



מעין ישראל  
Mayan Yisroel

# Think Chassidus

December 2011  
Rosh Chodesh Kislev 5772

**Think Chassidus:** Exposing the neshama of Yiddishkeit, and bringing to life concepts that we know and are familiar with

**Think Chassidus** is a monthly publication distributed to 20,000 homes, shuls, and stores in Flatbush. To advertise or sponsor, please email [info@mayanyisroel.net](mailto:info@mayanyisroel.net).

Editor: Rabbi Avi Shlomo

Designed by: Raizy Levine

/1

/3

/5

/7

/8

/9

/10

**Editorial**  
Why Am I  
Here?

**Think Chinuch**  
The Goal of  
the Forth Grade  
Rebbe

**The Rest of  
the Story**  
Understanding  
Esav - Born To  
Struggle

**Words of Fire**  
Yaakov  
and Esav

**Halacha**  
Does Halacha  
Allow  
Cosmetic  
Surgery?

**Da Ma  
SheTashiv**  
How does  
Chassidus view  
Gehinom?

**Not Just a  
Story**  
Eliyahu Hanavi  
in Minsk

## WHY THINK CHASSIDUS IS BECOMING A MONTHLY

Recently, I got a ride with a Yid, a successful businessman, and a person who makes kvios ittim l'Torah. Naturally, as I always do, I invited him to join a Chassidus shiur. He told me, "Rabbi, I have very limited time for shiurim, why should I spend it learning Chassidus? Don't get me wrong, Chassidus is very lofty and spiritual. It always has a good vort and a sharp insight, but it's just not that practical in day-to-day life. But thank you for the offer."

This is a common misconception that I encounter, and the truth is quite the contrary. There is nothing more practical.

The Belzer Rebbe זצ"ק was a great oheiv Yisrael. He said, "Today, there is no such thing as a rasha. Even a Jew who does not keep Torah and mitzvos is just a תינוק שנשבה and simply does not know better."

Once, he was walking on Shabbos with his chassidim, and they approached a man smoking a cigarette. When the man saw them, he quickly threw down the cigarette and extinguished it. One of the chassidim commented gently, "Rebbe, you see, some Jews know that they are not supposed to smoke on Shabbos, and do so anyway!" The Belzer Rebbe replied, "No. This man forgot that today is Shabbos, and only when he saw us approaching in Shabbos clothing, did he remember."

The Belzer Rebbe was not naïve. Obviously, the man knew that smoking is forbidden on Shabbos, which is why he extinguished his cigarette when he saw the Rebbe approaching. What the Belzer Rebbe meant was that due to his lack of education, he had "forgotten" what Shabbos is all about. He has

*Continued on page 2*

*Continued from cover*

lost touch with the essence of Shabbos. He doesn't "remember" the spirit, the holiness, the beauty, the joy, and the experience of Shabbos. But when the man saw a procession of Yidden dressed in Shabbos clothing, his neshama experienced something, so he extinguished the cigarette.

Far more important than telling people what to do is connecting them to the true soul of a mitzvah—plugging them in to the source. But to do this, we have to expose and get in touch with the most important part of our lives: our souls. The neshama is who we truly are, and it is the life force behind everything that we do. But day-to-day existence desensitizes us.

The pnimiyus of Torah arouses the pnimiyus of the Yid. Because it is beyond the surface, it touches us beyond the surface, too, and we "remember" the answers to the most important questions in life. Answers that we may think we already "know," but like the Jew in the story, have actually "forgotten" as we traverse through life trying to balance our marriages, our families, and our jobs. What is the purpose of life? What

is the spiritual affect of Torah and mitzvos? What differentiates a Yid from a goy? Did you know that you have not one, but two souls and how much of an effect that has on your life? How is it possible to truly love your fellow Jew like yourself? How can you arrive at true bitachon and learn how to throw yourself completely into Hashem's embrace? How can a finite human connect to an infinite G-d?

Chassidus asks and answers these questions. It explains reality and the nature of life—not from our perspective, but rather from Hashem's perspective. The language of Chassidus is the language of the soul. It is not just about a sharp vort or an inspiring message. It actually allows us to "remember" and internalize these truths.

