

A Tzaddik and His Students

Many Jews are attracted to spirituality but never think to look in their own religion to find it. Still more are unaware that chassidic philosophy and its practice are the “soul” and spiritual core of Judaism.

The starting point of the chassidic way of life is a chassid’s connection to his or her Rebbe. But like many of the more spiritual concepts in Judaism, the role and function of a Rebbe -- and the chassidic movement in general -- has been largely cloaked in mystery, misinterpreted, or simply unknown.

In this book, **A Tzaddik and His Students: *The Rebbe-Chassid Relationship***, Rabbi Shloma Majeski takes the reader on a step-by-step journey into the spiritual world of the Rebbe-chassid relationship, explaining the nature and purpose of a tzaddik/Rebbe, his connection with his chassidim, and the relevance of this phenomenon in the lives of every human being today.

Rabbi Shloma Majeski is the dean of Machon Chana Women’s Institute of Jewish Studies in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, home of the World Headquarters of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement. A renowned lecturer on chassidic philosophy for over thirty years, Rabbi Majeski is the author of the acclaimed book *The Chassidic Approach to Joy* and a tape series entitled “The Basic Principles of Chabad Chassidic Philosophy.”



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בס"ד

A Tzaddik and His Students: THE REBBE-CHASSID RELATIONSHIP

By: Rabbi Shloma Majeski

(Chapter 3)



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A Tzaddik and His Students: The Rebbe-Chassid Relationship

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For further reading about this and other topics in chassidic philosophy, information on how to obtain Rabbi Majeski's book *The Chassidic Approach to Joy*, and his tape series on chassidic philosophy, contact your local Jewish bookstore, sie100@aol.com, or call 718-778-5436.



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Since G-d is the source of life, the closer you are to G-d, the closer you are to life, while the farther you are from G-d, the farther you are from life.

Therefore, since a *tzaddik* contains G-d's presence within him and generates this to the rest of the world, that which is closer to the *tzaddik* is *chai* — full of life and blessing. What is farther away is more distant from *chai*. Therefore connecting and focusing on one's connection to the *tzaddik* does not detract from his G-dly service, but increases his ability to serve G-d and receive blessing in all areas of his existence.

* * *

Having given an overview of what a *tzaddik* is and his purpose in the world, we will now focus on several different functions of a Rebbe which enliven and strengthen Jewish belief and practice. This, in turn, will give us some insight into the way we ourselves should approach and relate to a Rebbe.



IN HONOR OF
Schneur Zalman שיחי **Yakubov**
On the occasion of his 4th birthday, 12 Menachem-Av, 5770

AND IN HONOR OF HIS BROTHER AND SISTERS שיחי

AND IN HONOR OF HIS PARENTS

Mr. & Mrs. **Tzion** and **Adina** שיחי **Yakubov**

DEDICATED BY THEIR FRIENDS

Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** שתיח **Shagalov**
and family שיחי

*

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Reb **Yitzchok Dovber** ben Reb **Dovid** ע"ה **Brown**
Passed away on 14 Menachem-Av, 5742

Mrs. **Faiga** bas Reb **Yaakov** ע"ה **Brown**
Passed away on 19 Elul, 5762

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

DEDICATED BY THEIR CHILDREN & GRANDCHILDREN
Dr. & Mrs. **Dovid Eliyahu** and **Sara Malka** שיחי **Brown**
Mr. & Mrs. **Uri** and **Shaina (Helen) Chada** שיחי **Misrachi**
and family שיחי

How could various people perceive the same situation and circumstances so completely differently? Because to see G-dliness and spirituality, a person must have some measure of spiritual refinement himself. If a person has spent his life focusing mainly on the material aspects of life, he will see materialism wherever he looks. But a person who has developed himself spiritually will be able to perceive the spirituality outside of himself as well.

That is why a person traveling to the *Beis HaMikdash* would prepare for the journey by refining himself spiritually. For the most part, the greater his efforts, the more developed his spiritual receptivity would be.²⁰ The same applies to a chassid when he travels to his Rebbe. The chassid may often spend a year refining himself spiritually so that he will be more open to receive the spiritual treasures available to him while in the Rebbe's presence.

