



## THE ADMISSION TEST

Every new bride goes through an 'admission test' in her new family. In Abraham's family, there was a very high bar. Rebecca was accepted into the family only when she managed to bring several miracles into her home: A Cloud of Glory, a growing dough, and a candle that wouldn't go out. What do those miracles represent?

TEACHER'S MANUAL



# JEWISH INSIGHTS

A TASTE OF THE REBBE'S TEACHINGS



PARSHAT CHAYE SARAH

**Parshat Chaye Sarah**

*Dedicated in honor of the  
weekly Torah Class at Ft. Huachuca  
and in honor of the Upshernish of  
**Mendel Shemtov,**  
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Shluchim of the Rebbe to Mumbai India

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## A. Personal Efforts.....5

In the first verse of this week's Torah portion, we read the sum total of Sarah's years. As Rashi explains, the strange terminology teaches us that all her years were equally good (Sources 1).

The Rebbe says: What lesson can we learn? What exactly was the goodness of her life? There were three specific blessings that rested on her tent – a blessed dough, a cloud on her tent, and an eternal flame – which are the subject of this week's discussion.

In source 2, we read about the second generation of the Matriarchs. When Sarah died, those miracles ceased. But then Rebecca came along. What exactly did Isaac see in Rebecca that comforted him over the death of his mother? It was the same three miracles.

The Rebbe explains that these are miracles which arrive after the individual invests a maximum effort. The three miracles represent three aspects of Abraham and Sarah's work to spread the name of G-d. In each case, after Sarah invested all the effort she could possibly invest, G-d came along and gave it an extra blessing.

## B. The Inner Layer.....9

In the next section, the Rebbe explains the personal meaning of each element.

What does dough, light and clouds represent in our personal service of G-d? What lesson can we learn from our Matriarch?

Dough represents our service of G-d which stems from an intellectual place. The cloud represents the effort to rise above the limitations of our intellect. And the light – Chassidism – is what guides the whole process.

The miracle is that when we invest our maximum, G-d comes along and gives us a blessing which takes us infinitely further.

# Introduction:

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This week's Torah portion, Chaye Sarah, focuses on the death and burial of Sarah and Abraham's efforts to find a bride for his son, Isaac. He sends his servant Eliezer on a mission to find the perfect girl, and the mission is crowned a success; he finds Rebecca and brings her back home to the Land of Canaan.

Then, something interesting occurred. The Midrash relates that during Sarah's lifetime, three miracles would occur in Abraham's tent. A cloud was always 'tied' to his tent, the dough would be blessed, and a light always miraculously burned.

When Sarah died, all three miracles ceased to occur. And when Rebecca arrived, all three miracles inexplicably returned. This occurrence made Isaac feel that the right choice had been made, and he found comfort in his new wife.

In today's lesson, we will learn about these three miracles, and their significance for us.

# A. Personal Efforts

## Source 1 Genesis 23:1

And the life of Sarah was one hundred years and twenty years and seven years; [these were] the years of the life of Sarah.

Rashi

**The years of the life of Sarah:** All of them were equally good.

וַיְהִי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה מֵאָה שָׁנָה  
וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְשִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים  
שָׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה:

רש"י

שָׁנֵי חַיֵּי שָׂרָה. כִּלּוֹן שְׁוִין  
לְטוֹבָה:

## >> The Rebbe

The Torah's teaching regarding the life of Sarah – that they all were considered equally good – is meant to serve as an example for future generations. In other words, each of us has the ability to achieve this level, in which all our years will be “equally good.”

How was this expressed in Sarah's life? In the end of the Torah portion, we read that throughout Sarah's lifetime, “her candle would remain lit from one Shabbat eve to the next, her dough was always blessed, and a cloud was always attached to her tent.”

ענין זה שהתורה מספרת לנו אודות שנות חיי שרה שהיו “כולן שוין לטובה”, הוא בבחינת “מעשה אבות סימן לבנים”, היינו, שכל אחד מישראל יכול להגיע לדרגא כזו שיהיו כל שנותיו שוין לטובה.

במה מתבטא הענין שכל שנות חיי שרה היו שוין לטובה? - על כך מסופר בסיום וחותם הסדרה? ש”כל זמן ששרה קיימת הי' נר דולק מערב שבת לערב שבת, וברכה מצוי' בעיסה, וענן קשור על האוהל”.

