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BEIS MOSHIACH

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READY TO LEAVE IT ALL BEHIND

SICHOS IN ENGLISH



SHABBOS PARSHAS LECH LECHA; THE 13TH DAY OF MARCHESHVAN, 5750

1. The Torah relates that the first command which G-d gave the first Jew, Avrohom Avinu, was “Go out from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father’s house, to the land that I will show you.” This raises a question, for on the surface, it would seem more appropriate that the first command given to a Jew would clarify the nature of service to be rendered to G-d.

There are commentaries that explain that Avrohom’s journey is symbolic of the preparatory step necessary to serve G-d. To serve Him properly, one must depart from all worldly perspectives. Only after turning away from evil, can one then, “do good,” and serve G-d in a desirable manner. Nevertheless, since every concept in Torah contains a self-contained purpose and does not merely function as a preparation for another service, it follows that this command must also be seen in such a light. Accordingly, we must perceive Avrohom’s journey as part — indeed, the beginning and the foundation — of every Jew’s service of G-d

This concept can be clarified through the explanation of other problematic points in this verse. Among the difficulties raised by the verse are the following:

a) On the surface, since the intent of G-d’s command was for Avrohom to journey to a different land, it would seem more appropriate to simply say, “Go to the land that I will show you.” Why is it necessary to mention the place from which Avrohom had to leave? Even if that was necessary, why is it necessary to elaborate, “from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father’s house”?

b) The order of the clauses, “from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father’s house,” is also problematic, for it would seem to be more likely that first one leaves one’s “father’s house,” then one’s “birthplace” and then one’s “land,” the direct opposite of the order chosen by the verse.

c) On the surface, it would have been appropriate to give Avrohom some insight into the nature of the land that would be his destination so that he could prepare himself and take with him any articles that he

would require there.

d) This verse (in contrast to other verses in the same passage) does not mention that G-d revealed Himself to Avrohom. It relates G-d’s command directly without any introductory remarks.

The above points can be explained as follows: G-d’s command to Avrohom to leave Charan began the preparatory service for the Giving of the Torah, the event which forged the identity of the Jews as G-d’s chosen nation. Thus, this command expresses the fundamental principles which characterize the service of the Jewish people.

A Jew lives in a physical world which is governed by the forces of nature that conceal G-dly light. Furthermore, he is born with certain natural tendencies and is influenced by his environment. Nevertheless, he has the potential to rise above these limitations and, through the Torah and its *mitzvos*, serve G-d, Who transcends all these limitations. He can reveal G-dliness within the world and elevate the world above the level which it could otherwise attain.

Although “the world was created

in a complete state,” a Jew has the potential to lift it to a higher level of completion. The *Midrash* explains that before the Giving of the Torah, there was a decree separating the higher realms from the lower realms. The Giving of the Torah nullified that decree and afforded the potential for the Jews to ascend to the higher spiritual realms while living in this material world, and to reveal G-dliness in this lowly, material world.

The first stage of such service is a Jew's willingness to leave “your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house.” These three terms reflect three influences of a general nature which affect a person's character and behavior. “Your land” refers to the basic physical and material tendencies with which we are all born. “Your birthplace” to the traits and dispositions acquired from one's environment, and “your father's house” to those attitudes and dispositions ingrained by one's home.

On another level, these three terms reflect three levels within a person's own character: “Your land” refers to man's basic nature, his instinctive drives. “Your birthplace” to the emotions that are aroused by his thoughts, and “your father's house” to our intellectual potential.

A Jew must be prepared to rise above these influences and these tendencies and proceed to “the land which I [G-d] will show you;” i.e. to give himself over to G-d's will, which is above his perception and understanding. This expresses the service of *mesirus nefesh*, transcending one's intellect and giving over one's will and the totality of one's personality to G-d. One becomes unified with G-d's will to the extent that “G-d's will becomes one's own will.” Even when a person dedicates every aspect of his character to G-d's service, he still

remains an individual entity. For him to unite with G-d, it is necessary that he “go out from his land,” his tendencies and desires, and “go to the land which I will show you.”

This service was epitomized by Avrohom. He “recognized his Creator” at the age of three, and from that time onward he rose ever higher in the service of good, bestowing kindness to others and proclaiming G-dliness throughout the world. Nevertheless, at the age of 75, G-d told him that this service was not sufficient, and that it was necessary for him to “Go out from your land, from your birthplace, and

***Only after a person
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from your father's house, to the land that I will show you.”

Based on the above, we can resolve the difficulties mentioned above. Since a person must depart from his original state, it is necessary to describe that state in detail, enumerating the three influences (in ascending order of difficulty) which shape his character. Since his goal is *mesirus nefesh*, giving himself over to G-d to the extent where he no longer feels his individual will, nor is he governed by his own intellect, thus his destination is only described as “the land which I (G-d) will show

you.” He knows nothing about his destination, nor is it necessary for him have this knowledge.

The above also allows us to understand why this command preceded G-d's revelation to Avrohom. Only after a person departs from his original state, and journeys to “the land which I will show you,” i.e., he unites with G-d's will, is he a fit vessel to receive the revelation of G-dliness.

2. The service of leaving one's “land, birthplace, and father's house” is not only personal in nature. Rather, it also involves the elevation of one's family and surrounding environment. Thus, we find that Avrohom took Sara, his wife, Lot, his nephew, his property, and “the souls which he made in Charan” together with him on his journey.

Such actions indicate that one has truly departed from his previous state, for nothing with which one shares a connection is left behind. Rather, everything is also elevated and taken to one's new state. Similarly, the oneness that one establishes with “the land which I will show you” is greater for, in this manner, it can permeate through the totality of one's being. This allows one to spread the awareness of G-dliness throughout the world, unifying them to the extent that G-d is not only “the G-d of the heavens,” as He was before Avrohom journeyed to *Eretz Yisroel*, but “the G-d of the heavens and the earth.” For through Avrohom's activities, all the travelers who passed through his home became aware of G-d's presence.

Based on the above we can understand the connection of the beginning of the *parasha* with its latter portions, which describe in detail the story of Lot, how his shepherds and Avrohom's quarreled, his settling in Sodom, the war of the kings, and the miraculous manner in

which Avrohom saved Lot from captivity. On the surface, Lot's story represents the direct opposite of the *mesirus nefesh* displayed by Avrohom, as Rashi quotes Lot as saying after departing from Avrohom: "It is impossible for me to tolerate Avrohom or his G-d." Similarly, his choice of Sodom as a place to live despite the wicked behavior of its inhabitants reveals the nature of his own character.

Nevertheless, Avrohom's efforts to elevate and refine his surroundings, to take them with him on his journey from his "land," "birthplace," and "father's house," "to the land that I [G-d] will show you," also had an effect on Lot. Though Lot remained a wicked person, he still maintained a connection with Avrohom. (In fact, this connection was so strong that Avrohom was willing to risk his life in order to save Lot.)

Of course, this connection was not only one-sided; it also had an effect on Lot, refining him to the point that he continued showing hospitality to guests in Sodom despite the danger involved in such an activity. As the *parasha* relates, the inhabitants of Sodom would harshly punish any act of hospitality. Though he was conscious of this danger, Lot was influenced by the training he received in Avrohom's household and eagerly sought to bring guests into his home. This self-sacrifice reflects how Lot was affected by Avrohom's service.

Thus, the journey "to the land that I [G-d] will show you" lifts a person beyond his limits as a human being, a creation, and establishes his identity as a servant of G-d, willing to do His will — whatever that implies — with a commitment of *mesirus nefesh*.

"The deeds of the fathers are a sign for their descendants." (The

Sages explain that this implies that our ancestors' deeds endow us with the potential to follow in their footsteps.) Thus, Avrohom's settling in *Eretz Yisroel* made that land an eternal inheritance for his descendants. Because of his acts, every Jew in any era possesses a portion in *Eretz Yisroel*.

Similarly, Avrohom's spiritual service served as a preparation for the service of his descendants. Thus, his journey from his "land," "birthplace," and "father's house," is a source for every Jew to serve G-d with *mesirus nefesh*. Although a Jew lives within the limits of worldly existence, he can depart from his individual existence — even if that existence involves holy matters — and give himself over entirely to G-d's will, devoting himself to transforming the world into a dwelling for G-d.

3. The above also clarifies the connection between the command for Avrohom's journey given at the beginning of the *parasha* and the conclusion of the *parasha*, which describes his circumcision. The circumcision is a "covenant" reflecting the unity between Avrohom (and through him, his descendants) and G-d. This unity is so complete that it is reflected in a sign on our actual flesh. It is the only *mitzva* before the Giving of the Torah that effected the physical nature of the world. And it was through the fulfillment of this *mitzva* that Avrohom became "perfect."

Furthermore, this covenant was established with the help of G-d, Himself. Our Sages relate that Avrohom was afraid to carry out the circumcision, so G-d helped him, "extending His hand and holding the knife together with him." Thus, he and G-d became partners in the fulfillment of the *mitzva*. This partnership demonstrated the complete nature of the union with

G-d and His will, with that union being reflected in Avrohom's physical being. The connection between the *mitzva* and Avrohom's physical being is further emphasized by the physical pain the circumcision caused.

(At first glance it is difficult to understand: Why is the *mitzva* of circumcision connected with pain? Also, in particular, in regard to Avrohom: Avrohom was a master of his senses and had control over his feelings. If so, why did he feel pain over the circumcision? On the contrary, since this was the first *mitzva* G-d actually commanded him to fulfill, because this *mitzva* effected his physical being itself and allowed him to reach "perfection," he should have been so happy to perform the *mitzva* that he would feel no pain at all.

(The explanation of the concept is: Since circumcision establishes a covenant with G-d in our actual flesh, the covenant must be forged in a manner that reflects the nature of our flesh. Since, by nature, we feel pain when our flesh is cut, that pain must be felt in connection with the fulfillment of this *mitzva*.

(Thus, although Avrohom would not have felt any pain over the circumcision — on the contrary, he would have been happy to fulfill G-d's will — he, however, had departed from his own personal nature and given himself over entirely to the fulfillment of G-d's will. Accordingly, since G-d desired that this *mitzva* be carried out in a manner that effects our actual flesh, Avrohom let himself experience the feelings that the circumcision would naturally bring.)

The complete union with G-d that Avrohom established through the circumcision is transmitted to all his descendants, allowing them to establish a complete connection with Him, a connection that effects even

their physical beings.

On this basis, we can explain the connection between the three Torah portions, *Noach*, *Lech Lecha*, and *VaYeira*. *Parshas Noach* describes the flood which came to purify the world. After its completion, Noach saw a “new world,” a world that had been refined and elevated to a higher level. This served as a preparatory step for G-d’s command to Avrohom to leave his home, i.e., to rise above the limits of worldliness and go to, “the land which I will show you,” i.e., to commit himself to G-d’s service with *mesirus nefesh* (*Parshas Lech Lecha*). This, in turn, brings about “And G-d revealed Himself to Avrohom” (*Parshas VaYeira*), the ultimate oneness with G-d, a unity which reflects the revelation of the giving of the Torah and the Messianic era.

4. The above also relates to the month of MarCheshvan, the month which is characterized by a transition from Tishrei, a month that is “filled with festivals,” to the day to day routines of life, “And Yaakov went on his way.” This is also related to the service of *Lech Lecha*, leaving one’s previous level (even if it was involved with a service in the realm of holiness) and setting out on a new path of service with *mesirus nefesh*. In this manner, “his way,” the individual matters of a Jew, become unified with “G-d’s way,” “the land which I will show you.”

In particular, greater potential for such service is granted this year, 5750, “A Year of Miracles.” This year each Jew is given special powers to rise above the natural order. Furthermore, he has the potential to elevate his family and his surrounding environment to a higher plane, as well.

