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# Hello, It's Nice to Meet Me!

At the behest of the Friediker Rebbe (the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Reb Yosef Yitzchok, zy'a), Rabbi Moshe Yitzchak & Rebbetzin Rivkah Hecht had been the Chabad *shlichim* in New Haven, Connecticut, since 1941.

Within days of arriving in New Haven, Rabbi Hecht began literally knocking on doors and visiting families in the community to encourage them to enroll their children in the city's first Jewish day school, located in a dining room. As years unfolded, the burdens of an expanding community, of managing a shul, a day school, a yeshivah, a mikvah, open Shabbos dinners with dozens of guests, raising their own children, offering extensive adult educational programs...it all began to weigh on him.

In 1974, as the debt and demands on his time and resources continued to mount, he wrote to the Rebbe, complaining that

in more than 30 years of *shlichus*, despite his dedicated, hard work, he felt he hadn't made much progress. Feeling overwhelmed, he considered the possibility that he simply could not continue in the role. He ended with a sincere plea that the Rebbe should consider their difficulties, "and help and do all he can."

The Rebbe's response was indicative of how the leader of a generation believes in others and empowers all who turn to him for guidance:

"... I have already followed your advice and done as you've suggested; I've sent there Rabbi Moshe Yitzchak Hecht. But it appears from your letter and from those preceding it that you don't yet know him and are not familiar with the strengths and capabilities with which he is endowed.

Whatever the case, you should get to know him now. Immediately, everything will change—your mood, your trust in God and *simchas ha-chayim*...

וְכָשָׁלוּ אִישׁ-בְּאָחִיו כְּמַפְיִיחַרְבַּ וְדָרַךְ אֵין וְלֹא-תִהְיֶה לָכֶם  
תְּקוּמָה לִפְנֵי אֲבִיכֶם

Each man will stumble over his brother, [fleeing] as if from the sword, but without a pursuer. You will not be able to stand up against your enemies

וְאֶבְדֶּתֶם בְּגוֹיִם וְאָכְלָה אֹתְכֶם אֶרֶץ אֲבִיכֶם:

You will become lost among the nations, and the land of your enemies will consume you. (26:37-38)

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Rashi clarifies the import of these verses: “With fear in their hearts, they will run and flee in panic, and will stumble over each other... כשתהיו פזורים תהיו אבודים זה מזה *When you will be scattered, you will become lost from one another.*”

The students of the Baal Shem Tov expanded this interpretation: אבודים, *avudim*, means not only ‘lost from one another’, but also lost and exiled within — ‘You will lose your *sense of self*.’

The frightening warnings and prophecies of our sedra parallel those of the *Tochachah* in Parshas Ki Savo detailing horrific suffering, poverty, war, famine and exile. Worst of all perhaps is this verse:

וְהָיוּ חַיִּיךָ תְּלָאִים לְךָ מִנֶּגֶד

And your life will hang in suspense before you.

וּפְחַדְתָּ לַיְלָה וַיּוֹמֵם

You will be in fear night and day,

וְלֹא תִאֱמָיוּ בְּחַיִּיךָ:

*and you will not believe in your life...*

This is the greatest suffering, to not believe in our lives, to have no faith in oneself, no confidence, purpose or self-esteem. One can become “lost” to a sense of listlessness, alienation and placelessness, always thinking that who we are and what we do is not enough, that our efforts don’t matter, that life is too difficult. In this state, it is not long until one becomes פזורים, scattered, and אבודים, lost to oneself.

While serving as the Rav of Boisk, Latvia, the great Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook, zy’a, filled numerous journals with Torah thoughts, poetry and personal reflections. In one passage, he reflects on the ability to recognize the spiritual ‘diamond’



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within ourselves and others, as essential to our path:

“Until a person teaches himself to truly appreciate מעלת נשמת האדם מעלת נשמת ישראל the eminence of the human soul, the eminence of the Jewish People, and the eminence of the Holy Land — including the proper yearning that each and every Jew should have for the rebuilding of the Temple, the restoration of greatness to the Jewish People, and their elevation in this world — it is almost impossible for him to truly ‘taste Divine service.’”

May the message of our sedra awaken us, and make us recognize and reveal our abilities and strengths. And may we “meet ourselves”, become who we really are, and merit that *“immediately, everything will change—our mood, our trust in God and simchas ha-chayim...”* ■