בנם מיכאל משה בן אודליה הודיה

נמני

להצלחה רבה בגו"ר בבני חיי ומזוני רויחי

Preface

A bochur once wrote to the Rebbe, outlining his plans for the future year. In the letter, he mentioned that he had asked his *mashpia* for permission to go to college, and that his *mashpia* had indeed given him the necessary permission.

The Rebbe's answer to the mazkirus was brief. "*Ivarer me hu hamashpia*" (determine who is the *mashpia*). Upon investigation, the following story emerged. Apparently, the bochur had asked a friend of his to act as his "*mashpia*," and had asked this "*mashpia*" whether he should enroll in college. Evidently, the "*mashpia*," not very impressed with this scheme, retorted to the bochur "*tu vos du vilst*" (go do what you want). Armed with such a "clear directive," the bochur subsequently had written a letter to the Rebbe, claiming that his "*mashpia*" had given him permission to go to college.

The story is humorous, and yet, at the same time, can very well cause one to rethink his or her approach to having a *mashpia*. We can all see how misguided the Bochur was in his understanding of what a *mashpia* is all about. However, how well do we understand the role of a *mashpia*? Do we truly appreciate the superiority of the *mashpia* and value his guidance? Or are we perhaps, in some way, similar to the bochur, choosing someone just to fulfill an obligation to "have a *mashpia*" and then follow them irrationally, being that this is "what my *mashpia* said".

So what is a *mashpia*?

The Rebbe, on occasion, expressed disappointment when people would excuse themselves for not turning to a *mashpia*. "Can these people not find someone who has more *Ahavas Hashem* and *Yiras Hashem* than them?" asked the Rebbe¹. We see that a *mashpia* is first and foremost a spiritual guide, someone to look up to in matters of *ruchniyus*, a person whose devotion to the values of *yiddishkeit* and *chassidishkeit* earn our respect. A *mashpia* is someone who we can learn from when it comes to our own service of Hashem.

A great example can be taken from the world of business. Someone who is new to a field of business will naturally feel lost, unable to make decisions, unsure of which direction he should be moving toward. The best thing, under the circumstances, would be to learn the business from an older, more experienced businessman. Through watching the experienced businessman's dealings, the newcomer will learn how to go about his own business affairs. And before he makes a decision, the newcomer will want to know how the older, seasoned businessman feels about this deal. Even though it is his own business, still, the young businessman values the advice that his older colleague shares with him. Every bit of advice contains years of knowledge and experience. What the older businessman had to learn the hard way, through trial and error, can now be learned by merely listening and understanding, through appreciating the wisdom behind the advice.

In spiritual matters, things are no different. A *mashpia* is meant to be a person with years of experience and knowledge. Someone who has the knowledge to guide, and at the same time, has actually worked on himself, who

1. Simchas Beis Hashoeivah 5713 (Lekutei Sichos vol. 24 p. 106). See Sefer Hasichos 5747 p. 71 that even the residents of S'dom recognized the need to appoint a Rav who is spiritually greater than themselves (Lot, from the family of Avrohom Avinu).

has the experience and the know-how to lead his fellow².

A *mashpia* is not merely a wall to bounce ideas off of, nor a crystal ball, to follow blindly. Rather, a *mashpia* is someone with whom to discuss our issues, someone who helps us make decisions, and someone who we look up to and respect.

When we give some thought to the idea of what a *mashpia* should be, and can be, it may occur to us that quite possibly, there is room for improvement in this aspect of a *chossid's* life. How many errors could be avoided, how much misunderstanding could be averted, and how much better could we be serving Hashem if we only knew how to utilize this tool which is so readily available to those who wish to avail themselves of it?

Hopefully, this compilation regarding different aspects of "Asei lecha rav" will encourage many to find a *mashpia* for themselves, thereby fulfilling the Rebbe's personal request ("*bakasha nafshis*"), towards our benefit, *b'gashmius* and *b'ruchnius*.

Merkaz Anash

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May they all be bentched bebanei chayei umezoinai rvichei, vkol tuv begashmiyus uberuchniyus.

2. See Sefer Hasichos 5747 p. 48 that a *mashpia* should be greater than oneself in Torah knowledge and actual experience of serving HaShem.



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As a Father Cares for his Children

HOW THE REBBE PREPARED US FOR THE POST-GIMMEL TAMMUZ ERA • POTENT GUIDANCE AND DIRECTION • THE CHILLING EVENTS OF 2 ADAR, 5748 (1988)

SPONSORED BY REB DANIEL JACOBSON AND FAMILY

Gimmel Tammuz, 5754 (1994)

Shock, confusion, pain.

And then the multitude of questions surfaced:

Could it be that the Rebbe did not forewarn us?

May we *chas vesholom* suggest that this was an error in the plan?

What would the Rebbe say to us now?

And then on a practical level: How does the Rebbe want the Lubavitch community to be run, and by whom? To whom do we bring our questions – mundane and spiritual, personal and communal?

The simple answers to these crucial concerns lie in an awe-inspiring event, on a *Motzoei Shabbos*, deep into the winter of 5748 (1988).

At that time, like a father caring for his children, the Rebbe specified a coherent plan of action for all of us to follow.



The *histalkus* of the *Rebbitzin* on 22 Shvat, 5748, struck the Lubavitch world with shock. But what most worried chassidim was the Rebbe's demeanor. The Rebbe looked very serious. More than once during the *shivah*, the

Rebbe choked with emotion as he served as *sheliach tzibbur*. The Rebbe was clearly anxious, and with him all the chassidim.

But the shock was yet to come, ten days after the *histalkus*, on *Motzoei Shabbos*, 2 Adar, 5748.

On that evening the Rebbe served as *sheliach tzibbur* for *Maariv* at his home on President Street. *Havdala* followed, after which the Rebbe was expected to go upstairs.

Suddenly, the Rebbe turned to the chassidim, ready to share a *sicha*. The hundreds present immediately took their places, and a hookup was hastily arranged to be heard and watched in 770.

Everyone present understood that something out of the ordinary was happening. The silence was tense, as the Rebbe began by saying:

A very good *Motzoei Shabbos* to all. ...May all the *inyanim* of *Motzoei Shabbos* be revealed in a positive manner.

After introductory teachings on various subjects, including *Motzoei Shabbos* and the concept of giving *brochos*, the Rebbe looked very serious as he proceeded to say:



...The ongoing continuity of *Chassidus* and of the Rebbeim until the coming of *Moshiach* is assured beyond all doubt. Nevertheless, to counter the doubt that some people may entertain on the subject (and the numerical value of *sofek* equals the numerical value of *Amalek*), let us be clear:

...My father-in-law, the *nasi* of our generation, once related that some years before the passing of the *Tzemach Tzedek* [and after the passing of his *Rebbitzin* – Ed.], someone mentioned to him the concept of *bo'u nachshov cheshbono shel olam*.

[In the *Gemara*, that phrase speaks of weighing and monitoring one's life in this world, keeping in mind its sequel in the World to Come. It thus alludes to the subject of *histalkus*. – Ed.]

Nevertheless, we see that the *Tzemach Tzedek* lived and was active as Rebbe for some years after that.

At the time I wondered why this episode was told to me...

This was the first time the Rebbe had ever mentioned this incident about the *Tzemach Tzedek*. Indeed, it had never been printed in the name of any of the Rebbeim

nor had it ever appeared in the chassidic oral tradition. After cryptically alluding to it, the Rebbe continued:




Indeed, the very discussion of this subject may be regarded as a *segula* for good years and a long life.

...The first *nosi*, Moshe Rabbeinu, began passing on the *nesius* to Yehoshua immediately on being commanded to do so, and in the course of his own lifetime, when he appointed him to wage war with Amalek. A similar pattern may be observed with our Rebbeim...

...The Torah entrusts authority into the hands of a *beis din*. They have been endowed and empowered with this role and this mission.

... The Torah dictates that when a person has a question, he should approach *rabbonim*. When necessary – three *rabbonim*, or it could be only one *rov*. Alternatively, if it is a private question, one could speak with one *rov*, who will discuss the issue with his colleagues and relay their joint response to the questioner...



Chazal say that one should regard the current *chachomim* just as those from the previous generation. One should not say, "If Rabbi Akiva would be with us, I would learn from him; if Rabbi Zeira and Rabbi Yochanan were alive, I would learn with them." Rather, he should consider the *chachomim* of his own generation with the full respect. This is the meaning of Shlomo Hamelech's words, "Do not justify yourself by saying that the earlier days were better than these."

(קה"ר פ"א, ר"ה בב סע"א)



The Torah commands us to follow the instructions of the *rabbonim* in each generation. Chazal explain that no matter the greatness of the leading *chachomim*, we are obligated to heed their guidance. Though Yiftach was no comparison to Shmuel HaNavi in greatness, the people of his generation were nevertheless obligated to hold him in equal regard.

The Sefer HaChinuch writes that one who disregards their advice is forfeiting a *mitzvas aseï* and deserves great punishment: "For this is a firm pillar upon which the Torah stands, as can be understood by anyone with understanding."

(ס' החינוך מצוה תצה)

...In times bygone, there would need to be a *mashpia* as well as a *rov*, in order to clarify a ruling from all sides. However, today, when we have the concept of *chassidishe rabbonim*, the Lubavitcher *rabbonim* incorporate all the required qualities, so they also have the distinctive quality of a *mashpia*... [The Rebbe here defined a *chassidisher rov* as one who actively studies *Chassidus*. – Ed.]

...Therefore, in every city and town there should be a *beis din* of *chassidishe rabbonim* to deal with the issues that arise. In a place where there are no three *chassidishe rabbonim*, a third *rov* should be brought in from another place, or alternatively, one of the townspeople could be chosen by the *rabbonim* to join them, as is prescribed in the *Halacha*...

...And so, regarding all questions that may arise, one should know that their answer already lies with the *rabbonim*. All you need to do is ask them.

All Jews, including even those described in [chapter 2 of] *Tanya* as *tzipornayim*, have an inborn soul-link with Moshe Rabbeinu, and with the extension of Moshe Rabbeinu in every generation. By virtue of this link, they are animated by all his *inyanim*, in *gashmiyus* and even more so in *ruchniyus*. In the words of the *pasuk*, *Tov ayin hu yevorach*... [Literally, "He whose eye is generous will be blessed," on which Chazal comment, *Tov ayin hu yevarech*... – "He whose eye is generous will bless." – Ed.]



Toward the end of the thirty-eight minute sicha, the Rebbe showered his *brochos* on all those assembled, including the Rebbe himself:

...May we all have *arichus yomim*, with the blessings of *HaShem* for *bonei*, *chayei umezonei*, in a plentiful manner.

Wishing everyone a joyous *Motzoei Shabbos*...



Immediately after the *sicha*, the Rebbe distributed dollars [to be given for *tzedaka*] to all those present. Word of this spread quickly, and thousands flocked to President Street to receive a dollar from the Rebbe's holy hand.

As the line thickened, the *rabbonim*, the members of the *beis din* of Crown Heights, hastily convened. They decided they must approach the Rebbe himself.

The leader of the group, *HaRav* Marlow, after wishing the Rebbe long life, said to the Rebbe: "This week's *parsha* begins with the words *Ve'ata tetzaveh* ('and you shall command') – and everyone knows whom the *Ve'ata* is referring to..."

The Rebbe immediately answered, borrowing a phrase from the same *pasuk*: **There should be a *ner lamaor*** ("a lamp to serve as a luminary"), which presumably means that the leadership of the Rebbe should spread forth to the *rabbonim*...

