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### Chizuk - Inspiration

One of the most beloved and celebrated figures in nineteenth-century Ukrainian Chassidus was Reb Dovid'l Twersky of Tolna (1808–1882), known simply as the Tolna Rebbe. He was a towering spiritual leader whose court drew thousands of Chassidim from across the Kiev district, and whose wisdom extended into domains that modern society would today recognize as psychiatry and mental health.

Reb Dovid Twersky was born in 1808 in the Ukrainian town of Chernobyl, the sixth son of Reb Mordechai Twersky, the Maggid of Chernobyl. His grandfather was the great Reb Menachem Nachum, the Me'or Einayim, one of the foremost disciples of the Baal Shem Tov and the Maggid of Mezritch. The Twersky dynasty became one of the most illustrious in all of Chassidus: Reb Mordechai's eight sons each went to different towns throughout Ukraine and each founded his own dynasty — among them Skver, Trisk, Makarov, Rachmastrivka, and Tolna.

Around the year 1835, Reb Dovid'l settled in the town of Tolna, in the Kiev district of Ukraine, and established his court there. The town of Tolna rapidly became one of the most prominent Chassidic centers in all of Ukraine. The Rebbe was famed not only for his piety and Torah scholarship — he authored three major works, the Magen Dovid, the Birchas Dovid, and the Kehilas Dovid — but also for his deep love of Niggun (music).

Reb Dovid'l had many remarkable and unique qualities including an extraordinary skill in dealing with those suffering from mental illness. His great-nephew, Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski, the renowned psychiatrist and author, recorded several accounts of Reb Dovid'l's treatment of those with mental illness and noted that they served as a formative influence on his own approach to psychiatric treatment.

One account describes an individual, possibly experiencing paranoid psychosis or bipolar disorder, who demonstrated a persistent belief that he was the Moshiach, which he actively shared with those around him. His family and community were at a loss. No amount of reasoned argument could penetrate

the wall of his conviction. Logic, rebuke, and gentle persuasion had all failed. In desperation, they brought him to the Tolna Rebbe. The Rebbe did not argue with him. He did not challenge his delusion head-on. Instead, he began with a disarming question.

"Do you know who I am?" the Rebbe asked.

"Of course," the man replied. "You are the great Rebbe of Tolna."

The Rebbe proceeded calmly. "Do you not believe then that I am Divinely inspired?" he asked.

"Of course," said the man.

The Rebbe continued: "Then would my Divine inspiration not reveal to me the truth — that you are the Moshiach?" The man, confident in his delusion, agreed that the Rebbe would surely know that he was Moshiach.

Then came the masterstroke. "But you see," said the Rebbe, "I have taken an oath never to reveal that. You must do likewise. Never reveal to anyone that you are the Moshiach."

The man, bound now by the weight of a sacred oath — and, crucially, feeling that his identity had been acknowledged rather than denied — promised solemnly that he would never reveal it. From that day forward, he ceased speaking of being the Moshiach.

On another occasion, a young man was brought to the Rebbe because he was terrified to sit down. He suffered from a severe somatic delusion: he was convinced that his back was made of glass, and that if he sat down, it would shatter.

The Rebbe did not try to reason him out of the delusion by explaining the anatomy of the human spine. He listened, took the fear seriously, and told the young man to come back later. In the meantime, he instructed his aide to procure a large glass bowl and a hammer.

When the young man returned, the Rebbe seized him and sat him down firmly. At that very moment — as arranged —

the aide brought down the hammer on the glass bowl with a resounding crash. The Rebbe then calmly showed the young man the shards of glass on the floor.

"Your glass back was broken," the Rebbe said, "and now you have a normal back like everyone else."

The young man was elated. The delusion was resolved — not by argument, but by a theatrical enactment that met the patient's delusional logic on its own terms and then redirected it toward a healthy outcome.

The Torah's prohibition against falsehood is serious and far-reaching. Midvar Sheker Tirchak — "Distance yourself from falsehood" (Shemos 23:7) — is formulated unusually stringently. The word Tirchak, "distance yourself," implies a heightened level of caution beyond the standard prohibitory formulation. Rashi and the Rishonim understood this as a call to avoid even the proximity of falsehood.

Nevertheless, Halacha has long recognized that there are certain situations in which altering or withholding the truth is permitted, as Reb Dovid'l did to cure mental illness.

### On The Parsha

In Parshas Tzav we learn about the Minchas Chavitim. It was an offering that was brought by the Kohain Gadol which was composed of fine flour that was made into twelve loaves that were boiled and baked and then fried in olive oil. The offering was brought every day. Half of the offering was brought in the morning and the other half was brought in the afternoon. The Minchas Chavitim was offered to bring atonement for the sins of the Kohain Gadol.

The Abarbanel explains that the task of the Kohain Gadol (High Priest) is to attain atonement on behalf of others. However, if the Kohain Gadol is guilty of sinning himself, how then can he attain atonement on behalf of others, when he himself is not free of sin? We find a similar concept in Sanhedrin 18a which says that one should "first correct your own errors and then correct those of others." It would appear that the concept above reflects a certain Yashrus (fairness). One cannot atone for others, if he himself needs atonement. That would be insincere and hypocritical. Therefore, when the Kohain Gadol brought this offering and received atonement, it cured that insincerity and resolved the hypocrisy. It put the Kohain Gadol's "house in order" so to speak, so that he could then seek to do the same for others.

The Imrei Emes (Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter, ZT"l) writes that since the Minchas Chavitim was offered in the morning and afternoon each day, exclusively by the Kohain Gadol, it is logical to assume that the olive oil that was used for the frying of the loaves of the offering would be kept under the careful oversight of the Kohain Gadol. As part of that oversight, this would be the oil that would be placed in cruses that potentially would have the seal of the Kohain Gadol on it.

We know that regarding the miracle of Chanukah, the Chasmonaim found a cruse of oil with the Kohain Gadol's seal on in it and they used it to light the Menorah. We know that oil that is used for the lighting of the Menorah has to be of an exceedingly high quality (from the first crushing of the olives). We also know that this is not required regarding the oil that was used for the frying of the Minchas Chavitim. From the fact that the Chashmonaim used this oil to light the Menorah, it stands to reason that it was indeed oil from the first crushing, and since it had the Kohain Gadol's seal on it, it is likely to assume that the Kohain Gadol who placed the seal on it, had originally intended to use it for the Minchas Chavitim even though such exceedingly high quality oil was not required. Therefore, it appears that the Minchas Chavitim must have been exceedingly valued and beloved to this Kohain Gadol. Why was the Minchas Chavitim so beloved to this Kohain Gadol?

According to the Abarbanel above, we may have the answer. The Abarbanel said that the reason that the Minchas Chavitim was brought was to atone for the Kohain Gadol's sins and by doing so, resolve the insincerity and hypocrisy of atoning for others when the Kohain Gadol himself needed atonement. An offering that resolves hypocrisy and insincerity and makes the Kohain Gadol's actions consistent and sincere is a very noble offering indeed and that is why the Kohain Gadol rightfully treasured it.

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I have already committed to?"*

*"Should I report a co-worker who is acting dishonestly?"*

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