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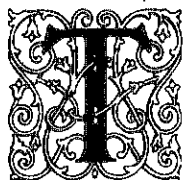
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mitgaber.

9

THE NEED FOR STIMULATION



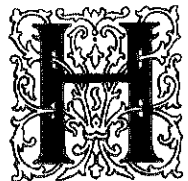
he human soul relishes sensation, not only if it is a pleasant feeling but for the very experience of stimulation. Sooner sadness or some deep pain rather than the boredom of nonstimulation. People will watch distressing scenes and listen to heartrending stories just to get stimulation. Such is human nature and a need of the soul, just like all its other needs and natures. So he who is clever will fulfill this need with passionate prayer and Torah learning.

But the soul whose divine service is without emotion will have to find its stimulation elsewhere. It will either be driven to cheap, even forbidden sensation or will become emotionally ill from lack of stimulation.

SHAPIRA

edward. His greater
ains naked, and his
g from sin is tanta-
sin 39b), sitting back
is sometimes tanta-

LEAVING YOUR MARK ON THE
WORLD



e who knows his place.

Be creative and contribute to the world, give it the best you have. Make a niche for yourself that will always be felt in the world.

Are not the "places" of our forefathers, the prophets, and other *tzaddikim* to this day not known in the world? What a void there would be in the world if, for instance, there had been no Baal Shem Tov?

So "he who knows his place"—who leaves a mark in this world with his life—his "place" will forever be known, even beyond his life.

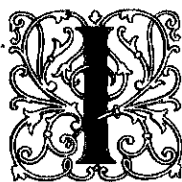
SHAPIRA

at your soul, you say,
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greatly to come

proof that God exists
elf? King Shlomo said
ad the empty-hearted
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14

IS IT WISH OR IS IT RESOLUTION?



If you want to know if you've progressed on your spiritual path over the years, the way to judge is to look at your resolution—at your inner drive—and not at your wishes.

Only the inner drive with which you work to attain your desired goal is called resolution. But if you do not work but rather just want, this is not called resolution. It is just some wish that you wish for yourself to be blessed with that desired objective. For example, the pauper who works to sustain himself, this is a drive, because he is doing something constructive toward it. But the wish that he'll find a million dollars is just a wish to be rich and not a resolution.

Every Jew would like to be a *tzaddik*, but this is no

more than a wish: he'd like to wake up in the morning and suddenly find himself a *tzaddik*. Only the level and state of being that you seriously work toward can truly be called a resolution.

Therefore a wish can be for great things and be way out of line with reality: to find some great treasure, to be transformed to some great saint, to spontaneously change reality.

But the true inner drive that is accompanied with hard work is not for jumping but for gradual progress. Step after step to a higher level is the goal of those driven from within. Consequently, the objective of your resolution will be in direct proportion to your present spiritual level: at the beginning your strivings will be to master lower levels, and as you progress, your drive will be to attain progressively higher levels.

So if you want to know how you've progressed and to gauge the change in your spiritual level, compare the goal of your drive of last year with that for which you strive now: is it for the same objectives or even for higher? This shall be your sign that, thank God, you have made progress.

PERSONAL RULES FOR SUCCESS

If you have rules for your spiritual life, you will find it easier to follow them. But if you have not, you will find your life to personal failures and successes.

Because the spiritual life is a long and difficult journey, it is easy to become discouraged and distracted. Supporting his family, his indolence, negative traits, and so forth—a constantly involved in winning and sometimes losing.

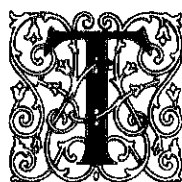
SHAPIRA

come a simple creature
the moon, the birds, and
to Him. Reveal the
and fill it with a sense of

n by reciting: "Adon
..." "Yedid Nefesh—
g. . . ." See how your
approach of its Maker.
hear your sweet song,
. Only the gushing of
calm your passion.
she prayed to become
sing (*Genesis Rabbah*
e to God as a simple

19

THE REBBE'S MIDLIFE TRANSITION



Thank God, I am already in my fortieth year of life and in a few months it will be my fortieth birthday. After that begins the decline of life, the beginnings of my old age. I am afraid. Very afraid. Not so much from the inevitable passing of my life but from the spiritual poverty of my years do I shudder: they are gone and past, empty and void, wasted on childish games.

"What will be with you, mortal creature!" I tell myself. "Your prime of life is gone, and now, when you've reached your decline, when the inevitable process of dying has begun, only now you remember your Creator?"

And even now, can I be sure of myself? How many

periods of inspiration and improvement have I already had in my life, and what always happened to them? They passed like snow on a summer's day. This happened at previous transitions of life: before my *bar mitzvah*, before my wedding. . . . I experienced then such a deep inspiration and felt so firm in my convictions. I said to myself that from then on I was certain to be God's faithful servant. And who knows if even now, once I become accustomed to being past forty, that the past will not happen again: all the inspiration and aspiration will melt and disappear. As there is no trace left from my earlier inspirations, what will be left of this one?

But I dare not despair! My heart pounds from my impending fortieth birthday, my entire body shakes from my oncoming declining years. Still, I will try to muster all my strength to commit myself and my life to God. Perhaps, perhaps something will remain.

Just One Thing Missing

But to what shall I commit myself? To learn more? I think that as far as possible, I don't waste any time. To abstain from physical pleasures? If my own desires are not fooling me, thank God, I am not so attached to them. So what am I missing? Simply to be a Jew. I see myself as a self-portrait that shows all colors and features real to life. Just one thing is missing: the soul.

"God! Master of the World, Who sees my innermost secrets! Before You I confess. You I beseech! I feel so cast aside and distanced from You and from Your holy Presence! Help me—I want to become a simple Jew!

"God! Save me from wasting the rest of my years chasing the illusions of life! Draw me closer and bring me into Your innermost Presence! Bind me to You forever and ever in wealth of spirit and soul!"

BECOMING 1



wo we pray anymore for lo old age of a certain o a condemnation.

His entire life he all his chasidic peers baser drives grabbed him to act them out deeper and deeper, he was seventy-five himself and refrain how he can still deh old *chasid* is an enig

Is old age like t

Is this called a life we should look forward to reach? Or is this spiritual putrefaction in the depths of Hell from which we should flee as far as we can?

