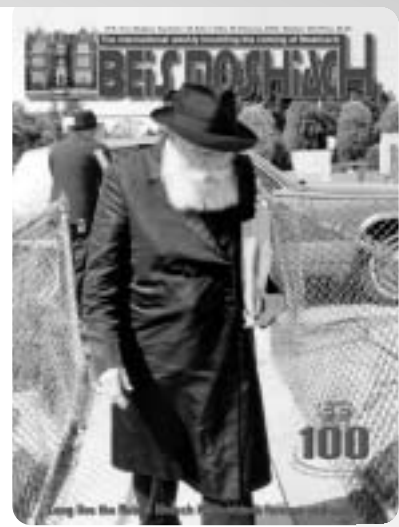


CONTENTS



The international weekly heralding the coming of Mashiach
BEIS MOSHIACH

4 | NO NEED TO WAIT FOR PEKUDEI

D'var Malchus / Sichos in English

8 | WHY MUST A CHASSID DANCE IN THE MONTH OF ADAR?

Farbrenge with Rabbi Zalman Notik

14 | KNOWLEDGE: THE SOURCE OF THEIR JOY

Biographical Sketches / Translated by Rabbi Shimon Neubort

16 | MIRACLE VIA BOSTON

Stories from Rabbi Chaim Konikov

18 | WOULD WE CHOOSE A “VIRTUAL” LIFE?

Farbrenge with Rabbi Tuvia Bolton

22 | CHASSIDIM DON'T PART (CONT.)

Stories

27 | HA'CHASSID R. YOSEF TOMARKIN: THE RAV OF KREMENCHOG

Chassid

30 | “OUR SIMCHA IS EVERYBODY'S SIMCHA”

Miracle Story / Y. Ben Aruya

34 | SHARON FOUND GUILTY IN BRUSSELS COURT

Shleimus HaAretz / Shai Gefen

37 | THE STORY AS TOLD BEFORE THE REBBE

Readers Writing

40 | HACHNASAS SEIFER TORAH AT CHOVEVEI TORAH IN MEMORY OF YANKI ROTENSTRIECH, A”H

News

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NO NEED TO WAIT FOR PEKUDEI

SICHOS IN ENGLISH



SHABBOS PARSHAS VA'YAKHEL; 25TH DAY OF ADAR I, 5752

Fulfillment: The Fusion of Two Half-Entities

Rephrasing slightly our Sages' words,[444] a Torah sage can be compared to "a walking Torah scroll." Similarly, *chassidim* would always refer to the teachings of their Rebbeim as *divrei Elokim chayim*, "the words of the living G-d," for "every new Torah concept developed by an experienced Sage was already given to Moshe on Mount Sinai." [445] In previous generations – and likewise in the present day – *chassidim* would make an effort to "live with" the words of their Rebbeim, to internalize them and apply them in their lives.

In recent years, we have merited a veritable effulgence of teachings from the Rebbe *shlita*: talks of scholarship and inspiration delivered on every Shabbos, and at times, several times on weekdays as well – until the eve of 28th of Adar Alef. May we be soon privileged once again to hear Torah from his mouth

with ever-increasing vigor and joy.

Now, the Rebbe's condition is, *baruch Hashem*, improving and his doctors are hoping for a speedy and complete recovery. In the interim, however, the talks he delivered on Shabbos Parshas VaYakhel, just two days prior to the eve of the 28th of Adar, take on a unique significance. They serve as a veritable spiritual treasure trove, containing lessons relevant in regard to our own individual divine service, the manner in which we relate to others, and the means by which we can hasten the coming of the ultimate Redemption.

We have already published an adaptation of these talks in a form more accessible to the general public in the essay entitled "Togetherness – Between Individuals, and Within Individuals." To do justice to the wider range of ideas presented by the Rebbe, however, we also feel it necessary to present them in a form far more representative of the style in which they were originally delivered.

May our efforts to live with the Rebbe's talks, to internalize them and apply them in our lives, generate divine blessing that will enable him to again deliver such talks in the most immediate future. And may we all together merit an ever-increasing sequence of blessings, including the ultimate blessing – the coming of the Redemption.

The message of Parshas VaYakhel and Parshas Sh'kalim: unity with other Jews, unity within one's own being

Generally, the *parshiyos*, VaYakhel and Pekudei are read together. As explained on previous occasions, when two *parshiyos* are combined, they form a single entity. Thus, when these two *parshiyos* are combined, the intent is not that there are certain aspects of the reading that are relevant to Parshas VaYakhel and others to Parshas Pekudei, but rather, that every element of the Torah reading has a combined message VaYakhel-Pekudei.

444. Kiddushin 33b.

445. Talmud Yerushalmi, Peia 2:4.

446. In a larger sense, this mission

involves, not only humans but the totality of creation. In regard to men, our Sages teach, "I was created solely to

serve my Creator." And similarly, the creation at large exists for a single purpose to express G-d's will.

Herein lies a fundamental lesson in our service of G-d, for the totality of the mission with which we are charged to fulfill in this world is crystallized in the two thrusts VaYakhel and Pekudei.[446]

To explain: VaYakhel, “And you shall gather,” points to the unification of all the entities in this diverse world, uniting them within the domain of holiness. Pekudei, by contrast, means “counting,” and highlights how every entity possesses its own unique importance. For every creation was given a unique nature with which it can serve G-d.

Although the sequence of the two parshiyos indicates that VaYakhel prepares one for Pekudei, VaYakhel represents an independent service in its own right. This concept receives greater emphasis this year, when VaYakhel is read and studied as a separate parsha.

In particular, the message of VaYakhel applies to the Jewish people and alludes to their being gathered together to form a single collective entity in the spirit of the *mitzva*, “Love your fellow man as yourself.” This is possible, because all Jews share a single essence; all are “truly a part of G-d from above.”

The importance of this service is emphasized by the fact that the Alter Rebbe placed the declaration, “Behold I accept upon myself the fulfillment of the *mitzva*, ‘Love your fellowman as yourself,’ “ at the very beginning of the prayer service,[447] making it the foundation of one’s daily activities.

In simple terms, this command means that when a person sees

There is no need to wait for Pekudei, the census of the Jewish people, for the beginning of VaYakhel, the ingathering. On the contrary, the Jews will first gather together in Eretz Yisroel, and afterwards, there will be a census.

another Jew, he should try to unite with him, for in truth they share a fundamental commonality. This applies, not only to the Jews in one’s immediate community, but to all Jews, even those far removed, indeed, even those in a distant corner of the world. Needless to say, the manner in which these feelings of unity are expressed will differ in terms of the practical means of expression available, but the feelings of oneness are universal in nature.

Even when the distance is also spiritual in nature, i.e., when another Jew does not share one’s level of Jewish observance, one should focus on the connection shared and not on the differences. In regard to one’s personal conduct, one must emphasize two modes of

servicing G-d – striving both to, “Turn away from evil and do good.” When, however, one relates to another individual, one must channel one’s energies solely in the path of “Do good.”

Although there may be times when another individual’s conduct warrants reproof, before speaking one should question whether he is fit to be the one to administer it. Furthermore, if reproof must be given, it should be offered gently, which will obviously enable it to be accepted more readily than harsh speech. Moreover, such words should be spoken only on select occasions.

These concepts are reflected in the verse, “One who withholds the rod hates his son,” which indicates that stiff rebuke may be given only when the relationship between two individuals is like a father and a son. There are two concepts implied by this verse: Firstly, that to give rebuke, one must love the other person just as a father loves his child. And also that the difference in level between the two people must be as radical as that between a father and a son. This is not true in most cases. Since all individuals share a fundamental equality, it is appropriate that they relate to each other as equals.

This is the message of Parshas VaYakhel, which one seeks to unite with every member of the Jewish people. This service receives greater emphasis at present, when we are sitting together in a *farbrengen*, when our feelings of *ahavas Yisroel* are actually expressed. When we say, “Behold I accept upon myself the

447. Prayer is essentially a person’s request for the fulfillment of his own needs. Thus it relates to Parshas Pekudei, where the emphasis is on the importance of every individual particular. Before this service, the Alter Rebbe emphasized the importance of

ahavas Yisroel, the lesson of VaYakhel. This sequence is reflected in the very beginning of the prayer service, the verse “How goodly are your tents O Yaakov.” Our Rabbis explain that this verse refers to the separation of the

tents into tribes, i.e., each service standing out as a distinct entity.

448. For the preliminary stages of the prayer service are often recited at home, before one joins together with a community.

fulfillment of the *mitzva*, 'Love your fellow man as yourself,' " this is a private statement.[448] In contrast, the present gathering is an opportunity for these feelings to be actually expressed.

This approach, the thrust to unite with one's fellow Jews, will lead to the ultimate fulfillment of VaYakhel, the ingathering of the Jewish people to Eretz Yisroel. And here, a significant lesson results from the fact that VaYakhel and Pekudei are read as separate parshiyos. There is no need to wait for Pekudei, the census of the Jewish people, for the beginning of VaYakhel, the ingathering. On the contrary, the Jews will first gather together in Eretz Yisroel, and afterwards, there will be a census.[449]

This is particularly relevant in the present year, a year of "wonders in all things," for a foretaste of this ingathering is being experienced at present with the *aliya* of Jews from many different countries to Eretz Yisroel. Throughout the centuries, there were always Jews who made *aliya*. At present, however, there are far more Jews gathering in Eretz Yisroel than ever before and indeed, this has attracted the attention of the entire world.

In this context, it is worthy to note an enigmatic phenomenon. Although Rav Mendel of Horodok and several other Rebbeim settled in Eretz Yisroel, none of the *n'siim*, from the Baal Shem Tov to the Previous Rebbe ever made *aliya*. Furthermore, with the exception of

the Previous Rebbe, none ever even visited Eretz Yisroel. And in the Previous Rebbe's case, he explained the reason for his visit: as a substitute for the visit to the graves of the Rebbeim in Lubavitch and Rostov.

The above concepts also relate to the special Torah reading of the present week, Parshas Sh'kalim. We find that the Torah explicitly commands that "the rich shall not give more... than a half-shekel." On the surface, this is difficult to understand: All the offerings in the *Beis HaMikdash* were required to be perfect and complete. Why in this instance were we required to give no more than a half-shekel? Also, since the Torah requires us to give only a half-shekel, why does it mention that an entire shekel is twenty *geira*? Seemingly, all that concerns us is the ten *geira* of the half-shekel.

In resolution: This command clarifies that a Jew cannot become a complete entity, a "holy shekel, unless he joins together with another Jew. Each Jew himself is ten *geira*, a half[450]-shekel. When, however, he joins together with another Jew, they reach twenty[451] *geira*, a complete entity.

Parshas VaYakhel and Parshas Sh'kalim also emphasize the need for establishing unity within one's own self. Indeed, the establishment of such unity makes possible the establishment of bonds of unity with other Jews.

This endeavor is illustrated in a renowned *chassidic* story: Rav

Zalman Aharon, the elder son of the Rebbe Maharash, once asked his uncle, Rav Yosef Yitzchok, if he recited his prayers *b'tzibbur*, "with the community." Rav Yosef Yitzchok answered in the affirmative. The very next day, however, Rav Zalman Aharon noticed that his uncle prolonged his prayers, lingering far longer than any congregation would.

"You told me you prayed *b'tzibbur*?" he asked.

"I do," his uncle replied. "*B'tzibbur* literally means 'with the collective.' After I marshal together the ten components of my soul, I pray."

Similarly, in regard to Parshas Sh'kalim, another explanation of the reason why only a half-shekel was given was to emphasize that a Jew's second half comes from above. Thus the Maggid of Mezritch interprets the expression *shnei chatzotzros* (lit. "two trumpets") as *shnei chatzi tzuros*, "two half-entities," for a Jew and G-d are both "half-entities" until a union is established between them.[452]

In this context, we can understand why a Jew's day begins with the declaration *Modeh Ani*. Even before a person says, "Behold I accept upon myself..." as soon as he arises from sleep, he declares *Modeh Ani*. [453]

What is the core of this declaration? That a person gather together his entire being and devote it to G-d.

To explain: Seemingly, before a person is able to make such a

449. Taking the census of the Jewish people will take time, for a census must be carried out in an orderly manner. Therefore, first there will be the ingathering of the exiles, VaYakhel, and then afterwards, after we have left the exile, the census will be taken.

450. The concept of being a half relates to the service of having "a broken, and

crushed heart," which makes one worthy of the assurance that "G-d will not scorn."

451. In Kabbalistic terms, twenty is associated with the S'fira of Kesser, a perfect level which leads one to "lift up one's heart in the ways of G-d."

452. Here again there is a connection to the

number twenty, for this is the sum reached when a Jew's ten faculties are combined with the ten S'firo from above.

453. The declaration "Behold, I accept upon myself..." begins the prayer service, but well before a Jew is able to make such a declaration, he begins his day with *Modeh Ani*.

declaration, he should consciously perceive G-d's presence. This in turn would appear to require that he contemplate the world around him until he comes to the realization that "the entire earth is filled with His glory." Only then, would he be able to make an all-encompassing commitment to G-d.

We, however, do not need such preparation, for our connection with G-dliness is intrinsic and constant, shaping our thinking processes even when we sleep. Indeed, a person's bond with G-d may be even greater when he sleeps than when he is awake, for then his conscious, intellectual faculties do not control his thoughts. In their absence, his essence can surface. And the essence of every soul is connected with G-d at all times.[454]

When a person arises from sleep,[455] however, he becomes conscious of himself as an individual entity, and indeed, as a powerful entity.[456] Nevertheless, as soon as he feels his own existence, he gives himself over to G-d with thankful acknowledgement.[457] And this enables him to perceive how "great is Your faithfulness," i.e., how every

A Jew cannot become a complete entity, a "holy shekel, unless he joins together with another Jew. Each Jew himself is ten geira, a half-shekel. When, however, he joins together with another Jew, they reach twenty geira, a complete entity.

entity in the world reflects G-d's gracious kindness. In this manner, he is able to collect every entity in the world at large under the all-encompassing banner of G-d's service.

