

WHO IS A REAL CHABAD CHASSID? WHO NEVER MOVES AN INCH FROM THE REBBE'S INSTRUCTIONS?

מי הוא חסיד חב"ד אמיתי? שאלות ותשובות לחסידי חב"ד

Question: A certain Chabad Chasid asked me why I bother sending our books to Chabad synagogues? Don't you know that we don't learn Zohar?

Answer: First of all, anyone who says such a thing is obviously a big ignoramus as not only does he does not understand the Torah properly but he certainly does not even know the customs of Chabad! A Chabad Chasid who speaks in such a fashion is certainly not even on the doorstep of Chasidut in the very least – and certainly not on the doorstep of Chabad Chasidut!

And now I'll prove to you just how wrong you are. The Leubavicher Rebbe Ztl' once asked the 'Rishon Le'Zion' Rav Mordechai Eliyahu Ztl' if they learn Zohar in the holy land. He told him that only the Sephardim learn Zohar on a regular basis. The Rebbe retorted: 'Why such discrimination? After all, the Zohar was given to the Ashkenazim as well, as certainly the Ashkenazim must also learn the Zohar Ha'Kadosh.' The Rebbe then told him (30 years ago in 5744): **'When you get back to the holy land put up giant posters all over the Eretz Yisrael to impress upon them that it I hold and command that everyone should learn and toil in the Zohar Ha'Kadosh!'**

There is another wonderful story I can tell you that is found in the book **'The Rebbe and Yahadut Sepharad'** (in footnote 11 – Pg. 84). This is a real life

story that happened to a certain Yeshiva student who was a **phenomenal learner** in a certain Yeshiva, and as a result of his great learning prowess he earned the respect and awe of his friends and Rabbis. The full story is very long and touching, so I'll tell you only the gist.

One day the boy was fortunate to enter a 'Yechidut' with the Rebbe (with the help of a certain Chasid who brought him before the Rebbe). During that 'Yechidut' the Rebbe impressed upon him the great importance of learning the secrets of the Torah and Chasidut. The boy asked the Rebbe: 'But why?' The Rebbe answered him (in approximately these words): 'Because if at any point they'll stop respecting you – you may stop learning altogether!' As the boy left the holy midst of the Rebbe, his Chasidim approached him hoping to hear what the Rebbe said to him. However, he was in no mood to exchange even one single word with them as he was quite upset about how the Rebbe spoke to him. However, precisely what the Rebbe predicted unfortunately happened to that boy – as this previously phenomenal learner eventually left the Torah and the Mitzvot altogether. (By the way – from here we learn that when one does not learn and cleave to the Zohar Ha'Kadosh this is a sign that all his learning is for the sake of personal fame and glory. The primary sign of this is that if he will not succeed in attaining that fame and glory he will immediately abandon the Torah – and who knows what will become of him!)

Till one day the boy met that same Chasid that previously took him to the Rebbe. When he saw him from across the street he screamed out: 'I want to learn Chasidut!' The Chasid eventually recognized the boy even though his appearance had changed so much. At that point he asked him: 'What happened to you? How did you deteriorate to such a degree?' And the previous Yeshiva student admitted: 'The Rebbe told me in our Yechidut that this will happen to me and I was very angry in my heart for speaking to me that way. However, the next time it was my turn to say the 'Chabura' (i.e. an in-depth discourse of the Gemorah) in Yeshiva in front of my colleagues I failed tremendously and my honor was thrown to the

floor. From that point on they respected me less and less in Yeshiva until I lost the taste for Torah learning. I stopped learning and with time left Torah and Mitzvot altogether. But when I saw you today I recalled the words of the holy Rebbe who predicted a head of time what would happen to me. That shook me up tremendously and aroused in me a great sense of remorse. Therefore, I beg of you – please teach me Chasidut! (The name of this Avrech is well known).

The following is the gist of the historical meeting with the Rebbe as accounted in the book 'The Rebbe and Yahadut Sepharad'

The unification of Ashkenazim and Sephardim!

We often here talk of the great necessity to break the barriers that separate the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim.

