

*PLEASE GIVE TO RABBI LAMM - PLEASE EDIT & RETURN ASAP - I'M GOING TO MAIL IT IN 4 WEEKS. MY FAX IS 213/936-0381*

RD I'd like to begin with your recollections of Yechidus you have had with the Rebbe in 1956.

*REBE CH*

*CONFIDENTIAL*

*1-19954-177*

NL It was probably in 1956 that I met the Rebbe ZT'L. It was about the day school we had in Springfield Mass., where I was a Rabbi. We had a day school and there was a Lubavitcher day school. The question was, My concern was that there was competition for a very few students. I came to the Rebbe. I saw him quite late at night, I don't remember exactly what time, K'darko Bakodesh. He took a halachic stance, that there is no Hasogas

Gvul when it comes to Talmud Torah. That's the way it remained. He didn't order any change. To this day there are two schools that operate separately. I was not necessarily pleased with this decision but I respected it.

RD You were the principal of the other school.

NL I wasn't the principal - I was a rabbi in the community. That day school I felt responsible for because it was the day school that serviced my congregation. Like so many suburban or out of New York day schools it had quite a number of non-orthodox kids from non-orthodox families who we tried to be mekarev. The same was true of the Lubavitcher day school.

I had tried to ~~see to have~~ <sup>effect</sup> some sort of unification <sup>but</sup> and it didn't work. I accepted the Rebbe's decision, and never held it against him or the Lubavitcher in Springfield, who are still very dear friends, people I like very much, the Adelmans.

RD Were there any personal or philosophical things discussed?

NL No.

RD Were you here in America when the Previous Rebbe came in 1940.

NL I was a Bar-Mitzvah boy at the time. I was born here. I must tell you that to my recollection, the impact that the Previous Rebbe had was nowhere near as widespread and powerful as the last Rebbe. There were a number of Chassidische Rebbeim. All of them had a certain amount of prominence, but no one really overwhelmed the Gilom. It's the most recent Lubavitcher Rebbe who had this tremendously wide influence and broad impact on the Jewish community as a whole.

RD How do you see this in detail.

NL You must know <sup>from market</sup> ~~lechatich~~ that I am not a Lubavitcher Chasid; however, in general I am very kindly disposed to Chasidus, and I have a special respect and affection for Lubavitch. It does not mean that I am a Chasid, because if I were a Chasid I would take everything the Rebbe said with no questions asked. It so happens that on almost all major policy decisions I would have disagreed with the decisions of the Rebbe. Yet I considered that he was preeminently the most distinguished, the most important Jewish man in my lifetime and probably in the last century, because his contribution to Yehidus was incalculable.

*Even though* I may not have agreed with certain policies of his, namely the borders of Eretz Yisroel - I'm not saying I disagree, but I certainly did not go as far as he does. I didn't agree with him on getting his people involved in the last election in Israel, I didn't agree on pressing too far on the Mihu Yehudi, although in the beginning Lubavitch distributed my articles on the whole issue. I thought there comes a point where you have to back down. As a matter of fact Lubavitch later did back down. It was a question of when. So the differences I had with the Lubavitch line were more of details rather than general import.

*deeply know* Whether it was or it wasn't, I have a great, enormous respect for Lubavitch, not only the late Rebbe, but for the Chasidim too, with some criticisms.

Their work on the Chabad house(s), in every area has been enormous. My concerns are...

RD More on the philosophical approach. I have read your book Torah Umada.

NL My ~~shitch~~ <sup>view</sup> of Torah Umada is based largely on a Chasidic concept, the idea of Avodah B'Gashmius. As I write in my book, the Chasidic Gedolim themselves did not approve of science in their generations, but, nevertheless, it follows logically from their premises. I think the Lubavitcher are probably the closest to us in that respect. The Rebbe himself did not forswear advanced secular education. He himself studied in Berlin and at the Sorbonne, and he sent his talmidim here. We have a number of talmidim who were sent here by the Rebbe. If he really thought they should not be exposed to Torah Umada he wouldn't have let them come within a mile of us. To wit, certain Litvishe Yeshivas. The Rebbe on the contrary - we never considered him anything but a close friend.

