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T'SHUVA AND BEYOND

SICHOS IN ENGLISH



SHABBOS PARSHAS R'EI, SHABBOS MEVARCHIM ELUL; 25TH DAY OF MENACHEM-AV, 5749

1. This is the Shabbos on which the month of Elul is blessed. Elul is a month of general significance, the month when we make a reckoning of all the service which we performed in the previous year with the intent of correcting and compensating for any deficiencies. Also, it is a month of preparation for the coming year so that the service of that year will be on a higher rung.

For this reason, Elul is connected with the three services: Torah, service (prayer), and deeds of kindness which are the “pillars on which the world stands.” Indeed, these services are reflected in the very name of the month, the name Elul serving as an acronym for verses from the Torah associated with each of these services. In regard to Torah study, our sages cite the verse: *Ina Lyado Vsamti Lach* which refers to the Cities of Refuge. This relates to Torah study because “the words of Torah are a refuge.” In regard to prayer, they cite the verse, “I am my Beloved’s and my Beloved is mine,”

and in regard to deeds of kindness, they cite the verse, “[Sending portions] each man to his friend and gifts to the poor.”

The stock-taking of the service for the previous year and the preparations for the coming year must involve every dimension of our service which is – in turn – included in these three fundamental services. For this reason, it is Jewish custom to increase the performance of these three services in the month of Elul.

The above concepts establish a connection between Elul and the service of *t’shuva* which involves “regret over the past and the acceptance of good resolutions for the future.” Thus, a fourth verse is cited, “The L-rd, your G-d, will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants.”

The service of *t’shuva* is not merely intended to compensate for deficiencies in the other services, but rather must be considered as an independent service in its own right. We see this concept in our Sages’ expression “*t’shuva* and good deeds.” If *t’shuva* was only intended to enable us to correct faults in the other services, it

would be more appropriate to state “good deeds and *t’shuva*.” (This would imply that a Jew’s service should consist of “good deeds.” If for some reason, he does not carry out this service as desired, he will repent.) Stating *t’shuva* first indicates that the service of *t’shuva* is of primary importance. It elevates the nature of one’s deeds making them “good,” i.e., lifting them to a higher level of good than they possess in their own right.

T’shuva reflects a great yearning and desire to cling to G-d which adds energy and vigor to every aspect of our performance of Torah and mitzvos. Though generally, *t’shuva* is associated with repentance from sin – and the greater thirst and vigor of *t’shuva* comes about because of one’s awareness of the descent and distance created by sin^[173] – there is a concept of *t’shuva* which is relevant to every Jew, even one who never tasted sin.

The service of *t’shuva* is reflected in the verse, “And the spirit will return to G-d who granted it.” Since the soul has descended from its spiritual source into the material realm, it feels distant

173. In this context, our Sages declared: “In the place of baalei *t’shuva*, even perfect tzaddikim cannot stand.”

Because a baal *t’shuva* overcomes the challenges of the descent which he previously underwent, he can rise to a

higher level.

and separate from G-d. These feelings awaken a desire and yearning within the soul to cling to G-d which, in turn, elevate the mitzvos which are performed, making them “good deeds.”[174]

To elaborate: The Mishna states: “I was created to serve my Creator.” The purpose of a Jew’s service is to labor with his own potential to fulfill Torah and mitzvos. So that he will not regard his achievements as “bread of shame,” his connection with G-d is not given to him as a present, but is rather the products of his own efforts.

Therefore, it follows that the ultimate level of performance of mitzvos is when a Jew applies his heart and mind to their performance. He does not fulfill them merely as perfunctory physical activities, but invests his mind and also the energy of *t’shuva* into these deeds, thus making them “good deeds.”

This service of *t’shuva* is accomplished through the person’s own efforts, through service on his own initiative. The soul as given by G-d is on a high peak. A Jew through the service of return, however, can reach an even higher level and the acquisition of this spiritual peak is his own accomplishment. Similarly, the service of *t’shuva* contributes a new dimension to the mitzvos. Their transformation into “good deeds” through the Jews’ service elevates their level above the rung possessed by the mitzvos as they were given by G-d.

In this context, we can understand the central role of *t’shuva* in the service of Elul for it is through *t’shuva* that the three services of Torah, prayer, and deeds of kindness are lifted to a higher level, becoming “good deeds.”

The service of *t’shuva* and its influence on these other three services does not, however, represent the ultimate rung of service. Though

t’shuva reflects the ascent of the soul on its own initiative after the descent into this world of concealment and challenge, the very fact that it deals with these two stages indicates an association with the concepts of descent and concealment. Thus, it cannot reflect the essence of G-d – or the essence of a Jew – which has no relation to these concepts at all.

The ultimate level of service reflects

The ultimate level of service reflects a connection between a Jew and G-d which does not allow for any possibility of transgressing His will. This level will be revealed in the Messianic Age when “I will remove the spirit of impurity from the world.”

a connection between a Jew and G-d which does not allow for any possibility of transgressing His will. This level will be revealed in the Messianic Age when “I will remove the spirit of impurity from the world.” There will be no possibility for the concealment of G-dliness which allows for the potential for sin.

In microcosm, this service is also possible in the present age, each

individual experiencing a personal redemption from those factors that may sway him away from the service of G-d. This service is also reflected in the name, Elul, which also serves as an acronym for a fifth verse which refers to the concept of redemption. In the verse, “Then, Moshe... sang this song to G-d and spoke saying, ‘I will sing...,’ “ the letters of the word Elul are found in reverse order. Our Sages explain that this verse uses the future tense, thus alluding to the ultimate level of redemption, the Era of the Resurrection when G-d’s essence will be revealed throughout the world.

To explain: G-d gives a Jew free choice, as the opening verse of this week’s Torah portion relates, “Behold, I am setting before you life and good, death and evil... May you chose life.” However, the very fact that there is a crossroads and that one has to choose between one of two paths indicates that this level is below G-d’s essence. “I,” G-d’s essence, transcends “life and good” and their opposites. Despite the great spiritual peaks associated with the service of free choice, the fact that choice is possible demonstrates that this is a lower level than G-d’s essence.

Even the concept of life – since it has a specific definition and there is the possibility of increasing life [and the opposite, *ch”v*] – is not appropriate to Him. On the contrary, the very fact that the Torah relates that He “is setting before you life,” implies that He, the Giver, is above the quality which He gives.

G-d’s essence is above all concept of definition, nor is any concept of choice appropriate regarding Him. Concerning this level, the Torah states, “There is nothing else.” Though in other texts, it is explained that the verse, “There is nothing else outside of Him” implies that “together with Him,” there is the possibility for existence,

174. This *t’shuva* also elevates the soul to a higher level than its original source – for if not, of what value would be its

descent. The descent of the soul into the physical world parallels the descent of a baal *t’shuva* and the yearning and

connection with G-d the soul establishes reflects the higher rung that a baal *t’shuva* can reach.

i.e., it is possible for there to be a world that reflects His Being, this is also a lower level. When speaking of His essence, the verse, “There is nothing else” is more appropriate, i.e., there exists only Him and Him alone.

A Jew can also reach this level. Since his soul is “truly a part of G-d,” even this rung is within his potential. The Baal Shem Tov taught, “Whenever you grasp part of the essence, you grasp it in its entirety.” Therefore, since the Jews are “part of G-d” – “Israel and the Holy One, Blessed be He are one,” the essence in its entirety is reflected within a Jew’s soul. Thus, he has the potential to establish a connection which transcends the possibility of choice. Such a person will have one desire alone, to fulfill G-d’s will. Nothing else will even come to mind.

It is not that he will go through a period of intellectual stock-taking and as a result, choose to do good. He does not think about the matter at all, but rather to quote our Sages’ expression, “Bows naturally.” His own will and personal identity are totally nullified and thus, it is impossible that he will have any desire or yearning to do anything outside G-d’s will.[175]

Based on the above, we can appreciate the advantage the service of redemption contributes to the other four services associated with the month of Elul: The service of “*t’shuva* and good deeds” is given over to man’s free choice. He stands at a crossroads and has the choice of “life and good” or its opposites. Thus, even though ultimately, through a process of thought and meditation, a person will choose the correct path, the fact that he has a choice demonstrates that he has a connection to the other path.

The service of redemption lifts a Jew above these levels. When a Jew is

connected with the level of G-dliness about which it is said, “There is nothing else,” he also stands above any thoughts of a second path. Without even thinking, as a natural reflex process, he follows G-d’s will reflecting the state of oneness which will be revealed in the Messianic Age.

This service is dependent on a Jew’s independent efforts. On the surface, since these acts are a natural response, without conscious choice, it would seem that it would not be considered service, nor should it earn a Jew a reward.

In fact, however, the opposite is true. This level of service represents the fullest expression of a Jew’s initiative and potential for achievement. In regard to the service of conscious choice, the Torah states, “Behold, I am setting before you life and good, death and evil;” i.e., the potential for the service of “choosing life” is given from above. In contrast, the level of following G-d’s will as a natural, spontaneous response is not given from above – for it transcends the possibility of being given. Instead, a Jew reaches it on his own initiative. Though he is living in this material world with a physical body and all the veils and concealments they bring, he performs the services of Torah, prayer, and deeds of kinds – and also the service of *t’shuva* – in a manner which reflects how “Israel and the Holy One, Blessed be He, are one,” transcending intellectual choice.

The service of redemption is not separate from the other four services of the month of Elul. On the contrary, it is through these services and particularly, the service of *t’shuva*, that a soul connects with its essential source – the level on which “Israel and the Holy One, Blessed be He, are one”

– that makes possible the single-minded service of redemption.

A Jewish soul is “truly part of G-d from above.” The Hebrew word for truly “*mamash*” also has the meaning, “material form.” In the above phrase, the two meanings are complimentary, it is when the “part of G-d,” the soul becomes enclined in the body and takes on “material form,” that its essence, that it is “truly a part of G-d,” can be revealed.

To explain: The soul passes through several intermediate levels in its descent into this material world as we recite in our morning blessings:

The soul which You gave me is pure (the world of Atzilus), You created it (the World of Briah), You formed it (the World of Yetzira), and You blew it within me (the World of Asiya). It is through the service while enclined within a body – and not on these spiritual levels – that the essence of the soul is revealed. In the spiritual realms, only the intermediate qualities of the soul are revealed. In contrast, when a soul descends to this material world and carries out the services of Torah, prayer, and good deeds – and in particular, the service of *t’shuva* – in thought, speech, and deed, the essence of the soul – which is connected to G-d’s essence – is revealed.

Based on the above, we can understand the nature of the service of the month of Elul as reflected in the five services mentioned above: The three services of Torah, prayer, and good deeds are “the three pillars on which the world stands;” i.e., they reflect the natural order of the world.

The service of *t’shuva* lifts us above the natural order of the world, to the source of the soul (in the World of Atzilus). This allows the mitzvos we perform to be “good deeds” and

175. We find a parallel to the concept of behavior above choice in the animal kingdom. Torah law relates that the nature of a healthy animal is to avoid fire. This is not a thought out process

of choice on the part of the animal, but rather a spontaneous natural response. Similarly, we find an expression in the words of our Sages, “I pray with the intention of a child.” One directs one’s

mind to G-d with the single-mindedness of a child, who is conscious of himself and G-d’s essence and is not aware of any other intermediate levels.

“illuminated deeds.” This also brings about the fifth level, the service of a Jew on his own initiative reflecting how “Israel and the Holy One, Blessed be He, are one,” revealing the essence of the Jewish soul which is one with the essence of G-d.

Since this service is not granted by G-d, but rather achieved by a Jew through his own efforts, it will bring him the highest and most complete reward, that being the opportunity to continue to serve G-d in this manner as explained in the interpretation of the Mishna, “The reward for a *mitzva* is a *mitzva*.”[176] This can be seen in the behavior of the great *tzaddikim* who reached the level that the essence of their souls was revealed while they were living in this world – reaching the level “You will behold your world (your portion of the World to Come)[177] in your lifetime.”

What did they do after experiencing such a revelation? They continued to serve G-d, advancing further in the performance of Torah and mitzvos. This is the concept of redemption in its fullest sense. It comes as a result – and a direct continuation – of our service of Torah and mitzvos in the present age.

2. A connection to the above concept can also be seen in this week’s Torah portion, Parshas R’ei. The closing verses of this portion describe the celebration of the pilgrimage festivals. In this context, the Torah states, “You shall surely rejoice.” On that verse, our Sages comment that the word “*ach*” alludes to the inclusion of a concept not explicitly mentioned in the verse and that this is a reference to

the celebrations of Simchas Torah.

This concept is difficult to understand: Generally, the word “*ach*” implies an exclusion, a limitation of the concept mentioned explicitly in the verse. In this instance, however, it is serving the opposite function, alluding to the inclusion of a subject which is not mentioned.

