

# CHAPTER FIFTY

*by Rabbi Yitzchok Rubin*

The Rebbe Reb Mendele of Vorke was one of the greatest lights in the chassidic firmament. He was a leader of Polish Yidden for some forty years and was renowned for his love of Hashem's children. Although during those years he rarely "said" Torah; he "gave over" Torah through his every action.

Once, Reb Mendele sat with his chassidim for hours without saying a word. They looked on his holy visage, he into their hearts. On and on the clock ticked off the minutes as the hours stretched without a break. Finally, he turned to the assembly and said, "Hashem echad, G-d is one." All sat with bated breath as the Rebbe added, "Happy is the person who knows that Hashem is one' means Hashem is one!"

This is a searing lesson, one that marches straight into one's soul. The transmission of Torah truths is always difficult. No matter how brilliant a writer or how convincing a speaker may be, there are always layers of unrecognized obstacles that cloud every human mind and form a barrier to such knowledge. We are told that Moshe Rabbeinu was moser, he "gave over" the Torah to Yehoshua (Avos 1:1). Perhaps the reason Chazal didn't say that he "taught" Torah is because there is a huge difference between teaching a subject and giving it over. Moshe gave over the Torah to Yehoshua with all its depths and meanings. This was not an academic exercise, but one of huge spirituality.

It is possible to learn vast volumes of material without it entering our essence. Our heads become stuffed with knowledge, yet it never becomes actualized within our selves. But then there are moments of insight, those times when the heart opens up and eternal truths find their way in.

We, who are caught up in the muck and mire of this materialistic world today, are often prone to learning a lot, but not internalizing what we learn. We can do mitzvos today in such a grand fashion, with such panache and beauty. Yet often we failed to be moved by what we are doing.

This is no new phenomenon. It has been with us from our beginnings. The gap between action and commitment has always existed. It is close to impossible for such fragile people as we to encompass all the spiritual energy our mitzvos carry. We are bogged down with so many different points of anger and despair, it's a miracle we do anything at all.

The Vorker Rebbe was telling his chassidim in his silent way that Hashem echad is easy to intone, but when it comes to actualizing the concept, he who does so is the only truly happy soul.

The Rebbe Reb Lebele Eiger was the son of Rav Shlomo Eiger, grandson of the gaon Rav Akiva

Eiger. Reb Lebele ran away from his rabbinical home to absorb the chassidic world of Kotzk. This was no simple matter and caused his distinguished father a great deal of anguish. On his return, his father asked him what it was he had learned in Kotzk that he could not learn at home. He answered, "In Kotzk I learned there is a G-d!"

"What!" his father exclaimed. "Everyone knows there is a G-d. Even the poor housemaid knows that." With this, he called in the young orphan girl who worked in their home. "Tell me, is there or isn't there a G-d?"

The young lady was shocked by the question from such a renowned Torah scholar and stammered, "Of course there is a G-d."

"You see," said Rav Shlomo, "even the unlearned maid says there is a G-d, so why did you have to run off to Kotzk?"

Reb Lebele looked at his holy father with deep eyes. "She says there is a G-d. In Kotzk, we know there is a G-d!"

This is what "giving over" Torah is all about.

Each of us, in our own circumstances, must seek ways and means to "receive" such total Torah into our lives. There are many "givers" of the Torah, and it is the wise person who accepts the gifts when offered.

Everyone will acknowledge that there are moments when his heart floods with a warmth, a sense of goodness, and that at such times he feels a special closeness to all things holy. It may be the simple action of a child, a sudden reaction to a nigun, or perhaps the sight of a holy Yid praying. It makes no difference; it's a gift "given" to you. We must be ready to accept it and open our hearts to all life's truths.

In this kapitel, the psalmist touches on this special facet of life.

*Almighty God, Hashem spoke, calling the earth from sunrise to sunset.* The Torah is Hashem's message to all of mankind, and its message can be found wherever one goes, whatever time of day.

*From Zion, beauty perfection, God appeared.* The only perfect place of spirituality was that one place where Yidden were once able to come to Hashem's Sanctuary in complete purity. The fact that this was once so makes it possible to hope to realize it in the future.

The kapitel then goes on and tells us Hashem's words: *Listen My people and I will speak! Israel, and I will bear witness against you. God, your God, am I.* Hashem tells us to "listen" to accept and absorb the vital message that Hashem is our G-d and that these are His words. If we don't, then this in itself will be a testament against our souls.

*Not for your sacrifices will I rebuke you, for your burnt offerings are always before Me.* Hashem is telling

us that we will be held to account not because we did not fill His Sanctuary with sacrifices. Surely there was no dearth of such gifts.

*I will not take a bullock from your house nor any male goats from your pen, for every forest creature and the cattle on a thousand hills belong to Me. I know every bird of the mountains, and what creeps on My fields is Mine.* Everything in this whole world exists through Hashem. Nothing is without His sanction and will.

*If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and all its fullness are Mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?* Does Hashem eat, or does He need anything we possess? It is foolishness to even contemplate such a thought! No, the entirety of our mitzvos was given for our sake, not because Hashem needs something from us.

*Offer confession to God, and pay your vows to the Most High.* The basis of all service to Hashem is first and foremost our soul searching. The vows refer to the mitzvos that we do, which are truly worthy once our hearts are open and seeking.

*Call to Me on the day of distress. I will free you, and you will honor Me.* The only real freedom is that which is found when we bind our spirit to Hashem. The feeling of uplifting, of sweetness in this life, is there whenever we call on Hashem with our open hearts.

The kapitel ends with a far-reaching message. *He who confesses, honors Me, and prepares the way. To him, I will show God's salvation.* The true path for us is clear and openly marked. It is not about the trappings of religiosity; it is about using those vital tools, our mitzvos, to bring true honor to Hashem. How? By activating our hearts, by seeking beyond the superficial, by being a Yid who knows Hashem echad is Hashem echad!

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