

A Tzaddik and His Students

Many Jews are attracted to spirituality but never think to look in their own religion to find it. Still more are unaware that chassidic philosophy and its practice are the “soul” and spiritual core of Judaism.

The starting point of the chassidic way of life is a chassid’s connection to his or her Rebbe. But like many of the more spiritual concepts in Judaism, the role and function of a Rebbe -- and the chassidic movement in general -- has been largely cloaked in mystery, misinterpreted, or simply unknown.

In this book, **A Tzaddik and His Students: *The Rebbe-Chassid Relationship***, Rabbi Shloma Majeski takes the reader on a step-by-step journey into the spiritual world of the Rebbe-chassid relationship, explaining the nature and purpose of a tzaddik/Rebbe, his connection with his chassidim, and the relevance of this phenomenon in the lives of every human being today.

Rabbi Shloma Majeski is the dean of Machon Chana Women’s Institute of Jewish Studies in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, home of the World Headquarters of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement. A renowned lecturer on chassidic philosophy for over thirty years, Rabbi Majeski is the author of the acclaimed book *The Chassidic Approach to Joy* and a tape series entitled “The Basic Principles of Chabad Chassidic Philosophy.”



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בס"ד

A Tzaddik and His Students: THE REBBE-CHASSID RELATIONSHIP

By: Rabbi Shloma Majeski

(Chapter 8)



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A Tzaddik and His Students: The Rebbe-Chassid Relationship

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For further reading about this and other topics in chassidic philosophy, information on how to obtain Rabbi Majeski's book *The Chassidic Approach to Joy*, and his tape series on chassidic philosophy, contact your local Jewish bookstore, sie100@aol.com, or call 718-778-5436.



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לזכות

הו"ח ר' רחמים הכהן בן מרגרט שיחי'

דואק

לרגל יום ההולדת שלו, ביום כ"א אלול,
לאריכות ימים ושנים טובות עד ביאת גואל צדק
ומתוך בריאות הנכונה ולשנת ברכה והצלחה בגו"ר

*

נדפס ע"י זוגתו

מרת ליליאן עליה תחי'

ומשפחתם שיחיו דואק

* * *

לעילוי נשמת

הרה"ת ר' יוסף יצחק הלוי ע"ה רייטשיק

בן שד"ר כ"ק רבותינו נשיאינו

הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' מנחם שמואל דוד הלוי ע"ה

והרבנית מרת לאה ע"ה רייטשיק

נפטר בדמי ימיו, בן נ"ה שנה, ביום כ"א אלול ה'תשס"ח

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

נדפס ע"י

אנ"ש דלאס-אנדזשעלעס, קאליפארניע

שיחיו

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לעילוי נשמת

ר' יהודה ב"ר צבי הירש ע"ה סטראל
נפטר בש"ק פ' נצבים, ז"ך אלול ה'תשס"ה
וזוגתו מרת טשארנא גיטל בת ר' יעקב ע"ה סטראל
נפטרה בליל ה' טבת ה'תשס"ו
ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

נדפס ע"י בנם

הו"ח ר' שמואל וזוגתו מרת מלכה שיינדל
ומשפחתם שיחיו סטראל

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לעילוי נשמת

הרב התמים יוסף ע"ה קריימן
בן - יבלחט"א - הרה"ת ר' נחמן בער שיחי' קריימן
נקטף בדמי ימיו, בן כ"ג שנה,
ביום ועש"ק, כ"ח מ"ח ה'תשע"א
ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

נדפס ע"י

אנ"ש דלאס-אנדזשעלעס, קאליפארניע

שיחיו

* * *

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR DEAR MOTHER

Mrs. Chava bas Reb Chaim Greenberg ע"ה
Passed away on Monday night, 25 Cheshvan, 5771

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

DEDICATED BY HER CHILDREN שיחיו

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** ע"ה
ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi**
Shagalov

Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766

Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** ע"ה
Ekman

Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765

Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** ע"ה
Marenburg

Passed away on the second day
of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766

Reb **Yitzchok Moshe** (Ian)
ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** ע"ה
Ekman (Santiago, Chile)

Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769

.ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

AND IN HONOR OF
Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתח'ל
Shagalov

DEDICATED BY
Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y.** and **Gittel Rochel** שיחיו
Shagalov

לעילוי נשמת

החייל ב"צבאות השם" **שכנא** ע"ה
בן ר' **שלמה אלי** שיחיו
נפטר בדמי ימיו, כ"א מני"א ה'תשנ"ט
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

ולזכות אחיו ואחיותיו שיחיו

ולזכות הוריו

הרה"ת ר' **שלמה אלי** וזוגתו מרת **שרה** שיחיו
מארקאוויטש

לאריכות ימים ושנים טובות עד ביאת גואל צדק
ומתוך בריאות הנכונה, ולשנת ברכה והצלחה בגו"ר

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נדפס ע"י ידידיהם

הרה"ת ר' **יוסף יצחק הלוי** וזוגתו מרת **גיטל רחל** שיחיו

שגלוב

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לעילוי נשמת

הרבנית מרת **לאה** בת ר' **אברהם אבלי** ע"ה **רייטשיק**

אשת שד"ר כ"ק רבותינו נשיאינו

הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' **מנחם שמואל דוד הלוי** ע"ה

ב"ר **שמעון הלוי** הי"ד **רייטשיק**

נלב"ע ביום כ"ד מנחם-אב ה'תשס"ז

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

*

נדפס ע"י

אנ"ש דלאס-אנדזשעלעס, קאליפארניע

שיחיו

tzaddikim over the last three hundred years have only been a preparation — an orientation, so to speak — for something much greater.

What exactly are we being prepared for? A time when the world will enjoy the ultimate revelation of G-dliness, when G-d will present the world with a great spiritual king and leader, *Melech haMoshiach*, and the world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d, when all men and women will be inspired with the Divine gift of prophecy, evil will be completely eradicated, and there will be no wars, hate, or poverty.

Moshiach will be a collective soul, not only of this generation but — with the accompanying Resurrection of the Dead — of all the Jews of all the generations, and he will lead and inspire all Jews to see G-dliness in the most revealed way.

Regardless of our level of observance and our actions up until now, we have merited to experience this monumental era simply because of our great fortune to be born into it. Nevertheless, every person can enjoy additional merit by actively participating in bringing this about.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe has told us that the coming of Moshiach is imminent and that one single act can “tip the scale” to bring Moshiach now. It is our heartfelt prayer that the culmination of all the above should be now, that the Third *Beis HaMikdash* be built, that G-dliness permeate the entire world, and that we witness Moshiach leading the whole world to its complete Redemption.



CHAPTER EIGHT

THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE OF IT ALL

Many concepts have been presented throughout this book describing the nature of a Rebbe/*tzaddik* and his contribution to the spiritual elevation of world Jewry. Regardless of a Jew's level of observance, whether unaffiliated religiously or a committed chassid, a *tzaddik's* influence affects every Jew in varying degrees.

But how does a chassid know which Rebbe to follow? What draws him to one Rebbe over another?

Finally, is there a deeper dimension to the Rebbe-chassid relationship than what has been discussed until now?

To understand all this, it is first necessary to explain the difference between the various chassidic Rebbes and the one factor that unites them all.

Different Paths of Inspiration

Each chassidic community has always had its own Rebbe — and the choice of a Rebbe for a certain community does not negate the choice of another for a different community. The Maggid of Mezritch had 120 students; each one a *tzaddik* in his own right. From the learning center in Mezritch, they spread out to different cities and towns, each establishing his own chassidic community and becoming its teacher. Although they were all *tzaddikim* of great spiritual capacity, they were all different from the other in the spiritual focus with which they

taught and practiced Chassidism. Whatever path a Rebbe followed shaped the behavior and conduct of the chassidim under his leadership.

If all these spiritual giants, these *tzaddikim*, were of such impeccable spiritual stature, what exactly was the difference between them?