The Rebbe then paused, lowering his holy eyes in thought. After a moment's contemplation, the Rebbe said, again borrowing a phrase from that *pasuk*, and emphasizing the word *kosis*: **I don't mean *kosis lamaor***. [The *pasuk* says that olives should be "*crushed* for the luminary."] **May the above take place *without* the *kosis*** [that is, *without* a crushed heart]. **May it take place with revealed and apparent good.**



As the Rebbe left to go upstairs, he turned to one of the *mazkirim* and asked if there was anyone who hadn't yet received a dollar. Another few people approached, and the Rebbe handed them each a dollar.

As the Rebbe began to walk up the stairs, another

chossid arrived. The Rebbe turned around, and went down two steps. With a glowing countenance, as the Rebbe was standing on the stairs, he leaned over the banister to provide this last chossid with his *brocha*.



The *sicha* was delivered, but understandably not published. Rightly or wrongly, chassidim could not entertain the thought.

Six years passed. *Gimmel Tammuz*, 5754 (1994).

For the first time, the *sicha* is published in the *Kfar Chabad Magazine*, and is circulated among chassidim the world over. This is the only instruction the Rebbe publicly gave to *adas hachassidim*, addressing the post-*Gimmel Tammuz* era.

Throughout Lubavitch communities, the Rebbe's words vibrate. Chassidim analyze the details that had initially gone unnoticed.

Some dwell on these words: **...regarding all questions that may arise, one should know that their answer already lies with the *rabbonim*. All you need to do is ask them.**

Others are taken by the next few lines: **All Jews... have an inborn soul-link with Moshe Rabbeinu, and with the extension of Moshe Rabbeinu in every generation. By virtue of this link, they are animated by all his *inyanim*, in *gashmiyus* and even more so in *ruchniyus*.**

Some point to the Rebbe's words to *HaRav* Marlow: **May the above take place *without* the *kosis*** [that is, *without* a crushed heart].

All note the connection with the classic *maamar* that begins with the words, *Ve'ata tetzaveh*. That *maamar*, the last to be published by the Rebbe, dwells on the concept of *kosis*.

Some chassidim observe that exactly 830 days passed between 27 Adar I, 5752 (1992), the day the Rebbe fell

ill, and 3 Tammuz, 5754 (1994). And the numerical value of *kosis* is 830...

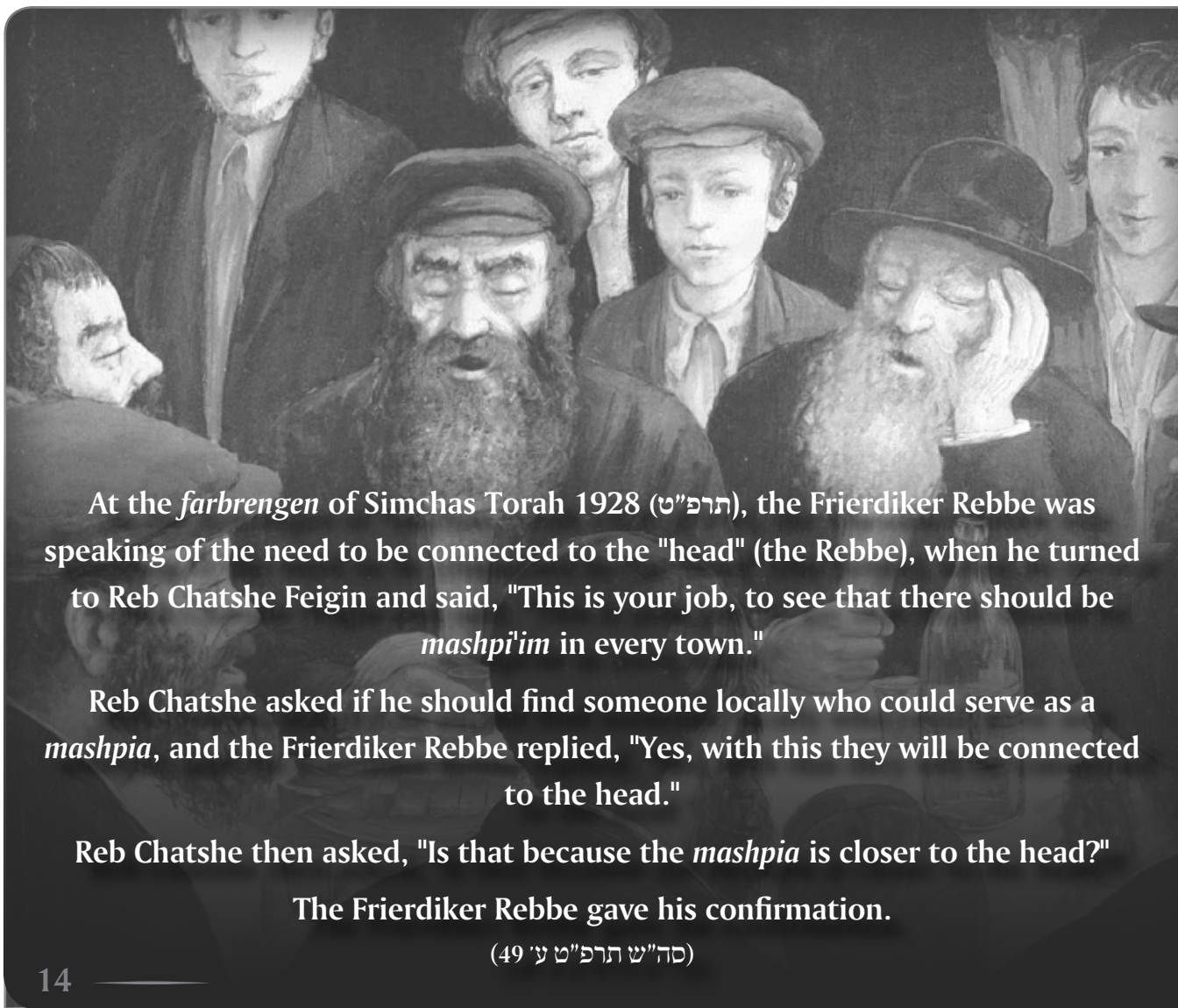
Another chilling connection is made between the Rebbe's opening words, **May all the *inyanim* of *Motzoei Shabbos* be revealed in a positive manner...**, and his repeated mention of *Motzoei Shabbos* throughout the *sicha* – and that unforgettable *Motzoei Shabbos* six years later, *Gimmel Tammuz*, 5754 (1994)...

However, the nucleus of the *sicha* – the obligation to seek

guidance from *chassidishe rabbonim* – is understood by all.

Comfort can be found between the soothing words of the *sicha*. The Rebbe has it all planned out. All we have to do is follow his guidance.

(The boldface extracts from the *sicha* of 2 Adar 5748 were paraphrased, from the original videotape of the event, by the editorial staff of MERKAZ ANASH and on their responsibility alone.)



At the *farbrengen* of Simchas Torah 1928 (תרפ"ט), the Frierdiker Rebbe was speaking of the need to be connected to the "head" (the Rebbe), when he turned to Reb Chatshe Feigin and said, "This is your job, to see that there should be *mashpi'im* in every town."

Reb Chatshe asked if he should find someone locally who could serve as a *mashpia*, and the Frierdiker Rebbe replied, "Yes, with this they will be connected to the head."

Reb Chatshe then asked, "Is that because the *mashpia* is closer to the head?"

The Frierdiker Rebbe gave his confirmation.

(ס"ה"ש תרפ"ט ע' 49)

The Crown of the Community

THE MASHPIA AS SPIRITUAL GUIDE, FROM DOR HAMIDBAR TO DOR HASHVI'I

The sun beat mercilessly on the endless line of people who inched their weary way past the tent of the great Rebbe, the *nasi nador*. Each of them had something else on his mind on that scorching desert day: a chicken with a *shayla*, a monetary dispute, a spiritual quandary. Observing his son-in-law's superhuman caseload, Yisro offered his advice – that Moshe Rabbeinu establish a pyramid of authority, by which he would delegate the work of guiding *bnei Yisrael*. Every *Yid* would thus have an accessible guide, and Moshe Rabbeinu would be able to concentrate personally on the truly difficult dilemmas.

Undeniably, the plan called for a compromise on quality. The thousands of *rabbonim* could certainly not match the knowledge or piety of the Rebbe of all Rebbeim, but at the same time, this was the genius of Yisro's vision. He was helping *klal Yisrael* mature. True, no one can substitute the *nasi*. Nevertheless, in order to survive and thrive, a healthy community of cared-for individuals must also have local, accessible *rabbonim* and *mashpi'im* whose guidance can be followed.

Moreover, aside from the inevitable compromise on the quality of leadership, this plan, like many a good plan, couldn't be realistically carried out as it was drafted on paper. For a start, of the four qualifications Yisro laid down for eligible candidates, the Torah relates that only one was found in all of them.³ This, too, was to be a cautionary lesson for future generations: spiritual guides, like all other mortals, certainly have faults. No one is perfect in an imperfect world – but that does not mean that any society can dispense with leaders.

Yisro's plan of delegation continued to be the model for

communal leadership when the Yidden ultimately reached their reached their destination, *Eretz Yisroel*. Thus, for example, the framework of universal education that reached its amazing peak during the reign of Chizkiyohu⁴ did not hinge on any single individual: it was obviously manned by hundreds of Torah teachers deployed throughout the land.

SURVIVING GOLUS

Likewise, when our people were scattered in exile, the scholastic giants of the *Gemara* shared the onus of responsibility for instituting local teaching and spiritual leadership with each individual community⁵. And so on, throughout the Diaspora over the next three millennia, the Tunisian *chacham*, the Lithuanian *maggid* and the German *rabbin*, had their visible differences – but all of them served as the navigators whose sense of direction enabled their respective communities to maintain an even keel, despite the turbulent waves and the cultural storms that our nation has been destined to survive.

A secular academic once criticized the religious perspective of Jewish history as “a long list of rabbis.” He wasn't wrong. A person to whom *Yiddishkeit* means little has a hard time grasping the significance of the influence of *rabbonim* on the remarkable phenomenon of Jewish survival. Yet the fact is that over the years, spiritual leaders have served as the compass of their respective communities by authoritatively setting the tone in every matter, even the most mundane. Hence, their part in shaping history cannot be overestimated.

Yisro's vision thus did not merely service our people in

3. See *Sforno*, *Shmos* 18:25.

4. *Sanhedrin* 94b.

5. See, for example, *Sanhedrin* 17b.

practical questions of *Halacha*. Beyond that, a spiritual leader has always served his community as the guiding light to differentiate right from wrong. His word was final on all matters, not merely spiritual affairs. Since the communal *rov* was steeped in Torah and *avodas HaShem*, the clarity of his vision could be trusted concerning the delicate decisions that influenced the life of the community. His finger was always on the pulse of the local *shul*, of the local educational system, and of the homes of the community members, monitoring their progress and inspiring them to proceed along the lifelong path of *Yiddishkeit*.

CHASSIDISHE MASHPI'IM

This aspect of the role of the communal leader took on a new dimension with the revelation of *Chassidus*. The specific needs that had to be met by the *chassidishe* communities, as well as the winds of change in the world outside, demanded that his guidance be upgraded to pioneer fresh modes of leadership and inspiration. Hence the role of the *mashpia*. In the words of the Friediker Rebbe, "Among chassidim, the *mashpia* plays a primary role in creating a *chassidisher* lifestyle. The crown of the *chassidisher shtetl* was the *mashpia*."⁶ Indeed, it is impossible to imagine what chassidim or *Chassidus* would look like, were it not for the input of *chassidishe mashpi'im*, the elder chassidim, over the generations.