(1) ראה תנחומא לך לך ט. ב"ר פ"מ, ו. רמבין לך לך יב, ו. ועוד.  
(2) ב"ר פ"ס, טז. הובא בפרש"י פרשתנו כד, סז.

## Source 2 Genesis 24:67

Isaac brought her to the tent of Sarah his mother, and he took Rebecca, and she became his wife, and he loved her. And Isaac was comforted for [the loss of] his mother.

Midrash, Bireishit Rabbah

**Isaac brought her to the tent of Sarah his mother:** All the days that Sarah was alive, a cloud was connected to the entrance of her tent. When she died, the cloud stopped [resting at her tent.] When Rebecca came, the cloud returned . . . All the days that Sarah was alive, there was a blessing in her dough, and when Sarah died, that blessing ended. When Rebecca came, [the blessing] returned. All the days that Sarah was alive, there was a candle that would burn from Shabbat Eve to [the next] Shabbat Eve, and when she died, the candle stopped [burning for so long]. And when Rebecca came, [the week-long flame of the candle] returned.

וַיְבִאֶהָ יִצְחָק הָאֵהָלָה שָׂרָה  
אִמּוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־רֵבֶקָה וַתְּהִי־  
לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה וַיֵּאָהֲבֶהָ וַיִּנְחַם  
יִצְחָק אַחֲרֵי אִמּוֹ:

מדרש, בראשית רבה על הפסוק

וַיְבִאֶהָ יִצְחָק הָאֵהָלָה  
שָׂרָה אִמּוֹ (בראשית כד,  
סז), כָּל יָמִים שְׁהִיְתָה  
שָׂרָה קִיָּמָת הָיָה עָנָן  
קָשׁוּר עַל פֶּתַח אֵהָלָה,  
כִּינּוֹ שְׁמַתָּה פָּסַק אוֹתוֹ  
עָנָן, וְכִינּוֹ שָׁבָאֵת רֵבֶקָה  
חָזַר אוֹתוֹ עָנָן... וְכָל יָמִים  
שְׁהִיְתָה שָׂרָה קִיָּמָת הָיָה  
בְּרָכָה מְשֻׁלַּחַת בְּעֵפֶסָה,  
וְכִינּוֹ שְׁמַתָּה שָׂרָה  
פָּסְקָה אוֹתָהּ הַבְּרָכָה,  
כִּינּוֹ שָׁבָאֵת רֵבֶקָה חָזְרָה.  
כָּל יָמִים שְׁהִיְתָה שָׂרָה  
קִיָּמָת הָיָה גֵר דּוֹלֵק  
מִלֵּילִי שָׁבַת וְעַד לֵילִי  
שָׁבַת, וְכִינּוֹ שְׁמַתָּה פָּסַק  
אוֹתוֹ הַגֵּר, וְכִינּוֹ שָׁבָאֵת  
רֵבֶקָה חָזַר.

## >> The Rebbe

### The Miraculous Cloud

Since Abraham and Sarah didn't live in one location, but rather wandered from place to place, they lived in a tent instead of a house made of wood and stone. The purpose of the tent was simply to protect them from the sun and rain. G-d then placed a cloud on the tent, which signifies additional protection. In other words, at first they built themselves a man-made shelter, and afterwards, G-d added a shelter of his own – the cloud.

כיון שאברהם ושרה לא היו דרים במקום קבוע, אלא היו נודדים ממקום למקום, לכן לא דרו בבית הבנוי מעצים ואבנים, כי אם באוהל, שענינו הוא להיות מחסה משמש וממטר. ונוסף לזה הי' גם "ענן קשור על האוהל", שזהו ענין של הגנה נוספת. והיינו, שלכל לראש בנו בעצמם אוהל, שזוהי פעולתו של האדם בענין ההגנה, ולאחרי כן היתה תוספת הגנה מלמעלה - "ענן קשור על האוהל".

### The Dough

Abraham and Sarah were exceptional with regard to the mitzvah of welcoming guests. As we read in last week's Torah portion, Abraham slaughtered three cows for just three guests – to serve each one from the choicest section, the tongue – and Sarah prepared baked goods with high-quality flour, no doubt in great quantity. Nevertheless, it was still limited to human proportions. But then G-d added a blessing of His own: her dough became blessed – and a blessing from G-d is unlimited.