The answer can be gleaned from an expression in the *Talmud* in which one Rabbi asks another Rabbi, “Tell me, in which *mitzvah* was your father more observant?”¹ An innocuous query at first glance, the question becomes puzzling upon learning that the father spoken of refers to a *tzaddik* who, no doubt, observed every *mitzvah* with 100% perfection. What, then, was the deeper meaning of this question? In addition to the fact that he observed all the commandments flawlessly, there must have been some specific detail of this one *mitzvah* in which he devoted himself in greater measure than any other *mitzvah*.

The same is true of all *tzaddikim*: although, by definition, a *tzaddik* fulfills every *mitzvah*, there is some particular emphasis, some focus, that attracts a *tzaddik* in different ways. Just as different people are more specifically drawn to different areas of Jewish practice (e.g., a “doer” or a “learner”), a Rebbe would emphasize a certain area in his practice as well.

Certain Rebbes would devote themselves more to Torah study; others to prayer. Some had a special devotion to Shabbos while others emphasized the giving of *tzedakah*. For whatever spiritual reason, certain areas within Judaism inspired them in an exceptional way, and a Rebbe would devote his life in greater measure to that *mitzvah* over all others.

Our Patriarch Abraham, for example, was known for his emphasis on the performance of *hachmosas orchim*, welcoming

Why Now?

It is our great fortune to be part of this era in history when G-d has sent us such spiritual giants as the Baal Shem Tov and the chassidic Rebbes who followed to inspire Jews with a passion and love for G-d, profound joy in observing the *mitzvos*, and a path toward true unconditional love for every Jew. They have illuminated the world by teaching us the hidden G-dly wisdom in the Torah, performing phenomenal miracles, and pronouncing open prophecies — all with the goal of revealing G-d’s presence in the world.

Such a phenomenal outpouring of open G-dly light has not been seen since the times of the prophets. The question is, why now?

From one perspective, we are told that the ways and teachings of Chassidism were introduced to the world in the 1700s as a powerful antidote to the unprecedented low state of Jewish affairs at that time. Before the Baal Shem Tov was revealed as a *tzaddik*, the Jewish people were so spiritually weak that the “smelling salts” of Chassidism were necessary to revive them.

But from the opposite perspective, Chassidism has been revealed to us because of our unprecedented high spiritual position. With the approach of the seventh millennium since the Creation of the world — one millennium representing a day of the week and the seventh millennium representing Shabbos — the Baal Shem Tov revealed the light of Chassidism during the “last minutes before Shabbos” when we fervently prepare for our day of spiritual rest and rejuvenation. Because we are approaching the *ultimate* Shabbos, the era of Moshiach, we need the spiritually heightened awareness of G-d and the spiritual refinement that will prepare us for that. All the monumental spiritual accomplishments of the Rebbes and

1. *Shabbos* 118b. See *Tanya, Iggeres HaKodesh*, the end of Epistle 7.

connecting to a Rebbe is the switch that allows that to happen. The Hebrew word *hiskashrus* means “connection,” and the full benefits of *hiskashrus* between a Rebbe and a chassid depends on the degree of the chassid’s efforts to connect.

How is that connection made?

By studying a Rebbe’s teachings, requesting his blessings, relating stories about the Rebbe, singing his holy melodies (*niggunim*), and fulfilling his directives.

In Chabad, there are hundreds of volumes of the Rebbe’s teachings available for study; myriads of his directives guiding us in all areas of life. Increasing in the observance of these directives reinforces one’s *hiskashrus* to the Rebbe.

In addition to the above, there is the “crown jewel” — the one directive closest to the Rebbe’s heart and soul. As a natural corollary, the highest form of *hiskashrus* can be achieved when one follows the Rebbe’s most precious request:

The Rebbe reiterated hundreds of times the directive that every man, woman and child recognize his or her capacity, responsibility, and privilege to hasten Moshiach’s coming by spreading the wellsprings of chassidic teachings, learning about Moshiach, strengthening their belief in Moshiach, adding in Torah and *mitzvos*, adding in the realm of goodness and kindness, and publicizing this message to others. While Jews have always learned Torah and performed *mitzvos*, the innovation in the Rebbe’s request is that one’s every additional act of G-dliness be performed with the knowledge and intention that it is being done in order to bring Moshiach.