To begin with the first flowering of *Chassidus Chabad*: When the Alter Rebbe published the *Tanya* in 5557 (1796), its Compiler's Foreword⁷ explicitly called upon chassidim to consult with *mashpi'im*, whose task was to clarify the teachings of *Chassidus*, and to help people develop as chassidim by applying those teachings in their lives. Indeed, for the last two hundred years, that earnest call of the Alter Rebbe is closely studied by every chossid, even before he begins the study of the *Tanya*

itself!

The Friediker Rebbe describes in a historical essay the early development of the position of *mashpia* as follows: "After the first fifteen years [of the Alter Rebbe's leadership, until 5540 (1780)], the community of *Chabad* chassidim in White Russia numbered about 30,000. The Alter Rebbe entrusted twelve individuals with the holy task of traveling to the communities of chassidim in cities and villages, in roadside inns and on the estates of landowners.

"In addition to reviewing *Chabad* chassidic teachings in public, these emissaries would *farbreng* with chassidim to draw their hearts close to one another; they monitored the conduct of the chassidim in their various places of residence; appointed *mashpi'im* and *madrichim*⁸; saw to the organized collection of funds for the running expenses of the Alter Rebbe's household; and encouraged Yidden to engage in agriculture. By 5555 (1795), those emissaries estimated the number of *Chabad* chassidim in White Russia and Ukraine to be 70,000."

(Apparently the Friediker Rebbe intended the article for a wide audience of readers who would not be familiar with the insiders' *Chabad* jargon. He therefore added footnotes to explain the meaning of terms such as *farbrengen*, *maamad*, and *shadar*. Interestingly, he differentiates between the terms *mashpia* and *madrich*. The footnote defining *mashpia* reads: "It is the custom of *Chabad* chassidim in every town, and in larger cities in every *shul*, to appoint an individual to publicly teach *Chassidus* both from a text and by repeating chassidic discourses by heart." The footnote on the term *madrich* reads: "In the early years of the development of *Chassidus*, there would be one elderly individual in every town who would serve as the community's guide.")

6. *Sefer HaSichos* 5703, p. 77.

7. Page 4.

8. In some cases the Alter Rebbe himself would appoint *mashpi'im* in specific towns. For example he appointed R' Shimshon Melamed to be the *mashpia* of Beshenkovitch (*Sefer HaSichos* 5700, p. 66).

Elsewhere, in a lengthy *sicha* on *mashpi'im*, the Frierdiker Rebbe⁹ makes it clear that the role of a *mashpia* includes more than the mere academic task of teaching *Chassidus*. As the very word *mashpia* indicates, the primary function of a *mashpia* is to influence. The approach in each case always varied of course according to the personality of the *mashpia* and the specific needs of his listeners. The guidance required by a *yoshev ohel* who was steeped in Torah and *davening*, detached from worldly affairs, was obviously unlike that needed by a *baal eisek*, as precious as his *avoda* might be in the eyes of *HaShem*. Recognizing the varying needs within his specific community, a *mashpia* learned to divide his time judiciously. Much also depended on whether he held a full time position or whether he also served as the local *rov*, *shochet* or *melamed*. Thus, as the Frierdiker Rebbe mentions in another *sicha*,¹⁰ a prominent *mashpia* by the name of R' Avraham Ber Babruisker earned his living as a bookbinder.

THE MITTELER REBBE

So crucial was the function of a *mashpia* in the eyes of

the Alter Rebbe that he appointed his son, who was to succeed him as the Mittlerer Rebbe, to serve as the *mashpia* of the *yungeleit* in Liozna, alongside the noted chossid R' Aharon Strashelye, who was the *mashpia* for the older chassidim.

A description of the Mittlerer Rebbe's activities in this role can be found in an essay of the Frierdiker Rebbe¹¹, in which he records the impressions of an undercover visit to Liozna by one of the leaders of the Haskala movement. In one of the rooms adjoining the Alter Rebbe's *shul*, a young man, who he later discovered was the Mittlerer Rebbe, was delivering a *shiur* in *Tanya* to twenty-three young men who listened to him intently. Twice a week the Mittlerer Rebbe gave a class to two such groups of that size.

With love and devotion, as well as uncompromising demands, the Mittlerer Rebbe paved the way as one of the earliest *mashpi'im* of Lubavitch. For generations thereafter, hundreds of *mashpi'im* would follow in his footsteps, blending care and concern with rigid requirements, in order to bring out the best in their students. It is significant that the Mittlerer Rebbe

9. *Sefer HaSichos* 5702, p. 52.

10. *Sefer HaSichos* 5700, p. 155.

11. *Yoman Admur HaRayatz*, Vol. 8, p. 41.

Chazal say that one who is knowledgeable in Torah but did not receive guidance from *talmidei chachomim* is reckoned an ignoramus. Since he has not been taught the principles according to which one should approach Torah scholarship, he is likely to apply incorrectly that which he has learnt.

(סוטה כב ע"א)

personally was so detached from worldly things that he did not know what a coin looked like. Nevertheless, during his *nesius* he established dozens of farming settlements ("colonies," as they were called) in southern Russia, thereby providing a home and a livelihood for some 27,000 Yidden, most of them unlearned but pious chassidim.

As the geographical map of Lubavitch chassidim expanded, the role of *mashpia* took on a new form. Certain *mashpi'im* were appointed to travel throughout the farflung communities to deal with their specific concerns. Most notably, the Mittlerer Rebbe appointed his renowned chossid, R' Hillel of Paritch, as their itinerant *mashpia*, to inject them with inspiration, direction and practical advice on how they could enhance the commitment and experience of their *Yiddishkeit*. Although these Jews were generally very unsophisticated, R' Hillel, himself a scholar of stature, forged an exceptionally close relationship with them.

From this point on, he dedicated his life to guide and help them in all their spiritual as well as material needs, and they in turn were extremely receptive. Whenever he visited a village, the villagers would give him an exuberant welcome.

His work is described by the Friediker Rebbe in these words: "Reb Hillel was a *mashpia* with *mesirus nefesh*. He would invest the greatest efforts into helping one individual follower develop. The merest villager was dear to him.... For each individual he had something distinctive – a story, a *vort*, and sometimes a *niggun*. He always gave something that would strike a chord within the soul of the particular *yungerman* who stood before him."¹²

Even after R' Hillel was appointed as the *rov* of Bobruisk, in the year 5612 (1852), he would still spend several months a year doing his rounds throughout the colonies. So deep was his bond with his *mushpo'im* that before his

12. *Sefer HaSichos* 5703, p. 80.



Reb Chaim Klien, the director of The *Heichal Shlomo* Institute in *Yerushalaim*, had an interesting *yechidus* with the Rebbe.

The Rebbe asked him, "Who is the *Rov* of the *shul*, where you *daven* on *Shabbos*?" Reb Chaim answered that there was no official *Rov*. To this the Rebbe replied, "If you seek my advice, then on Friday nights, for *Kabbolas Shabbos*, take your son to a *shul* where there is a *Rov*. It makes no difference which *shul* – as long as there is an officiating *Rov*."

"A *Yiddishe* child must know that at the end of davening, he approaches the *rov* to wish him a 'gut *Shabbos*' and the child will look forward to receiving a 'gut *shabbos*' back from him..."

(As told by Simcha Raz in his book *Sipurei Tzadikim* page 342)

passing he asked to be buried among them in Kherson, very far from his *rabbei'im* in Lubavitch. Little wonder that over the years he has been looked upon as the *mashpia par excellence*, a role model of what a *mashpia* should be.

Another renowned *mashpia* of that era was a chossid by the name of R' Yosef, who became a wagon driver on the directive of the Alter Rebbe, and in his old age, on the Mittler Rebbe's instruction, undertook the responsibility of directing chassidim in the town of Beshenkovitz.¹³

However, the role of *mashpia* was not limited to those few chassidim of eminent stature. The Mittler Rebbe made it a rule that all chassidim traveling to and from Lubavitch should teach and inspire their fellow chassidim in all the villages they passed on the way. This naturally infused new life in all those communities¹⁴. Thus, every chossid who had had an encounter with the Rebbe in Lubavitch was able to be *mashpia* on others. In addition, as *chassidishe* communities took root, townsfolk would elect their own full time *mashpia*, or a number of *mashpi'im* for the various local *shuls*.

THE TZEMACH TZEDEK

It became standard at that time for chassidim to make a point of settling in towns where there were *chassidishe* communities with *mashpi'im*.¹⁵ In fact, the *Tzemach Tzedek* set up *yeshivos* and *kollelim*, not necessarily large ones, under the direct supervision of eminent chassidim whom he handpicked personally, in all the big chassidic communities.¹⁶ This comprehensive network thus ensured that no community that requested a *mashpia* to guide them in their *avodas HaShem* was left without one. A child growing up in a *chassidisher kehillah* would

be taught to observe the local *rov* and the *mashpia* as they went about their *avodas HaShem* – as they *davened*, learned and *farbrenge*d. He knew that when his father was at a crossroads in his life and had to make a difficult decision, he would seek the counsel of the *rov* or the *mashpia*.

In many a case the *mashpia* had to be begged, cajoled and pressured by the local *Anash* to take on the position. Every community had its own favorite anecdotes about how they finally managed to drag their *mashpia* out of his *pnimiyusdike* life among his *seforim* into the town's bustling *olam hazeh*. In some cases it was only through the direct intervention of the Rebbe of the time that a chossid agreed to take on the responsibility. After all, the challenge confronting a *mashpia* has never been easy. As the Frierdiker Rebbe used to say, a *mashpia* is a funnel. On one hand, he must channel the lofty chassidic teachings of his Rebbe down to ordinary chassidim – yet at the same time, he must take care not to lose one drop of that life-giving elixir.

THE REBBE MAHARASH

Under the watchful and caring eyes of the Rebbe Maharash, the garden of *Chassidus*, that had been tended by dedicated elder mentors of one generation after another, blossomed further and produced succulent fruits – warm and earnest chassidim who were imbued with zest in their *avodas HaShem*. He relied heavily on his *mashpi'im* in their task of guiding those chassidim. At *yechidus* he would ask each *mashpia* about his progress and would direct him as to the approach that would best suit his particular community.

In Vitebsk, for example,¹⁷ a group of intellectual *yungeleit*, *baalei moichin*, formed their own *minyán*. Their *mashpia*, who served as their *baal tefilla*, would *daven* very quietly and thoughtfully – in *chassidishe* parlance, *moichindik*.

13. See Introduction to *Pokeiach Ivrim*.

14. See *Kuntres Limud HaChassidus*.

15. See *Sefer Hasichos* 5702, p. 53.

16. *The Tzemach Tzedek and the Haskala Movement*, p. 33.

17. *Sefer HaSichos* 5702, p. 96.

At his first *yechidus* with the Rebbe Maharash, around Rosh HaShana 5627 (1866), the Rebbe asked him his usual question: “Where are you holding?” – which meant to ask at what point in his *avoda* had he left off, not long earlier, with the *Tzemach Tzedek*.

When the *mashpia* told the Rebbe that he served as a *baal tefilla*, the Rebbe told him, “A *baal tefilla* stands on a pedestal. If he does his job properly, he is meritorious and brings merit to the public; if not, he sins and brings sin upon the public.”

The *mashpia* later related how the Rebbe “touched his heart and gave him a new *neshama*.” And when he returned to Vitebsk and *davened* the first *Kabbalas Shabbos* there, he *davened* with such passion that people passing by stopped to see what had happened: that *davenen* seemed to be more passionate than *Kol Nidrei*.

THE REBBE RASHAB

Lubavitch, 5643 (1883). Times were tough, *parnassa* was hard to come by, and the Haskala and the Zionist movements were eating away at the fabric of *Yiddishe* life throughout Europe. To make matters worse, the Rebbe Maharash suddenly passed away, leaving a bereaving community.

