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In order to achieve this, we have created a dynamic, original curriculum that features:

- Thought-provoking issues
- Helpful, informative synopses
- Materials for 40 minutes of study
- Clear, easily understandable language and layout
- Challenging questions to consider at the end of each lesson

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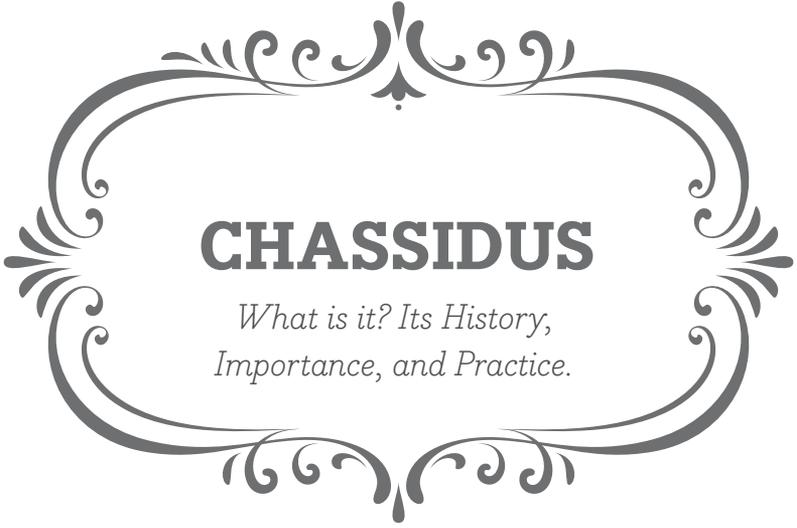
Sincerely,

Rabbi Yehoshua Werde
Director

Chavrusa Sushi is a coordinated network of creative learning programs geared toward the young working Chabad Professional. For comments questions or requests to join the Chavrusa Sushi Network, please email Director@Torahlp.com.

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ב"ה



Lesson Outline

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Chassidus

What is Chassidus? What does it do? And why is it necessary?

Setting the Stage for Chassidus

To appreciate what Chassidus is, we need to first understand the context in which Chassidus was first introduced to the world.

It was in the years following a great upheaval that rocked the Jewish world. The hardship of living in a time when murderous pogroms were a regular and common practice and the average economic status of Jews was that of dire poverty, you can imagine that this may be what led a great part of the Jewish world to jump on the possibility that the geulah was imminent and believe in Shabtai Tzvi (1626-1676) when he declared himself Moshiach.

However, following Shabtai Tzvi's conversion to Islam, the mood of the Jewish community was completely shattered along with their hopes for the imminent coming of Moshiach. It was in this setting that R' Yisroel Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760) entered the scene.

To Awaken the World from an Unconscious State

Sefer Hamaamarim 5663, p. 142

מאמר סתום מזה"ג ר' פנחס מקארעץ ז"ל מתלמידי הבעש"ט ז"ל,
שאמר שנשמת הבעש"ט ירדה לעוה"ז להעיר את כלל ישראל משינתם
שהם בבחי' התעלפות,

There is an encrypted saying from Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz OB" M from the disciples of the Baal Shem

Tov who said that the soul of the Baal Shem Tov descended into this world to awaken the Jewish people from their sleep, for their were in a state of unconsciousness.

The Rebbe explains that it was not only the Jewish people who were in a state of unconsciousness, but the entire world was in such a state, because the state of the Jewish people is a reflection of the state of the world at large.

How do you awaken a person from a state of deep sleep?

Ibid, p. 142-3

יש ... מדריגות בשינה, המדריגה הא' היא נים ולא נים, תיר ולא תיר, דקרו לי' ועני ולא ידע לאהדורי סברא, המדריגה הב' שנשתקע בשינה וצריכים להקיצו, המדריגה הג' שמי שנתעלף אז צריכים להקיצו ברפואות וסמים, ונכתב בספרי הרפואות סגולה לזה שילחשו לו באזנו שמו ואז יקיץ מההתעלפות...קודם התגלות הבעש"ט נ"ע הי' בכלל ישראל בחי' התעלפות וע"כ ירד הבעש"ט ז"ל לעוה"ז ליתן רפואות חזקות והם ד"ח, וגם לחש באזניהם את שמם שנק' ישראל

There are different levels in sleep. The first is a state of drowsiness where a person is awake but not awake, when you call the person and they respond but they cannot answer sensibly. The second is when a person falls asleep and you need to wake them up. The third is a person who faints and you need to use medication to revive them. Medical books cite a trick [to wake up a person who has fainted] by whispering their name into their ear which causes them to regain consciousness...