Dedicating ourselves to fulfilling the Rebbe’s wishes, and particularly his most heartfelt request, deepens the connection of a person — any person — to the Rebbe.

guests into his home, and much is made of this in the account of his life in the Torah. Nevertheless, neither his son Isaac nor his grandson Jacob focused on this particular *mitzvah* in his Jewish practice.

Nobody would doubt that these great spiritual giants, Isaac and Jacob, observed the commandment of welcoming guests into their home, fulfilling the *mitzvah* as did their father and grandfather Abraham. But the Torah only records this quality in relation to Abraham because, while each *tzaddik* performed the *mitzvah*, Abraham’s primary source of inspiration came through this *mitzvah*. The primary source of inspiration for Isaac and Jacob came through the observance of other commandments.

In analogy, a person might be acquainted with a group of people and know that this one is inspired by art, this one by science, and another to expressing herself through music. If you would ask, which is the right mode of expression, could you find an answer?

Of course, when it comes to a natural inclination for particular talents or areas of self-expression, there is no right way. Each person has his or her own means of expression that helps bring out the strength of his talents in the optimum way.

Nevertheless, if a person is drawn to science, it doesn’t mean he doesn’t appreciate art or music. He may take great pleasure in looking at a beautiful painting or hearing an exquisitely orchestrated blend of voices. But he derives his main inspiration from science.

This concept applied to all of the Mezritcher Maggid’s chassidim (as it does the *tzaddikim* of today). They were all great *tzaddikim*, people of great spiritual capacity, who all followed the chassidic approach. Nevertheless, each one chose

something within Jewish and chassidic practice from which to draw his main source of inspiration.

Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, one of the Maggid's students, was renowned for speaking well of every Jew in an unprecedented way. Known as "the defender of the Jewish people," whenever he saw anyone doing something wrong or pointing out another's faults, he would always go out of his way to defend and justify whoever was being accused or criticized.

The Baal Shem Tov surely taught and stressed the importance of having love for, and finding the good in, every single Jew, and undoubtedly, every chassidic Rebbe exhibited this quality to the utmost. But why, in that generation, was Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev the only one credited with this particular attribute? Because this mode of behavior was the main aspect of Jewish practice that motivated and inspired him. Whoever studied with him and followed in his footsteps was also drawn to this particular path, receiving his main source of inspiration and vitality from the emphasis on this *mitzvah*.

So, too, the Alter Rebbe had a particular focus that characterized his path and that of those drawn to his Chabad movement. In his groundbreaking work *Tanya*, he describes his detailed approach of harnessing the mind to rule the heart; stimulating the heart and emotions in deeper levels of prayer through the intellectual understanding and in-depth study of chassidic teachings.

Other chassidic Rebbes were known for their emphasis in other areas, even though all of them were faithfully following the path of Chassidism, the path of the Baal Shem Tov.

One could attribute this to the nature of one's soul, a kind of "spiritual chemistry," in which one *tzaddik's* spiritual chemistry would draw him to one area of Jewish practice while

encouraging greater participation in Jewish life and strengthening their faith in G-d.

Much has been written and publicized about the Rebbe's famous "Sunday Dollars Line,"¹⁰ where Jews from the most diverse communities — spiritually as well as geographically — would stand on line for hours just to receive a dollar for *tzedakah* and a blessing (sometimes with a request for advice) from the Rebbe.

The connection of a collective soul with every Jew goes well beyond the above-mentioned efforts. In fact, a collective soul feels the pain (and joy) of every Jew around the world in a real and tangible way. A young woman once told the Rebbe that she questioned his saying that he felt the pain of a particular tragedy she had undergone. He replied that one day, when she would get married and have a child, her child would begin teething. In the same way that she would feel the pain of her child teething, the Rebbe felt the pain of her particular struggle.

While *tzaddikim* are general souls with varying numbers of souls in their soul grouping, a collective soul, whose soul contains every soul and who is responsible for every single Jew, has an infinitely bigger mission.

Connecting to the Tzaddik

Although a *tzaddik* radiates spiritual light to the world, one can't truly absorb or benefit from this light unless he or she is receptive to it. Sunlight is brilliant, but if the shutters are closed, the house won't be illuminated by its light.

