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THE 7TH GENERATION

“The process of bringing Divine presence into our benighted and physical world, and the lowest realms within the physical, essentially, is a gradual one. With every subsequent generation, the Shechinah descends a little further. As holiness penetrates increasingly lower levels of existence, our mission becomes more outward oriented. At some point, this process increases exponentially. That period is what we refer to as *Ikvesa D’moshicha*—the ‘Heel of Moshiach.’

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“You see, Jay, the earlier generations correspond to the ‘brain’ of the cosmic matrix, while the final generations correspond to its ‘heel’. The brain, or head, which is the seat of the intellect, is far more delicate than the foot.

“Maintaining the integrity and wellbeing of the brain—protecting its delicate complex mechanism, both neurologically and physiologically—requires greater care, than that of the relatively coarse foot. We see this patently reflected on a daily basis, in the fact that helmets are commonly worn on the head rather than on the foot.

“As part of the cosmic ‘head,’ our forebears had the great responsibility of interpreting the *Torah* and establishing the law for all of time. This required a helmet, in the form of increased inward focus, and limited exposure to the ‘outside’ elements. Thus, they were unable to engage the lowly and coarse elements that are common in the generation preceding the advent of Moshiach.

“Even in the time of R’ Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the 18th century author of *Tanya* and founder of the Chabad movement, the Divine servant found himself withdrawn from the materialistic sphere.

“Expected to study vast amounts of *Torah* and pray with utmost fervor and concentration, while expressing the ultimate in character refinement, the seeker of holiness had little capacity for involvement with the secular and mundane elements of life. After all, that generation had the sacred task of laying the foundation and framework of Chassidic ideology.

“But now that we reached the final quarter of the 5th millennium since creation, well into the stage known as the ‘Heel of Moshiach’—indeed the very end of the heel—we possess the unique ability and mission to confront and transform the darkest vestiges of exile, our generation’s limited spiritual capacity notwithstanding.

“Chabad sees a critical parallel between the advent of the Chassidic movement and the period of the heel. In fact, Chassidus is seen as the armor, or intelligence, for this final foray. Our mission entails completing the process of drawing down the Shechinah to earth.

“We must draw down the Shechinah, not just to the lower levels, but to the very lowest level—the farthest and the darkest corners of the universe—thereby clearing the path for the ultimate redemption.

“Chabad culture maintains that, with the advancement of time and the proliferation of more potent forms of Chassidus and their more illustrious articulation, the implements are provided to complete the work of turning this world into a dwelling for the Divine presence. Through the progression of Chabad Rebbes and the translation of the deepest concepts of *Torah* into every spoken language, we are ready to penetrate the farthest and innermost layers of exile.

“The anticipation of the final redemption in this age of *Ikvesa D’moshicha* is not limited to the cognitive intellectual realm; it finds expression in the practical arena, as well. Through its army of Chassidim and

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Shluchim, Chabad sees its role as being the vanguard of this mission—‘the boots on the ground.’ Chabad’s goal is to use every method of outreach to bring *Torah* to every man, woman, and child alive today.

“Although this final endeavor began with the Baal Shem Tov and R’ Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the farthest corners remain reserved for the last generation to elevate. The sixth Chabad Rebbe, R’ Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, brought the movement to the West and took the process to a new level, by extending it to people and places that were, previously, unable to even relate to the process.

“Through his Yiddish translations of Chassidus and illustrious memoirs, R’ Yosef Yitzchak enabled the mind of the ordinary person to grasp and internalize the transcendent spirituality of basic Chassidism and Kabbalah.

“However, the greatest expansion came with the advent of the late Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the ‘seventh generation’ of Chabad leadership. His teachings include Kabbalistic philosophy and theology, recorded for the most part in his *Likutei Sichos*.¹⁵⁰

“Chabad believes that the final step of bringing the Shechinah down to earth, so that the ‘lower world’ itself becomes a source of illumination, belongs to the Rebbe of the ‘seventh generation.’