"Think Chassidus" is now becoming a monthly publication in Flatbush. Our hope is to give you a small taste of the world of Chassidus, although such a limited medium doesn't do it justice. In times like these, let us expose a little more of our neshama, and learn to live a more soulful existence. Enjoy!

*Rabbi Yoseph Vigler*



# Real Chinuch for the Real World

## The goal of the fourth grade Rebbi

By Rabbi Yoseph Vigler

A fourth grade Rebbi once told me that even though he is teaching Chumash, his goal is to prepare his students to make a laining on a blatt Gemara. After all, in the long run, that is what the student is going to spend most of his life on, im yirtze Hashem. Everything else is laying the foundation, training, and sharpening the child's mind to analyze just as he will when learning Gemara.

According to this, the goal is not for the child to master the words, facts, personalities, dates, and locations in Chumash. The child is not expected to know off hand details like the names of the people between Adam and Noach, the dates of the rainfall of the mabul, who the sons of Kush were, or who was 777 years old when he died. For this, the child can just open up the Chumash and find the answer.

Many parents feel the same. They believe that the goal of a child learning Chumash Bereishis is to internalize the fact that Hashem created the world; that Hashem brought a mabul because the people were wicked; that there was one man named

Avraham who introduced emuna to the world and followed Hashem against all odds. That's what is important; the rest of the story is secondary.

### The true objective of Yeshiva

I beg to disagree.

The real question here is, what constitutes limud haTorah? What is our objective in learning Torah?

If it is all about knowing what is relevant in day-to-day life, then a Yeshiva curriculum should only consist of practical halacha and basic hashkafa. Why do we spend so many hours toiling to understand theoretical Talmudic scenarios? Why do we learn about tuma and tahara, kodshim and korbanos, agricultural laws, and damages caused by farm animals?

Torah is more than a manual for a good and moral life. Learning is an opportunity to grasp Hashem's ideas and wisdom in our minds, to fuse our human mind with the Divine, to unite with Hashem and elevate our entire mode of living. The cases being discussed are merely the "handle"



With compliments of:



**ALLSTATE**  
Leasing Collision  
Repairs Insurance  
718.633.6161

Hashem provided us, but the real point is the connection that is being created in the course of study.

As Yidden, we appreciate this inherent kedusha of Torah, and therefore we enjoy even the theoretical. Paradoxically, it is then that our connection to Hashem is most apparent, for there is no other objective but “lishma!”

From this perspective, every single word, subject, fact, place, date and personality in Torah is equally vital to master. There is nothing secondary or irrelevant. There is equal divine holiness in the words ‘ליתן תמנע ואחת’ as there is in the words, ‘אנכי ה' אלוקיך אנכי’. We must educate our children to fall in love with Torah, and when someone is in love, every detail matters.

### How To Teach

According to this, the way to lay a foundation that all future learning will build upon it to teach our children the preciousness of every word of Torah, and to help them master and even memorize it, backwards and forwards. One way to do this is by having the children lein the chumash continuously together. A proficient Baal Koreh can tell you the tiniest details of a parsha by referring back to the words, which he already knows. This method of teaching has proven to produce phenomenal results.

And by the way, it was Lemech who was 777 years old when he died, and that’s one of Hashem’s messages to us.

*Continued from page 8*

with the advancement of experience and expertise in this area of medicine, the risks involved have been greatly minimized, and therefore undergoing such a surgery cannot be reasonably considered a risk to life.

### “Improving” Hashem’s Handiwork?

However, Rav Eliezer Waldenberg (Tzitz Eliezer, Vol. 12, 43), disagreed with these opinions, and ruled unequivocally that elective cosmetic surgery is forbidden. In his opinion, the Torah’s statement, “ורפא ורפא,” from which we learn that one may and must seek medical help, does not apply to ailments that are purely cosmetic. He also adds a philosophical reasoning: One must believe that Hashem, the greatest artisan of all, formed him or her in the most fitting way, and one must not change this form. Changing one’s figure for beauty concerns alone is tantamount to insulting Hashem’s handiwork!

Many Poskim have reached some sort of compromise, ruling that cosmetic surgery is permitted in order to remove an abnormality if there is a grave psychological need, or to facilitate a happy marriage or decent livelihood. However, cosmetic surgery is prohibited if done for beauty or convenience alone.