The above is connected with two practical directives which will lift our service to a higher level:

To gather together every Shabbos to study Torah communally: As mentioned previously, it is appropriate that in every community where Jews live, they should gather together on Shabbos to study Torah, both Nigla and Pnimiyus HaTorah, and make good resolutions concerning their service in Torah, prayer, and deeds of kindness. In particular, at this time, it is appropriate to take on resolutions regarding the needs of the community.

In order to unite all the different communities together, it is appropriate that, in addition to the established Torah classes, every community should join together in

Director of institutions should distribute money to be given to tzedaka to all of the employees at least once a week.

the study of a single subject. This study should center on the weekly Torah portion, studying at least several lines as they are interpreted by one commentary in the realm of Nigla and one commentary in the realm of Pnimiyus HaTorah, Chassidus. In the realm of Chassidus, to save everyone the trouble of finding appropriate subject matter, it is suggested to study the discourses of the Tzemach Tzedek in the series Or HaTorah, which includes explanations of many of the verses from the weekly Torah portions, including the first and final verses, which are often regarded with special appreciation by Torah students.

b) Gifts to *tzedaka* — Giving *tzedaka* is one of the most important *mitzvos* in the Torah, indeed, it is “equal to all the *mitzvos*.” In particular, it is important in this era directly before Moshiach’s coming. To stress the importance of increasing one’s gifts to *tzedaka* this year, it is appropriate that every director of an educational institution should distribute money — even a penny is sufficient — to each of the students and each of the employees for them to give to *tzedaka*. This will serve as an example to motivate the students to give *tzedaka*, adding to the amount they were given with their own money. This should be done at least once a week, preferably on Fridays before the students depart for Shabbos.

This practice should also be followed in all Jewish organizations and institutions. The director of the institution should distribute money to be given to *tzedaka* to all of the employees at least once a week. Similarly, this practice should be followed in organizations and institutions that involve gentiles, since *tzedaka* is necessary for “the settled nature of the world.” (Accordingly, some authorities consider it one of the seven universal laws given to Noach and his descendants.) In particular, this applies in America, where *tzedaka* is one of the pillars of the country. The above points should be publicized wherever possible. Surely, the suggestions will be accepted and bring greater success than that which was originally conceived.

May our efforts in *Lech Lecha* — going out from our previous position with *mesirus nefesh* — bring about the era when G-d will take us “to the land which I will show you,” *Eretz Yisroel*, with the coming of Moshiach.

“WHERE ARE YOU COMING FROM AND WHERE ARE YOU GOING?”

BY RABBI LEVI YITZCHOK GINSBERG
 MASHPIA, YESHIVAS TOMCHEI T'MIMIM – LUBAVITCH, KFAR CHABAD
 TRANSLATED BY MICHOEL LEIB DOBRY



This was when I was about to return to Eretz HaKodesh, after spending an entire year in 770, and my mood, as with all my friends, was especially dispirited. The Rebbe knows the soul of his chassidim, and on that Shabbos, Shabbos Parshas Lech Lecha, he spoke at length about “And Yaakov went on his way.” He spent considerable time discussing the joy and celebration that existed at the dedication of the First Beis HaMikdash, regarding which it is said, “And they went to their tents, joyous and glad-hearted for all the goodness that G-d had done for His servant Dovid and His people Israel.” The Rebbe asked in wonderment, “What’s going on here? ‘Joyous and glad-hearted’? What’s all the simcha for?”

The following words have previously been written in this column on more than one occasion. Nevertheless, whenever we pass from the “*freilechen*” month of Tishrei and Shabbos B’Reishis to the gray life of the month of MarCheshvan, and in the background, we hear the humorous melody and words of “But because of our sins, we were exiled from our land, and driven far away from our Rebbeim,” we recall anew the fiery *sicha* of the Rebbe *shlita* as cold water to a tired soul. “*M’geit nisht avek fun melech! M’geit nisht avek fun beis HaMikdash! M’geit nisht fun Hakhel! – Aderaba, m’nemt mit dem melech, m’nemt mit dem beis HaMikdash, m’nemt mit dem Hakhel – dahs altz brengt men a heim, laasos lo yisboreich dira b’sachtonim!*” (There is no leaving the king! There is no leaving the Beis HaMikdash! There is no leaving Hakhel! On the contrary, we take with us the king, we take the Beis HaMikdash, we take Hakhel. This is all brought home to make a dwelling place for G-d Alm-ghty in the lower worlds!)

Therefore, I will not get tired from repeating again and again the *sicha* that we were privileged to hear twenty-three years ago on Shabbos Parshas Lech Lecha, 5741.

This was when I was about to return to Eretz HaKodesh, after spending an entire year on *k'vutza* in 770, and my mood, as with all my friends, was especially dispirited. Anyone who was not privileged to be on *k'vutza* will probably not be able to understand this. However, those who were know that it takes quite a long time until they truly absorb what 770 is and why it is so important to be in 770, to the point that it changes completely the *shtetl* of every Tamim in Tomchei T'mimim – without exaggeration. After a lengthy stay in 770, where we had just barely started to absorb matters a little, suddenly the time had come to leave it all and head back home, far from *Beis Chayeinu* – far physically, which usually has an influence on the spiritual distance, as well.

Despite all the explanations and interpretations that the physical distance takes up no actual space, when you don't "breathe the Rebbe" in simple terms, as in 770, it requires great hidden strengths in order that all the inner spiritual feelings will remain within you in full force.

I recall an interesting episode that illustrated for me during those days the difference between and the transition from living with the Rebbe in 770 and living with the Rebbe in Eretz HaKodesh:

On the first Shabbos back in Eretz HaKodesh upon my return from 770, I naturally stayed with my parents in B'nei Brak, as they had not seen me for a whole year and had missed me very much. In the tight financial times back then, when the cost of overseas telephone calls was astronomical, requiring numerous attempts on old rotary telephones, and demanded tremendous investment, especially money, time, and effort, we didn't even dream of the possibility of calling the United States to find out what's happening in 770? However, we knew that there were those who did know (particularly those among the *shluchim*

who came after 5736, and who somehow managed to instill in Eretz HaKodesh the concept of "living with the Rebbe") and we usually tried to reach them to hear something from *Beis Chayeinu*.

After that Shabbos in B'nei Brak (when we felt as if we had fallen "from a mighty peak into a deep pit," from 770 straight into B'nei Brak), I finally arrived the next morning back at Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Kfar Chabad, where I could start to feel at home a little. I asked the first *bachur* I met, "Was there a *farbrengen* on Shabbos?"

The *bachur* simply didn't

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understand why I had such a burning desire to know if there was a *farbrengen* on Shabbos. He responded quite plainly, "Of course. There were two *farbrengens*. One upstairs with HaRav Meir Gruzman in Yiddish, and another downstairs with HaRav Moshe Naporstek in Hebrew..."

Now, go and explain to him that the physical distance takes up no actual space, and that you can and must "live with the Rebbe" in Eretz HaKodesh, just as in 770...

In any event, "a *tzaddik* knows the soul of his animal," and the Rebbe MH"M *shlita* also feels what we're going through and knows what

depresses and bothers his *chassidim*. So on that Shabbos, Shabbos Parshas Lech Lecha, the 8th of MarCheshvan, the Rebbe held a *farbrengen* and spoke at length about the concept of "And Yaakov went on his way" (*Sichos Kodesh* 5741, Vol. 1, from p. 376).

The Rebbe devoted considerable attention to the last *pasuk* of the Haftora from Shmini Atzeres (*Chutz La'Aretz*), which speaks about the joy, celebration, and *korbanos* from the dedication of the First Beis HaMikdash: "And they went to their tents, joyous and glad-hearted for all the goodness that G-d had done for His servant Dovid and His people Israel."

The Rebbe asked in wonderment, "Joyous and glad-hearted? Why? What's all the *simcha* for?" (We understood and felt the question all too well. We felt it in all our 248 limbs and 365 veins, far more than we grasped the answer, as true as it was.)

While we contemplated it only for a moment, the Rebbe cried in a fiery voice, ***Fun vanet geit men un vu geit men? (Where did you come from and where are you going?) M'geit avek fun melech! M'geit avek fun beis HaMikdash! M'geit avek fun Hakhel! (You're leaving the king, you're leaving the Beis HaMikdash, you're leaving the Hakhel gathering), un vu geit men? (And where are you going?) To their tents – home! To be involved with everyday matters, with the ox, with the cow, with the donkey, with money and prestige, and with all the filth of this material and physical world! "Joyous and glad-hearted"? Why? What is there to be so happy about?***

None of us – the T'mimim returning to Eretz HaKodesh from "*k'vutza*," together with the guests who came for Tishrei, and possibly many other Jews – had a need for any explanations or proofs that the Rebbe truly empathizes with you, even more than you feel yourself. He digs deeply into your soul, and helps you to find the subversive elements that can

potentially destroy everything, *ch"v*, the sparks of depression, despair, sadness, and bitterness that build up within you and try to make you feel like a beaten rug, without an ounce of vitality. As a result, you are prepared to deteriorate further without the slightest desire to rise up and do what must be done.

The Rebbe comes down to you with great and intense love, to the depths of despair and depression, takes you with a firm hand, gives you endless strengths, helps you to raise your head and get a bit of vitality, and expects you to try and carry out your responsibilities as you should.

The Rebbe continued (*ibid.*, p. 379, free unedited translation), "If Jews would leave Yerushalayim and go on a trip, there would be no reason for them to be 'joyous and glad-hearted'... However, when Jews go out of Yerushalayim and the Beis HaMikdash to their homes, with the intention of fulfilling the Divine mission of making material things into a 'dwelling place for G-d Alm-ghty in the lower worlds,' a holy sanctuary for G-d... – 'And I will dwell within them,' in plural – this is far more lofty than the 'And I will dwell within them' according to its simple interpretation in the singular in connection with the Beis HaMikdash. Here, the Jew creates a new innovation of 'as the advantage of light over darkness,' i.e., even his physical words become a holy sanctuary to G-d Alm-ghty."

And if the words had yet to be absorbed and understood, the Rebbe continued, focusing further upon the words, to the point of directing them to us (*ibid.*, p. 382):

"The instruction derived from the aforementioned is that when we come from the month of Tishrei with all the revelations connected with it, we might think that when the month has concluded and we return home and begin the *avoda* of "And Yaakov went on his way" that this is a great descent from the status of the month of Tishrei, and thus, there is no reason for *simcha*.

"We are told that this is not a descent. On the contrary, the *avoda* to make a dwelling place for G-d Alm-ghty in the lower worlds has now begun. Every Jew should make from his physicality a holy sanctuary for G-d Alm-ghty, as is written, 'And I will dwell within them.'

"As a result, a Jew must know that he is making holiness from his portion in the world, higher and more holy than that of the month of the Tishrei, since there is the addition of 'the advantage of light over darkness.'

"Therefore, he must be happy – 'happy in the joy of G-d Who is pleased and glad to dwell in the lower worlds' – to the point that he must be happy from the very fact that he is fulfilling G-d's mission to make for Him a dwelling place in the lower worlds.

"As a result, when we go out of the month of Tishrei, 'filled with holidays,' leaving the 'holiday matters' that finish with the 7th of MarCheshvan and entering the 'days of action' and the involvement in mundane affairs throughout the entire year, we should not diminish the *simcha* in which we were immersed during the month of Tishrei, 'the time of our rejoicing,' Shmini Atzeres, and Simchas Torah. Since that the *avoda* of turning mundane matters into a 'dwelling place' for G-d Alm-ghty has now begun, we must increase in greater *simcha*, due to the merit of being a *shliach* of G-d Alm-ghty to make a dwelling place for Him in the lower worlds, in a manner of 'And they went to their tents' (as concluded on the 7th of MarCheshvan), and to do so 'with joy and gladness of heart.'"