Before the Baal Shem Tov was revealed, Jews were in an unconscious state. This is why the Baal Shem Tov's soul descended into this world to apply strong medication, i.e., Chassidus, and also whispered their name into their ear, that they are called Yisroel.

It is no coincidence that the Baal Shem Tov's name was Yisroel, the name of the Jewish people. And he also introduced Yidden to their name. This is why he was called the Baal Shem Tov—the “master of a good name,” for he introduced the Jewish people to their real name.

Chassidus explains why a name has the power to awaken a person from a state of unconsciousness:

When a person is unconscious, the essence of their soul is still alive and intact, however, the expression of the soul in the body is limited.

A person who is unconscious cannot walk, talk, smell, and do many of the things a conscious person can do; however, essentially they are still alive.

How do you get the essence of the soul to express itself once again in the various functions of the body so that the person regains consciousness?

This is the power of a name. A name is a reference to the essence of the soul, the yechidah sheb'nefesh, and therefore by whispering a name, it has the power to beckon the soul from its unconscious state back to consciousness.

From this we learn that Chassidus is both a powerful medication, like a strong ammonia or smelling salt that awakens the soul. And it also works like a name, in that it

evokes the essence of our soul to be expressed, to awaken us from our state of sleep to become alive and vibrant in our service of Hashem.

The Value of the Simple Jew

At a time when to be an observant Jew meant you had to be a Torah scholar who is able to spend day and night in study and comprehend the most complex of ideas, the average poor and ignorant laborer largely felt left outside of the fold.

It was at this time that the Baal Shem Tov, after spending 10 years studying in the Carpathian mountains under the tutelage of the prophet Achiya Hashiloni (Eliyahu Hanavi's own teacher), took the advice of his teacher and travelled from town to town igniting the souls of the common Jews, explaining to them how dear and precious they are in the eyes of Hashem, and how their simple words of davening and Tehillim were of priceless value in the heavenly realm.

Chassidus Chabad

While the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov lent tremendous value to the simple service of the simple Jew, to understand the logic behind his teachings you needed to be a saintly person of high stature and have much experience in the esoteric, mystical realms. That was until the Alter Rebbe came around.

The Alter Rebbe introduced the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov in a way that was understandable to average folk. No longer did you need to be a great Torah scholar with a tremendous understanding of Kabbalah to comprehend the G-dly wisdom revealed in Chassidus.

With the exception of the Tanya, this innovation primarily took place following the Alter Rebbe's incarceration and subsequent release from the S. Petersburg prison on Yud Tes Kislev.

What is Chassidus?

What was this revelation that was revealed to the Baal Shem Tov and revived the world from its state of deep slumber? And what is it that the Alter Rebbe made accessible for us to understand?

Beyond the Letter of the Law

The classic definition of a Chassid in Gemarah is someone who goes beyond the letter of the law to do more than is required of him. The act of doing so is therefore called Chassidus.

Rashi, Avos 6:1

חסיד: עושה לפניו משורת הדין

A chassid: One who does more than the amount the law requires of him.

This is why Chassid is from the word “Chessed” kindness, and benevolence, which means to give more than is deserved. Someone who devotes himself more than is required of him is called a chassid.

Why Might Someone Do More Than Is Required?