This concept relates to the ideas discussed above because the three pilgrimage festivals parallel the three

A Jew restricts his limitations and reveals happiness, a quality which “breaks through barriers” and reveals an unbounded quality within this limitation.

services of Torah, prayer, and deeds of kindness. They refers to the service of the righteous which is carried out through joy as it states, “Serve G-d with happiness.” This happiness is fully expressed on the pilgrimage festivals.

Despite the fact that a Jew is found in a world of limitation in which the G-dly light is concealed, he restricts that limitation and reveals happiness, a quality which “breaks through barriers”

and reveals an unbounded quality within this limitation. This reflects the Talmudic principle “a limitation which follows a second limitation is intended as an inclusion;” [to cite a parallel, a double negative connotes a positive statement].

The inclusion referred to in the verse, the rejoicing of Simchas Torah, reflects a higher level of happiness than the other festivals. The Hakafof of Simchas Torah – which are a custom instituted on the initiative of the Jewish people – transcend the celebrations of the other festivals that were commanded by the Torah.

This concept can also be associated with the beginning of the following week’s Torah portion, Parshas Shoftim, which mentions the commandment to appoint judges and enforcement officers.[178] The Talmud teaches that the Sages would appoint enforcement officers on the festivals to ensure that the celebrations remained within the bounds of modesty. (Thus, we see a limitation – “*ach*” – to the holiday celebrations.) In regard to the celebrations of Purim,[179] however, we do not find such a provision. On the contrary, then the celebration is boundless. “A person is obligated to become drunk... to the point that he does not know the difference between ‘Cursed be Haman’ and ‘Blessed be Mordechai.’”

Seemingly, since a person has loosened the reigns of intellect, he “does not know,” it would seem that there would be more need for supervision and yet, none is required. This shows that when a Jew steps beyond the realms of intellect, when

176. See above the Sichos of Parshas Eikev, where this concept is explained in depth.

177. Although on an individual level, one may experience the revelation of the essence of one’s soul even during the present age, the most complete revelation will come in the Messianic Era when this revelation will be experienced by the entire Jewish

people. In this manner, the Messianic redemption will surpass the other redemptions which preceded it.

178. One might ask: Since in the Messianic Age, “I will remove the spirit of impurity from the world” and all undesirable influences will no longer be present, what role will enforcement officers have in that era? It can be explained that then, their task will be

to facilitate the performance of good deeds, e.g., to assist witnesses who saw the new moon to come to Jerusalem as fast as possible.

179. An added significance to the above is that the festival of Purim was instituted in exile. Thus, it reflects the service of transforming the exile.

he reveals the essence of his soul, there is no need for supervision. G-d, Himself, watches over him. Since the essence of a Jew's soul is connected to G-d's essence, just as G-d's essence stands above the possibility for choice, so, too, a Jew will naturally, without the need for conscious thought, do G-d's will.

To bring the above down in actual deed: The month of Elul should be filled with the services of Torah, prayer, and good deeds. These should be infused with light and energy by the service of *t'shuva*. This will lead to them all being carried out in the spirit of redemption, serving G-d with a single-minded commitment which reflects the complete unity between a Jew and G-d to the extent that it is impossible for a Jew to do anything that is opposite G-d's will.

In addition to the activities involving one's own self, one must work to reveal these qualities in the world at large. These efforts of refinement will serve as a preparation for the fulfillment of the prophecies, "I will remove the spirit of impurity from the world," and "the world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the

waters cover the ocean bed," revealing how "there is nothing else" but G-d's essence throughout all existence.[180]

Accordingly, each person should take on the resolution to increase his efforts to bring stability to the world at large. In particular, this applies within the realm of Chinuch, education,[181] for educating a child has an effect on all the children and grandchildren who will ultimately descend from him.

This is particularly relevant in the present days when parents are enrolling their children in schools for the upcoming year. Each and every person should make an effort to influence them to send their children to Torah schools.[182]

This will serve as a preparatory step to the new year, 5750, a year of miracles. This is further emphasized by the fact that the first day of Rosh HaShana falls on the Shabbos, an allusion to the era which is "only Shabbos and rest forever."

3. The above can be connected with the fact that this is the fortieth year after the Previous Rebbe's passing. The Torah teaches that after the passage of such a time period, one receives "a heart to know, eyes to see,

and ears to listen." These potentials must be used for the service of G-d through Torah and mitzvos. When a Jew carries out such service, "walking in My statutes and observing My mitzvos," G-d grants him abundant blessings as the Torah continues including the blessing, "You shall walk upright;" i.e., proceed without shame.[183]

This is in the potential of every Jew as implied by the use of the singular form of the word "your G-d" in the command, "I am the L-rd, your G-d" which implies that this is an individual matter, relevant to every single person. Similarly, in this week's portion, Moshe's charge, "Behold, I have set before you..." employs the singular form, i.e., it is addressed to each Jew individually.

This service will hasten the coming of the redemption. The Previous Rebbe stated that all that was necessary was to "polish the buttons and to stand prepared for Moshiach to come." That service has also been completed and all that is necessary is to dance with Moshiach, with unbounded joy, in the Messianic redemption.

180. The concept that "There is nothing else," but G-d's essence is reflected in the portion of Pirkei Avos studied this week which describes how G-d created the world with ten statements despite the fact that He could have created it with one statement alone. Why was this done? To give a reward to the tzaddikim. Since each person is obligated to say: "The world was created for me," the fact that G-d invested ten statements in its creations, emphasizes the full weight of that responsibility.

On a deeper level, this statement can also be interpreted that the creative power of the one statement (the level of Kesser) transcends the ten statements (which reflect the ten S'firots), but, nevertheless, permeates through them. This is revealed in the final teaching of the chapter of Pirkei Avos studied next week which concludes, "G-d will reign forever," demonstrating how "there is

nothing else," only Him.

181. The activities of tz'daka and prayer are also significant in this context. Since tz'daka involves "granting life to the soul of the poor," it establishes a connection between the donor and the recipient which continues afterwards. Similarly, prayer should also be intended for the benefit of the world at large as evident by the fact that the blessings of the Shmoneh Esrei use the plural form, i.e., a person does not pray only for himself, he prays for the entire world.

182. It can be explained to the parents that – as a result of the mitzva, "and you shall teach them unto your children" – they have a responsibility to teach their children Torah. If they do not do this themselves, they should enroll a child in a school which will.

Furthermore, this will bring about the ultimate good for the child. Today, it is

customary to consult experts in all fields concerning a child's welfare. The way to ensure that a child's education is under the supervision of experts is to send him to a Torah school where he will be taught by experts.

183. Parshas B'Chukosai which contains the above blessings also contains the Tochacha ("the rebuke" – a series of curses). It is explained in Likkutei Torah that since G-d, Himself, is the source of these "curses," they must be understood as hidden blessings. Indeed, it is only because their source is so high, that they are revealed in a manner which, on an apparent level, is the opposite of blessing.

This relates to the opening verse of this week's Torah portion, "Behold, I am setting before you the blessing and the curse." Since "I," G-d's essence, is "setting it before you," we can understand that even what appears as "the curse" is truly a blessing.

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WE MUST PUBLICIZE THE MIRACLES

BY RABBI LEVI YITZCHOK GINSBERG

When we are witness to an abundance of miracles, especially as we have been enjoined “to publicize the miracles that Hashem does in our times, that publicizing them brings about the true and complete Redemption,” each one of us understands that we are forbidden to waste such an opportunity. We have the obligation to publicize them in every possible way so that every Jew hears about it.

In the *sicha* of Parshas Chukas 5751 the Rebbe writes, “And all this is done in a way of “*revos mofsai b’Eretz Mitzrayim*” (an acronym for RaMBaM) – that while we are still within the constraints and limitations of *Galus*, the “*revos mofsai*” (increase in wonders) is revealed. The “*revos mofsai*” is done in a way that when a Jew is asked what was the last wonder he saw he answers: What do you mean “last”? There were and there will be more! “*Revos mofsai*” and “*revos*” in the Torah means more and more, unlimited.

There cannot have been a greater publicity of “*revos mofsai*” than what we have witnessed lately. We live in an era when the Rebbe MH”M answers, and guides, thousands of Jews, without exaggeration, often with outright miracles. Jews of all backgrounds and types ask the Rebbe for advice and his *bracha* by inserting a letter into the *Igros Kodesh* or through other means, and they receive amazing answers to their questions, as we have all heard.

This phenomenon is publicized not only in *Beis Moshiach* in *Kfar*

Chabad and in *Sichas Ha’Geula*, but even in newspapers which can be described as “secular,” with names, addresses and words of respect, emphasizing that “you can’t argue with the facts.”

And whatever has been publicized thus far is only the tip of the iceberg of the tens of thousands (perhaps even hundreds of thousands) of answers that the Rebbe MH”M provides to everybody who asks (and sometimes even to those who don’t ask).

When we are witness to an abundance of miracles, especially as we have been enjoined “to publicize the miracles that Hashem does in our times, that publicizing them brings about the true and complete Redemption” (*Sicha VaYeishev 5751*), each one of us understands that we are forbidden to waste such an opportunity. We have the obligation to publicize them in every possible way so that every Jew hears about it.

Obviously, anyone who has received an answer in this way, once or twice, and saw salvation and success with his own eyes will be *mekushar* (connected) to the Rebbe, and come closer to Torah and *mitzvos*

in general. He will learn *chassidus* and follow in the ways of *chassidus*, and will fulfill the Rebbe MH”M’s directives.

This is especially so in our unique situation today after Gimmel Tammuz, when we have a holy obligation to publicize these miracles in every possible way so that the publicity will affect and influence more Jews to connect with the Rebbe, and to know that he is a G-dly individual who is not affected by the limitations of nature.

Of course, it is not always easy to publicize these miracles, especially to the “outside.” A person might feel, “It’s true that the Rebbe mentioned in a number of *sichos* the Jewish custom to open a holy book at random, and act according to what is written there (e.g., *Sicha Parshas BaMidbar 5749*), and he even instructed that this be done. Nevertheless, it wasn’t commonplace. It was on specific occasions and under unusual circumstances and there were even certain reservations as far as using holy books for non-holy matters. If so, where do we see a source to make this common knowledge, to publicize this to others?”

In the first *farbrengen* of Yud Shvat 1951, the Rebbe stated that the ultimate purpose of all our missions (including those missions directed at drawing Jews to Torah and *chassidus*) is to draw Jews to *Toras ha’chassidus* and to “connect Jews to the Rebbe.” At the same time, the Rebbe wrote:

“For we do not have any fountain by means of which the wellsprings of the Baal Shem Tov are drawn save for the Rebbe [Rayatz]. By connecting with this fountain with a bodily connection (by giving of one’s means with which one can purchase one’s physical necessities) and a soul-connection, even water [which is unfit] becomes “living water,” for this is so according to the law of the Torah, which rules and governs nature in the most literal sense and in all circumstances.” (*Igros Kodesh* vol. 3, p. 54)

In that same famous letter (of the



15th of Shvat 5709) the Rebbe demanded that Jews become connected to the Rebbe, that they be chased after and spoken to, and told to write to the Rebbe to ask for their physical needs.

Here are some portions from that same letter which was addressed to R’ Shlomo Chaim Kesselman, who was the emissary of the Rebbe for raising funds for “*maamud*” [funds for the Rebbe’s personal use] in Paris at the time:

Regarding what he writes about the impossibility of accomplishing in

the area of *maamud* among the people of the city (aside from *Anash* and *T’mimim*), and he explains this with a number of reasons and arguments, two-and-a-half lines before that he writes that “*Anash* are bound heart and soul [to the Rebbe] to the point of actual *mesirus nefesh*, and if they were to be told to crawl into a [small] hole they would do it ... it seems that he doesn’t even entertain a shadow of a doubt that there is some contradiction between the preface and the conclusion!

Based on experience in every place that [*chassidim*] have been

involved in *maamud* in recent years (in the U.S. , Canada, South America, South Africa, etc.) they accomplished, even though not in all places equally, of course, and those involved didn’t have to actually remove *mesirus nefesh* from their suitcases, and didn’t even have to crawl into a hole ... And he writes in his letter ... and decrees quite cold-

heartedly that all Jews in his city – aside from those who live in his neighborhood – don’t relate to this! Please convene a gathering of all Lubavitchers and make a reckoning about how much effort they expended on acquiring these souls. Then all arguments will be unnecessary since, immediately the reasons for the lack of results will be obvious.