All of us clearly felt how this was no ordinary *sicha* in a *farbrengen*, rather this was actually a *yechidus*. We felt the Rebbe extend his holy hand to us, to the low level we had reached, with an absolutely intense and endless sense of love. He gave us unlimited strengths and helped us to lift our heads a little and carry out the *shlichus* and the

mission we had been given: to go out specifically into this world, "the lowest of the low," and make a "dwelling place" for G-d Alm-ghty, where He will dwell and reveal Himself in all His essence. Melech HaMoshiach must be instilled specifically in the lowest of all possible matters, in a manner of "*Mach Da 770*" (make 770 here).

**"There is no leaving the king!
There is no leaving the Beis
HaMikdash! There is no leaving
Hakhel! On the contrary, we take the
king, we take the Beis HaMikdash, we
take Hakhel. This is all brought home
to make a dwelling place for G-d
Alm-ghty in the lower worlds!"**

* * *

Twenty-three years have passed since then. We have tried and we continue to try (and each one knows exactly where he is truly holding) to live with that message at all times. "To live with the Rebbe" even when physically distant. "To breathe the Rebbe" even when we are found elsewhere under different conditions. "To feel the Rebbe" even within limitations and constraints in a variety of unique situations. To be totally nullified to and united with the Rebbe.

As HaRav HaChassid R. Reuven Dunin once said in his unique manner, "I simply wanted to get under the Rebbe's shoe, and then this whole Reuven business will be finished at last, so that there will be left only the Rebbe without anything that constantly hides and conceals."

One must realize that even though this is much harder (and who knows if people actually do something along these lines), this is specifically what the Rebbe wants and this is how we take the Rebbe and his essence (despite the fact that we don't properly feel the revelations). We have tried and we continue to try to travel at least once a year to Beis Moshiach, in order to feel and breathe the Rebbe. To "live" the Rebbe, and afterwards to take this home "to their

tents,” in order to bring the Rebbe even there, to every location and corner.

Now, suddenly, in 770 – *Beis Moshiach*, *Beis Chayeinu*, they are starting to tell us stories about the essence which is higher than all revelations. Suddenly, even in *Beis Chayeinu* they don't see, hear, or understand what is happening, nor do they feel what should be felt. Again, they are in need of those explanations about the essence that is higher than all revelations. These opposite extremes that filled our hearts at the start of 5741, fill the hearts of all those who were privileged to be in 770 for Tishrei at the start of 5764.

At least three times a day before and after each *t'filla*, the singing of “*Yechi Adoneinu*” breaks out with renewed and powerful vitality, as the chair, the *shtender*, the carpet, and even two lamps lit above the place where the Rebbe MH”M *shlita davens* are all in position while thousands of people stand and wait. Nothing could be more natural than for the door to open and the Rebbe simply enter, touch the *paroches*, go up to his place and *daven* with all of us in a manner than we can physically see and feel.

Indeed, nothing could be more natural, understandable, expected, and certain than this – something that can happen at any moment. The fact that this does not occur in a way that our physical eyes can literally see is incomprehensible, unexpected, and unnatural!

The heart and the mind fill with pain as they cry out endlessly, “What's going on here? This is in ‘clear violation of the law’! *Ad masai*? It is simply impossible and unacceptable for this to continue for another minute!”

Yet, together with (and especially due to) the inner pain and outcry rising from the depths of the heart, the singing and joy comes forth with a mighty voice: “Fortunate are we! How good is our portion, how

pleasant is our lot!” Fortunate are we that we are privileged to be *chassidim* of the Rebbe MH”M *shlita*!

The more intense the pain and outcry grows, the more the singing and joy. And from this intense singing and dancing, there comes the tremendous realization that can be almost felt with our hands that the Rebbe is literally here. Yes, the Rebbe is here, even if we still have not merited to see this! He *davens* with us, *farbrengs* with us, waves his holy hand to give us encouragement. Then the

This essence, which is beyond all measure even to the point that one cannot say that it is above and not below since it is truly everything, must be brought home, “to their tents,” in a manner of “joy and gladness of heart.”

powerful cry bursts forth, “So why can't we see? What's going on? It has been promised to us by the only one who can make such a promise, by the one in whom we believe 100% that nothing he utters goes unanswered, that this is the time of the Redemption and the “appointed times have passed” long ago, and “it depends only upon Moshiach Tzidkeinu himself”!

These two contrasting emotions are in complete and utter contradiction with one another. Nevertheless, they complement one another and integrate

in one single melody that grows in greater intensity, filling every available corner and breaking all barriers, to the point that even “a stone from the wall will cry out,” “*Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu V'Rabbeinu Melech HaMoshiach Lolam Va'ed!*”

The words have long since finished. The letters of speech, action, even thought, no longer have such meaning. There is no intellect, no emotion, no will, or no desire. Nothing. There is only the essence. An essence higher than all revelations, an essence that reveals itself in all its intensity within all revelations, letters, images, and all existence. An essence that has absolutely no relevance to any semblance of change, even in a hidden sense, to the point that it is not sheer nonsense to suggest the idea. An essence that illuminates in all its revealed force (“a revelation of the essence that is higher than the level of concealment or revelation,” in the language of the *maamer* “*Pasach Eliyahu*” 5652), all its purity, all its strength, and all its beauty, within the physical and material existence of this lowest of all worlds.

This essence, which is beyond all measure even to the point that one cannot say that it is above and not below since it is truly everything, must be brought home, “to their tents,” in a manner of “joy and gladness of heart.” It must be instilled within the whole world, including even “the tumult of Rome,” “the farthest and lowest of all levels,” with the pure faith that has not been sullied by the materialization of human intellect and human emotion.

Such faith will illuminate, reveal, and bring everything into actual deed, to the point that we will see everything, especially the Rebbe MH”M *shlita*, who will bring all of us to the true and complete Redemption, immediately, *mamash*, simply before our very eyes, without any *p'shetlach*.

Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Melech HaMoshiach l'olam va'ed!

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A FIRE THAT IGNITED A FIRE

BY RABBI YITZCHOK LIPSZYC



One of the interesting people who regularly attends our programs at the Chabad house in Simferopol-Crimea, is Baila, who is a nurse in her 50s. Her husband is very far from any religious observance, but because of her good *middos*, he understands her and looks favorably upon her involvement in *Yiddishkeit*. Even her children are gradually getting involved in a life of Torah and *mitzvos*.

The following story took place a little over three years ago, in the summer of 5760. Baila and her family eat the Shabbos meals with us every week. One Shabbos we observed that Baila didn't look well. After much pleading she agreed to tell us what had happened, on condition that her pregnant daughter, Elka, not find out.

In tears she told us that she hadn't been feeling well for a few months and after doing tests she learned she was sick with *yene machala*.

We suggested that she take on a *mitzva*, and then write to the Rebbe about it and ask for his *bracha* for a *refua shleima*. We told her she could put the letter in a volume of *Igros Kodesh*. We also gave her some of the Rebbe's *mikva* water (see box).

Baila agreed to do as we suggested, but for some reason she insisted on taking on a *mitzva* only after receiving an answer from the Rebbe. We explained the importance of making a vessel for the *bracha*, but she couldn't be swayed.

She wrote her letter, and in the answer she opened to (vol. 11, p.

202), which was written to "a conference of religious doctors in New York," it said:

"These days it has become known how a small bit of damage in the soul can lead to a great deal of damage in the body, and the healthier the soul, the greater its sovereignty over the body and [the greater its] ability to fix deficiencies in the body ... Many are the questions that pertain directly to the work of a doctor, some of them *halacha l'maaseh*, for example: publicizing the tremendous benefit in keeping the laws of family purity, *kashrus*, *mila* ... It's unnecessary to emphasize that in the abovementioned, regarding the health benefits in *mitzva* observance, I don't mean to explain the reasons for *mitzvos*, because, as is

known, we must fulfill *mitzvos* because they are the command and desire of the Creator ... but what I mean in the above is that for those who are sick in their souls, *r'l*, with whom there is no other way to be *mekarev* them to fulfill a *mitzva*, everything possible should be done to bring them to actual *mitzva* observance, even if by emphasizing the physical benefit.”

We understood from this that the Rebbe wanted us to do all we could to get Baila to keep kosher, and that this would positively affect her health. We explained the Rebbe’s answer to her and she said that as she had committed to taking on a *mitzva* after receiving the Rebbe’s answer, she was ready to take on *kashrus*, but she had to first convince her husband to agree.

We had thought it would be difficult to convince her to *kasher* her kitchen with the mess that entails, but Baila happened to mention that in another week they were planning on doing over the kitchen.

We didn’t have to teach her the laws of *kashrus* since she knew them from the *shiurim* she regularly attended.

We waited for her positive response, but didn’t get one. After nearly two weeks went by, we asked her what had happened. It was her husband who was making things difficult. She promised us that it wasn’t that she wasn’t interested but that it would take some time.

A few days later she called and happily said that her husband understood the importance of this to her and had agreed to have the kitchen *koshered*. She asked us to come and *kasher* those parts that hadn’t been changed in her kitchen.

This took place during the summer as we ran our camp, so we asked some *bachurim* who were counselors to help us *kasher* the kitchen. The kitchen was built in the style called Khrushchev (after the dictator Nikita Khrushchev), a small square kitchen with one door. This design is very different than the

style called Stalin, in which the apartments are much bigger.

Behind the door, we placed the gas tank with a pipe and small torch. One of the *bachurim* took the torch and directed the flame towards the oven. This was an old Soviet torch, and suddenly the fire changed direction and turned towards the *bachur*. He was scared and dropped the torch and in a second we heard an explosion in the kitchen.

Miraculously all the *bachurim* managed to leave the kitchen, getting

One of the bachurim took the torch and directed the flame towards the oven, and suddenly the fire changed direction and turned towards the bachur. He was scared and dropped the torch and in a second we heard an explosion in the kitchen.

past the tank that was in the way, without being even slightly hurt. Baila’s husband who had been sleeping up until this point, woke up at the sound of the explosion. He quickly shut the torch, burning himself only slightly in the process, thus preventing a greater tragedy.

The fire, however, continued burning. It destroyed all the plastic on the door of the fridge, the tapestries on the walls and even the ceiling, not only in the kitchen but the entire length of the hall. There was an electrical outlet there and you could see how the fire

charred the wall in a circle around the outlet, but not the outlet itself. It’s difficult to describe the magnitude of the miracle. In a city like Simferopol a short like this could be the source of a tragedy for an entire building.

In Baila’s building there’s no water in the faucets at night, and the neighbors had to put the fire out, each one bringing the water they had stored in their apartment. While the neighbors tried putting the fire out, we saw Baila’s husband calming her and saying over and over, “Don’t worry, you’ll still eat kosher.”

After apologizing profusely for the unfortunate outcome, the *bachurim* returned to camp. The next day Baila asked us to come back and finish the job. We arrived once again and *koshered* her pots and pans, the oven, the stove and sink, as well as the new cabinets that were undamaged.

Since that frightening incident, Baila runs her kitchen peacefully, and *baruch Hashem*, she is fully kosher.

A week went by and Baila told us that she was going for a check-up. Wanting to calm her, we said, “Don’t worry, you’ll see how everything will be improved.” To our surprise she didn’t accept what we said as a mere hope and wish: “I did what the Rebbe said, and now I’m certain that there’s nothing there and that I’m perfectly healthy.”

Baila had her exam and the shocking results were that she had no sign of the disease! Today, years later, she is doing fine. As the Rebbe concluded the letter: “...to do everything possible to bring them to *mitzva* observance, even if by emphasizing the physical benefit.”

Baila began observing *kashrus* only in order to merit good health, but the fire broke out while *koshering* her kitchen and the great miracle ignited the fire of *Yiddishkeit* in her *neschama*, and today she keeps Shabbos and is even an expert in the laws of *kashrus* and serves as *mashgiach* in the school’s kitchen.