The Fighting Spirit

An awesome terror grips me as I think about this. God! Just living and getting old is such a hazard!

We have spoken about this elsewhere, but I will recapitulate the point: the state of any individual's purity and character is dependent on his fighting spirit. Two people can be plagued by equally base drives, yet one will overcome them and the other be overcome by them. He who can muster his inner strength and say, "I am the master of my life," will be able to overcome his drives. Another whose heart is weak and whose spirits are wilted will be overwhelmed by the slightest impulse.

"Who is the true strong man?—he who can control his desires" (*Avot* 4:1). Only the strong of spirit are able to control their desires. Therefore, when a person ages and his strength of spirit wanes, he will find it harder to control himself. His only saving grace is that his baser drives also wane with his body strength. But woe to the unfortunate soul whose drives do not wane with his body strength: if he did not defuse them when he was young, he is in greater danger of caving in to them when he is old.

So as it is insufficient merely to act like a *chasid*, but one must *become* a *chasid*, as it is insufficient just to act with holiness, but one must *become* holy, as the verse actually says, "Act with holiness and become holy" (Leviticus 11:44, 20:7), so too is it insufficient to just act with strength of spirit. You must become strong-spirited and take possession of your inner world.

Train yourself to life, not only regard regarding permissibility tire inner life. Let no in spontaneous fashion, action, speech, or even and ultimate master command.

If you train yourself become a giant of physical strength may your spirit, will remain you will be able to spiritual victories.

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You must become
of your inner world.

Train yourself to be the master of all aspects of your life, not only regarding forbidden behavior, not only regarding permissible pleasure, but regarding your entire inner life. Let not any natural response be triggered in spontaneous fashion, be it action, a refrain from action, speech, or even thought. Become the absolute and ultimate master of your inner world so that it reacts not to external influence but only to your deepest command.

If you train yourself in your younger years, you will become a giant of spirit. Your body may age, your physical strength may wane, but your inner essence, your spirit, will remain strong. To the end of your life you will be able to take pride in your continuing spiritual victories.

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THE VALUE OF TIME



I recently visited a rich man who earns his living with minimum toil—he doesn't even have to leave his house. Other worries I also did not find in his life: he is physically healthy and emotionally he feels content.

But one thing I noticed did bother him: how should he spend all his free time? To solve this, he would just sit and chat with his wife and family to alleviate his boredom. He thus seemed to me to be like the poor soul who was granted entrance to *Gan Eden* because while on earth he had saved two Jewish lives from death. But because he was an ignorant wagon driver who had no grasp of what *Gan Eden* is all about, he was placed in a beautiful palace and handed a whip that he could wave

to his heart's desire. The angels finally had compassion on him that he was forfeiting *Gan Eden* with his whip. I heard this story from my father-in-law o.b.m.

So I, too, had compassion on this poor rich man who has so much free time—every minute could be a *Gan Eden*. How much could he accomplish with this time? In a day? A week? A lifetime? . . . And he squandered it on idle chatter.

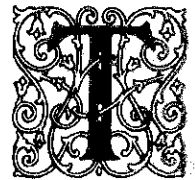
And I was so jealous of his free time. If only he could bequeath me four hours a day so that I could have twenty-eight hours, how much happier we both would be. He would be freed of the burden of four boring hours, while I would come into the fortune of this *Gan Eden*.

But why should I envy his time, such idle time, such an empty and barren existence, which has no meaning or content? He does not enjoy the triumphs that follow the setbacks so inherent to the spiritual life—his whole life revolves around the pleasure he gets out of eating. Would my soul not abhor to receive such barren and empty hours?

So why do I look at his spare time and not look at my own? Can I myself not cut down on my hours of sleep, can I not find here and there some free moments? These wasted minutes that pass unnoticed—can I not somehow condense them together into one set period and use it for spiritual progress?

If you are willing to exert yourself, you will find storehouses of hidden time.

THE ULT



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7. Tzav V'Ziruz
R. Kalonymus Kalman
Shapira
1889-1943



The Sages tell us that shalosh seudos is a most suitable time for doing teshuvah, for it is a time when a person's soul is attached to Hashem. (Sidduro shel Shabbos) In this waning hour of Shabbos, there is an opportune moment to reflect on the holy day.

Shalosh seudos is the weekly Yom Kippur. Just as on Yom Kippur the soul is aroused and cleansed from its failings during the year, at shalosh seudos the soul's hidden lusts and maladies of the entire week are laid open, and the individual is cleansed and purified.

(Tzav Veziruz, page 53:47)

ובכן השלש סעודות בשבת, הוא יום התפניות של השבוע. במו יום התפניות/שקילה ובאחר אף הנפש מקבל השקנה, בן שלש סעודות קבלה אף על התשובות והנחות הנפש שהיו במקורות בו קבל השבת. בכל השבת הנפש שואפת אל על, והאמת המסתתרת והרסית, כפי הגוף והמדות עומדים עליה רוססים אותה וסוחטים את פיה עד שלפעמים גם קולה לא ישמע, ואין האדם יודע לשמוע שיש בו נפש שחולת אהבה, ובשבת שלש סעודות שתאיש עוזב את כל העולם ומוסר את עצמו לר' מתקרב אליו ומדבר עמו, כל השעות הנפש יסודית והעקבותיה של כל השבת באים ומתגלים, פעם כדגיש תשוקה זאת, מושך עקרה אל רצונה, ופעם כאב עצום בקרבו. הכוונת והענין והאמת מתפרצת ממנו אל נא רפא נא לך.

ואם מקשיב האיש לכל ועומץ ותעסוק נפשו בשעה זו, ישמע את צלילת פת המלך שואבמת וקבה מן הריקים ופוחים, בשעה שהיא רדפה אל אברה, וקוראה, אבי אבי הצילי מהם אלדי.

