

Interview with Rabbi Lazar

I remember my first time visiting actually Russia. I remember we were sitting around the table and there were some guests from the states and they were asking each person, what is he?

what does he, who does he belong to? and I remember one of the Chasidim of then who is today no longer alive, he said I wish I would be able to be a Chasid. My wish is to be a Chasid. And really today the name Chasid already became a ticket, sort of a certain group of people that go around with beards and hats, they are Chasidim. But really to be a Chasid is something which a person has to feel inside of him that he has reached a level of a Chasid. He, a person has to be able to sort of connect first of all with the Rebbe in a real connection and then he is a Chasid of his Rebbe. And then be able to emulate all the things that a Chasid should be doing. He should be able to learn the way a Chasid does. He should be able to daven the way a Chasid does. Chassidus is really a way of life. That everything a person does should be done fully with understanding with feeling shouldn't just be that he puts on tefillin in the morning and it becomes a day to day thing. He has to feel a certain love for G-d when he is doing it. And therefore when I heard this Chasid saying, 'I wish I would be able to be a Chasid.' He probably meant, I wish in my every minute to minute life I will be able to live as a Chasid.

Q:

I consider myself a Chasid of The Rebbe, that I feel that I am very strong connected to The Rebbe and I feel the Rebbe was my teacher all along and everything that I am doing is only because The Rebbe has brought me to this level of doing what I am doing. And the name, Chasid means a righteous person. I hope I can stand up to those criterias. But there is no question that I would, I feel part of the Chassidic community. I feel a strong follower of The Rebbe and actually, I feel like I gave over my life to the ideals that The Rebbe taught us so enthusiastically and so giving it with so much joy that I feel that's where I want to be and that's what I want to do. Even though I was born a Chasid, but every day I feel again that I am becoming a Chasid once again.

Q:

The truth is that there are different type of Chassidim. Many groups which are called The Poylisha Chassidim. The Chassidim that come from Poland. And then there is The Chabad Chassidim, The Lubavitch Chassidim which come from Russia.

And the difference, one of the main differences which was in the first days was that the Chassidim that came from Poland they used to say that a Tzadik is the one that does everthing for the Chasid. He prays for the chasid. He rejoices for the chasid. Everything the chasid just he has to connect with the Tzadik with the rebbe and that's already enough for him to be part of where the train that the rebbe is leading. And by Chabad Chassidim by the Russian Lubavitcher Chassidim, The Rebbe always said that we'll try to help you as much as

we can and we'll try to give you instructions as much as we can, but you have to do it on your own. The Tzadik is a figure that you have to listen to. That you have to follow, but you have to have your own work, your own actions, and of course to know what to do, and to know where you're standing. You have to always relate to the rebbe and you have to always hear what the rebbe has to say and new instructions that the rebbe gives us and mainly learn the torah from the rebbe. But if you are not doing your own work yourself, you can't say that I'm a Chasid just because I have a Rebbe. You have to be doing what a Chasid has to be...

Q:

The truth is, there are Chassidim who are not doing the kind of work that I am doing. They are in business or whatever they are in and they still are hundred percent Chassidim. One of the innovations that The Rebbe started as soon as he became Rebbe was the idea of Shlichus, sending out emissaries, Rabbis throughout the world to teach the communities which after The Second World War sort of fell apart. And my father was sent by The Rebbe thirty five years ago to Italy and I was brought up in a family where we were Chasidim and we were also Shluchim. From day one I knew that I'm a Shaliach of The Rebbe even as a child I was supposed to teach my friends. I was supposed to be bringing them closer to Yiddishkeit because my friends in Italy many of them were not religious. And when I came to learn in the Rebbe's Yeshivah and when I started hearing the Rebbe's Farbrengen I always heard this message from The Rebbe. Today he was telling us go out to the world and bring the world closer to Judaism as The Rebbe once said, ""let's conquer the world with Judaism."" And as The Rebbe explained, this is what will bring Moshiach closer, because when the famous story that The Bal Shem Tov went up to heaven and he asked The Moshiach, when his he going to come and The Moshiach said when your words will be disseminated all over the world, then Moshiach will come. And that's the idea that The Rebbe has brought that not only you should bring Yiddishkeit to the world, you should bring Chassidus also to the world. You should let people know what it means to live as a Chassid.

