

20 Kislev word

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19-20 Kislev and Parshas Vayeishev

I am writing this as someone who, although Chabad, grew up attending non-Lubavitch Mosdos in the city where I was raised. My primary time at day school was after Gimmel Tammuz, when the non-Lubavitch Frum Jewish world was at war with Lubavitchers and Chabad in an age-old fight that began with the Alter Rebbe.

I am writing this word, because of something I heard at a 19 Kislev Farbrengen, that the Alter Rebbe's choice after he was released was not to fight the people who perpetrated his suffering, even so much as attending "Avigdor's" house (mistakenly going there, rather than the Chassid upstairs), to be berated for 3 hours before the Alter Rebbe's troupe realized where he was. The Alter Rebbe commented that the 50+ days in jail paled in comparison to the three hours with the "Misnaged," who, despite the suffering he caused, and despite the miraculous salvation of the Alter Rebbe, chose to berate the Rebbe, causing further suffering. Despite all this, the Alter Rebbe told his Chassidim (and, with that, us) to focus on moving forward and spreading light, and not to cause harm to another Yid. But fast-forward 250 years, and there is a sentiment among Misnagedim that remains alive, one I grew up in and know well. The point, though, of what I am writing is something else.

Every day in school was a challenge. I had Rabbeim who would purposefully make my day hell for being a Lubavitcher (this was especially true when I began growing a beard after my bar mitzvah)—every Single Day, bullied, without fail. Now, I write this not for empathy, but rather to make a specific point. Despite the challenges, threats to personal safety, etc. I had a fire burning within me that knew the truth. The truth is that I have a Rebbe and I have Chassidus. What this means is that, during my dark times, I used to think the reason I was being made to go through this experience was that I had something special. And the truth is, we do have something special. Heaven only knows, the tools we have to be strong Jews despite the darkness around us, even if that darkness is by fellow Jews. My writing isn't to critique that internal self-hatred of Jews; rather, it is to say, we as Chassidim don't even realize the tools we have. Some people can only know this if they've been exposed to it. When you don't know, let me tell you with authority, you have the tools for greatness in your own personal life, most specifically, about being the best Jew you can be.

Even a simple explanation of the Rebbe from a Sicha, that has been repeated a million times by bochurim to shuls on Tahlucha, or in offices when bochurim are doing

mivztoim, those simple words, that we take for granted, are eons greater as an asset to strengthen our Yiddishkeit than the alternative that is without it. Only now, in our time, are Farbrengens happening in Lakewood and other non-Chabad communities that have finally been exposed to the greatness of the Chassidus given to us by our Rebbes. Specifically, after celebrating 19-20 Kislev. The whole Kitrog that the Alter Rebbe had to suffer for, was because the world was not, in the opinion of the heavens, ready for Chassidus. Still, since the wellsprings had begun to flow after 19-20 Kislev, it became incumbent on us to make the wellspring burst, not merely flow. Finally, our adversarial environment is getting it, and realizing the truth that Chassidus, and specifically Chabad Chassidus, has as a tool to get us through golus, and be steadfast focused on the mission, the mission of our Rebbe to bring Mashiach.

Why am I writing this? I was sitting at a 19 Kislev Farbrengen and was realizing that, as uninspired as I felt in the moment, I needed to understand what was missing. The Mashpia's point was heavily focused on some ideas that seemed not to connect with the people sitting around. Furthermore, the most interesting part of the Farbrengen was the recounting of the events leading up to the Alter Rebbe's arrest, and the attitude of another Jew that could go so far as to put the Alter Rebbe in harm's way. Then, when I heard about the 3 hours in the Misnaged's presence that the Alter Rebbe mockingly said was worse than his days spent in actual jail, it dawned on me. People, you need to understand that the tools set forth by the Baal Shem Tov, who's eventual disciple the Alter Rebbe was told that the wellsprings of Chassidus must burst forth, gave us, all these years later the tools to succeed, and use to be the best version of ourselves we can be, both as a person and most importantly as a Jew. You don't need to look elsewhere for inspiration or think that the grass is greener on the other side. We have it all.

In conclusion, shift your lens and look at any seforim shelf with a Tanya, Torah Ohr, Lekutei Torah, Sefer Sichos, Lekutei Sichos, Mamarim, etc. and see that you have the most precious golden Torah to Chap Arein, and harness, and live with, and use to be the best version you can be, despite life's challenges and the Avoda of being a human.

May this year's 19-20 Kislev celebration not just be a day in the calendar for us, but the point of reflection where we look at the gift of Chassidus we were given, and be inspired to use the tools the Rebbes gave us, specifically our Rebbe, because we are Dor Shevii, and may we see the face of Mashiach now.

Good Yom Tov.