8. Haachsharas Avreichim
R. Kalonymus Kalman Shapira
1889-1943

אכל לא שעה ראנה ואנחה על התפניות בלכד הוא השלש סעודות, רק גם שעה של התרוממות היא, הצדיקים אקרו

ששעה שלש סעודות היא השעה של יפה שעה אחת מהשנה ומעשים טובים בעולם הזה בכל ימי העולם הזה. ומקבול קדשה הוהני רוב הצדיק והקדוש שגמולו שגמולו הגאון הצדיק והקדוש המגיד והקוללית המאונץ אצרי פעם בשלש סעודות שנתה בבחינת צדיקים ויחבים ומשומותיהם הראשיתם והנעים כיוו השכינה. ואף זה אפשר שגם שכן מקור לא יכל אור אם גנו ערו יתה, ובעולם העליון לא ינעם, ואתה גם בשמחה וקצא בשעה שיותר יפה מן הון ערו, קאלו הם לשלום לא בד ולא אלדי הדבר נוגע בטה עצלותה קססה אותה שוב לאמר ופי דקנה להמגיד ולשאר הצדיקים וצ"ל אכל השוכה בו השוכה הצדק הרע שבה היא, ד' יתברך מלכותו בכל משלה, ואם הצדיקים וי"ע הרגשו והתענוו מקדשיתו בבחינת רישא, אתה על כל פנים את בחינת עמכם או עמכם רעמכם והקדשה תרגש. אכל בטה גם אהם כרגיש בך את השלש סעודות, גם לקי וכוונת מתענוגים ומתענוגים מקל רעש העולם, ולכלי המרובה שיעבורם דוד ופשו, רק שצין אתה יכול להתבונן ולהסתכל, ורעם ורעש ואברים ופסדים עד שבעים לא תנע שר' אלפים פא וכל קדשוני עמו.

והדבר רשמו (לעיל) בחובת המלמדים איה דגמאות איה חוצא לך את התרוממות נפשו של קדשה, קססה, כליל שבת קדש, ואף תחזק את מתענוגותיה ביה והמלא אותה ציורים מרעיונות ודמיונות של קדשה, ותהא נוסף לך את השלש סעודות (סעודה שלישית) בשבת קדש. כי האם אין אתה כרגיש מאומה בשעה שאתה יושב ביה מרבית הספרים, וזו דבר שאי אפשר, אם לא תרעד נפשו בכל טעם שאתה יושב עמכם אף זה אפשר שתרעד וזו או וז, בציור מכוור או על כל פנים בציור פסוק לא יעברו חופי אש או רק נוצץ וי גור בך, אשר כל אברך תענוו ואת כל צדיק יצרכו. כי אם סדירות והחוליות שבעל השבת משעממים אותך ואת רעיונותי לכלי ראות את חובותיך לך, אף לעצמך שלא תשאר גם בעולם הזה וגם בעולם העליון בפאול, בור שנת ופנת רחמנא לך, ולכלי להבים את עליות הנפש שאין טעה בן חורין מקלי לעלות עליה, על כל פנים בשבת קדש בשמחה נח מן סדירותי, רחוק מכוללתה, וישנה יתרה ואור קדשה יותר רב ממלאים אותה מפיח ומכחול אף זה אפשר שלא תדאג ולא תאנה על שנותיך שעובדות שבות אתה שבות בדרומות שגמולתם והכלים. ובקום שנתה לך בכל נח ובכל שעה שאתה מודען יותר, בכל יום ובכל שבות שאתה מתקרב אל מן שנותיך, לחוסף קדשה ולהתקרב יותר אל ר', הסוג אחר והשקע יותר בנחת, ואם לא בעבודת המדות הם ושלום, אף אם לא בבטול הוה, הלא גם אבק העבודות אם רב הוא, ופסולי העבודות מהשבות ומניח, אם תמידית הן, בכוון להשקע את האיש ביון המצולה עד הנאמר הם ושלום. ואף זה אפשר ששעה שלש סעודות עת המסלק השבת קדש לא יתה לך בשעה כיום התפניות.

A person should adapt himself to the condition of the soul which lives in darkness, as it says, "He made darkness His concealment." (Tehillim 18:12) It is in darkness where there is true light. By sitting in the dark and shutting out all worldly distractions, a person can distance himself from this world and draw close to the spiritual light of Hashem. One only wishes he could remain in this lofty state of attachment to Hashem, but the soul knows that in a few minutes the lights will be turned on and the soul will return to its weekday routine.

The king's son was banished from the royal palace. In the last moment before his departure, he draws close to his father in a final embrace. At shalosh seudos, before being thrust onto the weekday treadmill, a Jew cries out to Hashem, "Though I walk in the valley overshadowed by death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me." (Tehillim 23:4)

(Hach'sharas Aurelchim 4)

Pause and think: the holy Shabbos is about to depart. You did not think of worldly affairs. You did not waste time, but immersed yourself in Torah study in the company of your friends and cleansed yourself of any stain that may have attached itself to you during the past week. Hour by hour you rose to higher levels of kedushah, and now, at shalosh seudos, you feel the loftiness of this "hour of favor." You sense that this is the moment to seek attachment to "G-d who conceals Himself in the radiance of the Infinite Divine Light."

Together with your friends, you sit in a room steeped in darkness, adapting your physicality to the spiritual realm of the soul. There are two kinds of darkness. It says about Hashem, "He made darkness His concealment." (Tehillim 18:12) To our physical eyes, Hashem's brilliant light is darkness, because our human senses cannot grasp His Infinite Light.

But for the past twenty-four hours you have elevated your heart and soul far above your mundane concerns. You have penetrated the cloud that enshrouds the Shechinah; you have conquered the spiritual darkness and seen bright light. While your body is now submerged in physical darkness, your mind is undistracted by earthly matters. After seeking Him all day on Shabbos, you have finally reached your Creator—and you don't want to let go.

If only you could remain close to Him! Your soul would rejoice with eternal bliss. But shortly the lights will be turned on; you will plummet into the darkness of the worldly toil and struggle. And you exclaim, "Though I walk

through a valley of deepest darkness, I fear no harm, for You are with me." (Tehillim 23:4) With trembling hands you reach out to Hashem when you say these words, as if to say, "I want to take hold of You and never part with You."

