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## Squandering the Legacy of the Lubavitch Rebbe

As somebody who had the privilege of meeting the Rebbe on a number of occasions and who has supported Chabad throughout the World at very significant levels for the past 40 years I am distraught at the way in which his legacy is being squandered by the Cabal of elderly Rabbis who are almost universally so far beyond their 'sell by' date if indeed they were ever capable of exercising leadership in the first place.

At the kinnus, the annual meeting of Lubavitch representatives from throughout the World they indulge in the an orgy of self-congratulation without the slightest recognition or mention of the developing fault lines that will eventually trigger the implosion of the Movement during the next decade.

These fall generally but not exclusively under these headings:

### 1. Lack of Leadership and lack of Corporate Governance.

It is well-known that the leadership of Lubavitch fragmented almost immediately after the death of the Rebbe. Apart from the messianic issue which will be referred to separately, these divisions were nothing less than a power struggle between the elderly group of Rabbis that had served the Rebbe for several decades. As a result such structures as were in place have proved to be ineffective in dealing with major disputes and other problems in individual Chabad domains. The classic examples are Sydney Australia where the outrageous behaviour of Rabbi Feldman, his wife and his brother-in-laws have led most Chabad adherents to reject the authority of the Rebbe's nominee and form break away communities. A similar process is underway in Melbourne since the passing of the formidable Rabbi Yitzchak Groner.

London has seen decades of internecine strife between Rabbi Nachman Sudak and Rabbi Vogel and his sons. Whereas the latter were rightly disenfranchised as Chabad representatives, the former was patently incapable of providing leadership and again is increasingly isolated and rejected by the local Lubavitch community. All this whilst lurching from one financial crisis to another and refusing to recognise the causes and refusing the countenance the solutions.

The lack of leadership and partisanship in such cases demonstrated by Rabbis Krinsky, Kotlarsky, Kaplan and many others of their generation epitomise the absence any successful of Corporate Governance. It is about time that the Lubavitch leadership everywhere recognised that there is 'no taxation without representation' and if Lubavitch organisations are unwilling to accept oversight, transparency and participation in non-spiritual decisions their funding base will be increasingly eroded.

## 2. Messianic Heresy

It is not within the scope of this article to elaborate the theological lunacies represented by the neo-Christian attempt of some of the Rebbe's followers to usurp the Divine Prerogative of nominating the Messiah. It is however a fact that the failure of the leadership to make a definitive and unequivocal pronouncement that the Rebbe was not the Messiah has led to the oft quoted saying "Lubavitch is the nearest thing to Judaism." If this Heresy problem is not dealt with let alone continues to be taught sooner or later the divide which already exists between Chabad in particular and the Orthodox Jewish World in general will increase to the point of being unbridgeable.

## 3. Nepotism and Competition:

The prevalence of nepotism exacerbated by the increasing level of intermarriage within Chabad families is both spiritually and organisationally disastrous. Forcing incapable or unsuited children into shlichus and guaranteeing them the succession of their parent's position not only puts square pegs in round holes but is also grossly unfair to those whose personal qualities render them far more suitable to positions reserved for family members.

Surely somebody must recognise the inherent problems of finding useful employment for growing numbers of Lubavitch children at a time when the Jewish population of the World is shrinking.

## 4. Lack of Quality Control

The virtual absence of any level of quality control once a Shaliach has tenure means that a bad choice remains a bad choice for life and also obviates virtually any system of discipline when practical failure or personal misconduct occurs. The expulsion of Shmuel Botteach from Oxford being one exception to the rule, but in the main failure and misconduct is covered up and never dealt with so the culture of 'we can get away with anything even when sometimes we get caught' is all-prevailing. Total financial collapse is about the only circumstance in which a Sheliach can be removed and this in itself is a major cause of financial recklessness and misconduct examples of which can be seen almost everywhere.

## 5. Secular Illiteracy

I was recently asked to intervene to prevent a young Lubavitcher whose parents I know well from being banned from one of the major campuses in the UK. On investigation I found many reasons why this perfectly nice young man had got himself into such trouble but they all stemmed from one source namely despite the fact that his parents both had PhD's he had no secular education worth speaking about whatsoever. This young man like countless others throughout the World are supposed to minister to the needs of our brightest young people during the most creative period of their personal development. Yes these young couples provide very pleasant environments for a soup kitchen on Shabbos but they are in the overwhelming number of cases totally unsuited to interact with the most highly educated element of our young Jewish population. Similarly they are at a major disadvantage in dealing with highly sophisticated, highly educated and cultured Jewish adults. Lubavitch schools are becoming increasingly deficient in providing an education for Lubavitch children in the context of a vocation let alone a career in the general world. Similar factors apply to

the Rabbinic qualifications and lack of requisite Talmudic and Halachic knowledge often apparent amongst Chabad representatives. The very small proportion of genuine Talmidei Chachomim in the Lubavitch World is testimony to the failure of their current educational system to produce rabbis who achieve significant depth and breadth in their Jewish learning. There has to be a total rethink of the curricular of the school and Yeshiva system in order that the graduates of these institutions are equipped to deal with the problems of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Lubavitch still does magnificent work throughout the World but the emphasis must be reversed to quality not quantity. The formula for the Third World where there are no Jewish communities are not applicable in the main to the developed Jewish World. For all the reasons cited above Chabad has slipped from the leader of Outreach to 'also ran' and without the fundamental changes that the current leadership have proved unable either to recognise or implement Chabad will increasingly lose its relevance and degenerate into an uncontrolled, undisciplined, low quality equivalent of a Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise competing for increasingly overcrowded territory, diminishing financial support and therefore increasingly irrelevant to the fight against assimilation and anti-Semitism which threaten the existence of the Jewish people and the State of Israel.