RD You studied with Rabbi Soloveitchik.



NL Of course.

RD Did you ever hear from Rabbi Soloveitchik discussions about the Rebbe?

NL No. He may have had them, but I didn't hear. I certainly never heard any criticism. I know that later on he went into Crown Heights for a farbrengen. I think he was there also for the Shiva call. It is obvious that he would not have gone had he not had a lot of respect for him. The Rov did not go to other people just like this. He had a lot of respect, I know, for Reb Aharon Kotler ZT'L, and for the Lubavitcher Rebbe. To say that there was any kind of Kera [split] between them would have been terribly wrong. On the contrary.

RD I also understand from some of your writings that you have a specific shita on orthodoxy. What is your understanding of what the Rebbe has done for Orthodoxy?

NL The Rebbe did an enormous amount for Orthodoxy. The idea of kiruv that was accomplished by Lubavitch is incredible. I think we were the first kids on the block when it came to that thing. I remember in the 1950's we had these huge seminars that Yeshiva founded, etc. Later, because of financial reasons, we had to pull back and others came to fill the void, but Lubavitch acted on its own, separately from some of the others. They have done tremendous good. I applaud them. I might be a bit critical because sometimes the Lubavitch element seems too strong. It seems almost as if you have to convert to Lubavitch before you convert to Yiddishkeit...

Although I don't begrudge them their successes, may they increase, you know kachena vekahena... but it's a petty concern - it's not an ikar. The ikar is they are doing marvelous work. They're Chasidim. That's their strength and that's their weakness.

RD What is your position now on Eretz Yisroel?

NL I wouldn't go into that because it is a political discussion, which is more nuanced than you want to hear. I'm not a dove and I'm not a hawk. I feel that a lot of the talk is overblown. We are right before the elections, and we're not getting an honest opinion by anyone, either by Labor or Likud. I think that whoever wins is going to have to do more or less the same thing. The difference will be only in style, not in substance. I'm not terribly excited about this election, one way or the other. What concerns me more than the peace process in the long run is the Kulturkampf that's taking place. That bothers me. Here I feel that the real issue is, are we going to be a nation like all the nations, or are we going to be an Am Segulah? That is much more critical for the future development of Am Yisroel and Medinas Yisroel than whether we are going to negotiate with the Arabs with a smile or with a smirk.

RD Have you yourself attended a farbrengen?

NL No. I've seen it on television but I haven't been there.

RD Your writing has a lot of Chasidus.

NL Well, I come from a Chasidic background somewhat. My grandfather ZT'L, Yehoshuah Beim [sp.] was a very, very prominent Williamsburger, the author of Teshuvah Seferim, some of the most important seferim of World War Two and that period. He himself was not a Rebbe by any means, but he was the first Rosh Yeshiva in Vishnitz when he was 16 or 17 years old. He started the Vishnitzer Yeshiva in Vishnitz. He came from that lineage, from the Tzanzer background.

My other grandfather ZT'L was an Adam Poshut. He was not a Rov, but he was a man who traveled to the Belzer Rov in Lemberg [L]. So I come from Chasidic background and therefore am very close. What happened was, when I was in college I used to read on my own the history of Chasidus, because of my interest, and then, after I got Semichah and I decided to go for a doctorate, I did my work on Reb Chaim Volozhiner, which led me of course into Lubavitch and in turn to Tanya. [not clear]. I learned Tanya and Likutei Torah etc. etc. in an attempt to understand the differences. That you have in my Sefer on Torah Lishmoh. It is really a story of the growth of Hisnagdos and the relationship between Hisnagdos and Chasidus.

That sefer was printed originally in Hebrew by Mosad Harav Kook, and subsequently came out in an English translation called Torah by Ktav. I can give you a copy if you wish. It constantly refers to Chabad, because Chabad obviously has the most articulate exposition of Chasidus. Almost all the others are Droschos, a good Vort which was said at Sholosh Seudos, which a Chasid, generally in poor style, recorded. But the whole leaders of Chabad movement, they wrote. They wrote seforim directly on Machshovoh, and Divrei Elokim Chaim. So here you have it straight, and it is much more systematic, much more oisgerechent.

