

Wedding Celebration

Of

Yaakov Mordechai

And

Chaya Mushka

Wilansky

21 SIVAN, 5711

JUNE 23, 2011

To all of our family and friends:

We give thanks to the Al-mighty for enlivening, sustaining and bringing us to the occasion of the marriage of our children, Yaakov and Chaya. We hope that their lives will be blessed with an abundance of good health, happiness and success in all of their endeavors, both physical and spiritual. May it be G-d's will that they will establish a home of love and care for each other, and extend that love and care to each and every Jew.

It is our honor and privilege to present this collection of letters from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, as a memento from our Simcha. Some 30 years ago, the father of the bride presented to the Rebbe a compilation of hundreds of letters and excerpts of letters, written by the Rebbe, organized according to subject matter.

At the time, the Rebbe responded to the idea of printing his letters positively. To paraphrase part of his answer, "Understandably his intention is desirable. However in the publishing of letters written to individuals, the responsibility is great . . . Therefore there needs to be a committee, and not an individual, to decide what to publicize . . . he should speak to the Secretariat in regard to the above".

A committee was established, but unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, the project never came to fruition.

The Rebbe had the ability to answer questions on any subject, coming from people from all walks of life, always based on the premise that the Torah has the answers to all questions. To date, over 30 volumes of the Rebbe's letters have been printed, and those are primarily letters written in Hebrew and Yiddish! In addition, many thousands of letters were written in English as well, although only a small portion of these letters have been published to date.

One of the recurring ideas expressed by the Rebbe was that the Torah is *Torath Chayim*, the Law of Life, and *Torath Emes*, the Law of

Truth, and therefore the Torah is the true guide in the daily life of a Jew. As Yaakov and Chaya build their lives together, we are confident that they will establish a bayis ne'eman b'yisroel, a true Jewish home, founded upon Torah, which is "a Tree of Life to those who grab hold of it".

Thank you for coming to join in our Simcha. May we merit to always share in each other's simchas, and enjoy true Yiddishe nachas from all of our loved ones. Mazal Tov . . . and L'Chaim! To Life!

Rabbi Avremel and Chany Kotlarsky

Rabbi Yosie and Malke Wilansky

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Marriage

Torah is the Foundation to Marriage.....	5
The Foundation of a Happy Marriage - A Jewish Wedding	7
The Secret to Our Childrens Blessings.....	10

Education

Jewish Continuity	13
Chinuch Starts From the Very Young	15
Don't Get Side Tracked With the Outer looks!	17

Torah & Science

Torah is True.....	18
Understanding Earth's Orbit.....	21
Torah is Eternal	23
Torah vs. Science	25
Medicines Mentioned in the Talmud <i>do</i> Work	30
How Old is the World?	31

Free Choice

The Paradox of Choice.....	40
Intermarriage – Doomed From the Start.....	42

The Influence of the Gentiles.....	45
Religious Dialogue	47
Death and Mourning	52
Don't Despair	54
Depression Comes From the Yetzer Hara.....	56
Don't Let the Yetzer Hara to First Base!	57
Dissatisfaction – Good and Bad.....	58
Moshiach - From Exile to Redemption.....	60
“Even” in Israel we must keep the Torah – a private letter to Prime Minister Ben-Gurion.....	65

Marriage

TORAH IS THE FOUNDATION TO MARRIAGE

By the Grace of G-d
27th of Marcheshvan, 5726
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Jewish Institute for Brides & Grooms
5200 Cote St. Catherine #7
Montreal, P.Q., Canada

Greeting and Blessing:

Your letter reached me with some delay. Thank you very much also for the enclosures dealing with your activities and programs.

I hope that you are making efforts not only to maintain your activities in high gear, but also to extend them from time to time. For, needless to say, a marriage in Jewish life is an institution which is called Binyan Adei Ad - an "everlasting edifice." And in order that it should be so, it is necessary that everything connected with a marriage of a bride and groom should be in full compliance with the instructions of our Torah, which is called Toras Chaim, because it is not only the source of everlasting life in the Hereafter, but also the true guide in life on this earth. The analogy of a marriage to an "everlasting edifice" is not merely a figure of speech, but there is an important idea and instruction in it. It is that just as in the case of any structure, the first and most important thing is to ensure the quality and durability of the foundation, lacking which all the efforts put into the walls and roof and decorations, etc., would be of no avail, and so it is in regard to a Jewish marriage which, first of all, must be based on the foundation of the Torah and Mitzvoth, then follows the

Wedding Celebration of Yaakov Mordechai and Chaya Mushka Mitansky

blessing of the joy and rejoicing of the beloved couple for the rest of their life.

In view of the above, it is also clear that there is a standing obligation upon everyone to help a bride and groom to establish such an everlasting edifice, and it would be totally unjustified to think that it is a matter of their own personal life, in which no one has a right to interfere. Surely when one sees someone bent on harming herself or himself, and their children, or about to do something which might lead to self destruction, G-d forbid, one will not consider it "interference" or "encroachment" to try to prevent that person from harming himself. Similarly, when there is an opportunity to help someone with a lasting benefit, surely it is an elementary duty so to do, how much more so where the benefit is a truly everlasting one.

I send you my prayerful wishes to continue your good work in helping young couples to establish truly Jewish homes, homes that are illuminated with the light of the Torah and Mitzvoth, above all with the observance of the laws and regulations of Taharas Hamishpocho. May you do so with deep inspiration and with ever growing Hatzlocho.

With blessing,

Thursday, June 23 2011 - 21 Sivan 5711

THE FOUNDATION OF A HAPPY MARRIAGE - A JEWISH WEDDING

By the Grace of G-d
1st Day Rosh Chodesh Iyar 5714
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Free Translation

Greeting and Blessing:

....In connection with the various rumors that have reached me, and which greatly surprise me, notwithstanding my many preoccupations I am writing the following.

According to my information (which I hope will be subsequently incorrect) your family is against arranging the wedding of your daughter.....to..... In accordance with the requirements of the Shulchan Aruch; that there must be a separation between men and women.

I hereby wish to explain to you the position as I see it:

When one arranges a wedding with a partition according to the stipulation of our Holy Torah, the Din is that we should say (in the Grace after meals) "Shehasimcha Bimono," which means that when mentioning G-d's name we do so in connection with Simcha. This means that we should bring Simcha into the world and especially to the Chosson and Kallah.

Surely it is superfluous to write what has happened in recent years in the world generally and particularly among Jews. If in all ages we had to rely on G-d for a blessing, success and even more for a healthy and happy life, how much more so is it essential in our generation, and the only one who can provide this is the One who is

Master of the whole world - the Holy One Blessed be He.

Since the time when Rabbi... asked my opinion about the Shidduch, and when your question came to me about it, I found it my duty and privilege to point out that when your daughter and the Chosson, Rabbi..... Start their life together, it should be in a manner in which they can expect the maximum blessings from G-d, that they should have a healthy and happy home. As mentioned earlier our Holy Torah confirms that is so in the situation when one can say "Shehasimcha Bimono," and if this is the Din then it is self-understood that no one can alter it. Therefore it surprised me that parents who do everything within their power to ensure that their children should be blessed with good fortune, should be willing to apply energy towards **preventing** there being Simcha at their daughter's wedding, which will result in it being lacking, G-d forbid, to a certain measure in their later life.

One gets married in order to build a "house" for tens of years. Is it right that parents should risk that which affects their daughter for decades in order that the few hours of the duration of the wedding should please those people who are unacquainted with the laws of the Shulchan Aruch; or those who ignore the Shulchan Aruch; or the irresponsible ones who think it worthwhile to risk tens of years for the sake of a momentary, imagined pleasure. How does one have the boldness to take such a responsibility upon himself?

It is not my duty to force people to act in accordance with my opinion; it is not my habit to persuade people in general to conform with my views; and it is not my custom to use harsh words. Therefore, I wish to conclude my letter with talking only about that which is good. When I gave my consent to the Shidduch, I was sure that the parents on their hand would do everything dependent on them that their daughter and future son-in-law would be ensured of goodness and happiness, as much as feasibly possible, for the tens of years that they will be together. It is self-understood that it is of no consequence whether or not her friends will be pleased as long as the Holy Torah is satisfied with the arrangements at the wedding. As mentioned previously, if we truly want the Holy Torah to Pasken that

Thursday, June 23 2011 - 21 Swan 5711

we can say "Shehasimcha Bimono" at the wedding, and thereby be happy thereafter for the rest of life, the Shulchan Aruch says that the wedding should be with a separation.

With blessing,

P.S. I am aware that there have been many weddings, including ones of religious people, unfortunately without partitions. But I also know of the troubles which unfortunately ensued.

The Al-ty should bless you that you should report only good news materially and spiritually.

...I received your note in which you write about your son. If you will let me know your son's full Hebrew name as well as your full Hebrew name, I will remember him in prayer for a speedy recovery.

I trust you will not take the following remarks amiss, but I consider it my duty to mention that very often this kind of disorder in children is due to the fact that the parents have not observed Taharas HaMishpacha at the time of conception. If, G-d forbid, this was the case it is necessary to bear in mind that Teshuva (repentance, return) is effective also retroactively to a considerable extent, so that it is possible to rectify the failure of the past. This means that you and your husband should, from now on, resolve firmly to observe the laws of Taharas HaMishpacha, and should try to impress your friends with the vital importance of observing these laws...

(Letter, 27 Sh'vat 5724)

THE SECRET TO OUR CHILDRENS BLESSINGS

By the Grace of G-d
In the Days of Chanukah, 5721
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

I have received your letter of November 20th. I was pleased to read in it that you are determined to live up to the Jewish way of life, and, when you get married, to set up a truly Jewish home on the foundations of the Torah and Mitzvos. Our Sages have assured us that when a person makes a little effort to sanctify himself, he receives a great deal of assistance from on High to carry out his determination, and in an easier and greater measure than anticipated.

With reference to the question of a Shaytel about which you wrote that you object to it on the grounds that it is old-fashioned, etc., let me say that the true approach to matters of the Torah and Mitzvos is not from the point of view of whether they are considered old-fashioned or new-fashioned. We observe the Torah and Mitzvos because they are directives from the **Creator** of the world and of man. It is self-understood that the Creator knows what is best for man and that He desires that man should be happy and not only in the world to come, but also in this life. This is the reason why the Torah is called Toras Chaim, meaning that it is a guide to the good life on this earth.