To summarize: a Jew's service begins with gathering together the different aspects of his own being,

Afterwards, he gathers together with the entire Jewish people, and then, gathers together every element of the world and shows how their entire existence is intended to carry out G-d's will.[458]

In this manner, every moment of a Jew's life should be one in which he "wakes up from sleep," and begins with *Modeh Ani*. And then his entire day is healthy in both a spiritual and a material sense.[459]

And this will lead to the ultimate process of ingathering, the ingathering of the dispersed Jewish people. G-d will "sound the great *shofar*... and bring us together from the four corners of the earth into our land." "A great congregation (– all the Jews of the present generation and all those of the previous generations –) will return here."

And this will happen in the very near future.[460] And then we will proceed "with our youth and with our elders... with our sons and with our daughters" to Eretz Yisroel, to Jerusalem, and to the Third (and threefold[461]) *Beis HaMikdash*. May this take place in the immediate future.

454. Note the Rambam's statements in Hilchos Gerushin 2:20 that every Jew desires to fulfill G-d's will at all times.

455. Since a Jew's essence is connected with G-d at all times, he does not sleep because of his own individual desire, but only as a response to G-d's command, "And you shall show very careful concern for your lives."

456. A Jew's existence is *k'vua*, "fixed and permanent." And our Sages teach that the existence of an entity which is *k'vua* cannot be nullified even when mixed together with a quantity one thousand times greater than itself. Moreover, the Hebrew word for one thousand, *elef*, also relates to one of the terms used to describe G-d, *Alufo Shel Olam*, "L-rd of the world." A Jew's existence cannot be nullified even in

the face of *Alufo Shel Olam*. For *Alufo Shel Olam* refers to G-d as He descends and limits Himself in order to allow for the possibility of worldly existence. A Jew, however, is one with G-d at a level which transcends worldly existence entirely.

457. In the Mishneh Torah, Hilchos T'shuva 3:4, the Rambam speaks of "those who slumber in the vanities of worldly existence." The fundamental unity all men share with G-d affects these individuals despite their "sleep." Accordingly, their "slumber" will surely be only temporary. Ultimately, they too will "wake up" and develop a conscious relationship with G-d.

458. This reflects the connection between the ten utterances of creation and the Ten Commandments.

459. Indeed, the material and the spiritual are fused together into a single entity. For *Modeh Ani* reflects a oneness with G-d's essence and at that level, there is no difference between material and spiritual existence.

460. Indeed, it is possible that the prophet Elyahu has already come to Tiberius and announced the coming of Moshiach.

461. I.e., inclusive of the different advantages possessed by both the First and Second *Battei HaMikdash*.

* Epistle 31. For an elaboration of the teaching of the Arizal that all the souls of the Jewish people are essentially the limbs of one and the same body, see also *Mitzvas Ahavas Yisroel in Derech Mitzvosecha*, by the Tzemach Tzedek.

WHY MUST A CHASSID DANCE IN THE MONTH OF ADAR?

TRANSLATED BY MICHOEL LEIB DOBRY



It's natural for every person to be happy. However, we must link ourselves to the words of the Rebbe MH"M, who speaks of everything that can possibly make one happy. At a chassidic farbrengen held on Zayin Adar Rishon at Beis Agudas Chassidei Chabad – Kfar Chabad ("770"), Rabbi Zalman Notik gave an inspiring talk on hiskashrus, dancing in Adar, and publicizing what the Rebbe said in connection with the events in Iraq.

One Friday, the Baal Shem Tov said to his students, "Go out and look for a Shabbos guest." The students began their search, looked for a long time, but found no one. However, the Baal Shem Tov remained determined and asked them to find a Shabbos guest.

Half an hour before Shabbos, there was still no guest. So the students went to the outskirts of Mezhibuzh, and waited by the crossroads, until finally they found a Jew arriving with a heavy sack on his shoulder. They asked him if he has a place for Shabbos, and he said no. They suggested that he spend Shabbos with the Baal Shem Tov in Mezhibuzh, and he happily agreed.

The Baal Shem Tov was truly

pleased to see the guest, and it appeared that he was in an especially good mood. During the Shabbos meals, a most joyous and arousing atmosphere reigned.

At the *Seudas Shlishis*, the Baal Shem Tov sang *niggunim*. In the middle of the *seuda*, he stopped the *niggunim* and told his students that he wants each of them to say a *d'var Torah*. There were sixty students, sitting in the shape of a letter *Ches*, and the guest was on the left side. Starting from the right, each one said a *d'var Torah*. When the guest's turn came, the Baal Shem Tov said to him, "Say a *d'var Torah*."

The guest responded that he doesn't have what to say. The Baal Shem Tov asked him if he could at

least say something short. The guest replied that he doesn't know how to learn.

"Just say one *Mishna*." Yet, the guest again said that he doesn't know.

"Didn't you learn in *cheider*? At least, tell a story about Avrohom Avinu..."

The Jew, who was a simple person, didn't understand exactly what the Baal Shem Tov was asking. So when he heard the word "story," he figured that he was being asked to tell a story – any story.

"I'll tell you a story that happened to me," he said, "if you would like to hear it."

The Baal Shem Tov smiled and agreed.

"Yesterday, Friday, I was released from imprisonment by a *paritz* (landowner). For an entire year, he held me in a pit, where I heard voices coming out from under the ground. I didn't know if they were voices of people or spirits. I was afraid even to move."

"It was only during my last week in the pit that I got up the courage, bent down to the ground, and asked if they could hear me. They said that

they could.”

“‘Are you people or spirits?’ I asked them.

“‘We are spirits,’ they replied.

“‘I want to ask you a few questions.’

“‘Ask,’ the spirits responded.

“‘I have realized that you have a strange custom that you cry every day of the week, but when Friday night comes, you laugh. What is the meaning of this?’”

The spirits answered him: “We are a group of spirits that live from

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chassid had special
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save him.***

the sins of one *chassid*. He fasts every day of the week, going without food or drink. When Shabbos comes, he wants to eat. However, due to his fasting, his stomach has shriveled and he can't eat meat or fish. So he makes *Kiddush* on wine, and then immediately afterwards, his wife brings him a cup of milk. After he drinks the milk, he waits half an hour until he is allowed to eat meat, and only then does he eat his Shabbos *seuda*.

“However, every time his wife

brings him the cup, we make sure that a little bit spills, and then he gets angry and annoyed at her. ‘I fast the whole week, and you spill my milk!’ he scolds her. Sometimes, he even threatens that if the milk is spilt one more time, he will take her to the *rav*. Every week, we make certain to spill the milk, so when Shabbos comes, he will chastise her again. This makes us very happy, because then more *aveiros* are created, *aveiros* from which we live.”

The Jew then asked another question. “Why did you cry last week twice as much, and when Shabbos came you *laughed* twice as much?”

The spirits replied: “This week, we were in serious danger. The *chassid* said to himself that from now on, he would not get angry at his wife. ‘I’ll pour the glass of milk in the afternoon, and I’ll place it in the cupboard, so when Shabbos comes I’ll have a glass of milk ready for me,’ he resolved.

“On Friday afternoon, the *chassid* poured his cup of milk, placed it in the cupboard, and then went to the *mikva* and to *shul* for his Shabbos prayers. Suddenly, his wife heard outside that they are selling wood for half price. She began to look in her husband’s money compartment. In the meantime, the wood sellers were knocking at the door, saying that they were lowering the price to a quarter. In her haste to find some money, the wife opened the cupboard, and the glass of milk fell out and broke.

“On Shabbos evening, the *chassid* came back home very happy. ‘This time, I won’t get angry at my wife. Peace and tranquility will reign at home,’ he thought to himself.

“The *chassid* opened the cupboard, and the glass of milk was not there. He saw that everything had spilled. When he turned to his wife for an explanation, she started

to apologize. He became furious and said, ‘Now I understand! Every time, you spilled my milk on purpose! If I had a doubt up until now, now I know the truth. On Sunday, we are going to the *rav* to get divorced...’

“If we were crying the whole week many times more than usual, since we didn’t know what to do,’ the spirits said, ‘on Shabbos evening, we laughed many times more because we had succeeded in our mission.’”

When the guest concluded his story, the Baal Shem Tov began to sing a *niggun*. When he finished, it was already Motzaei Shabbos, and

***To put it more
simply, you can be a
great tzaddik, but it
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to be connected to the
Rebbe!***

the *beis midrash* was shrouded in darkness. The Baal Shem Tov ordered for light to be brought, and lo and behold, there was the student who sat to his right, on the floor in a dead faint. It turned out that this was the *chassid* about whom the guest was speaking...

INAPPROPRIATE CONCEPTS

This story is told among both Polish and Lubavitcher *chassidim*. However, each of them learns a different lesson from the story in relation to *avodas Hashem*. Polish *chassidim* learn that it is forbidden to disgrace one’s wife, and in general, it is forbidden to disgrace one’s fellow. Contempt for another Jew gives life to evil spirits. Therefore, there must

be peace and tranquility.

In Lubavitch, we learn from the story an entirely different lesson. A Jew can live for seventy, eighty years and still give life to evil spirits. This particular *chassid* had special help from Heaven, as he was a *chassid* of the Baal Shem Tov. In that merit, he heard the story at the right time and in the right place in order to save him.

A Jew goes through many things in his lifetime – both good and bad. But if he is happy during the fortunate month of Adar, then everything will be transformed into good. Therefore, chassidim dance in the month of Adar in order to fulfill the Rebbe’s instructions, both in body and soul.

To put it more simply, you can be a great *tzaddik*, but it is far more important to be connected to the Rebbe!

What does it mean “to be connected to the Rebbe”? To learn the weekly *Dvar Malchus* every week, and to understand from the contents of the *sicha* what the Rebbe wants us to do during the coming week.

Why should we specifically learn *D’var Malchus*? What does it have that *Likkutei Sichos* and *sifrei maamarim* don’t? The reason stems from the fact that these *sichos* represent the last words on this particular Torah portion that we have heard from the Rebbe until now, and we must carry them out!

In the *D’var Malchus* of Parshas Truma, the Rebbe speaks about the fact that a Jew goes through many things in his lifetime – both good and bad. But if he is happy during the fortunate month of Adar, then everything will be transformed into good. Therefore, *chassidim* dance in the month of Adar in order to fulfill the Rebbe’s instructions, both in body and soul.

Amalek loves two expressions: 1) “*amahlike*,” i.e., once upon a time, a long time ago, and 2) “maybe.” Sometimes, we hear people say, “*amahlike reid*,” claiming that certain things no longer apply; things are different now. They explain that back then the Rebbe said such and such, but today, things have changed... There are those who use the concept of “maybe”: maybe it means this, maybe it means that. Such considerations are made instead of thinking clearly and directly to the point.

Chassidim must erase these two expressions from their lexicon. We must know that everything that the Rebbe said exists even now, eternally, and there is no room for doubt and no “maybe.”

It’s natural for every person to be happy. If you want to be happy through learning a *sugya* of Gemara, go right ahead. So, in the month of Adar, learn more than you are accustomed, and then you will be even happier. If someone else achieves this through dancing, then he has to dance more than he is accustomed. However, we must link ourselves to the words of the Rebbe

MH”M, who speaks of everything that can possibly make one happy.

The Mittlerer Rebbe writes in a famous letter to a deeply brokenhearted Jew whose son had just passed away that he must be *b’simcha*. And if he can’t be happy inwardly, then at least he should make joyous movements, such as dancing.

WITHOUT “P’SHTLACH”

It is written that the Jewish People were commanded to fulfill three *mitzvos* upon their entry into

Chassidim must erase these two expressions from their lexicon. We must know that everything that the Rebbe said exists eternally – even now – and there is no room for doubt and no “maybe.”

the Land of Israel: to appoint a king, to destroy the seed of Amalek, and to build the *Beis HaBechira*.

In a footnote in the *D’var Malchus* of Parshas B’Shalach, the Rebbe says that everyone has a little Amalek in his heart. Therefore, the first thing that must be done in order to subjugate Amalek is the appointment of a king. For if there is a king, then it is possible to destroy the seed of Amalek.

What is Amalek? In the *maamer* “Remember what Amalek Did to You”

5665, the Rebbe Rashab brings different categories of Amalek, and we will try to translate them into practical terms.

One category of Amalek is when a *chassid* is told about a miracle that the Rebbe did, and he says that it didn't happen, or it happened by chance. This is a coarse Amalek. But there is also a more refined Amalek. He truly believes, but he also arouses doubts about the greatness of the miracle.

There was a Jew who for ten years had no children. The Rebbe told him to check his *mezuzos*, gave him a *bracha*, and now he has children. "I have heard hundreds of Rebbe stories of this type. What interests me is a story with suspense, a story with a lot of detail, not a "run-of-the-mill" miracle like this..."

In effect, this is a special type of Amalek. He holds the Rebbe in very high esteem, a Rebbe who can make many miracles. Though until now, the Amalek says to him that he doesn't want to hear these "simplistic" miracle stories...

There is the Amalek about which it is said that he is the *gematria* of "safek" (doubt). When G-d told Avrohom Avinu to have a *bris mila*, He didn't tell him where on his body to do it. Avrohom Avinu understood G-d's command, "Circumcise for yourselves every male," on his own. He understood that this meant the place that distinguishes between male and female – without *p'shetlach*.

