

IKVESA D'MOSHICAH—  
HEEL OF MOSHIACH

“So, Jay, can we talk about you now, or do you want to continue changing the topic? Teshuva is the way to go, my friend. Forget the anger; forget the blame; forget the feeling bad for yourself. Focus your energy on self-growth and improvement. Do as Chassidus teaches; turn your past into merits.”

“You know, Danni, now you’re really beginning to annoy me,” says Jay, visibly irritated. “I’m not sure whether you’re pretending or just plain clueless, but, for the life of me, I can’t understand why you insist on ignoring the elephant in the room.”

“The room? The room we’re in right now,” I say in an attempt to lighten the mood, “is 30 thousand feet in the air, I sure hope there’s no elephant in it.” I manage to eke a faint grin out of Jay, but my humor fails to do the trick, Jay is still quite upset. “Okay, Jay, tell me about the elephant in the room,” I say.

“You mean to tell me, Danni,” Jay exclaims, “that you really don’t understand the obvious predicament in which I find myself as a result of my marital status? It’s easy for you to sit there and preach these hifalutin ideas about Teshuva and turning my past into merits, but I’ve got to deal with reality, such as a wife and kids.

“So what are you suggesting, Danni? That I do Teshuva, while I remain in the relationship, or do you recommend that I get rid of my family? What do the great Rabbis of Chabad have to say about this situation? Would they favor Teshuva over broken families?”

“I’m sorry, Jay, I really should have been more sensitive to your situation,” I concede. “Your predicament is more complex than I seemed

to acknowledge, but it was not intentional. I just was not looking that far down the road, but rather at the more immediate picture.”

“But is there a long term answer for this type of circumstance, Danni?”

“This is an extremely delicate issue, Jay, and I’m afraid there is not a one size fits all answer to this question. Each situation must be considered individually. But Jay, please don’t shoot the messenger. Chabad, nor any of the other Orthodox strands, is not the enemy. The *Torah’s* laws about intermarriage are over 3 thousand years old. So are the laws regarding conversion; Chabad did not invent them or change them.

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“Your predicament , Jay, is a tragic result of an unfortunate state of affairs within the Jewish community, but, of all parties, Orthodoxy is the least to blame.”

“Then what does one do, Danni,” asks Jay. “You know how little control I have over the situation at this point. I can’t make the kids be any more Jewish. I certainly can’t make Arlene. To be honest, I don’t even feel like I have the right to request it from her. So, what am I supposed to do, Danni?”

“You really want to know, Jay,” I ask.”

“No, I don’t really want to know, Danni,” he sarcastically remarks. “I’m just trying to make conversation, because we’ve hardly talked to each other during this trip... Of course, I want to know.”

“Well then, I’ll tell you Jay,” I assert. “Leaving aside for now the possibility of an Halachic conversion that, of course, should be part of any plan, the answer is that you should do whatever you can to align your life with G-d and *Torah*. The rest leave up to G-d. Remember the Hashgacha Pratis concept, G-d has a master plan and nothing is outside its purview,

even your situation. So don't try to run the world, because you'll put G-d out of a job, and who knows where that could lead."

"Oh I see, so now you want me to turn into a hypocrite," Jay protests. "I should have two lives, Jay the sinner and Jay the saint. Are you really serious, Danni? Can one really serve G-d and transgress at the same time? What about Teshuva?"

"You raise a good point" I tell Jay, "In a different era, you might have been 100 percent right; but our generation is unlike any other, especially regarding the issue of hypocrisy. You see, Jay, each generation in history has its unique mission and set of challenges that call for a corresponding response. In that regard, Judaism is not a static religion, but rather a living breathing organism. Incidentally, this may explain Judaism's mysterious ability to survive against overwhelming odds.

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"Be that as it may, much as the Baal Shem Tov acted in response to the crisis of his time, the Supra Leaders of each generation are charged with the responsibility to identify and contend with the unique threats facing world Jewry in their time. This is why Judaism places such great prominence on leadership in conjunction with the law. The Tzadik is called 'the eyes of the community.'<sup>125</sup> He possesses the vision to not only see the immediate, but also the larger picture. In fact, there is 'an extension of Moses in every generation'<sup>126</sup>

"The Moses of the day maintains the Divine spirit and authority to make necessary adjustments within *Torah* observance.<sup>127</sup> Such adjustments include the emphasis, or de-emphasis, of a given law or set of laws and practices. Even the temporary suspension of certain commandments is placed in his authority and judgment. In some cases, the generational

<sup>125</sup> Rashi, Taanis 24a.