A young man who was forced to flee from where he lived, whose *davening* was nothing special, who wasn’t a *maskil* or an *oved*, who was clean-shaven, etc., who never learned

in Tomchei T'mimim or any *yeshiva* at all, wandered to a most distant land both physically and spiritually. Some time passed and letters began to arrive from men and women, addressed to the Rebbe. For example: from a businesswoman who had an offer to rent a store and an apartment in different parts of the city. She asked the Rebbe for advice as to what to do. She had never seen him, and she knows that the Rebbe was never in her city or her country. She's not a Lubavitcher and doesn't seem to stem from Lubavitchers. But when she heard the young man speak words from the heart: there is a Rebbe who is unlimited by the rules of nature, and whoever wants to know what to do – in business, matters having to do with the home, etc. – should not move a finger without asking the Rebbe. And she sees that the man means it, because people can sense the truth, so she writes to the Rebbe her question and is connected to him as a result, and she draws closer to *Yiddishkeit*, and certainly over time she will run her home with *kashrus* and family purity, etc. This is a result of the work of one simple man who does this, not out of *mesirus nefesh* and *kabbalas ol*, because he doesn't see it as illogical, nor in any way opposing his own human intellect.

Even his animal soul agrees with this, because it is not coming from his intellect and argumentation and research in books, but it comes from the experience of him and his friends. It was demonstrated to them that when they listened it was good and that when they didn't listen they suffered the consequences.

Just imagine, what he experienced he accepts as a given – that what the Rebbe says goes and his *bracha* is a *bracha*. Even his animal soul agrees with this, because it is not coming from his intellect and argumentation and research in books, but it comes from the experience of him and his friends. It was demonstrated to them

that when they listened it was good and that when they didn't listen they suffered the consequences. Therefore, just as he is not embarrassed to tell all his friends who need it the address of a good doctor, so too when he sees a person who is confused or has to make an important life decision, he says: the Jewish people are not widowed, G-d forbid; there's somebody you can ask. Not only that, he doesn't wait until his friend comes to him to find out if

“Have pity on yourself and the members of your household and everything you have and don't rely on your own understanding. Learn chassidus, connect with so-and-so, do what he says and then you will see success.”

there's a Rebbe, since most of the time his friend doesn't know what a Rebbe is. He goes to him and explains that he doesn't have to rely on his own understanding, nor on the *shadchan*, nor on the doctor, nor on the middleman. All those ways are uncertain, and he has a sure way to resolve his doubts. And our Sages have said that words that come from the heart, enter the heart ...

It's obvious that a man who

believes with complete faith, i.e., that it governs all his faculties, that the opinion and blessing of so-and-so holds sway in all areas, and he knows that his friend must make a decision regarding “children, life, and a livelihood,” etc., or some critical matter, G-d forbid, out of humanitarianism, love of a fellow Jew, danger to life, etc., if there is even the slightest chance that he will listen, he should run after his friend and say: Have pity on yourself and the members of your household and everything you have and don't rely on your own understanding. Learn chassidus, connect with so-and-so, do what he says and then you will see success.

The promise of the Alter Rebbe is well-known, that what *chassidim* will do – they will see success ...

They go to Paris and its environs and are in contact with hundreds and perhaps many thousands of our Jewish brothers, may they increase ... they converse with them at great length, yet how many of these many thousands of people have asked a question about an operation or a *shidduch*, or requested a *bracha* for Rosh HaShana or the like? The truth is that if they would tell them who the Lubavitcher Rebbe is – telling without explaining – and then the second time, if they would relate a little of his *sichos* and then his directives, how many souls, they and their children for generations to come, would be connected through them with the tree of life, would increase the light in their homes, would become Moshe's men (... connected to the Rebbe who is the extension of Moshe in every generation...), becoming upstanding people who support all institutions willingly and graciously and not just for the sake of honor.

Instead of all that, this one turns to his institution and that one to his business, each one pacifies himself in that he gives *maamud* nicely and

generously, they justify themselves in that they have at the ready, according to his words, actual *mesirus nefesh*, and the *avoda* apparently did not even begin.

When discussing the *Igros Kodesh*, we are not speaking of “signs” nor about “lotteries,” but about Jews who turn to the Rebbe *shlita* with questions of advice and blessing. Just as it was always an accepted thing to do – to turn to the Rebbe with questions on every topic, and not to lift a hand or foot without his say-so.

when we still don’t actually see him.

Consequently, there is no reason to have reservations about using holy books for secular matters – just as we weren’t concerned all the years and were commanded, as mentioned above – to use the Rebbe himself, holy of holies, even for our mundane matters so that we don’t raise a hand or foot without his advice and blessing.

As the famous *chassidic* story goes about the simple Jew whom they questioned about the reason for his

he understands that he can’t make a move (not even to sell a cow) without asking the Rebbe first.

And even if somebody is not on this level, and he thinks more about “solving his own problems,” we were commanded as already mentioned and with special emphasis, “to run after him” and to do all we can so that he too – and especially him – will ask the Rebbe and won’t make a move until then.

As it is stated in the letter, even those who aren’t yet observing the



We have been ordered to do all we can so that more and more Jews connect to the Rebbe and write and ask him things, especially regarding their physical matters, so too (and even more so) is this true today.

We have the most wondrous obligation, merit, and responsibility to run after anybody whom we think might listen to us, and persuade him not to take a serious step in life without the Rebbe’s counsel and *bracha*, who “will find the way” to answer even in these few moments

trip to Lubavitch and why he was going to bother the Rebbe with his simple and mundane questions: whether to sell his cow or not. The *chaasid* answered: I’m going in order to find out what G-d wants of me: Does He want me to sell the cow or not?

In other words, a *chaasid* doesn’t travel to the Rebbe and ask questions in order to “use” the Rebbe “to solve his little problems.” On the contrary, since he wants to be utterly given over to G-dliness and to the Rebbe,

laws of family purity or *kashrus*, etc., must be urged to write to the Rebbe about their mundane questions and that this itself will lead to their coming closer to Torah and *mitzvos* in general, and *chassidus* in particular.

It is true that in recent years especially, the Rebbe gave a number of instructions about how “to problem solve” and resolve doubts even without an explicit and direct answer, whether through “wise friends,” “a doctor who is a friend,” “community activists,” “a *rav* who

rules on issues of *halacha*,” etc. But we must keep in mind that even then, it didn’t mean that we can work things out without the Rebbe, G-d forbid! The opposite is true. The Rebbe stressed many times that even then the answer is his (the Rebbe’s), but it has to come through friends, activists, etc.

Around 1980, a *baal t’shuva* wrote a note to the Rebbe with various questions, and he received an answer: Regarding this topic, consult with a *mashpia*; about that matter, ask wise friends; and about a certain thing, ask a *rav*, etc. The person wrote to the Rebbe again and said that he knew nothing and that the Rebbe was his *rav*, *mashpia* and most wise friend, and that he was really asking for a clear answer to his questions.

The Rebbe replied: “He must listen,” and repeated his very clear answer which was: Regarding this topic, consult with a *mashpia*; about that matter, ask wise friends; and about a certain thing, ask a *rav*, etc.

To another person who “complained” about a similar answer from the Rebbe, the Rebbe said: “What does he care if my answer comes through so-and so and so-and so?” That is, the Rebbe wants (for whatever reason) that his answer pass through somebody else, but it is obvious that we from our part never make a move without the Rebbe’s say-so, whether via an explicit, private instruction or through a general directive.

(There were *chassidim* who explained (as much as one can explain anything the Rebbe does) that this was in accordance with how the Rebbe did things in later years in general, in that we were required to be more and more independent. Just like the Rebbe, in later years, did not call in *shluchim* and tell them where to go for their *shlichus* (as he did in earlier years), but he had them do their own research and then ask for

his direction and *bracha*.

(The apparent reason for this is that it is important that we, with our own understanding, do what needs to be done without being directed from above, which is the final stage in

It is true that in recent years especially, the Rebbe gave a number of instructions about how “to problem solve” and resolve doubts even without an explicit and direct answer, whether through “wise friends,” “a doctor who is a friend,” “community activists,” “a rav who rules on issues of halacha,” etc. But we must keep in mind that even then, it didn’t mean that we can work things out without the Rebbe, G-d forbid!

“refining this lower world.” So too, in our situation: the Rebbe wants us to figure things out for ourselves and to understand and feel what the Rebbe wants from us.)

Despite all this, *chassidim* never

stopped – especially after Gimmel Tammuz – asking the Rebbe questions. The Rebbe answers when he wants to, to whom he wants to, and how he wants to, and the Rebbe knows who needs an explicit answer and who needs to understand things on his own from general directives.

It’s true that one shouldn’t ask “silly things,” as the Rebbe once said that *hiskashrus* need not be expressed with the question as to whether one should sneeze to the right or to the left. It has to be clear that we are connected to the Rebbe in all matters and that we don’t lift a hand or foot without his advice and *bracha*. However, sometimes it happens that the Rebbe wants us to understand what it is that he wants, or that we consult friends, activists, a doctor, etc.

When there is no clear answer from the *Igros Kodesh*, even after much thought, it is possible that the Rebbe chooses not to answer, as was commonplace before Gimmel Tammuz. Pestering doesn’t help, because only the Rebbe decides when, how, and in what manner the answer will come.

They say that it is the simple people who asked in sincerity that were answered in the past, and the same could be true today.

In any case, we must do our part in publicizing and doing everything we can so that all Jews hear and know that we haven’t been abandoned, G-d forbid. “There’s a Rebbe in Israel” and “there’s someone we can ask,” and we shouldn’t move without asking for the advice and *bracha* of the Rebbe MH”M.

As the Rebbe said (*Sicha Mishpatim* 5751) : “We have already had the appointment of Dovid Malka Meshicha. What’s needed now is to accept his sovereignty and perfect the connection between the king and the people, with the perfection of the *Geula*.”

A LAMDISHE TALK IN THE AIRPORT TERMINAL

BY RABBI LEVI FISHER

*I met a Satmar relative of mine in the airport and we got to talking. * An interesting dialogue about hafatzas ha'Yahadus and the role of Moshiach.*

In 5752 I had the *z'chus* of being a *shliach* in the Chabad *yeshiva* in Kiev, where I stayed for a number of months and served as *mashgiach* for the *bachurim*, overseeing the learning schedule. 5752 was still the beginning of the Jewish awakening in the former Soviet Union. Everything was still new. People didn't know much and had hardly any experience.

Aliya was at its height, but plenty of Jewish families remained in the C.I.S. Word about the *yeshiva* had gotten around, and young men and boys came to learn about Judaism. One friend brought another. When they heard about the *yeshiva* and Judaism, their souls ignited and they began learning and *farbrenging*, and many of them stayed on.

I kept a diary with stories and interesting anecdotes. The following story is taken from this diary. Let me tell you what happened on my way from the Ukraine to the U.S. Here is

what I wrote in my journal, while under the emotional impact of the tremendous upheavals in the Communist world:

These are truly wonders (I saw this in Kiev in particular). Everybody knows that *hafatzas ha'Yahadus* the way we do it today is, if we may so put it, the Rebbe's *chiddush*. The Rebbe called upon all Jews and cried out for years (from 5710, and even before that), without letup, in many *farbrengens*, and in personal meetings, and in endless letters to private individuals, that *hafatzas ha'Yahadus* in our generation is in the category of *pikuach nefesh*, and that according to *halacha*, it is forbidden to sit off to the side and just learn Torah.

The Rebbe begged and demanded of everybody, "come and rescue!" (it's interesting to note a particularly sharp letter on this topic in *Igros Kodesh*, volume 14, p. 30, where the Rebbe writes about *roshei yeshivos* who have a

policy of "I saved my own soul," that what would a *rosh yeshiva* say if it was his only son – would he do the same thing?). It is no secret that among other groups very few rose to the occasion, at least not to the extent that the Rebbe demanded. There were even some who held that it was forbidden to leave the walls of the *yeshiva* and *kollel* to spread *Yiddishkeit*.

But in recent years this idea has penetrated the walls of other groups and men in Yerushalayim and Boro Park, people who never dreamed of doing this (and didn't do it) are now finding themselves in Russia, spreading *Yiddishkeit*. This is also one of the signs of *Geula*, as the Rebbe said that "*yachof kol Yisroel*" (compelling all Israel to go in the ways of Torah, the role of Moshiach) can also be done by Moshiach's emissary, and the emissary's emissary. Indeed, we see that all the signs of *Geula* begin from "that country" (i.e., Russia), beginning from the time of the sparking of the light of Moshiach (i.e., the birth of *chassidus*), and then with the fall of communism, for we know the *sicha* of 5727 that this is the aspect of "Hashem will strike terror in his opponents." And continuing with the *aliya* to Eretz Yisroel from the former Soviet Union, which the Rebbe

said is a foretaste of the ingathering of exiles. Of course, the biggest wonder of all is how it's all viewed matter-of-factly.