כיון שגדלה מעלת אברהם ושרה בהכנסת אורחים, וכמסופר בפרשה הקודמת<sup>3</sup> שאברהם שחט ג' פרים כדי שיוכל ליתן לכל אחד משלשת האורחים מן המובחר, ושרה לקחה סולת והכינה עוגות כו' - הרי מובן, שגם העיסה שהכינה שרה מצד עצמה היתה במדה גדולה ביותר. אבל אף על פי כן, הרי זה בהגבלה. ובזה ניתוסף שהיתה "ברכה מצוי" בעיסה" - תוספת ברכתו של הקב"ה, שתוספתו מרובה על העיקר<sup>4</sup>.

(3) ב"מ פו, ב. הובא בפרש"י וירא יח, ז.  
(4) ב"ר פס"א, ד.

## The Candle

Despite the greatness of Sarah's Shabbat candles, they were limited by their physical constraints. Then, G-d gave this candle the ability to be unlimited – by keeping the candle lit till Friday night, when she would light it again – thereby ensuring that it remained constantly lit. The only reason it would go out right before Shabbat was to give Sarah the opportunity to earn that eternal light through her personal efforts.

הנר שהדליקה שרה מצד עצמה - ככל שתגדל מעלתו, הרי זה ענין שבהגבלה. ובוזה ניתוספה ברכה מלמעלה שיהי' "נר דולק מערב שבת לערב שבת", שזהו עניין התמידות ובלי-גבול- שהרי גם בערב שבת שלאחרי זה הדליקה שרה נר שהי' דולק מערב שבת לערב שבת, ואם כן, הי' הנר דולק בתמידות; אלא, שמצד מעלת עבודת המטה (שלא יהי' בבחינת "נהמא דכיסופא"<sup>5</sup>) הי' זה באופן שבערב שבת שלאחרי זה תהי' פעולת הדלקת הנר על ידי שרה.

*The miracle of the candle wasn't just a miracle of a week's duration. Rather, the candle remained lit eternally. It would remain lit until Friday evening when Sarah would light it again, and then it would remain lit throughout the week, and so on. In other words, it was always burning.*

*Why was it necessary for Sarah to relight it? So that she would have the opportunity to invest effort in it – so that it wouldn't be "bread of shame" (i.e. something attained without any effort).*

In other words: All of Sarah's personal mitzvot – notwithstanding their own greatness – were amplified by an additional blessing from above which gave them an "eternal" nature.

וכללות הענין בזה - שמבלי הבט על גודל מעלת עבודת שרה מצד עצמה, הנה נוסף לזה נמשכה גם תוספת ברכה מלמעלה, שזהו עניין המשכת הבלי-גבול.

<sup>5</sup> ראה ירושלמי ערלה פ"א ה"ג. הובא בלק"ת צו ז, רע"ד. ובכ"מ.



*These three things (the cloud, the dough, and the candle) signify Abraham and Sarah's three main accomplishments. They symbolized the main achievements of Abraham and Sarah.*

*Their life mission was essentially to make a "Chabad house"; a place where people were invited to eat, drink, rest, and also learn about the Creator of the world.*

*Such a project is obviously very challenging, and they had to push their limits to the max. They couldn't make a house out of stone and wood, because they were mobile, trying to spread awareness of belief in G-d wherever possible. They large quantities of food, drink, and illumination.*

*The Torah tells us that only after Abraham did the maximum effort to build a tent on his own, G-d provided His own addition and gave the cloud for additional protection.*

*Sarah too: after she made every effort to provide food for the guests, doing so – as we read last week – on a very high scale, then G-d added a blessing from on High, blessing the dough to always suffice for all the guests.*

*(This is the type of miracle that Chabad Houses often experience, especially those which service Jewish tourists. It can be very hard to predict how many people attending. A flood of people can suddenly swarm in from nowhere, with no advance notice. But then, a miracle happens! The Shluchah heads into the kitchen, and within a few minutes, lo and behold, there's enough food for everyone!)*

*This idea applies to the candle as well. After Sarah lit the candle on Friday night – quite literally, to illuminate the home – G-d blessed the light and made it burn throughout the entire week.*

## **When You Do Your Best**

As said earlier, the stories of our forefathers in the Torah serve to teach and empower us. Every Jew inherits this power from our forefathers, an inheritance which is carried through the generations: when we invest effort to do our part, G-d gives us His blessing, bringing our work to much greater heights.