Rambam, Hilchos De'os 1:5

ומי שהוא מדקדק על עצמו ביותר ויתרחק מדעה בינונית מעט לצד

זה או לצד זה נקרא חסיד, כיצד מי שיתרחק מגובה הלב עד הקצה האחרון ויהיה שפל רוח ביותר נקרא חסיד וזו היא מדת חסידות... וחסידים הראשונים היו מטין דעות שלהן מדרך האמצעית כנגד שתי הקצוות, יש דעה שמטין אותה כנגד הקצה האחרון ויש דעה שמטין אותה כנגד הקצה הראשון, וזהו לפני משורת הדין, ומצווין אנו ללכת בדרכים האלו הבינונים והם הדרכים הטובים והישרים שנאמר והלכת בדרכיו.

A person who carefully [examines] his [behavior], and therefore deviates slightly from the mean to either side is called a chassid.

What is implied? One who shuns pride and turns to the other extreme and carries himself lowly is called a chassid. This is the quality of chassidus....

The chassidim of the early generations would bend their temperaments from the middle path towards [either of] the two extremes. For some traits they would veer towards the final extreme, for others, towards the first extreme. This is referred to as [behavior] beyond the measure of the law.

We are commanded to walk in these intermediate paths - and they are good and straight paths - as [Devarim 28:9] states: "And you shall walk in His ways."

Simply put, we are required to follow the average path. If we are not arrogant, but also not overly humble, we have done our duty of following in Hashem's ways. However,

if we know we have a problem with arrogance, then it is befitting (although not required) to go beyond the letter of the law to an extreme of humility. This is a chassid in the simple sense, someone who seeks to rectify a weakness by overcompensating.

The inner dimension of Torah provides a deeper explanation:

Zohar, Parshas Ki Seitzei

איזהו חסיד המתחסד עם קונו

Who is a chassid? One who is benevolent to his Master.

What does it mean to be benevolent to his Master? The Ra'ayah Mehemna provides an analogy for this:

Ra'ayah Mehemna, Parshas Ki Seitzei

כברא דאשתדל בתר אבוי ואימה דרחים לון יתיר מגרמיה...ומסר
גרמיה למיתה עלייהו למפרק לון כו'

Like a son who will go to great lengths to please his father and mother because they love him more than he loves himself...and he will sacrifice his life in order to save them.

According to Kabbalah a chassid wishes to do more than is required of him in the service of Hashem, not to overcompensate in order to rectify a weakness, but rather because his life is devoted to Hashem more than he is devoted to achieving his own personal goals. This comes from an understanding that Hashem loves him as parents do, i.e., more than he loves himself. And he is therefore willing to give

his life for the service of Hashem.

The Rebbe Rashab explains:

Sefer Hama'amarim 5672 vol. 2 p. 773

וזהו שחסיד הוא שעושה לפניו משורת הדין דעל פי שורת הדין
דתורה הוא עכ"פ שיהי הגילוי לעצמו כו' אבל חסיד הוא המתחסד
שאין הכוונה לעצמו כו',

This is why a chossid is one who does more than the amount the law requires of him, since the reason for following the letter of the law of Torah is to achieve a personal revelation [of G-dliness], but a chossid is benevolent, because his intent is not for his personal gain.

This explains why the Mishnah in Pirkei Avos (6:1) describes a person who learns Torah for the sake of learning Torah a chassid (among other names), because he is not interested in his personal gain, only in serving Hashem.

Beyond a selfless commitment to serving Hashem, there are additional purposes to Chassidus:

To Change the Nature of our Middos

Likutei Diburim vol. 1 pg. 56-57

באחת ה"יחידות" של הרבי ה"צמח צדק" אצל סבו רבנו הזקן – כפי
הנראה ה' זה בין השנים תקס"ה-ס"ח – שאל בין יתר שאלותיו:
– מהו ענין החסידות?
ענה לו רבנו הזקן:

– כל ענין ההסידות – לשנות טבע מדותיו של האדם –

In one of the private audiences that the Tzemach Tzedek had with his grandfather, the Alter Rebbe—this appears to have taken place between the years 5565 and 5568— he asked among his other questions:

What is the concept of Chassidus?

The Alter Rebbe answered:

The entire concept of chassidus is to change the nature of a person's middos.