* * *

Now back to the story which illustrates what I've been saying. We stopped in London, and waited in the airport. I met a relative, a Satmar *rav* (who was waiting for someone), and we began talking a bit. When he heard that I was coming from Russia and that we spread *Yiddishkeit* there, he began asking about the Jews in Russia and was really amazed at how *bachurim* travel to Russia to spread *Yiddishkeit*. His comment was, "Mamash Moshiach's tzeiten" (it's really Messianic times).

At first we didn't speak directly about the "meshaleiach," i.e., the Rebbe, just about the *shlichus* and about the state of *Yiddishkeit* in Russia. I refrained from talking about the Rebbe because I knew it could make him uncomfortable, and I didn't want to chase him away from the very start. But I figured that he knew that I didn't travel without being told to. Anyway, I kept quiet.

We continued talking and then he asked, "Do the *talmidim* become *emese erliche frume Yidden* (real, sincere, religious Jews), and if yes, where do they go afterwards?"

I answered, "Some of the *talmidim* are sent to Kfar Chabad," and as I said it, I could tell that the fact that I was on the Rebbe's *shlichus* had just registered (and that it really is *Moshiach's tzeiten*, and this began back in 5710), and I was amazed at how readily and happily he accepted the fact that a *yeshiva bachur* could travel to Russia for a few months to spread *Yiddishkeit*, when not too long before it was utterly taboo among certain groups.

We continued talking and spoke about the state of *Yiddishkeit* in London, and he said that unfortunately there were many

chiloniyim (secular Jews), as he put it.

"Maybe you'll use your influence in this, and I'm sure that nobody would mind," I gently suggested, so as not to offend him.

"It's a mitzva to tell your sons, even if they didn't ask, for it says, 'and you shall relate to your son' according to the intelligence of the child, the father teaches him. How? If he is young or foolish, tell him, "Hashem redeemed him and took us out to freedom, and if he is big and wise, tell him ... and the miracles that were done for us through Moshe Rabbeinu – all according to his intelligence."

He looked at me and shrugged, "That's not what we do!"

"Why," I asked.

"I've already learned, "he answered, "that *hafatzas ha'Yahadus* without *chassidus* doesn't work, so I myself can manage. But if you want me to convince others, it's difficult without *chassidus*."

"I'm sure that even if you teach

chassidus, nobody will mind," I said, and immediately reminded him of the vort of Reb Chaim Brisker, "*Az es felt in hasbara, felt in havana*" (when the explanation is lacking, it's because the understanding is lacking).

We continued talking about miracles and wonders that happened in recent years (the Gulf War and Jews leaving Russia) and then he asked, "There's one thing I don't understand. How come when you talk about these miracles, you always stress that the Rebbe did them and that the Rebbe said it ahead of time and said to publicize it, etc. It is true that it happened that way, but ultimately they are Hashem's miracles. So why does it not satisfy you to say that Hashem did the miracle, and nothing more?"

I began explaining to him that it really amounted to the same thing, and I spoke about the role of the *nasi ha'dor* who is the *memutza ha'mechaber* (the connecting intermediary), and I added sources from *Poilshe s'farim*.

He heard me out and then said, "I don't care one way or the other, but I mean it for your own good, so it should be more accepted in the world. There are people who really don't like hearing that everything comes from the Rebbe. If it amounts to the same thing anyway, why not just say that Hashem did it?"

I smiled and said that this approach was adopted from the Rambam's *Yad HaChazaka*. At that time we were learning "*Hilchos Chametz u'Matza*" in the daily schedule. When I got up to chapter 7, *halacha 2*, I saw an amazing thing in the Rambam. This is what the Rambam writes about the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim:

"It's a *mitzva* to tell your sons, even if they didn't ask, for it says, 'and you shall relate to your son' according to the intelligence of the child, the father teaches him. How? If he is young or foolish, tell him, "Hashem redeemed him and took us out to freedom, and if he is big and wise, tell him ... and

the miracles that were done for us through Moshe Rabbeinu – all according to his intelligence.”

Why does the Rambam change the wording, at first referring to Hashem doing the miracles, and then to Moshe Rabbeinu? What's the difference? Doesn't it amount to the same thing, since Moshe is Hashem's emissary to effect the miracles and redeem the Jewish people?

The answer is, there really is no difference, and it only matters to whom you are talking, whether to the older, wiser son or the younger, foolish son.

He smiled and told me that he once had to give a lecture on Shabbos HaGadol, and before Shabbos he opened the Rambam to “*Hilchos Chametz u'Matza*” in order to find

some difficult Rambam to elucidate in his *drasha*. While looking, he noticed the wording I had pointed out, but couldn't come up with a reason to explain it, so he looked around for

something else to lecture on.

“Now I can say a *drasha* on that, and I won't wait until Shabbos HaGadol!” concluded the Satmar *rav* happily.

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KEEPING IT ALIVE

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



Imagine hearing it reported that someone split the Atlantic Ocean on CNN – and it was captured on video! A month later all the papers are plastered with the same person's picture under the headline "Miracle-man finds cure for all diseases!" But a week later he issues a public statement declaring that G-d no longer wants Jews to put on *t'fillin, ch"v*.

Would you trust this man? The answer is to be found in this week's Torah section. Such a person is called a false prophet and our *parsha* tells us that it is necessary not only to ignore him, but actually to take him to court and have him killed!

Sound strange? Well here is something even stranger: We know that G-d creates everything constantly; the entire universe and everything in it. If so, why would G-d do such a thing as create a false prophet, give him success, give us problems that seemingly only he can solve, and then command us to ignore him?

The Torah itself answers this question (13:4) – that G-d is testing you in order to know if you love Him. But this is also not understood. Doesn't G-d know everything? Certainly He knows if you are serious or not.

Before we attempt to understand

this I want to ask a related question: This week's section begins with a seemingly bizarre statement. "Look, I (G-d) put before you a blessing and a curse." Isn't G-d completely good? Why would He make "curses"?

To understand all this here is a beautiful story.

Once there was a great and wise king who loved roosters. He was so inspired by their majestic fierceness, their splendid flashing colors, their every graceful move, that he commissioned hundreds of artists to draw him giant paintings to hang on the wall of his palatial throne room. But to his dismay none of the portraits were to his liking. So he invited greater artists, and then even greater, but he was still left unsatisfied.

So he sent invitations to three of the greatest artists in the world along with fine presents and promises of fame and fortune. The artists took up his offer and he made them the following agreement. Each would receive fifty thousand gold pieces in addition to a fine house with servants, etc., for one year and at the end of that time the King would pay one million gold pieces for any picture that found favor in his eyes.

The year passed swiftly and the word of the unveiling of the three

pictures spread throughout the kingdom. The King built a massive stadium seating several thousand people and in the center of the stage were the three huge canvases each covered with it's own ornate curtain.

The day arrived; the stadium was packed with thousands of noisy people. But the crowd fell silent as the first artist approached his canvas, hesitated a moment, held the rope that opened the curtain and turned to face the King. The king nodded, and the artist, without even turning around, triumphantly pulled the rope and a hum went out from the crowd. It was truly a masterpiece!

The king rose from his royal seat, walked to the picture, examined it from near and far and announced. "It is truly a work of genius, but it is not exactly what I want."

The crowd was abuzz as the King returned to his seat and motioned for the second artist to approach. The same scene repeated itself: silence, tension, the graceful pull of the cord. In fact, this time when the painting was uncovered, shouts of "Bravo!" were heard. But the King, although he admitted that the picture was exquisite, still was not satisfied.

Finally the third artist approached and stood by his picture and again the

King nodded. But the artist, before he pulled the cord, made a request. "Your Majesty I humbly request that you make no judgment of my work until fifteen minutes after it is unveiled." An unusual request, but the King nodded in agreement, the artist pulled the rope and revealed – the crowd gasped – an EMPTY CANVAS!

"WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?!" shouted the King, but remembering his promise, he fell silent.

The artist, meanwhile, had paid no attention to the King's outburst. He was concentrating on the empty canvas before him, palette in one hand and brush in the other, and suddenly he began to paint.

The colors flowed from his very being, the lines danced and shouted praises, changing like fire, like a rushing river, like a field of wheat, like the eyes of a child, of a king.

And then after ten minutes, the picture was finished and he turned to face the King.

Everyone was silent. You could hear only the wind. Everyone was frozen as though hypnotized.

Then someone broke the spell and began clapping, then another then another until finally the crowd was like thunder, on their feet whistling, clapping and shouting, "Bravo! BRAVO!" The king rose from his seat with open arms, walked to the artist and embraced him with tears in his eyes, "THIS, this is what I was waiting for!" Even the other artists had raised his arms in victory and were weeping with emotion.

The King motioned to the crowd to be silent once more, "How did you do it? The picture is miraculous! But how could you have been so sure of yourself?"

The artist cleared his throat and answered, "In order to answer that question I want to invite the King to my home."

Again a gasp went up from the crowd, but the King readily agreed

and within minutes they were standing before the artist's house. "Please, your Majesty, please enter," he said.

The king opened the door and immediately noticed tens of pictures of roosters. He slowly entered, turning his gaze in every direction and slowly he realized that the entire house was filled with pictures of roosters! Literally thousands of pictures of roosters surrounded him!

"Allow me to explain," said the

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artist. "I knew that the other artists would go home and draw excellent portraits, but I felt that the King was looking for something real, something alive, and that could only be done live.

But I was afraid, perhaps I wouldn't be in the right mood, perhaps there would be distractions, perhaps I wouldn't be deeply inspired or capture the moment. So I practiced

every day for hours, so that roosters would not just be on my mind, or in my heart, but even in my bones. Until I was sure that nothing could distract me from pleasing the King."

* * *

This is the answer to our above questions.

The entire purpose of the Torah is to bring Moshiach. Only Moshiach will (build the Third Temple and) cause G-d's oneness to be revealed on earth even more than it is even in the highest heavens. That is what the King (Hashem) really wants.

But (as the Rebbe MH"m said countless times) it all depends on us. First we must learn as much as possible about Moshiach and the oneness of G-d that will be revealed.

But that is not enough. Like our artist friend, we must practice constantly, every spare moment so that the desire for Moshiach be not just in our minds, but in our hearts and even in our very bones. Then, when he arrives we will be ready.

(The Hebrew word for "practice" (*emunim*) is from the same root as the word for "believing" (*emuna*), and one of the 13 basic Jewish beliefs is to practice desiring Moshiach.)

Now we can understand what it means that G-d sends us false prophets in order "to know" – not that G-d should know, but in order that we should "know," i.e., come to a deeper "knowledge" and longing for the truth. Similarly G-d even creates what seem like curses for the same purpose – that we go deeper into our own souls and really desire the unveiling of the "big picture." (Then even the holocaust and all the other "curses" will make sense.)

Then we will see that all the Jewish people were really artists all along, bringing true pleasure to the King. Only then, all these terrible 2000 years of waiting will be transformed into a blessing. Moshiach NOW!

For more articles from Rabbi Bolton visit:
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IGNITING SOULS WITH MUSIC

BY SHNEUR ZALMAN BERGER

This talented musician wandered throughout the U.S. for three years, searching for meaning. He played Indian music, joined a cult, and was pressured to become a priest in a monastery – only then did he discover Chabad.

“I was born to an assimilated family in Peoria, Illinois,” begins David Louis. “My parents belonged to the Conservative community and my mother worked as a secretary at the *shul*. I personally felt no obligation to attend services with my parents on Shabbos, but I went anyway to please

them. It goes without saying that there was no *mehitza*. In general, my parents wanted to hide their Jewish background as much as possible, which is why they changed our name from Ginsberg to Louis.”

* * *

The walls of the Louis home in Kiryat Gat are decorated with interesting instruments: guitars, flutes, and a harp, alongside stunning landscapes painted by David, a talent he inherited from his mother. Yet his parents preferred that he study music, because “you can’t make a living from painting,” and so little David studied music diligently.

David excelled in his study of music and while still quite young, he became a star performer on the trumpet, as well as a composer: “I would get together often with my musician friends and we would compose and play together. I reinterpreted well-known songs in my own style, and I composed new songs, as well.”



David Louis playing at the opening ceremony for the curbside mall named for the king of Morocco, in Kiryat Gat

At the age of 15 David was chosen to play in the philharmonic orchestra of his city. “My ego soared,” confesses Louis. “I felt that the most important job in the world was to play the trumpet.”

While in university, Louis continued to study music and he joined the theater, where he played trumpet. As a student, David took an interest in philosophy and mysticism. In the course of his searching for unique music, he went to an Indian music school where they taught him that each note represents a spiritual level, a concept that fascinated David.

This was in the 60’s. The war in Vietnam was raging despite a very vocal public voice that claimed the U.S. government was committing

genocide in Vietnam. Large groups of students began to rebel. Some demanded that the war in Vietnam stop. Others went further and expressed disgust for the normal strictures of daily living, placing special emphasis on the academic system. Students went on strike at twenty-five universities around the country. Tens of thousands of students walked the streets. More aggressive students took over deans’ offices and refused to allow life to go on as usual. Many left the universities and normal life and wandered around the U.S. living as they pleased.