Similarly, one must be connected and open to a Rebbe in order to fully absorb and be affected by his light. Actively

10. See "Transmitting Blessings Through an Object," in ch. 7.

HaMikdash there was always one *tzaddik* who was considered the *Nasi*, the leader and Rebbe, of the entire generation.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains in many places that the Alter Rebbe in his generation contained the *neshamah*, the soul, of all the souls of that generation, as did the Mitteler Rebbe who succeeded him. The same is true with all the Rebbes of Chabad, each one in his generation.

This can explain why the Alter Rebbe and the Chabad Rebbes who followed extended themselves way beyond the boundaries of their own community. Because their soul contained all the souls of that generation, it was their responsibility and mission to reach all these other people simply because they were Jewish, regardless of their affiliation or standing in the Jewish community.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, the collective soul of our generation, assumed the leadership of Chabad in 1950, establishing, under his personal direction, thousands of Chabad houses, *yeshivahs*, and Jewish day schools in almost every country in the world, from America to Armenia; Thailand to Siberia; China to Morocco. The Rebbe instituted an additional outreach effort in which *yeshivah* students are sent annually to corners of the world even more remote, to touch the lives of Jews who have had no opportunity to learn what it means to be a Jew. They make Shabbos meals, organize Torah classes, and give the Jews they are privileged to meet a sense of pride in their Jewish roots. As the collective soul, the Rebbe's efforts concern every Jew in every corner of the world.

Astonishing are the many volumes of the Rebbe's letters that have been published, copies of those written to tens of thousands of people, communicating with Jews from every corner of the globe on every subject imaginable: from teaching Torah, to giving advice in spiritual and material matters,

another *tzaddik* would derive his inspiration from an entirely different area.

Why would there need to be a difference in the spiritual chemistry of one *tzaddik* versus another? Surely G-d could have created all *tzaddikim* with the optimum — and therefore identical — approach!

Because, indeed, each *tzaddik* has a different spiritual mission in the world, and a *tzaddik's* spiritual chemistry is designed to fulfill that mission. Since each generation has specific challenges to overcome and tasks to accomplish, a *tzaddik* is imbued with a certain spiritual chemistry to inspire the people to best conquer their challenges and fulfill their task.

The human body provides a good example of this phenomenon. The body is composed of many organs, each important in its own way, but all necessary to form a complete human being. Nevertheless, the function of the eye is different from the function of the ear. And the function of the ear is different from the function of the brain or heart, as is so with all the other organs. While every organ is important, and the function of each is necessary for the proper maintenance of the body as a whole, each fulfills a unique role in order to accomplish its specific purpose and mission.

Every *tzaddik* is like a different organ of the entire Jewish body with its own spiritual mission and function, each contributing a particular strength and purpose to make the whole “body” complete. No individual mission could be omitted and each plays a vital role in completing the entire mission. Thus they serve G-d by focusing and emphasizing on a very specific area in Torah and a specific area within the chassidic movement.

*The Deeper Reality of
The Rebbe-Chassid Relationship*

How did each chassid find the Rebbe whom he felt was the right teacher and spiritual guide for him?

The chassidim followed that Rebbe who gave them the strength to practice Judaism in the most complete and inspired way possible for them. The fact that some chassidim were connected to one particular Rebbe indicated that the spiritual chemistry of those chassidim resonated with that of their Rebbe. Indeed, that is what led them to follow that Rebbe's particular path in the first place. Other chassidim were drawn to a different Rebbe because their spiritual mission would ultimately be fulfilled by following in that path.

With all these different groups of chassidim, one would think that one group might negate the other, or that following a specific Rebbe might negate another Rebbe's path of inspiration. On the contrary, each Rebbe complemented the other because each modeled that which his particular chassidim needed for their own, uniquely designed source of inspiration.

There is a deeper explanation as to why a group of chassidim resonate with a particular Rebbe and receive inspiration from the same path. A Rebbe is a *neshamah klalis* — a general soul — as his soul includes many other souls.²

In other words, the souls of the chassidim who follow that Rebbe are included in, and are an extension of, that *tzaddik's* soul. The fact that they share the same ideas, goals and areas of inspiration is an outcome of their being essentially one.