וכאמור לעיל, "מעשה אבות סימן  
(ונתינת-כח) לבנים", שזהו הכח שיש  
לכל אחד מישראל בירושה מאבותינו  
- ירושה שאין לה הפסק, אלא נמשכת  
בכל דור ודור - שכאשר מתייגע  
בעבודתו כפי כחו, הנה לאחרי כן נותן  
לו הקב"ה תוספת מרובה על העיקר.

Our sages say, “When you will labor, you will find success.” When we invest efforts according to our capabilities, we *find* success; in other words, the result is like an unexpected “*find*” which we didn’t work for at all. G-d gives us blessings that are incomparably greater than our own efforts.

וכמארז"ל<sup>7</sup> "יגעת ומצאת",  
והיינו, שלאחרי שישנו אצלו  
ענין היגיעה כפי כחו, אזי  
"ומצאת", שנעשה אצלו ענין  
של מציאה שבאה בהיסח  
הדעת<sup>8</sup>, כיון שנותנים לו  
מלמעלה הרבה יותר ממה  
שהתייגע, באין ערוך<sup>9</sup>.

*As we learned in last week’s class, our forefathers pave the way and empower us to follow in their footsteps. This story of Sarah’s tent is a lesson for us too – we must do all we can and then G-d will add far more of His own.*

The Rebbe spoke about this point countless times, stating a famous quote from the Talmud: "יגעתי ולא מצאתי - אל תאמין, לא יגעתי ומצאתי - אל תאמין, יגעתי ומצאתי - תאמין" **"If a person says to you: I have labored and not found success, do not believe him. Similarly, if he says to you: I have not labored but nevertheless I have found success, do not believe him. If, however, he says to you: I have labored and I have found success, believe him."**

Why does the Talmud use the term “found success”?

When I go to a store and pay \$10 for a product worth \$10, that’s not something that I “found.” I paid money for it! I know what I want, and I got exactly that. But if I went on a walk and casually found a treasure – if I found \$1000 on the street – that is a *find*; I received something without correlation to the efforts I invested.

If so, the Talmud’s saying, “I have labored and found success,” seems to be a contradiction. If I worked towards a goal – to build a structure, to understand a concept, etc. – the result does associate with the measure of my investment. Why is that considered a *find*?

The Rebbe explains: The Talmud teaches us here that after doing all you can – “יגעת”, the Torah assures us that not only will you reach your intended goal, but moreover, G-d will add to what you did, helping you achieve far more than you first intended – “ומצאת.”

When you will invest efforts to understand the teachings of the Torah, G-d will help you understand it in a way that far surpasses your capacity.

When you invest efforts to support your family, and you work hard and do everything within your ability, G-d will come and provide you with sustenance that far surpasses your original plan.

(8) סנהדרין צז, א.  
(9) ראה גם תו"מ חכ"ה ע' 148. וש"נ.

## B. The Inner Layer

Previously, we spoke about the power given to us by Abraham and Sarah and explained that the blessings of Sarah's tent apply to us as well. But not all of us build tents or feed guests. What do the tent, dough, and candle mean to us?

The Rebbe explains the meaning of these three miracles in our own service of G-d.

### >> The Rebbe

#### Inner vs. Outward

We can also explain the significance of the three miracles:

A human being's needs are generally split into two categories: internal needs and external needs. There are things which a person imbibes in his body, like food, and there are needs which are not absorbed in the same fashion, but rather serve their purpose in an external way, such as clothing or — even more externally — a house.

*A person's needs are split into two categories: "inner" things that become a part of the person, and "external" items which serve their purpose by surrounding and protecting the human being.*

These two categories are represented in the dough and the cloud:

Dough, which is used to make bread and food in general, represents the inner category. The cloud on the tent represents the external category.