THE CHASSID WHO FOUGHT TO BRING THE GEULA

BY SHNEUR ZALMAN LEVIN

*He epitomized “swimming against the current,” from early childhood to his ceaseless struggle to proclaim the Rebbe as Melech HaMoshiach – stories and remembrances from the colorful mosaic of the life of the chassid, Rabbi Avrohom Pariz, a”h. * Part 1.*

“It was Shabbos Parshas Ki Savo, 21 Elul 5728 (1968),” begins Rabbi Yosef Hartman. “We were guests of my brother-in-law, Rabbi Yaakov Lerer, in B’nei Brak and on Motzaei Shabbos we stayed in B’nei Brak for Slichos in the Chabad *shul*.

“The *shliach tzibbur* began to chant the *piyut*, “*ovad chassid min ha’aretz, v’yashar b’adam ayin*” (a *chassid* is gone from the earth, and there is no upright one among man). Suddenly I heard a whisper and someone lay his hand on my shoulder and whispered to me to go outside.

“Once outside, my brother-in-law, R’ Sholom Dov Lerer told me about the sudden passing of our dear grandfather, the *chassid* Rabbi Avrohom Pariz. In the headline of the

announcement that was hung on the walls that very evening the black letters cried out, “*ovad chassid min ha’aretz*,” in reference to this special *chassid*.

“That’s when I fully grasped the import of these words. We knew that we had lost the image of the *chassid* R’ Avrohom Pariz. He was a genuine *chassid*, *mekushar* heart and soul to the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach, *nasi doreinu*.

“He had become a walking legend of *hiskashrus*, inner *bittul*, humility, *tznius*, fleeing from honor, fulfilling missions with *mesirus nefesh*. He was the first *chassid* who not only understood but also dared to declare that the Rebbe is Moshiach, and that he is the man who was destined to be

the crown-bearer for Melech HaMoshiach.

* * *

“My first encounter with my grandfather (by marriage), R’ Avrohom Pariz, I remember till this day and I don’t think I’ll ever forget it. It was the fifth night of Chanuka in the year 5720 at the old hall of Yeshivas Tomchei T’mimim in Lud.

“Dozens of T’mimim were *farbrenging* with the famous *mashpia* Rabbi Shlomo Chaim Kesselman. Then in walked an old, thin, wrinkled *chassid*, with two big, black, smoldering eyes, on fire with the fire of pure *emuna*.

“‘Sha, sha,’ the *niggunim* stop. ‘Who’s that?’ I ask a Tamim sitting near me. ‘That’s R’ Avrohom Pariz, the Rebbe’s *ba ko’ach* (representative). ‘Why did he come now?’ I persisted, and my neighbor responded, ‘He came to give us Chanuka *gelt* from the Rebbe.’

“Without saying a word, R’ Avrohom sat down near the *mashpia*. He took out bundles of new bills of Israeli liras and distributed Chanuka *gelt* to us. For me, a young boy of 18 who was in Tomchei T’mimim for a

few months, it was an unforgettable scene. R' Avrohom sat silently, and from his silence we learned a lot. He spoke very little. He just looked around, gazing penetratingly at each *bachur*.

"The *bachurim* told me that he had learned in Lubavitch by the Rebbe Rashab. His mother, Mrs. Zlata Pariz, *a"n*, came to take him with her when the family moved to America, but he refused to go and remained in Tomchei T'mimim.

"All his life he excelled in his devotion and his *hiskashrus* to our Rebbeim, the holy *n'siim*, especially the Rebbe MH"m with whom he worked in the same room for a long period of time. After the passing of the Rebbe Rayatz on Yud Shvat 5710, R' Avrohom was among the first *chassidim* who called for the crowning of the Ramash (as the Rebbe was known) as *nasi Chabad*."

"Rabbosai," announced R' Avrohom at a gathering of *Anash* in Tel Aviv. "I worked with him in one room for ten years, my desk right near his. I didn't work at all because I watched him the entire time to see what he was doing, and I'm telling you that he hides himself. *Un ich zog aych az er iz der Rebbe!* (I'm telling you, he's the Rebbe.)"

"I had the privilege of becoming the grandson of this outstanding *chassid*. It was a few years later that I married my wife, Mattia Lerer, the daughter of R' Avrohom's first son-in-law, i.e., my father-in-law R' Efraim Tzvi Lerer and Chaya Disha, the oldest daughter of R' Avrohom. I lived in Petach Tikva from 5724-5728 on 16 Bar Kochva Street, near the humble apartment of R' Avrohom.

"For four years we were guests of his on dozens of Shabbasos and Yomim tovim. This is how I became

very close to him. I accompanied him to *shul* on Shabbasos and Yomim Tovim, and sat with him at dozens of *farbrengens*, mostly on Sukkos, Chanuka, Purim, and Shvii Shel Pesach and the Seudas Moshiah.

"I noticed repeatedly that Grandfather constantly demanded three main things: 1) that we learn *chassidus*, *Likkutei Torah*, *Torah Ohr*, and *maamarim* and *sichos* of the Rebbe; 2) that we follow every *horaa* of the



Rebbe with the greatest devotion and *bittul* of all personal desires; 3) that we spread the wellsprings among all groups of people in order to hasten the *hisgalus* of Moshiah Tzidkeinu.

"His daily routine began early in the morning with *toiveling* in the *mikva* in Petach Tikva. Afterwards he would go to *shul* and listen to the *Kadeishim*, *Barchu*, *k'dusha*, and *chazaras ha'shatz*, and then he would

return home and learn *Likkutei Torah* in depth or *Torah Ohr*, and only after many hours of preparation would he *daven* at length with a sweet *niggun*. It was only in the afternoon hours that he sat down to eat breakfast."

* * *

R' Avrohom Pariz was born on Purim 5649 (1889) in the city of Bobroisk, a city rich in a heritage of Judaism and *chassidus*. His father, R' Boruch, was a businessman and was not a *chassid*.

While still a young boy before his *bar mitzva*, R' Avrohom became acquainted with the *chassidic* atmosphere in his city. He took the initiative, borrowed money from his uncle and traveled to Lubavitch alone, and there, alone and far from his family, he became *mekushar* heart and soul to the Rebbe Rashab. Young Avrohom saw his new family in Tomchei T'mimim, in its *mashpiim*, teachers, and *talmidim*. He suffered from constant poverty and more than once he actually starved for bread, but physical hunger was nullified many times over in his hunger for *nigleh* and *chassidus*, which he sated with diligent study and in *chassidic avodas Hashem*, causing him to forget what he lacked.

On a Yom Tov that he spent in Bobruisk, as he walked down the street a Jew approached him and asked him to be part of a *minyán* for Mincha. When he walked into the *beis midrash*, he found his friend R' Aryeh Leib Sheinin sitting in *t'fillin* and *davening b'arichus* (at length).

R' Avrohom saw that if they included R' Aryeh Leib they would have a *minyán* without him. When he asked them why they didn't count his friend as part of the *minyán*, they answered that this *bachur* had been sitting there since the morning, not

seeing or hearing what was going on around him, and so they thought he had lost his mind and that's why they didn't include him in the *minyan*.

That's when R' Avrohom realized: "The difference between me and R' Aryeh Leib is that to the *balabatim*, I'm still normal." At a later point, R' Avrohom said that this episode made him begin to work on *avoda* with greater zeal.

After a number of fires that broke out in Bobruisk, which destroyed large sections of the city, R' Boruch Pariz decided to emigrate to America, *meshaneh makom meshaneh mazal* (change your location, change your fortune). He packed, and in the winter of 5663 (1903) he and his wife Zlata and his children – Leiba, Itche, and his daughter Leah – left for Odessa to sail from there to America. They planned on picking up Avrohom along the way but he told them, in no uncertain terms: "Go in peace. I'm staying here in Lubavitch." He was all of 14 at the time.

Years went by and R' Avrohom was 18 and his mother made the trip from America to Lubavitch. Didn't she realize that her son yearned to be *mekushar* and near the Rebbe? She thought that the reason he had stayed in Russia was because he planned on raising a family there, and that the woman destined to be his wife wouldn't allow him to leave Russia. So she returned to Russia in order to take both of them back to America with her.

R' Avrohom told her she was mistaken. "My place is here, in Lubavitch! This is the reason I'm here."

In later years R' Avrohom said, "After the Rebbe said the *maamer*, 'Hob ich zich gevalgert tzvishen di T'mimim heren a derher' (I wandered among the T'mimim to hear some deep understanding). I wanted to hear what each one 'took' from the *maamer*. I took something from each



one, but I heard what *they* wanted to hear from the *maamer*. From those who didn't speak, from those who kept quiet, I got the most."

His *hiskashrus* to the Rebbe Rashab knew no compromise. He was tied to him with ropes of love. This is illustrated in the following story:

In the year that the communists completed the revolution, Russia was a battlefield. The civilian battle between the "Reds" and the "Whites" were at their peak, and pogroms were routine. The German army was still present in Russia and it captured parts of the country and won in other areas. Many Jews lost their lives in these battles and pogroms. The Angel of Death was ever-present and a Jewish face was reason enough for abuse.

The Rebbe Rashab minimized his trips at this time. He wrote to his son (later to be the Rebbe Rayatz): "My dear son ... you shouldn't think at all about coming here to visit me, because the trip is frightful... We are thinking about how our return trip will be, *im yirtze Hashem*, because the way we traveled here is nearly impossible."

But for R' Avrohom, any danger, as serious as it might be, was insignificant when it came to visiting

the Rebbe. R' Avrohom's daughters relate that during those dangerous days of pogroms, their father went to Rostov to be with the Rebbe for Tishrei. After Yom Tov, when he wanted to return to Vitebsk, the fighting was so severe that it was life-threatening to travel. He decided that he would remain with the Rebbe until things quieted down. In those days there were no phones and the mail coaches had stopped traveling, and so his family didn't know what had become of him. They feared the worst.

Thus, R' Avrohom remained with the Rebbe for a year and a half while his family had no idea whether he was alive or not. After things quieted down and the danger had passed, R' Avrohom returned home. He feared entering his house suddenly lest it shock his family, so he went to a neighbor and asked him to prepare his family to meet him.

A SACK OF MONEY NEAR A TREE STUMP

After the passing of the Rebbe Rashab, R' Avrohom became *mekushar* to his son, the Rebbe Rayatz, who accepted not only the leadership of *Anash* but also the leadership of all Jews in Russia, and immediately

began his battle for the furtherance of Jewish life in general and *chinuch* in particular.

In 5686 (1926), R' Avrohom began trying to get out of Russia, according to instructions from the Rebbe Rayatz, despite the fact that parting from the Rebbe was difficult for him. After extensive efforts, he received exit permits for himself and his family, and he emigrated to Eretz Yisroel. Shortly thereafter the Yevsektzia pounced on his house in Vitebsk as part of the mass arrests that were taking place then, and searched for him with an arrest warrant. Thus he was saved at the last moment.

He built his home on 16 Bar Kochva Street in Petach Tikva. This house became famous as a magnet for the tiny Chabad community that lived in Eretz Yisroel at the time. *Chalutzim* (pioneers) and those who dried out the swamps who had Chabad roots would visit with R' Avrohom and nostalgically recall the days when they sat at *chassidische farbrengens*.

Within a short time he renewed the connection with the Rebbe in Russia in order to be informed about what was going on there. He heard about the Rebbe's health problems and the financial problems that prevailed at Beis Chayeinu. "The coffers are literally empty," he was written. "There's nothing there. The Rebbe's people have to take loans for daily needs, all the more so for large expenditures that are needed for the Rebbe's health and his visits to health spas."

Being poor himself, R' Avrohom couldn't help out financially, but in order to help improve the Rebbe's health he took it upon himself to fast many half days in a row.

One day he was enabled to help out financially, too. He was on his way to an orchard while riding a donkey, when he noticed a sack near a tree stump. He picked up the sack and opened it to discover a veritable

treasure, a sizable amount of gold coins. He inquired of passersby: perhaps they saw who it belonged to, perhaps someone had seen someone looking for his lost bag. But nobody had seen and nobody knew.