Although most *Yidden* were still *frum*, the vibrant life of *Chassidus* threatened to wilt. The Frierdiker Rebbe described this period as “the *churban* of Lubavitch,¹⁸” because it would take roughly ten until the Rebbe Rashab would assume leadership. During this time, chassidim begged and pleaded with the Rebbe Rashab to become Rebbe, but to no avail. He immersed himself in learning and *davenen*, and had to travel much of the time, due to his ill health. However, he still invested considerable effort to ensure the welfare of his chassidim.

The opening of Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim in 5657

(1897) was another milestone, and when its *bochurim* went home they would light up their surroundings. In fact, as part of their eating arrangements, they would dine at various homes in Lubavitch. The Frierdiker Rebbe, the educational director of the Yeshiva, explains that this was arranged in order to penetrate the homes of the *baalei batim*!

It seems that the purpose of the Yeshiva was to create leaders of chassidim – to train *mashpi'im* who would in turn inspire the many chassidim throughout the region, and beyond. Thus, in addition to the *rabbonim* and *shochtim* and *mohalim* that the Rebbe Rashab sent out, even as far away as the isolated communities of Gerusia (Georgia), he likewise dispatched *mashpi'im* far and wide. One example is the chossid by the name of R' Aharon Belinki of Bobruisk, who was sent to serve the *chassidishe* community of Moscow.¹⁹

After years of work, complaints began to be heard from many *shuls* throughout Russia, that the study of *Chassidus* was too difficult for the regular participants in the *shiurim*. One could only imagine the *nachas* that the Rebbe Rashab had when he received such complaints. Finally, the fruits of his labors were beginning to show – people now realized that something had been lacking, and were hungry for *Chassidus*! In order to satiate that new hunger, he wrote and published a booklet of original *maamorim*, dedicated to the needs of the participants of the *shiurim*, entitled *Kuntres Uma'ayon*²⁰. It deals with the trials and challenges confronting a Yid in business and with his social pressures and worries, offering him advice on how to overcome them and still remain focused on the Will of *HaShem*.

During that trying period, the study and practices of *Chassidus* were falling into a state of neglect. Many longtime chassidim who could have been studying

18. *Igros Kodesh Rayatz*, Vol 3 p. 404.

19. *Shemuos VeSippurim*, p. 91.

20. See Introduction to *Kuntres Uma'ayon*.


Chassidus and adhering to its requirements were not doing so, and the involvement of others waned. Observing their plight and concerned for their *ruchniyusdike* welfare, the Rebbe Rashab worked to develop a plan that would breathe life into his chassidim and awaken them from their slumber. Accordingly, in the course of a consultation with the esteemed chossid R' Yaakov Mordechai Bepalov, the *Rov* of Poltava, who was a close confidant, he once suggested sending out itinerant *mashpi'im* to visit the various towns. In each town they would establish a regular *shiur* of *Chassidus*, *farbreng* with the townsmen, and guide them in the ways of *Chassidus*; this would inspire them to begin living a true *chassidisher* life.

R' Yaakov Mordechai, however, raised the concern that while the *mashpi'im* would no doubt succeed in inspiring the local chassidim to begin a *shiur* of *Chassidus* and to apply themselves to it, he feared that perhaps the inspiration might be short-lived. He argued that in order for the *chayus* in *Chassidus* to endure, there would have to be a resident *mashpia* in each town who would constantly inspire the local people to grow.

While in principle the Rebbe Rashab agreed with Reb Yaakov Mordechai, he saw a need for a more practical option, because sending full time *mashpi'im* to a town and supporting them long term would require major funds which he did not have at the time. He therefore opted to send the choicest graduates of Tomchei Temimim, who were steeped in *Chassidus* and *avodas HaShem*, to travel throughout Russia and inspire chassidim everywhere to lead a *chassidisher* life. In a letter to his son, the Frierdiker Rebbe, describing his discussion with Reb Yaakov Mordechai, he expressed the hope that in the near future, with the help of *HaShem*, he would be able to implement the ideal option of having resident *mashpi'im* in every community.

How dear this ideal – urging *mashpi'im* to teach *Chassidus* – was to the Rebbe Rashab, we can learn from his last will to his son, the Frierdiker Rebbe: “Yosef Yitzchok..., try hard to establish the study of *Chassidus* in the city, which I have begun, and which (thank G-d) has been well accepted.... I am certain that *Anash* will assist you with this work...”²¹

21. Chanoch LaNaar, p. 51.



The Rebbe Rashab told his son, the Frierdiker Rebbe: One must spend time in the close company of elder chassidim (*raibn-zich arum eltere chassidim* – colloquially, “hanging around elder chassidim”). When I was younger I would spend time with Reb Shmuel Ber and Reb Chaim Ber during the few weeks that they spent in Lubavitch. I then spent three-quarters of a year applying what they spoke about.

(רשימות היומן ע' תסא)

THE REBBE RAYATZ

The Friediker Rebbe understood this instruction to mean strengthening the concept of *mashpi'im* in all communities.

The catastrophic effects of World War I and the Russian Revolution of 1917 had demolished the structure of many organized Jewish communities. Communist persecution forced thousands of *rabbonim* to flee the country en masse, leaving their flocks stranded. The future looked bleak for Yidden at large and also for *adas hachassidim*. And it was during those fearsome times, in 5680 (1920), that the Rebbe Rashab passed away, leaving his only son to tackle the situation. And tackle it he did, head on.

The Friediker Rebbe saw the role of *mashpia* as inspiring his fellow chassidim to forge ahead with *mesirus nefesh*, especially during those difficult times, when communication with the Rebbe was often impossible. He immediately mobilized some of the most learned chassidim to accept the yoke of directing *Anash* and others through those trying times. They were all aware that this meant endangering their lives, but with *chassidishe* fire they dived right into the task at hand.

The historical work documenting the Friediker Rebbe's efforts to fortify *Yiddishkeit* in Soviet Russia, entitled *Toldos Chabad BeRussia HaSovyetis*, describes the Friediker Rebbe's campaign to arrange for *mashpi'im* in cities and towns across Russia. One letter cited there, penned in the winter of 5682 (1922) by the celebrated chossid Reb Chonye Morozov, who served as a secretary of the Rebbe Rashab and of the Rebbe Rayatz, states: "In the winter of 5681 (1921) the Rebbe established a fund called Kupas Rabbeinu with the goal of bringing into fruition the directive of the Rebbe Rashab about expanding the regular study of *Chassidus* and of Torah in general. This fund was to cover the expenses of *mashpi'im* who traveled from town to town in order to teach *Chassidus* publicly, and to support *yungeleit* who taught

Chassidus." Thus, for example, R' Yisrael Jacobson records in his memoirs²² that in 5685 (1925) the Friediker Rebbe appointed him as the *mashpia* of Homil and paid him a salary of forty rubles a month.

To further his campaign, the Friediker Rebbe addressed numerous letters to chassidim at large and to individuals, urging them to accept the position of *mashpi'im*, and also to influential activists to ensure that their respective communities would accept those *mashpi'im*. In addition to organizing classes and study groups, each *mashpia* was expected to set up three fundraising campaigns – for Kupas Rabbeinu, for Colel Chabad in *Eretz Yisroel*, and for the Tomchei Temimim Yeshiva, which continued to function for long decades even after its classes were hounded and driven underground.

In a letter²³ appointing R' Shmuel Bepalov, a son of the above-mentioned *rov* of Poltava, as *mashpia* of Kharkov, the Friediker Rebbe outlines his strategy – to divide Russia into regions and to appoint one individual to oversee the activities for his entire region. Dozens of chassidim, young and old, duly fanned out throughout Communist Russia, encouraging Torah learning among *Anash*, arranging clandestine *farbrengens*, and fighting to keep the fire of *Chassidus* ablaze despite the seemingly impossible odds. It was only due to the selfless dedication of those chassidim, and the affectionate support and cooperation of their communities, that *Chassidus*, and *Yiddishkeit* itself, survived Stalin's ruthless regime.

One of the well-loved *mashpi'im* of *Anash* was R' Shlomo Chaim Kesselman, later the *mashpia* of the Central Tomchei Temimim Yeshiva in Lod and later in Kfar Chabad. Twice he was exiled and imprisoned for his work. Once, when speaking of the sterling work of the *mashpi'im*, the Friediker Rebbe exclaimed,²⁴ "There will come a day when the hem of Shlomo

22. *Zikoron Livnei Yisrael*, p. 100.

23. *Igros Kodesh of the Rebbe Rayatz*, Vol. 1, p. 77.

24. *Sefer HaSichos 5687*, p. 121.

Chaim's garments will be holy!"

Another revered *mashpia* was R' Yeine Kahn (*hy"d*). During the most trying periods, through the bloodthirsty purges and then through the infamous famine, R' Yeine encouraged and reinvigorated his fellow chassidim as day after day they doggedly went about their life-threatening tasks.

A glimpse into the influence of such a *mashpia* can be obtained from an anecdote related by R' Mendel Futerfas. At one point he informed R' Yeine, the local *mashpia*, that the time had come for him to leave his work on behalf of the underground network of the Tomchei Temimim Yeshivos, because he realized that the police were trailing him.

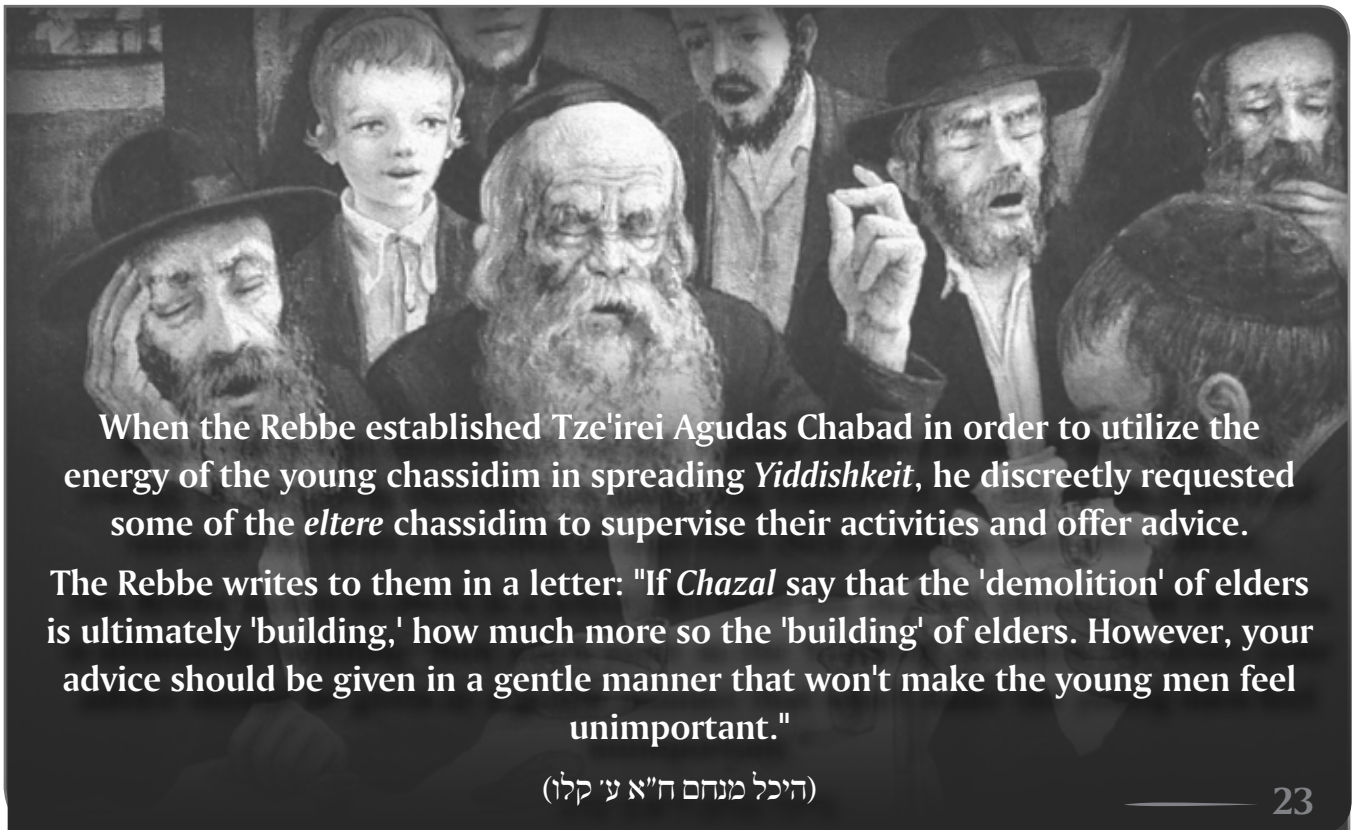
He writes: "R' Yeine listened silently, and waited for me to finish. He then raised his flaming eyes, gazed through me with his most penetrating look, and said, as if to

himself: *Kumt ois, az mesirus-nefesh hot eich a gvul...* ('That means that even *mesirus nefesh* has a limit...').

