

Rabbi's Article II

The Angel is in the Details

Concerning *Chai* (lit. "life"; 18th of) *Elul* (-[Link](#)), Rabbi Yoseph Yitzchok of Lubavitch, the *Previous Rebbe* (-[Link](#)) said: *It is common among chasidim the ancient saying, with two versions: (i) 'Chai (18th of) Elul is the day brings and permeates life (chai) into Elul,' and (ii) 'Chai Elul (אלול) is the day that gives life into the service of (-Songs 6:3) 'I am to my beloved and my beloved is unto me (אני לְיְדוּדֵי יְדוּדֵי גִי; the acronym of אלול).'"*

We need to understand: The word *Elul* carries many different acronyms for the different services of *Elul*¹, of which "I am to my beloved and my beloved is unto me," --the service of *prayer*--, is but one of them. Hence, why would the *Previous Rebbe*, after including all the services of *Elul* in the first version, then go on to quote the second version, which speaks only of one specific service of *Elul*?!

The Explanation: Chai Elul is the birthday of the *Baal Shem Tov* (-[Link](#)), founder of *General* (all of) *Chassidus*, and two generations later, *Chai Elul* is the birthday of the *Alter Rebbe* (-[Link](#)), founder of *Chabad Chassidus* (one branch of *chassidus*). And the first version of the ancient Chassidic saying is speaking of *Chai Elul* as the birthday of the *Baal Shem Tov*, while the second version, as the birthday of the *Alter Rebbe*.

The fundamental difference between *General Chassidus* (*Baal Shem Tov*) and *Chabad Chassidus* (*Alter Rebbe*) can be understood from a short statement by the *Previous Rebbe*: "The *Baal Shem Tov* showed us how we need to serve G-d, and the *Alter Rebbe* showed us how it is possible to serve G-d." What does this mean?! The students of the *Baal Shem Tov* before and after the *Alter Rebbe's* showing how it is possible to serve G-d, not only studied and understood how one needs to serve G-d, but understood the can serve G-d, and actually did so?!

In the giving of the *Revealed Torah* (Talmud, Law, etc.), as in the *Esoteric* (Chassidus) *Torah* was first given in *general* (Moses; Baal Shemtov), and then was brought down into the *detailed* understanding of the Torah (Talmudic sages; *Alter Rebbe*). Hence, G-d gave the *Written Law* (-[Link](#)), and with it the *13 Principles of Torah Elucidation* (-[Link](#)), from which we clarify and rule the verdicts of all the laws of the Torah. However, the actual elucidation of the Torah is in the *Oral Law* (-[Link](#)), by all of Israel, throughout all generations, studying and extrapolating the Torah, which includes the, "Innovations of laws *ad infimum*." Our sage teach (-Jerusalem Talmud, Pe'eh, Chapter 2, Law 4), "Even what a competent student will discover (innovate) before his teacher was said to Moses on Sinai." However, we find (-Menochos 29b), "(Moses) said before (G-d): Master of the Universe, show him (Rabbi Akiva (-[Link](#)), who will extrapolate from the crowns upon the letters in the Sefer Torah) to me. G-d said to him: Return behind you. (Moses) went and sat at the end of the eighth row (in Rabbi Akiva's study hall) and did not understand what they were saying!" Hence, on the one hand, all comes only from Moses at Mount Sinai, from the general rules from which everything is extrapolated from the all-inclusive general *Written Law*. However, in detail, we received it not from Moses, but from the, "competent student," to the point of Moses, "did not understand what they were saying!"

Deeper yet, even though the *competent student's detail* was already hidden in Moses' *general* Torah, nevertheless, it is called the innovation of the student, because from the perspective of the human's understanding this is a total innovation of the student, to the point that the completion of the student's soul is dependent on his having his innovations in Torah-study, which is the truest experience of his own brain's totally grasping and understanding Torah. And because Torah-study in such a fashion is the ultimate "wondrous oneness" with G-d, therefore, this innovation of Torah brings to the completion of his soul.

Hence, this is the difference between the Torah as it is given from *Above*, which is given in a general manner, as our sages state (-Pesachim 3b), "A person should always teach his student in a concise manner," for the student to be able to receive it. However, the student receiving, must unpack and extrapolate and completely grasp the details. For ultimately, it is only through completely grasping the details that one ultimately understands the entire general concept in its complete depth.

And so too, the *General Chassidus* of the *Baal Shem Tov*, which was transmitted as it is given from *Above*, being that (-Ruth Rabbah 4:3), "(The righteous) are likened to their Creator," and therefore, a primary foundation in *General Chassidus* is (-Habakkuk 2:4), "but the righteous shall live by his faith," and faith is given and planted within the soul from *Above*, and an inheritance, as our sages state (-Shabbat 97a), "Believers the sons of believers." However, with *CHaBaD* (*CHochma* (wisdom) *Bina* (understanding) and *Da'at* (knowledge)) *Chassidus*, the *Alter Rebbe* made it possible for the person to grasp, absorb and internalize, through his own effort of studying, where in addition to his faith (gift from *Above*), he can now make it *his*, with an innovation of a *competent student*. And it is specifically through this *Chabad Chassidus* work (from *Below*) that one ultimately understands the entire *General Chassidus* in its complete depth.

And this is why the *Previous Rebbe* states both versions of the impact of *Chai Elul*, for first there is the impact of the General *Chassidus*, in which the work of *Elul* is the accounting and the *teshuvah* of one's general relationship and service to G-d. However, then one must do the *Chabad Chassidus* work from *Below*, the, "I am to my Beloved," in the detail of his relationship with G-d, which then ultimately brings a deeper and complete vitality to all of *Elul*.

- (i) "אני לְיְדוּדֵי יְדוּדֵי גִי - (But G-d) orchestrated for him, and I will set a place for you (where he can find refuge)" (-Exodus 21:13), which is Torah-study (for Torah is called a place of refuge), (ii) "איש לְרֵעוּהוּ וּמִתְנוּת לְאֵבוֹנִים - (and sending portions) one to another, and gifts to the poor" (-Esther 9:22), which is charity, and (iii) "אַתְּ לְבַבְךָ וְאֵת לְבַבְךָ - (Will circumcise) your heart and the heart of (your offspring)" (-Deuteronomy 30:6), which is repentance.