I once heard from the *chassid*, Rabbi Mottel Kozliner, of blessed memory, that Avrohom Avinu did right by not seeking advice on where to do it, or else, he would have cut his beard, which is also a place that distinguishes between male and female... Only because he asked no questions, and did everything in the simplest terms, did he succeed in properly fulfilling the word of G-d.

Questions such as, "maybe it

could be this or maybe something else?" are nothing more than Amalek. If the Rebbe says to be happy and the *chassidim* go out and dance, then that's the way it should be, as dancing represents the simplest expression of joy.

Yet, here comes Amalek and asks, "Who said so?" Maybe it would be more appropriate to sing a *niggun*, and that will make you happy?

The Baal Shem Tov once told his students that before he revealed himself, he was sitting in the *beis*

"There cannot possibly be any change, as my words are based upon the pasuk, 'The eyes of G-d are upon it from the beginning of the year until the end of the year,' and there is no change in the pasuk."

midrash and learning Torah. Suddenly, there emerged from the *aron kodesh* a Jew with a white beard who said to the Baal Shem Tov, "Come, I will teach you the whole Torah."

The Baal Shem Tov told him, "No, get out of here."

"I understood that this was the *Samech Mem*," said the Baal Shem Tov. His students asked him how he knew.

"I saw that he had a sad face," he

replied.

We are *chassidim* and we must learn everything from the Rebbe. When the Rebbe came in for *davening* and left after *davening*, it was always with a joyous *niggun*. *Simcha* is a matter for the Rebbe above all else. In contrast, when people say today that you have to dance and sing, the claim is: What are we, dancers?

The Rebbe opened a treasure for us. He said that the month of Adar turns all undesirable matters from the entire year into goodness. Instead of arguing, we should take advantage of every possible moment.

* * *

I asked a fellow *chassid* why he is not publicizing that the Rebbe said that Eretz Yisroel is the safest place. This *chassid* told me that maybe the Rebbe's words applied to the Gulf War of 1991, but who knows if the same could be said today? I replied that for half a year before the Gulf War, there were diplomatic efforts to prevent the outbreak of hostilities. Yet, the Rebbe said the entire time that Eretz Yisroel is the safest place in the world. After all methods of diplomacy had failed, and it was obvious that the war was about to begin, a Jew passed by the Rebbe at Sunday dollars distribution around that same time. He asked if what the Rebbe said – that Eretz Yisroel is the safest place – was still in force now. The Rebbe responded, "There cannot possibly be any change, as my words are based upon the *pasuk*, 'The eyes of G-d are upon it from the beginning of the year until the end of the year,' and there is no change in the *pasuk*."

Therefore, I answered this *chassid*, the Rebbe's words are eternal and are in force even now, since they are based upon a *pasuk*. The Torah remains equally applicable twelve years later...

But this *chassid* continued to argue. "There was the *churban* of the

first and second *Beis HaMikdash*, and the subsequent Exile, despite the fact that the *pasuk* says, ‘The eyes of G-d are upon it.’” I responded that perhaps when the Rebbe prophesized that Eretz Yisroel is the safest place he drew down an increase of spiritual strength so that Eretz Yisroel would not be harmed.

During the Gulf War, I was learning in Kfar Chabad. I remember how Rabbi Shmuel Grumach, the *shliach* in Beit Dagan, would load up his van every night with *yeshiva bachurim*, and together they would go to those places where Scud

During the yechidus, the Rebbe revealed to him that there was a harsh decree against him, but when he went out and danced on Simchas Torah, the decree was annulled...

missiles landed. We would turn on the music full blast and dance. The neighbors would open their windows and be joyous together with us. This is how the *klipa* of Amalek is nullified.

We spoke before about the *mitzva* of wiping out Amalek, which is preceded by the *mitzva* of appointing a king. The intention behind this *mitzva* is to be nullified to the king (the Rebbe) in a manner that is beyond all reason and logic. The Rebbe says that we must be happy in the month of Adar, so we have to start with boundless joy and dancing.

The Rebbe says that Eretz Yisroel is the safest place, and that this must be publicized – so that’s what *chassidim* must do!

In 5751, the Rebbe said that this is the time to encourage and strengthen the Jewish people through the announcement of the Redemption, “I have surely remembered you,” that Moshiach is about to arrive, and that everything that is happening in the Persian Gulf is a sign of the Redemption. We must follow through without hesitation!

And if a Lubavitcher *chassid* with a long beard still comes by and tells you that this is “*amahlike reid*,” talk said way back when and no longer applicable, and he adds that maybe it really means this or maybe that – then go out with him in joyous dancing and tell him that Moshiach says, “The time of your Redemption has arrived!” The main point is that you have to be *freilech*!

THE SOUL CRIES OUT FOR MOSHIACH

Yet, after discussing the matter at length, the question still arises: But this isn’t me! I’m not the type to be so happy. By nature, I am a quiet person, not a noisemaker. This whole business doesn’t speak to me; it doesn’t suit my personality.”

In the *maamer* “*Lo Y’kanef Od Morecha*” (5721), the Rebbe lays out the most important foundations of the seventh generation. The Rebbe quotes the following from the Arizal’s *seifer Mevo Sh’arim*: “The secret of the garments is a very great secret.” What does this mean?

The Rebbe explains that when an ignorant person reviews words of wisdom said by a *chacham*, eventually, if he reviews the words over and over, that person becomes wise himself. Similarly, this applies regarding a cruel person. When he does acts of kindness over a period of time, he eventually becomes a

kind person. The question is: How can it be that the person’s character completely changed?

The Arizal comes and says that the secret of the garments is a very great secret. It turns out that the garments, despite the fact that they are only “external,” have the strength to affect even things of an “inner” nature.

The Rebbe Rayatz related during

Someone who is drunk doesn’t distinguish between “Blessed is Mordechai” and “Cursed is Haman,” and he acknowledges the fact that everything that G-d does is for the good. This is what the Rebbe means when he says that joy reveals the good in everything.

one of his *farbrengens* the story of a *chassid* who dreamt on Rosh HaShana that he would not live out the year. After Rosh HaShana, he went immediately to the Rebbe (the Rebbe Rayatz didn’t mention which Rebbe it was) and told him in *yechidus* about the dream. The Rebbe tried to calm him, telling him that “dreams speak in untruths.” But the *chassid* was not soothed by the Rebbe’s words. In

fact, he was most worried.

Simchas Torah came and everyone was dancing, but the *chassid* sat on the side and cried. In the midst of it all, he said to himself: The Rebbe wants me to be happy, so I have to be happy. He got up from his place, and began to dance. After Simchas Torah, he traveled again to the Rebbe for *yechidus*. During the *yechidus*, the Rebbe revealed to him that there was a harsh decree against him, but when he went out and danced on Simchas Torah, the decree was annulled...

It seems that in his heart, he was crying and distressed, and all his dancing was not out of happiness, but out of *kabbalas ol*. Nevertheless, the dancing succeeded in removing the decree from him. This characterizes the seventh generation, *S'firas HaMalchus*: doing everything the Rebbe says, even if it is out of *kabbalas ol*, not inner feeling, just as a servant follows the orders of his king.

In practice, everyone must learn the weekly *D'var Malchus*. How do we do so? As a *chassid* going into *yechidus* to hear the words directly from the Rebbe. In this week's *D'var Malchus*, there is an instruction from the Rebbe that a Jew must be happy during the month of Adar beyond all reason and logic.

In a footnote to the *D'var Malchus* from Parshas Ki Sisa, the Rebbe comments on the saying that "one is

obligated to drink [on Purim] until he doesn't know the difference between 'Cursed is Haman' and 'Blessed is Mordechai.'" Could someone really be so drunk that he cannot distinguish between "Cursed is Haman" and "Blessed is Mordechai"? The Rebbe explains that when something good happens to someone, he says, "Blessed is Mordechai," and in the case of something bad, he says "Cursed is Haman." But one who is drunk doesn't distinguish between "Blessed is Mordechai" and "Cursed is Haman," and he acknowledges the fact that everything that G-d does is for the good. This is what the Rebbe means when he says that joy reveals the good in everything.

Sometimes we say that when a person does a *mitzva* it is out of self-interest, honor, or social pressure, in order for him to become more accepted in the community. The Rebbe writes about this in *D'var Malchus*. Even if you are certain that others are doing a *mitzva* in their own personal interest, it is still the fulfillment of a *mitzva*, and even if the person himself fulfills the *mitzva* for ulterior motives, the truth is that he does it on account of his G-dly soul. We must look at everything in a positive light.

A Jew cries out for Moshiach because his *soul* is crying out for Moshiach. And even if you think that he is doing so for selfish reasons, the Rebbe says that he isn't.

This is similar to the famous story with Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev. Once, there was no *esrog* to be found anywhere in Berditchev. Then, on Erev Sukkos, a merchant arrived with an *esrog*. Rabbi Levi Yitzchok wanted to buy it, but the merchant refused, until Rabbi Levi Yitzchok agreed to sell him his portion in the World to Come.

That night, the first night of Sukkos, the town's entire Jewish community refused to host the merchant, who understood that Rabbi Levi Yitzchok had ordered them not to do so. He came to Rabbi Levi Yitzchok's *sukka*, but even *he* refused to let him in. The Jewish merchant was determined to fulfill the *mitzva* of sitting in a *sukka*, and Rabbi Levi Yitzchok agreed to let him in, but only on the condition that he give him back his portion in the World to Come. The merchant agreed. Rabbi Levi Yitzchok then joyfully told him that he would give him his World to Come as a just reward, and not a business deal...

We see from this that even when a Jew does things out of self-interest, at the moment of truth, when he asks to fulfill the *mitzva* of sitting in a *sukka*, he is prepared to give it all up.

The Rebbe says that Moshiach has been revealed, and all we have to do is open our eyes.

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KNOWLEDGE: THE SOURCE OF THEIR JOY

TRANSLATED BY RABBI SHIMON NEUBORT



Biographical Sketches

From the sichos of the Rebbe Rayatz in America

Seifer HaSichos – Kayitz 5700

Daytime Meal of Shabbos Parshas Chukas – Part 2

17. Among the *chassidic maamarim* that reached Vohlynia was the *maamer* “*VaEira*,” which was called the “Pious *VaEira*.”¹ This *maamer* made a great impression throughout Vohlynia.

18. When the holy Reb Menachem Nachum [of Chernobyl] passed away, Reb Pinchas, the father of Reb Levi Yitzchok (the [Hornosteipeler *chassid*], who was relating this story), became an adherent of [his son] the holy Reb Mordechai, and became one of his closest followers. And when the holy Reb Mordechai arranged the match with the Mittlerer Rebbe, and the time for the wedding arrived, Reb Pinchas was among those who traveled with Reb Mordechai to the wedding in the town of Zhlobin. Reb Pinchas related to his son, Reb Levi Yitzchok:

“In those days, it was said in our country² that most of the *Litvaks* – even the *chassidim* – were excessively pious; they were busy fasting and afflicting their bodies, and would walk in the street with hoods over their faces to avoid looking at anything outside their immediate vicinity. And even though I had seen [that this was not true regarding] the Rebbe of the *Litvaks*, that proved nothing regarding the *chassidim*. But when we arrived in Zhlobin, I saw that the *chassidim* are people similar to ourselves; among them there are even those who are quite joyful.

“I found this difficult to understand, and so I asked the Rebbe: ‘Your *chassidim* are scholars who have fear of G-d and who know a great deal of *chassidic* literature, having studied and occupied themselves with it with much

exertion. But I wonder where they get such joy, for they are always exceedingly joyful.’

“The Rebbe replied: ‘The joy of *chassidim* comes from the light of truth: they know how they are supposed to be, and they also know that they do not meet the standards.’

“I then said: ‘Well, since they know that they are not up to par, what is the occasion for such joy?’

“The Rebbe replied: The knowledge that one is sick is in itself half the cure. And that is the source of their joy, for they now know how to cure the illness.”

19. In the winter of 5651, on Shabbos Parshas Truma, my father the Rebbe [Rashab] recited the *maamer* “*V’Asu Li Mikdash V’Shachanti B’Socham*.” Rav Meir Shlomo Yanovsky³ (of blessed memory) of Nicholaev came [to Lubavitch] for this Shabbos. On Shabbos Parshas Tetzaveh my father, the Rebbe, recited the *maamer* “*V’Asisa Tzitz*.” Reb Asher, the *shochet* of Nicholaev, came for that Shabbos, along with the *shochtim*, Reb Yehoshua and Reb Shimon of Cherson; Reb Meir

1. It was printed in the edition of Torah Or printed in Lvov in 5611.

2. Vohlynia and Poland.

Shlomo of Nicholaev also remained for Shabbos Tetzaveh.

That Sunday was Purim Katan. The *farbrengen* began after *Mincha* at the home of my grandmother, Rebbetzin Rivka. At twelve o'clock there was a recess to *daven Maariv*, after which the *farbrengen* continued until the morning light. My uncle, Raza, was also present at that *farbrengen*, and this was the first time I heard him repeating a *maamer* of *chassidus*. The *maamer* he repeated was "*Hatei Elokai Oznecha U'Shma*." The *sichos* that were spoken then are recorded in the appropriate place.

From the *farbrengen* Father proceeded to the *mikva*, where he apparently caught cold, for he experienced fever that same day. He managed to prevail over it for several days without having to lie in bed, but on Friday⁴ 19 Adar Rishon, pneumonia set in and he had to remain in bed for about six weeks. On Shabbos Parshas Tazria he sat up in a chair near his bed for the first time. During his illness there were periods when he was in grave danger. And although his mind remained clear and his ability to speak was unaffected, the local physician, old Bogorodsky, and his Jewish assistant, the Charkover doctor, as well as the physician who was called in from Vitebsk, caused us great anxiety.

