

Tips for the Delta Variant

The Delta variant is spreading. What should we do about it?

A Clothing Manufacturer

Anxiety is once again on the rise. The Delta variant is circulating around the world, and once again, governments are talking about shutdowns and so on and so forth.

Allow me to share with you a story about a Chossid which could perhaps give you some perspective and some tools to deal with the current situation.

In Poland of 1934, Rabbi Simcha Zajac (*pronounced Zayantz*) was a young Chabad Chossid. It was two years after he had married; two children had joined their family, and he was in urgent need of a job. After some searching, he found work in a certain town, and went to request a blessing from the Previous Rebbe (who lived in Poland at the time) before embarking on the journey.

The Rebbe surprised him. Instead of blessing him and wishing him well, he told him, "Poland is no longer a place for Jews."

"Where should I go?" Simcha asked.

"Go to Brazil and establish kosher shechita there." (Rabbi Zajac was a certified Shochet).

"But Rebbe, I have two children," he argued. Brazil had no proper infrastructure for Jewish education, let alone Chassidic

education.

“You will have more children,” the Rebbe answered, “and I take responsibility for their education (*alai v'al tzavari*).”

Simcha returned home and shared the Rebbe's instructions with his father. His father was chassidic, but not Chabad, and he didn't like the idea at all. He went to ask his own Rebbe's advice, and his Rebbe told him, “Brazil?! Even the stones are *trief!*”

His father-in-law, on the other hand, told him: “You are a Lubavitcher, so you need to follow your Rebbe's instructions.”

Simcha indeed took his family to Brazil, and his father and father-in-law remained in a dispute over the matter and didn't speak to each other. It was only when they were both taken to the Majdanek concentration camp that they finally realized the Previous Rebbe's foresight.

In Brazil, following the Rebbe's instructions, Simcha became a shochet. His children grew older, and in 1947, he decided to send his two oldest sons, Meir and Mordechai, to study in the Previous Rebbe's yeshivah in 770. Mordechai was thirteen years old. In those days, it took a lot of self-sacrifice to send a child from Brazil to the United States, and the Previous Rebbe showered them with attention. Mordechai studied there for almost ten years until his marriage in 1957; he had the special merit of the Rebbe officiating at his wedding, and then he and his new wife returned to Brazil.

Three years later, for Shavuot 1960, he returned for a visit to

770. During his private audience with the Rebbe, he asked for a blessing for his new business venture: establishing a factory to manufacture coats. The Rebbe listened carefully and gave him a blessing.

On his way out of the room, as he was already turning the doorknob, the Rebbe suddenly asked him, “Where did you learn [in Yeshivah]?”

He was shocked by the question. “Rebbe, I learned here!”

“Really?” the Rebbe asked. “What did they teach you here — to be a manufacturer?”

“So, what does the Rebbe want me to do?” he asked.

“I want to understand,” the Rebbe said, “how a young man like you could sleep contentedly and eat contentedly while you know that a yeshivah of the Previous Rebbe is in danger of closing.”

“Which yeshivah?”

“Buffalo.”

The Rebbe told him to travel to Buffalo and reopen the Yeshivah. He didn’t need to move there permanently, but he was to begin the process. The Rebbe suggested that he travel to Brazil to help his wife pack up, but Mordechai knew that his father would never let him leave Brazil, so he remained in New York and his wife joined him there.

They moved to Buffalo and lived there for three and a half

years. He opened the Yeshivah and began fundraising throughout the region. He later related that there were times when he walked through the streets of downtown Buffalo with holes in his shoes on the coldest days of the year because he couldn't afford to fix them. Nevertheless, those were the happiest days of his life, because he knew he was fulfilling the Rebbe's will.

True Righteousness

In this week's Torah portion, Moshe sums up the forty years in the desert in a speech he delivers to the Jewish people. He describes how G-d led them through the desert for 40 years, while providing them with manna each day (chapter 8). The Talmud explains how the process worked: "For righteous people, the manna fell at their doorstep. For ordinary people, they had to go out and collect it. Evil people had to work hard and search for it" (Yoma 75a).

The Rebbe once explained that the manna of each person received corresponded to his level of faith. Those who had complete trust in G-d received their manna in the most convenient way possible. Those who had a lower level of faith needed to invest some effort, and those who had the lowest level were forced to work very hard. (Devarim 5734, Lahak booklet pg. 14).

This short statement is actually an amazing concept.

When we think of righteous people, we imagine a person who scrupulously observes the Torah, prays a lot, and does acts of kindness. Being that they are so righteous, you may reason,

they are deserving of manna at their doorstep.

But the Rebbe says otherwise: a person could observe the Torah righteously but still lack in perfect faith in G-d. True faith in G-d — the firm belief that G-d will take care of you and give you only good — is very difficult to achieve.

Who are the people that received manna at their doorstep? Not necessarily the people who behaved righteously; it was the people who had perfect faith.

Many people recognize that everything comes from G-d. However, it is much more difficult to internalize the belief that everything that G-d does, is the best for us. That's a whole different level; it's like the trust we have in a spouse to do everything for the benefit of our children. The people who received the manna at their doorstep were those who had a perfect trust in G-d and knew that He only has our best interest in mind.

The Most Difficult Job

My friends, the Rebbe once repeated a tradition from the Rebbe Maharash that our livelihoods are like modern-day manna. The more faith we have, the less we will need to work for it. (10 Shevat 5741).

The question is: what is more difficult — working hard or having absolute faith in G-d?

Let's ask the question a bit differently:

What is more difficult, physical labor or intellectual labor? Is it

easier to be a gardener or a lawyer? The answer is that intellectual labor is more difficult. People that need a break from intellectual labor are told by their doctors to engage in physical labor.

But faith in G-d is more than just intellectual labor. It's mental labor. It is much easier to engage in physical or intellectual labor than to bring ourselves to have absolute faith in G-d.

This is what G-d expects of us today. Instead of worrying about the future and constantly checking and rechecking the amount of new Covid patients and what percentage of them were vaccinated, we would be better served to develop our faith in G-d.

This doesn't mean we should disregard the virus. In fact, Torah commands us to safeguard our health. But our energy and enthusiasm should be directed towards positive thinking: that G-d, who manages to care for billions of people, will no doubt watch over us and care for us.

Faith is achieved through joy. When you wake up in the morning and feel good about the fact that you were born and were born a Jew, you gain the strength to overcome all your deepest fears. And then, when you open your front door, you will discover that G-d sent you a package — manna, straight from heaven.