After relating this incident, the Frierdiker Rebbe added that the Tzemach Tzedek did not ask what Chassidus is, as the Tzemach Tzedek was well acquainted with Chassidus and knew that it is G-dly wisdom, the inner dimension of Torah. He only asked about the concept and purpose of Chassidus.

While the Alter Rebbe told the Tzemach Tzedek that the purpose of Chassidus is to change the nature of the middos, the Rebbe Rashab explains what the nature of that change is:

Sefer Hama'amarim 5672 ibid.

מעלת החסידות הוא שהכחות הטבעיים נעשים כחות אלקים

The advantage of Chassidus is that one's natural abilities become G-dly abilities.

What does it mean to transform ones natural abilities into G-dly abilities?

ישנם ענינים בתקון המדות, כמו מדת הכעס או גאוה והדומה שאינם מתיחסים כלל אל העבודה הפנימית ע"פ חסידות והיינו שעל זה אין צריכים לימוד דא"ח, כי כדי לתקן מדות אלו די ומספיק לימוד ספרי מוסר המבארים גנות המדות רעות ושבח המדות טובות...

אם האדם כבר שלם כשלימות המדות טובות ומתפלל ג"פ ביום ולומד תורה כפי הזמן שאפשרי לו ומקיים המצוות כהלכתן כדיני התורה אינו משלים עדיין תכלית הנרצה בהכוונה העליונה בירידת נשמתו להתלבש בגוף.

וכאן הוא התחלת העבודה שע"פ החסידות:

עבודת החסידות הוא להכניס אור וחיות פנימי בכל שלימות הציור קומה שלו. כי האדם השלם הנ"ל הוא אינו אלא רק כלי טוב בלבד, ובכלי טוב הלוזה צריכים להכניס אור וחיות, ודוגמא לדבר גוף שלם ובריא הוא כלי טוב לחיות הנפש אשר כל כח יתלבש ויאיר בכלי שלו, כלומר האבר שהוא הכלי המקבל אור הכח.

There are certain aspects of correcting ones middos, for example the middah of anger or haughtiness and the like, which are not related to the avodah following of Chassidus, i.e., you don't need to learn Chassidus to do so. Studying the works of mussar that deplore these traits and speaks positively of good traits is enough to correct these middos.

If a person is already perfect with good middos and davens three times daily and studies Torah with whatever time he possibly has, and performs mitzvos as is required of him following the directives of Torah, he has not yet completed the desired

purpose in the heavenly plan for the descent of his soul into a body.

This is where the avodah of Chassidus begins:

The avodah of Chassidus is to introduce an inner light and life that saturates his entire being. For the aforementioned perfect person is merely a good vehicle, and in this good vehicle one needs to add light and life. An example for this: A perfect and healthy body is a good vehicle for the soul, in which every human ability embodies itself and shines within its vehicle, i.e., the body part which is the recipient of the particular ability.

From the perspective of Chassidus, to be a perfect person is only the starting point of our avodas Hashem. The avodah of Chassidus is to take that perfect person and utilize every aspect of his being in the service of Hashem, so that G-dliness permeates his entire existence and he becomes a vehicle through which G-dliness shines into the world.

This is the purpose of our existence; to reveal our G-dly soul so that it permeates every aspect of our being (including our natural and animalistic tendencies), as the Rebbe Rashab explains:

Letter of the Rebbe Rashab from 5673, Hatomim p. 291

זה כל האדם להיות עבודה שבלב להאיר ולגלות אור נפשו האלקית, ולתקן מעשיו לזכך גופו ונפשו הטבעית בו, שזהו ע"י פנימיות התורה

The entire purpose of man is to serve Hashem with

is heart, to illuminate and reveal the light of his G-dly soul, and to rectify his deeds to refine his body and natural soul. This is through the inner dimension of Torah.

G-dliness is not something that is outside of us that we introduce, but rather it is in inside of us, in our G-dly soul, and we need only express and reveal it.