On Monday 22 Adar Rishon, Mendel, the [Rebbe Rashab's] attendant came to the *cheider* where I was studying – together with two

***“The Rebbe replied:
The knowledge that
one is sick is in itself
half the cure. And
that is the source of
their joy, for they
now know how to
cure the illness.”***

companions – under my tutor Reb Nissan, ז"ל, in the home of Reb Yeshaya Kostier. He informed my tutor, Reb Nissan, that Father had sent for him. When Reb Nissan returned he told me that Father had said to him that he wished me to serve as his attendant until he recovered.

Each day that I was with my father during those six weeks he related to me stories of things he had seen by his father, my grandfather, the Rebbe Maharash, and by his father-in-law, my grandfather, Reb Yosef Yitzchok – things that he had seen while living in Lubavitch, as well as things he had seen during the short time he lived in Avruch. He also told me about his conduct up to the age of his *bar mitzva*, and from the age of *bar mitzva* onward. From each and every story he would extract the lesson to be learned from it regarding fear of Heaven and

conducting oneself with good *middos*.

I did not understand the reason for these stories. And, knowing how highly Father valued the time that I studied with my tutor, Reb Nissan (he would watch over this with a careful eye), I wondered about this. My daily schedule during that time was as follows: At seven-thirty,⁵ *davening Shacharis* with the second *minyán* (the first *davened* earlier); at nine o'clock, breakfast; nine-thirty my lessons began, and lasted until two o'clock; three o'clock (during the winter), *Mincha* with the congregation; half an hour for writing; from four o'clock until eight-thirty, lesson time; then, *Maariv* and supper. At first I assumed that Father had summoned me to attend him, but I later realized that he did not need my service, and so this was all strange to me.

My tutor, Reb Nissan, would ask me each day what Father had spoken about to me. And being very fond of him, I would tell him. Frequently, I would see tears flowing from his eyes, and I did not understand why, for the subjects I related to him were not of the sort that ought to induce tears.

It was only many years later that I discovered that Father knew his present illness had been life-threatening, and so he had pressed himself to tell me all these stories, and especially the commentaries and conduct lessons, which he had explained in order to guide me along the right paths.

3. Rav Meir Shlomo Yanovsky was a rav and the administrator of the yeshiva in Romanevke, and later in Nicholaev. He was one of the "sitters" and chassidim of the Rebbe Maharash and later the Rebbe Rashab [he was the father of

Rebbetzin Chana, mother of the Rebbe MH"M.]

4. A footnote by the Rebbe MH"M: "see this whole story in the diary of the arrest, Part 4, (Brooklyn, 5715), p. 13ff, where the details are somewhat different. The

version written in that diary is more authentic, for it was copied from my father-on-law's own handwriting."

5. The aforementioned diary (p. 7) reads, "...eight-thirty, for prayer."

MIRACLE VIA BOSTON

STORIES FROM RABBI CHAIM KONIKOV,
FRIEND OF ASTRONAUT ILAN RAMON, A"H

After the tragic passing of Israeli astronaut, Ilan Ramon, a"ח, Rabbi Chaim Konikov, *shliach* on the Space Coast in Florida, traveled to Eretz Yisroel to participate in the funeral and *nichum aveilim*. R' Konikov became famous as a result of his friendship with Ramon, and was an important factor in the *kiddush Hashem* that Ramon caused in his final weeks of life.

On the day he landed in Lud, R' Konikov participated in an official ceremony in memory of Ilan Ramon, at which time he met the director of the Chabad house at the airport, Rabbi Nachman Maidenchek, who hosted him at his home in Kfar Chabad.

Over the weekend R' Konikov *farbrenge*d. Friday night with the students of Tomchei T'mimim, Motzaei Shabbos in R' Nachman's home along with the director of Agudas Chassidei Chabad-Rabbi Shlomo Maidenchek, and with dozens of T'mimim and many of *Anash*. R' Konikov also held a *farbrengen* with many dozens of women.

Throughout his visit, students and businessmen that had been connected to him in Florida, which has a large Israeli population and tourist trade, came to meet him.

R' Konikov is a young *shliach* with a charming and perpetual smile. He spoke about his *shlichus* in Florida, about the difficulties and miracles, and about the Divine providence that constantly accompanies him. *Anash*

drank in his every word.

HELP FROM ABROAD

Writing to the Rebbe MH"M is a regular habit of R' Konikov, and the answers he receives in the *Igros Kodesh* are astounding. The following are some of the stories that R' Konikov related. We'll start with a story that sounds farfetched, but it's the story of how the new Chabad house came to be.

"A number of years ago I was surprised to discover that some non-Lubavitchers wanted to open a center in the same vicinity as my Chabad house. The Jewish community is not a large one, and their opening the center would have destroyed whatever I had built up over the years. I knew that in order to prevail I would have to do something *Tohu'dik* (outrageous), something really big and difficult. I decided to put up a large building for a new Chabad house.

"I wrote to the Rebbe about it, and the answer I opened to in the *Igros Kodesh* was written to the N'shei

Chabad of Boston. I didn't see anything in the letter that pertained to me, but I wouldn't write again if I didn't have anything new to say.

"My financial situation at that time wasn't great, nevertheless I proceeded with my plans and began looking for a location for a Chabad house. I found it rather quickly. It was in the best possible location as far as who I wanted to reach, but it needed serious renovations. Actually, it needed to be torn down and rebuilt. This entailed an enormous expense and I had prior debts.

"Then I got a phone call from an Israeli girl who had been at our Chabad house some time before. She's a bit spiritual, if I can call her that, but not quite "one of ours"... She was spending time in Boston where she was involved in stocks, using money she had received from her mother. She had opened a business in Boston and her account was there. Anyway, she told me that she wanted to give me a donation. I immediately recalled the letter I had opened to about the N'shei Chabad of Boston!

"Then I was preparing for Purim and the girl from Eretz Yisroel was on the line again, this time telling me she was in Eretz Yisroel but she couldn't transfer the money to my bank account since the bank refused to do the transaction. The money was in Boston and she was in Eretz Yisroel and something was amiss. So in

Rabbi Chaim Zvi Konikov, *shliach* at the Space Coast, who has come into the spotlight on account of his friendship with the Israeli astronaut, Ilan Ramon, a"ח, was in New York to celebrate his son's bar *mitzva* in 770. Many Crown Heights residents attended the bar *mitzva farbrengen*, during which Rabbi Konikov spoke about the *kiddush Hashem* that Ilan Ramon made during his doomed space flight, as well as his personal connection with the astronaut. Rabbi Konikov's son delivered the bar *mitzva maamer* during the *farbrengen* and declared, "Yechi."

another half a year, around the holiday time when she'd be back in America, she'd send me a donation.

"I got up my courage and said that if she couldn't transfer the money, I would personally show up to any location she named, in order to get the donation.

"Hearing that, she said she had a different solution. Go to Boston, she said, and then I'll tell you how to obtain a signed check and you'll fill in the amounts I tell you.

"So as in a fairy tale, I flew to Boston and late at night, as per her instructions, I went to an attic where I found checks. She told me to fill in one check for \$50,000 for that day, and another check for \$50,000 for the following month! And that's how our new center opened, a center where we do ten times more than we used to, effectively ending the plans of our opponents."

THE RIGHT ANSWER FROM THE RIGHT PERSON

Among the other things R' Konikov related, he described a meeting of all Jewish representatives in his area which was attended by men in high public positions and key individuals within the Jewish community. One man got up and spoke in unflattering terms about Chabad *chassidim* and their belief in the Rebbe being Moshiach.

R' Konikov was caught entirely unprepared, and the situation seemed far from simple. He still hadn't decided how to respond and wondered where it was all headed

when a woman who serves as president of Hadassah in Florida got up and said to the man, "*Mamash, mamash, mamash!*"

The man looked at her in bewilderment and said, "What's that – *mamash, mamash, mamash?*"

The woman replied, "Start attending R' Konikov's classes and then you'll know what '*mamash*' is and what Moshiach is!"

As R' Konikov puts it, "I had nothing to add. Anything I could have said, as terrific as it might have been, couldn't have been better than what a woman like her said!"



Rabbi Chaim Konikov with Ilan Ramon

UNCOMPROMISING EMUNA

One of the businessmen who lives in the area became involved in Torah and *mitzvos* by visiting the Chabad house and R' Konikov's home, but he was more involved with the men from Aish Ha'Torah. This man was close to forty and single and R' Konikov suggested that he ask the Rebbe for a *bracha*. The man did so and opened a volume of *Igros Kodesh*, and was married shortly thereafter and had a child.

He expressed his thanks to the

Chabad house and the Rebbe by donating \$300 a month every month. Yet one fine day R' Konikov got an e-mail in which the man said he wanted to stop sending his donation. R' Konikov ignored it and a few days later he got a phone call from the man in which the man said that since Chabad *chassidim* say that the Rebbe is Moshiach, he had decided to stop sending his donation.

R' Konikov said he certainly wasn't going to change his beliefs for a donation, and the man certainly had the right to cancel his donation effective immediately. He then went

on to do his best to explain why he believes what he believes; and the end of the story? The man continues to send his checks and keeps in touch with the Chabad house.

* * *

R' Konikov returned home to celebrate his son's *hanachos t'fillin* and he concluded his *farbrengen* by saying that children are called "anointed ones." As the Rebbe says, when you see a Jewish child, you

see Moshiach. His own son has an e-mail list of *mekuravim* to whom he sends material about Moshiach on a weekly basis.

Regardless as to how you present Moshiach to the outside – says R' Konikov – on the "inside," at the Chabad house, in Chabad communities, and certainly in Kfar Chabad – there must be a *shturm* about belief in what the Rebbe taught us which is expressed in the proclamation of "*Yechi*."

WOULD WE CHOOSE A “VIRTUAL” LIFE?

BY RABBI TUVIA BOLTON, MASHPIA IN YESHIVA
OHR TMIMIM OF KFAR CHABAD



This week’s section is very strange because it is almost totally a repetition of Parshas Truma (three chapters ago, where the complicated commandment of making the Tabernacle and all its details was explained). The only difference is that here the word “va’yaas” is added to each detail, meaning that what was commanded earlier was actually “done.”

But, this could have been accomplished by simply adding one sentence to the end of Parshas Truma: “And all that G-d commanded in the construction of the Tabernacle was done.” Why was it necessary to make an entire separate chapter and devote hundreds of words of repetition to say the same thing? What is G-d telling us here?

I would like to illustrate with a joke.

Once, after Napoleon had won one of his most important battles, he called the generals of his various legions to his stately war-room to reward them in a pompous ceremony.

The general of the Bavarian troops stepped forward, fell to one knee before the Emperor, and declared, “I want autonomy for Bavaria!”

“So it shall be!” proclaimed Napoleon to the ministers and officials surrounding the scene. “Autonomy for

Bavaria!”

The Slovakian general then stepped forward, fell to his knee and similarly declared, “Liberty for Slovakia!”

“Liberty it shall be!” shouted Bonaparte.

And so it was with the Arabian and the Ukrainian generals. “By G-d, autonomy and statehood for Arabia, and for the Ukrainians!” he announced.

Finally the chief of the Jewish forces stepped forward. “And what of you, my loyal friend?” Napoleon asked. “What reward do you ask for your bravery?”

“I would like a cup of hot coffee with milk and no sugar, two bagels with cream cheese, and some lox on the side.”

Without hesitating, Napoleon sent one of his officers to bring the Jew’s order, saluted all those present, and left the room. Meanwhile, the order arrived, and the Jewish general washed his hands for bread, sat down, and began eating while the other generals gaped in amazement.

“You fool!” one of them blurted out, “Why did you make such a stupid request! You could have asked for a nation, riches and power! Why did you waste your wish on a few bagels?!”

The Jew stopped eating for a

moment, looked up at them with a sly smile, and replied, “At least I got what I asked for.”

* * *

That is what G-d wants to show us here: the main thing is the final deed – action! Torah learning, prayer, good resolutions, and enthusiasm are all essential, but it is all meaningless without it coming into action in this physical world.

To illustrate, here is a story.

The Baal Shem Tov had a pupil called Mordechai who wanted to learn sorcery. All the pupils of the Baal Shem Tov were geniuses and very spiritual people, but it is known that the greater that a person is, his evil impulse is also correspondingly greater. In any case, this pupil wanted magic. He knew that the Torah forbids such activities, but he felt that his life was gray and empty without witchcraft, and he was desperate and bored. He wanted action, real action!

He made up his mind that this would be his last encounter with the Master, and early Sunday morning he would head out for a new life. He already had made contacts, and everything was set.

That Shabbos night he sang the songs, ate the meal, and listened to the words of Torah with all the other

chassidim, but his mind was far away. He vaguely noticed that it was unusually warm in the room, and not giving it much thought, he removed his *strimel*, but it didn't help. He unbuttoned the collar of his shirt and removed his overcoat; he couldn't recall it ever being so hot there before.

Through the window next to him he saw how the icy winter wind was howling through the trees and deep snow covered the forest ground outside, but here inside he was sweating and he felt as though he was about to faint. "Please, may I step outside for a moment?" he asked the Master. "I need some fresh air."

"Just for a minute, no longer," answered the Baal Shem Tov. "Just make sure that you return immediately. It's dangerously cold out there."

It was already getting hard for him to breathe. He opened the door and stepped outside as the freezing fresh air hit his face. "Wow, one more minute and I would have passed out," he thought to himself, but suddenly he felt hot again. Without hesitating he opened his shirt and began rubbing his face and chest with snow.