Specifically on the question of a Shaytel let me quote here the words of the holy Zohar (Part III, Page 126a) which are quoted in the Mishnah Brura, and I will quote only the positive results mentioned there, omitting the negative aspects following from the non-fulfillment: "Her children will be superior... her husband will be blessed with spiritual and material blessings, with wealth, children

Thursday, June 23 2011 - 21 Swan 5711

and children's children."

Considering the great reward which is promised to the woman and mother who wears a Shaytel, it should surely be worthwhile to do so even if the wearing of a Shaytel would entail serious difficulties and conflicts. How much more so where the objection to it, as you write, is only because it is "old fashioned." This is not a real objection, nor a valid one, and it is rather based on the "opinion" of others. Let me also add that even considering the general attitude towards this and other Mitzvos, there has been a radical change in recent years; one of respect and admiration for people who are consistent and live up to their convictions and ideals, and are not influenced by the mob. There may always be some individual who might make a joke about a person's convictions but where a person is sincerely dedicated to his faith, such a person can only call forth respect and admiration. Furthermore, if you will eventually settle in a Jewish Orthodox neighborhood, you will find that other young women will wish to emulate your good example, and thus you will have the additional Zechus of being instrumental in influencing others in the right way. The reverse is also true, for a Jew must always consider how his or her conduct affects others. This should be an additional consideration why you should overcome your superficial objection to wearing a Shaytel.

It is no less important to bear in mind that marriage is called "An everlasting edifice," meaning that it is an everlasting institution which is of vital importance not only for the husband and wife, but also for future generations. Every parent desires to ensure the happiness of children and will do everything possible to take out the utmost measure of such insurance.

Of course you might point to this one or that one who do not wear a Shaytel. However, it is surely unnecessary to point out that every person may have a particular weakness, and if one is to follow the principle "He is wise who learns from every person," he will be wise to learn from only the person's strong and positive qualities and not from his weak ones.

Wedding Celebration of Yaakov Mordechai and Chaya Mushka Witansky

If you will let me know your Hebrew name and your mother's Hebrew name, also your Chosson's Hebrew name and his mother's Hebrew name, I will remember you in prayer that your marriage should take place in a happy and auspicious hour; and that you both make the necessary resolutions to set up your home on the foundations of the Torah, which is called Toras Chaim, as above, and the Mitzvos whereby Jews live, which is the only way to ensure a true and lasting happiness, materially and spiritually, which for Jews go hand in hand together.

As we are now in the auspicious days of Chanukah, which we celebrate, among other things, by kindling the Chanukah lights in growing numbers, may G-d bless you with a growing measure of light and success along the lines mentioned above.

With blessing,

Education

JEWISH CONTINUITY

By the Grace of G-d
1st day of the Week of Vayero
5730, Brooklyn, N.Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

It is a Jewish custom to relate the events of the week to the weekly portion of the Torah, and thereby to derive true instruction from the Torah of Truth ("Torah" means "Instruction").

This week's Sedra tells us of the birth and upbringing of the first Jewish boy, born of Jewish parents, namely, Yitzchok, the son of Abraham and Sarah, the first ancestor of our Jewish people.

The circumstances surrounding Yitzchok's birth were supernatural and miraculous. His Bris (circumcision) took place when he was eight days old, and his upbringing was fraught with difficulties and trials.

Quite different was the case of Abraham's son Ishmael, whose birth was quite normal, and who was circumcised when he was thirteen years old, i.e. at a mature age.

Yet it was Yitzchok whom G-d chose to be Abraham's true heir, from whom the Jewish people would descend.

Thus, the Torah teaches us that when new generations are to be born who are to ensure the Jewish continuity and future, the approach must not be based on natural considerations and human

Wedding Celebration of Yaakov Mordechai and Chaya Mushka Witansky

calculations. For Jewish existence is not dependent upon natural forces, but upon G-d's direct intervention and providence.

Similarly, the education and upbringing of Jewish children is not to be determined by the same considerations and criteria as in the non-Jewish world. Jewish parents do not wait until the child becomes mature enough to determine his behavior and find his own way to Yiddishkeit. He is given the strongest and fullest possible measure of Jewish training from infancy. Only in this way is it possible to ensure the "everlasting covenant" with G-d, to come through all difficulties and trials with strength, and endowed with G d's blessings materially and spiritually.

Thursday, June 23 2011 - 21 Swan 5711

CHINUCH STARTS FROM THE VERY YOUNG

By the Grace of G-d
Rosh Chodesh Menachem Av
5733. Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. Mordechai Shoel Landow
4340 North Bay Road
Miami Beach, Fla. 33140

Greeting and Blessing:

Our contact has been on matters of a higher level, or, in Chabad language - "inward" matters. To me, as I hope also to you, this means a continuous contact, even during intervals between correspondences, for where there is a meeting of minds and thoughts, the contact transcends time and distance.

This being the case, and since my thoughts are with you, I want to share with you in a matter that has preoccupied my mind in recent weeks, namely, the inadequacy of attention given to the Chinuch of children of pre-Bar (Bas) - Mitzvah age, down to the very little ones. Even in circles where serious attention is given to older boys and girls, there is a prevalent tendency to take the Chinuch of the little ones more lightly.

This attitude is rather surprising, for the Torah has quite strong views on the role of the youngsters. Suffice it to cite the rule laid down by our Sages that as soon as a child begins to speak, his father must begin to teach him Torah, specifically the verse - "The Torah which Moshe commanded us is the heritage of the congregation of Jacob" (Deut. 33:4). At first glance, there is a very long way between a two year old toddler, just beginning to speak, and the Torah which Moshe Rabbeinu received at Sinai when he was 80-odd years old and at the height of his greatness. Yet, this is

Wedding Celebration of Yaakov Mordechai and Chaya Mushka Witansky

precisely what the Rabbis had in mind: to put this toddler in immediate relationship with the Torah which Moshe received at Sinai. So such so, that the Alter Rebbe, founder of Chabad, begins the Laws of Talmud-study in his Shulchan Aruch with this very rule laid down by our Sages.

In view of the above, I have addressed two special messages to pre-Bar (Bas) Mitzvah children, as per enclosed copies, which I trust you will find illuminating.

Needless to say, I am certain that you will not suspect me of an indirect appeal for money. For, as you know, it is our understanding that your priority is specifically bound up with Miami, whence the voice of Torah will hopefully reverberate to the far corners of the earth. What I am after, and I make no secret about it, is the children: - "Give me the persons" - in this case, the children; not to **me**, of course, but to Torah, in accordance with the commandment which Jews recite twice daily: "And you shall teach them (words of Torah) diligently unto your children" - meaning **Talmidim** school children.

With blessing for Hatzlocho in all your activities, both general and personal, aided by Zechus Horabim, and looking forward to hearing good news from you at all times.

DON'T GET SIDE TRACKED WITH THE OUTER LOOKS!

....And speaking of Chinuch and the building in which it is housed, there is a symbolic connection between the essential aspects of both. For, to be sure, the external aspects of a building are important, and due consideration should be given to make the premises comfortable and attractive even at a glance. Yet, it is self-evident, that ultimately the most vital part of the building is its foundation, though people hardly ever speak about it. And, in so far as the foundation is concerned, the essential thing is that it should be made of the most durable material, which has been tested and is known to be resistant to the elements of change and erosion. It is of no concern what a passerby or neighbor might think about its external appearance.

This is especially true of Chinuch:

To be sure, the external aspects of the premises are important and praiseworthy. Indeed, in regard to all Mitzvoth our Sages enunciated the principle of beauty, as witness the commentary on the words of the Torah, "This is my G-d, and I will beautify Him," - "can a man beautify G-d? But I will make myself beautiful to Him through the Mitzvoth.. A beautiful Succah, beautiful Tzitzith, beautiful Tefillin...."

But one must not lose sight of the fact that the most important thing about Chinuch is the quality of the Chinuch itself - to permeate the child with the kind of Torah Chinuch that will be his unshakable foundation upon which to build a truly beautiful edifice of adulthood, family life, and future generation....

With blessing for the utmost Hatzlocho,

Torah & Science

TORAH IS TRUE

I trust you will not take it amiss if I will quote in this connection the words of the wisest of all men, King Solomon, "G-d made man straight, but they sought many accounts." In other words, man often confuses himself with delving, unnecessarily, into inquiries and accounts of things which should be taken for granted and which do not really present any problems. Needless to say, that the more intellectual a person is, the more he is inclined to seek "accounts" and, consequently, the more apt he is to get confused.

This reminds me of the episode which a professor of medicine once told me. On one occasion when he was learning anatomy, and particularly the anatomy of the leg, describing the various muscles, etc., amounting to hundreds, all of which are so perfectly coordinated in the motion of the leg during walking, he became so engrossed in the details (all the more so being a man of great intellect) that momentarily he found his walking difficult and quite complicated as he began to analyze the working of each muscle and joint, etc. The moral is obvious. Now to your question:

I will first briefly state here the logical basis of the Truth that the Torah and Mitzvos have been given to us Jews by Divine Revelation. This is not very difficult to prove, since the proof is the same as all other evidence that we have of historic events in past generations, only much more forcefully and convincingly. By way of illustration: If you are asked, how do you know there existed such a person as Maimonides (whom you mention in your letter) author of *Hayad HaChazaka*, *Sefer HaMitzvos*, etc., you will surely reply that you are certain about his existence from the books he has written, and although Rambam (Maimonides) lived some 800 years ago, his

Thursday, June 23 2011 - 21 Swan 5711

works now in print have been reprinted from earlier editions, and those from earlier ones, still uninterruptedly, going back to the very manuscript which the Rambam wrote in his own hand. This is considered sufficient proof even in the face of discrepancies or contradictions from one book of Rambam to another. Such contradictions do not demolish the above proof, but efforts are made to reconcile them, in the certainty that both have been written by the same author.

The same kind of proof substantiates any kind of historic past, which we ourselves have not witnessed, and all normal people accept them without question, except those who for some reason are interested in falsification.

In many cases the authenticity of an historic event is based on the evidence of a limited group of people. Even where there is room to suspect that the witnesses were perhaps not quite disinterested, if there is nothing to compel us to be suspicious (and especially if we can check the evidence and counter-check it) it is accepted as fact.

Now suppose that 600,000 parents would today say to their children, "This morning you and we were all gathered at a certain place, and we all heard a Heavenly voice proclaim the Decalogue." The children would not accept this for they would say: "If we were there with you, why did we not hear or see anything?" Now, making the single assumption that human reactions have not essentially changed in the course of centuries, I assume that such would have been the reaction also in the previous century, and two centuries ago and so on, until we reach the generation whose parents witnessed the event of the Giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. And let it be emphasized again that during this long chain of tradition, there has been no break, nor has the number of transmitters at any time been reduced to less than many hundreds of thousands, for at no time was there less than one million Jews in the world, Jews from all walks of life, who had no personal axe to grind, etc., yet in each generation of the uninterrupted and unbroken history of our people, this event was accepted as authentic history and the text of the Decalogue remained exactly the same. This is certainly undeniable evidence

Wedding Celebration of Yaakov Mordechai and Chaya Mushka Witansky

according to all the rules of scientific proof accepted today.