When you reflect along these lines, the thoughts of Shabbos are bound to remain with you, and you will feel uplifted all week. You feel a surge of yiras Shamayim during shalosh seudos. Don't let it pass. Say to yourself, and repeat it over and over, "I am in awe of Hashem, my holy Creator, who is close to me now." When your soul is uplifted, and you rejoice in being free from earthly concerns, you will feel an irrepressible urge to sing the words of the holy zemer, Kah Echsof, "O Hashem, save Klal Yisrael who extend the Shabbos. Don't distance Yourself from them during the six weekdays, but extend the kedushah of Shabbos over us even during the weekdays."

(Hach'sharas Aurelchim)

The following memorial represents the last written testimony to the centuries of Hasidic civilization that once flourished in Poland.⁴

In Eternal Memory

of my holy, righteous and honored mother and teacher, the woman of valor Hanah Berakhah of noble lineage, daughter of the holy and righteous Rabbi Hayim Shmuel ha-Levi of Hantshin. She served God with all her might, heart and soul, and with great effort raised her children to Torah. Her holy and pure soul rose on high on the Sabbath eve of the 7th of Marheshvan 5700 [October 20 1939].

My honored wife, the righteous, modest, pious woman of noble lineage Rahel Hayah Miriam, the daughter of the righteous and holy Rabbi Yerahmiel Moshe, Head of the court of Kozienice. She had an exceptionally fine character and even learned Torah every day. She was like a merciful mother to every embittered soul, and especially to Torah students and Hasidim. In the bloom of youth her holy and pure soul rose on high, on the holy Sabbath of the week and Miriam died there,⁵ the tenth of Tammuz, 5697 [June 19, 1937].

My honored only son, cherished heart and soul, the holy and pious Rabbi of noble lineage

Elimelekh Ben Tsion. A good character, steeper Israel, who left behind Shabbat and the first Gravelly wounded at a on Monday the 12th c and bitter suffering his high on the 16th, th [September 29, 1939].

His honored wife, my pure and modest won daughter of the righted Balakhov. With great remained by the hospi holy son, lay wounder Tuesday the 13th of Tis

May the Merciful One bind their souls in the inheritance, and may th

⁴ Mendel Plekarz (Paikazh), *Ha-teudah he-hasidit ha-sifrutit ha-aharonah al admat Polin: Divrei ha-Rebi be-gito Varsha* Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1977.

⁵ Numbers 20:1.

⁶ Cf. Jeremiah 30:7.

⁷ Reproduced in *Sefer Aish Kodesh* Jerusalem: unnumbered page xi; *Derashot* 1:329.

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Memory

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Teshvan 5700 [October 20

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nd Miriam died there,⁵ the
June 19, 1937].

cherished heart and soul,
Rabbi of noble lineage

Elimelekh Ben Tsion. A man of truth, of fine and
good character, steeped in Torah, wise, a lover of
Israel, who left behind Torah insights on tractate
Shabbat and the first volume of Yoreh Deah.
Gravely wounded at a time of suffering for Yaakov,⁶
on Monday the 12th of Tishrei 5700, after great
and bitter suffering his holy and pure soul rose on
high on the 16th, the second day of Sukkot
[September 29, 1939].

His honored wife, my daughter-in-law, the holy,
pure and modest woman of noble lineage Gitl,
daughter of the righteous Rabbi Shlomo Hayim of
Balakhov. With great personal sacrifice she
remained by the hospital where her husband, my
holy son, lay wounded, and she was killed on
Tuesday the 13th of Tishrei [September 26, 1939].

May the Merciful One shelter them forever and
bind their souls in the bonds of life. God is their
inheritance, and may they rest in peace, amen.⁷

Hasidic ha-sifrutit ha-aharonah al admat Polin:
in Hasidim, 1977.

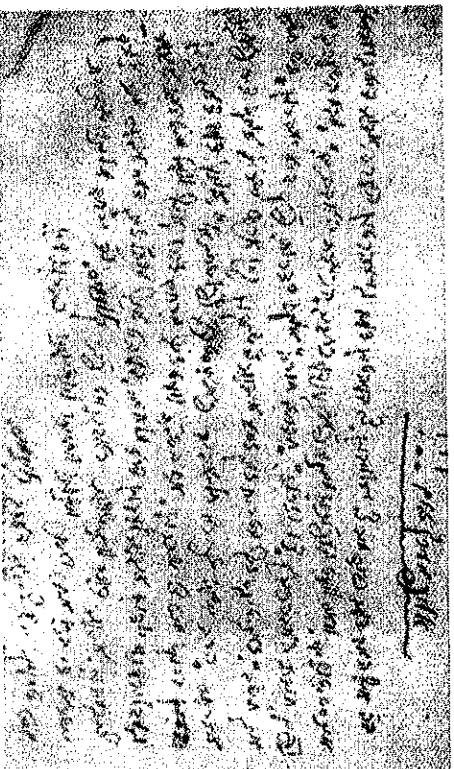
⁶ Cf. Jeremiah 30:7.

⁷ Reproduced in *Sefer Aish Kodesh* Jerusalem: Va'ad Hasidei Piasetsnah/Feldheim, 2007,
unnumbered page xi; *Derashot* 1:329.

wreckage of the ghetto. Where was one to look amidst the destruction of Poland's first city? Through a remarkable turn of events, Duvdevani managed to realize the dream of the surviving remnant of Piaseczno Hasidim by locating the precious manuscripts. Duvdevani described his amazing discovery in 1961, when he was summoned to testify at the Nazi War Crimes trial of the notorious war criminal Adolf Eichmann:

The staff of the Jewish Historical Institute helped me but to no avail. One day, when I had decided to search further, suddenly they brought me a will which had been found amongst these documents, of Rabbi Kalonymus Shapira in favor of his brother in the Land of Israel, the late Rabbi Yeshayahu Shapira and two other disciples who are living today in Israel. When I noticed the date, which was four months before the Warsaw Ghetto revolt, I became very excited and began reading. And I saw that he had put into the can books which he had written during the War years.⁴

The document Duvdevani discovered was a brief cover letter written by the Rebbe in ornate Yiddish prose:



ATTENTION!!!