A related question is whether a man undergoing cosmetic surgery for aesthetic purposes is included in the prohibition of *אשה ולא ילבש גבר שמלת אשה*, which precludes a man from indulging in feminine activity.

This is a very subjective issue in which people can easily delude themselves about the degree of pain and abnormality associated with their looks. It is of utmost importance to personally discuss this issue with one’s Rav, as the Halacha varies with each case.

*With compliments of:*

### Pavilion Electronics

Your Best Local Source for Digital Cameras,  
Computers & Audio Equipment

Canon Sennheiser Panasonic hp

3410 Ave N

718-252-8141

### FLOWERS R US

Shabbos flowers delivered to your door!

Joey Weinstein 917.755.0492



# The Rest of the Story

## Understanding Esav - Born to Struggle

The question is difficult to ask, and even more difficult to answer:

How did two tzadikim, Yitzchak and Rivka, have a son like Esav? Where did his “evil genes” come from? Esav was both conceived and raised in the same good Jewish home as Yaakov, so what went wrong? Certainly Yitzchak and Rivka gave him the best chinuch possible. How did he become a wild “man of the field?”

Another equally perturbing question is, did Esav have free choice, or was his wicked destiny pre-ordained? The Midrash tells us that when Rivka passed a beis medrash, Yaakov struggled to get out, and when she passed a house of idol worship, Esav struggled to get out. This implies that, even before birth, Esav was predisposed to idol worship! A fundamental axiom of Torah is that every person, no matter the circumstances of his personality or upbringing, has absolute freedom to choose between good and bad, and therefore is held accountable for his or her decisions. But, seemingly, Esav had no choice!

### Two Personalities. Two Missions

The Rambam writes in Shmona Perakim that there are two types of Jews: the “perfectly pious” and the “one who conquers his inclinations.” The “perfectly pious” individual despises evil and desires only good; since evil does not entice him, his life’s work consists only of increasing and enhancing the good in himself and the world. On the other hand, the “conqueror”

struggles with the negative in himself and in his environment and, in the struggle itself, sees his mission in life.

The difference between them is not a matter of behavior, and both live moral, halachic lives beyond reproach. Where they differ is in their character and in their focus. The “perfectly pious” individual was either born with a flawless character or has succeeded in permanently refining it. He now concentrates on attaining greater heights within the realm of good itself. The “conqueror,” however, is still struggling with his nature, constantly defeating his negative inclinations in order to maintain the integrity of his behavior. In fact, to him, the struggle is not the means to attain a state of perfection but an end in itself. Even if he never rids himself of imperfection, he has realized his mission in life. His contribution is the very process of struggling with evil. That is what Hashem desires of him.



Every man has been given the divine gift of absolute free choice and the spiritual resources necessary to overcome any challenge—no matter how strongly the deck may be stacked against him, and no matter what demons pervade his heart. As Chazal have said (Sukah 52b), “If one is greater than his fellow, his evil inclination is also greater.” Conversely, for every challenge that man must face, he has what it takes to meet and overcome it.

### Why Yitzchak Loved Esav

Yitzchak, as a founding father of the Jewish people, incorporated within himself the potential for both modes of living, and his twin sons embodied these two aspects of man’s service of his Creator. The fact that Esav had a powerful inborn inclination towards evil did not mean that he was doomed to a life of corruption. It meant

that his challenge in life was to be a “cunning hunter, a man of the field,” a “conqueror” who grapples with the coarseness in him—self and the world. It meant that, unlike Yaakov, who was “perfectly pious” and whose goodness was natural, Esav possessed the potential to produce goodness by constantly overcoming his own negativity, which is equally vital to Hashem’s purpose in creation.

Yitzchak educated both of his sons in their own unique mission. “ויגדלו הנערים”, “the children matured.” As Yaakov thrived in the tents of study, Esav initially embraced

his calling: the challenges of the material world. That is why Yitzchak, seeing Esav’s tremendous spiritual potential, loved him. It was only later in his life, the day Avraham passed away, that Esav, using his own free choice, self-destructed.