The same cannot be said of any other religions in the world, which you mentioned, such as Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. In the case of all these religions, there is a definite break, or the tradition narrows down to a single person such as Buddha, Mohammed, or the founder of Christianity, who transmitted his teachings to a group of 12 Apostles.

(Excerpt of a letter)

Thursday, June 23 2011 - 21 Swan 5711

UNDERSTANDING EARTH'S ORBIT

By the Grace of G-d
23rd of Elul, 5728
Brooklyn, NY

Greeting and Blessing:

I am in receipt of your letter of September 10th, in which you touch upon the question of whether the sun revolves around the earth or vice versa, in view of the fact that you heard from a college student that “the truth is that the earth revolves around the sun.”

It greatly surprises me that, according to your letter, the student declared that science has resolved that the earth revolves around the sun. The surprising thing is that a person making such a declaration would be about one half a century behind the times insofar as the position of modern science is concerned. For it is approximately one hundred years ago, which was accepted by all scientists as the basis for all the branches of science. One of the basic elements of this theory is that when two bodies in space are in motion relative to one another (actually the theory was initiated on the basis of the movements of stars, planets, the earth, etc.), science declares with “absolute certainty” that from the scientific point of view both possibilities are equally valid, namely that the earth revolves around the sun, or the sun revolves around the earth.

An essential point in the above conclusion is that it is not based on a lack of more definitive knowledge, but this is the inevitable conclusion based upon the present position of science, namely that in principle it is impossible that there would ever be scientifically proven which of the two, the sun or the earth, revolves around the other.

Needless to say, any particular scientist, like any individual, is

entitled to his own opinion as to which alternative he prefers, or that he simply is inclined to believe in one rather than in the other. However, this is only an expression of a personal preference which any individual human being is entitled to. But it would not be true to say that science has resolved the question in favor of one school of thought against the other. To be sure, there were scientists who made such declarations over one half century ago, as mentioned above, and this provides at least some explanation why the textbooks in the elementary schools have still retained that outdated position. However, it is surprising that a college student, who has already passed through high school and has entered college, and should therefore have some knowledge of the theory of Relativity, should attribute to science such an unscientific and obsolete statement.

To sum up the above, it is clear that where one says that it is possible to be a scientist and accept the idea that the sun revolves around the earth, and another one says that science rejects this idea (I emphasize the word science, as distinct from scientist, a human being - no more(?) As mentioned above) -- the first one has both his feet firmly on a scientific foundation, modern science, while the second one appears to have remained in the world and time of Copernicus.

I assume from your letter that it is unnecessary to emphasize to you the truth that a Jew's life and his daily conduct must revolve around the Will of the Creator, the Creator of heaven and earth, in a way that it is expressed in action, since, as our Sages said the essential thing is the deed. The present days of Elul are particularly auspicious to advance and to go from strength to strength in this direction, and to do so with joy and gladness of heart.

Hoping to hear good news from you, and wishing you and yours a Kesiv v'Chasimo Tovo, for a truly good and sweet year,

With blessing, M Schneerson

TORAH IS ETERNAL

...To refer to your quotation of the Rabbinic saying, "The Torah spoke the language of man", from which you conclude that each segment of Jewry should be expressed in its own language and terms, and I trust it is unnecessary to emphasize to you that this principle applies only to external aspects, or as the Sages express it, the "language", leaving the content intact. Our Torah is called Torah Emes, because it is eternal and immutable. When the Truth is modified or altered by compromise, whether to the extent of 99% or less, it ceases to be the Truth. And the Truth remains the same for all people, and at all times. If one accepts the eternity of the Torah, and this can be only on the basis of Torah min Hashomayim, then it would be absurd to say that while it is true that Torah was given by G-D, times have changed- as if the Creator and Governor of the Universe could not have foreseen that there would be a 20th century with contain groups of people, such as scientists or "modernists", who would be inclined to accept only a compromised Torah, not the Torah of Truth.

As a matter of fact, and as I have had occasion to emphasize many times before, we live in a more fortunate era in this respect. In the 19th century it was the prevailing view of scientists and modernists that human reason was infallible in "scientific" deductions, and that such sciences as physics, chemistry, mathematics, etc. were absolute truth, that is to say, not merely accepted truths, but absolute. Speaking in Jewish terms, this meant the establishment of a new "idolatry", not of wood and stone, but the worship of the contemporary sciences and philosophies.

In the 20th century, however, and especially in recent decades, the whole complexion of science has changed, as you know. The assumed immutability of the so-called scientific laws and the concept of absolutism in science in general have been abrogated, and the contrary view is now held, known as the "principle of

indeterminism". Nothing is any more certain in science, but only relative or probable, and scientific findings are now presented with considerable reservation, and with limited and temporary validity, any day likely to be replaced by a more advanced theory.

Living as we do in this climate of scientific uncertainty, surely there is no reason to attempt to reconcile the eternal truth of the Torah to the uncertainties of scientific findings, which science itself declares as only "probable". Of course, a scientific or modernist may declare that the Torah too, is only "probable". But I am speaking of persons like yourself, who accept the truth of Torah min Hashomayim, and by definition this means eternal truth; hence it cannot be diluted or compromised.

May G-D grant that both you and your wife will utilize to the full capacities and knowledge which you possess, to disseminate the truth of the Torah, Toras Chayim, and of the Mitzvoth, of which it is said, "and he shall live by them".

With blessing,
Menachem M. Schneerson

Thursday, June 23 2011 - 21 Swan 5711

TORAH VS. SCIENCE

Sholom u'Brocho,

Although I do not know you personally, I am taking the liberty of writing to you, having just received the Av, 5731 (Aug `71) issue of INTERCOM, with your article in it. I find myself in agreement with some points brought out in your article, which encourages me in the hope that as Editor and influential member of your Association you may be able to give new impetus to the Association and its members, and, especially, help clear up once and for all certain misconceptions which -- as it seems to me -- are still troubling some orthodox Jewish scientists.

Specially, I find it incomprehensible and regrettable that some of our orthodox Jewish scientists still evince an apologetic attitude vis-a-vis science and certain scientific theories. This is evident also in some articles in the present INTERCOM and I have seen it also in personal discussions with some genuinely frum scientists.

To put it bluntly, some orthodox scientists seem to be ashamed to declare openly their adherence to such basic tenets of the Torah as, for example, that G-d created Adam and Chava, or the possibility of a miracle (Ness) in the present day and age, as a Ness is defined in Torah, namely, an occurrence in defiance of the (so-called) laws of nature. When I asked them, squarely, how do they reconcile this lack of conviction in basic Torah-matters with what every believing Jew believes and professes, the answer was that they have managed to "departmentalize" their day -- Tefillin and Torah, etc., being one "department", science another.

Needless to say, such an attitude is unthinkable. For, when a Jew declares daily, Hashem hu ho'elokim, ein od Milvado, it is plainly meant that this is for the whole day, not part of the day. Moreover, a scientist with such a split personality is a contradiction also to the

concept of Hashed echod. as the Chazal interpret “echod” -- aleph, ches, dales -- that aleph, i.e. alupho shel olom, rules not only in the seven heavens but also on earth (ches -- “eight”), and in all the four directions (dales) (SeMag, quoted in Beis Yosef, Tur Orach Chaim, par. 61).

As for the matter of miracles, as it affects the daily life, the Torah view is clear: It rules that “one should not rely on a miracle,” but at the same time it requires every Jew to be permeated with complete faith that G-d acts through nature, and also “above” nature. This is also the plain meaning of the posuk: “And G-d, your G-d, will bless you in all that you do.” It is necessary to do (not rely on miracles), yet ultimately the blessing comes from G-d. To think otherwise would also be contradictory to the three daily Tefilos. The blessings of Shemoneh-esrai are clearly based on the conviction that G-d can interfere with nature, e.g. heal the sick and bless the crops, etc., even where the natural factors are unfavorable. Unless one believes in G-d's omnipotence and personal interest in every individual's daily life, there is no sense in praying to Him, and asking Him for His blessings.

Of course, when a Jew finds himself in an environment of non-believers, it is difficult to be different and face possible ridicule. But this too has already been forewarned by Shulchan Aruch. At the beginning of the very first volume, the Shulchan Aruch lays down the basic principle for the fulfillment of all the four volumes: “And let him not be ashamed in the face of men who may scoff at him for his service to G-d.”

What is even more surprising -- and as yet I have not received any answer from those with whom I had occasion to speak on the matter -- is that the said apologetic attitude is completely out of harmony with the view of contemporary science. If a century ago, when scientists still spoke in terms of absolute truths, it was “understandable” why a person who wished to adhere to his faith might have been embarrassed to challenge “scientific” claims, this is no longer the case in our day and age. Contemporary science no longer lays claim to absolutes; the principle of probability now reigns supreme, even in practical science as applied in common daily experiences. Certainly in such realms as the origin of the universe,

Thursday, June 23 2011 - 21 Swan 5711

the origin of life on earth, and the origin of the species, where theories are based on speculative extrapolation, and even more so in the realm of pure science, where everything is based on assumed promises (IF we assume that, etc., then it follows, etc.) -- scientists do not deal with certainties.

Need one remind our orthodox Jewish scientist, who still feels embarrassed about some “old fashioned” Torah truths, in the face of scientific hypotheses, that Heisenberg's “principle of indeterminacy” has finally done away with the traditional scientific notion that cause and effect are mechanically linked, so that it is now quite unscientific to hold that one event is inevitably a consequence of another, but only most probable? Most scientists have accepted this principle of uncertainty (enunciated by Werner Heisenberg in 1927) as being intrinsic to the whole universe. The 19th century dogmatic, mechanistic, and deterministic attitude of science is gone. The modern scientist no longer expects to find Truth in science. The current and universally accepted view of science itself is that science must reconcile itself to the idea that whatever progress it makes, it will always deal with probabilities; not with certainties or absolutes.

Needless to say, it is not my intention to belittle science, applied or speculative, and especially for quite another reason. For, as a matter of fact, the Torah bestows upon science -- in certain areas at least -- a validity much greater than contemporary science itself claims. The Halacha accepts scientific findings, in many instances, not as possible or probable, but certain and true. There is surely no need to elaborate to you on this.