RD In your analysis of Reb Chaim Volozhiner, do you see a major philosophical difference that led to the [split between the groups]?

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NL I see a major philosophical difference between the Chasidim and Misnagdim as represented by the difference between Reb Chaim as a talmid of the Vilna Gaon and the Baal haTanya as a talmid of the Magid. The differences are very subtle. Major consequences to the differences, but the differences themselves are very subtle and they go within the same context. It's not as if one is coming from left field and one from right field. They are in the same context of how you interpret certain elements, in the detail of dealing with the result of Tzimtzum. There, I think I've discovered the nub of the differences which leads one to transcendence or to immanence, and how they relate to each other. It leaves one with a great deal of respect for both sides.

RD I don't really understand the shitah of the Vilna Gaon, how Tzimtzum is to be understood in the simple sense.

NL This difference goes back even before the Gaon. I'll give you the sefer in English. In Hebrew I hardly have any left.

RD I'd like it in English.

NL ~~In Hebrew ?? Zalman Ashur ??~~

Of course, you're not going to write about this in your sefer. You're writing about the Lubavitcher Rebbe. You don't want to get involved in an internal Machiokes. It is davke because of my deep respect for Lubavitch that I feel so saddened by what is happening now. I feel that it is a major tragedy. If it is not resolved, and resolved properly, I feel that it will be a bechayah ledoros, chas vesholom. The whole Moshiachist movement is a ~~siya skiyah~~. It is taking the greatest achievements of Lubavitch in all the years... 45 years of historic work and destroying them. It will be done out of good intentions and respect for a man and destroying everything he did. It's just dreadful. I wish there was someone in our generation who was strong enough and accepted on all sides to say, "Stop! No more!" It's terrible. It's dreadful.

RD I think everyone wishes that.

NL I saw the Times articles. ~~Who~~ <sup>ment</sup> advertises in the Times. I wept when I saw this. Vildkeit. I don't know where you stand on this [???]. It's sad, very sad.

RD When you don't have the manhig... [???]

NL It's a pity.

RD You are very well aware that there are many, in Los Angeles, who have this unity. There are Yechidim Mamash, outside of the norm. And in Eretz Yisroel... [???]

*twelf,* NL But this is the place from where it all emanates. If only it would be an internal thing, but they've gone public with it and what has happened as a result is that they have raised, inspired suspicion. Every time I meet a Lubavitcher I ask, "Is he one of them or is he sane?", which is terribly unfair...

RD That's beyond my scope... here in New York...

NL How about what's his name in Los Angeles?

RD Rabbi Cunin.

NL Yes, where does he stand?

RD Mainstream... he wants Moshiach should come, like every Yid.

NL But the idea of a posthumous Moshiach. It's mind-blowing. I don't want to go into it.

RD You mentioned earlier you had some thoughts about Moshiach.

NL I wish them well. I think it would be a good idea if we could cooperate in some areas. To cooperate with anyone, I would be happy... the normative Lubavitch movement. I appreciate their openness. In many ways.. Whenever I travel out of the city, I come to a Bais Chabad or a Lubavitcher shul, your people are doing exactly what we did. In other words, in an attempt to reach the oilom, you don't throw ~~kelchein~~... [???] You have to read a passage with them in English, you read it in English. If they come by car, you don't ask them any questions because they're going to ride anyway. You don't make it a policy you're allowed to ride with a car, but you don't

*every chumra of them*



make a policy that if you ride with a car you can't come into my shul. This has basically been our approach all along. Until you have enough people to set up in a community by your standards. I think it's intelligent. It's the way things should be done.

RD I have seen some musmochim of YU that have... ??? Is my assumption wrong? I'm not saying it's rampant.