*Focusing on the Tzaddik
Enhances Our G-dly Service*

An interesting statement made by the Rebbe the Tzemach Tzedek provides a commentary on the words “*machtzis hashekel*” (the half-shekel) in the Torah. The word *machtzis* is spelled with the Hebrew letters מחצית — *mem ches tzaddik yud saf*. The letter *tzaddik* is in the middle. The two letters on either side of the *tzaddik* spell the word *chai*, which refers to life. The two letters that are distant from the *tzaddik*, the first and the last, constitute the Hebrew word *meis*, which means death.

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20. Of course, there are exceptions, such as a person who, due to certain spiritual gifts, has an awakening from Above without any preparation. Numerous cases have been reported, for example, of a life-changing spiritual arousal when visiting the western remnants of the outer wall of the courtyard of the *Beis HaMikdash* (the Kotel) in Jerusalem.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** ע"ה
ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד
Shagalov

Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766

Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** ע"ה
Ekman

Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765

Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** ע"ה
Marenburg

Passed away on the second day
of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766

Reb **Yitzchok Moshe** (Ian)
ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** ע"ה
Ekman (Santiago, Chile)

Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF

Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתיח'ל
Shagalov

DEDICATED BY

Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y. and Gittel Rochel** שיחי
Shagalov

“After finding his way to the *Beis HaMikdash* and entering its gates, he was shocked to see it filled with a hefty number of goats, sheep and cows, rows of tables on which meat was being chopped up as if in a butcher shop, and *kobanim* (priests) running around barefoot. One *kohen* would be occupied with stirring the blood contained in a particular vessel while another would be sprinkling blood on the Altar.

“He looked at the scene and said, ‘I can’t believe it! This is it? This is what all the commotion is about? A bunch of barefooted people and all these animals running around?!’

“Lost in thought, he was approached by the *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest) who said, ‘Excuse me. I see you have an animal here you want to sacrifice. Can you tell me in connection to what sin are you bringing it?’ The man began to stutter and said, ‘It’s not really for a sin. I’m not the kind of person who commits sins. But just to be sure, in case I did something somewhere that was not one hundred percent, I came here.’

“The *Kohen Gadol* interrupted him and said, ‘But what about what you did in so and so’s house a week ago Monday night?’”

When the *tzaddik* described exactly what this person had done himself on a Monday night the week before, the person turned pale. Then he said, “And what about what you did a few weeks before that on Tuesday afternoon in this part of the city?” The person again went pale, realizing that the *tzaddik* had holy vision and could see everything he did.

At that point, he finally recognized what a *tzaddik* is and asked the Rebbe for a path to guide him in sincere repentance.

Yes, a person could stand in the holy *Beis HaMikdash* and instead of seeing G-dliness and spirituality, see a bunch of animals, blood and barefooted people.

“Well, I don’t see anything unusual — just a human being who looks like anyone else. He even looks into his *siddur* to *daven* just like the rest of us. Is this who they all get so excited about?!”

As he stood there deep in thought, the *tzaddik*, who could read everything that was going on in his mind, called him over and said, “Do you have any questions to ask?”

“No,” he replied.

“Well then let me tell you a story. There was once a Jew who lived in Israel in the times of the *Beis HaMikdash* but never went to visit the *Beis HaMikdash*. The people in his community traveled there for every holiday and used to come back bubbling with excitement. They were full of inspiration and stories to tell about their experience, but he himself would never go.

“He was getting older and said to himself at one point, ‘If I don’t go now, I don’t know if I will ever have a chance to go. Maybe I should take the opportunity to go to the *Beis HaMikdash*.’

“So he began his travels. Coming to a fork in the road, he didn’t know which road to take to Jerusalem. He stopped a young boy and asked him the way. Astonished, the young boy raised his eyebrows and exclaimed, ‘You don’t know which road takes you to Jerusalem?! A man of your age doesn’t know the way to Jerusalem when you’re supposed to go there three times a year?!’

“He was embarrassed, of course, but he finally managed to get the directions and proceed on his way. He soon came to another fork in the road and once again had to go through the same embarrassment. This repeated itself again and again until he finally arrived in Jerusalem.

CHAPTER THREE

LIKE THE BEIS HAMIKDASH

The previous chapter gave an overview of the attributes of a *tzaddik* and discussed how people as well as objects are considered holy when G-d’s presence rests within them. Just as we have awe and reverence for a Torah scroll because of the G-dliness vested in it, so, too, we have awe and reverence for a *tzaddik*.