In the light of what has been said above, there is no basis whatsoever for any religious Jewish scientist to be embarrassed, since modern science cannot legitimately (and I mean “legitimately” even from the viewpoint of science itself) challenge Torah from Sinai.

It follows that there is no need whatever -- however well intentioned, to attempt to reinterpret passages in the Torah in order to reconcile them with scientific theory, not to mention

“reinterpretations” which do violence to the letter and meaning of the Torah. Thus, for example, the attempt to “reinterpret” the text of the first section of Breishis to the effect that it speaks of periods or cons, rather than ordinary days, or to apply indiscriminately the dictum that “the Torah speaks in the language of man,” etc., is not only uncalled for, but it means tampering with the Mitzvah of Shabbos itself, which “balances” all the Torah. For, if one takes the words “one day” out of their context and plain meaning, one ipso facto abrogates the whole idea of Shabbos as the “seventh day” stated in the same context. The whole idea of Shabbos observance is based on the clear and unequivocal statement in the Torah: “For in six days G-d made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He ceased from work and rested” -- days, not periods.

Such attempts at reinterpreting the Torah are, of course, the outmoded legacy of the 19th century and before, when in the face of dogmatic and deterministic view of science prevailing at that time, a whole apologetic literature was created by well-meaning religious advocates and certain Rabbis, who saw no other way of preserving the Torah heritage in their “enlightened” communities except through tenuous and spurious reinterpretations of certain passages of the Torah in order to accommodate them to the prevailing world outlook. No doubt they knew inwardly that they were suggesting interpretations in Torah which were at variance with Toras Emes. But, at least, they “felt” they had no alternative. But surely there is no longer any justification whatever to perpetuate this “inferiority complex” Certainly there is no basis for holding on to views which have come down in outdated elementary and high-school textbooks on science.

It is very saddening to think that those who should be the champions of the Torah-hashkofo and its advocates, especially among Jewish youth in general and academic youth in particular, are timid, or even ashamed to expostulate it. This is all the more regrettable precisely in this day and age, after science had finally come out of its Medieval wrappings, and accepted the Heischberg principle of uncertainty, etc., etc., which makes it so “easy” for an orthodox Jewish scientist to espouse the Torah-hashkofo boldly and

Thursday, June 23 2011 - 21 Swan 5711

forcefully, without fear of contradiction. Yet some Jewish scientists apparently have not yet managed to free themselves from the fetters of the 19th century approach and inferiority complex. Surely the time is ripe for a reassessment as to where they stand.

I trust that you will use your good influence to the end that the articles appearing in the future issues of Intercom be permeated with the Torah-hashkofa, and that the same approach should be reflected in all public lectures and private discussions. By closely adhering to the Torah, Toras Emes, one can rest assured of walking the path of truth, and truth does not admit compromise. I sincerely hope that you will take up this matter with your colleagues, and “words coming from the heart, enter the heart,” especially a Jewish heart, and find a ready response in terms of action, for the essential thing is the deed.

May I conclude on a note, which is of course in no way meant as a disparagement, that every Jew engaged in any scientific field will be characterized as a “truly believing Jew and also a scientist,” rather than as a “scientist and also a believing Jew.”

With blessing,
(signed) M. Schneerson

MEDICINES MENTIONED IN THE TALMUD DO WORK

With regard to your question concerning the role of Aggadah in the Talmud, particularly those of dealing with medicine, and want to point out that you are touching upon two distinct questions Aggadah in Talmud, and Medicine in the Talmud. As to the question of Medicine in the Talmud, they are not at all as fantastic as they may appear. As a matter of fact, many medical suggestions in the Talmud have been confirmed in recent years as to their therapeutic value, although medical science had long decided them.

Generally speaking, however, inasmuch as the nature of the human organism has undergone many changes since those days, the medical advice contained in the Talmud cannot be applied nowadays. But it is quite certain that in their days the remedies were quite effective. For references consult: Tosafoth Moed-Koton Ila () Kesef Mishneh, Ch. 4 of Hilechoth Deoth, Ch. 18, and sources mentioned in Sdei-Chemed, vol. of Kelolim, under "R" Klal 54, where it is mentioned stated that due to physical and Climatic changes, medical treatment and remedies of old no longer good generally. In the history of Medical Science many illustrations are cited as to changes in both in man's susceptibility to disease and treatment, the development of virus attack, new diseases, etc. There is quite a literature on the subject, and there is no need for me to enlarge upon this subject. I am surprised that you do not mention in your letter anything about your activities in influencing others to bring them nearer to Torah and Yiddishkeit, which serves also to strengthen one's own convictions.

With Blessings,

(excerpt of a letter dated 11 Tishrei, 5712)

Thursday, June 23 2011 - 21 Swan 5711

HOW OLD IS THE WORLD?

By the Grace of G-d
18th of Teveth, 5722
Brooklyn, NY

Greeting and Blessing:

After not having heard from you for a long time, I was pleased to receive regards from you through the young men of Chabad who visited your community recently in connection with the public lecture. I was gratified to hear that you participated in the discussion, but it was quite a surprise to me to learn that you are still troubled by the problem of the age of the world as suggested by various scientific theories which cannot be reconciled with the Torah view that the world is 5722 years old. I underlined the word theories, for it is necessary to bear in mind, first of all, that science formulates and deals with theories and hypotheses while the Torah deals with absolute truths. These are two different disciplines, where "reconciliation" is entirely out of place.

It was especially surprising to me that, according to the report, the said "problem" is bothering you to the extent that it has trespassed upon your daily life as a Jew, interfering with the actual fulfillment of the daily Mitzvoth. I sincerely hope that the impression conveyed to me is an erroneous one. For, as you know, the basic Jewish principle of na'aseh (first and v'nishma (afterwards) makes it mandatory upon the Jew to fulfill G-d's commandments regardless of the degree of understanding, and obedience to the Divine Law can never be conditioned upon human approval. In other words, lack of understanding, and even the existence of "legitimate" doubts, can never justify disobedience to the Divine Commandments; how much less, when the doubts are "illegitimate," in the sense that they have no real or logical basis, such as the "problem" in question.

Apparently, our discussion which took place a long time ago, and which, as I was pleased to learn, has not been forgotten by you, has nevertheless not cleared up this matter in your mind. I will attempt to do so now, in writing, which imposes both brevity and other limitations. I trust, however, that the following remarks will serve our purpose.

Basically the “problem” has its roots in a misconception of the scientific method or, simply, of what science is. We must distinguish between empirical or experimental science dealing with, and confined to, describing and classifying observable phenomena, and speculative “science,” dealing with unknown phenomena, sometimes phenomena that cannot be duplicated in the laboratory. “Scientific speculation” is actually a terminological incongruity; for “science,” strictly speaking, means “knowledge,” while no speculation can be called knowledge in the strict sense of the word. At best, science can only speak in terms of theories inferred from certain known facts and applied in the realm of the unknown. Here science has two general methods of inference;

(a) The method of interpolation (as distinguished from extrapolation), whereby, knowing the reaction under two extremes, we attempt to infer what the reaction might be at any point between the two.

(b) The method of extrapolation, whereby inferences are made beyond a known range, on the basis of certain variables within the known range. For example, suppose we know the variables of a certain element within a temperature range of 0 to 100, and on the basis of this we estimate what the reaction might be at 101, 200, or 2000.

Of the two methods, the second (extrapolation) is clearly the more uncertain. Moreover, the uncertainty increases with the distance away from the known range and with the decrease of this range. Thus, if the known range is between 0 and 100, our inference at 101 has a greater probability than at 1001.

Thursday, June 23 2011 - 21 Swan 5711

Let us note at once, that all speculation regarding the origin and age of the world comes within the second and weaker method, that of extrapolation. The weakness becomes more apparent if we bear in mind that a generalization inferred from a known consequent to an unknown antecedent is more speculative than an inference from an antecedent to consequent.

That an inference from consequent to antecedent is more speculative than an inference from antecedent to consequent can be demonstrated very simply:

Four divided by two equals two. Here the antecedent is represented by the divided and divisor, and the consequent -- by the quotient. Knowing the antecedent in this case, gives us one possible result - the quotient (the number 2).

However, if we know only the end result, namely, the number 2, and we ask ourselves, how can we arrive at the number 2, The answer permits several possibilities, arrived at by means of different methods: (a) 1 plus 1 equals 2; (b) 4-2 equals 2; (c) 1 x 2 equals 2; (d) 4/2 equals 2. Note that if other numbers are to come into play, the number of possibilities giving us the same result is infinite (since 5 - 3 also equals 2; 6/3 equals 2 etc. ad infinitum).

Add to this another difficulty, which is prevalent in all methods of induction. Conclusions based on certain known data, when they are ampliative in nature, i.e. when they are extended to unknown areas, can have any validity at all on the assumption of "everything else being equal," that is to say on an identity of prevailing conditions, and their action and counter-action upon each other. If we cannot be sure that the variations or changes would bear at least a close relationship to the existing variables in degree; if we cannot be sure that the changes would bear any resemblance in kind; if, furthermore, we cannot be sure that there were no other factors involved -- such conclusions of inferences are absolutely valueless!

For further illustration, I will refer to one of the points which I believe I mentioned during our conversation. In a chemical reaction,

whether fissional or fusional, the introduction of a new catalyzer into the process, however minute the quantity of this new catalyzer may be, may change the whole tempo and form of the chemical process, or start an entirely new process.

We are not yet through with the difficulties inherent in all so-called "scientific" theories concerning the origin of the world. Let us remember that the whole structure of science is based on observances of reactions and processes in the behavior of atoms in their present state, as they now exist in nature. Scientists deal with conglomerations of billions of atoms as these are already bound together, and as these relate to other existing conglomerations of atoms. Scientists know very little of the atoms in their pristine state; of how one single atom may react on another single atom in a state of separateness; much less of how parts of a single atom may react on other parts of the same or other atoms. One thing science considers certain -- to the extent that any science can be certain, namely that the reactions of single atoms upon each other is totally different from the reactions of one conglomeration of atoms to another.

We may now summarize the weaknesses, nay, hopelessness, of all so-called scientific theories regarding the origin and age of our universe:

(a) These theories have been advanced on the basis of observable data during a relatively short period of time, of only a number of decades, and at any rate not more than a couple of centuries.

(b) On the basis of such a relatively small range of known (though by no means perfectly) data, scientists venture to build theories by the weak method of extrapolation, and from the consequent to the antecedent, extending to many thousands (according to them, to millions and billions) of years!