To Comprehend G-dliness

This is why the innovation of the Alter Rebbe—that regular people are able to understand Divine wisdom—is so crucial. If the purpose is to internalize G-dliness, we need to be able to comprehend it:

Sefer Hasichos Toras Shalom p. 113

וואס חסידות האט אויפגעטאן איז, אז יעדער איד זאל קענען פארשטיין ווי איהו ממכ"ע ואיהו סוכ"ע, ווארום פארדעם איז געווען אז ניט יעדער איד האט געקאנט משיג זיין אלקות, נאר דערצו האט מען געדארף האבען ווער עס האט א העכערע נשמה און ער איז מזוכך יענער האט משיג געווען אלקות און האט דערהערט אלקות, אדער ווער עס האט ניט געהאט קיין נשמה גבוה, איז דורך זיכוך... חסידות האט אויפגעטאן אז יעדער איד ווער עס האט ניט קיין נשמה גבוה און האט זיך נאך ניט מזוכך געווען זאל אויך קענען פארשטיין א ענין אלקי

What Chassidus accomplished is that every Jew should be able to understand how He [Hashem] fills all worlds and He encompasses all worlds. Before [Chassidus], not every Jew was able to comprehend G-dliness. To do so, you had to have a person who

had a lofty soul, a person who was refined, such a person could comprehend G-dliness and really get what it is about. Alternatively, a person who never had a lofty soul, by refining himself [he was able to comprehend]...Chassidus enabled every Jew who does not have a lofty soul and never refined themselves to be able to understand a G-dly concept.

Why is it important to be able to understand a G-dly concept intellectually?

The purpose of life is to reveal Hashem's presence in the world. How does a person go about achieving this? Being that we are primarily intellectual beings (intellect is our most refined ability), if we are to introduce Hashem's presence to the world we ought to be able to comprehend what Hashem's presence is intellectually.

Practically speaking, to reveal Hashem's presence in the world means to transform our natural and animal souls to recognize Hashem's presence.

The purpose of davening (which is also called avodah) is to connect to and awaken the G-dly soul's natural love of Hashem, and to influence the animal soul to develop its own love and connection to Hashem.

One can only develop real feelings as a result of a concept that the mind can connect with intimately (i.e., not only in a superficial manner).

For this to happen, one must first be able to relate to G-dliness intellectually (a precursor to Davening is to "know

before Whom you stand”).

This is why the teachings of Chassidus are needed to introduce us to Hashem in a way that our minds can comprehend and that we can relate to in an intimate and real way so that we can arouse real emotional sensations and then it becomes real enough so that even our animal soul is able to arrive at such a realization on its own.

“This is the wonder of the Tanya” said Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Bardichev when they brought him a copy of the Tanya to lend his words of endorsement “That he was able to take a G-d so great and fit him into such a tiny book!”

G-dliness by definition is unlimited and defies limitations, while our mind and what any book may be able to contain is limited. So how can our minds comprehend G-dliness? How can G-d be described in a book? This is the unique achievement of Chassidus.

The secret lies in the fact that Chassidus doesn't introduce anything new (if it were new, it would be impossible to fit an infinite G-d into a limited comprehension). If not something new, what then does Chassidus introduce? The Rebbe explains:

Inyanah Shel Toras Hachasidus, Ois Vov

כל החידושים שחסידות חידשה [בתורה (כולל הבאת חלק ה"סוד" שבה לידי גילוי); בעבודת האדם (ההנהגה דלפנים משורת הדין ושינוי טבע המדות); בכללות העולם (התעוררות מהתעלפות)], אינם חידושים שכאן מתחדש הוא בפני עצמו, כי אם, שחסידות היא חיות חדש, חיות עצמי דבחי" יחידה. וכאשר חיות חדש זה של החסידות נמשך בעולם [תורת חסידות הכללית ע"י כ"ק הבעש"ט, הה"מ וכו']

ואח"כ - תורת הסיודות חב"ד ע"י ה"נשמה חדשה" - כ"ק אדמו"ר הזקן
[...], התחילו כל עניני העולם לחיות בחיות חדש - חיות עצמי, ובמילא
נתחדשו בהם כמה וכמה ענינים.