David Louis was affected by all these upheavals. “The student riots changed America, me included. My entire worldview changed.”

What exactly made it change?

“First of all, the sharp transition from peace and quiet to chaos and anarchy. Another thing, civil rights for blacks was an issue of the day that created tremendous upheaval. The National Guard shot and killed people mercilessly. This was besides the fact that thousands of soldiers came back from Vietnam as drug addicts or having lost their minds because of the horrors there. All this shook me up.

“That’s how the beginnings of an awakening began, but I had nothing to base it on. I started looking into mysticism and was excited by the phenomenon of prophecy. I, David Louis, confirmed atheist, began believing in prophecy.

“I imagined prophecy as angels

with wings coming down from heaven. I knew there was a spiritual world and that there was a Jewish people and I was one of them, but despite this, my views were heretical. On the other hand, I knew that I couldn't be wicked since the time would come when I'd have to give an accounting for my actions before someone, and this too was no small achievement."

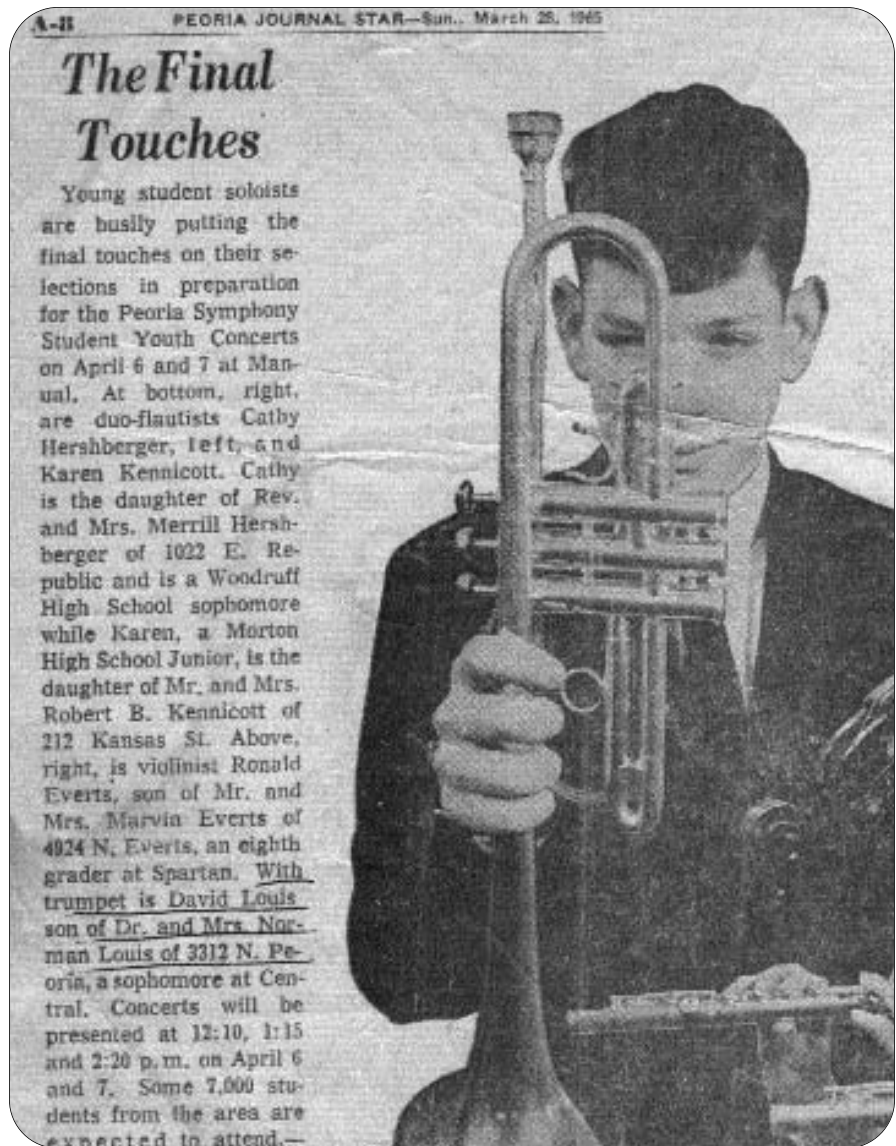
David, like many other students, became a hippie who searched for meaning in life. He went "to find himself," on long trips throughout the U.S. and Canada.

"I wandered around America for three years. I hitchhiked from city to city. I didn't stay in one place for more than three months, and in each city I looked for a place to study mysticism and music – my two hobbies.

"I learned the music of the Japanese emperor's court and got involved with Zen, which emphasizes the search for absolute spontaneity. As a composer-musician and artist, spontaneous creativity is an inseparable part of what I do.

"I spent most of my time alone in those years. I had almost no money, and was supported by welfare. I worked at various jobs, mostly in music, but when I had to I also worked in gardening. I was satisfied with whatever little provisions I acquired, and I would sleep in odd places, the main thing being to spend as little as possible."

David Louis grew his hair long, sported a mustache and wore decrepit clothes. On his three-year odyssey he often met up with his fellow hippies: "There was a special feeling of brotherhood among the hippies, and so whenever hippies met we bonded, even though we didn't know each other. Whenever I arrived in a new city, I would meet many hippies who were wandering around like me, and we would live together until each of us moved on. Nobody sought comfort. We would sleep on a mattress on the floor or in a stairwell, even for a few



A newspaper article in the *Peoria Journal* in 1965 about David Louis, when he was fifteen years old.

weeks. Nobody was bothered by this."

Louis had many adventures in his search for meaning. He took on a particular challenge when he lived in Berkeley.

"I slept on the carpet of a public library which was open at night. One night, I lay there on the carpet with my thoughts racing. I wondered why a city like Berkeley didn't have a philharmonic orchestra.

"The next day I used a public phone to call the Academy of Music and various people involved in music,

and I said I would start a philharmonic orchestra! I began publicizing it wherever I went and after some time I had a list of a hundred musicians who wanted to join the orchestra I was going to lead.

By this point I had already met the mayor who gave his blessings, and we began rehearsals. We had public performances, after which I would go to sleep on the carpet in the public library.."

At a certain point Louis joined the Hare Krishnas, one of the infamous

Indian cults. They would circulate in business areas and airports, selling incense and singing the praises of their cult: "I met them there one day and I liked them," recalls Louis. "What attracted me was the kindness they did, giving food to the hungry and

helping others in any way possible. So I made this major transition from a life of abandon to a structured life within the strictures of a cult."

Louis still hadn't found peace though. He left the cult and continued traveling. Throughout the years he had

almost never called home. "I had called from time to time and my mother would cry because she didn't know where I was. Her crying, however, made me call less often since I didn't want to hear her suffer."

David arrived in S. Francisco, where he rented a room. When he looked out the window the first evening, he saw an old wall. He wondered what an old wall was doing in a modern city, so he went outside to take a closer look. Through the gates in the wall he saw that the building beyond the wall was in a Gothic style. Well-tended gardens and swimming pools were built alongside magnificent buildings. He decided to go inside.

"I went in and was amazed by the unique architecture in the middle of this large city. I was told that this was a monastery with a college for Catholic studies nearby. I met with people from the monastery and suggested that I teach music in the college. After telling them my musical history, I was employed and became part of the staff. I taught music once a week and got all the benefits the students got, which included a room to sleep in. It's hard to describe what a huge change it was for me, after three years of sleeping in neglected rooms or on street-corners to live in a proper room."

The monastery quickly realized that Louis was a first-class musician and they wanted him to join the staff of the monastery and to become a priest! "Study what you need to know and you have a glowing future ahead of you," they promised.

David's *neshama* made him proudly declare, "But I'm Jewish": "I thought, it was one thing to join an Indian cult, because they don't hate Jews. But Christians, who were behind the Crusades and the Inquisition, which targeted Jews, is not something I want any part of. I refused to become a priest despite all they promised me."

The staff of the monastery, however, didn't give up. A nun gave him a book written by a Jewish



Performing in Serbia



woman, an apostate, which was written during the period of the Spanish expulsion and Inquisition. David took the book and began reading it avidly, identifying with the parts about prophecy, angels, and mysticism: "On the one hand, I liked what I read. On the other hand, I felt I had to get out of there as fast as possible.

"I followed my instincts and without a definite reason I packed my few belongings and left the monastery with only fifty dollars. I decided to go to Los Angeles, which cost me twenty dollars. I was left with thirty dollars for my basic needs."

When he arrived in Los Angeles, David looked for the university where he hoped to find groups interested in mysticism or music. On his way he noticed a sign that said, "Chabad House," but he didn't pay it much attention. When he returned from the university using the same route, he saw the sign once again as well as a young man who looked like an Orthodox Jew. David wondered what he had to offer. He entered the Chabad house where they offered him a drink. This was the first time in his life that he said the "Sh'ha'Kol" bracha.

David stayed until the evening, when Rabbi Yosef Teitelbaum came in and invited him to visit his house and learn Torah: "We got to the Teitelbaum house and R' Yosef opened a *Torah Ohr* and began explaining it. I was dumbfounded. He was explaining the *Maaseh Merkava* of Yechezkel! He spoke about the Jewish *neshama*, the heavenly throne, and the images associated with the heavenly throne – the prophetic things I had dreamed about since I was a kid. It really grabbed me. I couldn't understand how it happened that all those years I had searched for this within various cults, and it was right there in Judaism which belonged to me.

"I stayed at the Chabad house and slept in a makeshift dormitory on the

second floor. During the day they taught me to *daven*, to put on *t'fillin*, and about some other *mitzvos*. In those early days of my becoming observant, I was especially interested in the conversations with Rabbi Shlomo Cunin, *shliach* in California, who spoke a lot about *chassidus*, which is what I wanted to hear: mysticism.

"It was mysticism that brought me to learn *halachos* and *minhagim*, and to religious observance in daily life."

When did you see the Rebbe for the first time?

"They spoke a lot about the Rebbe at the Chabad house, and I knew that he was the leader of the Chabad



movement. That was the sum total of my knowledge of him. When they suggested that I go to a *yeshiva* for *baalei t'shuva* in New York, I liked the idea, for it would give me an opportunity to see the Rebbe.

"I went to New York, for Chanuka 5733 and was accepted in Hadar HaTorah in Crown Heights. The senior students there took care of me and took me to the Rebbe's *farbrengens*, and even gave me some new insights into the essence of a Rebbe. I understood that the Rebbe is a man above other men, and that before him all others are equal, *rabbanim* and ignorant people alike, old and young. Despite this, I

still hadn't absorbed the inner awareness of what a Rebbe is."

The first shock David experienced when seeing the Rebbe, happened a few months after he came to Crown Heights. It was Pesach night and he was sitting in the *yeshiva* dining room: "One of the *talmidim* announced that the Rebbe would be arriving shortly. I didn't get too excited because I didn't know what a Rebbe is. Suddenly many *chassidim* came and stood around the dining room. Then a second wave of *chassidim* made their way in, and older men stood in the front row. I realized the Rebbe would be arriving any minute and that he would probably just smile at us, bless us and leave.

"Suddenly the Rebbe walked in with a serious expression on his face. Everybody was silent. The Rebbe walked over to the kitchen, checked that everything was set up properly for Pesach and left without saying anything.

"It's hard to describe what I felt. It was at that moment that I realized that Judaism and *chassidus* are not just another cult that teaches a religion and rituals. The seriousness on the Rebbe's face expressed for me an inner, deep seriousness which was interwoven with the foundations of *Yiddishkeit* and *chassidus*."

In Hadar HaTorah, David's musical talents quickly came to light, and he and some of his friends organized a *chassidic* concert in which David appeared. He told *chassidic* stories and accompanied them with his music. David liked combining story and song, and the concert was very successful.

This paved the way for additional concerts, in Europe too, and David got the Rebbe's *brachos* for these concerts.

"I once asked the Rebbe whether the *niggun* 'Arba Bavos,' which is only sung on special occasions, could be played in concert, since I thought it would ignite many *neshamos*. The Rebbe's answer was unequivocal: a big

NO!

David married and moved to Eretz Yisroel where he lives in Kiryat Gat. He composes, plays, draws, and learns and teaches *kabbala*. The thing that attracts him the most is the combination of story and song. Once a week he attends a meeting for young intellectual couples that takes place in a café in Rechovot, and he tells *chassidic* stories and performs *chassidic* music.

Louis is a talented musician who has composed many songs that are played by the Israeli philharmonic, as well as in London. These pieces (among them, “*B’nei Hachala*” of the Alter Rebbe), were recorded and produced as a special set of classic tunes.