In the year 5744 both chief Rabbis of Yisrael (Ashkenazi and Sepharadi – namely **Rav Avraham Shapira and Rav Mordechai Eliyahu**) soon after beginning their post met with the Leubavicher Rebbe. During that conversation they discussed the need to learn the secrets of the Torah and the urgency to break the barriers that separate between the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim. This is part of their conversation, as quoted from the book 'Be'Tzel Ha'Chochma':

Rav Shapira: The learning of Kabbalah was common amongst the Sephardim more than it was amongst the Ashkenazim, however **the leaders of the Ashkenazim** received the Kabbalah heritage **from the Sephardim** when they ascended to Eretz Yisrael. (It is worthy to quote from the book 'Shorshei Ha'Chasidut' that **the first to spread** the secrets of the Torah in the Ashkenazi countries were the Sephardim that arrived there after the Spanish expulsion. According to this insight, we therefore learn that both when the Ashkenazi leaders **ascended to Eretz Yisrael** as well as initially after the Spanish expulsion when the Sephardim arrived in the Ashkenazi countries – the spread of Kabbalah was attributed primarily to the Sepharadi Jewry. This goes hand in hand with the Rebbe's assessment that the Sephardim preceded the Ashkenazim with regards to the secrets of the Torah).

The honorable Admor: The learning of the Torah's secrets belongs to the entire nation of Yisrael – both Ashkenazim and Sephardim. With regards to Ashkenazim, the GRA who was one of the greatest Ashkenazi leaders wrote in his commentary to Mishley (Ch. 2: verse 9 – and we'll cite the GRA word by word): 'Once he understands the secrets properly everything else will be understood properly as well –

the Peshat, the Remez and the Drush. However, until he understands the secrets of the Torah he did not even acquire the Peshat yet!' – these are the words of the GRA.

During the continuation of their Yechidut with the Rebbe the chief Rabbis requested a blessing so that they will not stumble in matters of Hallacha rulings. The Rebbe responded that according to the words of the GRA that only one who learns the secrets of the Torah is assured to arrive at the true Hallachic ruling – be it 'Yoreh Yoreh' or 'Yadin Yadin' – as we saw above from the GRA's words that without learning the secrets of the Torah it is impossible to know the Hallacha properly (i.e. not even the Peshat)! Furthermore, the GRA's famous disciple Rav Chaim of Vilozin published his famous 'Nepesh Ha'Chaim' which draws mostly from previous Kabbalah works.

If so, we clearly learn from the Rebbe that the learning of Kabbalah belongs to all the different circles in our holy nation – both Ashkenazim and Sephardim!

The following is also related to our discussion regarding the need to break the barriers between the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim. As we know, certainly everything begins with the Torah as stated in the Zohar (Part 2 – top of Pg. 161b) that before the Almighty created the world '**he looked at the Torah and proceeded to create the world**'. Therefore, in order to break the barriers between the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim we must certainly start with the Torah as we learned from the words of the Rebbe. One could incorrectly argue otherwise from that which the Rebbe disagreed with the Rav Shapira's assessment that Chasidut belongs to the entire nation of Yisrael 'both Ashkenazim and

Sepharadim', as well as from what the Rebbe said with regards to the learning of Kabbalah when he agreed with Rav Shapira that the learning of Kabbalah is stronger amongst Sepharadim. Nevertheless, there is certainly no contradiction between the two statements. Surely, in spite of the excellence of the Sephardim when it comes to learning the secrets of the Torah and in spite of their merit for having initiated this learning amongst our nation in the first place – nevertheless by no means does their merit (God-forbid) negate or diminish the duty that is surely placed upon our Ashkenazi brethren to also participate in this learning as well – as we clearly saw in the words of the GRA that the Rebbe quoted.)

Serving Hashem – Learning the secrets of the Torah in depth!