When time had passed, he told his family that his first thought upon seeing the treasure was about the serious financial crisis the Rebbe was in. "I thought Hashem had given me

When he asked them why they didn't count his friend as part of the minyan, they answered that this bachur had been sitting there since the morning, not seeing or hearing what was going on around him, and so they thought he had lost his mind and that's why they didn't include him in the minyan.

the merit so that through me relief would come, at least a little bit. Yet I feared lest my heart persuade me to take some of the treasure for myself, so I went straight to the bank without going home first, and I deposited the entire sum into the Rebbe's account in Riga."

He later learned that this money had helped the Rebbe Rayatz make the Rebbe MH" M a beautiful wedding

on Yud-Daled Kislev 5689.

At a certain point R' Avrohom traveled to the U.S. for *parnasa*. He stayed near the Rebbe Rayatz, and despite his financial woes, he didn't neglect his public work of publicizing and aggrandizing the name and honor of the Rebbe. He began disseminating the Rebbe's *sichos* everywhere.

He didn't stop doing this for the rest of his life, for publicizing the teachings of the Rebbe (and after 5710, the teachings of the Rebbe MH" M) was his life.

After the Rebbe Rayatz managed to get out of burning Warsaw, he spoke with Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson and asked him to give *brachos* to *Anash* and to the Jews of America. R' Jacobson told R' Avrohom about this and as soon as he heard it, he publicized a manifesto in Yiddish to the Jews of the U.S., which is translated here:

Kol mevaser mevaser v'omer! Mazal tov, mazal tov to all of us and to the entire House of Israel and thanks to G-d may His name be blessed for the Rebbe shlita and his family arrived in Riga. We hope that Hashem will not withhold His kindness, and will bring him quickly and successfully to the United States, and he will lead us to greet Moshiach with the help of Hashem.

Today at 4:30 a.m. Rabbi Jacobson spoke with the Rebbe *shlita* by phone in Riga, and the Rebbe *shlita* conveyed, through him, his blessings to all Jews in America: "All Jews who await Moshiach, *farbreng*, say *l'chaim*, and give thanks for this to Hashem. And each of you should promise in your heart to Hashem to improve more and more and to get closer to all matters of *Yiddishkeit*, and by doing so we will speedily merit the coming of Moshiach."

Most respectfully,

Avrohom Pariz
Brooklyn, N.Y.

(To be continued.)

LIVING WITH MOSHIACH

TRANSCRIPT: ALEXANDER ZUSHE KOHN

Rabbi Gold: As our listening audience will recall, we were learning the Rambam's "*Hilchos Melachim*" with Rabbi Majeski. We were in middle of the section dealing with the arrival of the Redemption, but I asked Rabbi Majeski if he would comment briefly on a very special and historic talk delivered by the Lubavitcher Rebbe exactly 12 years ago, on the 7th of Elul, 5751 (1991). It was Shabbos Parshas Shoftim, and the Rebbe revealed something very amazing. I think it would be fair to say that it is one of the most famous talks ever delivered by the Rebbe. In fact, a new publication of this incredible talk has just been released, which presents the text of the sources that the Rebbe refers to in his cross-references. It is a beautiful format.

Rabbi Majeski, right now I want to just read a segment of this famous *sicha* (talk). And then, you might want to comment on it. I want to quote one small section of this *sicha*. The quote can be found in the book, *Besuras HaGeula*. As mentioned, the Rebbe delivered this *sicha* exactly 12 years ago, on Shabbos 7 Elul. Here's the quote:

"One must publicize to all the people of the generation that we have merited that G-d has chosen and appointed a free-willed individual, who is incomparably higher than the people of the generation, to be "your

judge" and "your counselor," and the prophet of the generation, and who should provide instruction and advice pertaining to the service of all Jews and all people of the generation, in all matters of Torah and *mitzvos*, and daily conduct, and matters relating to, "*In all your ways, know Him,*" and, "*All your deeds [should be for the sake of Heaven].*" His council extends to the fundamental prophecy, "to imminent Redemption," and immediately, literally, "Behold he (Moshiach) comes."

Rabbi Majeski, would you please comment briefly on this famous *sicha*.

Rabbi Majeski: Yes. This *sicha* was said, as you mentioned, in 1991, on this very day, 7 Elul, today's anniversary. After the Rebbe said this *sicha*, he requested that it be published, which it was. It can be found in *Seifer HaSichos*, 5751, p. 792. At the time, the Rebbe requested that it also be published in the newspapers. This created quite a commotion, because what the Rebbe is basically saying in this *sicha* is that all this talk about Moshiach coming, and Moshiach coming imminently, is not just hopeful wishes or good blessings, but it's actually also prophecy. Many people were under the impression that there's no such thing as prophecy today; once the Beis HaMikdash, the Temple, was destroyed, prophecy became unattainable. In this *sicha*, which is a long *sicha*, the Rebbe deals with this

question, and he explains how prophecy does in fact exist today.

Let me mention briefly now what the issues are: The Gemara says in Bava Basra 12b: Reb Yochanan said, "From the day the Holy Temple was destroyed prophecy was taken away from the prophets and was given to the fools and the children. This means that when a child, or a fool, says something at random, it is an indirect way of Hashem revealing things. As far as actual prophets are concerned, however, this Gemara implies that once the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed they no longer exist. There's another source, Sanhedrin 11a, which says as follows: When the last of the prophets – Chagai, Zechariah, and Malachi – passed on, *ruach ha'kodesh* (Divine inspiration) was taken away from the Jewish people. These sources seem to indicate clearly that prophecy no longer exists.

However, in his *sicha*, the Rebbe maintains that prophecy does in fact exist at all times, and that we know this from the Rambam. The Rambam is the only book of *halacha* that deals with the laws of prophecy. He begins to talk about these laws in the 7th chapter of "*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*." The Rambam goes into many details: who is qualified to be a prophet, how one becomes a prophet, how do we identify a prophet, how does a prophet receive prophecy, and so on. The

Rambam also lists the criteria for prophecy. Yet, in all of the details and conditions that the Rambam brings, he doesn't mention the very simple condition that prophecy does not exist today. The Rambam lived over 800 years ago, long after the destruction of the Temple, and long after the passing of the three abovementioned prophets. He should have said that prophecy does not exist today. Since the Rambam did not mention this, even though he mentioned all the other details, conditions, and qualifications, we understand that this is not a condition, and prophecy can in fact exist at all times.

Now how can we reconcile this with the Gemara, which seems to be saying that prophecy no longer exists?

We must say, therefore, that according to the Rambam the Gemara is not saying that prophecy no longer exists, but that it is no longer as common as it once was. The Gemara tells us that there were twelve hundred thousand (1,200,000) prophets. So, whereas in the past, there were thousands of prophets in every generation, now, prophecy is no longer as common.

Moreover, on *amud Alef* of the abovementioned Gemara in Bava Basra, we find another opinion that states clearly that prophecy *does* exist today, and this is clearly the opinion that the Rambam is following. The Gemara there says: "Rav Dimi of Chaifa says, 'From the day the Temple was destroyed, prophecy was taken away from the prophets and was given to the *chachamim* (sages).'" So the Gemara asks, "Atu *chacham lav navi*?" ("Isn't the *chacham* the *navi*?"). And the Gemara answers, "Af *al pi sh'nitla min ha'neviim, min ha'chachamim lo nitla*." ("Although prophecy was taken away from the prophets, it was never taken away from the *chachamim*.") In other words, a certain form of prophecy was taken away, but a different form of prophecy remains. As the Rambam on this Gemara explains, prophecy in the form

of a vision was only experienced by a prophet, but prophecy that is processed by the *tzaddik's* intellect, or wisdom, remains.

So, clearly, there are opinions in the Gemara that there is prophecy today, the Rambam holds that there is prophecy today, and even the Gemara that seems to suggest that prophecy no longer exists can be interpreted to mean that prophecy is no longer as common as it used to be, but, nevertheless, still exists.

There's an interesting Tosafos in tractate Gittin, page 88a. Look into the Tosafos that begins with the word "V'Dilma," and you will see that one of the Baalei Tosafos, one of the Rabbis of the Tosafos – the Rabbis of the Tosafos lived about seven, or eight hundred years ago – was called Rav Ezra HaNavi, or Ezra the Prophet. His name is mentioned again in Tosafos to Tractate Shavuot, 25a. There are many other sources, and maybe at another opportunity we will go more into detail about this.

This was definitely a historic *sicha*. Because the Rebbe, throughout all the years, directed people, guided people, and said things that clearly demonstrated his knowledge of the future. But never did he use the term prophecy to describe this knowledge. Only in this one single instance did the Rebbe describe his knowledge of the future as prophecy.

One of the things that is significant about a prediction being actual prophecy is as follows. There were times when great rabbis predicted that Moshiach was coming, and it did not actually happen. (This is a subject that we'll get into at a later time.) This does not mean that they made a mistake, G-d forbid. Rather, the time that they spoke of was a time that was conducive for Moshiach's coming and there was an opportunity for Moshiach to come, and had we taken advantage of that opportunity it would have actually happened; unfortunately we missed the moment. By contrast, once

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a prediction is pronounced as a prophecy it *must* be fulfilled; it cannot be withdrawn or canceled – that’s the *halacha* of prophecy. Therefore, it is so much more encouraging, and inspiring, and strengthening, when the Rebbe tells us that his words, “*L’Alter l’Geula, v’hinei zeh Moshiach ba*” (“The Redemption is imminent,” and “Behold, Moshiach is coming”) are being said as a prophecy. Now it’s no longer an issue of whether it is going to happen soon or not – that is a given, an absolute certainty! The only question is what we can do to make it happen sooner than soon.

Rabbi Gold: Incredible words, Rabbi Majeski. I remember I was standing maybe twenty feet in front of the Rebbe when he made that historic statement, where he revealed to the world that he is not only the *nasi* of the generation, the leader of the Jewish people, but that he is also a *navi*, a prophet, with all of its *halachic* ramifications. It’s just incredible. It’s something that the Rebbe specifically told us to publicize to the whole world.

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Rabbi Majeski: Now we’ll continue the Rambam, chapter 12 of “*Hilchos Melachim U’Milchamoseihem*.” This is the last chapter of the Rambam’s *Mishneh Torah*. We’re up to *halacha* 2, which begins as follows:

“The Sages said: ‘There is no difference between the current [pre-Redemption] era and the Messianic era, except insofar as the subjugation to foreign governments is concerned.’” This means that there is no difference between the way things are currently, and the way they will be in the times of Moshiach. The only difference will be that the Jewish people will no longer be subjugated to the nations of the world.

In our previous lesson, we spoke at length about the source of this opinion and what it means.

The Rambam continues: “It appears from the simple interpretation of the

Prophets’ words that [the events connected with the Messianic Redemption will unfold according to the following pattern]: In the beginning stages of the days of Moshiach there will be a war [between two nations] – one is called Gog, and the other is called Magog.”

Now, it is very unclear who these two nations are today. The Rambam continues: “Before this War of Gog and Magog, a prophet will arise, to bring the Jewish people to follow in the right path, and to prepare their hearts to be close to Hashem and to be able to receive this amazing change that the Redemption will bring about in the world. As it is written (Malachi 3:22), ‘Behold I will send you Eliyahu HaNavi (Elijah the Prophet) before the coming of the great and awesome day.’” Eliyahu will thus come before the War of Gog and Magog, and his function will be to bring the Jewish people to *t’shuva*, to repentance.

The Rambam goes on: “His coming will not be for the purpose of establishing that those whom we thought are pure are really impure, or that those whom we thought are impure are really pure. Nor will his coming be for the purpose of disqualifying those whose lineage was assumed to be unblemished, or to declare unblemished those whose lineage was assumed to be blemished.” (Although Eliyahu HaNavi will do these things, they do not represent the main purpose of his coming.) “Rather, he will come [primarily] for the purpose of establishing peace in the world, as it says (Malachi 3:24), ‘He will return the hearts of the fathers with their children, and the hearts of the children with their fathers.’” This means that he will bring the heart of the fathers and the children, which were distant from each other, together.