Blessed is God. I have the honor of requesting the esteemed individual or institution that finds my enclosed writings *Hakhsharat Ha-Aveichim, Mavo Ha-She'arim*, (from *Hovat Ha-Aveikhim*), *Tsav ve-Zeruz, Torah Insights* on the weekly readings for the years 5700, 5701 and 5702, to please exert themselves to send them to the Land of Israel to the following address: Rabbi Yeshaya Shapira, Tel Aviv, Palestine. Please also send the enclosed letter. When the Blessed One will show mercy, and I and the remaining Jews survive the war, please return all materials to me or to the Warsaw Rabbinate for Kalonymus, and may God have mercy upon us, the remnant of Israel in every place, and rescue us, and sustain us, and save us in the blink of an eye.

With deep, heartfelt gratitude,
Kalonymus⁵

Switching to eloquent Rabbinic Hebrew, Rabbi Shapira then penned a message to his brother Yeshaya Shapira, describing the nature of the manuscripts and asking that they be produced for publication. This letter, Rabbi Shapira's final will, contained an exhortation to future readers of his work. "Please also print in every work," he wrote, "that I urge every single Jew to study my books, and the merit of my holy ancestors will stand by every student and his family, now and forever." The will and

⁵ The Rebbe's cover letter is reproduced in *Derashot* 1:328. Unless otherwise indicated, translations are my own.

Empire dislodged the traditional political quiescence of the Jewish population, and many turned their backs on traditional Orthodoxy in favor of newly formed mass movements that promised to solve social ills with one or another broad, bold idea. Some chose to identify closely with middle-class urban Polish values, replacing Yiddish with Polish and even converting to Catholicism. Others simply chose to leave Poland for the economic opportunity and personal freedoms promised by the United States. The burgeoning Zionist movement made considerable inroads among Polish Jewry, promising a secular redemption with a return to the land of Israel. Finally, a significant number of Jewish youth were attracted to various shadings of Socialism, which promised an end to human strife with the radical economic transformation of Polish society.⁴⁰

Rabbi Shapira's Prewar Writings

The Rebbe railed against the failure of the religious establishment to keep Polish-Jewish youth inspired by traditional Judaism. He was especially concerned that the traditional rabbinic leadership failed to understand the gravity of the threat of assimilation. Speaking at an undated interwar conference of the Council to Preserve the Yeshivot of Poland and Lithuania, the Rebbe decried the lack of concern for the broad masses of Jewish youth:

Once, we used to concern ourselves that the students who left the *heder* [traditional religious primary school] would continue learning Torah, and our concern still deserves encouragement. In those days, it was necessary for them to continue studying, in order that they be learned people of Torah, but now it is necessary *for them to remain Jews*. Today we see that the majority of those who do not continue to study Torah simply leave the fold, Heaven forbid, shave their beards and desecrate the Sabbath. I am not a fool to suggest that only the Yeshivah students will remain Jewish, those people and no more, and we should be satisfied. Should we say that it would be sufficient that in every city only the Rabbi, the ritual slaughterer and the assistant be Jews, and the rest of the population not?⁴¹

Consider this: approximately ten thousand students currently study, out of several million Jews, may there be no evil eye, in Poland and Lithuania—should they be the only remnant of faithful Jewry? Shall we look beyond the Rabbis and the ritual slaughterers of every city? The Jewish people, the entirety of Israel is what we require! All of them must be true to God and His Torah! Yet we hope only that the students will themselves sanctify the entire generation, they will fortify it with Torah and Divine service.⁴¹

⁴⁰ For an overview of the several ideological opportunities pursued by Eastern European Jewry in the early twentieth century, see Henry Abramson, "The End of Intimate Insularity: New Narratives of Jewish History in the Post-Soviet Era," *Construction and Deconstruction of National Identities in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, Ed. Tadayuki Hayashi, Sapporo: Hokkaido University, 2003, 87-115; "Two Jews, Three Opinions: Politics in the Shetl at the Turn of the 20th Century," *The Shetl: New Evaluations*, Ed. Steven Katz, New York: New York University Press, 2007, 85-101.

⁴¹ *Doreth ha Melakh*, 462.

The Rebbe also felt the pain that these dramatic social and demographic changes wrought inside the Jewish home:

The Satan rises up against our sons and daughters in the form of ideological movements to poison their souls and to defile their bodies with heresy and other vile and disgusting sins, Heaven forbid.

There are homes in which the father returns from the ritual bath and prayer on Friday night dressed in his Sabbath finery, and wishes to inspire the holy flames of God and the Sabbath in his kiddush prayer, while his son sits and smokes cigarettes, Heaven forbid, or reads some filthy publication that defiles body and soul, Heaven forbid, or the children speak of whatever depravity occurred in the theatre. Some of them even abandon the purity of the Jewish home and go to the theatre to sin and debase themselves and the entire Jewish people. And the father looks on, his heart shrinks and his thoughts fade as the days pass in decline and decay, like a prince who is held in lengthy captivity by drunken, worthless people, until he loses his lofty soul and exalted wisdom and becomes ignorant, even heretical, knowing little more than what he eats and his material possessions. A man without aspirations, without lofty ambitions. Even if he occasionally recalls days long past, when he was a young Hasid, a student of Torah, and he wishes to arouse himself spiritually, he falls yet again, saying "what am I, what is my life, the weekdays with their commercial

activities are hellish, and this is my house, the house of Israel.⁴²

By the early thirties the Rebbe developed a master plan to reverse the downward trend. He outlined a major multi-volume literary project, which he hoped would expand the mission far beyond a few hundred students and Hasidim in his school and court. Only two of the publications appeared in his lifetime. Two others survived the war in manuscript form, buried along with his wartime sermons in the Oneg Shabbat archive, along with a tiny fragment of a fifth work. Taken together, these works outline the Rebbe's comprehensive plan for the spiritual renewal of the Jewish people.