NL It's a generational thing. This happened... For instance, when I graduated from Yeshiva College in 1949, there were still people, generally on the lowest level of the class, who thought they couldn't hack it here, couldn't make it, couldn't go into a semicha program that had a ~~Mr~~ Soloveitchik, and they also probably were more economically oriented, so they went to the Seminary. This wasn't only here. I could show you now leading reform and conservative rabbis who come from Torah Vodaas and Chaim Berlin. We always produced more rabbonim, so by us it was more ~~bold~~ <sup>more</sup> emphatic. I am here president almost twenty years. I don't know of a single student who went to the Seminary. I could show you ~~many~~ <sup>a number of</sup> students who came from the Seminary to us. The wheel turns over. It's a completely different orientation.

Now we have people coming to us from the outside in general.

RD Meaning?

NL Completely from secular backgrounds.

RD Coming to learn.

NL Coming to learn, and many of them become Rosh Yeshivos. Not merely musmochim in pulpits, but Rosh Yeshivos ~~like~~, and some of the finest. So we have people who defected to the conservative movement a generation or two ago. Now we have people who have defected in the other direction, ones who used to be anti-yeshiva becoming pro-, generally associating with the Litvishe yeshivos, but we haven't had any defections to the left in at least twenty thirty years. A whole different atmosphere.

NL Let me ask you a question. I know the name Dalfin. I remember I met a Mister Dalfin in Los Angeles at an OU convention.

RD That's Allen Dalfin, my father's second cousin ???

NL Really, really. Now I remember the name Dalfin. Please go ahead.

RD Would you see that the initiation of the movement of Torah Umada would be with the Vilna Gaon's allowing of certain ideologies that were not in the Jewish community at that moment.

NL What kind of ideologies did he allow?

RD When they started to come in from Germany, and they wanted to start teaching Dikduk, and they put an emphasis on Hebrew Grammar, and also what's written is that he sent some of the Talmidim to study general studies.

NL It's true and it's not true. See, the idea of emphasizing Hebrew grammar comes much before the influence of the Haskalah. It goes back to the Maharal. So does the emphasis on Machshovoh. It goes back to the Maharal, who was really a first-rate educational reformer who ~~said that the system~~ <sup>was critical of the system</sup> ..

Incidentally, we have now reverted to the system that he criticized. We teach Gemorah and that's all; you start a ~~kid~~ <sup>boy</sup> on Gemorah before he knows how to read Chumash and Rashi, and you put him into pilpul immediately. The Maharal was very upset by it. He was a great educational reformer; that tendency was there already.

What the Gaon did was not to battle the Haskalah, which I don't think affected him very much directly. It was a generation later that that took place. What he did was, he told his talmidim, ~~especially R. Yisroel Mishklov~~, that there should be some understanding of mathematics, and therefore R. Boruch Mishklov writes in the introduction to one of his seforim that the Gaon asked him to translate Euclid from Greek into Hebrew and also told him the famous statement that ~~public~~ <sup>certain</sup> people say is not authentic, but that itself is propaganda. It's authentic - I'm 100% sure it's authentic: "When a person lacks one measure of the world's wisdom, there are 10 measures of Torah wisdom that are lacking." That is very important for our Hashkafah.

The Torah Umada draws in this sense to some extent on the Misnagdic groups and to some extent on the Chassidic groups. It's simply an attempt to find, from within our own Mesorah, the ability to approach the world in this particular way. [very revealing statement adm].

The Gaon... ~~some of his talmidim, Boruch Mishklov and so forth~~ <sup>such as R. Yisroel Mishklov</sup>... He was attempting to bring in legitimate Chochmas Haolom into the Jewish community, and he had some talmidim, I forget the name right now, who were very important in setting up a ~~reformed~~ <sup>different</sup> ~~not with a capital R, with a small r~~ <sup>kind of</sup> Chinuch system, one which would prepare students more rationally, more intelligently for being able to understand Tanach and Torah Sheb'al Peh.

I don't think they were very successful. And I think the reason they weren't very successful was because the Haskalah came along and radicalized the frum community. If not for the Haskalah, I think naturally the frum community would have come to the same conclusion in a context of Emunah. Once they had to fight the Haskalah, with its excesses, it no longer followed what I would call a natural development, which would have had Limudei Chol in the context of Yiras Shomayim. That threw a crimp into the whole development.

RD This has been a very ...??

NL I don't know how much it's going to give you for your particular book, but please let me...

RD ...