The chapter ended with a question: Why is it necessary to focus so extensively on a *tzaddik*? Doesn’t it take away from our emphasis on other things in Judaism: studying Torah, performing *mitzvos*, and directing one’s thoughts to G-d — the ultimate source of everything?

These questions will be addressed in this chapter, beginning with the explanation that connecting to a *tzaddik* in order to become closer to G-d is not an innovation of chassidic practice but a basic fundamental principle of the Torah.

Focusing on a Tzaddik

The *Talmud*¹ discusses the following verse from the Torah:² “You should attach yourself to Him, [i.e., to G-d],” and asks, “How can one attach oneself to G-d? G-d is compared to fire, so how can you attach yourself to fire?”

1. *Kesubos* 111b. See *Deuteronomy* 4:24 which states: “For the L-rd thy G-d is a devouring fire....”

2. *Deuteronomy* 11:22. It is also enumerated by the *Rambam* in his *Sefer HaMitzvos* as the sixth positive commandment in the Torah.

It is explained there that the way to become connected to G-d is by attaching and connecting oneself to a *tzaddik*. Connecting to a *tzaddik* is neither “un-Jewish” nor a spiritual luxury for a select group of truth seekers; on the contrary, it is the only method prescribed by the Torah to become truly connected to G-d. This idea — commonly thought to be the exclusive domain of chassidic teachings and practice — is a basic principle outlined in the *Talmud*, the ultimate authority of Jewish law.

Nevertheless, the question still remains: Why should a Jew place so much importance on a human being of flesh and blood? Why should such a large part of his Jewish practice focus on being connected to a *tzaddik*? Why not just focus directly on G-d?

A Tzaddik Is Compared to the Beis HaMikdash

This can be explained with a powerful statement from the *Talmud* which states that the passing of a *tzaddik* is equivalent to the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*:³

The fast of the fifth (month) refers to Tishah B’Av, for on that date the house of our G-d was burned. The fast of the seventh (month) refers to the third of Tishrei, for on that date, Gedaliah Ben Achikam was assassinated.... The [latter] day is included here to teach you that the death of the righteous is equivalent to the burning of the house of our G-d.

It is an obvious deduction that if the passing of a *tzaddik* is like the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, then the life of the

This now explains why one’s true attachment to G-d comes through being attached to a *tzaddik*. The attachment to a *tzaddik* exists whether it is actively pursued or not. But the more one works at attaching oneself to a *tzaddik*, the more one’s attachment to G-d will be revealed. In order to feel the attachment spiritually and emotionally — not only that a person does *mitzvos* and studies Torah but that these practices are accompanied by an awareness, love and awe of G-d — one must be connected to the source where G-dliness is revealed.¹⁹

One might say, “Well, I went to visit a *tzaddik* and did not become inspired. All I saw was someone who looks like anyone else: two hands, two feet, a nose and a mouth. I did not experience this sudden awareness of G-d’s presence in the world.”

This can be explained with a story about a very great chassidic Rebbe who lived in a small *shtetl* in Eastern Europe.

In a certain city, chassidim of this *tzaddik* would travel to him during the festivals. There was also a particular individual in this city who was not a chassid. Whenever the chassidim would come back from their visit, they would be bubbling with excitement — full of inspiration and stories about their visit and what happened during the holiday.

In one way, this individual envied them, but since he wasn’t a chassid, he would never dream of accompanying them. Nevertheless, they would always ask him to go along with them to see what it was all about, and one time they actually convinced him to go.

And so he went. He walked into the *shul* and indeed saw this great *tzaddik*, but looking at him, he thought to himself,

19. Of course every Jew is connected to a *tzaddik*, but for those in whom that connection is not on a revealed level, the full extent of the benefits of that connection are likewise not revealed. See *Lessons in Tanya* (Kehot Publication Society, Brooklyn, NY, 1997), ch. 2.

3. *Rosh Hashanah* 18b.

contributes to heightening one's awareness of G-d. So, too, G-dliness is revealed on a conscious level when one witnesses or hears about the miracles a *tzaddik* performs, similar to the reaction one had when witnessing the ten miracles that occurred on a constant basis in the *Beis HaMikdash*.¹⁷

But on a subconscious level, there are several changes taking place within a person as well when in the Rebbe's presence. These hidden stirrings then translate into an awakened love for G-d and a heightened awareness of, and sensitivity to, G-dliness.