The first and most well-known of the Rebbe's works was *The Obligation of Students* (*Hovot Ha-Talmidim*, 1932). It received immediate acclaim throughout Eastern Europe, and has demonstrated its continued relevance through multiple printings and translations into the 21st century. *The Obligation of Students* is a bold, highly original work directed at adolescent readers. The book is composed of three distinct sections: a long introduction intended for parents and teachers, followed by *The Obligation of Students* proper, and then a sizable appendix consisting of three kabbalistic essays explicitly written for older students in their late teens and early twenties. The overall purpose of *The Obligation of Students* was stated on the cover page of the first edition: "to penetrate into the depths of the student, reveal his soul, to train him in Torah, divine service, the ways of Hasidism and to bind his soul to God." Interwar Polish Jewry, according to the Rebbe's analysis, was plagued by a reification of the spirit, a

⁴² *Ma'avo ha-shet'rim*, 273-274 (Chapter 8 in the updated Feldheim publication of the 1961 edition).

they were executed. Smuggling, however, was essential for the survival of the ghetto, and border crossings continued. On December 15, 1941, during the holiday of Hanukah, a celebration of Jewish freedom from oppression, another fifteen prisoners were taken out to the firing squad. The Jewish police were involved in the original arrests, but balked at the prospect of murdering them—the Nazis accomplished the task by enlisting Polish policemen instead.⁴⁴ The mass murder of fifteen prisoners, literally killed for the crime of crossing the street, sent shock waves through the Ghetto. Chaim Kaplan described the scene outside the prison, which was located not far from the Rebbe's synagogue:

Our holiday has been turned into a day of mourning. The courtyard of the prison on Dzielna Street was turned into a slaughterhouse today. At ten o'clock this morning, within earshot of thousands of people who were jammed around the fence encircling the jail, fifteen people were shot to death. They had been caught outside the ghetto limits. This murder, like the earlier ones, was carried out after a "trial" and "legal sentencing"...The cries of the victims in the prison courtyard were heard by the throng outside. Rage and frustration turned into mass weeping. Other prisoners locked inside the prison began to shout and beat their heads against the walls. There is nothing more nerve-shattering than the concerted weeping of a great crowd. The wailing at this hour in history was an echo of the weeping and lamentation decreed upon the generations of the people of Israel. It was a protest against the loss of

our human rights. The sentence was carried out by Polish policemen in the presence of rabbis and other representatives of the Jews. The Poles fired the shots—and they too wept. They had been given no choice either.⁴⁵

The Rebbe responded with his message on Hanukah. The powerful vision of Akiva's martyrdom was still reverberating in the Rebbe's mind, and he returned to it in this sermon, this time presented from the perspective of his anguished students. Once again, his words resonate with autobiographical feeling:

[Akiva's] students were in fact so troubled with the bitter death of their teacher, that the question of Moses our teacher arose in their hearts: "Is this the reward for Torah?" They feared that, Heaven forbid, contemplating this question would damage their faith. They begged their teacher, strong in his great faith, to speak a few words to them, pouring his faith into them. They asked him, "our teacher—to this point?" Meaning, "our teacher—will you die in such a horrible way?" He did not answer them directly, perhaps since God had already responded to Moses, saying "quiet!" Yet Rabbi Akiva understood that they wanted him to pour his own faith into them. Therefore he spoke personally, and from his own perspective: "all my days I was [troubled by the verse, "and you will love the Lord your God with all your soul," and now that the

⁴⁴ Engelking and Leociak, *Warsaw Ghetto*, 86-87.

⁴⁵ Kaplan, *Scroll*, 283.

opportunity has come to my hand [shall I not fulfill it?].⁴⁶

The central theme of the Hanukkah 5702 sermon, connecting directly with both the historical character of the holiday and the contemporary circumstances in Warsaw, is faith during times of persecution. Following a traditionalist, essentialist argument, the Rebbe describes faith as a faculty endowed upon the Jewish people by the spiritually heroic achievements of the Patriarchs. The Rebbe acknowledged, however, the corrosive impact of persecution, even among the faithful:

In our suffering, we see now that even among those who were always of perfect faith, the faith of certain individuals has weakened, and out of their hardships they cry, "why have You abandoned us? Were these trials intended to bring us closer to Torah and divine worship? The opposite has occurred: the Torah and everything holy is destroyed," and so on. Behold, if a Jew speaks in this way in prayer and supplication, with the pouring out of his heart before God, this is good. Alternatively, Heaven forbid, if the Jew asks questions, and even if one does not ask questions, yet faith in the innermost places of one's heart is damaged, Heaven forbid, then God protect us.⁴⁷

The Rebbe then attempted to blunt the force of the assault on faith by placing it in larger historical context. As harsh

as the persecutions are, argued the Rebbe, they are somehow justified in the inscrutable mind of God:

It is true that trials such as we are enduring now come only once every few centuries. In any case, how can they help us understand the current acts of God? Historical knowledge has the potential to cause damage, Heaven forbid, if we do not understand history. We do not even understand a single blade of grass made by God, how much more so do we not understand a soul, and how much more so an angel, and how much more so the mind of the Blessed One! How can our historical awareness help our minds to understand that which the Blessed and Exalted One knows and understands? Why people are hurt under our current tribulations, more than the trials the Jews endured in the past? When one learns a verse, Talmud, or Midrash, and hears of the suffering of Jews from earlier times, how did faith remain intact, yet nowadays faith is weakened? Those people who say that trials such as these never existed in Jewish history are in error—what of the destruction of the Temple, and the fall of Betar?⁴⁸

The Rebbe continued that while the experience of the Jews of Warsaw was not qualitatively different than prior periods of persecution, the contemporary erosion of faith was because Jews unusually identified with the victims: "one also fears that, Heaven forbid, one might come to the

⁴⁶ Dorashot 1:242-243.

⁴⁷ Dorashot 1:241.

⁴⁸ Dorashot 1:242. The destruction of the Temple refers to the Babylonian invasion of the 6th century BCE and the Roman-Jewish war of the first century CE; Betar was destroyed in the Bar-Kochba rebellion against Rome in the following century.

terrible circumstances that one sees others experiencing." The cruel execution of Jews for the "crime" of leaving the Ghetto to trade for food, an absolutely essential element of the Ghetto economy, provoked understandable dismay. The Rebbe's point was that since so many Jews were forced to engage in smuggling food, they identified more closely with those who were executed than those who had suffered in other ways. The Rebbe concluded his sermon, as always, with a note of encouragement—but a year later he would reverse his position dramatically. Shortly before handing over his manuscripts for burial, the Rebbe would append a chilling annotation. This important footnote, dated 18 Kislev 5703 (December 15, 1942), will be discussed in the following chapter.