In fact, this is also one of the prophecies that is being fulfilled in our time. In so many situations, fathers are further away from Judaism, and more assimilated than their children. Then

the children come and embrace Torah and *mitzvos*, and the children bring back their fathers. “He will return [to G-d] the hearts of the fathers *through* their children”.

The Rambam goes on: “There are those Sages who say that Eliyahu HaNavi will come before Moshiach.” In other words, there are those Sages who say that he will *not* come before Moshiach, and there are those Sages who say that he *will* come before Moshiach. In fact, this explains a certain Gemara. The Gemara tells us a story – and the Rambam begins his laws [concerning Moshiach] with a reference to this story – that there was a *tzaddik* by the name of Bar Kochba. He was a king and a leader, and Rabbi Akiva and all of the greatest sages thought that he was Moshiach, but ultimately it turned out that he didn’t lead the Jewish people to Redemption. And the question is, how could they even have thought that he was Moshiach, and how could Rabbi Akiva have declared that he was Moshiach and pointed to himself as Moshiach when Eliyahu HaNavi had not yet come to announce him?

[From this] we see clearly that there is a possibility – and there is such an opinion – that Moshiach comes first and Eliyahu HaNavi later. Even though it’s common knowledge, and we say it and find it in so many places, that Eliyahu HaNavi will be the one to announce and let us know the good news of Redemption, some opinions hold that we’re not certain what stage of the Redemptive process he’ll announce, because, as we mentioned many times, the Messianic process will consist of many stages. The Messianic Era will constantly be developing, and greater and more phenomenal things will happen as we go along. One opinion holds that Eliyahu HaNavi will announce one of the later stages. There’s [even] an opinion – I think it’s the Abarbanel – that says that he’ll announce the stage of *T’chiyas HaMeisim*, the Resurrection

of the Dead. So, it's clear that he'll be there to announce redemption, but the issue is what stage of redemption.

The Rambam continues: "No person knows how these matters will unfold until they actually unfold, for these matters are concealed by the Prophets; even the Sages do not have an established tradition regarding them; rather, each Sage interprets the verses in the Prophets the way he understands them." This means that it's not really clear exactly how and in what order these things will happen. The Rambam goes on: "Therefore they have differences of opinion regarding how these events are going to happen. At any rate, the order and minute details of these events are not a primary, fundamental aspect of our faith. One should not become preoccupied with these teachings, and should not spend a lot of time on these and similar Midrashim, and should not make them into a primary aspect of our faith, for they lead neither to fear nor love of G-d."

The obvious question is – and a lot of times you hear people ask this: if that's the case, why are we putting so much emphasis on Moshiach and all the details. After all, the Rambam here tells us not to make this into a primary aspect of our faith?

Of course, it's absurd to think that the Rambam is saying that the subject of Moshiach is not a primary issue of faith when the Rambam himself established that belief in Moshiach is one of the 13 principles of faith upon which all of Judaism stands. One of these principles is belief in G-d, one of them is belief in Moshe Rabbeinu, and one of them is belief in Moshiach. What the Rambam is saying, if you read his exact words, is that the order of things, and the minute details are not a fundamental principle of faith, because there are different opinions regarding them, and we don't know the exact manner in which they will unfold – we won't know it until it actually happens.

As for the question: if that's the case, why are we talking about it so much *now* and putting so much emphasis on it? I think that the answer to this is also obvious: when one studies the laws of Moshiach as an academic subject, then one should not go into all the details because these matters are unknown – we won't know the exact details until they happen. But when we come to the time when these

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events are actually unfolding – which is now – then *of course*, we may and should think into the details of these events. The Rebbe declared that "the time of your Redemption has arrived," and we're anticipating the ultimate moment. In fact, we're constantly seeing major, major things happening in the world, such as the situation with Iraq, and all the major world events

that happened prior to that, and all the major events that are taking place now, and the situation in Israel, etc. We see the fulfillment of this prophecy coming closer and closer, and therefore, we should try to understand what is going to happen, how it's going to happen, and when it's going to happen, because now it has become relevant.

An analogy can be brought from the laws of a *yasom* (orphan): the *halacha* is that 30 days before a Yom Tov, one is supposed to learn the *halachos* of that Yom Tov. At other times during the year, you can choose to learn any *halachos* you wish. However, when a particular Yom Tov is approaching – whether it's Pesach, Shavuos, Rosh HaShana, or Yom Kippur – you should begin studying the laws of that Yom Tov because now they are relevant and you view them in a totally different light. [The same is true here:] if we're going to build the Beis HaMikdash, then, of course, we need to know the laws, because they're relevant now. It's like anything else that's relevant – you learn it intensely, with all the details, and you want to know it properly.

Therefore, now is definitely a time for learning the subjects of Moshiach and *Geula*, as the Rebbe said – that is one of the ways of expressing our belief and confidence in the imminence of the Redemption, and therefore we're all excited about the details.

Of course, a special day like today, 7 Elul, which marks the day the Rebbe said this prophecy, is an appropriate day for this type of learning, and is conducive toward the actual fulfillment of this prophecy in its complete, and most open and revealed way, so that we should see the revelation of Moshiach, *teikef u'miyad mamash* – tonight!

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MAKING SOULS IN CHARAN

BY MENACHEM ZIEGELBOIM

During Tishrei of last year, I had the opportunity of traveling a few times on the subway in New York. Somebody had preceded me because I could see passengers, Jews and gentiles, men and women, blacks and whites, holding Sheva Mitzvos cards. This is the third edition of these cards, another hundred thousand copies.

People read them, looked at them, and even turned them over to see the other side. Perhaps it was interesting, or maybe they were simply bored. You know how on the N.Y. subways people will do anything to avoid catching the eye of another rider.

These cards are another project of Rabbi Boaz Kali, at the forefront of the Sheva Mitzvos B'nei Noach campaign in recent years. He made this his personal project, and publicizes it by all means possible in order to raise the world's awareness of the Sheva Mitzvos that G-d commanded all humankind.

There are those who think R' Kali has taken things too far, too literally. "Don't they have what to do?" they complain. "Did we finish *mitzva'im* with Jews that they're going to work on the entire world?"

Good questions. Serious ones. And as always, a *chassid* asks: What does the Rebbe say about it?

At the *farbrengen* of Yud-Alef Nissan 5743, the Rebbe MH"M first announced the *mitvza* of Sheva Mitzvos B'nei Noach. In the years that followed, the Rebbe continued to promote this topic of spreading awareness of the Sheva Mitzvos among the nations of the world. If you open a volume of *sichos* of those years, you'll see the

unusual attention the Rebbe gave this subject, and how he referred to the activities done in this regard.

The Rebbe based his *sichos* on this subject on the *p'sak halacha* that the Rambam writes – that "Moshe Rabbeinu commanded, from the mouth of Hashem, to compel all people to accept the *mitzvos* that were commanded to B'nei Noach." The Rebbe explains that this doesn't mean literal force, but appropriate explanations, to explain to all that these seven *mitzvos* are fundamental values for the continued healthy and just existence of mankind, which will unite all nations in the belief in the Creator of the world.

The Rebbe concludes that the time for this message is now: "In previous generations, any attempt to affect the nations of the world in matters of *emuna* entailed danger to life, and therefore it wasn't possible to fulfill this. However, in our generation, not only is there no danger involved, on the contrary, activities like these increase the honor of the Jewish people in the eyes of the nations, seeing that the Jewish people are concerned not only for themselves but for the civilization of the entire world through proper and just behavior." (Seifer Hisvaaduyos 5747, vol. 3, p. 67).

In addition to all these reasons, *chassidim* felt that this *mitvza* is definitely a new stage in the Rebbe's *avoda* in preparing the world to greet Moshiach. We can learn more about this from the interview that Rabbi Nissan Mindel, *a"h*, the Rebbe's secretary, gave to *Kfar Chabad* magazine: "In the Mishna in Avos it says there are three crowns: the crown of Torah, the crown of Kehuna

(priesthood), and the crown of Malchus, and the crown of a Good Name is above them all.

“That in our generation the Rebbe *shlita* is crowned with all these crowns is no *chiddush*. Who is a *baal Torah* greater than the Rebbe? Who is an *oveid Hashem* (Kehuna) like the Rebbe? As for Malchus, aside from the spiritual concept of *nasi ha’dor*, the Rebbe is also descended from Dovid HaMelech, not to mention the crown of a Good Name... But in a general way, we always knew that the Rebbe is adorned with two crowns of leadership: the leadership of Chabad and the leadership of *Klal Yisroel*.

“Now, yet another crown of leadership was revealed to the world through the Rebbe’s work in instilling the inyan of Sheva Mitzvos in the world.”

R’ Mindel also referred to the fact that it is specifically now that the Rebbe is calling on all people to observe the Sheva Mitzvos B’nei Noach. “Since we were raised on belief in Divine providence, we know that there is a connection and that these ideas are interdependent. The reason for the advent of this *mivtza* specifically in our generation is because we are closer to the time of the *gilui Moshiach*, when we will be recognized as ‘a light unto the nations,’ in the ultimate way, according to all the prophecies. Hashem orchestrated events in such a way that at the end of *Ikvisa d’Meshicha* (the era of the Heels of Moshiach) we would be able to prepare for being ‘a light unto the nations’ by spreading that part of Torah that the Torah tells us to teach to others.”

Following the fiery *sichos* of the Rebbe, in which he said we should make a *shturm* in spreading the Sheva Mitzvos, many activities were done in this regard. Among other things, *shluchim* met with then president of the U.S. Ronald Reagan, and suggested that he proclaim to all American citizens that they observe the Sheva Mitzvos. Reagan liked the idea and even made a special proclamation about it. The Senate even publicized an official declaration in which it asked American citizens “in light of the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s call,” to observe the Sheva Mitzvos.

A *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* with a synopsis of *halachos* of the Sheva Mitzvos was begun, and this was done with the instruction, encouragement, and under the direction of the Rebbe.

Indeed, this *mivtza* was another stage in preparing for Moshiach and the *Geula*-state that would prevail in the world, but was this *mivtza* really different than other *mivtzaim* like *t’fillin*, *mezuzah*, *kashrus*, etc.?

It seems so, because the other *mivtzaim* are directed at Jews, while this *mivtza* is (the first to be) geared for gentiles. Yet upon deeper reflection, one can definitely conclude that it paves a new path in preparing the world for *Geula*.

Not long ago there was a fascinating interview with Dr. Krauss from Bar Ilan University printed in *Beis Moshiach*. Dr. Krauss did his doctorate on the teachings and philosophy of the Rebbe. Among Dr. Krauss conclusions is regarding the order of the Rebbe’s activities. The Rebbe established his goal from the outset, “in his first *maamer* as leader, he outlined the direction and goal – the role of the seventh generation to connect and complete the *avoda*,” and from that point on, the Rebbe began an orderly process in the expansion of his leadership. From a small *chassidic* group to the entire world – not just to Jews.

In the parsha we find Avrohom Avinu involved in kiruv of B’nei Noach, “and the souls they made in Charan.” There is a contemporary version for the “Dor HaShvii”- a series of activities to spread awareness of the Sheva Mitzvos B’nei Noach.

Dr. Krauss says, “In my research paper I devoted a chapter...to proving that the Rebbe divided the work by decade. In the first decade (1950-1960), the Rebbe focused primarily on *Anash*... Towards the end of the decade he began preparing the groundwork for reaching out. In 1958 the Rebbe began talking about outreach. In the 60’s the Rebbe was already reaching outward and he initiated the next stage: going on *shlichus* and establishing Chabad houses on campuses, an attempt to capitalize on the rebelliousness of the youth in that era. Towards the end of that decade, in 1967, the Rebbe broke out even further with *Mivtza T’fillin*, the first of the *mivtzaim*, which actually blossomed in the 70’s. It was first in the 80’s that the Rebbe reached even further towards the finish line, which he had

envisioned from the beginning: Moshiach. The 80's are characterized by an open approach towards the topic of Moshiach. ...