And as I mentioned as soon as I came to The Rebbe, Farbrengen after Fabrengen, I used to hear The Rebbe speaking about the Shluchim when there was a conference of Shluchim, I used to see them coming back to 770 full with joy. And I saw these people were alive, they had a meaning to life. They had something going for them. They felt that they were doing something useful with their time and with their, even though some of them used to live in Tunisia, anywhere in the world where different difficulties each one of them, but they all came back to 770. And you saw these people had something in their life. And I remember once the Rebbe spoke that the smart ones when we speak about Shlichos they say you know what, let's go somewhere close. We are doing Shlichus. We are doing work, good work, but we'll be near The Rebbe. The rebbe said, the farthest you go, the closer you will be to me. And I never thought I'll end up in Russia, but I knew that I was ready to go anywhere the Rebbe would send me. And I was ready even to do something, to go a little farther then the ten miles away from Crown Heights in order to feel really that I'm doing what The Rebbe wants me to do and I'm bringing Moshiach closer. It happened so that they asked me to come to Russia as a bochur to teach here in those days when everything was still closed.

And I remember meeting here Chassidim actually one of them, Reb Getcha who was you could say the founder of The Baal Teshuva Movement here in Russia, a chasid of the previous Rebbe who was connected underground ways with the Rebbe day to day basis. And I remember seeing him a Chasid who had never seen The Rebbe and who felt this idea of being far away and has given over his life to help Jews here in Russia. I remember once standing in front of The Metro Station next to the big shul where he used to daven everyday and I was trying to convince him to come visit The Rebbe. He had never seen The Rebbe and he was getting already older and I remember arguing with him and I was telling him that a Chasid has to see The Rebbe because you'll see the Rebbe, you'll feel the strength and the joy that The Rebbe emanates and you will come back a different person. And after a half hour, an hour at the end he tells me you should understand, I have people here who I help day to day if I would leave who would help them those few days that I won't be here. Because we had come to the point that I told him, you'll leave on Sunday and you'll be back before Shabbos. He said, ""What will happen that week that I won't be here to these people?"" I saw a Jew that had really given over his life not for no reason besides helping Jewish people. And that was the message that The Rebbe was giving in New York. He had felt that here in Russia, even though there were no faxes and no communication and he was emulating what a Chasid should be doing on a minute to minute basis. He was ready even, his biggest dream was to see The Rebbe. If a Chasid could see The Rebbe, that's the biggest thing for him. And he was ready to give that up in order to help one more Jew one more day.

Q:

I don't think a Chasid becomes a Chasid or even when he is a Chasid, he feels that he is closer to G-d then anyone else. A Chasid wants to, when somebody becomes a Chasid he wants to really feel a meaning in life. Chassidus explains a person from A to Z. Everything that a person does, everything that a person feels. How it's connected to G-d. How every action a person does should be to serve G-d. That doesn't make him closer to G-d. In a way, we say that being a Chasid you have to do much more in order to be closer to G-d. Sometimes a simple Jew can get closer to G-d just through his feelings, because he is so simple he doesn't have to go that far. A Chasid by knowing so much, for him to achieve this closeness, sometimes it's even harder. But a Chasid feels that he knows where he is standing. He knows what life is about. He knows what the world is about. And he knows what his purpose in life is about. Therefore he feels happy. He feels fulfilled and he feels that he knows where he is going and what he wants to achieve.

Q:

That's Moshiach. That's when a Chasid wakes up in the morning the way he should be, he should feel, How can I bring Moshiach closer by a few minutes.

Q:

When a Chasid wakes up in the morning the way he should be, he should think, How will I bring The Messiah closer? How will I make the Messiah come even a day earlier, a minute earlier? Because as Chassidus explains, the world was created for one and only purpose, to bring the revelation of G-d and the world in an open way through the Messiah and that's really what our deeds and day to day life is in order to bring this revelation. So every deed a person does, he does it in order to bring Messiah, Moshiach closer. And to make the world a better place and that's how Mossiach will come. So he sees he has a purpose even though he is one little person. As The Rebbe explains us, This little person in this corner of the world if then you put together all the people and each action by itself adds up, then that's how Moshiach will come.

Q:

It is easy. Just has been taking a long time for something easy. The Talmud states that a person is created to serve G-d. The Rebbe added that not only is a person created to serve G-d, the person's only meaning for creation is to serve G-d. So really a Chassid doesn't feel closer to G-d he feels he is more given over to G-d. The word, ""Bitul"", annullifying ones own self. Some people their whole life is to try to achieve, to become something, to become someone and this becoming something is in their head twenty- four hours a day. How will people realize that I am someone important. How will people realize that I am something worthwhile? And their whole meaning of life really loses because a person is thinking, what will other people think of me, not what am I for myself? When a Chassid realizes and feels that his life is given over to what G-d wants him to do, what G-d wants to achieve in the world, he forgets about himself and he thinks, what is G-d's purpose in the world? And then his actions are really not so selfish and therefore he can go and help someone else. He doesn't mind giving over his time to help someone else, because he is not losing, he is helping in the general picture what G-d wanted in the world. And therefore I don't think a Chassid is closer to G-d, a Chassid understands what G-d wants of a person much more than a regular person who is thinking of himself and doesn't think of G-d.