Tevet-Shvat 5701 (December 21-February 17)

The Rebbe devoted his December 27, 1941 message (*Parashat Vayigash*) to encouraging prayer. On January 10, 1942 (*Parashat Shemot*), he delivered a lengthy sermon on repentance, also a traditional Hasidic topic. With the exception of very general references to suffering, these entries seem as if they were composed in an intellectual vacuum, separate and distinct from the carnage outside, as if the Rebbe wished to insulate himself and his followers by immersing in Rabbinic texts. The entry for January 17, 1942 (*Parashat Vaera*) hews to a less typical path, focusing on the negative impact of the character trait of "cold," which is associated with sloth and laziness, perhaps inspired by the bitter winter temperatures that year and exacerbated by the Nazi confiscation of all fur coats in December.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Czornikow, *Diary*, 108, 111.

Parashat Bo (January 24) returned to tradition again with a lengthy exhortation on behalf of communal Torah study. Ringelblum noted in January that the earlier Nazi confiscation of Jewish books and subsequent closing of bookstores had created a new market for used books, sold on the street. "Of late," he wrote, "one notices the sale of Talmudic volumes—completely unprecedented. Such volumes used formerly to be regarded as holy and transmitted as a family inheritance from generation to generation. The sale of such volumes by the basketful is a sacrilege that is the best evidence of the level we have descended to."⁵⁰ By 1942, the crisis of faith was palpable to many observers. Chaim Kaplan:

It is not at all uncommon on a cold winter morning to see bodies of those who have died on the sidewalks of cold and starvation during the night. Many God-fearing, pious souls who, if the day happens to be the Sabbath, are carrying their tallith under their arms, walk by the corpses and no one seems moved by the sight. Everyone hastens on his way praying silently that his will not be a similar fate. In the gutters, amidst the refuse, one can see almost naked children who were orphaned when both parents died earlier in their wanderings or in the typhus epidemic. Yet there is no institution that will take them in and care for them and bring them up as human beings. Every morning you will see their little bodies frozen to death in the ghetto streets. It has become a customary sight. Self-preservation has hardened our hearts and made us indifferent to the suffering of others. Our moral standards are thoroughly corrupted. Everyone steals! Petty thievery, such as picking pockets or

⁵⁰ Ringelblum, *Notes*, 244, 245.

"begin" in every context. For example, in the phrase in the Talmud (*Pesachim* 116a) describing the Haggadah of Passover ("[the Haggadah] begins with shame and ends with praise"), we would never think of using the word *chinuch* for "begin." Nor would it be appropriate to use the word *chinuch* in tractate *Sanhedrin*, where it says of the judicial procedure of the high rabbinic court: "We begin from the side."

In *Parshat Lech Lecha*, Rashi gives us a deeper insight into the word *chinuch* in commenting on the word *chanichav*. This word means, according to Rashi: "He educated him toward the fulfillment of the commandments. The root CH-N-CH implies the initial entry of a person or an object into a trade or path that is his destiny. Thus we find the root CH-N-CH referring to the education of a child, the consecration of the altar in the holy temple, and the dedication of a house."

There are strict parameters for the use of the word. One would not use it to refer to a craftsman who was beginning to work on a specific job but was already expert in his trade, or for a house that was just starting to be built. The proper usage of the word *chinuch* is for a person just beginning to teach himself a skill, or for a building that has already been built and is just beginning to be used. Rashi is precise in writing of "the initial entry of a person or object . . . which is his destiny," because the word *chinuch* refers not to a trade or skill, but to the potential, the predilection and capability that a person might possess, which makes him suited for a particular task. In a house or vessel, *chinuch* refers to the preparation that has made a house or a vessel suitable for a certain task or usage. The word *chinuch* is a special word that implies the realization of the already inherent capacity of a person or object; the actualization of a potential. This potential will remain hidden unless we bring it out. Our task is to cause the potential to emerge, to accomplish the *chinuch* that will transform the person into a skilled artisan; will cause the house or vessels to fulfill their functions, each room according to what it is best suited for, every vessel or instrument according to the task for which it was designed and prepared.

When referring to the education of children, therefore, *chinuch* means stimulating the growth and development of what each child

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

A DISCUSSION WITH TEACHERS AND PARENTS



King Solomon, in Proverbs, advises: "Educate (*chanuch*) a child according to his own path, and even when he grows old, he will not stray from it." The most essential task of education is to teach in such a way that the child will not stray from the path we have set for him, even when he grows older and is no longer under his father's supervision. To truly educate is not just a matter of getting a child to follow your commands, or even of accustoming a child to do good deeds. True education is a much greater and more galvanizing process. Commanding and habituating children to a certain way of life are merely tools that must be used when educating them in the path of God.

Rashi, in commenting on a passage in Deuteronomy 20:5, explains the word *chinuch* (which in the passage translates as "dedicated" but which is also the word for education) as meaning "to begin." Obviously, one would not use the word *chinuch* to mean

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is suited for by his very nature. This quality or potential may be found in him only in very small measure, in total hiddenness, the task of the educator is to uncover it. Since a Jewish child has the spirit of God, the breath of the Lord, hidden and concealed within him from the very moment of his birth, it is necessary to raise him and educate him to bring out and reveal this godliness and allow it to flourish. If this is done, the child will grow into a faithful Jew, a servant of God. He will have an independent desire for Torah and will not stray as he gets older. A person whose educational strategy is one of commands and even habituation cannot be so sure that the child will continue to practice as he becomes independent. This, then, is the command of King Solomon: "Educate the child"—penetrate to his inner being and reveal the holiness of Israel that is hidden there. Only then will the child not stray from the path when he grows older.

King Solomon, however, does not just inform us here of the goal of education—to reach the child in a way that will keep him on the path even after he has matured and grown independent. In the passage "Educate the child according to his way . . ." he also illuminates for us the way and the means through which this goal can be accomplished. Someone who is trying to educate through command and habituation need not pay any attention to his child or student—to his nature, to the way he thinks, or to his other distinguishing characteristics. The command itself—do this or do that—is all that is needed. Nor is it necessary to deal with each student separately. A single command can suffice for an entire age group, for it is not the student or the child that is important, but the person giving the commands: he has commanded, and that is everything.