(c) In advancing such theories, they blithely disregard factors universally admitted by all scientists, namely, that in the initial

period of the "birth" of the universe, conditions of temperature, atmospheric pressure, radioactivity, and a host of other cataclystic factors, were totally different from those existing in the present state of the universe.

(d) The consensus of scientific opinion is that there must have been many radioactive elements in the initial stage which now no longer exist, or exist only in minimal quantities; some of them -- elements that cataclystic potency of which is known even in minimal doses.

(e) The formation of the world, if we are to accept these theories, began with a process of colligation (of binding together) of single atoms or the components of the atom and their conglomeration and consolidation, involving totally unknown processes and variables.

In short, of all the weak "scientific" theories, those which deal with the origin of the cosmos and with its dating are (admittedly by the scientists themselves) the weakest of the weak.

It is small wonder (and this, incidentally, is one of the obvious refutations of these theories) that the various "scientific" theories concerning the age of the universe not only contradict each other, but some of them are quite incompatible and mutually exclusive, since the maximum date of one theory is less than the minimum date of another.

If anyone accepts such a theory uncritically, it can only lead him into fallacious and inconsequential reasoning. Consider, for example, the so-called evolutionary theory of the origin of the world, which is based on the assumption that the universe evolved out of existing atomic and subatomic particles which, by an evolutionary process, combined to form the physical universe and our planet, on which organic life somehow developed also by an evolutionary process, until "homo-sapiens" emerged. It is hard to understand why one should readily accept the creation of atomic and subatomic particles in a state which is admittedly unknowable and inconceivable, yet

should be reluctant to accept the creation of planets, or organisms, or a human being, as we know these to exist.

The argument from the discovery of the fossils is by no means conclusive evidence of the great antiquity of the earth, for the following reasons:

(a) In view of the unknown conditions which existed in "prehistoric" times, conditions of atmospheric pressures, temperatures, radioactivity, unknown catalyzers, etc., etc. as already mentioned, conditions that is, which could have caused reactions and changes of an entirely different nature and tempo from those known under the present-day orderly processes of nature, one cannot exclude the possibility that dinosaurs existed 5722 years ago, and became fossilized under terrific natural cataclysms in the course of a few years rather than in millions of years; since we have no conceivable measurements or criteria of calculations under those unknown conditions.

(b) Even assuming that the period of time which the Torah allows for the age of the world is definitely too short for fossilization (although I do not see how one can be so categorical), we can still readily accept the possibility that G-d created ready fossils, bones or skeletons (for reasons best known to him), just as he could create ready living organisms, a complete man, and such ready products as oil, coal or diamonds, without any evolutionary process.

As for the question, if it be true as above (b), why did G-d have to create fossils in the first place? The answer is simple: We cannot know the reason why G-d chose this manner of creation in preference to another, and whatever theory of creation is accepted, the question will remain unanswered. The question, Why create a fossil? is no more valid than the question, Why create an atom? Certainly, such a question cannot serve as a sound argument, much less as a logical basis, for the evolutionary theory.

What scientific basis is there for limiting the creative process to an evolutionary process only, starting with atomic and subatomic

Thursday, June 23 2011 - 21 Swan 5711

particles -- a theory full of unexplained gaps and complications, while excluding the possibility of creation as given by the Biblical account? For, if the latter possibility be admitted, everything falls neatly into pattern, and all speculation regarding the origin and age of the world becomes unnecessary and irrelevant.

It is surely no argument to question this possibility by saying, Why should the Creator create a finished universe, when it would have been sufficient for Him to create an adequate number of atoms or subatomic particles with the power of colligation and evolution to develop into the present cosmic order? The absurdity of this argument becomes even more obvious when it is made the basis of a flimsy theory, as if it were based on solid and irrefutable arguments overriding all other possibilities.

The question may be asked, if the theories attempting to explain the origin and age of the world are so weak, how could they have been advanced in the first place? The answer is simple. It is a matter of human nature to seek an explanation for everything in the environment, and any theory, however far-fetched, is better than none, at least until a more feasible explanation can be devised.

You may now ask, In the absence of a sounder theory, why then isn't the Biblical account of creation accepted by these scientists? The answer, again, is to be found in human nature. It is a natural human ambition to be inventive and original. To accept the Biblical account deprives one of the opportunity to show one's analytic and inductive ingenuity. Hence, disregarding the Biblical account, the scientist must devise reasons to "justify" his doing so, and he takes refuge in classifying it with ancient and primitive "mythology" and the like, since he cannot really argue against it on scientific grounds.

If you are still troubled by the theory of evolution, I can tell you without fear of contradiction that it has not a shred of evidence to support it. On the contrary, during the years of research and investigation since the theory was first advanced, it has been possible to observe certain species of animal and plant life of a short life-span over thousands of generations, yet it has never been

possible to establish a transmutation from one species into another, much less to turn a plant into an animal. Hence such a theory can have no place in the arsenal of empirical science.

The theory of evolution, to which reference has been made, actually has no bearing on the Torah account of Creation. For even if the theory of evolution were substantiated today, and the mutation of species were proven in laboratory tests, this would still not contradict the possibility of the world having been created as stated in the Torah, rather than through the evolutionary process. The main purpose of citing the evolutionary theory was to illustrate how a highly speculative and scientifically unsound theory can capture the imagination of the uncritical, so much so that it is even offered as a "scientific" explanation of the mystery of Creation, despite the fact that the theory of evolution itself has not been substantiated scientifically and is devoid of any real scientific basis.

Needless to say, it is not my intent to cast aspersions on science or to discredit the scientific method. Science cannot operate except by accepting certain working theories or hypotheses, even if they cannot be verified, though some theories die hard even when they are scientifically refuted or discredited (the evolutionary theory is a case in point). No technical progress would be possible unless certain physical "laws" are accepted, even though there is no guaranty that the "law" will repeat itself. However, I do wish to emphasize, as already mentioned, that science has to do only with theories but not with certainties. All scientific conclusions, or generalizations, can only be probable in a greater or lesser degree according to the precautions taken in the use of the available evidence, and the degree of probability necessarily decreases with the distance from the empirical facts, or with the increase of the unknown variables, etc., as already indicated. If you will bear this in mind, you will readily realize that there can be no real conflict between any scientific theory and the Torah.

My above remarks have turned out somewhat lengthier than intended, but they are still all too brief in relation to the misconception and confusion prevailing in many minds. Moreover,

Thursday, June 23 2011 - 21 Swan 5711

my remarks had to be confined to general observations, as this is hardly the medium to go into greater detail. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to write to me.

To conclude on a note touched upon in our conversation:

The Mitzvah of putting on Tefillin every week-day, on the hand facing the heart, and on the head -- the seat of the intellect, indicates, among other things, the true Jewish approach: performance first (hand), with sincerity and wholeheartedness, followed by intellectual comprehension (head); i.e. na'aseh first, then v'nishma. May this spirit permeate your intellect and arouse your emotive powers and find expression in every aspect of the daily life, for "the essential thing is the deed."

With blessing
signature

Free Choice

THE PARADOX OF CHOICE

By the Grace of G-d
25th of Adar, 5721
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

I received your letter, which is an acknowledgement of my letter. I was pleased to read in it about your Shiurim, and I hope that you make additional efforts from time to time in accordance with the precept of our Sages that all things of holiness should be on the upgrade.

With regard to the discussions and debates and questions about which you write, it is not the right way to engage in this kind of futile discussion which are endless and useless. There is only room for discussion among people who are studying together and a question comes up now and again, and even then they should be of a minor consideration.

Generally speaking, all the questions which mentioned have already been answered in our sacred books, and those who continue to argue about them do so mostly either because of ignorance or mischief. Some people simply fear that if they accepted the Torah and Mitzvoth fully, they would be obliged to commit themselves in their daily life and conduct, and give up certain pleasures, and the like. Therefore, they try to justify their misguided views by futile arguments.

By way of example, I will take one question which you mention in your letter, and which apparently was impressed upon you as something complicated, but in reality the matter was discussed and

Thursday, June 23 2011 - 21 Swan 5711

solved very simply in our sacred literature. I refer to the question of how can man have free choice of action if G-d already knows beforehand what he is going to do? The answer is simple enough, as can be seen on the basis of two illustrations:

1. Suppose there is a human being who can foretell the future of what is going to happen to a person. This does not mean that knowledge deprives that person from acting freely as before. It only means that the knowledge of the forecaster is such that it is the knowledge of how the person will choose freely and of his own volition. Similarly, G-d's knowledge of human action, is such that does not deprive humans from their free choice of action, but it only means that G-d knows how the person will choose to act in a certain situation. To formulate this in scientific terms, we can say that the opposite to free choice is not preknowledge but compulsion, for there is such knowledge which does not entail compulsion (as for example knowledge of the past).

2. Every believer in G-d, and not Jews only, believe that with G-d the past, present and future are all the same, since He is above time and space. Just as in the case of human affairs, this fact that Mr. X knows all that happened to Mr. Y. in the past, this knowledge did not affect Mr. Y.'s in the past, so G-d's knowledge of the future, which is the same as His knowledge of the past, does not affect the free choice of human action.

From the simple solution to the above question, you can draw an analogy in regard to all similar questions and be sure that there is an answer to them, and very often a simple one. But the proper Jewish way is to fulfill the Torah and Mitzvoth without question, and then try to find out anything that one wishes to find out about the Torah and Mitzvoth, but not G-d forbid, make human understanding a condition of performance of G-d's commandments.

I trust that you participated in a Purim Farbrengen, and I hope that the inspiration and Joy will be lasting throughout the year.

Hoping to hear news from you.

With blessing,

INTERMARRIAGE – DOOMED FROM THE START

B.H. Erev Succos, 5727
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

I am in receipt of your Express letter, and although it is Erev Yom Tov and not very convenient for correspondence, I will reply as briefly as possible in view of the importance of the matter and your understandable anxiety. I leave it to your discretion whether to show this letter to your sister, or convey to her its contents.

For a Jewish person to marry a non-Jew is one of the greatest calamities, and not only from the religious viewpoint. Nor is it entirely a personal matter affecting the person involved, for it concerns the whole Jewish people, and there are few transgressions which affect the whole Jewish people as an intermarriage, G-d forbid. It is a transgression also against one's elementary honesty, for it is exceedingly unfair to the other party, from the viewpoint of each, and it is also unfair to the respective good friends, who wish to see their near and dear one lastingly happy, and not otherwise.