Additionally, people in the world in general will feel an awareness of G-d as a result of the *tzaddik's* presence and service in the world. Through his Torah study and prayer, a *tzaddik* not only draws down and contains G-dliness within himself, but he radiates this G-dliness throughout the rest of the world.

That is why it is also an obligation to visit one's Rebbe during a holiday. Going to a *tzaddik* reinforces and strengthens our awareness, sensitivity and consciousness of G-d. One doesn't visit a *tzaddik* just to help him follow the "do's and don'ts" of Torah law. A person could accomplish that by opening up the *Shulchan Aruch* (*the Code of Jewish Law*). The main purpose of going to a *tzaddik* is to establish an awareness and consciousness of G-d and to develop a love, awe, and profound belief in Him.

Based on all the above, what was once accomplished through the medium of the *Beis HaMikdash* is presently brought about through the *tzaddik*.¹⁸

17. For a list of the ten miracles, see *Pirkei Avoth* (*Ethics of the Fathers*) 5:5.

18. Albeit on a lesser level. This is why we continue to pray for the building of the Third *Beis HaMikdash*.

tzaddik must also be similar to the purpose and function of the *Beis HaMikdash*.

This is further illustrated with a story from the *Talmud*.⁴ There it discusses the actions of a king named Herod whose claim to be Jewish was questioned by all the Jewish authorities. During his reign, the great Sages at that time ruled that according to Torah law he did not have the qualifications to be a Jewish king. To show them what he thought of their ruling, Herod had them all killed. The only one he allowed to live was a relative of his named Bava ben Buta, but Herod blinded him in order to weaken his power.

Ironically, Herod would come to Bava ben Buta for advice, and after a period of time recognized the value of his incredible *Talmudic* wisdom, lamenting, "I sincerely regret my actions because I see what a tremendous asset these Rabbis would have been to the world. How can I repent and correct the damage I did?"

"Because you destroyed the *tzaddikim*," he answered, "the way to repent and correct that is by rebuilding the Temple." As the *Talmud* states: "Since you extinguished the light of the world, (for so are the Rabbis called)... occupy yourself now with restoring the light of the world, [meaning the Temple]...."⁵

From Bava ben Buta's response in the *Talmud*, the notion of a *tzaddik's* equivalence with the *Beis HaMikdash* is more tangibly reinforced.

4. *Bava Basra* 4a.

5. *Ibid.* The *Talmud* cites another version of his response: "Because you blinded the eye of the world (by killing the Sages, who are the 'eyes' of the nation), you can achieve atonement by occupying yourself with restoring the 'eye' of the world by rebuilding the Holy Temple which is also associated with 'eyes,' as is written (*Ezekiel* 24:21) '... My Temple [is] the desire of your eyes.'"

In 20-19 BCE, in the 18th year of his reign, Herod was, in fact, credited with rebuilding and expanding the Second Temple.

There is yet another similarity in the Torah between a Rebbe and the *Beis HaMikdash*. There is a law that three times a year, during the *Shalosh Regalim* (the Jewish holidays of Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkos), one is obligated to travel to the *Beis HaMikdash*. The commentaries explain that just as in Temple times it was a commandment to visit the *Beis HaMikdash* three times a year,⁶ a person is likewise obligated to visit his Rebbe during the festivals.⁷

The comparison between a *tzaddik* and the *Beis HaMikdash* can be found in other places in the *Talmud*. For example, when G-d says:⁸ “Even though the Temple was destroyed, I left [the Jewish people] a ‘miniature Temple,’” one of the explanations in the *Talmud* is that during the Jewish exile in Babylonia, a “miniature Temple” (*mikdash m’at*) referred to the house of Rav,⁹ who was a *tzaddik* and the greatest Torah authority at that time.

So when the *Talmud* says that a miniature *Beis HaMikdash* is the home of Rav in Babylonia, it is establishing some sort of equality between the *tzaddik* and the Temple.

The Spiritual Purpose of the Beis HaMikdash

Since we have seen in several places that a *tzaddik* is equated with the *Beis HaMikdash*, understanding the spiritual

6. “Every male among you must appear before G-d the L-rd three times each year...” (*Exodus* 23:14-17); “Three times each year, all your males shall thus present themselves before G-d the Master, L-rd of Israel” (*Ibid.* 34:18-23).