"In 1985 the Rebbe went even further and began talking about the Sheva Mitzvos B'nei Noach, an important part of preparing the world for the Messianic era, according to the Rebbe's *sichos*."

The Rebbe doesn't stick to influencing only his *chassidim*, or even just Orthodox Jews, and not even just the entire Jewish world. Dr. Krauss zeroed in on the fact that the Rebbe's *avoda* is about influencing the entire world, including gentiles.

On a deeper level we can understand this as part of Moshiach's influence on the entire world, for the *Geula* is not for the Jewish people but the redemption of all of existence.

The Rebbe, in his role as Moshiach, doesn't suffice with the proper thinking of this *chassid* or the *midas chassidus* of that *chassid*, nor does he even agree to be satisfied with putting on *t'fillin* on this Jew or *mezuzos* on that Jew's doorpost (as important as these things are); the role of Moshiach is to affect the entire world.

So it's no surprise that the Klausenberger Rebbe, *zt"l*, reportedly said, when he heard that the Rebbe had announced the Sheva Mitzvos campaign, "He wants to be Moshiach." He realized that this wasn't just another *mitvza* of the Rebbe, but an entirely new campaign, a new dimension by means of which Moshiach would complete his goal in the world: "to correct the entire world to serve Hashem together, as it says, 'for then I will transform for the nations, a clear language, for all of them to call in the name of Hashem, and to serve him together'" (Rambam Hilchos Melachim, 11:4).

Rabbi Kasriel Kastel, who has worked on *hafatza* for years under the auspices of the Lubavitch Youth Organization, said, "When the Rebbe went out with a *shturm* about spreading the Sheva Mitzvos, people held meetings about how to go about promoting this *mitvza*. They began preparing brochures and sent them to the Rebbe for editing, but the Rebbe didn't approve them.

"At a certain point, Rabbi Dovid Nachshon and R' Avi Taub sent in a draft, and the Rebbe didn't approve of it either. The draft went in a number of times, but it was rejected by the Rebbe.

"In the final version they added the topic of Moshiach and *tikkun olam* as it will be in messianic times. It was this that the Rebbe approved. The Rebbe even gave a dollar for every copy that he got, saying, 'You must pay for a *seifer*.'"

This story proves more than anything else that this

mitvza was not meant to be another "nice" *mitvza* that puts the Chabad movement in a positive light in the eyes of the government or in the eyes of those intellectuals who support justice and good. Chabad is not another organization that supports a clean ecology and recycling (important things). The goal is to make G-d's name beloved to the entire world and to let the world know the importance of the Sheva Mitzvos, and to prepare the entire world to accept the kingdom of the Creator with the fulfillment of the Sheva Mitzvos He gave them.

In this lies the answer to the question we started with. As we said, quite a few Jews and even old-time *chassidim* complain about a group that decided to promote the Sheva Mitzvos. "Signs in Arabic? Are you out of your minds?"

No doubt, they weren't born yesterday. They were around twenty years ago when the Rebbe first announced this *mitvza*. The Rebbe addresses these very people in an unusual *sicha* (B'Shalach 5743): "And this is the response to those who seek a pretext and ask, 'why are we suddenly talking and demanding that the nations be influenced to keep their seven *mitzvos*? Did we already finish everything we need to accomplish with our own people? And when this Jew who wears a *shtraimel* and a silk *kapote* meets a Lubavitcher and asks him this question, the Lubavitcher stammers and doesn't know what to say! This question is derived from a fundamental error in the belief in the coming of Moshiach!"

It is not a legitimate question. The Rebbe asserts that a *chassid* (with a *shtraimel*) who asks such questions, testifies about himself that he has "a fundamental error in the *emuna* in the coming of Moshiach!"

The Rebbe goes on to say: "And therefore, by way of preparing for the future *Geula*, the Jewish people must also influence the entire world so that it will be ready for the situation of 'to perfect the world with the kingdom of G-d.' This is accomplished by Jewish people working on the nations of the world so that they behave in a way of 'it was created to be settled/civilized' through the fulfillment of the Sheva Mitzvos B'nei Noach.

"As was said, this question pertains only to those who think that the future *Geula* is for him alone, but when you know that the future *Geula* will bring about a *shleimus* in the entire world, then one is compelled to make the world ready for it."

Therefore, fellow *chassidim*, if the Rebbe said "one is compelled" in this matter, it's a *mitzvas asei sh'ha'z'man grama* (a time-bound positive *mitvza*).



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WHAT ONE COUPLE CAN ACCOMPLISH!

BY C. NUSSBAUM



A difficult *shlichus* in a difficult place with a special *shlucha* – Mrs. Rika Forma of Paraguay. You’ve read many articles about *shluchim* and

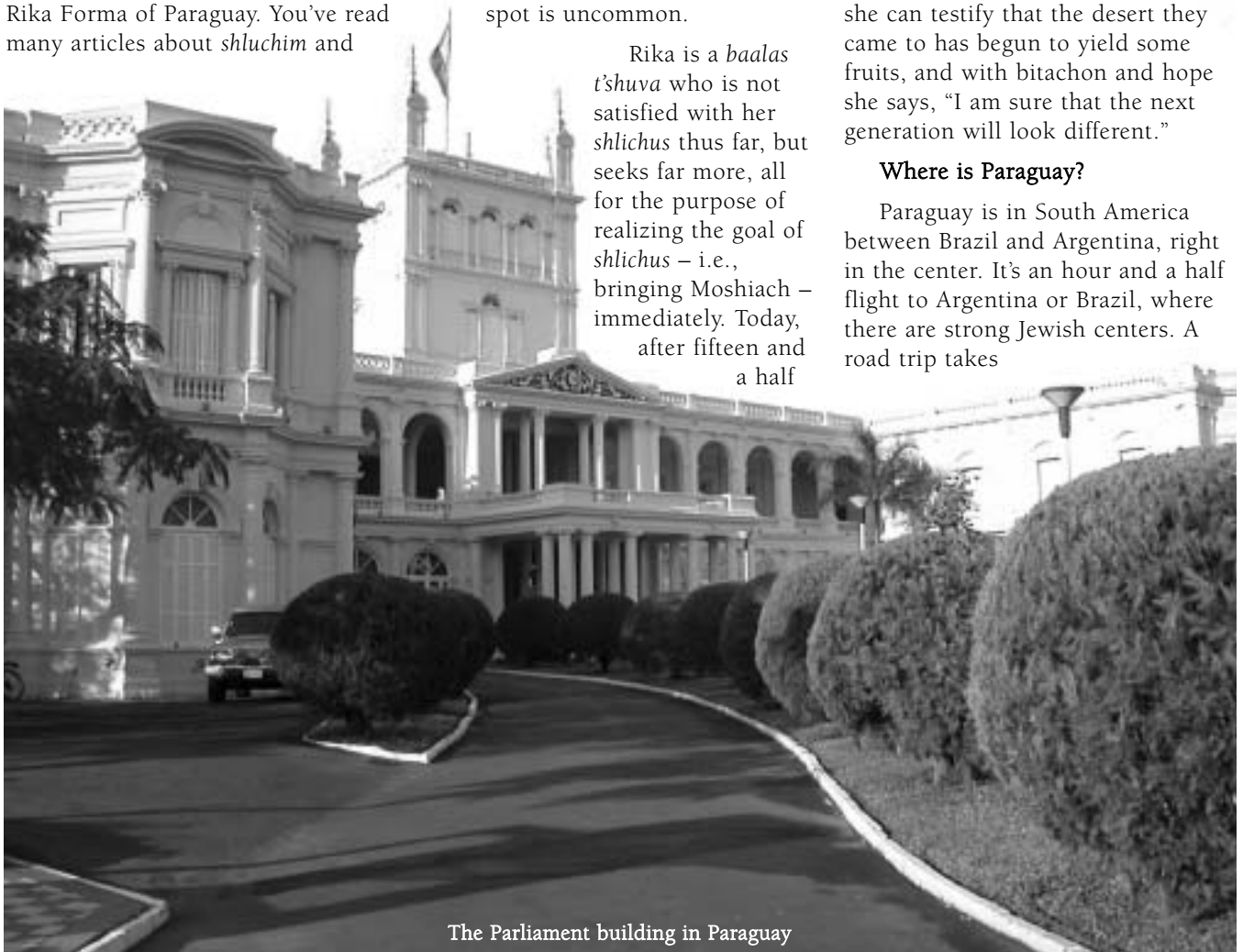
shlichus, but a *shlichus* with such *mesirus nefesh* in such a forsaken spot is uncommon.

Rika is a *baalas t’shuva* who is not satisfied with her *shlichus* thus far, but seeks far more, all for the purpose of realizing the goal of *shlichus* – i.e., bringing Moshiach – immediately. Today, after fifteen and a half

years of *shlichus* in Paraguay with her husband Rabbi Yehoshua Forma, she can testify that the desert they came to has begun to yield some fruits, and with bitachon and hope she says, “I am sure that the next generation will look different.”

Where is Paraguay?

Paraguay is in South America between Brazil and Argentina, right in the center. It’s an hour and a half flight to Argentina or Brazil, where there are strong Jewish centers. A road trip takes



The Parliament building in Paraguay

six hours. We are on the border of Brazil and Argentina (about an hour's drive), but the Jewish areas are much further. Spanish is spoken in Paraguay and Argentina while Portuguese is spoken in Brazil.

How did you get to Paraguay?

I was born in Brazil, where I became *frum* through Chabad's shliach, Rabbi Dovid Weitman, when I was fifteen. After becoming *frum* I was active in *mitvzaim*, etc. At age seventeen I went to Machon Chana in New York and then returned to Brazil, where I worked in the Chabad school in S. Paulo. Then I went back to New York where I met my husband, Yehoshua.

He is also a *baal t'shuva* who became *frum* through Chabad in Venezuela. After the wedding my husband learned in the Kollel in Crown Heights for a year and a half.

We heard about the possibility of *shlichus* in Paraguay – the local Sephardic *k'hilla* was looking for a Chabad shliach to work there. At that time, the Rebbe was talking about “*shliach oseh shliach*” (one shliach making another) and Rabbi Weitman of Brazil made the *shidduch* between us.

We checked the place out and got a positive response from the Rebbe, and we were off! We were supported financially by Rabbi Shabsi Alperin of Brazil. This help lasted nine years until recently, when the terrible political and economic situation in South America made it impossible for him to continue supporting us.

So how do you manage?

I have no explanation except that it's through the *ko'ach* of the *meshaleiach* (the power of the one who sent us). My husband now has to fundraise abroad and it's becoming more and more difficult. Our regular contributors were also adversely affected by the economic

situation, and they can't stand by their commitments as they once did.

Paraguay is a country whose economy is dependent on its big neighbors, Brazil and Argentina. It was clear to us from the start that without outside help it would be hard to manage, but somehow we've managed for over six years on open miracles, *baruch Hashem!*

It's hard to depend on the local people since they are not accustomed to the *mitzva* of *tz'daka* and don't appreciate its importance. If a Jew here gives ten dollars to *tz'daka*, it's considered a big deal.

What's it like in Paraguay? How many Jews live there?

The people are cold and apathetic (even though it's warm most of the year). There are about 700 Jews who live in Paraguay itself, but the assimilation rate is alarmingly high. Only thirty families are actually Jewish. People are simply unaware of the fact that by marrying out they are cutting off their link to Judaism. So it's not surprising that when we came here, some people didn't understand why we showed up in a place like Paraguay!