"Those sharp words cut into my heart, and changed my plans. They cost me another twenty years in the Soviet Union, many of them in prison, and for that I am eternally indebted to R' Yeine...."

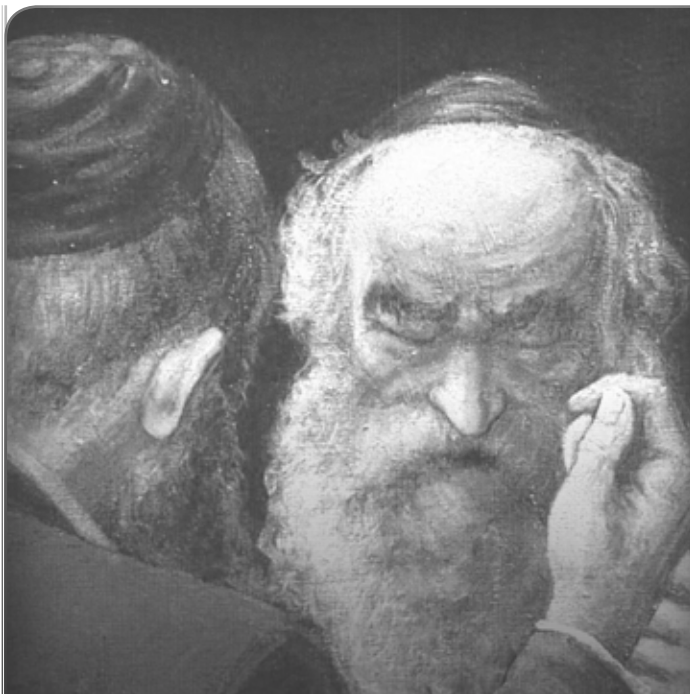
IN OUR GENERATION

From the beginning of his *nesius*, the Rebbe constantly encouraged the communal *rabbonim* and *mashpi'im* and upheld their standing in the eyes of *Anash*. In Montreal, for example, the Rebbe personally appointed R' Peretz Motchkin as the *mashpia* in the year 5714 (1954), and directed the community to give him a salary. The Rebbe wrote: "If you ease his worldly burdens, he will be able to help you in your *ruchniyusdike* life." In the remote chassidic community of Melbourne, R' Zalman Serebransky set the tone as its *mashpia*, and in Paris, R' Nissan Nemenov stood



When the Rebbe established Tze'irei Agudas Chabad in order to utilize the energy of the young chassidim in spreading *Yiddishkeit*, he discreetly requested some of the *eltere* chassidim to supervise their activities and offer advice.

The Rebbe writes to them in a letter: "If *Chazal* say that the 'demolition' of elders is ultimately 'building,' how much more so the 'building' of elders. However, your advice should be given in a gentle manner that won't make the young men feel unimportant."



When introducing the initiative for appointing personal *mashpi'im*, in addition to the already-appointed community *mashpi'im*, the Rebbe set criteria regarding whom one should choose as a mentor.

Firstly, said the Rebbe, a *mashpia* must have the three qualities that characterize Yidden in general: he must be compassionate, bashful and kind – visibly so, and to a degree appropriate to his position.

Secondly, *Chazal* teach that one should learn Torah from a *rav* who resembles a *malach*. This means that the *rav* should be far removed from personal bias and envy, so that he can advise a fellow Jew without any personal interests involved.

(תו"מ תשמ"ז ח"ב ע' 236, 196)

at the helm of the community. And the large *kehilla* of Kfar Chabad received an explicit directive from the Rebbe to elect a team of *mashpi'im*, a *vaad ruchni*, to uphold the desired standards, to inspire individuals, and to give direction to the community at large.

Although the Rebbe often instructed people seeking his advice to consult with elder chassidim and *mashpi'im*, in the early years there weren't many substantial *Anash* communities other than those mentioned, and they already had *mashpi'im*.

A turning point came with the *farbrengen* of Chof Kislev 5737 (1976). The Rebbe said that in the times of the earlier *Rebbeim*, every *kehilla* had a *mashpia* who was responsible for arousing and guiding the local chassidim in their *avodas HaShem*. The Rebbe then spoke at length about reinstituting this concept. He suggested that in large *kehillas* there could be a number of *mashpi'im*, who would divide their respective spheres of influence among the various *shuls* or according to the responsibilities involved. During the next few months the Rebbe continued to encourage this new venture, adding that *mashpios/madrivos* should also be appointed in every community for the local women and girls.

After raising this topic at every opportunity throughout that winter, the Rebbe expressed anguish that to date, the efforts that had been made to elect *mashpi'im* were not to his satisfaction. Understandably, the prevailing sentiment was, "Why appoint a *mashpia* if we have the Rebbe?" But then, on the 28th of Adar, the Rebbe surprised everyone by announcing that he would hand out a signed copy of *Kuntres Ahavas Yisroel* to all those who had been nominated as *mashpi'im*.

Lubavitch communities worldwide heeded the call. Scores of *mashpi'im* were elected, and they each received a signed *kuntres* from the Rebbe. The main Lubavitch community, *Anash* of Crown Heights, elected four highly-respected elder chassidim to serve as their *mashpi'im*: R' Abba Pliskin, R' Avrohom Drizin (Mayorer), R' Elya Chaim

Roitblat, and R' Yehoshua Korf, *aleihem hasholom*. Another thirty people were appointed to provide guidance and inspiration to *shuls*, groups of *Anash*, or certain blocks in the neighborhood, and a flyer was distributed with the names of the *mashpi'im* who had been appointed.

Still, the Rebbe still felt that not enough was being done. On more than one occasion, he took the *mashpi'im* themselves to task, for not being sufficiently dedicated to their mission. As one example of many:²⁵

"...The mission of every *mashpia* and *mashpiah* is not to wait until someone brings you a glass of tea or a cup of juice and begs you to share a *chassidisher vort*, and only then to say something to him – and even then, not bother to explain it, on the pretext that anyhow 'a *chassidisher vort* never goes to waste....'

"Better yet, the *mashpia* assures himself that since the Alter Rebbe promised that whoever is *mekushar* to him will be safe, there's no need to even say a *vort*.... So the *mashpia* goes off to learn by himself....

"This is **not** the *kavona* of our Rebbeim! The Rebbeim expect every *mashpia* to personally approach chassidim and inspire them....'

It was during this period that the Rebbe began to buttress the authority of *rabbonim* throughout the Lubavitch community worldwide, beginning with the institution of Vaad Rabbonei Chabad of Eretz Yisroel in 5738 (1978), the organizing and support of the Crown Heights Beis Din in 5746 (1986), and laying the foundation for the Vaad Rabbonei Lubavitch of the U.S.A. in 5750 (1990).

As part of this program, the Rebbe would often direct people asking for advice to the *rabbonim* of their city. Naturally enough, chassidim would often feel frustrated; they would have preferred that the Rebbe address their

issues personally. But the Rebbe persisted. In private and in public, he explained that the time had come for chassidim to learn to listen to the voice of authority within *adas hachassidim*.

PERSONAL GUIDES

During the summer of 5746 (1986), the Rebbe initiated another campaign – *Aseh lecho rav*,²⁶ asking that all chassidim should appoint, in addition to the communal *mashpia*, a personal *rov*. This *rov* was to be a personal mentor, to whom a chossid must report periodically, and who should be consulted before making major decisions. During the following months the Rebbe elaborated on how one should choose a *mashpia*, provided the Torah sources on the importance of this project, and highlighted its imperative necessity in our times.

On one occasion, the Rebbe said he had heard that the *horo'oh* had not been fulfilled by everyone. He made it clear that it was not a suggestion, but the obligation of every Lubavitcher chossid. At one point the Rebbe "threatened" that when he received a letter from a chossid, he would ask him the name of his *mashpia*...!

Within days, naturally enough, there was not a chossid to found without a specific *aseh lecho rav*. Elder chassidim sometimes appointed themselves a *rov* many years their junior. R' Mendel Futerfas, for example, chose his former *talmid*, R' Velvel Kesselman; R' Mottel Kozliner chose HaRav Ganzburg, who was forty years younger than he; and the legendary R' Yoel Kahan elected HaRav Heller to be his *rav*. The project reached a crescendo when the Rebbe himself joined the campaign by choosing HaRav Piekarski to serve as his personal *rav*.

25. *Sichos Kodesh* 5740, Vol. 3, p. 303.

26. See *sicha of Shabbos Parshas Devorim*, 5746.

AFTER GIMMEL TAMMUZ

However, despite everything the Rebbe had explained, and despite all the efforts of chassidim in electing communal *rabbonim* and *mashpi'im*, and despite every individual chossid's appointment of a personal *aseh lecho rav*, the Rebbe nevertheless continued to be consulted in times of need. Evidently, most chassidim didn't feel themselves worthy to give guidance, and most people wished to write and correspond with the Rebbe, rather than with a *mashpia*.

Hence the gaping vacuum after *Gimmel Tammuz*. How are we to deal with the multitude of questions, mundane matters, issues of viewpoint and opinion, spiritual deliberations and communal concerns? During this time of *he'elem vehester*, to whom are we to turn for answers?

But the truth is that the Rebbe had foreseen this situation, and for some years had been directing his chassidim how to continue – by turning to *mashpi'im* and *rabbonim*.

In an unprecedented half-hour *sicha* on *Motzoei Shabbos*, 2nd Adar 5748 (1988), ten days after the *histalkus* of the

Rebbitzin a"h, the Rebbe explicitly directed, and clearly spelled out, how chassidim should conduct themselves after *Gimmel Tammuz*.

The Rebbe spoke of the authority of *chassidishe rabbonim*, and instructed that regarding all questions that arise, three *rabbonim* should be consulted. (Details of the Rebbe's directives at that time are presented in *As A Father Cares For His Children*, in this publication.) Indeed, the week after *Gimmel Tammuz*, the Kfar Chabad Magazine printed this very *sicha*, transcribed from the recording.

There is an axiom in Torah that the more vital something is, the more effort does the *yetzer hora* exert to resist it. In this light it can be stated that the political climate after *Gimmel Tammuz* was not fertile ground in which the instructions in that *sicha* could properly flourish. Accordingly, as chassidim dedicated to the Rebbe and bound with love to his wishes, we must hold dearly on to his words in that *sicha*, and implement them, during the present challenging interval between *Gimmel Tammuz* and the imminent *Geulah*.



In response to someone's report of a misfortune that befell a woman in Australia, the Rebbe wrote: "Do you think that what I spoke about *Aseh lecha rav* does not apply in your community?"