... And it is certainly permitted to point out that although in previous generations it sufficed to merely take on Chasidic customs or recite Chasidic Torah articles as if they were merely a 'Segulah' to read them without needing to understand their contents in depth and breadth – as back then the world was not mired in attitudes that contradict the holy Torah and the Jewish character was evident in the streets and ever the more so inside the home – nevertheless in our current generation when we are mired deeply in matters of conniving and the sorts that originate in the foreign wisdoms (and not the least from the 'wisdom of denial/Kefirah'), on top of the fact that we mire our Chabad (i.e. our personal Chochma, Bina and Daat in our heads) in matters of Parnasa, and uncommon sprits blow in the

Furthermore, this seems to be the proper fashion to break the dividing wall and bring together the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim. Till now Sephardim were more attached to this learning – it is therefore time for the Ashkenazim to 'catch up' and in doing so break this division! (From Be'Tzel Ha'Chochma – Pg. 802-902)

This is the gist of that famous meeting. In addition we'll quote a few sections from 'Igrot Ha'Kodesh' that relate to the Zohar Ha'Kadosh so that we'll all understand to what great extent the Rebbe actually pushed the learning of the Torah's secrets.

First letter brought in Igrot Ha'Kodesh (Pg. 142):

streets... **Clearly we must counteract all of that with a deep understanding in learning the Torah's secrets that the Zohar Ha'Kadosh calls 'the tree of life'**, which also adds life to our learning of the revealed parts of the Torah in order to improve our performance of the Mitzvot which reaches the very body of the Jew which is also holy. After all, these matters are clarified in great depth in several places including the Igeret Ha'Kodesh of our elder Rebbe the author of the Tania (Posek Be'Nistar Ha'Torah) and the Shulchan Aruch (Posek Be'Nigleh Ha'Torah) in Siman 26, and in the Kuntres 'Etz Chaim' written by his grandson's grandson and eventual replacement ("אדמור מוהרש"ב"). And let this learning find favour in the eyes of the Almighty, etc.

'The Rashbi's Zohar – Recruitment to the Zohar's army'

Question: To you the Admor from Halmin I ask: What in your opinion is the reason for the great calamity that befell upon us - that they've started sending warrants for army service to the Yeshiva students in Eretz Yisrael? These warrants imply that if they do not agree to join the army ranks they will be imprisoned in the military jail. What is the reason for all this heavenly wrath that brought this about terrible danger?

Answer: It was actually Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai who aroused the state of Israel to take the Yeshiva students to the army!

Question: How can you speak about Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai that way?! Why would he do such a thing?! Why would he send the Yeshiva students to the army?!

Answer: Yes, yes indeed! This is actually spelled out

in the Zohar, that when one does not learn the secrets of the Torah then even the revealed Torah that he learns is worthless – since all the Torah that he learns is merely superficial lip-service! (See Tikunei Zohar #30 and #43, as well as Rav Chaim Vital's famous introduction) If so, the Yeshiva students have but two options: Either Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai's army – or the defense army! After all, Rashbi writes that by learning the Zohar no one can possibly harm the nation of Yisrael – and as a result we will not need any soldiers at all since nobody could possibly lift his hand to threaten Eretz Yisrael. However, when they do not learn Zohar than all that time is wasted which brings about all these harsh decrees – God forbid!

And take to heart that this reality does not pertain only to the decree regarding army service but rather to all the decrees and all the suffering that the nation of Israel undergoes. We find more and more young orphans as more and more people dying at a

younger age – God spare us – in ever increasing numbers! And this happens for one single reason: because we do not learn the secrets of the Torah, as Ramchal writes that **only by consecutive learning of the Torah's secrets will all the harsh decrees be abolished!**

Therefore, any Rosh-Yeshiva who does not does not make a loud proclamation that the entire Yeshiva should learn at least two pages of Zohar a day (that takes but two minutes) **is certainly also responsible for the evil decrees that befall our nation – including the decree of army service!**

Let us fight against the heads of the Yeshivot who do not do not personally want to learn Zohar and precisely for that very reason do not want their students to learn as well – **as they are the leaders of**

the Erev-Rav in our generation as they are responsible for all the evil decrees upon us. It is actually spelled out in the holy Zohar that there are five types of Erev-Rav, one of which build houses for Torah study (Batei-Midrashot) and even put Torah scrolls in them – however for the same reason that the Tower of Bavel was built, as written in the Torah: ‘Let us build a tower and make a name for ourselves’ to became famous in the people’s eyes. It is also known that the power of the Torah is only when it is learned for the sake of the Torah (Li’Shmah) and therefore one who does not want to learn Zohar is not in the category of learning for the sake of the Torah (based on the Chesed Le’Avraham). All of the above is spelled out black on white in the holy Zohar!