It has often been pointed out that marriage in general, even between two persons of similar background, entails a certain risk as to eventual adjustment and compatibility. Even if the two had been acquainted for some time, it is no sure criterion as to what the relationship will be when the acquaintance is turned into a marriage, where the two will be thrown together under one roof for 24 hours in the day, day after day, and week after week, etc. But when the background is entirely different, and where this difference dates back for scores of generations and consequently of a deep and lasting quality - the chances of adjustment and compatibility are negligible as to be non-existent. Especially, where the difference is of a definitely antagonistic and hostile nature, as has been evidenced by

Thursday, June 23 2011 - 21 Swan 5711

the pogroms and persecutions of Jews in every land where Jews sojourned in the past 2000 years. Moreover, modern science recognizes the hereditary nature of character traits, particularly deep-rooted ones over generations.

Thus, if one is honest - in the plain sense of the word - one would not wish to drag another party into an alliance which is doomed from the start. And if one truly loves the other, and not in a selfish way, one would certainly not wish to involve the other into such a misfortune, and would readily forgo the prospect of immediate and short-lived pleasure in order to spare the other the inevitable result. Otherwise, the professed love is nothing but selfish and egotistic.

Should there be children from such a union, there is the added consideration of the tragedy of the children having to witness constant friction, and worse, between their parents, which are bound to follow in the natural course.

There is no need to elaborate on this very painful subject.

Needless to say, I am aware of the "argument" that the percentage of intermarriage is a considerable one and many of them seem to last. But it is surely unnecessary to point out that married people try to put on the appearance of a "happy" marriage, being ashamed to confess failure, and to reveal the frictions and indignities, etc., suffered at home. In an intermarriage the sense of shame is even greater, knowing that many friends had warned them against it, and they had maintained that their marriage would be different. But as a matter of fact and statistics, the percentage of separations and divorces are incomparably greater than in non-intermarriages.

And another point. In the vast majority of cases, those that enter into an intermarriage are very emotionally involved. Were they themselves to be asked about others contemplating such a step, they would counsel against taking a step which would commit each other to possible lifelong misery. Indeed, they would consider it irresponsible to take such a step in **an emotional state of mind.**

Wedding Celebration of Yaakov Mordechai and Chaya Mushka Witansky

As a postscriptum I wish to add, that according to Jewish Law the child goes after the mother. Therefore where the mother is Jewish, even if the father is not, the child is Jewish and duty-bound to fulfill all the Mitzvoth, etc. Further details may be obtained from any Rov.

Wishing you and yours a happy Yom Tov,

With blessing,

Thursday, June 23 2011 - 21 Swan 5711

THE INFLUENCE OF THE GENTILES

With reference to your cousin about whom you write in your letter, it is clear that her being in a place where there are few Jews, while on the other hand there are gentiles who are busy exercising their influence, to gain converts, is a most undesirable situation. For, every one of us, and even Tzaddikim, says every morning in prayer, "Bring us not to temptation."

As for her request for literature, you should send her everything that our office in Paris has published in the French language. (The address: Rabbi B. Gorodetzky, 80 rum St. Antoine, Paris). If she also understands English, you ought to send her also some English publications which you can select from our catalogue, which you think may be of interest to her, since you know her personally.

I must say that I was greatly surprised that she writes to you about the benevolence of the gentiles in her environment. Does she not know of the terrible tragedy of the millions of Jews who were savagely put to death by the Germans and their cohorts, while the rest of the world the gentiles looked on with complete indifference? Even the last Pope who could have saved many Jews by mere oral intervention, refused to do so. It is a well-known fact that when the Germans occupied Rome, and the Jews were interned in concentration camps, the German commander hesitated to harm them, having been told that it would arouse the displeasure of the Vatican. However, checking personally with the Vatican whether this was so, the Pope refused to confirm it, knowing full well what the denial would mean for those thousands of unfortunate Jews, and although he had been pleaded with to say just one good word in their behalf. As a **direct** result, thousands of Italian Jews were deported to the extermination camps. This is all the more noteworthy since the Pope know well that his attitude would not remain a secret, and yet he could not find it in his heart to say a good word about the Jews. Despite efforts to misrepresent the facts, the evidence is

irrefutable, as it was given by the very persons who attempted to obtain the Pope's intervention in behalf of the Jews.

That a Jewish girl should be oblivious of this and fall under the influence of her gentile environment, is beyond comprehension.

Incidentally, it is well-known that Paul completely misrepresented the preachings of Jesus and other Apostles, as is clear from the contradiction among the Apostles themselves. Be it as it may, it is enough to remember the attitude of the Christian world to the Jews in those crucial times, to form an opinion of what Christianity represents in fact.

(Excerpt of a letter dated 13 Nissan, 5720)

RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

By the Grace of G-d

... In reply to your question as to what should be the Jewish attitude towards the matter of "religious dialogue" which has been advocated in certain Jewish and non-Jewish circles.

It surprises me that you should have any doubt in this matter. For, anyone with some knowledge of Jewish history knows with what reluctance Jews viewed religious debates with non-Jews. There were many good reasons for this attitude, in addition to the basic reason that Jews do not consider it their mission to convert gentiles to their faith, nor do they wish to expose themselves to the missionary zeal of other faiths.

Each and every generation has its own characteristics which have a bearing on contemporary problems. One of the peculiarities of our own day and age - a circumstance which makes such "dialogue" even more reprehensible - is the confusion and perplexity which are so widespread now, especially among the younger generation. Symptomatic of this confusion is the lowering, or even toppling, of the once well-defined boundaries in various areas of the daily life. This process, which began with the lowering, or abolishing altogether, of the **Mechitzah** in the synagogue, has extended itself also to the abolishing of boundaries in the areas of ethics, morality, and even common decency. In some quarters it has even led to a perversion of values, reminiscent of the lament of the prophet: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20).

One can hardly blame the young generation for their confusion and perplexity, considering the upheavals, revolutions and wars which have plagued our times, and the bankruptcies of the various

systems and ideologies to which the young generation has pinned its hopes for a better world. Moreover, many of those who should have been the teachers and guides of the younger generation, have compounded the confusion and misdirection, for various reasons which need not be elaborated here.

One of the consequences of the said state of affairs is also the misconception prevailing in some quarters regarding the so-called "interfaith" movement. The "brotherhood of mankind" is a positive concept only so long as it is confined to such areas as commerce, philanthropy, and various civil and economic aspects of the society, wherein peoples of various faiths and minority groups must live together in harmony, mutual respect and dignity. Unfortunately, the concept of "brotherhood" has been misconstrued to require members of one faith to explain their religious beliefs and practices to members of another faith, and in return to receive instruction in the religion of others. Far from clarifying matters, these inter-faith activities have, at best, added to the confusion, and, at worst, have been used with missionary zeal by those religions which are committed to proselytizing members of other faiths.

The alarmingly growing rate of intermarriage has a variety of underlying causes. But there can be no doubt that one of the factors is the interfaith movement, or "dialogue" (which is a euphemism for the same), wherein clergymen of one faith are invited to preach from the pulpit of another. It is easy to see what effect this has on the minds of the young, as well as of their parents, whose commitments to their own faith are in any case near the vanishing point.

This in itself offers a complete justification for the prohibition which the Torah imposes upon the study of other faiths - if, indeed, external justification were necessary. Only in exceptional cases does the Torah permit the study of other religions, and that also only to specially qualified persons. Bitter experience has made it abundantly clear how harmful any such interfaith or dialogue is. Thus, even those Jews to whom the Torah is not yet, unfortunately, their Pillar of Light to illuminate their life, but who still wish to preserve their Jewish identity and, especially, the Jewish identity of

Thursday, June 23 2011 - 21 Swan 5711

their children - even they should clearly see the dangers of intermarriage and complete assimilation, G-d forbid, lurking behind these so-called "dialogues," and should reject them in no uncertain terms.

While we must not give up a single Jewish soul which happens to be in danger of straying from the path of Torah and Mitzvoth, and certainly in danger of intermarriage, or assimilation, G-d forbid, and we must spare no effort in trying to save that Jew or Jewess, even if it involves a lengthy "dialogue" with him or her, we must just as resolutely reject any such dialogue with a non-Jew, for the reasons mentioned, and also because we have no interest in his conversion to our faith.

To be sure, we have obligations to our society at large. We must contribute our share to the common wealth, help to maintain and raise the standards of morality and ethics, and to encourage the non-Jew to observe the "Seven Precepts of the Children of Noah" in all their ramifications. But to accomplish these objectives, there is no need for us whatever to have any religious dialogues with non-Jews, nor any interfaith activities in the form of religious discussions, interchange of pulpits, and the like.

Finally, I wish to stress the following points: -

(1) In most polemics, debates, dialogues and the like, the usual outcome is not a reapproachment of minds and hearts; rather do they evoke an impulse of rivalry and the desire to score a point, or gain a victory over the opponent by any means. This is usually the case even in non-religious polemics, and certainly very much so in religious debates, inasmuch as the subject matter touches one's inner soul; and even more so where religious zealots are concerned.

Hence, if the purpose of the "dialogue" is reapproachment, it is doomed from the start, and often even brings the opposite results.

(2) Where one party to the dialogue is committed to proselytizing, and the other is not, it is clear that the dialogue will be

used by the first to accomplish its purpose, and the "dialogue" will in effect become a "monologue."

(3) Looking at the question from a practical standpoint, perhaps the most important point is that the effort expended on such "dialogues" is, to say the least, a waste we can ill afford. For, every individual has only limited resources of time, energy, and influence, while every right-thinking person must feel a sense of responsibility to accomplish something in behalf of the community in which he lives. Experience has shown that the benefits, if any, from all such "dialogues" in terms of a better understanding among men of different faiths and races, have been hardly discernable. But certain it is that the energies thus expended have been at the expense of vital areas of Yiddishkeit, where there is a crying need for strengthening the Jewish faith and practices within our own ranks, especially among the younger generation.

There are, of course, some well-meaning, but misguided individuals, who see in interfaith and dialogue an avenue of lofty goals and ideals deserving of their utmost efforts. But there are also those who encourage them in their misconceptions, thus abetting the misdirection and misplacement of energies and resources, sorely needed elsewhere, namely, and to repeat, in the spreading among our youths a deeper knowledge of the Torah, **Torath Chayim**, which, as the name indicates, is the true guide in the daily life of the Jew, at all times, and in all places. For the Torah's truths are eternal, having been given by the Eternal, the Creator of man, and the Master and Ruler of the World, at all times and all places. It is a tragic irony, that precisely in this day and age, and in this country, where we have been blessed with freedom of worship, and do not face persecution and constant peril for every observance as in certain less fortunate countries, yet so many of our younger generation are lost to us daily by the default, negligence and misdirection of the leaders who should know better.