(תשורה כינוס תורה פסח תשנ"ו)

Dare to Emulate

Anyone who knows Kingston Avenue knows Reb Pinye Korff. You can find him any day – walking an elder chossid, listening to a person in need, or simply walking deep in thought, as one would imagine a chossid walks.

A legend in his lifetime, this exemplary *masmid* and *mekushar* has served as the *mashpia* of the Oholei Torah Yeshiva for the past forty years, and in that capacity has taught most American Lubavitcher bochorim. He is widely revered for his *davenen* and *yiras Shamayim* – and envied for the fact that he was once actually beaten for teaching *Chassidus*....

Chassidim relate that when he was a *bochor*, he once approached his *mashpia*, Reb Peretz Motchkín of Montreal, to ask him for advice on a personal matter in *avodas HaShem*. Reb Peretz later exclaimed to his friends: "His questions remind me of the sincerity of the *bochorim* in Lubavitch in the good old days...." Indeed, Reb Pinye's own live memories of pre-war chassidim make him a rare *baal mesora*, a blast from the past.

To watch Reb Pinye *daven* is not something I can transmit on paper. To hear him *farbreng*, you've also got to be present to experience. However, one thing I believe can be encapsulated in print – his advice.

His acute intuition, his pure *chassidisher chinuch*, and his earnest dedication to *darchei haChassidus*, all blend to create a towering personality – a genuine chossid whose lifetime of intense *avoda* has produced a sharp perception that is cloaked in an unassuming, even simple, personality. Hundreds flock to him, not only for his wellspring of *chassidische mayeses*, ideas and feelings, but also for practical guidance on dealing with contemporary realities. And despite his humble demeanor, his opinions on these challenges ring loud and clear.

To interview Reb Pinye sounded like a wild idea. Though certain that he would refuse, I decided to give it a shot anyways. What did I have to lose...?

So one fine Tuesday morning I go to 770 in search of the *mashpia*. There I see him, stooped over a *Likkutei Torah*, teaching a group of focused *baalei batim*. As he leaves to go home, he is stopped by former *talmidim*, by recent *baalei teshuva*, and by old friends – his first fans from his *yeshiva* days.

Patiently, I await my turn. To my surprise, as soon as I approach him with my request, he peers up, and says in his thick Russian accent: *Farvos nit?* ("Why not?")

Here we have our first insight into Reb Pinye. He doesn't shy away from media and doesn't flee from *kovod*. It is simply insignificant to him. So, if it's something worthwhile, something someone can gain from, then *farvos nit?*

And so there we were, at the back of 770, deep in conversation, me asking and Reb Pinye answering. As I spoke, his head was bent, his snow-white beard spread over his chest, listening carefully. Each time, as soon as I finished, he looked up and shared his measured words.

Here they are, as he said them.



Q: Why must the way of life, ideals and values of *Chassidus* be transmitted *davka* through living *chassidim*? Isn't studying *Chassidus* and getting *hadracha* from a *sefer* enough? Why is there a need to *farbreng* with and listen to *eltere chassidim*, and to spend time in the company of *chassidim*?

A: It is true that one can receive guidance and inspiration through learning the *maamorim*, *sichos*, *igros* etc.; in

fact, those are the primary source. In the Frierdiker Rebbe's *sichos* and letters in particular, the reader will find a treasury of *chassidishe* stories, anecdotes, and history, that will inspire him, change his outlook and imbue him with true *chassidishe* values.

However, even once inspired, translating those words into practical application – especially when that involves changing one's entire lifestyle and value system – is often very difficult. A person may feel that he needs proof that it is actually possible to live a *chassidishe* lifestyle in the "real" world.

So as a first answer to your question: when one sees a living individual who in his day-to-day life personifies all that *Chassidus* stands for, this changes his perspective. He begins to view *Chassidus* as something practical and relevant.

Q. In other words, an elder chossid serves as a *dugma chaya*, a living example, for younger *chassidim*. Why is the Rebbe not enough of a living example?

A. There is a story told about Reb Abba Pliskin. The Rebbe had once instructed this chossid "to instill in the *bochurim* a warm relish for *Chassidus*" (*arain-gebben a lachluchis in di bochurim*).

Some time later, at a *yechidus*, he asked the Rebbe how he was to go about doing this. The Rebbe replied that he should tell them stories about *chassidim*. The Rebbe emphasized that he meant specifically those about *chassidim*, for when hearing *sipurei tzaddikim*, people can think that it is too far removed from them.

Stories of the Rebbeim are certainly of utmost importance: they instill in us *emunas tzaddikim*, teach us vital lessons and so on, but that's not to say that we can compare ourselves to the Rebbe, or that we can attain the Rebbe's level and emulate his accomplishments (although we certainly can, and should, strive to attain at the very least a minute resemblance). The Rebbe's levels and accomplishments can hardly serve as a

practical and relevant example for the average person to live up to in his day-to-day life.

With regard to *chassidim*, on the other hand, one feels that there is some relevance, and that with effort and persistence, he can succeed in attaining their level and living up to their example.

Q. I'm under the impression that in years gone by there was more of a stress placed on observing older *chassidim*, listening to them and watching them *daven*. What was your experience in this area?

A. After we ourselves finished our own *davenen*, there was always plenty of time left to observe the elder *chassidim* as they continued *davenen* in their own unhurried and deliberate style. The deep impression these men made upon us is immeasurable. In the letters of the Frierdiker Rebbe we find a vivid description of *davening* the way it was in the *chassidishe shuls* in the Old Country, and the effect it had on the youth¹:

"How good and how pleasant was the house of HaShem in the chassidishe communities! Even during weekdays, and how much more so on Shabbos and yom-tov, one could find a number of people davening with such dveikus and intensity, that upon entering the shul, one was taken aback or even overawed by the G-dly scene that met his eyes..."

In various corners of the shul, both in the mizrach side and in the maarav side, these lamps of HaShem, these mortal souls, stood burning with the holy anointing oil, as the spirit within them dominated the matter. Some wept from the depths of their heart and the innermost recesses of their soul; others stood in a state of delight, with a voice that aroused true intention, a feeling of attachment and love of HaShem, culminating in an all-encompassing outpouring of the very soul; while yet others were engrossed in an other-worldly contemplation of abstract concepts of G-dliness, yearning in silence, in a bond of essence to Essence.

1. Igros Kodesh of the Rebbe Rayatz vol 1 p. 330

Each individual on his own level knew that the study of Chassidus was his cherished portion in life, and that avodas hatefilla was the gate to the higher realms – to perceive G-dliness and to behold the glory of HaShem. He was well aware that his first priority in life was the refinement of his natural and materialistic middos, and the predominance of the soul and the spiritual over the body and the material.

Even the little children and the youth found a nest or a perch behind the doorposts, from which they could warm their hearts next to the fire of these chassidim, where they could sit at the feet of these anshei maaseh. And at other times they would wait around with an inner bittul, hungry and thirsty to hear at least a word, a mere droplet, from the mouths of the wise and elderly chassidim who had come to the house of learning, whose lips were uttering truly great words.... This thirst served as a salvation for these youngsters, enabling them to proceed along the true

derech...."

Indeed, observing *chassidim* and watching their *davening* has always been a great thing. But still, in my day, the primary time for guiding and inspiring chassidim of all ages was always a *farbrengen*. There, an elder *chossid* would open up and share his own feelings and thoughts, and would often talk about chassidim of earlier generations. The focus in all of this, the main reason for our desire to come to a *farbrengen*, was to receive instruction and guidance.

Q. How did this eagerness to hear from older chassidim express itself

A. True, some were the prying and inquisitive type (*krichers*). They would try probing and asking questions, hoping to hear stories and recollections, and indeed from time to time they did succeed in "squeezing"



In the winter of 1950 (תשי"י), the Frierdiker Rebbe discussed the necessity for *chassidishe* guidance. He said: "Nowadays, many chassidim are completely off track. It is often the loud youngsters, lightheaded and spiritually insensitive, who arrogantly jump to the head table, and thus they remain naked – without a knowledge of *Chassidus*, and even without *middos tovos* and a *geshmak* in *davening*. For, as the age-old chassidic saying goes, 'Everyone needs *chinuch*, even a Rebbe who is the son of a Rebbe and the grandson of a Rebbe.' "

(סד"ה ש"ה ש"י ת"ע 350)

tidbits to nourish the soul. But I wasn't that type. My friends and I would go and seek out *farbrengens* simply because we wanted to hear from chassidim, to be around chassidim. Whether it was this chossid or the other, was irrelevant; we just wanted to be at a *farbrengen*, to hear chassidim.

Q. But why did you have to go listen to many different chassidim? Why wasn't one *moreh derech* (mentor) enough?

A. For a *mashpia*, everyone had one chossid whom they looked up to in particular, and from him they primarily received guidance. But they would still be open to absorbing good things from a variety of chassidim. After all, from every chossid, each according to his distinctive soul-root, one can learn something valuable – whether it is the depth of his meditation, the warmth of his spiritual emotions, the spontaneity of his *ahavas Yisroel*, or the

sheer power of his *mesirus nefesh*.

Q. It sounds as if in your times there was a thirst to listen to from elder chassidim. Today that doesn't seem to be the case. Many of today's youth don't even aspire to reach the levels of the elder chassidim they do know, let alone chassidim of previous generations. The prevalent feeling is that the elder chassidim are products of a bygone era from a totally different society, making them impractical to emulate.

A. I see this "generation gap" perspective as one of the challenges of this generation. When I was young, we didn't view the *eltare chassidim* that way; we most certainly had *derech erez* towards them and recognized that they were on a much higher level than we were, but we didn't see them as hailing from another planet. There wasn't this "*mechitza*" separating the generations. The way we saw it, they were once young people like us,



The Rebbe Rashab told his son, the Frierdiker Rebbe: One must spend time in the close company of elder chassidim (*raibn-zich arum eltare chassidim* – colloquially, "hanging around elder chassidim"). When I was younger I would spend time with Reb Shmuel Ber and Reb Chaim Ber during the few weeks that they spent in Lubavitch. I then spent three-quarters of a year applying what they spoke about.

(רשימות היומן ע' תסא)

who lived in the same world and had the same struggles, and through working on themselves and receiving guidance from their *mashpi'im*, they eventually became who they are. So if we worked on ourselves, we could also become like them. It's not that we thought that we actually resembled those elder chassidim, but why not at least try to be like them?

Q. Where does the current attitude stem from?

A. In my opinion it comes from the secular culture around us, where the youth feel they are more advanced and knowledgeable than their parents and grandparents, and than anyone or anything that is associated with the previous generation. Not too long ago, the prevailing opinion was that the older a person was, the wiser and more knowledgeable he became, but today, the prevailing attitude is quite the opposite. Unfortunately, this view has crept into our circles as well.

Q. In fact, it seems that today people are more critical and less forgiving of faults: "this *mashpia* has this fault, that *mashpia* has another fault." Why didn't this problem exist back then?

A. This response might surprise you, but people were critical then as well. There were always critics – "*chachomim*" who thought they knew better; big *chachomim*, little *chachomim*...

Those, however, who were not as hot-headed; they still had some *bittul*, and didn't see it as their "holy duty" to find faults in all of the *mashpi'im* and *rabbonim*....

Q. But what is so wrong with being reasonable? Isn't it true that *mashpi'im* have faults?

A. First of all, it is not our task to judge others. We often don't know the full story about any set of circumstances or about another's motivations. And if this is true regarding any fellow Jew, then surely an older person, and in particular a true *chassid*, is entitled to receive the same tolerant and unjudgmental attitude.