About a year ago, Louis made four trips around the world for the purpose of bringing joy to Jews in far-off places. He visited communities in Yugoslavia, Slovakia, Czechoslovakia, Italy, South Africa and some communities in the U.S. He performed in about thirty concerts!

“I went to Serbia and saw terrible poverty; bombed out buildings and bridges; a ruined country. Belgrade, the capitol, was full of unemployed

people, and even those who worked made only thirty dollars a month.

“In the two days that I spent there, I appeared a few times. At each performance I told Baal Shem Tov stories and Chabad stories. I had long since learned that stories speak directly to the heart. I interwove the stories with music, and spoke about every Jew having a *neshama*.

What did people think?

I saw that the Jews were thirsty for substance, and were ready to be a part of it. They listened closely to what was said, as well as to the music. Reform works there, and they implant the idea that religious Jews are scary, yet suddenly here was a religious Jew with a beard, playing music they loved. There’s no question that this opened their hearts to listen and get more and more.

“Fortunately, this was a community that is accustomed to the culture of music. Although I played in halls without amplification, even the most subtle nuances were not lost, as the audience listened in respectful silence.

“In Belgrade, the feeling was one of strong unity. About a hundred Jews, which is most of the community, sat in the large hall. At a certain point I felt I

had to leave the stage and mingle with the audience. I was playing a medley of the *niggunim* of the Rebbeim on a flute. I felt like it was a *farbrengen*. As soon as I concluded, I felt that hearts had opened.

In Italy, he visited a little town on the border with Greece. Only ten Jews live there, and four of them couldn’t come. They gathered in the local *shul*, which was built one hundred years ago by the exiles from Spain.

“We extinguished the lights and lit candles and I began playing the flute. There was an unusual sense of being uplifted. Jews, who had no connection with other Jews for many years, sat together and listened to Jewish stories and songs.

“Once, they brought me to the bedside of Jews who were hospitalized. One scene that I’ll never forget was of an old woman in the oncology department, whose days were numbered, according to the doctors.

“When I began playing, her face lit up and she began to smile. The happy *chassidic* tunes filled the room and her smile broadened. Near her bed I felt that I was fulfilling my mission in life: to revive people who were declared “hopeless.”



The city of Pilsen in Czechoslovakia with the large *shul* in the center of the picture

JEWISH PRIDE IN BARANQUILLA

BY RABBI SHOLOM YAAKOV CHAZAN

*There are 180 Jewish families in Baranquilla, a port city in northern Colombia, South America. * Between 70-80% of the people participate in every Chabad event. * The story of Rabbi Yossi Liberow, shliach to Baranquilla*

As a child, when he still learned near home in France, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Liberow never dreamed that one day he would be running a Chabad house in South America. Certainly not in Colombia. For that matter, neither did his wife Chana, daughter of Rabbi Yaakov Goldberg from Crown Heights. Yet in Kislev 5750, the Liberow couple found themselves on a winding road between villages, gazing at the tropical scenery as they drove to the port city of Baranquilla in northern Colombia.

At the beginning of the year, the *shliach* in Bogotá, the capitol of Colombia, Rabbi Yehoshua Rosenfeld had suggested that he open a Chabad house in Baranquilla. The well-known *g'vir*, Moshe Tabachnik, father-in-law of Shmuel Rohr, a member of the Jewish community, had been greatly impressed by Chabad's work around the world, and along with other members of the community, sought to open a Chabad house in his city.

The Rebbe's answer was, "*haskama u'v'racha*" (success and blessing), *azkir al ha'tziyun*," and another corner of the world began to get ready to greet Moshiach.

Upon doing his homework in Baranquilla, R' Liberow knew that his *shlichus* would involve a small community of 180 Jewish families. In the past, 300 families had lived there, but the economic and security situation had caused nearly half the community to flee. Most of the Jews who remained are wealthy people whose businesses are flourishing despite the difficulties. The affluent run their businesses in Baranquilla while living in Miami.

As a typical Jewish community, as small as it is, Baranquilla has two *shuls*, one Sefardi and one Ashkenazi. The religious state of the Sefardic community is better than that of the Ashkenazic community, which tends towards Conservative. There is no *mehitza* in the Ashkenazi *shul* but they do not allow

women to lead the prayers or to get an *aliya*, as is done in Conservative *shuls*.

A "JEWISH" SCHOOL WITH 50% GOYIM

R' Liberow arrived on Yud-Tes Kislev and was warmly welcomed by the group of Jews who initiated his invitation to Baranquilla and had committed to supporting him. It was almost Chanuka and R' Liberow got to work. He established ties with key figures in the community, and by Chanuka everybody knew that the Rebbe's *shliach* to Baranquilla was going to make a public *menora* lighting.

Dozens of people attended the *menora* lighting and graciously greeted the new *shliach*, but there was some hesitation on their part, too. On the one hand they were happy to have a young rabbi who would breathe new life into the community. On the other hand they were afraid of his taking over. R'

The Chabad house in Baranquilla



Bogotá, who has produced the magazine for the last two years.

Speaking of regional outreach, the distribution of the weekly *L'Chaim* publication in Spanish, is also to R' Liberow's credit. The substance and content are taken from the popular *L'Chaim* publication published in New York, and the professional translation into Spanish, has made the *L'Chaim* a widely read publication in Jewish communities in Colombia.

Mrs. Liberow takes care of the Jewish calendar for the Jewish community of Baranquilla. Each month features a picture of a child from the community dressed in old-fashioned Jewish attire and performing a *mitzva* associated with the month.

SENIOR CITIZENS AND CHABAD HOUSE

The Chabad house holds evening classes for men and women. There is also a Jewish library with books and tapes of Jewish content.

The Chabad house held a public *seider* with seventy people from the community. Another *seider* took place at the Hilton Hotel in Cartachna, which attracts Israeli tourists, and 200 tourists participated.

All these activities were coordinated in a tiny building which couldn't be expanded. Five years after arriving in the city, R' Liberow decided to build a Chabad house.

"The community was greatly inspired and people made donations and offered help in every possible way. We wanted to buy land for a building, but it wasn't easy. Since northern Colombia is near the equator, the weather is hot all year round. If you walk in the street for more than ten minutes, you drip with sweat. For this reason, and in order to make it possible for people



Rabbi Yossi Liberow and his son

to walk to the Chabad house on Shabbos, I had to find a location that was close to the center of the Jewish community.

"We ended up paying a large amount of money and bought a plot

in an excellent location, a five-minute walk from the Chabad house and about the same distance from the *shul*. After we bought it, certain people who were afraid that the new Chabad house would be competition

for the *shul* and the community's *mosdos*, spread rumors that our goal was to compete with the community.

"We had no choice but to lie low for a while. We rented an apartment and focused on Jewish services for the members of the community, specifically in those areas that hadn't been taken care of previously.

"We wanted to show the community that there was no reason to fear Chabad's work, on the contrary. Little by little, we allowed ourselves to expand our work further, to rent an apartment with a kitchen and to open a sort of soup kitchen at the Chabad house.

"Those who had opposed us came to realize that Chabad's work only served to benefit the community, and they dropped their opposition. That's when I was able to go back to the original plan of building a spacious Chabad house. From the moment we began the building process, we saw how the Rebbe was leading us by the hand, and was doing miracles and wonders for us, one after another.

"The first plan was to build a one-story structure. I went to an

***"The chanukas
ha'bayis was amazing
in that every single
member of the
community came.
Even those who live
in Miami felt they
had to fly in for the
day."***

architect for him to draw up a blueprint, and then I took it to one of the wealthy members of the community. He was very excited by the idea, and immediately committed to paying 80% of the expenses. He even referred me to his brother who agreed to pay the other 20%.

"When I had the pledges that covered the expenses of the building, I began to think even bigger and in a conversation with another wealthy person, I mentioned

the idea of building a second story. He liked the suggestion but said that if it was going to be a two-story building we had to build a garage, otherwise the neighbors would complain to the city and prevent the building from being built. I figured he was right, but where would I get the money for a garage when I needed to get money for the second story?

"That's when I got the idea of building a *three-story* building, with a community Senior Citizens Home on the third floor. People loved the idea, and from that point on the attitude of the community towards the entire project shifted. Even the few who had opposed the building of a Chabad house changed their position 180 degrees and became ardent supporters. *Baruch Hashem*, I quickly found the money to pay for the garage and an elevator."

THE REBBE FORESAW THE RESULTS OF THE MEETING

"As soon as I got the idea for the Senior Center, I decided to talk to one of the wealthy members of the community and suggested that he pay for the additional floors. The father of this wealthy man was one of the leading opponents to the building plans, but having gotten to know the son, I knew that he appreciated our work and would be happy to help.

"Before leaving my house, I decided to write to the Rebbe and ask for a *bracha*. The answer I got in the *Igros Kodesh* amazed me. The Rebbe wrote about the importance of *tz'daka* and added that even if the person didn't have any now, he should commit to giving and Hashem would open new channels for him.

"I took the volume of *Igros Kodesh* with me and met with the wealthy man. I told him about the new plan to build a Senior Center in



Chabad campers

the Chabad house building, and when I saw that he liked the idea, I asked him to pay for the two additional stories, a sum of a hundreds of thousands of dollars.

“His reaction was amazingly similar to the Rebbe’s description in the *Igros Kodesh*. He said, ‘I’m very interested in helping out, but at the moment I have invested a lot of money in new ventures and I can’t set aside the amount you need to build the Chabad house.’

“I put the volume of *Igros Kodesh* down on the table, opened it to the page I had put my letter into, and told him that this was the answer I had gotten from the Rebbe before I met with him.

“The open miracle wowed him. He had met the Rebbe a number of times, and the Rebbe’s clear answer touched a chord. After thinking it over briefly, he said he would take care of the entire project but out of respect for his parents he asked that I get his father’s consent first.

“After seeing the Rebbe’s open miracles, I was hopeful that the father would agree. I arranged to meet him and after showing him the Rebbe’s letter he said happily, ‘Very good! I’ve wanted to train my son to give charity. Now here’s an opportunity!’

“Once again I saw how the Rebbe takes care of his *shluchim*,” concludes R’ Liberow.

REVIVAL OF JUDAISM IN BARRANQUILLA

Last Adar the community of Barranquilla celebrated the *chanukas ha’bayis* of the Chabad house. The stunning three-story building had given the Jews of Barranquilla a strong injection of Jewish pride.

The *chanukas ha’bayis* was attended by the chief rabbi of Bogotá; Rabbi Yehoshua Rosenfeld, *shliach* in Colombia; Rabbi Sholom

Ber Lipskar, *shliach* in Miami; a representative of the Jewish Agency, and all the members of the community.

R’ Liberow sees this large-scale participation as one of his big successes. “When you go on *shlichus* to large communities, what happens is only a small percentage of the Jewish community regularly participates in Chabad house events.

“We have a small community, only 180 families. Thus, we have been able to get 70-80% of the community to participate in every event we do. The *chanukas ha’bayis* was amazing in that every single member of the community came. Even those who live in Miami felt they had to fly in for the day.”

The participants received a *bentcher* in Spanish and a book with dozens of articles about Judaism from the perspective of *chassidus*, translated into Spanish. The book is part of a plan to translate as many books as possible into Spanish in order to enable the Jews of the community to benefit from the light of *chassidus*.

The *chanukas ha’bayis* was tremendously inspiring for the Jews of the community. When *chazan* R’ Shneur Zalman Baumgarten sang *chassidic niggunim*, one of the distinguished members of the community got up and began dancing with holy fervor.

“After the *chanukas ha’bayis* I received dozens of phone calls from members of the community, who wanted to express their feelings about the event. One of the wealthy people I had brought to visit the building stopped in the middle of the tour and gazed at the building in pride. He’s a young man, in his thirties, but as a native of Barranquilla who had never seen a public display of Judaism, the sight of the Jewish building, which

symbolizes the revival of the Jewish community, moved him to tears.”

“At the *chanukas ha’bayis* I remembered the beginning of the *shlichus*, when whoever I met was sure that within a few weeks I would realize that this wasn’t a place for a religious Jew and I would leave. Today they all realize that when we show up somewhere, we won’t leave until we’ve finished our job with the coming of Moshiach.

“Now we’re expanding our work on all fronts, starting with more regular Torah classes, and intensified programming for children. For Shabbatons they’ll be able to sleep at the Chabad house and truly integrate the experience of the Shabbaton. The new building has a huge library of books, tapes, and videos in Spanish, all with Jewish content. People of all ages enjoy visiting the library, reading, listening, and watching authentic Jewish material.”

WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE REBBE

A few weeks after the *chanukas ha’bayis*, the community united once again, this time for the reading of the Megilla and a Purim party, and mainly to inaugurate the *shliach*, Rabbi Eli Swued, as the new rabbi of the Sefardic community.