It is high time to replace interfaith with inner-faith, and concentrate on dialogue with our own misguided youth, as well as - to our shame - with the adults, so as to fan their slumbering embers

Thursday, June 23 2011 - 21 Swan 5711

of faith and to illuminate their lives with the Pillar of Light and the Pillar of Fire of the Torah.

With blessing,

P.S. In order to bring my reply in fuller accord with the details of your question, the above has been couched in terms that would be fitting for a person who is not committed to the Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish Law). However, from the viewpoint of the Jew to whom the Torah is indeed "a lamp unto his feet," the true guide and illumination in his daily life, the decisive reason for the outright rejection of religious dialogue is the prohibition imposed by the Torah against the study of other religions, except in very specific cases and by specially qualified individuals, as already mentioned.

In this connection I wish to clarify one more point. It is sometimes argued that the rejection of religious dialogue, or the prohibition of the study of other religions, indicates an acknowledgement of weakness, G-d forbid, on the part of the Torah vis-a-vis other religions. There is no need to refute this fallacious argument. However, if a weakness is involved, it is that of human nature. In the face of a promise of an easier way of life, free from the restrictions of 248 positive and 365 negative precepts, and more freedom to gratify one's lower instincts, many an individual may succumb to the temptation. Moreover, the human mind is often so inconstant that one may readily overlook the most glaring and evident truths that bar the way to the gratification of one's lusts.

Besides, in any dialogue or debate, the victory often goes not to the proponent of the truth, but to the one who is more skilled in dialectic and oratory. By sheer rhetoric, by the gift of eloquence, one may even succeed in calling "evil good and darkness light" to which reference has been made in the beginning of this letter.

Thus, from whatever viewpoint you consider the matter, religious dialogue with non-Jews has no place in Jewish life, least of all here and now.

DEATH AND MOURNING

Greeting and Blessing!

I was deeply distressed to hear of your great loss - the tragic death of your young son, may he rest in peace.

It is not given to us to know the ways of the Creator. During the war, during the time of danger, it was His will that all be saved. Indeed you, sir, were one of those who achieved victory for our people of Israel against our enemies, when the many were delivered into the hands of the few. Yet, at home, and during a time of peace, this terrible tragedy happened! But how can a mortal understand the ways of the creator? There is no comparing our minds and His. We do not wonder that a small child does not understand the ways and conduct of an old and wise man, though the difference between them is only relative.

This is no attempt to minimize the extent of your pain and grief, and I, too, share in your sorrow, though I am so far from you.

Even in such a great tragedy as this, solace can be found in the words of our traditional expression of consolation to mourners - an expression which has become hallowed by the law and tradition of many generations of our people. "May the Almighty comfort you among the other mourners of Zion and Jerusalem." We may ask, why mention those who mourn for "Zion and Jerusalem" when comforting an individual on his personal loss? A deeper analysis will, however, reveal that the mourner will find comfort precisely in this comparison of his loss with the Destruction and exile of Zion, for several reasons.

First, the mourning over the Destruction of Zion and Jerusalem is shared by Jews the world over. It is true that those who live in Jerusalem and actually see the Western Wall and our Beis

Thursday, June 23 2011 - 21 Swan 5711

Hamikdosh in ruins feel the anguish more deeply, but even those who live far away feel sorrow. Similarly, the grief-stricken individual or family will find solace in the thought that "all the children of Israel are as one complete whole," that their sorrow is shared by all our people.

Second, we have perfect confidence that G-d will rebuild the ruins of Zion and Jerusalem; He will gather the dispersed remnants of Israel from the ends of the earth through our righteous Moshiach, and bring them in gladness to witness the joy of Zion and Jerusalem. We are equally confident that G-d will fulfill His promise that "...the dwellers of dust (the dead) shall awake and give praise." Great indeed will be the happiness and rejoicing then, when all will meet together after the Revival of the Dead.

Third, the Babylonians and the Romans were able to destroy only the Beis Hamikdosh of wood and stone, of gold and silver, but they could not harm the inner "Beis Hamikdosh" in the heart of every Jew, for it is eternal. In the very same way, the hand of death can touch only the body, but the soul is eternal; it has simply ascended to the World of Truth. Every good deed we do in accordance with the will of G-d, the Giver of life, adds to the merit of the departed soul, as well as to its spiritual welfare.

May it be G-d's will that you and your family know no more pain and distress. May you find true comfort and solace in your communal endeavors, defending the Holy Land, the land "...over which G-d your L-rd watches from the beginning of the year until the end of the year," as well as in those endeavors of your private life - observing the Mitzva of Tefillin, one Mitzva bringing another, and yet another, in its train.

(Letter dated 13 Tishrei, 5728)

DON'T DESPAIR

By the Grace of G-d
Erev Shevuoth, 5716
Brooklyn, New York

Sholom uBrocho:

In reply to your (undated) letter, you should bear in mind the following points:

(a) There can be no question but that teshuvo is effective in every case, and whatever the transgression, for Teshuvo is one of G-d's commandments, and G-d does not require of us the impossible.

(b) It is likewise certain that any kind of depression, despondency or sadness, is a trick of the Yetzer Hora to discourage one from serving G-d, as is explained at length in the books of Mussar, and in the books of Chassidus; and you would do well to refer to Tanya, ch. 26 and further.

(c) Even where one has relapsed in committing the same transgression for which one has done teshuvo, and, moreover, even while doing Teshuvo one is not certain whether he could resist the temptation should it recur, this must in no way prevent him from studying the Torah and observing its Mitzvoth, included among which also the Mitzvah of Teshuvo, for every action of man has its repercussions both down here below and Above, and you surely know the saying of our Sages "No transgression extinguishes a Mitzvah" (even though it extinguishes the reward of a Mitzvah). I refer you again to Iggereth Hatshuvo (part III of the Tanya), ch. 11.

I advise you from now on to stop weighing and dwelling on things which are of no practical value, and especially the kind of

Thursday, June 23 2011 - 21 Sivan 5711

thought that only leads to despondency, but concentrate ever growing efforts on Torah and Mitzvoth.

I wish you to celebrate the Festival of Our Receiving the Torah with inner and lasting joy.

With blessing,

DEPRESSION COMES FROM THE YETZER HARA

...You write that you feel depressed, as it appears to you that you have not made the success in your study at the Yeshiva which you had expected. Even assuming that you were completely right in your appraisal, this still would be no reason for being depressed. For, it is explained in many sources, (that) especially the book of Tanya, that even in the case of spiritual failure, no Jew should feel depressed, for a feeling of depression and gloom is, in itself, one of the strategic weapons which the Yetzer Hora uses, in an effort to discourage a person from serving G-d with joy and alacrity. And, when the Yetzer Hora succeeds in one thing, such as in discouraging you from study, as you write, he goes for even further things.

The way to combat the Yetzer Hora is, as explained in the tanya, to call forth redoubled efforts on one's part to overcome the feeling of depression, and to replace it with a feeling of joy in the realization that no matter what the past has been, it is always possible to attach oneself to G-d, through the study of the Torah and the observance of the Mitzvoth. The well known illustration used in the Tanya, in the case of persistent distraction, is to imagine that a heathen is standing by while one is in the midst of prayer, and trying to distract one from concentrating on prayer and study. In such a case one would certainly not blame himself, but would rather redouble his efforts to concentrate on his prayer or study, completely ignoring the outside distractions.

Thus, in the final analysis, it is up to a person to overcome his difficulties by his own effort and determination, and we have already been assured that where there is determined effort, success is certain. Moreover, in your case, it is quite possible that you have underestimated your success, which could also be a thought implanted in your mind by the Yetzer Hora....

Thursday, June 23 2011 - 21 Swan 5711

DON'T LET THE YETZER HARA TO FIRST BASE!

As for the question how best to overcome the temptations of the Yetzer Hora - the best way is not to let him get to first base. In other words, when an undesirable thought occurs, it is necessary to dismiss it at once from the mind. However, inasmuch as the mind must be occupied, it is possible to disengage it from one thought by engaging it in another. Therefore when any undesirable thought does occur, one must at once begin to think about good things, how to benefit oneself and others, and the like.

(Excerpt of a letter)

DISSATISFACTION – CAN BE GOOD AND BAD

16 Adar 5712
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Sholom u'Brocho:

I have duly received your letter of the 8th of Shevat, but this is the first opportunity to answer it. Should there be any good news in the meantime, you will no doubt let me know.

You seem to be disturbed because you feel that you have not attained the proper level in Torah and Mitzvoth and cannot see the 'tachles' etc., which makes you downhearted.

Leaving the details of your complaints aside, I wish to make several observations:

1. A feeling of dissatisfaction with one's self is a good sign, for it indicates vitality and an urge to rise and improve one's self, which is accomplished in a two-way method: withdrawal from the present state and turning to a higher level (see Sichah of my father-in-law of sainted memory, Pesach 5694).

2. If the urge to improve one's self leads to downheartedness and inertia, then it is the work of the Yetzer-hora whose job it is to use every means to prevent the Jew from carrying out good intentions connected with Torah and Mitzvoth.

The false and misleading voice of the Yetzer-hora should be stifled and ignored. Besides, as the Baal Hatanya states (Ch. 25), even one single good deed creates an **everlasting** bond and communion with G-d (ibid, at length). Thus, a feeling of despondency is not only out of place, but is a stumbling block in the worship of G-

Thursday, June 23 2011 - 21 Swan 5711

d, as is more fully explained in the above and subsequent chapters of Tanya.

3. With regard to understanding, or lack of understanding, of the 'tachles,' the important thing required of the Jew is contained in the words of the Torah: 'For the thing is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart (and the tachles is) to **do** it.' Understanding is, generally, the second step. The first step is the **practice** of the Mitzvoth. (See enclosed copy of my message to a study group).

My prayerful wish to you, as you conclude your letter, is that the next one coming from you will be more cheerful.

MOSHIACH - FROM EXILE TO REDEMPTION

By the Grace of G-d
21st of Menachem Av, 5728
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

I am in receipt of your (undated) letter.

The first observation I must make is that whenever a question is to be discussed, there can be a meaningful discussion only if both sides accept certain premises as a basis for the discussion.

From your letter I see that we both recognize the Written and Oral Torah as undisputable authority.