And even if one is convinced that he is indeed qualified to stand in judgment, why must he busy himself with such foolish endeavors? What **benefit** will be derived?

There is a story about a famous chossid called Reb Abba Persson. Reb Abba was a wealthy businessman, and notwithstanding his stature, his conduct in certain matters was such that, at least from a chassidic perspective, it may have been considered questionable.

Another prominent chossid of that time, Reb Chonye Morozov, is remembered as a personal secretary to the Friediker Rebbe and one of his closest confidants. In his youth, however, he had a wild side to him: he could be even seen jumping on to a trolley while it was in motion. Anyway, one day this young bochur was sent to stay with Reb Abba for a while in order to learn and receive guidance from him.

Reb Abba once chastised him regarding a certain matter, and without skipping a beat Reb Chonye responded, "But you too have many faults!"

"True," Reb Abba replied, "but if you focus on other people's faults, you will never become a *mensh*...."

One must focus on his **own** shortcomings, not on someone else's. One ought to learn and grow from the positive qualities of those who can be emulated, instead of trying to justify one's lack of *avoda* by proving that no one is perfect....

Q. Were you ever critical of certain *eltare* chassidim? Did you admire some more than others?

A. Most definitely. It's not that we were in denial! And it is obvious that even the greatest chassidim aren't perfect. So there were certainly differences: some chassidim we admired more, and others, not as much. But we were always eager to listen to every chossid. As I mentioned earlier, from every chossid there is what to hear and what to learn.

The problem with some critics nowadays is that they

aren't willing to look up to **anybody**! This *mashpia* has too much *gayva*, and that one is too *bittuldik*; this one is not inspirational enough, and the other, albeit very inspirational, is not as knowledgeable as I am....

It is certainly in order that one should admire one chossid more than another, and to appoint as his personal *mashpia* the chossid whom he regards most highly. The problem begins when one doesn't admire **anyone**, and **no one** is considered worthy of being listened to.

I remember when I was very young, I already had a leaning as to whom I would like to learn from and emulate. In my eyes, my opinion already carried considerable weight.

When I was around the age of *bar mitzva*, we were living in the Displaced Persons camp in Poking, Germany. Reb Yisrael Neveler was my top role model, and until today I hold his memory in the highest regard. He was a fiery chossid, full of joy and warmth. His *yiras Shamayim* was remarkable. He exuded an inner strength, and was unusually passionate and expressive.

In addition to Reb Yisrael, I decided at that time that I saw a certain *emeskeit* in two particular Chassidim, who, in comparison to others, weren't considered to be outstanding. I couldn't help but admire their sincerity, their *emes*, their *yiras Shamayim* and straightforwardness. For them it was a fact of life that what *Chassidus* demands must be carried out without excuses or shortcuts. There were other chassidim who were more widely respected, but I appreciated these two more.

Later, when I moved to France, there were also many *chassidishe* Yidden, including Reb Nissan Nemenov, who was the official *mashpia*, and of course I participated in his *farbrengens* and so on. But there, too, certain chassidim stood out whom I really looked up to and admired. And when I came to New York, this sequence repeated itself; I took well to some and had less

admiration for others.

For broad guidance as to the most appropriate path to follow in one's *avoda*, one needs a particular *mashpia*. But to supplement that with all the other good things that can be heard at a *farbrengen*, there is always something to hear from everyone – maybe it's not always 100% to the point, but there is always something to receive. So as a rule, I went to **all** the *farbrengens* of **every** *mashpia*.

To summarize:

Everyone has faults and shortcomings. Period.

It is **not** unreasonable to have tremendous respect for someone and consider him worthy to be listened to and learned from, even if he isn't perfect.

It is okay and natural to admire certain *eltere* chassidim more than others. Those whom you look up to and feel you have the most to gain from, are the main ones you should be observing and listening to.

Even after you have your *mashpia* and *elterer* chossid, you should listen to other *chassidishe* Yidden as well, since every chossid has something unique to offer.

Q. How does this all relate to the members of the Anash community?

A. Firstly, to ensure that there **are** *mashpi'im* who match the above-mentioned description. There must be general *mashpi'im*, *mashpi'im* for every *shul*, for every block, and so on etc. This must be implemented **regardless** of the time, effort and money it might call for. Once this is in place, people need to show an **interest**. This can be expressed in a number of ways: attending the *farbrengens* and *shiurim* and being attentive, pleading with the *mashpi'im* to give more *shiurim* and *farbreng* more often, and so on.

All of this will nurture **healthy** relationships between the *mashpi'im* and the *yungeleit*, ultimately bringing about inestimable good for the entire community.

Q. And how can the *mashpi'im*, for their part, help to improve the situation, and in particular to inspire the younger generation to become more involved in *Chassidus*, Torah and *yiras Shamayim*, at a time when there are so many distractions and challenges?

A. It goes without saying that the *mashpi'im* need to be devoted, to feel a sense of **responsibility**. They need to invest **effort and time** in the *yungeleit* and in the younger generation – to *farbreng* with them, to arrange *shiurim*, to listen to them, to encourage them, to show them that they truly care and that they are there to help them

out. They need to be **involved**.

When this is in place, the younger generation too will respond with eagerness and enthusiasm. If they feel that someone is truly devoted and sincerely cares about them, they will receive what is being said with open arms. Only when they sense that their concerns and issues really matter to someone, will it be possible for *mashpi'im* to speak of expectations or even offer criticism; only then, instead of confronting indifference or negativity, will the *mashpi'im* reap the desired results.

The Tzemach Tzedek once said, "The level of *chassidishkeit* has gone down."

He went on to explain that in the days of the Mittlerer Rebbe, first the *melamdim* and *rabbonim* were admitted for *yechidus*, and only then would the *baalei-batim* take their turn. Now, he said, the *baalei-batim* enter first. (After all, they have important matters to discuss; besides, they are the ones who support the *rabbonim*....) Only afterwards are the *rabbonim* and *melamdim* admitted.

When the elder *mashpia*, Reb Groinem, related this story, the *temimim* in Lubavitch asked him why the Tzemach Tzedek did not reverse the order to the way it had been in the past. Reb Groinem, in true chassidic tradition, explained with a story:

"There was once a villager, a simple *yishuvnik*, who would occasionally visit the *rov* of the nearby town and ask him all his *shaylos*. One day he arrived at the home of the *rov* and found him at a meeting discussing a serious matter with his colleagues. When the meeting ended, the villager presented his *shaylos*, and then asked the *rov* if he could know what was the matter of such great concern.

"The *rov* explained that since it hadn't rained for a while, they were deliberating whether they should declare a day of fasting and *davening* for the much-needed rain, to save them from possible famine. The villager, astonished, offered his counsel.

" 'I have a far simpler solution,' he said. 'Whenever my cat runs into the house and crouches near the oven, rain begins to fall shortly after. All we must do is grab the cat, place it near the oven, and the rain will surely follow!' "

The *mashpia* concluded: "In the days of the Mittlerer Rebbe, the *baalei-batim* admired and respected the *melamdim* and *rabbonim* and gave them precedence. But now that the situation has declined and they no longer respect them, rearranging them in the correct order is no more helpful than putting the cat near the oven to bring the rain...."

(רשימות דברים ה"א ע' קלז)

In The Rebbe's Words

SICHA 12 TAMMUZ 5718 (1958) – FREE TRANSLATION

KNOWING ONE'S PLACE

There is a *halacha* in Shulchan Aruch that says, "All those judging a *din Torah* must be *talmidei chachomim* and upright people; one should not judge a *din Torah* unless one knows this to be so." The commentaries (Smeh and Nesivos) add, "One should never judge a *din Torah* together with *baalei batim*, for it is known that the understanding of *baalei batim* and the understanding of *Torah* are completely contradictory."

Since this was said in addition to what is mentioned in the Shulchan Aruch, it is understood that though they are fine upright *talmidei chachomim* [and he, the *baal-habus*, surely has *smicha*]; yet, since he spends much of his time in the outside world, it is impossible that the worldly perceptions ("*hanachos ha'olam*") do not affect him...

The *baalei batim* must therefore know their place and the place of the Rov:

The Rov must be totally immersed in davening and learning, serve as a guide for the *baalei batim*, and not be drawn after desires and interests. The *baalei batim* must support the Rov and raise his position in authority and riches, like the *kohanim*, who were obligated to raise the position of their leader – the *kohen gadol*. For just as every Yid is called a "*kohen*," the Rov is considered to be the "*kohen gadol*".

The *baal-habus* must bear in mind, that though the Rov depends on him for support, nevertheless he remains an "ordinary *kohen*" and may not enter the area designated for the "*kohen gadol*". He is indeed a holy *kohen*, yet the *kodesh hakodoshim* is only for the *kohen gadol*.

THE TIMES BEFORE MOSHIACH

The protocol used to be that the *baalei batim* would present their *shailah* to the Rov and ask for a *psak din*. Later, as the generations progressed closer to the times of Moshiach and people became more impudent, the *baal-habus* had an opinion of his own ("*sam sapozhnik*"), and together with his *shailah*, he would tell the Rov of the various opinions and sources on the subject.

Later yet, as they came even closer Moshiach and felt the need to increase the 'signs of the time before Moshiach', they would ask the *shailah* and then add: "If you will pasken according to my liking, you will be my Rov; but if not, I will find someone else!"

Where does such a mindset come from? It was an outcome of the earlier mindset. When the *baal-habus* is allowed to enter the '*kodesh hakodoshim*' and give his opinion on various issues, this eventually leads to a situation that the *baal-habus* leads the way and the Rabbonim become their servants....

Therefore, in order to ascertain the Torah's opinion on the matter, it is important to explain to the *baalei batim* that although they are *kohanim*, they are not the *kohen gadol*, and may therefore not mix into rabbinic decisions.

Furthermore, in a situation where the Rov is lacking the inner strength to firmly state the true *Torah* ruling, it is the obligation of the *baalei batim* to strengthen him. They must put the Rov in his position and tell him: "Rule over us!"

LEARNING FROM THE REFORM...

In fact, regarding this matter, something can be learned from those who call themselves 'Reform', who have

recently begun to place their Rabbi at their head, and do not permit anyone who opposes him to have a place in the shul and community.

When the *baalei batim* will strengthen the Rov and he will lead them on the right path, then the *baalei batim* will merit brachos in their physical matters.

In this world, the accepted practice is that majority rules, and it should therefore follow that if the *baalei batim* oppose the Rov, the right should be with them.

However, we have "one Torah", the Shulchan Aruch, which can only be applied by those who are immersed in davening and learning and have no involvement in worldly matters, even in the most *kosher* way.

In other words, the *baalei batim* should be active primarily in the area of *gemilus chassadim*, and the Rov in the area of Torah and Avoda. Then, when each of them will fill his position, the community will be raised to be a holy community and a holy nation.



One day, during his early years in Homil, Reb Aizel Homiler *farbrenged* with the local *baalei batim* and told them: "The true '*mizrach*' is at the back of the *shul*, where the *melamdim* sit. You should listen and learn from the words of the *melamdim* just as you listen and learn from the Rebbe's words."

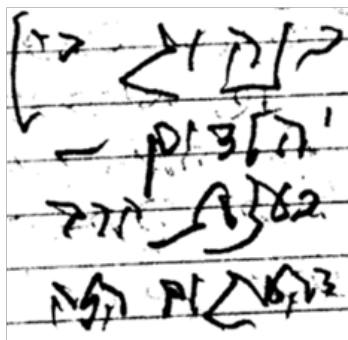
From that day on, the *baalei batim* began to appreciate the *chassidische melamdim*, and the town of Homil became bright.

When the Frierdiker Rebbe related the above, he added: "In the past, people would study not only the words of a Rebbe but the words of a chossid. The young people would listen to the old folk, the *baalei batim* would listen to the *melamdim* – and things were brighter."