7. *Rambam, Mishneh Torah*, “The Laws of Talmud Torah,” 5:7, where the commentary gives the *Talmudic* references to visiting one’s teacher (i.e., Rebbe) during the festivals (see *Sukkah* 10b, 26a). Based on an earlier *halachah* in this section, “Your fear for your teacher should be equivalent to your fear of Heaven” (*Ethics of the Fathers* 4:12), *Kinat Eliyahu* explains that there is a parallel between a visit to one’s teacher and a pilgrimage to the Temple (Moznaim Publishing Co., Brooklyn, NY).

8. *Ezekiel* 11:16.

9. *Megillah* 29a. See *Rashi* there.

One may wonder: shouldn’t it follow that since the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* there should be no awareness of G-d’s presence (or goodness) in the world at all? This would certainly be true if the destruction had been complete. But like the analogy of the brain where a destroyed brain would mean no life, a damaged brain means a compromised life. In such a case, a person might be in a coma or in a state of unconsciousness where there’s life, but it’s a very poor quality of life.

The same is true in our current situation of exile: G-dliness may be in an unconscious state, but it is not completely absent.

Two factors make this so: Even though the Temple was destroyed, the place on which it stood still contains G-d’s presence in a revealed way (albeit to a much lesser degree).¹⁶ So, too, on a certain level, the existence of a *tzaddik* brings about the awareness of G-d in the world.

The Connection Between The Beis HaMikdash and a Tzaddik

The function of the *tzaddik* is directly parallel to that of the *Beis HaMikdash*. The *tzaddik* not only contains revealed G-dliness within himself (because G-d’s presence, the *Shechinah*, dwells and is revealed within a *tzaddik*) but a *tzaddik* is like a power station through whom G-d’s presence is revealed and exposed to the rest of the world. This occurs on both a conscious and subconscious level.

On a simple conscious level, hearing a *tzaddik’s* Torah teachings, observing how he prays, or witnessing his refined nature, character traits, and extraordinary love for every Jew, all

16. The existence of holiness remaining in the ruins of the *Beis HaMikdash* is one of the reasons a Jew is prohibited from walking on the area on which the Temple once stood.

Without that, his Jewish practice would be like a body without a soul.

In sum, not only did going to the *Beis HaMikdash* not detract from one's growth and daily life, it actually heightened one's awareness of G-d, thereby contributing the essential ingredients of love, awe, and faith in G-d to his Torah study, observance of *mitzvos*, and prayer.

Mourning for the Temple

This is the reason why mourning the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* holds such a primary place in Jewish life. Many people ask why we make such a fuss about the destruction of the Temple. Shouldn't our primary focus be on mourning for the hundreds of thousands of people who were killed during this time and all the horrific suffering endured by the survivors? Indeed, we do have great reverence for these tragedies, but our primary focus is the destruction of the Temple, and our primary hope for the future is that it should be rebuilt.

Why is there so much talk about the Temple? Because the *Beis HaMikdash* is what allowed G-dliness to be revealed throughout the world. The greater the revelation of G-dliness in the world, the more positive the events that occur there. Conversely, the concealment of G-dliness causes negativity and evil to prevail.

Therefore, the *source* of all the tragedies that have occurred in our world for the past two thousand years can be attributed to one factor alone: the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*. Surely we grieve for every calamity that has occurred in the world, but mourning for the Temple takes on a greater significance when we know that its destruction is the root cause of each one of them. This is also why the central focus of our prayers is that the *Beis HaMikdash* be rebuilt.

purpose and role of the *Beis HaMikdash* will be helpful in understanding the corresponding attributes in a *tzaddik*.

The concept of the *Beis HaMikdash* is one of the 613 commandments of the Torah, derived from the verse, "Make Me a sanctuary and I shall dwell in it."¹⁰

The Torah states clearly that the purpose of the *Beis HaMikdash* is to provide a dwelling place for G-d. But what does it mean that G-d *dwells* in the *Beis HaMikdash*? Isn't G-d everywhere? How can He be in one specific place?