An educator, however, who wishes to uncover the soul of the child that lies hidden and concealed within him, who wants to help it grow and to ignite it so it will burn with a heavenly fire, upwards, towards the holy, so that the student's entire being, including his physical body, will increase in holiness and will long for God's Torah, such an educator must adapt himself attentively to the student, must penetrate into the midst of his limited consciousness and small-mindedness, until he reaches the hidden soul-spark. Then he can help it emerge, blossom, and grow.

ASTUDENT'S OBLIGATION



The education of each and every child must therefore be different, depending on his nature, mind, character, and all his other unique qualities. The educator must become aware of these qualities; it will not suffice for him to know himself and his own mind alone, since everything depends on the student who is being educated. It is not enough to utilize his own mind and his own strength in activating, commanding, and instructing his students; he must grasp the student's mind and the student's strength, working and acting within the parameters of each child's abilities. What he commands and instructs one child should be different from what he commands and instructs the next child, whose nature, will, and personality are completely different from the first. And this is what King Solomon is hinting to us—"educate the child according to his path"—according to the particular path of each and every child.

Our goal here is not to teach the craft of pedagogy—how to utilize the student's mind in various ways, how to broaden his understanding and knowledge of the meaning of the Torah. For what we are seeking now is not the student's intellect alone: we are interested in the whole student. We wish to connect the *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, and *Neshamah* of Jewish children to the God of Israel, so that they will emerge as Jews who revere the word of the Lord and direct all their desires toward Him.

Every father and every teacher knows that their children and students will not remain children forever, but will eventually grow, in years, and possibly in Torah knowledge and spiritual devotion. Yet there exist fathers and teachers who are concerned only with what they see right now. Since all they see right now are children, the goal of their efforts is to educate their charges to become good children. They wish to infuse them with only a child's measure of Torah and awe of God. This they consider sufficient. But a teacher or parent who does this is sinning against God and against His people. Fathers and teachers must know that their task is to educate and uncover children of the Lord and giants of Israel. They must see the children sitting in front of them as great souls still immature; their task is to get them to grow and flourish. A teacher is a gardener in the garden of God, assigned to cultivate it and guard it from

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harm. Even if some of the children seem rebellious, or flawed in their character, the teacher must know that the nature of soul-seeds, of unripe angels, is to taste bitter as they are ripening and to be filled with nectar in their maturity. Neither the nature, nor any particular quality of a Jewish child, is absolutely evil. This is what the holy Baal Shem Tov and his disciples have taught us. What is necessary is just to know how to use these qualities and how to help them develop and grow. For example, a particular child may be very stubborn—which is a character flaw. His teacher may suffer greatly because of the child's stubbornness. Yet if the teacher were to reflect, he would realize that when this child matures and receives as his own the yoke of Torah and of service to God, he will perform all his service of God with great stubbornness and self-sacrifice. He will not be frivolous or inclined to vacillate but will be the kind of Jew the *Midrash* described: In all matters of devotion, he will be as strong as the wall of a fortress.

Take another example—a child whose personality has an angry quality. True, the way that the child is expressing his anger at this point in time is extremely bad. But are we able to therefore decide that he is from a corrupt source, that he is inferior and base by nature? If an idiot heard the praises of the *drag* fruit, grabbed a seed or an unripe *drag* fruit, bit into it, and then shrieked and howled at how bitter and poisonous-tasting a fruit the *drag* is, would we not laugh at him and consider him a great fool?

It is impossible to predict ahead of time how great a benefit may emerge, through the efforts of the principal or teacher, from the very anger of the angry child. One must penetrate into his inner life, bring him close, ignite his heart and his soul until they are dedicated to God. Then his anger will be transformed into a fire from above. All of his acts of devotion will burn like fiery coals, and all the words that he will speak to God, in prayer and in Torah, will thunder from a voice of fire. See the commentary of the Rav on the *Siddur* if you wish to confirm this. There he explains as follows: "The heat that is in anger stems from the heat of the heart. Any person that is hot-tempered by nature has a heart that is inclined to burn with fiery flames of desire (for God)." And certainly if such a person finds within himself any stain or defect, he will be filled

ASTUDENT'S OBLIGATION

with tremendous rage and wrath. His good inclination will immediately rouse him to anger and indignation, and he will cast away and even destroy his evil inclination from out of his very midst. If he finds it necessary to chastise a friend for a spiritual failing, he will not insult or degrade him, but will speak simply, with words as hot as a boiling furnace that will rush from him like a stormy sea. In this way, he will succeed in melting and uprooting all the stains and soul-sicknesses of his friends as well.

We should be heartsick, however, and our hair should stand on end when we see the way the younger generation has turned to heresy and has lost all spiritual discipline. They possess neither faith, nor fear of God, nor knowledge of Torah. They have actually come to despise God and His servants, the people of Israel. The administrators and deans of the yeshivot, who are totally immersed in the life of the yeshivah and its students and encounter only the elite of our youth, are unaware of the gravity of this problem. They console themselves, saying: "Yes, it may be true that many of our young people have freed themselves of any commitment to Torah, but still, Israel has not been abandoned. There are still young men, sons of our people, outstanding in their Judaic scholarship, whose heart is steadfast with the Lord." Poke your heads outside of the four cubits of your yeshivah! You will see the great mass of people who have broken from the observances of our faith, may God have mercy on them and us. You will see houses of study where the destruction of Jerusalem has been reenacted. Once they were filled with Torah scholars, now they have become empty, and instead, groups and organizations whose goals include the dissemination of heresy and the rejection of Torah have been filled with members. In former good days, even the laborers and merchants who were not necessarily scholars were at least faithful Jews. Now their youth have denied Torah, have wandered and fallen into a great depth of spiritual darkness. Should we be satisfied with merely the handful of students who attend our yeshivot? Is this the entirety of the people of Israel?

And are we really so sure of our yeshivah students? Have we done everything we should do concerning their education? Yes, we can be confident that the students who have reached the upper level of classes, and especially those who have already begun to instruct