ויש להוסיף ולבאר הדיוק בג' ענינים הנזכרים לעיל דוקא:

ידוע שכללות צרכי ועניני האדם נחלקים לשני סוגים: פנימיים ומקיפים. ישנם ענינים שהאדם לוקח אותם בפנימיות, כמו ענין המזון, ויש ענינים שאי אפשר לקחת אותם בפנימיות, אלא הם עומדים בבחי' מקיף - מקיף דלבוש, או מקיף נעלה יותר, מקיף דבית<sup>10</sup>.

וזהו ב' הענינים ד"ברכה מצוי' בעיסה", ו"ענן קשור על האוהל":

עיסה - שממנה עושים לחם, שבזה נכלל גם כל דבר מאכל שקרוי לחם, כמו "עבד לחם רב"<sup>11</sup> - הוא ענין המזון, בחי' הפנימיות; ואוהל - בחי' המקיף.

[דניאל ה, א בלשאצר מלְקָא עֲבַד לָחֶם רַב. רש"י עבד לחם רב. עשה סעודה גדולה.]

(10) ראה לקו"ת ברכה צח, סע"ב ואילך. ובכ"מ.  
(11) דניאל ה, א. וראה פרש"י ויצא לא, נד. ויקרא ג, יא. אמור כא, יז.

*The first two miracles represent these two categories. Dough represents those “inner” items, and the cloud represents the external ones.*

These two categories as applied to our service of G-d: The “internal” form is when we serve G-d on an intellectual basis, “with all your heart and all your soul,” and the “external” form is when we serve G-d “with all your might” – in other words, when we try to grow out of our limitations.

ועניינם בעבודה: העבודה שעל פי טעם ודעת, “בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך”<sup>12</sup> - היא בחי' הפנימיות, והעבודה שלמעלה מטעם ודעת, “בכל מאדך”<sup>12</sup> - היא בחי' המקיף, שהרי העבודה ד”בכל מאדך” ענינה שהאדם יוצא מהציור שלו... וזהו ענין המקיף.

*There are two ways of serving G-d: There is an inner way, in which we serve G-d in a controlled, intellectual fashion, which is expressed in the verse of shema with the words “with all your heart and all your soul.” In other words, we serve G-d with our intellect, with our heart, and all our soul’s capacities. The second form is the external way, in which we try to rise above our soul’s faculties and limitations.*

*Let me try to give the following example:*

*The choice to study Torah every day or to be more careful to honor one’s parents is an intellectual decision. That’s an “inner” way of serving G-d. We understand why we do it, we choose a specific deed, and when we do it, we connect with it. It’s like food – which assimilates within the person.*

*But there are things that we do without connecting with the actual deed. For example: circumcision. People who don’t view themselves as religious, don’t attend synagogue and don’t do anything visibly Jewish will nonetheless circumcise their children. They can’t explain it – but they feel the need to do it anyway. That’s something beyond us; it transcends our limitations. That experience raises us to a higher place.*

*This form of service could be participating in Yom Kippur services or dancing on Simchat Torah. These things impact the individual in a way that he himself cannot understand. It can change him entirely, transforming him into a new person.*

Now, these “inner” and “external” categories are fulfilled by the person; and once he invests his own effort, G-d gives him additional blessings from on high, providing his efforts with the eternal power of G-d. That is represented in blessing of the dough and the cloud on the tent.

והנה, כללות העבודה בב' הבחי' דפנימי ומקיף היא מצד האדם; ולאחרי שהאדם מתייגע בזה כפי כחו, אזי נותנים לו מלמעלה תוספת ברכה, בברכתו של הקב"ה שתוספתו מרובה על העיקר, בבחי' בלי גבול - שזהו הענין ש”ברכה מצוי' בעיסה” ו”ענין קשור על האוהל”.

## The Light

The significance of the third miracle, The candle that remained kindled throughout the week:

A candle does not create anything new. When someone lights a candle in a room, nothing changes in the room itself. The only difference is that before the candle was lit, the room was dark and nothing was visible, and by lighting a candle we gain the ability to see with clarity.

*When a room is dark, a person is not capable of using the room to the fullest. When someone puts a candle in the room, without changing the room itself, we gain the ability to utilize it.*

The same is true in our service to G-d. The Talmud (as cited in Chassidic teachings) explains the verse, “mitzvot are a lamp, and the Torah is light” as follows: “This is comparable to a man walking in the blackness of night and the darkness, and he is afraid of the thorns... and the wild animals which he cannot see due to the darkness... and he does not know which way he is walking. If a torch of fire comes his way, he is safe from the thorns...Once the light of dawn rises, he is safe from the wild animals...” In other words, darkness represents the inability to evaluate oneself, and the inability to discern between good and bad, sweet and bitter, etc.