Then he began running. Ahhh... The cool wind against his body felt good, he stumbled and fell several times, but he didn't care. He staggered to his feet and again began running, running like a madman through the woods. The trees and the sky racing, spinning by him. He was out of breath, the cold wind, the stars, and then everything went black.

He woke in a strange warm room, freshly made bed. An old farmer and his wife were standing over him. "We thought you were dead when we saw you laying there in the snow," he said. "You've been sleeping for over a week. Are you all right? Do you want some warm soup? Where are you from?"

Our young hero was in a daze. He didn't remember anything, but he took up the offer on the soup.

In a few days he was already learning how to work behind the plow.

Gradually the farm began to change. New workers were hired, new fields were purchased and cultivated, and five years later the simple farm had become a massive estate.

One day, the old happy farmer returned from a trip into town and showed the young man an

What if it were possible to live a virtual life, to have our brains attached to electrodes so we can experience whatever life we wanted. Everyone could be rich and famous, generals, or even kings. All mankind could live 120 imaginary years of pleasure with no disappointments or pain. No wars or hatred. Would it be worth it? This week's section tells us: NO!

advertisement he had taken from the post office. "They are looking for new officers in the army," he said, "Just read this. I think you should apply. It's your chance to be someone really important. Just look at the miracles you have done here. You are someone special. Don't waste your life here on

this farm. You've been here long enough."

The young man took to the army like a fish to water. He passed all the entrance requirements with flying colors, and after two years of officer's training when the war broke out between his country and Poland, he found himself a captain in the Royal cavalry.

Several chapters would be necessary to describe the many fierce battles and brave accomplishments of our hero, his innumerable brushes with death, his brazen spirit, split second decisions, and impressive victories against impossible odds.

Five years later, he had already been promoted to the rank of Major-General and was seated on his fine horse, reviewing the ten thousand mounted lancers at his command, when suddenly from nowhere he remembered that night twelve years ago when he left the Baal Shem's Shabbos table!

He paused for several minutes, deep in thought remembering every rich vivid detail, and every emotion that passed through his mind back then. Suddenly he came to himself and announced, "Dismount! Return to your tents, and prepare yourselves for a journey. In one hour we are beginning a three-day march!"

It was late at night three days later when the huge army reached the forest surrounding the small synagogue of the Baal Shem Tov. The general turned to face his myriads of mounted soldiers and yelled orders: "Light your torches!" Suddenly it seemed as though the entire forest was illuminated with an eerie flickering light. "Draw swords." The ringing of the swords and the glistening blades were everywhere.

The general dismounted, approached the large old hut, drew his sword and began pounding with its hilt on the closed door. "Open in the name of the King! See what happens to a *chassid* who leaves the Holy Master!" No one answered, but he heard

someone speaking within the house, and he got angry.

He furiously stuck his sword in the ground and began pounding on the door with both fists and screaming “Open! Open for a general in the king’s army!”

Slowly the door opened, the Baal Shem Tov stuck his head out and said, “Mordechai, are you still here? You have been outside for almost five minutes! Do you want to become ill? Come in immediately!”

“Five minutes?!” the general screamed. “Look at all my troops and tell me about five minutes!”

He turned around and there was no one there, even his horse had disappeared! The wind was howling through the trees and deep snow covered the silent forest. Even his uniform and sword were gone! He was in the same garments as he was twelve years ago, it was all an illusion.

Suddenly he realized that the Baal Shem Tov also knew “magic,” and he humbly reentered the house, back to the real world.

The point of the story is this: What if our hero hadn’t woken up? What if he died thinking he was a general? Would that have been better?

The same for us. What if it were possible to live a virtual life, to have our brains attached to electrodes so we can experience whatever life we wanted. Everyone could be rich and famous, generals, or even kings. All mankind could live 120 imaginary years of pleasure with no disappointments or pain. No wars or hatred. Would it be worth it? This week’s section tells us: NO!

An imaginary life, a life that is not devoted to actually doing the Creator’s will, is a false life, and no one wants to be fooled.

That is why we Jews are supposed

to hide our *tzitzis* and not say words of Torah in a Jewish graveyard. The souls of the dead are leading only virtual, spiritual lives, and they are pained by the reminder that there is a real world where one can actually serve the Creator.

This is the reality that the *Beis HaMikdash* represents, and that Moshiach will reveal: the preciousness of life. The fact that the physical can be much more holy than the spiritual, and one good deed can make heaven on earth. And finally, Moshiach will bring about the ultimate action: the Enlivening of the Dead, including the loftiest souls – The Avos, Moshe Rabbeinu, etc. – will all return to bodies in this world of action. Moshiach NOW!

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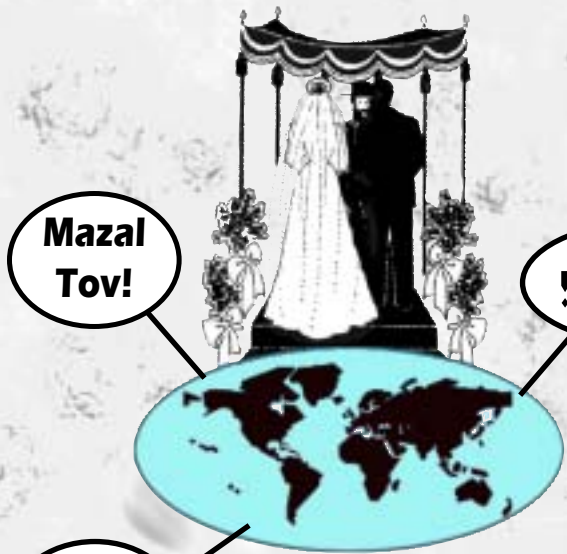
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CHASSIDIM DON'T PART

*Brief stories about the Rebbe's incredible relationship with Am Yisroel in general and his chassidim in particular. * A compilation of stories, answers, yechiduyos, directives, and guidance. * Taken from t'shuros distributed recently. **

Part 2

SEIDER HISHTALSHELUS

The Rebbe once said that if someone was used to learning eighteen hours a day, and was asked to learn one minute less, it would make someone who was almost removed from *Yiddishkeit*, completely removed.

The lesson is obvious.

AFTER DAVENING

The Rebbe once handed over a pile of answers for people just minutes before he went down for *Mincha*. After *davening*, when the Rebbe returned to his room, he asked for the pile of letters back since he wanted to add something to one of the letters.

GOING TO A CITY [AND NOT] FOLLOWING ITS CUSTOMS

There was once a Jew who became close to Lubavitch who had *yeichidus* with the Rebbe every so often. One time he figured that he had to behave according to the customs of the place and therefore he wouldn't speak in the *yeichidus*, nor would he extend his hand to the Rebbe.

A moment before entering Gan Eden HaElyon, he thought the matter



over once again and concluded that he didn't have the *maalos* that *chassidim* have, and so why then should he adopt the *chesronos*, and refrain from talking to the Rebbe?

When he walked in, the Rebbe held out his hand and greeted him with "*shalom aleichem*."

MIVTZAIM ARE MY THING!

There was a Lubavitcher who was enthusiastically involved in *mivtzaim* but who was lacking in *ahavas Yisroel*. When he entered for *yeichidus*, the Rebbe told him: "*Mivtzaim iz mayna a*

zach, ich vil nisht az du zolst gein oif mivtzaim (mivtzaim are my inyan, and I don't want you to go on mivtzaim).

LEARNING B'YUN

Someone who had a *yeichidus* said that the Rebbe told him that the *inyan* of "three days without Torah," includes someone who learns but not *b'iyun* (in depth).

EVERYBODY MUST WRITE TO THE REBBE

A guest who came in 5721 said that he told the Rebbe in *yeichidus* that people did not want to write negative things. The Rebbe

responded: *shtusim shtusim, m'darf altz shraiben* (foolishness, foolishness, they should write everything).

INSTRUCTIONS IN YECHIDUS

One of the T'mimim who had a *yeichidus* with the Rebbe said that he received a number of instructions from the Rebbe:

* his *siddur* should be open in front of him during *davening* even when his eyes were closed, like during *Shma*, since this helps dispel "foreign thoughts."

* in answer to his question as to what one must take from a *farbrengen*, the Rebbe said one should take just one thing from everything that was said, but it should be something that pertains to him.

* to learn *chassidus* each day before *davening* for at least five or ten minutes, even on a day when he doesn't have time.

* to give *tz'daka* every day, and not to be particular as to which cause, and if there's no *pushka* there, to put the coin aside until he finds a *pushka*.

A chassid whom the Rebbe wanted to send on shlichus, wrote to the Rebbe that since he was sick and weak and had no strength to go on shlichus, he asked the Rebbe to release him from shlichus.

WHOEVER BLESSES, IS BLESSED

On Yud-Alef Nissan 5719 two older *chassidim* had a *yechidus* wherein they asked the Rebbe to bless them in honor of his birthday. The Rebbe smiled and said, "*Alle brachos vos bentchen zich eine dem anderen zol mekuyam veren, un der Oibershter zol gebben mit a hosafa*" (All blessings with which one blesses one another should be fulfilled, and Hashem should give even more).

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

A *chassid* whom the Rebbe wanted to send on *shlichus*, wrote to the Rebbe that since he was sick and weak and had no strength to go on *shlichus*, he asked the Rebbe to release him from *shlichus*.

The Rebbe responded: I thought you'd write the opposite: I need to fulfill my *shlichus*, but I'm weak. Therefore, I ask for a *bracha* that I should have the strength to fulfill the *shlichus* in the best possible manner!

YOU MUST MAKE THE VESSELS

A Tamim had a *yechidus* in which he asked the Rebbe to arouse mercy on his behalf so that he'd have *chayus* in his learning. He was asking this because he didn't have *chayus*.

The Rebbe said, "*Al talmidei Tomchei T'mimim iz men shtendik m'orer rachamim; men darf mer nit vi machen keilim mekabel zain*" (We always arouse mercy on the T'mimim; you just have to make vessels to receive it).

WHAT NOT TO LOOK AT

A *chassid* had a *yechidus* with the Rebbe in which he spoke about his *shlichus*. Among other things he said that spiritually he was probably better off there, but materially he was better off here. Said the Rebbe, "Regarding that thing upon which is dependent the fulfillment of the purpose of the soul's descent below, one doesn't look at *gashmius*."

LEARN MORE

On 13 Nissan 5712 the Rebbe gave a letter to Y.K. for him to copy. The Rebbe was busy that day, and in the midst of his activities, he left his room. When the Rebbe returned to his room, this *chassid* stood up for the Rebbe. The Rebbe said, "*Besser zits un endik shneller* (it's better to sit and finish more quickly).

On the table lay a book from which he was supposed to copy. The

child S.Y.C. was also there at the time. He was about seven or eight years old. The Rebbe asked him why he wasn't learning, and the boy said that these days (before Pesach) there was no school.

The Rebbe did not accept this answer and asked the child the same question again. The boy didn't know what the Rebbe meant. The Rebbe took the book from the table and opened it to the last page and said, "Do you see how many *s'farim* there are in this room? And do you know

***The Rebbe responded:
I thought you'd write
the opposite: I need to
fulfill my shlichus,
but I'm weak.
Therefore, I ask for a
bracha that I should
have the strength to
fulfill the shlichus in
the best possible
manner!***

that there are many more *s'farim*? *Ven vestu doz alles klor veren?*" (When will you know them all clearly?)

EVEN FOR A DAY!

Somebody who became a *mekurav* to Lubavitch once asked the Rebbe about a *yeshiva* for his son. He had two options; either to send him to Tomchei T'mimim, but for various reasons this would be for a short period of time, or to send him to learn in a non-Chabad *yeshiva* for a longer period of time.

The Rebbe said he should send his son to Tomchei T'mimim even if only for a day.

In the end, things worked out and the *talmid* remained in Tomchei T'mimim for a number of years.

BEDTIME HABITS

The Rebbe once told a *chassid* to be *mekarev* a certain person who would drop in to see the Rebbe on occasion. One day this *chassid* told the Rebbe that he was disturbed by this *mushpa* since he sometimes expressed heretical ideas.

The Rebbe said, "I know him, and it's just talk. He probably reads a newspaper before going to sleep, and when you read the paper before going to sleep, you say things like that the next day."

REVIEWING CHASSIDUS

Someone told the Rebbe that he had reviewed *chassidus* publicly and he knew that he benefited greatly from this *b'gashmius*. Said the Rebbe, "*Halevai* everybody knew this – that reviewing *chassidus* is simply good for *gashmius*, too.

SINCE THE REBBE DIDN'T BRING IT UP...

On Yud-Tes Kislev 5736, a man and his son, a Tamim who learned in Tomchei T'mimim in France, had a *yechidus* with the Rebbe. The father asked the Rebbe to influence his son to go to college and not to *yeshiva*. The father excused his request by saying that he wasn't religious, and therefore, he had no influence over his son.

The Rebbe told him to write a letter to Rabbi S. and that the latter would tell his son what to do. The conversation went on with many topics being discussed.

Following that *yechidus*, the man started putting on *t'fillin*. He said that when he went for the *yechidus* he was sure that the Rebbe would talk to him about putting on *t'fillin* every day and he had already resolved not to give

in, but since the Rebbe didn't bring it up, he decided to do it...

LACKING INFORMATION

A senior military man had a *yechidus* with the Rebbe. The conversation was about *emuna*, and the man complained about the death of his friend as well as the death of the son of that man, a baby a few months old, who had died shortly after his friend.