But the mission of the Jew, even someone with the personality type of Esav, is to overcome his nature and serve Hashem. This transformation will be completed with the coming of Moshiach, when *ועלו מושיעים* בהר שעיר לשפוט את הר עשו

*Torat Menachem, Toldos, 5740.*



## Girls Program

Sundays 11 - 1 pm Ages 9-12

- Davening and Discussion with Tzippy

- Music and Dance!

- Learn a real instrument. Start with the recorder and progress to guitar!

- Dance and gym fun with Devoiry!

10 weeks for \$200

At: Mayan Yisroel 3307 Ave. N

Starting Oct 30<sup>th</sup> 2011, 2 Cheshvan 5772

For more information email  
Tzippy@MayanYisroel.net  
or 718-781-3864




## Attention Boys 10-12

- Want to be a real Baal Koreh and know how to lain properly?
  - Based on the Zilberman system of learning. You will iy”h know AND understand the lain-ing. With Rabbi YY Vigler.
  - After school Sundays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Includes dinner. At Mayan Yisroel, 3307 Avenue N.
  - Grand trip at the end of the semester based on coupon award system!
  - No charge. Sponsorship available.
- For info: info@MayanYisroel.net

With compliments of:

Americare



CHEIN  
INSURANCE  
AGENCY, INC.

Pinchas Chein, *President*

1609 East 29<sup>th</sup> St, Brooklyn, NY 11229  
Tel: 718.355.8602 / Fax 646.895.7646  
cheinins@gmail.com

# Words of Fire

## Yaakov and Esav

### Two Methods of Serving Hashem

“Esav was an expert hunter, a man of the field, and Yaakov was a sincere man, a dweller of tents.”

Rav Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch (1902 – 1994) said: Yaakov and Esav represent two methods of serving Hashem. Yaakov, the dweller of tents, represents serving Hashem through studying Torah and fulfilling mitzvos. On the other hand, Esav, the expert hunter and man of the field, represents serving Hashem by bringing holiness into the mundane, business aspects of life, the field, thereby “hunting” and capturing them to become holy.

### What did the angel of Esav look like?

An “enlightened” reform Jew approached R’ Eizel Charif of Slonim (1801-1872) and attempted to persuade him using lomdus that the reform movement was authentic. R’ Eizel realized that though this man was a scholar, he possessed no yiras shomayim.

He told him that there are two opinions in Gemara as to what the angel of Esav who fought with Yaakov looked like: a goy, or a talmid chacham. The question is, how can there be two opinions so diametrically opposed? Now, I know that sometimes you can meet a person who talks like a talmid chacham and a goy simultaneously...

### The Rebbe’s Wayward Son

Rav Chaim of Chernovitz had a son who went off the derech of his father. Nevertheless, his father loved him dearly and showed him great affection. He said, “I ask from Hashem that He treat His children, Bnei Yisroel, the way I treat mine.” Even if Yidden are not perfect, He should love them the way I love my son. This is what the posuk means, ‘וַיֵּאָהֵב יִצְחָק אֶת עֵשָׂו כִּי צַיִד’, “Yitzchak loved Esav.” Because of this unconditional love, צַיִד בְּפִי, he had in his mouth an answer to reply: He demanded from Hashem that He too should have unconditional love for us, His children.

With compliments of:



THE  
**VIDEO**

Yossi Tepper  
Tel: (347) 242-0088

New York's #1  
VIDEO - PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO  
Over a Decade of Experience

**MAVEN**

# Practical Halacha

## Does Halacha Allow Cosmetic Surgery?



By Baruch S. Davidson

*Editor's Note: This article is for theoretical purposes only. As these issues are quite complex, a Rav must be consulted in each individual case.*

In 1964, a woman who felt that plastic surgery would enhance her prospects of finding a suitable shidduch, posed the following shailah to several leading poskim: Was she allowed to shorten her nose surgically to beautify her appearance? Does Halacha allow cosmetic surgery whose sole purpose is physical enhancement?

This shailah brought up a number of interesting halachic issues:

Our bodies are not our personal property which we may treat as we please. They are on

loan to us from Hashem for the duration of our lives, to enable us to fulfill our mission in this world, which requires having a physical body. A soul alone cannot don tefillin or light Shabbat candles. As such, we are not entitled to mutilate our bodies in any way. "Wounding oneself" by undergoing surgery in general is problematic.

