

The Spiritual Global Warming

Category: Bereishis, Vayetzei

The world is slowly getting warmer—but this time, it's happening in a positive way.

The Kinus

This week, I was at the Kinus Hashluchim, the international conference of Chabad rabbis. The highlight of the banquet was an address by Rabbi Yehoshua Sudakov, the Rebbe's emissary to Israel's deaf community. He delivered his entire presentation in sign language, and on the small corner of the screen, his speech was "translated" into spoken English for us commoners.

Rabbi Sudakov shared his own journey to Judaism and to Chabad, and how he came to operate a unique Chabad House and a hospitality center which caters to the population of 15,000 deaf people in Israel.

What moved me the most was how he organizes bar mitzvahs for deaf children. These kids grow up seeing their peers celebrate their bar mitzvahs, and feel excluded because they can't participate in the same way. Then comes a rabbi who speaks their language, shows them how to put on tefillin, dances with them, and fills their day with joy. Witnessing the smiles on these children's faces is absolutely heartwarming.

Warming Temperatures

You know, this past summer was the hottest on record globally since temperature records began in 1850. Climate scientists are increasingly alarmed by global warming and are urging world leaders to take decisive action to curb this potentially catastrophic trend. This has sparked numerous global events and discussions on how to effectively address the situation.

So last week, at our conference, we discussed global warming—just not in the physical sense. It was focused on spiritually warming the world.

Back in 1990, when Rabbi Yosef and Esty Greenberg were sent by the Rebbe to

Alaska, he told them at dollars to “warm up Alaska,” to spread the warmth and light of Judaism there. But long before, the Rebbe had begun a campaign of global warming. By 1950, when he took over the leadership of the Chabad movement, he was already urging Chasidim to go out and spread Judaism’s message to every Jew around the world.

The Rebbe often emphasized that we shouldn’t just be satisfied with casually meeting Jews and sharing a bit of Judaism with them; it has to be our main focus. He called on young couples to dedicate their lives to this mission.

Starting out was tough; who would want to leave 770, the vibrant center where the Rebbe lived and worked, to go to a place that was spiritually cold? A Chassid could be right there by the Rebbe during the joyous Simchat Torah hakafot, dancing with ten thousand others, or be in some remote location struggling to gather a minyan to dance for half an hour.

Over the years, the institution of shlichus developed. By the late ’80s, the Rebbe had established the Kinus Hashluchim, which breathes new life into the Shluchim who attend. Each one returns to their city and community reinvigorated.

At this week’s Conference, you could really feel how this movement, responsible for the spiritual global warming of the world, is basically self-sustaining. It’s unstoppable. While physical global warming might still be stopped, one thing is clear: the Rebbe founded a movement of spiritual warmth that nothing can stop.

Thirty years since Gimmel Tammuz, the institution of shlichus has not only remained strong but has expanded tremendously. I met young emissaries, one from Vietnam, another from Zambia—places nobody would have considered thirty years ago.

In the past, a Chassid ready to embark on a shlichus was viewed as performing a miracle. Today, it’s the most natural thing in the world.

Visible Miracles

We are now in the month of Kislev, and soon we will celebrate Chanukah. Everyone is familiar with the mitzvah of lighting the menorah to commemorate the miracle of the oil. However, there’s another addition we make during

Chanukah. In the Amidah prayer, recited three times a day, we include a section that begins with “Ve’al HaNissim,” where we recount the miracle of Chanukah—which notably does not mention the miracle of the oil at all.

Instead, the miracle we emphasize in this specific prayer is the military victory: “When the oppressive Greek kingdom rose against Your people Israel... You took up their cause, avenged their wrongs, delivered the strong into the hands of the weak, and the many into the hands of the few...” It highlights the miraculous victory in battle.

Chanukah isn’t the only holiday during which we say the “Ve’al HaNissim” prayer. On Purim, right after the Modim prayer, we also add “Ve’al HaNissim” and recount the story of the Purim miracle “in the days of Mordechai and Esther...”

The Rebbe raises an interesting point about the prayer: we recite it during Chanukah and Purim, but not during Passover. Why is that? After all, Passover commemorates the Exodus from Egypt, a cornerstone miracle that introduced the concept of miracles to the Jewish people. The name of the month, “Nissan,” which stands for the word NES = miracle in Hebrew hints at the importance of the Exodus as the root of all Jewish miracles. So why is the prayer omitted?

The Rebbe explains that the Exodus was so clearly a miracle beyond the bounds of nature—there were no battles, just divine intervention—that everyone could see it was a supernatural event. That’s why we don’t need to say that it was a miracle in “Ve’al HaNissim.”

On the other hand, the miracles of Chanukah and Purim happened within what looked like normal historical events. Chanukah saw a small group of poorly equipped Jews win a military victory over a much stronger army, while in Purim, the survival of the Jewish people seemed to hinge on palace politics. By including these stories in “Ve’al HaNissim,” we underscore that behind these seemingly natural events, there was a divine hand at work, orchestrating these victories as true miracles. This addition makes the prayer a powerful reminder of the hidden miracles in our history. (Toras Menachem 5732 vol. ?? pg. 367)

When a miracle is hidden within natural events, when people could claim it was just nature, then the mention in prayers like on Purim and Chanukah becomes significant. It reminds us that even when hidden, these were indeed acts of divine intervention.

The same can be said about the Rebbe's magnificent shlichus enterprise. In the early years, it was necessary to publish stories about a shliach in one place and miracles occurring to another shliach elsewhere. Albums were printed to showcase the revolution the Rebbe made in the world through his Shluchim, which is why the Rebbe instructed to print Chanukah albums, for example. Subsequently, he directed the printing of the Shluchim Album, which was released in four splendid volumes. Those are all wonderful, and we need more of them, as the Rebbe said.

But what is happening in recent years is a profoundly different phenomenon. Today, to learn about the shlichus enterprise, one does not need to read in a newspaper; every Jew who has any connection to Judaism has a shliach they are connected to, or at least knows a shliach they can turn to.

I personally know entire families scattered across the globe, each member of the extended family belongs to a Chabad House in their place of residence; meaning they all go to Chabad.

If once we needed to tell everyone about the miracles of Chabad, today the miracle is so clear that there is no need to tell about it; every Jew, wherever they are in the world, is part of the miracle. If they need something, the first natural thing they do is turn to Chabad.

The Rebbe started a movement of global warming—and this one is a good one. So make sure you get on board.