All of the innovations of Chassidus [in Torah (including to reveal its "hidden" dimension); in man's the service of Hashem (conduct in the manner of going beyond the letter of the law and transforming the nature of ones middos); in the world at large (awakening it from its unconscious state)], are not original innovations, but rather Chassidus introduced renewed enthusiasm, an essential aliveness from the Yechidah level of the soul.

When this renewed enthusiasm of Chassidus was introduced to the world [in the form of general Chassidus through the Baal Shem Tov, the Maggid of Mezritch etc. and later - through the teachings of Chabad Chassidus that were taught by the "new soul" - the Alter Rebbe] all aspects of the world began to live with renewed vitality—an essential vitality, and as a result, several innovations were introduced.

Light and Life-Force

The Rebbe Rashab, in his letter for Yud Tes Kislev 5662 describes the day of Yud Tes Kislev as:

אור וחיות נפשנו ניתן לנו

[The day upon which] the light and life-force of our souls were handed to us.

What is the difference between light and life-force? The Rebbe explains:

The Rebbe, 19 Kislev 5716

אור - הוא פשוט. הגוון שנעשה בהאור בהתלבשותו בכלי, לבן, ירוק או אדום, לפי אופן הכלי - הוא רק מצד הכלים, אבל האור מצד עצמו הוא פשוט, וגם בהתלבשותו בכלי לא נעשה בו שינוי. וכמאמר "שמשא אכולי עלמא ניחא". השמש מאיר בחדר המלך ובמקום האשפה, ואין זה פוגע באור השמש, כיון שנשאר בפשיטותו.

וכמו כן בנפש יש חיות הנקרא בשם אור הנפש, שהוא אור פשוט, ולכן, אף שבכדי להתחבר עם האור זקוקים להמזון מצד הניצוץ האלקי שבו, מ"מ, הרי זה אצל כולם שיעור אחד שזה.

משא"כ חיות הנפש, קאי על החיות הפנימי המתלבש בהגוף, שמאיר תחילה בכללות, ואח"כ נמשך בפרטיות לפי אופן האיברים: במוח - חיות רב יותר, ובשאר האברים - במיעוט יותר, ועד שגם בהעקב יש חיות מצומצם.

"Light" is simple. The color that is created when the light shines through a vessel, white, green, or red, depending on the vessel - is only because of the vessel, the light itself however remains simple (colorless). Even once it is manifest in a vessel it remains unchanged as the statement "The sun is good for the entire world," The sun shines in the

kings chamber and in a dump and it makes no difference to the light of the sun, since it remains in its state of simplicity.

Similarly with regards to the soul, there is a life-force that is called “the light of the soul,” which is a simple energy. Therefore, even though one needs food to connect with this energy (because of the G-dly spark that is in it), nevertheless, it is one simple energy that is the same for everyone.

Whereas the vitality of the soul refers to the internal life-force that manifests itself in the body as it first shines in a general manner, and thereafter is introduced based on the needs of the various body parts: The brain receives more energy, and other organs less, until the heel receives only a minute amount of life.

Chassidus points out the G-dliness that exists within and is the essence of everything, thereby giving us renewed life and energy.

But it does so in two ways: 1) it allows us to SEE G-dliness in the world in a general sense 2) it allows us to PERCEIVE the G-dly purpose within every detail.

This is reflected in the difference between seeing and hearing. While seeing is believing—when you see something, you know it is true in a general sense—hearing allows a person to analyze the details (without being blinded by the bigger picture) and thus arrive at a more analytical and calculated

conclusion.

Chassidus achieves both. It introduces “light” so that we see the true reality of everything. As well as “life-force” - that we are able to sense Hashem’s presence as it powers every detail of creation.

As it relates to our service of Hashem, not only does it give us an excitement in our general avodas Hashem, but it illuminates every detail of every mitzvah so that we sense the G-dly purpose within every detail and therefore become enthusiastic about every detail.

Instead of introducing a novelty, Chassidus gets us to pay attention to the Divine presence that already exists within everything. The act of comprehension is therefore not about limiting G-dliness in order to understand it, but rather about opening up our minds to become enveloped in a realization of Hashem’s presence. To realize that in its essence everything is an expression of G-dliness.