וביאור ענין הג' - "נר דולק מערב שבת לערב שבת" (בקצרה על כל פנים, מפני קוצר הזמן):

ענינו של נר - שאינו פועל דבר חדש, שהרי כל הדברים שנמצאים בהחדר בשעה שמדליקים בו נר, היו בו גם לפני שהדליקו את הנר, אלא החילוק הוא, שלפני הדלקת הנר שרר חושך ולא ראו מאומה, ועל ידי הדלקת הנר נעשה אור, ורואים כל דבר בבירור.

וכמו כן בעבודה - כדאיתא בגמרא<sup>13</sup> והובא בקונטרס עץ החיים<sup>14</sup> בפירוש הכתוב<sup>15</sup> "כי נר מצוה ותורה אור", "משל לאדם שהי' מהלך באישון לילה ואפילה ומתיירא מן הקוצים ומן הפחתים (גומות) כו' ואינו יודע באיזה דרך מהלך, נזדמנה לו אבוקה של אור כו' כיון שעלה עמוד השחר כו'" - שענין החושך שלא רואים היכן נמצאים היינו שיכולים להחליף טוב לרע או רע לטוב, מתוק למר ומר למתוק וכו',

*The Talmud uses this parable to describe the function of Torah and mitzvot – they serve to light the way and help us avoid obstacles in our life.*

Therefore, in addition to the “dough” and “the cloud” (serving G-d with our understanding and beyond it), there also needs to be a “candle being lit.” We need to illuminate our lives with the “source of light” in the Torah, i.e., the study of the inner dimension of Torah.

לכן, נוסף על העבודה ד"עיסה" ו"אוהל" (פנימי ומקיף), צריכה להיות גם העבודה ד"נר דולק" - להאיר ע"י המאור שבתורה, זוהי פנימיות התורה<sup>16</sup>, שמאירה לו בכל עניינו.

*What is the light which will illuminate our service of G-d? The study of Chassidus.*

The Shabbat candle was instituted to maintain the peace in home and to help us avoid conflict. So too, on a deeper level: There can be, at times, a conflict in your service of G-d: you might agree that certain things should be dedicated to G-d, but in other areas, you might maintain that they are unrelated to G-d and you can do as you please. In order to avoid such “conflict” in your service to G-d, you need to ensure that you have a “lit candle.”

וכמו הענין ד"נר דולק" כפשוטו, נר שבת, שענינו הוא בשביל שלום בית<sup>17</sup>, היפך המחלוקת והפירוד, היינו, שלולי האור שע"י הנר דולק יכול להיות אצלו ענין של מחלוקת ופירוד - שבנוגע לענינים מסויימים הרי הוא מודה שהם שייכים לאלקות, אבל בנוגע לענינים אחרים חושב שהם שייכים אליו ויכול לעשות כרצונו, וכדי שלא יהי' פירוד בעניניו צריכה להיות העבודה ד"נר דולק".

*The basic purpose of lighting Shabbat candles is to maintain peace at home. If Shabbat would come along and no candles were lit, the people eating the Shabbat meal would be – quite literally – in the dark. They wouldn't know where the chair is, where the fork is, etc., easily leading to tensions. When there is light, peace can be maintained.*

*The same is true on a spiritual level: when there is no light (no direction and no clarity), we don't know how to properly define Torah and mitzvot, and it could lead a person to let go of his commitment. Some parts may be done right, but others might get messed up.*

(17) ראה שבת כג, ב. 30. חסר קצת (המור"ל). ע"ז ג, סע"א.

(16) ראה פתיחתא דאיכ"ר ב ובפי' יפה ענף שם. ירושלמי חגיגה פ"א ה"ז ובפי' קה"ע שם. המשך תעריב ח"ג ע' אישכב. סה"מ תרפ"ט ע' 176. וש"נ.



Simply put: a Jew can study Torah and do mitzvot his whole life – without light, with no life and energy. He must light a candle; he must have a passion in his service to G-d, and that is accomplished by studying the inner dimension of Torah, the Torah's "light."