Just as children are an extension of their parents, sharing like talents and tendencies, the souls of a particular group of Jews are part of, and an extension of, the soul of a *tzaddik*.

but there was one woman who gave birth to 600,000 babies at one time! Does anyone know her name?"

The students all perked up with that question, but when no one could figure out who the woman was, Reb Yehudah HaNasi finally answered, "Her name is Yocheved, the mother of Moses." In giving birth to a person who was equal to the entire Jewish nation, it was as if she had 600,000 babies.

On a simple level, this is interpreted to mean that she gave birth to a child who was equal in greatness to the entire Jewish nation. But on a spiritual level, she actually did give birth to 600,000 souls, because within Moses' soul were included the souls of all the Jewish people.

Just as this was true in Moses' generation, the same is true in every generation. There are many *tzaddikim*, and each is a *tzaddik* in his own unique way. He is a spiritual leader and guide in a very specific way to all the souls who are connected to him. In addition, there is a *tzaddik* who is the *Nasi*, the leader and collective soul of the entire generation, because his soul includes within it all the souls of the entire generation.

Indeed, the *Tikkunei Zohar* writes:⁸ "The soul of Moses included the souls of all 600,000 Jews of his generation; the same applies to the *tzaddikim*, i.e., the collective soul, of future generations, all of whom are an extension of Moses." They also include in their soul all the souls of their respective generation.

In the era of kings in Jewish history,⁹ this collective soul was most often the king of the Jewish people: King David in his generation and King Solomon in his, continuing in subsequent generations. After the destruction of the First *Beis*

2. For a more in-depth explanation of this concept, see the section entitled "The Collective Soul That Contains Them All" and fn. 7 in this chapter.

8. *Tikkun* 69; p. 112b; 114a.

9. Beginning with King Shaul and extending up until the destruction of the First *Beis HaMikdash*.

Jewish people left Egypt together, each tribe traveled in its own separate cluster. The *Midrash* says that when they arrived at the sea, the sea split into twelve different lanes or paths, so that each tribe could go through its own specific lane, corresponding to the twelve different paths or approaches in their spiritual missions. A different *tzaddik* for each tribe would guide them in the spiritual path that was unique to them.

Nevertheless, in addition to the fact that there were Twelve Tribes and each tribe had its own unique and specific spiritual leader, there was also one person who was the leader of the entire generation, over all the Jewish people, and that was Moses.

The Collective Soul That Contains Them All

The uniqueness of Moses was that his soul did not just contain those souls that resonated with his particular path, but it contained each and every soul of the entire generation.⁵ That is why *Rasbi* comments that Moses, one single person, was equivalent to the entire Jewish nation, because his soul included the entire Jewish nation within it.⁶

The *Midrash* relates the story⁷ of Reb Yehudah HaNasi who was once teaching his students and saw that they were not as alert as usual. He decided to say something humorous to wake them up and challenged them with a query: “When the Jews were in Egypt, they gave birth to six children at a time,

5. *Zohar* III, p. 216a.

6. *Rasbi* on *Numbers* 21:21, the section entitled “*Chukas*,” which states: “...for Moses is [the people of] Israel, and Israel is Moses, informing you that the leader of the generation is like the entire generation, for the leader is the whole — *ha Nasi hu hakol*.”

7. *Midrash Rabbah, Shir HaShirim*, ch. 4, v. 2.

Those are the people who would choose to be chassidim of that specific Rebbe. When that connection is not so obvious, Divine providence arranges various circumstances to guide them in the direction of that Rebbe.

That accounts for the uncanny sense of exclusivity the chassid feels about his Rebbe: that no other Rebbe could give him the same level of spiritual strength and inspiration as his own. Being connected on a spiritual level, and feeling his soul to be an extension of his Rebbe’s, no other *tzaddik* could give him that, since, in essence, he and his Rebbe are bound up as one.