The purpose of Chassidus is therefore to reveal the essence of everything. This is why Chassidus is likened to oil:

Chassidus is Likened to Oil

Inyanah Shel Toras Hachasidus, Ois Zayin

נמשלה תורת החסידות - לשמן, רזין דרוזין:

שמן הוא נקודת התמצית (“עסענץ”) של כל דבר. ומזה מוכרח, שמצד עצמו מובדל הוא מכל דבר (כי באם היתה לו שייכות לדבר פרטי, לא הי’ יכול להיות נקודת התמצית של כל דבר), אלא שהוא בחי “עצמי”, ולהיותו עצמי, נמצא הוא בכל דבר, כי העצמי נמצא בכל. ודבר זה, ככל הענינים שבפנימיות התורה, מתבטא גם בנגלה דתורה,

עד בהלכה למעשה: מצד אחד, השמן אינו מתערב בשאר משקין, ולאידך גיסא, מפעפע הוא בכל דבר.

ולכן נמשלה תורת החסידות לשמן, כי גם בה - שתי תכונות אלו: מצד ענינה העצמי - אינה מתערבת בשום דבר - עצם נקודת החיות שלמעלה מהתפשטות, ולאידך גיסא - מתפשטת היא ומפעפעת בכל דבר ודבר.

Chassidus is compared to oil—the secret of the secret.

Oil is the essence of all matter. This necessitates that it itself be removed from everything (for if it would be related to a particular aspect, it could not be the essence of everything), it is of an “essential” state, and because it is an essence, it is found within everything, for essence is found in everything.

This idea, like all ideas in the inner dimension of Torah, is also expressed in Nigleh [the revealed dimension] of Torah, to the extent [that it has applications] in practical Halachah: On the one hand, oil doesn't mix with other liquids, on the other hand, it spreads throughout everything.

As an essence, oil both stands apart, higher than and removed from everything else (all other liquids), yet it spreads everywhere and saturates everything precisely because it is the essence of everything.

This is true of Chassidus as well. It speaks of G-dliness that is far removed from the mundane nature of the world, yet

Chassidus reveals the essence of everything in the world, and how G-dliness can be found in the essence of every detail of the world.

In other words, a person may have heard some good reasons for the purpose and existence of life, and some of these reasons may even resonate as being true in some areas of life. However, once the person encounters the essential reason for existence, all of a sudden every single detail begins to speak of this truth. This is because specifically the essence explains and incorporates all of the details.

The Hebrew word for truth is *emes*. The word *emes* is comprised of the first letter, aleph, the middle letter, mem, and the last letter of the aleph beis, tav, so as to say that truth saturates everything, from beginning to end.

Chazal also teach that “words of truth are recognizable,” once you hear the truth, you begin to see it everywhere.

Why Was it Only Revealed in Recent Times?

If Chassidus is so important, why was it only introduced in the past few centuries?

Letter of the Rebbe Rashab, Hatomim, vol. 1, pg. 291

מפני שנתרבו ההסתרים ביותר, ע"כ מוכרח יותר הלמוד דפנימיות התורה, בדורות הראשונים מצד מעלת נשמתם שהיו נשמות גבוהות ולא היו נתפסים בגשם שהי' מאיר בהם אור נשמתם גם בחיצוניות ראו אור ה' שבה, ולאורה נסעו והלכו מדרגא לדרגא כו', ואין לך בן חורין אלא מי שעוסק בתורה, פי' בן חורין הוא חירות מהיצה"ר ושעבוד הגוף ונה"ב (שו"ע השעבוד כמ"ש בתו"א ד"ה מים רבים בפ' נח). משא"ב בדורות האחרונים בנשמות נמוכות ונתפסים בגשם, שבאה

הנשמה וכן התורה בריבוי העלמות והסתרים, ואינם רואים כלל את האור כי טוב אין טוב אלא תורה כו' וע"כ מוכרחים לפנימיות התורה אשר יסודתה, בהררי קדש פנימיות ח"ע בחי' תעלומות חכ' כו', אשר לא נתלבשה ולא נסתתרה בלבושים המעלימים והמסתירים ונראה ונגלה בה האור כי טוב

Because the concealments (of Hashem's presence) became so numerous, the study of the inner dimension of Torah became more of a necessity. In earlier generations, because of the worthiness of their souls—they were lofty souls that did not get caught up in materiality because the light of their souls shined within them—even outwardly they sensed the light of Hashem within it and travelled by its light from level to level.