After various rabbis of the Sefardic community, who had come to Barranquilla from *chareidi* centers in Eretz Yisroel, left after short trial periods, the leaders of the Sefardic community decided to choose the Chabad *shliach*, born in Mexico, as the *rav* of the community.

“It was a sweet surprise for me. I wasn’t involved in the selection of a rabbi, and I was very happy when I found out that Chabad’s work would be strengthened. *Baruch Hashem*, I see great success in the activities we do together with Rabbi Swued, and I’m certain that every additional



A Chabad Lag B'Omer bonfire

ko'ach moves the city one step closer towards Moshiach. To sum it up, it's a partnership for the Rebbe, and there could be no better partnership!" says R' Liberow.

The last Ashkenazi rabbi didn't last long either in this spiritually forsaken place. In the last ten years, at least ten rabbis passed through. Officially there is no rabbi for the Ashkenazi community, but everybody knows that when it comes to Judaism you can turn to R' Liberow.

He is the *mesader kiddushin* at weddings and he takes care of the spiritual part of *bar mitzvos*. You can tell how much they esteem R' Liberow from the fact that when they asked him to speak at the *shul* and he made his agreement conditional on a *mechitza*, they agreed to forgo their "principles" in order to have him come.

LUBAVITCHER SH'CHITA AND A CHABAD MIKVA

R' Liberow can point to dozens of things that have changed radically in

the thirteen years he has been in Baranquilla. He came to a spiritual wasteland, and now the place has begun to flourish. Dozens of families began keeping Shabbos, and many men put on *t'fillin* daily.

Great changes were made in *kashrus*. When he arrived no kosher products were available. They made everything themselves. In order to have chicken for Shabbos, he had to *shecht* his own chickens.

Once R' Swued arrived, who is also a *shochet*, the two of them opened up a kosher butcher store. With the approval of the administration of the Sefardic *shul*, they set up the *shul's* kitchen to meet the new requirements, they installed the necessary surfaces to *kasher* the chickens, and built a walk-in freezer. Today, anybody in the community can come and buy kosher meat *l'mehadrin, Lubavitcher sh'chita!*

"Since we're not interested in making a profit, we managed to keep the price the same as that of non-kosher meat, so no one can claim

that the price is too high," says R' Liberow. "Furthermore, our meat is always fresh – another advantage in buying kosher meat."

R' Liberow is also making a revolution in the area of family purity. When he arrived there was one neglected *mikva*, in the *shul* of the Sefardic community. Within a few months, he was able to raise funds to renovate the *mikva*. He wanted the *mikva* to be in accordance with *shitas Chabad*, but the *rav* of the Sefardic *shul* didn't want that. They finally built three pits around the *mikva* so that it satisfied all opinions.

Not satisfied with this, he built another *mikva* in perfect accordance with *shitas Chabad*. It was funded by Yekusiel Rohr, who donated a substantial sum in memory of the Rebbetzin. Two years later there was a *chanukas ha'bayis*.

THE REBBE IS WATCHING OVER US

Colombia is a country of opposites. On the one hand its

people live peaceful lives, free from any pressures. Whatever can be put off until tomorrow is postponed.

The exotic vacation spots, the beautiful scenery, and tropical jungles all contribute towards the unique peacefulness of the country.

On the other hand, Colombia is one of the most dangerous countries in South America. There are guerilla battles in the streets, and robberies and kidnappings are daily occurrences.

The deteriorating security situation has led many Jews to leave Colombia. "Even in Baranquilla we are affected by people leaving," says R' Liberow, "and the Jewish community announced an emergency plan to bring Jewish families to the community. A new family that comes to live in Baranquilla gets a house from the community for two years, and is exempt from all community taxes, including tuition at the Jewish school and membership at the *shul*."

"The community also helps newcomers to find employment, and if someone wants to open a business, he gets interest-free loans. The leaders of the community have figured out that at the current rate of attrition, the community will disappear in twenty years, and in order to prevent this from happening, they are ready to invest large sums of money."

When you ask for donations for the Chabad house, don't people ask you what the point is when the community will disappear in 20 years?

"It's just the opposite. Our work, the building and expanding, raises the morale of the community. People feel that if we build, there's a future."

R' Liberow's house is in a walled compound that is patrolled 24-hours a day. "Even though the school is

only five minutes away, it's dangerous to send the children to school alone. Whenever the children leave the house to visit friends or to some Chabad house activity, they are accompanied by an adult."

Don't the children live in constant fear?

"First of all, you get used to anything. Aside from that, we are confident and we convey our confidence to the children that *shluchim* of the Rebbe are not harmed. We do what we have to do *b'derech ha'teva*, but we are confident that the *brachos* of the Rebbe protect us."

BARRANQUILLA IS READY TO GREET MOSHIACH

After 13 years of *shlichus* the attitude of the community towards Chabad has changed from one of apprehension and alienation to admiration and full cooperation. "It's only because of the Rebbe that we

have achieved this," says R' Liberow.

The community is also aware that the Jewish success in Baranquilla is thanks to the Rebbe. In nearly every class they hear about how the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach is concerned about every Jew, everywhere in the world, in order to prepare the world to greet Moshiach. For them this is not a story but daily reality.

In times of joy and sorrow, the Jews of Baranquilla know the address: the Rebbe. When a young Jew went fishing out to sea and disappeared, the entire community was worried and the boy's parents turned to R' Liberow and asked him to ask the Rebbe for a *bracha*. This was after Chaf-Zayin Adar 5752, and the Rebbe gave his *bracha* with a nod of his head.

After three days of searching with the aid of helicopters, the boy's boat was found out at sea. The boy was on the verge of losing consciousness. His life was saved at the last minute,



Members of the community are extremely impressed by the new Chabad house



Rabbi Liberow (second from right) with donors, at the *chanukas ha'bayis* celebration

and the parents knew that the miracle was in the merit of the Rebbe's *bracha*.

Another Jew, who had a connection to the Rebbe before R' Liberow's arrival in town, through

Rabbi Yosef Weinberg, saw miracles in his business thanks to the Rebbe's *brachos*. He certainly appreciated the work Chabad does.

About two years after R' Liberow came to Baranquilla, this man

planned on buying a huge store, and he asked R' Liberow to ask the Rebbe about the business. The Rebbe's answer was negative, and so despite the fact that all predictions about the business were positive, he didn't get involved.

Within two weeks, new information showed that if he had bought the store he would have lost tremendous amounts of money. He got other *brachos* from the Rebbe, and since then he has had unusual success in business.

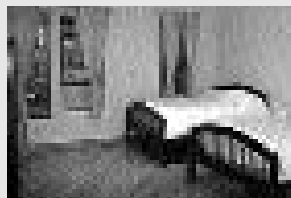
The man who contributed towards the upper story of the Chabad house considers himself a *chassid* of the Rebbe. He was in touch with Chabad for many years and had many miracles in his business.

Says R' Liberow, "When people like these hear that the Rebbe asks that we prepare the world for Moshiach, they accept it lovingly and get involved in doing just that!"

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A CHAPTER IN THE LIFE OF R' HILLEL PARITCHER

PART 3
BY SHALOM BER AVTZON

In the beginning of VaYikra, the third Chumash, the Torah tells us what a person must do if he wishes to “come close” to Hashem (“Adam ki yakriv mi’kem”), which in essence is the entire purpose of a Yid’s avoda. Yet before that pasuk there are two complete Chumashim, B’Reishis and Shmos, which are mainly comprised of stories about the greatest of people. So you see the Torah is telling that if you truly want to come close to Hashem you need this introduction.

GIVING OVER THE CHASSIDIC PERSPECTIVE

Reb Hillel was one of the great *chassidim* whom the Mittlerer Rebbe and the Tzemach Tzedek chose to send younger *chassidim* for guidance. Only after spending time with these noted *chassidim* would they be allowed to come for *yechidus*, etc.

R’ Hillel’s custom was that when

he received a newcomer, he would instruct two of his elder disciples to help in guidance and development. They would explain to the newcomer the ways of *chassidim* and *chassidus*. R’ Hillel called this “learning the *chassidishe* Alef-Beis.”

While they would explain some of the fundamental concepts of *chassidus*, most of the time they spent telling a story of the Rebbeim or of

one of the great *chassidim*. After reviewing it numerous times, until they saw that the newcomer knew the story to its minutest detail. They would then ask him to say what lesson and or moral can be learned from it in connection to correcting one’s character traits, his fear of Heaven, or his understanding of the Creator.

After he would express his thoughts, they would prod him to probe even deeper, to exerting his mental abilities as if he were studying a difficult concept in Torah. When he finally became exhausted from this mental exercise, they would exhort him to think of other possibilities. Then they would finally explain to him the lesson and moral that R’ Hillel himself gave on this story.

R’ Hillel explained, by first putting emphasis on stories, he is following the way of the Torah.

In the beginning of VaYikra, the third *Chumash*, the Torah tells us what a person must do if he wishes to “come close” to Hashem (“*Adam ki yakriv mi’kem*”), which in essence is the entire purpose of a *Yid’s avoda*. Yet before that *pasuk* there are two complete *Chumashim*, B’Reishis and Shmos, which are mainly comprised of stories about the greatest of people. So you see the Torah is telling that if you truly want to come close to Hashem you need this introduction.

In addition to hearing stories and their explanations from these older students, in honor of the newcomer, R’ Hillel himself would explain to all his students a story on the first three Shabbosim of the newcomers’ arrival.

Reb Dov Zev Kazevnikov, one of his *talmidim* who became the *rav* in Yektrinislav, related the story that R’ Hillel said on his first Shabbos:

The second time I was by the [Mitteler] Rebbe was for Shavuos of

5574-1814. Shavuot was Wednesday and Thursday, and on Shabbos Parshas Naso the Rebbe said another *maamer*. The *maamer* was on the *pasuk*, “*Naso es rosh*,” which means “elevating the head.” The Rebbe explained: How is one uplifted?, Through *ahavas Yisroel*. The Rebbe then expounded on the different levels of *tz’daka* and other acts of kindness to others. He then explained in detail and in great length that in kindness itself it should be manifested in the highest level, which is *chesed sh’b’chesed* (kindness within kindness). In simple terms IT means having a feeling and love in helping a *Yid*.

Coming home I reviewed for a group of *chassidim* all the *maamarim* that the Rebbe said numerous times. The explanations that the Rebbe put forth were reviewed and studied with enthusiasm and all enjoyed the sweetness of the *maamarim*. However, the saying of the Rebbe that *chesed sh’b’chesed* is having a feeling and love in helping another *Yid* was heard with special *hislahavus*. It imbued in all the ideal of *ahavas Yisroel*, with special emphasis on doing it with feeling and love.

We *farbrenged* on this saying for days. In the *shul* that we were *farbrenging*, there was a *Yid*, a *talmid chocham*. He was in his nineties and would remind us that he – not us – saw the Baal Shem Tov in Slutsk. Noticing our response and praise to the Rebbe’s *vort*, he couldn’t take it and said; “Why are you all overwhelmed by this explanation? When I was a young man, I heard from the exceptional scholar and gaon, the *parush* Rav Zecharia, the following explanation on the concept of *chesed sh’b’chesed*: *Chesed* is giving your old pair of slippers to a poor person. *Chesed sh’b’chesed* is giving him a nail to fix the slippers [so they can be used].

When Reb Hillel concluded this

story he then showed us from this the clear perspective and vision that *chassidus* gives. He made emphasis to point out the accomplishments of *chassidus* in *avoda*. In summary, you must feel the other persons concerns with a *hergesh p’nimi*.

Igros kodesh Rebbe Rayatz vol 4 pp. 50-52

Reb Hillel often would retell the story of the *ger tzedek* of Vilna Avrohom Ben Avrohom – Count Pototzky). He spoke about his greatness in detail. He reached a level that was attained by only a very few. Following the accepted way of serving Hashem through self-affliction, the *ger tzedek* accepted it

Chesed is giving your old pair of slippers to a poor person. Chesed sh’b’chesed is giving him a nail to fix the slippers so they can be used.

upon himself. After becoming a *Yid*, he would go into the woods and lay down in a place where there was an abundance of ants. They would crawl all over him and bite him. When one would fall off, he would pick it up, place it on his body and say eat away at the coarseness of my body.

Later, when the Church captured him, he endured tremendous pain and suffering at their hands. Although he could have alleviated some of the pain by appealing their death sentence upon him, he didn’t; he wanted to die *al kiddush Hashem*.

His reasoning for this was that the body is coarse and one has to destroy

this coarseness. That is accomplished through pain and suffering (*sigufim*).

This approach, R’ Hillel would say, was before the revelation of *chassidus*. *Chassidus* revealed the importance of the body. A *mitzva* could be fulfilled only when the *neshama* is in a body. This is the meaning of what our Sages taught us: One moment of *t’shuva* and good deeds in the physical world is better than the entire life of the world to come.