However, because Torah commands us to heal ourselves, maintain our health, and value our lives, surgery which is deemed necessary to treat an illness or injury is allowed—and actually required.

But the question remains: Is the prohibition of tampering with our bodies waived for a purely cosmetic concern? There is also a certain element of risk and a chance of complications, especially when one undergoes general anesthesia.

### Alleviating Psychological Pain

Rav Yaakov Breisch, (Chelkas Yaakov, Vol. 1, 31) responded to this woman's question that the prohibition of wounding oneself does not apply in a situation where the pain is intended to alleviate another more excruciating pain. He brought proofs from various places in Gemara that the psychological pain associated with having abnormal features overrides the pain associated with the surgery. He therefore permitted this surgery when done to alleviate psychological distress. A similar explanation was offered by Rav Moshe Feinstein (Igros Moshe, Choshen Mishpat Vol. 2, 66), who explained that the Torah only prohibits self-affliction when done with malice, or in a degrading manner.

Rav Breisch also addressed the risks associated with surgery, and ruled that

*Continued on page 4*

**With compliments of:**

**Medco Electric -  
Established 1975 -  
Licensed Electrical Contractors, Inc.  
3309 Ave. N Brooklyn, NY 11234  
718.253.1335**



# “Da Ma SheToshiv”

## How to explain fundamental ideas of Jewish faith to the non-religious Jews whom you encounter.

By Rabbi Aron Moss  
*Rav of the Nefesh Shul of Sydney, Australia*

### QUESTION:

How do I explain the concept of Gehinom to a non-religious Jew? Is it just a punishment for sinners, or is it something deeper? How does Chasidus view Gehinom?

### ANSWER:

Gehinom is not a punishment in the conventional sense; it is, in fact, the expression of a great kindness.

It is a spiritual “place,” and although it is usually translated as “Hell,” a better translation would be “the Supernal Washing Machine.” Because that’s exactly how it works. The way our soul is cleansed in Gehinom is similar to the way our clothes are cleansed in a washing machine.

Put yourself in your socks’ shoes, so to speak. If you were to be thrown into boiling hot water and flung around for half an hour, you might start to feel that someone doesn’t like you. However, the fact is that

only after going through a wash cycle can the socks can be worn again.

We don’t put our socks in the washing machine to punish them. We put them through what seems like a rough and painful procedure only to make them clean and wearable again. The intense heat of the water loosens the dirt, and the force of being swirled around shakes it off completely. Far from hurting your socks, you are doing them a favor by putting them through this process.

So too with the soul. Every act we do in our lifetime leaves an imprint on our soul. The good we do brightens and elevates our soul, and every wrongdoing leaves a stain that needs to be cleansed. If, at the end of our life, we leave this world without fixing the wrongs we have done, our soul is unable to reach its place of rest on high. We must go through a cycle of deep cleansing. Our soul is flung around at an intense

spiritual heat to rid it of any residue it may have gathered, and to prepare it for entry into Heaven.

Of course, this whole process can be avoided. If we truly regret the wrong we have done and make amends with the people we have hurt, we can leave this world with “clean socks.”

Although the purpose of Gehinom is to prepare the soul for the experience of the spiritual bliss of Gan Eden, while the person is alive he has the opportunity to cleanse and prepare himself in a painless and almost instantaneous way. This is authentic tshuva, which can transform a rasha into a tzadik in one instant.

So why wait?



# Not Just a Story

## Eliyahu Hanavi in Minsk

By Yitzchak Buxbaum,  
author of *The Light and Fire of The Baal Shem Tov*.

A man once travelled to the Baal Shem Tov in Mezhibuzh and made an audacious request: “Rebbe! I want to see Eliyahu Hanavi!”

“Ok. It’s simple,” said the Baal Shem. “Get two boxes, fill one with food, and the other with children’s clothes. Before Rosh Hashanah, travel to Minsk. On the outskirts of town, where the forest begins, is a dilapidated house. Find that house, but don’t knock on the door immediately; stand there for a while and listen. Then, shortly before sunset, knock on the door and ask for hospitality.”