The Rebbe said: When you stand among the soldiers where all the ammunition is kept, and a man suddenly comes along and asks:

The Rebbe said, "I know him, and it's just talk. He probably reads a newspaper before going to sleep, and when you read the paper before going to sleep, you say things like that the next day."

what's this, what do you say? You say this can kill 5000 people, and that can kill 5000 people, and so on.

Then what if the man starts shouting, "am I among murderers?" You explain that the fact that he lives securely in Yerushalayim along with his wife and child is only because of the soldiers and their weapons that protect the nation. The man rejoices and says: If that's the case, you're really good people.

The Rebbe concluded his analogy and said, "Just a moment before, the man thought they were all murderers

and a moment later he thought they were good people. The difference was only that he lacked information. You also lack information, and if you study more, you'll see and understand."

NO MASHKE, NO SHIDDUCH

In the winter of 5734 a *rav* sent in a bottle of *mashke* to the Rebbe so that he could get it back from the Rebbe before he left for his daughter's wedding in Eretz Yisroel. A few weeks went by and the Rebbe did not return the bottle.

The *rav* asked Rabbi Groner whether he should submit another bottle of *mashke*, and was told not to. At a certain point the *rav* took an opportunity that came up to ask the Rebbe himself why he didn't get the bottle back. The Rebbe didn't respond.

When the *rav* went to Eretz Yisroel he discovered that the other side had called off the *shidduch*.

THERE ARE ANOTHER 612

A *chassid* related: I once had a *yechidus* on Motzai Simchas Torah 5735. I handed the Rebbe my note, and the Rebbe asked me, "Did you hear anything lately from so and so?" Indeed I had spoken with this individual the week before about the topic of *Mihu Yehudi*, and he expressed his opposition to the Rebbe. I told this to the Rebbe.

The Rebbe said, "Somebody spoke *lashon ha'ra* about me – *motzi shem ra*. In conversations you don't speak about people but about viewpoints.

When I heard this I thought of telling this to the man so that I could be *mekarev* him to the Rebbe. I was still thinking this when the Rebbe said, "There's no point in telling him that I know."

I thought that maybe it paid to ask Rabbi P.V. to tell the man what the Rebbe had said but the Rebbe read my mind and said, "And there's no point in telling someone else to



tell him that I know.”

Then the Rebbe said, “*Mihu Yehudi* is one *mitzva*, but there are another 612!”

GO ABOUT THE STREETS OF BROOKLYN AND WILLIAMSBURG

The Rebbe once said at a *farbrengen*, “The Mittlerer Rebbe said that he wishes that when people go out in the street they talk about “*yichuda ilaa* and *yichuda tataa*. When a *tzaddik-nasi* wishes something, it is fulfilled, and now it only depends on the people themselves – that when they go about Brooklyn and Williamsburg they speak about “*yichuda ilaa* and *yichuda tataa*.”

HER MAZAL SHOULD SHINE

When the Rebbe MH”M met the Naroler Rebbe in Teives 5738, the Rebbe said, “When they tell me about a girl who lights Shabbos candles, I am accustomed to say, “*yair mazala*” (her *mazal* should be illuminated).

WHAT TO DO ABOUT EGO

A Tamim had a *yechidus* in which he complained that in everything he did, whether in learning or *hafatza*, he had plenty of *yeshus* (ego). The Rebbe advised him to think *chassidus* every day from the *kuntres* “*U”Maayan*” and the *maamer* “*HaUmnum*” 5643. The Rebbe also told him to contemplate *chassidus* for between ten and forty-fifty minutes.

The *bachur* did as he was advised, but after a few months he wrote to the Rebbe that he felt no change. The Rebbe answered that he shouldn’t be fazed by that and to continue doing what he was doing.

After some time the *bachur* had completely changed.

A FAMILIAR NAME

Y.Y.H. once went for “dollars” along with his baby, who was going to have his *bris* a few hours later. The Rebbe blessed the father and son and gave a dollar “*livracha v’hatzlacha*.”

That night, following a *sicha* delivered after *Maariv*, the Rebbe gave out dollars again as he did after delivering a *sicha*, and the man and his baby passed by the Rebbe once again. This time the baby had had his *bris*. The Rebbe asked the father what the baby's name was, and the father answered, "Menachem Mendel." The Rebbe smiled and said, "That's a familiar name!"

WHAT TO DO AT FARBRENGENS

A guest from Eretz Yisroel had a *yechidus* after which he related what they had spoken about. He said they discussed the style of *farbrengens* when only *l'chaim* was said and *niggunim* sung. The Rebbe said that a *farbrengen* should always have a *D'var Malchus* (a *sicha* or story).

GREETING MOSHIACH

In that *yechidus* they spoke about children of *Anash* who were growing up in Kfar Chabad, and the Rebbe said they had to be educated properly because, "they will be taken to greet Moshiach Tzidkeinu speedily in our day." And the Rebbe's face changed as he said this.

TO THE MIKVA BEFORE WRITING

A *talmid* wrote a note to the Rebbe. The Rebbe told Rabbi Chadakov to ask the *bachur* when the last time was that he been to the *mikva* before writing the note, and the Rebbe asked for an immediate response. It turned out that the *bachur* hadn't gone to the *mikva* for quite a while.

A Jew from Eretz Yisroel wrote to the Rebbe and the Rebbe told him that he mentions all the names the man had written in his letters at the *tziyun*, and therefore, from now on, he should go to the *mikva* before writing.

NO CONDITIONS

At a *yechidus* the Rebbe once said, "A soldier's job is with no conditions."



MAYIM SH'LANU

For a while the Rebbe's *matzos* were baked in a bakery on the East Side of Manhattan. One year Rabbi Simpson the secretary asked the Rebbe when he would draw the water of *mayim sh'lanu*. The Rebbe said he would do it on Tuesday. R' Simpson said that that wouldn't work out, and they ended up drawing the water [on a different day] and giving it to R' Berel Futerfas, who took the containers to the bakery.

There were private audiences that night in the course of which the

Rebbe asked R' Chadakov, "What's with the *mayim sh'lanu*?"

R' Chadakov said everything was fine. The Rebbe continued to receive people and then the Rebbe asked R' Chadakov once again about the water.

R' Chadakov realized something was up and he called the bakery. R' Berel said, "The container with the water just touched the steps and broke!"

When R' Chadakov relayed this to the Rebbe, the Rebbe said, "I had thought we'd bake on Tuesday."

HA'CHASSID R. YOSEF TOMARKIN: THE RAV OF KREMENCHOG

TRANSLATED BY MICHOEL LEIB DOBRY

The following article was first printed in the Teives 5694 edition of the HaYehudi magazine in New York. In the "G'dolei Yisroel" section, Dan Tomarkin describes the uniqueness of HaGaon HaChassid R. Yosef Tomarkin, of blessed memory, one of the greatest chassidim of the Tzemach Tzedek and the Rebbe Maharash. Thanks to Rabbi Sholom Yaakov Chazan for providing this article.

HaRav R. Yosef ben HaRav R. Eliyahu Tomarkin, of blessed memory, was born on the 18th of Teives 5579 (1819), in the city of Dobravne. His father was a great Torah scholar, a Lubavitcher *chassid*, and the product of a prominent family. He educated his son, Yosef, who even in his childhood, excelled with marvelous aptitude, in the path of Torah and Chabad *chassidus*.

While we do not have detailed information on his early education and childhood, it is known, however, that during his younger years, R. Yosef had established a reputation as a Torah giant who was an outstanding student of the famed *gaon* on his generation, R. Nechemia of Dobravne, of blessed memory, compiler of the *seifer Divrei Nechemia*, which includes numerous Torah innovations from his student, R. Yosef.

Besides his prowess as a Torah

scholar, he was a fervent *chassid* with all his soul and a loyal disciple of the Tzemach Tzedek, *nishmoso eden*. In spite of his youth, he always asked the Rebbe *halachic* questions, particularly on the laws of *agunos*. Almost all the outstanding Torah sages of his generation, including the Neziner Rebbe, would bring him their correspondences regarding practical *halachic* questions. His answers were always extremely deep and most scholarly, stated with the utmost common sense and straightforwardness, to the point that he was considered as the leading *halachic* authority of his day. His innovative Torah writings, which have been deemed of great value, remain in their original longhand, and to this day, they have yet to be brought to print for various reasons.

His prominence was so great and considerable among his peers that he, together with the famed Torah

scholars, R. Peretz Chein of Tchernigov and R. Shneur Zalman of Lublin, of blessed memory, were the ones to give their consent to the printing of the Alter Rebbe's *Likkutei Torah*.

As is known, even the most famous Torah scholars in those days would not dare to print their *s'farim* without the expressed consent of the leading rabbinical authorities of the generation. And so it was that the well-known *seifer Kav V'Naki* on laws of divorce and the *seifer Tiv Yehoshua* received R. Yosef's consent.

HaRav R. Yosef's first rabbinical assignment was in the city of Suraz, and after the passing of the *gaon*, R. Aharon, of blessed memory, the Mittlerer Rebbe's son-in-law, who had served as the *av beis din* of Kremenchog, a city known for its Torah scholars and flourishing community of Chabad *chassidim*, he was appointed as his replacement at the advice and consent of the Tzemach Tzedek.

Throughout his life, he firmly conducted the rabbinical affairs of his community and participated in all matters pertaining to the physical needs of the city. With the love of a father, he cared for his flock, especially in the area of *tz'daka* and *g'milus chassadim*. He would bring in guests, and his home was always open to the welfare of passers-by. On those occasions when Torah scholars would come as his guests, he was most happy and would joyfully serve them himself.

But if he was stringent about fulfilling *mitzvos* for his fellow Jews, he was especially endeared to the *mitzva* of *pidyon shvuyim* to the point of actual self-sacrifice.

The fact is that during the years that he served as the *rav* of Kremenchog, none of the city's young Jewish men were conscripted into the army. HaRav R. Yosef would always redeem captive Jews at their full value, thus securing their release. For this

purpose, he founded the Pidyon Shvuyim Society among the more honored and wealthy members of the community and served as its chairman. The city's residents, when they saw their *rav's* self-sacrifice towards this *mitzva*, would assist him in all their strength. They would give him the monetary support he assigned to each and every one, as his words were heard as a rabbinical decree not to be questioned.

It is told that there was in Kremenchog a very wealthy and prominent *chassid* named R. Yehuda Leib Zlatopolsky. When HaRav R. Yosef founded the Pidyon Shvuyim Society, this wealthy *chassid* gave him a special key to his strongbox, and said to him in these words: "Rabbi! My strongbox is open to you at all times and you may take money from it for *pidyon shvuyim* as much as is needed whenever you wish..." So great was the

*His davening was
always with
tremendous kavana
and unusual fervor
from the depth of his
heart and soul.*

love and admiration of the city's people for their *rav*.

During the year that the decree was issued throughout Russia to conscript all young men, twenty-one years of age, into military service, he was very upset and deeply troubled. He told his closest confidants, "I don't want to see our dear, gentle, and young fellow Jews falling into the hands of the evil destroyers of Israel." And similar to an inadvertent statement of a sovereign

ruler, that very year, just four months before the decree took effect, he passed away suddenly.

His *davening* was always with tremendous *kavana* and unusual fervor from the depth of his heart and soul. People who were present during his prayers were struck with great awe at the sight they beheld.

After the passing of the Tzemach Tzedek, HaRav R. Yosef was among those who turned to his youngest son, the Maharash, with the request that he succeed his father. Due to his influence and approval, the Maharash subsequently became the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

HaRav R. Yosef traveled to Lubavitch for Shavuot 5634 (1874) to spend the holiday with the Rebbe Maharash. As he prepared to depart, he told the Rebbe that he is planning to travel home via Kiof, because he wants to visit his mother. The Rebbe requested that he travel straight to Kremenchog and not through Kiof, and he even repeated the request several times. Even when HaRav R. Yosef was already sitting in his carriage, ready to travel, the Rebbe came out and asked him again not to travel via Kiof. Yet, the *mitzva* of *kibud eim* was so important to him, it superseded the Rebbe's request, and he traveled through Kiof. On the 23rd of Tammuz, 5634, while he was in Kiof, he suddenly passed away in his sister's home. He was buried in Kiof.

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“OUR SIMCHA IS EVERYBODY’S SIMCHA”

BY Y. BEN ARUYA



*A bris recently took place for triplet boys that were born to Ron and Hilla Feichman. The couple waited years for children, consulted with doctors, and increased in Torah and mitzvos, but the bracha took time to materialize. **

Here’s the story of their trials and tribulations, the answers from the Rebbe, and the miracle of their children as told by the Feichmans in an interview shortly after the triple bris.

Since the withholding of success is in a manner of “and it was to him a salvation,” through this he will be aroused to increase in Torah and *avoda*, in giving *tz’daka*, and then naturally there will be an increase in influence from Hashem in material matters, as well.

... So too regarding children. Those who received the Rebbe’s *bracha* for children and continuously wait for the fulfillment of the *bracha*, and the matter began ... and suddenly stopped, have to know that this isn’t, *ch”v*, a postponement, even temporarily; on the contrary, “and it was to them a salvation,” for after a time they themselves will see that this itself was because, “his right hand embraces me.”

(Toras Menachem, Hisvaaduyos 5711 beis; p. 272).

* * *

Erev Shabbos, 27 Cheshvan 5763,
Shabbos Mevarchim Kislev. Candles

can be seen flickering in the old stone homes on the edge of the alley that is Shabtai Street in Rechovot. The home of the Meifi family is lit up with the joy of Shabbos. The long table that fills the narrow house from one end to the other is festively set. At one end are guests, friends, girls, and *mekuravos*.