Rashbi’s army enrollment warrant!

Question: I see how the ‘World-Wide Zohar Factory’ constantly sends so many books to synagogues and places of Torah-learning with great frequency to the point that virtually every two weeks we see a new book. Why do you work so hard to send more and more books? Is there a Mitzvah to send so many books in almost endless numbers? There’s barely enough room on the shelves to hold all these books!

Answer: Our holy Torah states: ‘And you shall act according to how the elders shall instruct you’. And

it is known that in every generation we must view the leader of the generation as if he was the Cohen-Gadol or Moshe Rabeinu. In our generation we heed the words of Rav Shteinmann who ordered us in a letter in which he brought the words of Ramchal and urged us to learn five days consecutively. And this is precisely why we sent so many books, so that there will be enough books for all the Yeshiva students to learn from – in order that in this merit they will be spared from going to the army by learning from the Zohar Ha’Kadosh!

A clarification and an expression of Daat Torah!

A holy cry-out from the heads of the Yeshivot and the elders of our generation in light of the terrible decree in Eretz Yisrael and the rest of the world: We must strengthen ourselves in our Torah learning –

especially in light of the words of the eldest Rosh Yeshiva, the author of ‘Ayelet Ha’Shachar’ Shlita that are published here for the first time.

A protest-disclaimer against the lack of Torah learning!

From the holy words of the Rosh-Yeshiva Rav Aharon Yehuda Leib Shteinmann Shlita’: a holy cry-out from the elders of our generation to awaken

us regarding the disgrace of the holy Torah in order to strengthen our Torah learning.

Whoever is on Hashem’s side shall step forward to me!

[note: these are his precise words without any omissions – in light of all those who cited his words yet only after omitting

very crucial parts of his cry-out that changed the entire tone and weight of his words]

With God’s help – To uplift the Torah and esteem it! (Adar – 5773)

To remove a stumbling block

A letter from Rav Aharon Yehuda Leib Shteinmann Shlita – Shushan Purim 5773

I hereby come to strengthen the Torah learners who unfortunately are all mired in great danger regarding the future of our young Torah learners.

This is the future of the Torah of our next generation! Therefore everyone must add more Torah learning, by setting more fixed times for

learning – and those who learn in Yeshiva must learn even more zealously to use every bit of time for Torah learning!

With regards to the learners in Yeshiva I request them to heed the advice of Ramchal to learn for five consecutive days in order to abolish the terrible decree that wants to abolish the Torah learning in Eretz Yisrael!

And we hope that with God's help that this will arouse heavenly assistance to abolish the evil plan of those conspire to abolish the Torah from the nation of Yisrael!

From me, who writes this letter in great sorrow due to the terrible decrees that want to abolish the Torah. But certainly the merits of our learners shall abolish and cancel their evil plans!

Signed: *A.L. Shteinmann*

We come to further bolster the words of Rav Shteinmann Shlita' by citing the source of his words and by presenting the greater picture according to the Emet in all its intricate parts for the benefit of all those who heed the words of the leader of our generation Rav Shteinmann Shlita', so that they can follow his request according its basic fundamentals so as to have its maximum affect in abolishing the evil decree and to hasten our redemption in his great mercy.

These are Ramchal's holy words (without any omissions – in light of all those who cited his words yet only after omitting very crucial parts that changed the entire tone and weight of his words).

“This much I know, that the heavenly persecution had become so great that God-forbid it could have reached the highest places in the upper-worlds. However we – thanks God – preempted the cure before the destructive blow since already for the last five months we've been predicting what's awaiting us and we therefore instituted a great preventive measure. It is this preventive measure that I advice before your honorable Torah leaders to institute amongst all the holy congregations in Italy – may God protect them – in order that they'll be saved from the trap that their enemies set up to snare them in. And certainly they should oversee that it will be properly instituted without fail, as this is a very great and important matter!