The man went home and informed his wife he would be away for yomtov. Although his wife was upset, she agreed that this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that he simply could not pass up.

So he went and filled the parcels with food and clothing and set

off to Minsk, where he found the broken-down hut at the edge of town. He arrived shortly before evening and stood in front of the door, listening. Inside, he heard children crying, “Mommy, we’re hungry. It’s yomtov and we don’t even have decent clothes to wear!” He heard the mother answer, “Children, trust in Hashem. He will take care of us and send us everything we need.” Then, the man knocked on the door.

The woman opened it, and he asked if he could stay with them. “How can I welcome you when I don’t even have any food in the house for my own children?” she said. “Don’t worry,” he said, “I have enough food for all of us.” He came in, opened the boxes, gave the children the food and clothing, and eagerly settled in, anticipating with bated breath the imminent revelation of a lifetime.

For two days he did not sleep. But yomtov passed uneventfully, alone on the outskirts of Minsk.



With compliments of:

**Happy Dry Cleaners**  
2438 Nostrand Ave. (J & K)  
**718.677.7704**  
“Curb Side Service”

  
**SPOONS**  
BREAKFAST · LUNCH · DINNER  
2923 AVENUE J  
OFF CORNER OF NOSTRAND AVENUE

**Taubus** The Complete Furniture Store  
FURNITURE

**Knob Hangers**  
www.knobhangers.com

Immediately after yomtov, he returned to the Baal Shem Tov and complained, "Master, I did not see anything. Eliyahu Hanavi did not show up!" "Did you do everything I told you?" asked the Baal Shem Tov. "I did!" he said. "And you didn't see him?" "No, Rebbe." "Are you sure?" "Yes, Rebbe! I didn't see him!" "Then you'll have to return for Yom Kippur," said the Baal Shem Tov. "Go back before Yom Kippur with a box of food and a box of clothing to the same house. Again, be sure to arrive an hour before sunset, and don't knock immediately. Wait for a while and stand in front of the door, listening."

So he went back to Minsk before Yom Kippur. This time, he went earlier and stood in front of the door, listening. Inside he heard children crying, "Mommy, we're hungry! We haven't eaten the whole day! How can we fast for Yom Kippur?" "Children!" said the mother. "Do you remember when you were crying before Rosh Hashanah that you had

no food or clothes? And I told you, 'Trust in Hashem! He'll send us food and clothing and everything else we need!' Wasn't I right? He sent Eliyahu Hanavi with food and clothing! And he stayed with us for two full days! Now you're crying again that you're hungry. I promise you, Eliyahu will come now and bring us food!"

It was then that the man understood what the Baal Shem Tov had meant. By giving tzedaka and helping a destitute family in need, he was creating a revelation in the world of G-dliness that surpassed even seeing E l i y a h u .

G r e a t e r  
than seeing  
Eliyahu, the  
savior of  
Yidden, is  
becoming  
Eliyahu and  
helping a  
fellow Jew.



### Weekly Shiur for Ladies with Rabbi Vigler

Wednesdays @ 10:00am  
At Mayan Yisroel, 3307 Ave N

### Baalebaitim: Learn a Masechta and retain it when you're finished:

Blending a shiur with chavrusa study.

Track 1: Nightly 8 - 9pm.

Track 2: Daily 6:25 - 7am

At Mayan Yisroel, 3307 Ave N  
Rabbi@MayanYisroel.net

## דער בעל שם טוב'ס א ווארט

Arise from sleep with zerizus because just like the Holy One, blessed be He, creates and renews, you have been re-created and therefore are capable too of creating and producing.

(Tzavaat Harivash, 20)



With compliments of:

**Supermarket of Avenue N**  
3524 Flatlands Ave. 718-377-3377



Supermarketorders@gmail.com  
Delivery in under 30 min.



718 253 2600 3005 Ave K  
Cholov Yisroel Free Delivery

*With compliments of:*



**ELCHANAN ARYEH**

*Mortgage Banker*

*"For All Your Home Financing Needs"*

[iaryeh@gmail.com](mailto:iaryeh@gmail.com)

917.682.6263

**MOST COMPETITIVE RATES**