The answer is that even though there is no place in the universe that is devoid of G-d's presence, His presence can either be concealed or revealed. When we say that the *Beis HaMikdash* is the place where G-d dwells, it means that His *Shechinah* is revealed there. Yes, G-d is everywhere, but He is not *revealed* everywhere.¹¹

Not only is G-d's presence revealed in the *Beis HaMikdash*, it is actually the place from which this revelation spreads throughout the entire universe. When the *Beis HaMikdash* was standing, an individual anywhere in the world possessed of an awareness and consciousness of G-d, a love for G-d, or any kind of sensitivity towards G-dliness and spirituality, was only capable of these feelings as a result of G-d's presence emanating from the *Beis HaMikdash*.

An analogy to G-d's relationship with the world is the interaction between the soul and the body.¹² The universe is like a huge body which receives its life, its "soul," from G-d's presence. Even though one might ask where the life-force (the soul) is found in the body — and the answer of course is everywhere — the soul is most revealed in the brain. The brain,

10. Literally, "in them." See fn. 16 in ch. 2.

11. *Tanya*, ch. 51. See also *Likkutei Torah* (a compilation of chassidic discourses of the Alter Rebbe), *Parshas Pekudei*, p. 3a, *et al.*

12. *Berachos* 10a.

in fact, is the specific *point of contact* between the soul and the body, and from there it extends to the rest of the body.

For example, there might be electrical power on all 40 floors and all 1,200 electrical outlets in a building, but they all draw their electrical power from the main power source in the basement. The same is true in the human body. The soul fills the entire body (evidenced by the fact that every limb and organ of the body is alive) but all the different parts of the body draw their energy from the aspect of the soul that is primarily revealed in the brain.

If the main power source in the basement would be completely destroyed, the entire building would lose its power. Similarly, if the brain would be completely destroyed, G-d forbid, no part of the body would continue to live.

The same applied in the times of the *Beis HaMikdash*. Even though G-d's presence was consciously felt throughout the entire world, its point of contact with the universe was in the *Beis HaMikdash*. If G-d's presence was revealed in the *Beis HaMikdash*, it could be revealed and felt in varying degrees in the rest of the world. But if the *Beis HaMikdash* was completely destroyed — like the brain that was destroyed — then not only would the *Beis HaMikdash* lack G-d's presence, the entire *universe* would not be able to experience G-d's presence in a revealed way.¹³

Visiting the Beis HaMikdash Three Times a Year

This explains the biblical obligation to visit the *Beis HaMikdash* on the three holidays of Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkos. On

13. Given that the soil where the *Beis HaMikdash* stood still retains G-d's presence, and that *tzaddikim* also facilitate the revelation of G-dliness in the world as will soon be discussed, the revelation of G-dliness in the world has not been completely eradicated.

the surface this is a very difficult concept to understand. These yearly journeys required a tremendous loss of time from one's duties and responsibilities. The *Talmud* relates¹⁴ that from certain places in Israel it took two weeks to travel to Jerusalem and, of course, two weeks to return home. With one week in Jerusalem for the holiday itself, five weeks would be needed altogether just to spend one holiday at the *Beis HaMikdash*. Along with the other two holidays, about fifteen weeks a year would be spent away from home.¹⁵ In addition, as with any journey, preparatory time would also be invested before and after the trip.

How could the Torah command someone to spend so much time away from his duties and responsibilities at home with these visits to the *Beis HaMikdash*? In addition, many of these people were Rabbis and Torah scholars who would lose valuable time from their study of Torah. Obviously, something essential was gained by going to the *Beis HaMikdash* that justified this outlay of time and energy.

Since the *Beis HaMikdash* was the generator, the powerhouse, that facilitated the awareness and consciousness of G-d throughout the entire universe, one's thrice-yearly visit would reinforce and increase his awareness and consciousness of G-d as well. These pilgrimages to the *Beis HaMikdash* infused the way one lived throughout the rest of the year with a greater awareness, love and belief in G-d.

Indeed, all of one's activities throughout the entire year — in Torah study, observance of *mitzvos*, and basic conduct — grew continually in holiness and strength by going to the *Beis HaMikdash*. Were a person not to go, he would not only miss out on the experience of being there, he would miss a main ingredient in his Jewish way of life — the awareness of G-d.

14. *Taanis* 10a.

15. While Pesach and Sukkos span a little over a week, Shavuot is a one-day holiday in the land of Israel.