This is the learning schedule which we instituted in our own Beit-Ha'Midrash, as we surely know what Rashbi wrote in the Zohar in P. Va'Yetzeh: 'So long as that voice does not stop the Dibur rules and is empowered. Therefore the Torah must not stop!' And a litter further up it says: 'So long as the Talmidei

Chachamim hold on to the Torah then S.M. cannot hurt them!'

We therefore set down a consecutive learning regime that will never at any point stop – and these are its guidelines: We chose seven of us who volunteered for this purpose, who will collectively learn consecutively from the morning to the night and every single day without fail. And they conditioned amongst them that the merits of this learning will be strictly for the salvation of Israel – and they shall count as one unit as if it was one person learning – and no one will intend for himself but rather for the sake of Israel! And this is the order they should start with: Immediately after the morning prayer one of them should sit down in a special place prepared for this purpose and there he should learn his fixed measure of learning until the second person will come and take the book from him. From the place that the first one stopped the second one will continue until the third person comes and takes over from him the same way – and in such a fashion they shall continue until the stars come out at night – day after day! And every single one of them will behave during his watch of learning as if he was in the silent Shemonei-Esrei prayer to the extent that he cannot stop for any reason in the world, and should not stop his learning until his replacement arrives and actually begins learning – so that the voice of Torah shall never stop! And their program for learning is the Zohar Ha'Kadosh, Tikunei Zohar and Zohar Chadash – this way all of them will be learnt every single week.

This much we know – that this is how Hashem chose to abolish all evil decrees and to serve as a wall to protect us from the harsh decree – God forbid! And now, lest the elders of Israel disregard this advice, if it was up to me I would institute this in every single place – however at least you honorable Rabbi will heed my advice and it will be in your merit as there is nothing better for the nation of Yisrael. And everyone can do so in his place as it is not a difficult order at all – as we succeeded in instituting it, thanks God. We even have many such orders of learning. And may the merciful God fulfill the requests of our hearts favorably, along with the request of all our family members – as I seek their welfare at whole, etc.”

Based on everything we mentioned above, a Yeshiva student entered the home of the great elder of Yisrael, the Rosh Yeshiva Rav Aharon Yehuda Leib Shteinmann Shlita', the author of 'Ayelet Ha'Shachar' and personally asked him the following question: Can a Yeshiva student (Bachur) learning Zohar?

He answered in exactly these words: Yes – so long as you understand!

And it also happened that once the minister of Torah - Rav Chaim Kanievsky Shlita' was asked: **Is it true what was publicized in your name that Yeshiva students (Bachurim) should not learn Zohar?** He answered in the following fashion: **They say many things in my name – that shouldn't upset you. God forbid I should say such a thing! To the contrary, I was told by the Chazon Ish Ztl' that there is no better Mussar book that awakens and**

strengthens a person like the Zohar Ha'Kadosh. It is therefore a great must – and especially for full time learners – to toil in it! These were his words. As we see, the great Ramchal could not find any better advice to hasten our redemption other than to institute a Yeshiva in which they learn in consecutive watches from morning to night the Zohar Ha'Kadosh! And this what Rav Shteinmann Shlita' several times ordered us to do as well.

IF SO – WE HAVE NOTHING LEFT TO DO BUT GO OUT AND CARRY OUT HIS REQUEST!

And by doing so we will certainly find peace of mind with regards to the threat of army enrollment that hovers over the heads of the Yeshiva students. The advice is clear: That in every single Yeshiva wherever it may be they shall fix a consecutive program of learning the Zohar Ha'Kadosh from its beginning to its end – and make sure they complete it and they will certainly be spared from this danger as well as from any other possible disaster – God forbid! It is guaranteed that the decree will be abolished and their Yeshiva will not be enrolled.

As the verse states: “Would only my nation listen to my advice – and Yisrael would go in my ways.” Had we already taken Ramchal's advice to learn collectively the Zohar Ha'Kadosh by merely reading its text consecutively they would have already left us alone and we would have been saved from all those who rise against us to hurt us, and we would have already attained the spirit of purity! And as we read in Daniel (7:13): “And behold in the clouds of the sky is the image” of Melech Ha'Mashiach – and Yisrael will prevail!