Now it is clearly explained both in the Written Torah, as well as in the Oral Torah, that insofar as Jews are concerned, Golus comes not as a result of military circumstances, namely an outnumbered army, nor as a result of economic pressures necessitating submission to a stronger power, etc. Rather it has amply been explained again and again in the Chumash (including whole Sidras, such as Bechukosai, Ki Sovo, etc.) and in the books of the Prophets, and even more so in the Talmud and Rabbinic literature, that if Jews had always adhered to the Torah and Mitzvoth, they would have never been banished into Exile, regardless of the fact that "You are the smallest among the nations." For, Jews have always been outnumbered and outweighed in terms of military and physical strength, as King David puts it succinctly in one sentence, "These (come) in chariots, and those on horses, but we call upon the Name of G-d."

Conversely, when Jews forsake the Torah and Mitzvoth, G-d

forbid, no power nor military might, nor political alliances, etc., are of any avail, as the Torah clearly states, "If you will walk contrary unto me, then will I also walk contrary unto you" etc., with the inevitable consequence of Golus.

In the light of the above, the true test of events, to see if they herald the Geulo or not, is to see whether there has been an essential change in the causes which have brought about the Golus in the first place, namely a new tendency in the direction of stronger adherence to the Torah and Mitzvoth. A further point is this: After the churban, when there could have been no question about the observance of the 17th of Tammuz, Tisha B'Av, etc., there were still a number of Jews who remained in Eretz Yisroel, and it was incumbent upon them too to observe all the matters connected with the Golus. As a matter of fact, those who remained in Eretz Yisroel and saw with their own eyes the destruction, would have felt the Churban and Golus even more. Let us remember also that the observance of Tisha B'Av, etc., was in effect even during the time of Gedalia ben Achikom, the Jewish Governor of the Jewish community in Eretz Yisroel, before he was assassinated by Ishmael (II Kings, 25:25).

As in the case of many other Torah matters, there are sources where they are explained at great length. However, inasmuch as not every person has the ability or patience to study these things at length in their original sources, they come also in a short and concentrated form. Thus we find also the subject under discussion formulated in succinct terms by the Great Teacher, the Rambam, who was not only the Guide for the Perplexed of his generation, but for the perplexed of all generations. In his Code Yad Hachazoko, he describes in brief but highly meaningful terms the state of the last era of the Golus as it would be, and how the beginning of the Geulo would follow. I will quote what he states, but in English translation, with interpolations to clarify the text, with some prefatory remarks, namely that it has been amply explained in the Written and Oral Torah that the Geulo will come through the Melech Hamoshiach, and as the Rambam also declares, simply as a matter of course, in the section which is the last of his entire Code, so that it is in a sense the very seal of his Code - the section of Hilchos Melochim. There, at the

beginning of chapter II, he states that the Melech Hamoshiach will bring the Geulo, and at the end of this chapter he describes carefully the order how this will come about. And since this is not a book on philosophy, but a code of laws, the terms used are carefully chosen and strictly to the point, without polemics or homiletics. This is what he states (Par. 4):

And when a king of the House of David will arrive, dedicated to the study of the Torah and observance of the Mitzvoth like his father David, according to the Torah Shebiksav and Shebeal-Peh, and he will compel all the Jewish people to walk in it and strengthen its fences, and he will fight the wars of G-d, he is assumed to be the Moshiach. (Note that this is not yet a **certain** sign of the Geulo, for all this can still take place in a state of Golus. However) If he did so and has succeeded (in the above matters, namely having won all battles and impelled all the Jewish people to study the Torah and to mend its fences, we are still not sure and require a further sign, namely), and built the Beis Hamikdash in its place (- clearly in the holy city of Jerusalem, indicating that there would be a large Jewish population in that city, yet we are still not certain of the end of the Golus, so a further factor must be fulfilled, namely), and he gathers in the dispersed ones of Israel - then he is certainly the Moshiach.

Surely no further commentaries are necessary.

I will only add a further significant point, namely that this ruling and Din of the Rambam is not contested by any **Posek**. Even the author of the Shulchan Aruch, who has written a commentary on the Rambam, including this very chapter, the well known "Kesef Mishneh" has nothing to question here, accepting it fully, nor are there any other **Poskim** to differ.

To be sure there are various homilies and references and allusions to the period of the Geulo in the Agadah and Midrash, etc., but these are homilies, and do not affect the **practical Halachah**. Even in the Halachah we find at first certain differences of opinion on different matters, in the Mishna and Gemoro, but once the final decision and Psak Din is arrived at, it is valid for all without question.

Thursday, June 23 2011 - 21 Swan 5711

It is clear from the above Psak Din of the Rambam that before there can be a Kibbutz Golyos and the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash in its place, there has to be a full and complete return to the Torah and Mitzvoth while Jews are still in the Golus, and it is this that is the prelude and preparation for the Geulo.

I am aware of the fact that there are many individuals who wish to rely on this or that saying of our Sages, in the Tractate Sanhedrin or in the Yerushalmi and the like, in order to base upon it their view, but I have always marveled at the inconsistency of these individuals in regard to their entire approach. For surely the Rambam knew just as well those sayings of the Sages in the Sanhedrin or Yerushalmi, etc., and understood them at least as well as the individuals quoting them. The inconsistency is in the fact that these very individuals consider every word and expression of the Rambam's elsewhere as most meticulous, and study it with awesome reverence. Yet when it comes to this **simple and straightforward Psak Din** of the Rambam, they simply ignored it altogether.

The reason I have written at some length in reply to your letter (though this length is overly brief in comparison with the subject matter), is that it is simple painful to contemplate how misplaced the concern is of some well meaning individuals. Instead of each and every Jew, young and old, man and woman, dedicating themselves wholeheartedly to reduce and eventually do away with the causes which brought about the Golus, namely **Mipne Chatoenu** - "because of our sins we have been exiled from our land," and what these "sins" are is clearly spelled out in the Shulchan Aruch - there are many Jews, undoubtedly with good intentions, who use all their energy and influence to find all sorts of means and ways of human invention to bring about the end of the Golus. This is doubly painful for, firstly, it is simply a deception for Jews to believe that there can be any other way of Geulo than that which G-d had specified, and secondly, while engaged in other ways and means in futile effort to end the Golus, they cannot engage fully in the true battle against the Golus in terms of the Psak Din of the Rambam.

Wedding Celebration of Yaakov Mordechai and Chaya Mushka Witansky

May G-d grant that each and all of us in the midst of all Israel, should be inspired with true Heavenly inspiration to walk in the way of the Torah and to mend its fences, for it is **this** that will prepare the way for Moshiach to implement all the conditions necessary to bring about the truly full and complete Geulo.

With blessing,

Thursday, June 23 2011 - 21 Swan 5711

**“EVEN” IN ISRAEL WE MUST KEEP THE TORAH
– A PRIVATE LETTER TO PRIME MINISTER BEN-GURION**

His Excellency,
Mr. David Ben-Gurion,
Prime Minister of Israel

Greetings:

Yesterday I sent you my official reply to the question of Registration, and I have to apologize for the delay in my reply till now for a number of reasons. What is written further is not official and not even semi-official.

It was once fashionable in certain circles to suggest that the Jewish religion and religious observances were necessary for those living in the Diaspora - as a shield against assimilation. But for those who can find another "antidote": in the place of religion, particularly for those living in **Eretz Israel**, within their own society, where the atmosphere, language, etc. (apparently) serve as ample assurances of national preservation, the Jewish religion was superfluous - what need had they to burden themselves with all its minutiae in their daily life? But the trend of developments in **Eretz Israel** in the last seven or eight years has increasingly emphasized the opposite view: That however vital the need for religion amongst Diaspora Jewry, it is needed even more for the Jews in **Eretz Israel**. One of the basic reasons for this is that it is precisely in **Eretz Israel** that there exists the danger that a new generation will grow up, a new type bearing the name of Israel but completely divorced from the past of our people and its eternal and essential values; and, moreover, hostile to it in its world outlook, its culture, and the content of its daily life; hostile - in spite of the fact that it will speak Hebrew, dwell in the land of the Patriarchs and wax enthusiastic over the Bible.

I do not wish to dwell on this painful subject at all for obvious reasons (especially since I see no need for further elaboration). One of the reasons is that I fervently hope that this calamity will not come to pass. Eventually, members of that generation itself will vehemently rise up against that danger, and will take measures to ward off the evil. Indeed it is just recently that an intense ferment has been felt in **Eretz Israel** and abroad demanding a spiritual content to life; if a deeper probe is made, it becomes evident that the yearning is for something transcending the reason of man.

The thirst of the youth of our eternal people will certainly not be quenched by rationalizations and theories that are the product of contemporary mortals, which will share the fate of those ideologies which made their debut only yesterday and which are no more today. Here is the place for the Law of Moses and Israel, the Oral and Written Law, our independent values dating from the day the Jewish people stood before G-d, our G-d, at Horeb and the great voice was heard which did not stop: "I am G-d your G-d...You shall have no other gods...."

Needless to say, I do not speak here of a theoretical religiosity which serves only as a purely philosophical world outlook, or as the subject of lectures at weekends and holidays. I speak of a pervading and practical way of life, which includes the weekdays too, and all such matters which are usually termed "secular." Our faith is, after all, essentially one of practical deeds.

Now is the ideal opportunity to transform the whole canvas of life in **Eretz Israel** and direct it into the above- mentioned channels. This opportunity is knocking at your door; for you have been granted the ability and privilege to use it to the best advantage, a privilege and opportunity which are not given to every man and the likes of which have not presented themselves for many decades.

It is more than likely that the aforementioned lines will astonish you. Do I really imagine that by means of this letter I can change or influence an outlook many decades old, and in particular the outlook of a man who has seen the fruit of his labors? But, since in my

Thursday, June 23 2011 - 21 Swan 5711

opinion the situation in **Eretz Israel** is as described above - the situation in itself, the essential truth of the idea, the unique and most wonderful opportunity granted you - it is **they** which speak, appeal and demand. I am sure that even without my letter you have often reflected on this But I could not allow myself to pass over this in silence - at a time when I am engaged in writing on the subject of Registration which is part and parcel of the general background outlined above. I felt it my duty to refer to this, at least in a private letter to you.

At this opportunity, and begging apology for the delay, I thank you for sending me your booklet. Let me base my next few words on what you wrote in the booklet when referring to **Eretz Israel**, I mean the expression "the Holy Land." Now the epithet "holy" like that of "Jew", has had its content defined and consecrated by generations of our people, from the time of the Giving of the Law - when the title "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" was bestowed on us and when the Jewish people were granted the Holy Land according to its borders "the land of the Canaanite and the Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates" - till the present day and including it.

Yours truly,

IN HONOR OF THE WEDDING OF
YAAKOV MORDECHAI
AND
CHAYA MUSHKA
WILANSKY
21 SIVAN 5771
JUNE 23 2011