Similarly he also would speak about the *tzaddik* Rav Meir of Rothenberg. He was imprisoned by the emperor, who demanded an enormous ransom for his freedom. Fearing that this would set a precedent for the noblemen, Rav Meir forbade the Jewish community to buy his freedom. Seven years later, when he passed away in prison, the Emperor still did not release his body for burial. He demanded that the ransom be paid.

Some years later, a wealthy *Yid* redeemed the body and Rav Meir was finally laid to rest.

Coming to this *Yid* in a dream, Rav Meir offered him a choice of two rewards. Either he and his children would be blessed with riches forever, or he can immediately have a place next to Rav Meir in Gan Eden. The *Yid* Alexander ben Shlomo chose the later, and shortly thereafter passed away.

Being in Gan Eden is wonderful in itself. Being by a *tzaddik* such as Rav Meir in Gan Eden is a wonder that is impossible to put into words. Yet R’ Hillel declared that that was the *avoda* only *before* the teachings of *chassidus*. *Chassidus* explains that the true *avoda* of a *neshama* is only accomplished when it is within a body. The fulfillment of a single *mitzva* in the physical world surpasses all revelations in Gan Eden.

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NOT TO BE FEARFUL AND SOFT OF HEART

BY SHAI GEFEN

WHERE DID JEWISH BRAINS DISAPPEAR TO?

21 years ago, in a *sicha* of Yud-Gimmel Tammuz, the Rebbe said some shocking things about security in Eretz Yisroel. Large portions of the *sicha* are quite relevant today when Israel grants the Palestinians various concessions and authority over additional cities, while Intelligence warns that the Arabs are taking advantage of the *hudna* to amass more weapons, to set up terrorist laboratories, and to train terror cells. On the one hand, the heads of security keep warning about a possible huge attack (may it not happen), and on the other hand, they convey trust and legitimacy to terrorists.

In the *sicha* said 21 years ago, the Rebbe addresses the fact that Israel signed a peace agreement with a country that in the meantime is arming itself and is organizing itself militarily for a surprise attack. This is addressed to the prime minister:

As we see, all concessions and withdrawals in the past were preparations for a war that followed ... The claim that the signing of a peace agreement at Camp David prevented another front is unfounded. If they had stood strong

and not returned the oil fields and strategic areas, they would have signed a peace agreement then too. Then Egypt wouldn't be in a position of strength. Consequently, they wouldn't have a first front, as it is known that most of the money and weapons in the hands of the terrorists come from Egypt.

Nevertheless they continued meeting with politicians, and when they were asked, "You know the *tzaros* you caused in the Yom Kippur War with your political calculations, why are you doing the same thing again?" – they are left without an answer. But practically speaking they tie the hands of the one who is responsible for security. Why do you allow them to tie your hands? You were given the responsibility for security, and therefore, "there's no *shliach* for a transgression," even a slight transgression. All the more so when this involves actual danger to life!

In every event they were involved in there was a "withdrawal" (I don't want to use a sharper term), and in every event they were not involved in there was a completely supernatural victory. What is this compared to? To a "man who is fearful and soft of heart" who enters an operating room and sees doctors

begin surgery and when he sees the first drops of blood he begins begging the doctors to stop operating and to wait until the patient recovers from the beginning of the operation, and then to operate a second time, and so on, for how can the operation go on when the patient's blood is flowing? The doctors' reaction is obvious.

So too with the security situation of 3 million Jews (may they increase) in the Holy Land. After they began the first operation, along came the "man who is fearful and soft of heart" and ordered them to stop in the middle of the operation, saying that a meeting must be held, and they need to know the opinion of so-and-so and so-and-so (for if not, it's not a democracy), and they have to ask abroad, etc. And the same thing happens with the second and third operation. Now the fourth operation is taking place, and most of it is done, while sacrificing hundreds (may Hashem avenge their blood), and hundreds of wounded. Nevertheless there are those who think that in order to achieve peace is to stop in the middle of the operation and not heal the affected part. This is after hundreds have fallen! Over time they will convene more meetings and visit various

countries, and then they'll see what's what.

How are they allowed to conduct experiments like this when it affects 3 million Jews?! Three times they saw that this approach led to *tzaros*! And the same thing repeats itself time and again, almost like a photocopy! There are changes from time to time, because it's not possible for things to remain exactly the same (like the statement of *Chazal*, "it is impossible to be absolutely exact"), but the core is the same: It is always the same people (or their students), and the same claims – that you need to curry favor with the nations of the world, and you can't act in a way of "a nation that dwells alone," and this is the way to peace and righteousness! And if they don't do that, it will be like the failure of the Yom Kippur War, as the prime minister at that time admitted that for the rest of her life she'll never be able to forgive herself for allowing political considerations to outweigh the military's counsel, and for the rest of her life she'll see the dead and wounded who fell as a result of this failure – before her eyes!

WHAT'S A HUDNA?

For greater certainty that we actually understand what a *hudna* is, let's look at some news stories that have been coming out lately:

1. A senior member of military intelligence warned that the Palestinians are improving their Kassam missiles and after the *hudna* they'll be able to reach Gush Dan (the center of the country).

2. Hamas is using the *hudna* to send suicide bombers into the area of the Green Line so that as soon as the *hudna* is over (or even before, as we saw with the double suicide bombing last Tuesday) they can get to work, *r"l*.

3. The P.A. did not eradicate the terrorist infrastructure and didn't raise a finger during the *hudna*

4. The Voice of Palestine, which got its frequency from Israel in the Oslo Accords, began playing songs of incitement and murder against Israel

5. During the *hudna*, Jews have been kidnapped in the heart of the country (not the West Bank).

6. Hundreds of terrorists have been released, thanks to the *hudna*.

WHY SHOULD HE GO HOME?

The Rebbe constantly emphasized that the "fearful and softhearted man should return home." The Rebbe asks: How does this help? Wouldn't it be better to pray for him?

Twenty-five years ago, the Gerrer Rebbe *zt"l*, the Lev Simcha, visited the Rebbe. Most of the conversation pertained to *shleimus ha'Aretz*, and the obligation *rabbanim* have to express their views on this issue. An interesting explanation was given about the "fearful and softhearted man should return home."

The Rebbe: It was mentioned earlier, regarding strength and peace, and since you are the senior Admur in Eretz Yisroel, it would be worthwhile for you to publicize with strength, the *p'sak din* in *Shulchan Aruch* that when they come "about straw and hay" you should go out with weapons, etc., and naturally it will be "fear and dread will fall upon them," -should be fulfilled.

The Gerrer Rebbe: We see that the entire *Shira* ["Az Yashir"] is written in the past tense, where as "fear and dread will fall upon them" is written in the present tense.

The Rebbe: Since there are people who are "fearful and softhearted," and we must ensure that "the heart of his brother



It is compared to a "man who is fearful and soft of heart" who enters an operating room and sees doctors begin surgery, and when he sees the first drops of blood he begins begging the doctors to stop operating and to wait until the patient recovers from the beginning of the operation, and then to operate a second time, and so on, for how can the operation go on when the patient's blood is flowing? The doctors' reaction is obvious.

shouldn't be softened like his heart" (as we read last Shabbos), a *Kol Korei* should be publicized that this is a law in *Shulchan Aruch* (which is not about "*kedushas ha'Aretz*," "rebellion against the nations," or the like) that applies to every center of Jews, all over (even abroad), that even on Shabbos you go out against them with weapons, and [this is so] even when the confrontation is over just straw and hay, when concerning a border town. The publicizing of this *Kol Korei*, which will have a great impact, is now a timely matter.

First of all, we just read last Shabbos (Parshas Shoftim) that a Kohen, leader, or judge must try to strengthen others. Second of all, it is beneficial regarding the "fearful and softhearted," for at least they won't mix in. You see an amazing thing here. Regarding the "fearful and softhearted," you would think that one ought to convince him that he has nothing to fear, but we see just the opposite. "He should return home," for there's no time to change his mind. What must be ensured is that "he shouldn't melt the heart of his brother like his own heart," and therefore, he goes home and can do as he pleases at home. If they went out strongly with the force of "the rabbis are the true kings," with the strength of a law in *Shulchan Aruch*, it would change things Above, and naturally this would have an effect below.

The Gerrer Rebbe: "*Malchei rabbanan*" is plural; it doesn't mean one.

The Rebbe (smiling): I'll try to find a few more. There are a few already, but we need one to go out strongly.

As you mentioned before, regarding many things having to do with *yiras Shamayim*, things have improved and been made easier. All the more so must we try in this matter, which pertains to *pikuach*

nefashos, and this is something everybody agrees to!

The Gerrer Rebbe: Perhaps you'll come to Eretz Yisroel and we'll work on this [together].

The Rebbe (smiling): I'll try to work on it from here. Here in *chutz la'Aretz* there is also "he who is fearful and softhearted." (And regarding that which was mentioned before about the *Kol Korei*) – it would be a "thing in its time" and a "timely *mitzva*."

"When a lamp lighter stands in the middle of the street, people gather around him. When the lantern lighter doesn't stand in the middle of the street, you don't see people, you don't know who thinks the same way or who thinks the opposite."

The Gerrer Rebbe: We are working on it.

The Rebbe: But it's hush hush. The way to peace "and I'll give peace in the land" is when you stand in a manner of "and I will lead you upright," as Rashi says this means "with upright posture." The Rebbe, my father-in-law, once gave an analogy of a lantern lighter. When he stands in the middle of the street, people gather around him. When the lantern lighter doesn't stand in the

middle of the street, you don't see people, you don't know who thinks the same way or who thinks the opposite.

In the issue at hand, when we know the *p'sak din* in *Shulchan Aruch*, we must publicize it, particularly with strength, "*malka rabbanan*."

A LIGHT ON TO THE NATIONS?

Last week the news said that Kuwait refused to host Abu Mazen since during the Gulf War, the Palestinians supported Saddam Hussein, and till this day haven't apologized for that.

I didn't know whether to laugh or to cry. That murderer and Holocaust denier, whose goal is to rule over all of Eretz Yisroel, who openly says that his goal is to eradicate the state of Israel and the Right of Return, is hugged and fawned upon by Israeli leaders who praise him from morning to night. Yet a Moslem nation won't host him solely because he still didn't apologize for supporting Saddam Hussein.

That demonstrates pride on the part of a nation that will not debase itself, as opposed to a servile nation that stoops as low as it can go.

DEFEATISM

The news from the northern border isn't encouraging. The person killed in Shlomi and those wounded from Hezbollah missiles, raise the question once again about our shameful flight from Lebanon. The shooting is just the tip of the iceberg. We all know that Lebanon has 11,000 rockets aimed at Israel.

"The beginning of a fall is flight." We see clearly that what took place in Lebanon three years ago, invited the Palestinians to raise their heads. This is the consequence of the Israeli Left's defeatism.

INJUSTICE CRIES OUT TO HEAVEN

P.M. Sharon visited Washington a few weeks ago. Like all the other prime ministers who asked the U.S. president to free spy Jonathan Pollard, we expected Sharon to do the same. After all, Sharon was prepared with a petition to the American president, signed by 112 Knesset members!

The timing was certainly right. It was after Sharon caved in and freed hundreds of terrorists, in order to appease Uncle Sam, so he could certainly ask for the freedom of one person who has been in jail for 18 years. Yet it turns out that Sharon didn't bring it up. He didn't give the petition to Bush in order not to possibly upset him. And Sharon follows whatever the Americans tell him to do.

There's no limit to capitulation. At the same time that he releases hundreds of terrorists, he betrays a Jew who worked on behalf of Israel. He can release terrorists with no undue emotion, but to hand over the petition signed by all Knesset members (except for the Arabs) – that he cannot do. So much for this period of "peace and appeasement."

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The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the website <http://www.beismoshiach.org>. The browser's address bar and menu bar are visible at the top. The website header includes navigation links for HOME, PDF VERSION, ARCHIVES, ארכיון, אקרוואט, and עברית. A prominent banner for 'bhtech' is featured, with the tagline 'Heavenly design, down-to-earth prices' and the Hebrew text 'בית משיח'. Below the banner, the site is titled 'Chabad World' and includes a 'Long live the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach forever and ever' message. The main content area features an article titled 'APPLYING WHAT WE ARE TAUGHT ABOUT MOSHIACH' by Sarah Granovetter, with a sub-section 'MOSHIACH & THE WORLD' and another article 'TECHNOLOGY AS A TOOL FOR CHASSIDIC EDUCATION IN THE ERA OF MOSHIACH'. A sidebar on the right contains an 'Archive' section with a dropdown menu set to '420' and a 'SEARCH' button. The footer of the browser window shows the 'Internet' icon.