<sup>126</sup> *Tikkunei Zohar*, Tikkun 69

<sup>127</sup> *Talmud* Sotah 47-48.

leader relies upon the power of prophecy to mark a shift in the national direction.”

“From what you describe, Danni,” interjects Jay, “the revelation of *Torah* is kind of an ongoing phenomenon, what might be referred to as ‘real time’ in today’s vernacular. It’s almost as if the *Torah* continues to adapt through its leadership, in accordance with the characteristics of each generation.”

“Indeed, that is the case, Jay,” I affirm. “From its earliest inception, Judaism placed the highest value on spiritual leadership, beginning with Moses of whom the *Torah* states, ‘And they believed in G-d and in Moses His servant,’<sup>128</sup> thus placing G-d and Moses in the same phrase.

“Leadership and supra leadership are a constant within Judaism, from the age of the prophets to the Judges and from the authors of the *Talmud* to the Chassidic masters. The function of leadership and, especially, supra-leadership is to reveal, adjust, and apply proper Jewish observance, in accordance with the time and circumstance.

“Our generation was fortunate to have its own such Moses, the late Rebbe of Lubavitch, R’ Menachem Mendel Schneerson, known simply as the ‘Rebbe.’ For our generation, he identified and confronted the momentous trials and conflagrations.

“World Jewry at the time of his ascendance to leadership, the immediate post holocaust era, was in a ravaged state. The events of the first half of the 20th century left a majority of Jews victims of ignorance, through no fault of their own. Jewry found itself vulnerable as the winds of change swept the world and world Jewry in particular.

“Our 3 thousand year heritage was showing signs of fatigue as a result of the long and bitter exile. The culture that nurtured the people for centuries came under siege on many fronts.

“The dynamic Rebbe of Lubavitch declared our age to be the long

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<sup>128</sup> Exodus 14:31.

anticipated era of 'Ikvesa D'Moshichah'—a degenerate yet opportune time, known as 'Heel of Moshiach'—when Moshiach's approaching footsteps can practically be heard.<sup>129</sup>

“The commentaries explain that when we observe the *Torah* and its Mitzvos during the time of Ikvesa D'moshichah, G-d will keep His promise and bring the redemption. This promise is implied in Deuteronomy by use of the word 'Eikev.' 'And it will be, "Eikev"-because you will heed these ordinances and keep them and perform them, that the Lord your G-d, will keep for you the covenant and the kindness that He swore to your forefathers...' The word Eikev, assert the commentaries,<sup>130</sup> also means 'heel,' as in 'Heel of Moshiach.'

... The lesson that one who completes a mitzvah is credited with it (Rashi, Deuteronomy 8:1), is particularly apt for our generation. For according to all the signs which were given by our Sages, we are presently in the last generation of exile, which will become the first generation of redemption. Thus, it is greatly encouraging to know that, despite the fact the *Torah* study and observance of Mitzvos in previous generations greatly surpassed that of our more humble efforts, nevertheless, one who completes a mitzvah is credited with it. Moshiach will come in the merit of our Mitzvos, which are performed in the last moments of exile.<sup>131</sup>

“Implied here is that there is something unique about our observance of *Torah* during the stage of the 'heel' that will precipitate the redemption. What is so unique about the time of the heel? The explanation lies in its unique character.

“When one wants to enter a very hot bathtub or cold swimming pool, which limb does he or she put in first? The answer is the foot. Despite and because of the foot's reduced sensitivity compared to the more refined limbs of the upper body, it responds more readily to our will.

“The very 'lowliness' of the foot is its strength, enabling it to withstand

<sup>129</sup> See footnote 94 & 97.

<sup>130</sup> Deuteronomy 7:12.

<sup>131</sup> Based on *Likutei Sichos* vol. 19, pp. 104-5.

## WHAT CHABAD REALLY BELIEVES

harsh conditions and keep soldiering on. Similarly, although our generation may lack higher qualities and spiritual refinement associated with previous generations, like the heel, we are able to show a deeper commitment to the fulfillment of the Divine will. It is the action of the heel that brings fruition to the ultimate purpose of creation.