When the door opens a large contingent of *chassidim* wearing *sirtuks* and hats enters. When the ladies see them they burst into applause and cries of *mazal tov*. The happy new father, a friend and brother of the Chabad community in Rechovot, Roni Feichman joyously acknowledges the



Ron getting a dollar from the Rebbe MH”M

warmth and delight that greet him. The members of the *Anash* community of Rechovot are full participants in the *simcha* of one of their own, who finally realized the dream of having a family.

Although the Feichman family had moved to Elad, Ron made the *Shalom Zachor* with his friends in Rechovot, the community that stood by him throughout his ordeals.

Ron grew up in Australia and became a *baal t'shuva* while still a boy. He went on *k'vutza* to 770 and remained there for five years. After Gimmel Tammuz he returned to Eretz Yisroel, where he met and married his wife, Hilla, a girl from a traditional family who sought depth and meaning in life and found it in Chabad.

After they married, they settled in the Chabad community of Rechovot. When time passed and no children were born to them, they began doing research, going to the best doctors, to *rabbanim* and *mashpiim*. They did all sorts of *segulos* and received endless blessings from friends and acquaintances, but nothing worked. Nevertheless, they wholeheartedly believed they would have children and that it was only a matter of time.

They used this time to “spread the wellsprings.” This was one reason why they moved to Elad three years ago, where they were among the first Chabad families, and they started *shiurim* and *mosdos chinuch* there. Hilla started *mesibos Rosh Chodesh* and *chassidus* classes in her home, and she was also involved in starting a Chabad girls school, which she even ran in the early years.

It was Hilla's idea to learn and strengthen themselves in the laws of Family Purity and to strengthen their *hiskashrus* to the Rebbe through *mashpiim* and following the guidance of a *rav*.

“Despite it all, there were hard moments,” says Hilla when we met her in her house after the *brissin*. “I didn't know what else to do in order to see the realization of the *brachos*. When I wrote to the Rebbe I always got general answers about *hafatzas ha'maayanos*, but nothing about children.”

Two years ago Hilla joined a group of women who traveled to 770 for



Chanuka. “The entire time I was there, I *davened* for children – that it should happen already! I felt that it was an auspicious time in an auspicious place.”

Ron also tried to get *brachos* from as many people as possible. He knew what the Alter Rebbe said, “When I was by the Mezritcher Maggid, he once told me in the name of the Baal Shem

Tov that the *bracha* of a friend is important in Heaven, and is more accepted there than the good recommendation of Malach Michael and his arousal of Heavenly mercy!” Ron asked many friends for their blessings.

At a certain point Ron felt he couldn't take it any longer. He suddenly felt the depth of the pain, as though he was feeling the reality of their situation for the first time. Five years of prayers, efforts, and running to doctors. Five years of yearning, importuning, and faith. Enough! He had to do something to make it happen!

If you know Ron, you know his intense personality and his straightforwardness. He went to his *mesader kiddushin*, Rabbi Ashkenazi, and complained: “You were our *mesader kiddushin*, so how is it possible that you were *mesader kiddushin* but we have no children? Is it possible that a couple that merited to be married by a *chassidic rav* can be married for five years without having children?!”

“The *rav* became very somber and heard me out quietly. Then he said, ‘Don't worry. I promise you that with Hashem's help everything will work out soon.’”

Ron went to 770 for Tishrei 5762. It was *Simchas Torah* at the height of the *simcha* and dancing when R' Yehuda Blesovsky took out the Rebbe's *seifer Torah* and thousands crowded round to kiss it. Everybody knows this is a special time.

“I asked him to let me hold the Rebbe's *seifer Torah* for a few seconds, and he refused. I was ready to give anything to be able to have this *z'chus*, but he said it was impossible. I felt this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and I wasn't willing to pass up on it. I held on to the Torah and cried, ‘Rebбе! I came to you especially to get a *bracha* for children. Rebbe! Bless me!’

“R’ Blesovsky was shaken by the depth of my pain, and he loudly called out, ‘Amen! You should have children very soon!’

“Since we had gone to some big doctors and weren’t helped, our *mashpia* suggested we go to our *rav* and listen to what he told us to do. “A *rav* is the Rebbe’s *shliach*. Go with the *ko’ach* of the Rebbe.” We went to Rabbi M.M. Gluckowsky, *rav* of the Chabad community of Rechovot, and he asked me to give him a list of the five best doctors. After some thought, he sent us to Dr. Lev Ran.

When we got to his clinic we told him, “We are here thanks to our *rav*. And if our *rav* sent us to you, Hashem’s *bracha* will surely come through you.” The doctor looked grave and he said that with Hashem’s help he would do his best. In addition, I told him, “Doctor, I came to you for triplets, no less!”

The first treatment was set for Yud-Alef Nissan, the Rebbe’s birthday. Ron reminded the doctor that he wanted triplets. Two weeks later the results were positive. “I immediately began laughing, but Hilla was still in shock.”

“Listen,” said the doctor, “it’s still not a certainty. Come back in two days.”

Ron said, “Doctor, we won’t be coming back in two days but in nine months – to tell you about the *bris*.”

“We kept it a secret until nearly the sixth month. We were in touch with R’ Gluckowsky the entire time. We did everything with his knowledge and approval. I can’t tell you how helpful he was, how he supported us and encouraged us throughout. We are eternally indebted to him for the warm, fatherly concern he showed us.”

At the next checkup, the doctor looked at the ultrasound screen and said, “It’s better than good!” Three hearts were seen beating ...

“We received many *brachos* throughout that month,” says Hilla. “People didn’t know what was going

on with us, but they all blessed us wholeheartedly. We tangibly saw what it means to be part of a *chassidische* family.

“On Chol HaMoed Pesach, a few days after the test results, I asked the Rebbe for a *bracha* for an easy pregnancy. For the first time in all those years, I opened to a clear answer that spoke both about pregnancy and the time of year. The answer was in volume 17, p. 135:

Shalom u’vracha.

In answer to your letter of 22 Iyar, in which you write again that you still are not blessed with children, and since a number of new treatments have

been innovated in recent years, it would be proper to turn once again to a top doctor in this field and to ask specifically about these new treatments.

... Since we find ourselves in the days between Pesach, the Time of Our Freedom, and Shavuot, the Time of the Giving of the Torah Engraved on the Luchos – don’t read it “*charus*,” engraved, but “*cheirus*,” freedom – freedom from all constraints and sources of worry, you should also merit to report good news in all the above.

With blessings for *kabbalas ha’Torah b’simcha u’b’pnimiyus*, and

THE GOY SAID: “G-D WILL GIVE YOU CHILDREN FOR THIS...”

Ron relates: “A few days before Pesach I went to the Meifi home in Rechovot to visit the grandmother, who is known for her heartfelt blessings. When I walked in I saw Mrs. Ruth Meifi cleaning one of the walls. I asked her what she was doing, and she said she was cleaning for Pesach. I asked her how she expected to clean all the walls with a rag, and although I was pressed for time since I was in the middle of having the upper story of my home in Elad constructed, I told her: ‘The best thing would be for me to paint your walls. I’ll come tonight and paint it all.’

“I brought my Romanian workers and told them: ‘Guys! I want the house painted in two-three hours. I want it to look like new!’

“When they saw what the job entailed, their hearts sank, since the house was large and old. They looked at the walls and said the material they had brought along wouldn’t be enough. I told them that if they needed anything I would bring it, but they should start working. It turned out there was enough paint for the entire house, even two layers. Something akin to the miracle of the oil...

“When the grandmother thanked me for the work, I told her I didn’t do it for free and that I wanted payment. She realized I meant a *bracha*, and showered me with heartfelt blessings while adding, ‘Only Hashem can repay you.’ This was two days before we began the first treatment on Yud-Alef Nissan.

“That night, after the work was done and we left the Meifi home, the workers noticed that I hadn’t been paid. One of the Romanians said to me, ‘I saw what you did. You did a big thing. You don’t have children, and for doing this G-d will give you children.’

“That’s what the goy said, and I was completely taken aback. I thought: a goy doesn’t have free choice, so if he mentioned G-d and blessed me with children, than surley this is Hashem’s will!”



At the *bris* for the triplets

good news.

“Although I didn’t feel that well, the Rebbe’s words calmed and strengthened me. This letter accompanied me throughout the pregnancy. At a later point Ron opened the *Igros Kodesh* and happily said to me, ‘Hilla, we’re having three sons!’

“I didn’t know where he got that information from until he showed me the letter he had opened to and pointed out that the word “*zachar*” appears three times. He felt the Rebbe was hinting at the three sons we would have. Volume 20, p. 219:

Shalom u’vracha.

I received your letter of 2 Rosh Chodesh Iyar and the previous letters. According to the *parsha* at the end of this week, “*isha ki sazria v’yalda zachar,*” and the Alter Rebbe’s explanation of this – that it alludes to the concept in *avodas Hashem* that when things come about from an “arousal from below” in the *avoda* of *Knesses Yisroel, B’nei Yisroel*, then a *zachar*, something lasting, will be born.

... the Jewish people will do *t’shuva* (in a brief duration and a brief moment, and with joy) and return to *mutav*

(the source of *tov*, goodness), and immediately be redeemed in a *Geula* that is not followed by *Galus*, because it is true and complete, “*shir*” – *lashon zachar*, in the masculine sense.

With blessings for good news in all the things you wrote about, both generally and in particular.

“Throughout the pregnancy I asked the Rebbe for additional *brachos*, and I opened to, ‘may the days of her pregnancy be completed easily and properly, etc.’ It calmed me, says Hilla gratefully, and I didn’t ask for more than that. The pregnancy was far better than expected.”

On 25 Cheshvan 5763, triplet boys were born to the Feichman’s. Two months later, on Chaf-Daled Teives, they had their *brissin* and were named: Menachem Mendel, Levi Yitzchok, and Maoz Yisroel. Three soldiers in Tzivos Hashem joined the Rebbe’s army.

“I must thank Hashem, the Rebbe, and all the people, friends, and members of the *k’hilla* who joined in our prayers and now in our *simcha*,” says Hilla. “It’s important to me that they know how precious their words of blessing, encouragement, and love have been to us. Our *simcha* is everybody’s *simcha*.”

B.H

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SHARON FOUND GUILTY IN BRUSSELS COURT

BY SHAI GEFEN

THEY DON'T FORGET

As much as Sharon tries to mainstream himself and to present himself as a “man of peace,” who abandoned his militant past, and he prefers the image of the “kindly grandpa,” the more he is reminded that he’s the same old Sharon. This is similar to the Jews in Germany, who having tried to adopt German culture and to blend into German society were ultimately rejected. They too, went up in smoke like everybody else and died *al kiddush Hashem*.

For the last year and a half and even before that, Sharon has tried to project an image of a man of peace who will establish a Palestinian state. He is the first prime minister in the history of the State of Israel who publicly announced that he will establish a Palestinian state. As you read this, Sharon continues to meet with senior Arab officials.

Yet in Belgium they are not impressed, and they have reminded Sharon of Sabra and Shatila, when Sharon was blamed (thanks to Jewish foolishness) and held responsible for the murder perpetrated by gentiles upon one another. Sharon was removed from his position as defense minister, due to a report by the Cohen Commission over twenty years ago for this sham of an accusation.

The Belgian court decided that Sharon has to stand trial for war crimes as soon as he finishes serving as prime minister. It’s so obviously an act of G-d, for just as Sharon is trying to be

accepted into the “family of nations” as a man of peace, as the man who goes the farthest towards the Arabs and who has proclaimed the future establishment of an Arab state, the gentiles decide that he ought to stand trial for war crimes!

Nothing’s going to help you Mr. Sharon. You want to be written into the history books as the one who made peace, like Menachem Begin and Yitzchok Shamir, yet they’re showing you that what happened at Sabra and Shatila is still an issue. They lurk in the corner waiting for you, and won’t let up.

Weakness and capitulation to the gentiles is what caused the court in Belgium to decide as it did. Talks about concessions to Arabs prove to the world that you can take the prime minister of Israel and treat him like some guy off the street. If Sharon had strongly denounced Arab terror in Eretz Yisroel and had announced that all political agreements are off, there’s no way that Belgium would have decided he should stand trial. Human nature is such that weakness brings on weakness. If you’re weak, they step on you. You wanted to forget about Sabra and Shatila? Tough luck, for they’ve announced your culpability to the world.

It’s hard to complain about the Belgian court’s decision for if Sharon is making decisions, which in effect are an admission that Israel has oppressed the “Palestinians” and that he understands where they are coming

from, etc. Why then shouldn’t the Belgian court accept as fact that Sharon committed war crimes?

When our leaders are confused and don’t know what they want, and they still haven’t decided whether they’re in favor of “peace amongst enemies” or “restraint is peace,” it’s no wonder that the nations relate to them as they do, and justifiably so.

Our anger ought to be turned inward and we ought to ask: why haven’t we learned that capitulation doesn’t get us anywhere? Not to security, not to a great economy, and in addition, anti-Semitism is on the rise. Capitulation doesn’t lead to greater loyalty towards the Jews, but to its weakening.

The Rebbe spoke about this after they established the Committee to investigate what happened in Sabra and Shatila, and said: **And they went even further. When they established an “investigative committee” in Yerushalayim in order to investigate what role Jews had in the events that took place in the refugee camps in order to show the world how just we are, that we don’t refrain from condemning our own military men for not fulfilling their jobs properly ... the judges on the investigative committee want to show how outstanding they**



are in “justice” ... their low self-esteem before the goy is so great that they don't even consider the possibility of announcing that the goy is the one who did it [the massacre]... (Mikeitz 5740)

Today, twenty years later, we see how capitulating didn't help. The *goyim* didn't accept our gesture, and twenty years later they demand interest on top of interest for what was done, and they demand that other officers stand trial, too.