And it needs to be lit from one "Shabbat eve to the next." His candle needs to remain lit constantly; no matter what level he attains, he must continually strive to serve G-d with additional light, enthusiasm and passion.

ובאותיות פשוטות: יהודי יכול ללמוד תורה ולקיים מצוות בהידור כל ימיו, אבל, ללא אור, וללא חיות והתלהבות, ולכן, מוכרחת להיות העבודה ד"נר דולק", שיהי אור וחיות בעבודה דתורה ומצוות, וענין זה נעשה על ידי המאור שבתורה, זוהי פנימיות התורה.

וצריך להיות "נר דולק מערב שבת לערב שבת", היינו, שהענין ד"נר דולק" צריך להיות בתמידות, כך, שבכל מדריגה שמגיע אלי' צריך לפעול בה תוספת אור<sup>18</sup>, וענין זה פועל לא רק בעבודה ד"מי שטרח בערב שבת", אלא גם בהענין ד"יאכל בשבת"<sup>19</sup>.

משיחת שבת פרשת חיי שרה, מברכים החודש כסלו, ה'תש"כ, רשימת השומעים בלתי מוגה תורת מנחם חלק כ"ז עמוד 146 והלאה

*Chassidus is a paradox. On the one hand, Chassidus doesn't add anything specific to the Torah. Torah and Mitzvos without Chassidus are the same as they are with Chassidus. Even Chassidic customs are based on earlier sources. On the other hand, Chassidus changes the whole outlook of the Torah. It adds new life and meaning to the life of a Jew, to the point that even people that don't consider themselves Chassidim are deeply affected by the teachings of Chassidus.*

*The fifth Rebbe of Lubavitch, Rabbi Sholom Dovber, wrote a letter in honor of the 19th of Kislev (the day that the Alter Rebbe was freed from prison) in which he writes that this day signifies a breakthrough for Chassidus: "the light and vitality of our souls was given to us." These two words, 'light' and 'vitality', define Chassidus.*

*What's the difference between a dark room and a lit one? With regards to room itself, nothing changed. Nothing tangible was added or removed from the room due to the light. But on the other hand, the difference is as clear as it can be! In a dark room, objects cannot be used to*

(18) חסר קצת (המזל).  
(19) ע"ז ג, סע"א.

their fullest. Even when using them, the person may fall or even get hurt at any moment. When a candle is lit, the entire room changes!

The same is true in our lives. The vitality – the life and soul of a person – doesn't make any physical change to the body person; it is the same veins, bones, and limbs, whether alive or not. But are they comparable?! A body with no life is like a stone! A person can only be alive, happy and full of laughter and smiles because of one thing that is undefinable: life.

These two concepts – vitality and light – show us how something can change completely, without anything tangible being added or removed. That thing itself can either be illuminated and full of life, or dark and listless.

The most accurate description of Chassidus is that it is the inner dimension of Torah, the soul of the Torah. Like a soul, Chassidus gives a new life and vitality to Torah and Mitzvot. The Torah and Mitzvot don't change; rather, they start to come alive. When people learn Chassidus, they start to feel completely different about Torah and they begin to do Mitzvot with a whole new excitement and passion. Their routine is now suddenly overrun by a wave of excitement and vitality.

This paradox of Chassidus is also true in the study itself. On the one hand, all of Chassidus is based on the Talmud, Midrash, Kabbalah etc.; everything was already written before. Nevertheless, the way Chassidus presents it can open someone to a completely different approach – a different depth, a different clarity, a different way of understanding the connection between two disparate topics. Every topic is taken from an unclear, dim place, to a clear and brightly lit explanation. It simply makes lights up the Torah, until everything looks different.

One may ask: “What happened before Chassidus came around? Was everyone lost in the dark?” In truth, you can ask the same question regarding the time before the Gemara and Mishnah were written. How did they manage before? The answer is simple: The teachings that we read in the Gemara were self-understood in previous generations. The Gemara was not necessary, being that no clarity was necessary. The same is true with Chassidus: Previously, we were able to see the light and life of Torah and Mitzvos without Chassidus. But now, in recent generations, learning Chassidus is imperative.

(From Sichat Hashavuah)