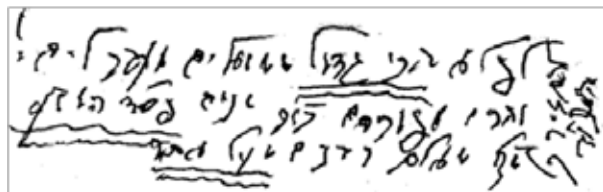
Clear Directives

Time and again the Rebbe would advise and demand of the *chassidim* to seek counsel by *Rabbonim*.

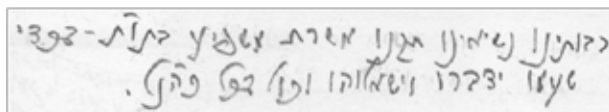
In an instance of dispute between *chassidim* the Rebbe wrote: "As is customary amongst Yidden – to follow the advice of the local Rov."



In one hand written response the Rebbe writes: "It is most surprising that they are asking such a question [to the Rebbe] from overseas! It is well known for many years the instruction of the Shulchan Aruch to consult the local Rabbonim." The Rebbe then instructed the secretariat to return any information enclosed.



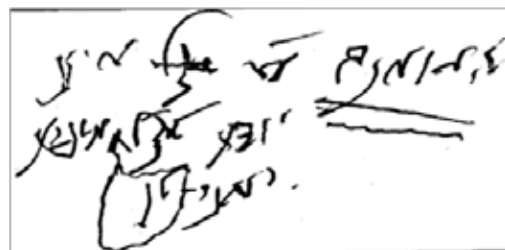
In response to a bochur who asked the Rebbe for advice, the Rebbe replied: "Our Rebbeim have established the position of *mashpi'im* in Tomchei Temimim so that one should speak to him and ask him advice etc. in all the above mentioned matters."



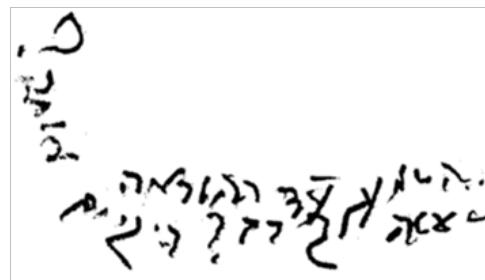
In another hand written note the Rebbe sums up the appropriate practice: "Balei batim follow the instructions of Rabbonim, and not the other way around."



On the importance of having a *ruchniyus'dike* advisor: "Can it be that you do not know that one must have a *mashpia ruchni*."



And finally this direct message: "Have you heard about the order of *asei lecha Rav*? Will you fulfill it?"



Seeking Guidance

Throughout the generations of *chasidei Chabad*, *chassidim* always understood that it was not enough to hear *Chassidus* from the Rebbe and go into *yechidus*, it was crucial to have an elder *chossid* to direct them in their *avodas HaShem*. After hearing a directive from the Rebbe, in public or private, the *chassidim* would review the Rebbe's words with 'their' elder *chossid*, who would guide them on how to apply it correctly. While everyone had heard the Rebbe speak, the *chassidim* understood that it was specifically the elder *mashpi'im* who understood the full depth of the Rebbe's words and its appropriate application.

Today, when we must draw guidance from the Rebbe's words in the past, it is even more crucial for us to turn to the elder *chassidim* today, to be guided on the correct understanding and application of the Rebbe's words.



RECEIVING HADRACHA

Chazal say that one who is knowledgeable in Torah but did not receive guidance from *talmidei chachomim* is reckoned an ignoramus. Since he has not been taught the principles according to which one should approach Torah scholarship, he is likely to apply incorrectly that which he has learnt.

(סוטה כב ע"א)

In a letter to a certain *elterer chossid*, the Frierdiker Rebbe pleads with him to *farbreng* with the younger *chassidim*: "Guidance in *Chassidus* can only be transmitted from one *chossid* to another, just as one candle is lit from another. It has been the practice of *Anash* throughout the generations to devote time to hearing a rich *vort* from *eltere chassidim*.

"My father, the Rebbe Rashab, praised this practice

and once told me, 'This practice has produced true *chassidim*! In whom will you find the meaty essence of *Chassidus*? Only in those who, like humble disciples, cleaved closely to *eltere chassidim* (*sheshimshu es ziknei hachassidim*). Their perceptions are distinctively superior. Many think that *Chassidus* is *haskala*, scholarship; that is a mistake! *Chassidus* means recognizing how *Elokus* permeates everything. And this recognition has always been brought about through *eltere chassidim*.' "

(אג"ק מוהר"י צ"ח"א ע' תרטו)

The Frierdiker Rebbe related: *Chassidim* would often ask *eltere chassidim* to explain to them the meaning of the words they had heard from the Rebbe at *yechidus*.

Reb Hillel Paritcher writes: Whoever wants to walk in the paths of *Chassidus* must be connected to the *tzaddik* of the generation, such as the Rebbe. In addition, one needs to have an elder *chossid* who will teach him and explain the Rebbe's teachings and *Chassidus*. This will enable the *chossid* to see and hear *Elokus*.

(סה"ש תש"ב ע' 321, מגדל עז ע' שנג)

GUIDED THINKING

The *Tzemach Tzedek* would often direct *yungeleit* to the eminent *chossid*, Reb Hillel Paritcher, to be guided in the ways of *Chassidus*. Reb Hillel in turn would entrust each newly-arrived *yungerman* to the hands of two elder *yungeleit*, who in addition to explaining the basics of *Chassidus*, would most importantly tell him *sippurim* about the Rebbeim and about *chassidim* of earlier generations. They would retell each story numerous times, until it penetrated the *yungerman* and he knew its details well. They would then ask him what lessons – in refining one's *middos*, in *yiras Shomayim* and *hashgacha protis* – could be learned from the story. They would urge the *yungerman* to toil, as one does in serious study,

to find the lessons, and they would help him in his search. Finally, they would tell him what lessons they had been told by their own *madrich*, Reb Hillel.

On the first three *Shabbosim* of a newly-arrived *yungerman*, Reb Hillel would relate a *sippur* in addition to the teachings of *Chassidus* that he delivered every *Shabbos*. After the *sippur* they would all sing *niggunim*, and then discuss the lessons to be derived in *avoda* of the heart and the mind.

Reb Hillel explained the reason for this procedure: "The beginning of *avoda* is 'Adam ki yakriv mikem' – a person has to offer of himself to *HaShem*. Those words appear at the beginning of *Sefer Vayikra*. However, in order that one should know that he is an *adam*, and how an *adam* should conduct himself, the *seforim* of *Bereishis* and *Shmos*, which are mostly *sippurim*, come first."

(אגרות קודש מוהריי"צ ח"ד ע' נ"א)

One *Yom-Tov*, at a *seuda* with his *chassidim*, the Frierdiker Rebbe related the following.

When a *chossid* is actively involved in his *shlichus* he is *mekushar* to the Rebbe. His entire being is bound to the Rebbe. He walks like a *chossid*, eats like a *chossid*, and sleeps like a *chossid*. However, this is only true of *chassidim* who have a mentor and accept guidance. If, however, one is his own teacher and guide, the above does not apply.

The Rashbatz would tell the story of a Russian non-Jew who found a pair of *tefillin*. Grabbing them by the straps, he headed for the market to sell his new *metzia*. A *yid* walking by was shocked to see a non-Jew holding *tefillin* by the *retzuos* and dragging the *batim* on the ground.

He asked him in astonishment, "Where did you get those?"

The non-Jew responded arrogantly, *Ya sam sapozhnik!* ("I myself am a cobbler!"), as if to show off his craftsmanship by claiming to have made them himself.

The Frierdiker Rebbe concluded, "The lesson is self understood..."

(ס"ה ש"תרח"צ ע' 462)

NOT RELYING ON ONESELF

During the reign of Yoshiyahu, King of Yehuda, Necho the King of Mitzrayim prepared to pass through *Eretz Yisroel* on his way northward to wage war against Ashur (Assyria). King Yoshiyahu was aware that *HaShem* had clearly promised that even a "sword of peace" would not pass through his land, and therefore warned the King of Mitzrayim to keep his troops at a distance. That warning was ignored. Yoshiyahu thereupon confronted them in battle, where he was showered with arrows and died.

Chazal explain that despite the fact that it seemed so clear in the Torah as he understood it, he should have sought the advice of the Navi Yirmiyahu. He would have been taught that his generation was not worthy of this special promise.

(דברי הימים ב' פל"ה כ-כד, תענית כב ס"א)

On one occasion, when King Yannai was celebrating a great victory, an evil man called Elazar ben Po'ira persuaded the king to believe that the hearts of the *chachomim* were against him. To prove his point, he advised the king to put on the *tzitz* of the *kohen gadol* and watch their response.

When Yannai did as he was advised, one elder spoke up: "Your majesty! It is great enough to be king; leave the *kehunah* for the children of Aharon."

The king, infuriated, expelled all the *chachomim* from the feast. And Elazar ben Po'ira, seizing the opportunity, incited him to kill them all.

Yannai was hesitant and inquired: "What then will become of the Torah?"

Elazar was quick to reply, "The Torah is written and available to whoever wants to learn it."

Yannai, duly convinced, killed all of the *chachomim*, leaving the world void of Torah learning – until Shimon ben Shetach eventually restored the Torah to its original glory.

Chazal charge Yannai with *apikorsus* (heresy), for though the *Torah shebiksav* is written, one must have teachers to guide him to a proper understanding of it, through the

oral tradition of the *Torah shebe'al peh*.

This, according to some, began the development of the *karo'im*, a group of Yidden who did not follow the *chachomim* and used their own understanding to explain the Torah.

(קידושין סו ע"א, כוזרי מ"ג ס"ה)

Everyone who says *Ashrei* knows those words: *v'es kol haresha'im yashmid* – "and He will destroy all evildoers." Well, there once lived a man who, realizing that he was not particularly righteous, was afraid of cursing himself. He therefore decided to omit the word *haresha'im* ("evildoers"), so that the verse now read, "and He will destroy all." And in due course, his children all baptized. (The root of *yashmid* also denotes apostasy.)

The medieval author of *Sefer Chassidim* explains that although this man's intentions were good, he was punished for not having consulted the *chachomim* of his town. They would have explained to him that though Dovid HaMelech himself had a wicked son, Avshalom, he nevertheless did say this *posuk*, since *HaShem* will do as He chooses.

(ס' חסידים ס"א ג')

FOLLOWING THE ELDERS

Chazal say: One should always heed the counsel of elders. Even if the elders advise one to demolish and the youth

advise one to build, one should listen to the elders, for the "demolition" of the elders is ultimately "building," whereas the "building" of the youth will ultimately bring about destruction.

In this context they point to the following story:

After the passing of Shlomo HaMelech, his son Rechavom ascended the kingly throne. A delegation of Yidden soon approached him, asking that he treat them gently and not overburden them with taxes. Rechavom told them, "Return in three days and I will answer you."

He then turned to seek the advice of the elders who had stood before his father. They told him, "If you treat the people gently, they will serve you faithfully throughout all of their days."

Dissatisfied with this approach, the king then consulted some young friends and they told him, "Be firm with the people. Tell them that you will be even more demanding than your father."

At the end of three days the people returned, and the king answered them as his young friends had advised. Infuriated, the people rebelled against him and chose Yerovam as their king.

(מלכים א' יב, לקח טוב שמות ד, כח, מגילה לא ע"ב)

Rava said: "How foolish are those people that stand up for a *sefer Torah* but not for a *talmid chacham*" – because of the degree to which the Torah empowers them to interpret its words.

(מכות כ"ב ע"ב)