The same is true in reverse. Being part of one soul, a Rebbe feels a special connection with the chassid as well and can look deeply into his soul to guide him in what is best for his physical and spiritual needs. The Rebbe chooses his chassidim, in a sense, in the same way that a chassid chooses his Rebbe.

Being an extension of the Rebbe’s soul, each chassid is naturally drawn to his Rebbe, and the Rebbe can see more clearly than anyone else the needs and direction of that chassid’s soul.

A Story

There is a story told of a chassid of the Alter Rebbe by the name of Reb Benyamin Kletzker.³ One time, another chassidic Rebbe, Reb Shlomo Karliner, came to visit the Alter Rebbe. When he was getting ready to return by horse-drawn carriage to his city, the Alter Rebbe asked Reb Benyamin Kletzker and some other chassidim to escort Reb Shlomo Karliner part of the way home.

3. *Likkutei Dibburim, an Analogy of Talks by Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn*, vol. 1, pp. 309ff., in English translation (Sichos In English, Brooklyn, NY, 1988).

Along the way, Reb Shlomo Karliner recognized that Reb Benyamin was not only intellectually brilliant, but a person of very high spiritual caliber. He began to share very profound esoteric secrets of the Torah with him which this chassid had never heard before, and performed incredible miracles that Reb Benyamin had not seen from his own Rebbe, the Alter Rebbe. While the others turned back at the agreed upon location, Reb Benyamin — mesmerized by Torah secrets known only to a Rebbe and the open display of miracles — accepted Reb Shlomo Karliner’s invitation to accompany him the rest of the way.

In the midst of their journey, they asked the driver to stop on the side of the road to *daven Minchah* (the afternoon prayer). Reb Shlomo Karliner would always wash his hands before *davening*, but they were unable to find water in that particular spot. Turning to Reb Benyamin, he said, “Let’s get back on the carriage and we will find water.” Once they were settled in, the horses began to gallop by themselves over hills and valleys, much to the dismay of the carriage driver who had clearly lost control of them.

The horses finally stopped after arriving at a creek, and the Karliner Rebbe and Reb Benyamin got off and washed their hands. After they finished praying, the driver said, “I don’t recognize this place. I don’t know how to get out of here.” The Rebbe replied, “Don’t worry. They will find the way.” Without having to touch the reins, the driver let the horses run by themselves until they finally arrived at the city where Reb Shlomo Karliner was to spend Shabbos.

Being in the company of this great *tzaddik*, Reb Benyamin Kletzker was so awed and dazed that he found it difficult to refuse Reb Shlomo Karliner’s invitation to stay and be his student for a time. Nowhere had he been privy to such

profound secrets of the Torah, and the temptation to remain was overwhelming.

But now the chassid was in a quandary. On some level he was drawn to learn with Reb Shlomo because of the incredible spiritual wonders he would experience and the deep spiritual secrets he would learn from him. On the other hand, he knew that he was a chassid of the Alter Rebbe.

Finally, after having made the decision to return to the Alter Rebbe, he said to Reb Shlomo Karliner the now-famous chassidic saying (in Russian): “*Pan to pan, no nie moi...*,” meaning, “The master is a master, but not mine. The servant is a servant, but not yours.” With this statement he was informing Reb Shlomo Karliner that although he was certainly a *tzaddik*, a master, he was not the right teacher for Reb Benyamin Kletzker. And although Reb Benyamin was a chassid, a servant, he was not the chassid of Reb Shlomo. Ultimately, the path of Reb Shlomo Karliner did not resonate with him, and he recognized his true soul connection with the Alter Rebbe and his unique path of Chassidism.

The Paths of the Tribes

When Jacob gave his final blessing to each of the Twelve Tribes,⁴ he identified each with a symbol. The tribe of Yehudah was compared to a lion; Naftali to a deer, and so on, with a symbol attributed to each. The symbol was more than a visual decoration to place on their banners, it represented the unique quality and spiritual mission of each particular tribe.

Having left Egypt, each tribe traveled through the desert led by its own *Nasi*, its own spiritual *tzaddik* and leader, who was the head of that particular tribe. Even though all the

4. *Genesis* 49:1-28.