By the way, in Israel this decision by the Belgian Supreme Court was vigorously attacked. All of a sudden, Israel protests Supreme Court decisions, yet how surprising this is when we've been taught that you can't argue with the Supreme Court!

What difference does it make whether it's the Belgian Supreme Court or the Israeli Supreme Court? Do they really think that all decisions made in the Israeli Supreme Court are just, while the decisions in Belgium are not necessarily so? Hmmm... There are quite a few decisions that the Israeli court made that are remarkably similar to that of the Belgian court...

IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE

That parties are running to join a Coalition is surprising even to the pessimists who knew that today's parties are lacking in ideology. Still and all, they counted on a minimum of self-respect.

Apparently not one of them talks about opposition to a Palestinian state or opposition to Bush's Roadmap, but just about who gets what... The chairman of the National Unity party is ready to enter the government on the basis of the decisions made by the previous government, i.e., the establishment of a Palestinian state and the acceptance of U.N. decision 242 and 338.

Lieberman says his faction is not a protesting party, and the chairman of the National Unity faction, Yuri Stern, said much the same thing. The

chairman of Moledet, who also wants another ministerial position as he had in the previous government, shows no signs of having any ideological qualms about joining, and they've even attained the support of Shinui as to their being a part of the government. Shinui is no longer opposed to National Unity's joining. Everybody's happy.

That party sat for nearly an entire parliamentary cycle in Sharon's government without saying boo. Sharon and Peres announced repeatedly that they would establish a Palestinian state; Gandhi's murderers were released; and National Unity didn't force a coalition collapse. What interests them at the moment is getting two portfolios in the government. Incredible.

When they're asked what would make them leave the government, they say that as soon as a Palestinian state is established, they'll split. Put in other words, if you will, that's when they'll show they have split hooves and scream, “We're kosher!”

It's hard to believe that in such a short span of time, the party that was considered the authentic representative of the Right, managed to become the party that is ready to concede on everything. If they're ready to sit in the government today, on the basis of the platform and policies of the previous government, we must accept the fact that the Right has gone bankrupt and that the “Right” is ready for the establishment of a Palestinian state and the abandonment of millions of Jews. In order to uproot Jews from their homes we need Benny Alon and Tzvi Hendel in the government.

Why do they want to be accomplices to the crime of uprooting Jews? Why this urgency to join the government no matter the cost? Is the job of minister so important that it supersedes the very existence of the Jewish nation in its land?

It's hard to write this, but it's even



It's so obviously an act of G-d, for just as Sharon is trying to be accepted into the “family of nations” as a man of peace, as the man who goes the farthest towards the Arabs and who has proclaimed the future establishment of an Arab state, the gentiles decide that he ought to stand trial for war crimes!

harder to keep quiet when not even one party has an ideological position regarding Eretz Yisroel. National Unity, in its present incarnation is just a vote-getter for the Right, and looks like it will be a partner in uprooting Jews from their land. Whoever has any doubts about that is in for a few surprises.

CHAREIDIM ABOUT WHAT?

Lately we've seen crocodile tears from the *chareidi* parties, in light of anticipated budget cuts. The *chareidi* Knesset members say that "these are cuts into the live flesh of the *yeshivos*." Much ink has been spilled in the *chareidi* papers following word that the Treasury will be cutting budgets for children and *yeshivos*. The numbers fly about, and cries of "gevald" can be heard from all sides.

We were also informed about the marathon meetings between the parties that call themselves *chareidiyos* and Sharon and the Likud negotiating team. Not one word about issues of substance. Not a sound about protecting the religious Status Quo. Not a whisper about protecting the lives of millions of Jews throughout Eretz Yisroel. Tens of thousands of Jews (even *chareidim!*) live over the Green Line, but they don't care.

What a *chillul Hashem* it is when we see them do things that make people denigrate Judaism. What interests them is \$\$\$\$. It's the only thing we hear about from them. For them there is nothing else, nothing about values. Yet they have the nerve to tell us how much they champion Torah and fear of Heaven. The time has come to expose the lie for what it is.

In the past they told us that *Mihu Yehudi* doesn't interest them because they were busy with unauthorized autopsies and daylight savings time. After that they said that upon the instructions of *g'dolei ha'Torah*, they were busy grabbing whatever piece of the apple pie they can get their hands on. Today the apples are already rotten,

and they're busy with power and getting jobs for themselves and their households. They want us to follow along with their flock and to answer amen after every outrage they perpetrate.

We will absolutely not support those that make a *chillul Hashem*, as *chareidi* Jews openly support agreements with Arabs, and are ready

Our anger ought to be turned inward and we ought to ask: why haven't we learned that capitulation doesn't get us anywhere? Not to a security, not to a great economy, and in addition, anti-Semitism is on the rise. Capitulation doesn't lead to greater loyalty towards the Jews, but to its weakening.

to forego *chareidi yishuvim* over the Green Line. "*D'var Hashem zu halacha*" hasn't changed an iota. The Torah doesn't change according to royalties or budgets that they do or don't receive. Aside from the *chillul Hashem* involved, they didn't attain a single religious thing in any area.

The one who declared that he

wouldn't mix into foreign or security matters should also not mix into matters of religion and Torah. These things are interconnected because the same *Shulchan Aruch* that says that a Jew is someone born to a Jewish mother or who converts *halachically* is the *Shulchan Aruch* that says that not an inch of land can be given to the goy. Whoever decides to ignore a *halacha* in *Shulchan Aruch* will end up rejecting all *halachos, ch*"v.

A true *chareidi* is one who is "chareid" (fearful) about following *Shulchan Aruch* perfectly. Those parties that do not consider *Shulchan Aruch* to be their guiding light in every area are not *chareidi* parties, even if they call themselves by that title.

REPEATING THE SAME MISTAKE

Four more soldiers were killed in the Gaza Strip. Once again, terrorists ambushed and murdered soldiers. This followed Kassam missile attacks on Sederot and the vicinity.

Just three weeks ago, the defense minister warned that Israel would enter Gaza and clean up there. The threat was not carried out and so it was meaningless, and once again Israel displayed its weakness. All the commentators were united in their belief that the threat that wasn't carried out was the cause of additional deaths.

The same formula endlessly repeats itself. They threaten but do nothing; twice, three times, and more. Enough! How long can you go on at the expense of people's lives? How long will irrelevant considerations be allowed to establish our security policies? When will security be our only consideration?

How many Jews would be alive today if not for policies that led us into this dead end? There is an alternative and that is the *Shulchan Aruch*, an approach that is completely divorced from any association with outside considerations. It's time to try it.

THE STORY AS TOLD BEFORE THE REBBE

In his *Igros Kodesh* (no. 783, in Vol. 3, pp. 400-410) the Frieddiker Rebbe writes (to the editors of *HaTamim*, in response to a story they sent to him to edit prior to publication):

“...there are several categories of stories: i) something one has seen himself, or that he himself heard from his Rebbe; ii) something one has heard from another person – someone who is trustworthy – telling things that he himself was involved in; iii) something one has heard from one of the imposing elders of *Anash* that he himself had heard from his elders; iv) stories told without naming the original source, to which people have added or subtracted details, each according to his own preferences and biases. Indeed, I heard from my saintly father the Rebbe [Rashab] that even such stories are important, and ought to be given a place at a *farbrengen* of *Anash*. But the present story is full of mistakes; in fact, I never heard such a story, even among stories of the fourth category.”

An unfortunate example of this appeared in issue 402 of *Beis Moshiach* (Parshas Truma, this year), p. 22. This story appears in print in numerous versions, which differ in minor details, but the version printed in the above issue of *Beis Moshiach* is distorted almost beyond recognition. Moreover, the end of the story printed there is the exact opposite of every other version, and leads to the exact opposite conclusion of what the author set out to prove. In all

versions of the story, it turns out that the Holy Ark is in Mezhibuzh; only in the *Beis Moshiach* version do we discover that it is the Baal Shem Tov

When the two met, Reb Volf explained to the Baal Shem Tov about his overpowering desire to be oleh to the Holy Land, and how, in the Rebbe’s absence, he had sold all his possessions and was now on his way.

who is in Yerushalayim. Were this to be correct, then certainly the *chassid* should go to Yerushalayim to be with the Baal Shem Tov.

It is worthwhile to repeat here the version of the story that was told over by Rabbi Shimon Goldman at a public *farbrengen*, in the Rebbe’s presence. Rabbi Goldman heard this story from his father-in-law, the noted and venerable *chassid*, Reb Yochanan Gordon, *a”h*; he also repeated it to Rav Zalman Shimon Dworkin, *z”l*, to obtain his approval before reciting it

in the Rebbe’s presence (we may also note that the Rebbe raised no objections to this version as told by Rabbi Goldman, unlike certain other occasions when the Rebbe did object to one of his stories).

The story as told in the Rebbe’s presence:

The famous Reb Volf Kitzes was a staunch adherent of the Baal Shem Tov, to the extent that he took up residence in Mezhibuzh to be near his Rebbe. Now, Reb Volf also had a powerful desire to be *oleh* to Eretz Yisroel, but he was simply unable to part from the Baal Shem Tov, and so his desire for Eretz Yisroel remained unfulfilled. From time to time the Baal Shem Tov would leave on one of his many journeys, and in his absence, Reb Volf would begin to make plans to move to the Holy Land. But before these plans could get very far, the Baal Shem Tov would return, and Reb Volf’s plans would be cancelled.

Once, the Baal Shem Tov was gone from Mezhibuzh for an extended period. Not only did Reb Volf succeed in finalizing his plans, but he actually sold all his possessions and bought whatever he needed for the journey. He calculated his needs, and discovered that he had exactly enough cash, to the penny, to cover the required budget.

There was a custom in those days that when starting out on a long trip, they would depart on Friday morning, just when the dough that the housewives had prepared for the Shabbos *challo*s was starting to rise. This was as an omen of good fortune and success. And so Reb Volf too departed on Friday morning. Since it was Erev Shabbos, he traveled only as far as the first inn beyond the city limits, planning to stay at the inn over Shabbos, and resume his journey on Sunday morning. But after he arrived at the inn and paid for his Shabbos lodgings, he discovered that

the Baal Shem Tov was also at the same inn, having returned from his own journey the previous night, and was now preparing to return to Mezhibuzh for Shabbos.

When the two met, Reb Volf explained to the Baal Shem Tov about his overpowering desire to be *oleh* to the Holy Land, and how, in the Rebbe's absence, he had sold all his possessions and was now on his way. "Well," said the Baal Shem Tov, "if your desire is so powerful, I will not stand in your way. But I beg you to do me one final favor and return with me to Mezhibuzh for Shabbos. After Shabbos, you can set out once more."

Reb Volf explained that his money had been budgeted to the last penny, and now that he had paid for his lodging at the inn, he could not

afford the expenses of spending Shabbos in Mezhibuzh. "In that case, come with me, and you will be my guest for Shabbos," replied the Baal Shem Tov. "I will even pay for your entry to the bathhouse and *mikva*."

So Reb Volf returned with the Baal Shem Tov. When he went to the *mikva*, he immersed and remained under the water for a very long time. So long, in fact, that others at the *mikva* became frightened that something had happened to him. But at last he emerged from the water and announced that his plans were cancelled. He would not be *oleh* to Eretz Yisroel, but would instead remain in Mezhibuzh.

He explained his decision: When going down into the water, he had immersed with his eyes open, as was

his custom. But he immediately felt an urgent need to shut his eyes. As soon as he did so, he saw himself in a vision, approaching the shores of Eretz Yisroel. Then he saw himself in Eretz Yisroel, going up to Yerushalayim, Next, he saw himself in Yerushalayim, going up to Har HaBayis. And then he saw himself entering the Courtyard of the *Beis HaMikdash*, and the Heichal itself, and finally he saw himself entering the Most Holy Chamber. But when he entered the Holy of Holies, he discovered that the chamber was empty – the Holy Ark was not there. *Ribbono shel Olam!* He cried out, "where is the Holy Ark?" And he heard a Heavenly voice proclaiming, "The Holy Ark is in Mezhibuzh!"

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HACHNASAS SEIFER TORAH AT CHOVEVEI TORAH IN MEMORY OF YANKI ROTENSTRIECH, A”H

More than three hundred people welcomed a new Seifer Torah in memory of Rabbi Yanki Rotenstreich to the Beis Midrash of Tomchei T'mimim Lubavitch at Chovevei Torah. The Torah was completed at Yanki's home on Union Street and was marched with great rejoicing and live music through the piles snow to the *yeshiva* at 885 Eastern Parkway.

The *Hakafos* in the *yeshiva*, with the participation of the *Mesivta* and Beis Midrash *bachurim*, were very lively and lasted more than two hours.

After the dancing and



celebration, men, women and children took part in a *seudas mitzva* in the *Beis Midrash*.

Rabbi Meir Rotenstreich thanked Yanki's friends for their suggesting and participation in the writing of Seifer Torah in his honor. He said that it was an excellent idea for Yanki, who was so dedicated to learning Torah, *dikduk* and *leining* the Torah.

Rabbi Moshe Drizin, a long-time close friend and classmate of Yanki's at the Lubavitcher Yeshiva, *farbrenge*d about the outstanding qualities Yanki had. He told amazing stories of his great love of Torah, his great *middos* and his tremendous *ahavas Yisroel*.

A 72-page *kovetz* of Yanki's *haaros* and *chiddushei Torah* was distributed to those assembled. The family further asked that anyone with stories, anecdotes, *haaros*, or pictures of Yanki should please e-mail them to pearlkras@aol.com for an upcoming booklet of *zichronos*.

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