And there is no free man but he who studies Torah. A free man is free from the evil inclination and the slavery of the body and animal soul.

Whereas in later generations, with lower souls that get caught up in material pursuit, since the soul and Torah underwent many concealments, and no longer do we see “the light that is good”—there is no good but Torah. We therefore need the inner dimension of Torah which is founded in holy heights, the innermost heavenly wisdom, the hidden aspects of wisdom, which never became manifest and hidden within concealing garments and “the light that is good” is revealed within it.

There Rebbe compares the situation to certain diseases that only appeared in recent generations that require new medical treatments in order to cure.

On the positive side, Chassidus is needed as a precursor to Moshiach. As Moshiach told the Baal Shem Tov when the Baal Shem Tov ascended to his heavenly chamber on high and asked when he would come, Moshiach responded “when your wellsprings spreads to the outside,” i.e., when Chassidus, the innermost dimension, is revealed to the outermost extremities.

The purpose of Chassidus and of Moshiach are very similar. Both are about revealing the G-dliness that exists in the essence of reality so that it is revealed in every detail. Therefore, the revelation of Chassidus in a way is part of the revelation of Moshiach.

Chassidim with Chassidus

Ibid, p. 292

על אחינו החובה לעסק בלמוד החסידות, ובהעדר הלמוד החסידות במה אנחנו חסידים, ובמה אנחנו מקושרים לרבותינו הק' וחלילה חלילה לנו שלא לקבל את הטוב אשר גמלנו ה' ופנימיות אור תורתו הק' נטע בתוכנו ע"י עבדיו הנאמנים

Our brethren have an obligation to toil in the study of Chassidus. Without studying Chassidus, what makes us chassidim? With what are we connected to our holy Rebbes? Heaven forbid that we not accept the good that Hashem has bestowed upon us and the inner dimension of the illumination of His holy Torah which he has planted in our midst

through his trusted servants.

We are fortunate to have access to a wealth of Chassidus like no previous generation before us has ever had. It is our duty to seize this opportunity and take advantage of it.

Particularly in our times, when we are no longer sheltered from the world, it is vital for us to study Chassidus every day and remind ourselves of Hashem's constant presence in the world and in our lives.

Moreover, we have been charged with the shlichus and duty to share the wellsprings of Chassidus with the world. Certainly, we should at least make a regular study of it ourselves!

Take-Aways

- » The Baal Shem Tov introduced Chassidus to awaken the world from its unconscious state of deep sleep
- » The Alter Rebbe introduced the Baal Shem Tov's teachings in a manner that can also be comprehended intellectually
- » In its simplest meaning, Chassidus is the approach of doing more than required "beyond the letter of the law"
- » One reason to do more than required is to correct certain flaws in one's character by going to the opposite extreme
- » The main purpose of Chassidus is not to correct character flaws, instead, the reason why we a chassid goes beyond his call of duty is because he is selfless and cares more about serving Hashem than he does about himself
- » Another purpose of Chassidus is to change the nature of ones middos, to transform ones abilities into vehicles for revealing Hashem's presence in this world
- » Chassidus made G-dliness comprehensible. For us to reveal G-dliness in the world, we need to be able to know what it is and relate to it.
- » Chassidus doesn't limit G-dliness to fit the limitations of our comprehension, rather it opens up our eyes to recognize how G-dliness is the essence of everything
- » Chassidus therefore did not add anything new, it only adds excitement and enthusiasm to what already exists.
- » Chassidus is therefore like oil, it stands apart, lofty and removed from the world, yet it saturates every aspect of it.
- » Only in recent centuries the concealment of Hashem's presence became so strong that Chassidus was necessary. Furthermore, the revelation of Chassidus is a precursor to the coming of Moshiach, when Hashem's presence will be revealed within everything.