I'll give you an example of the coldness. When we have 20-30 people as Shabbos guests, they don't ask questions or take an interest in Judaism or the customs they see at the table. (If there are questions they always come from the guests from Brazil or Argentina.) The most they'll offer is, “How nice!” This is the reaction even when the Jewish experience which they just discovered, is inspiring and moves them internally.

At the moment there doesn't appear to be much of a Jewish future for young people here in Paraguay. We came to the conclusion that the best approach is to open their eyes, and this can be

*When she came with her husband to Paraguay fifteen years ago, they couldn't get kosher fish and eggs! Only four people attended shul and they didn't know how to read Hebrew. There were only 700 Jews in the city, most of them assimilated. * Today, after years of work, the Formas have warmed up the Jews of Paraguay. * The unbelievable shlichus story of Mrs. Rika Forma.*

done only outside of Paraguay. Indeed, it has proven very successful. We began sending abroad those who regularly visit the Chabad house. We send the boys to *pegishos* in Argentina in order to prevent assimilation.

One of the boys who designed our Chabad house and is one of our main people went to these *pegishos* a few years ago (they take place once a year), met a Jewish girl, and they married. For Judaism in Paraguay it's a pure *hatzala*.

This year, ten 16-17-year-old girls came to learn at the Chabad house. They insisted on going to these *pegishos*. I didn't know what to tell them because they're really too young for the *pegishos*. In the end my husband had an idea, and he told them to learn for a while at Machon Chana in Argentina and only then could they attend the *pegishos*. Those ten girls stayed to learn at Machon (thank you Machon Chana of Argentina which was so devoted to them *b'ruchnius* and *b'gashmius*). They had their eyes opened there so they could see there is a Jewish future.

Let's hear about your work and your daily routine.

When we arrived here there was a Sephardic community and a tiny



Reform community. These *k'hillos* fell apart over the years. The Sephardic community nearly went under and then it was transferred to us. The Reform community had nearly nothing left to sell, and since we showed up they tried copying us, though unsuccessfully.

You can say that in many ways my husband is considered the chief rabbi of the country even though he doesn't officially hold this position. Everybody knows him. Every Friday he has a short program about the basics of *Yiddishkeit* on local television. He always concludes with "*Shabbat shalom*." People who meet him always say "*Shabbat shalom*" to him, even on Sunday or Monday. It

became a familiar concept to *goyim*, too. Because of this program, Jews stop him on the street and ask him various questions about Judaism.

Our days are busy. My husband does everything, *chazan*, *Krias ha'Torah*, giving the *d'var Torah*, *shiurim*, *bar mitzva* preparation, Sunday school, and lots of work Erev Yom Tov and on Yom Tov, as well as *shiurim* every day of the week. Aside from this, he counsels people in *shalom bayis* (he's an expert). He also started a special program for B'nei Noach.

The work keeps growing and this is thanks to the openness and love people have for what we do, and it's only with the *ko'ach* of the *meshaleiach*, of course.

Our Chabad house recently opened a small store for Judaica and kosher food. We also sell Jewish books that we translated into Spanish.

My husband started a *t'fillin* campaign and, *baruch Hashem*, we've reached the point where fifty people put on *t'fillin* regularly (in a country like Paraguay, that's a lot), but naturally, we don't rest on our laurels but always seek more.

As for me, every morning I teach in the nursery we opened. In the afternoon I give *shiurim* to women. I recently started offering courses in psychology in which I incorporate many Jewish concepts. I also give *shiurim* to girls once a week and organize the *Tzivos Hashem* activities according to groups.

Once a year we organize a gathering for women in some exclusive location. Last year we had peak attendance with 130 local Jewish women attending (a large number relative to the 700 Jews living here).

On Shabbos there's lots going on. After the *davening* there's *Kiddush* and a *farbrengen*, one for men and

EVEN THE REFORM PUT UP A PUBLIC MENORA

A tiny Reform community in Paraguay copies what the *shluchim* do. One year the *shluchim* started putting up two large *menoros*, one on the main street of the city and the other one in a busy mall. The *menoros* and the candle-lighting ceremonies attract many Jews (even the apathetic ones). Even government ministers come to see the great light.

You know that when the *shluchim* in the U.S. began putting up menorahs, they were fought primarily by the Reform. The Reform brought their dislike for the public menorahs to Paraguay too, but they ended up trying to copy it by putting up a menorah in a public place.

"If our menorah lighting attracted 300 Jews, then they got barely 50," says Mrs. Forma, "so they quickly stopped doing it."

one for women, and this is a golden opportunity to raise the level of *Yiddishkeit*.

Compared to when we first arrived, when there were four people in *shul* who couldn't even read and *daven*, today we have 80-120 people Friday night and Shabbos morning we have nearly thirty people. It's the result of lots of hard work!

When do you have time for your children?

We have, *baruch Hashem* and *bli ayin ha'ra*, seven children. Three of them are not home – the oldest, age 16, was sent at age 11 to *yeshiva* in Rio de Janeiro. That year our ten-year-old daughter also went to a Chabad school in Argentina. We must send them away to school because they need an environment with *chassidische* friends like themselves, and we don't have that in Paraguay.

My third child, a daughter, left this year for Argentina. I wanted her to stay here longer but she wanted to go and I couldn't take the pressure and I understood her. We are the only *frum* family here, and every girl her age wants friends.

My four youngest children are still here with us in Paraguay and they learn in the school we opened. I devote the mornings to them while in the nursery, and in my free time I am their teacher. I feel that they get



more here than children who live in a big city with a large Jewish center, and at least this is our reward!

In the afternoons they learn secular studies in school with local teachers, and then I'm free to work with women, etc.

* * *

Because there's no solid Jewish center in Paraguay, kosher food is a problem. In the beginning it was really tremendously difficult and the Formas subsisted on fruits and vegetables. They couldn't get kosher fish or other staples.

The meat problem was solved because Rabbi Forma studied *sh'chita*. "When the chickens walked around the house in those days, I couldn't believe it was my house," laughs Rika. But that didn't last long because when their work expanded it was hard to do *sh'chita* in an organized manner and they began importing meat and other things from Argentina.

As time passed, the size of the shipments grew and they began ordering kosher food for other families too. Today they sell kosher food to twenty-five families. They sell meat, tuna, sardines, and an array of products from Brazil.

A problem arose with dairy products. "Up until five years ago, we went to watch the milking, but as the demand for *chalav Yisroel* grew, we began bringing frozen milk products from Brazil."

They even have to import eggs from Argentina since the local eggs are always bloody. Rika laughingly relates, "When we came here, I wanted to bake a cake but after cracking dozens of eggs and finding blood, I gave up. Since then, we bring large quantities of eggs from Argentina, some of which are sold at the Chabad house as part of *Mivtza Kashrus*.

"We bake our own baked goods. At first we had a tiny bakery but this also stopped when our workload grew and there was no time for it. Today we import the bread and other baked goods."

For Pesach they import about 500 kilograms of *matzos* to sell in



the city.

You come from a non-religious home. What do your parents think of your *shlichus*?

My parents are from Morocco and they are traditional, so they always kept certain *mitzvos*. At first it was hard for them to accept the fact that I was teaching them, but today they themselves are *mekuravim* to Lubavitch. They go to the Chabad *shul* in Brazil every Shabbos and they learned to appreciate and to value and be partners with us in our *shlichus*.

Is there room for further expansion in your work in Paraguay?

Definitely. Two years ago we bought a lot for the purpose of building a new Chabad house, but the lot stands empty because the economic situation is so bad. When we get the money we want to finally build our own Chabad house (the present one is rented) which will have room for *shiurim*, a *shul*, a bakery, a Judaica store, a *mikva*, etc.

The new building is a symbol of hope for the future of the Jews in Paraguay. A beautiful building will increase their Jewish pride which is so vital in Paraguay.

Final words from Mrs. Rika Forma:

The idea of Sukkos is to go out, just as we do on *shlichus*. Hashem tells us, go out for a week, live out there, and feel that I'm there with you!

Most of us grew up in a warm and secure home in warm, Jewish surroundings. At a certain point the Rebbe said to us: the time has come for you to go out and do; I will be with you there and protect you. I don't think I have to tell this to *shluchos* because they see it themselves all the time. I see it in all sorts of way. Even when there's no *parnasa*, there's a *bracha* in the house (I'm still hoping that *parnasa* will come, too.)

As far as friends and *chinuch*, children of *shluchim* are successful

JUST THIS ONE TIME

Mrs. Rika Forma relates:

Two years ago, right after 9/11, I wanted to visit my daughter in Argentina. I stood there at the airport knowing that she was waiting for me. Suddenly I heard what had happened at the WTC and I had a dilemma. Should I fly now or not?

I opened a volume of *Igros Kodesh* and the answer there said, "Now is not a good time to fly." The Rebbe went on to say to add in goodness.

Since this was Thursday I decided to return home, but I wanted to start something in a positive direction. On the spot I decided to do a *Mivtza Neshek* campaign for that Shabbos. There wasn't much time left. I sat down some *mekuravim* at the phones and we called all the Jewish women in the city with a request that they try to light Shabbos candles with a *bracha* because it's a time to wake up and this would bring peace and hasten Moshiach's coming.

We asked them to light at least this one Shabbos, though of course it would be best if they lit from then on. If someone sounded hesitant or opposed to the idea, I took the phone myself and convinced her to do it just this one Shabbos. We had a great response.

One of the ladies that we called was 93 and assimilated (her grandchildren are *goyim*), and she said she didn't want to light candles, "because I haven't lit for 80 years."

I told her, "I respect your wishes but you should know that all Jewish women in the city will be lighting Shabbos candles, at least this Shabbos, and you'll be the only one not to light?"

She thought a moment and said, "No, it's too much for me. I'll do it just this one time so that I won't be the exception."

and well-educated and constantly serve as good examples. We see how their *chinuch* is on the Rebbe's shoulders.

Anyway, the point is not to remain outside! We want to be near

the Rebbe with the *hisgalus* of Moshiach now!

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THE RIGHT IS THE PROBLEM, BEILIN IS THE CONSEQUENCE

BY SHAI GEFEN

BEILIN – YOU'RE NOT ALONE

Everybody's talking about the Geneva Accords in terms of betrayal. Even the moderate Knesset members on the Right didn't hesitate to categorize the "understanding" forged in Geneva between senior members of the Left and Arab PA leaders as treason. In this initiative, the Left seeks to turn over sovereign territories to Arabs and to uproot hundreds of thousands of Jews from their homes.

We suddenly heard quotes from leaders (moderates too) that according to the law, someone who works to turn over sovereign land belonging to the State should be sentenced to life imprisonment or death. The Legal Advisor, according to press statements, has decided not to take action against the perpetrators of the Geneva Agreement, and announced that this is a matter for public discussion. The heads of Likud are screaming about the group that brought Oslo upon us, who are now going to Geneva to make a new agreement. There's anger on all sides, particularly on the part of the Prime

Minister.

All the people who have been yelling lately are the same people who, in the past months, worked on furthering the Road Map that is based on the principle of founding a Palestinian state. So it's not clear what the difference is between those who are furthering the Road Map plan and those who are working on the Geneva Agreement, for you end up with the same results in both cases. The similarity is obvious: both agreements will lead to dividing the land and establishing a Palestinian state.

Even if we assume there are differences between the two approaches, it is clear that in the end the Right will adopt the approach of Beilin and his cohorts, just as it happened with the Oslo Accords. So it's unclear why the Right is shouting now. They are part of Sharon's government, which is constantly promoting the Road Map, trusting murderers, and promising a Palestinian state.

Furthermore, the Geneva Accords are the results of Sharon's leadership. It has been three years of terror and murder, with the

entire Right frustrated and confused and not knowing where to turn. In this vacuum, the Left got the nerve to take another step forward under the assumption that if the parties on the Right adopted the Oslo Accords with all its details even after they saw the terrible damage that ensued, there was no reason not to adopt this new approach.

I write this sadly, since the Right always falls into lockstep behind the Left who promulgate disastrous initiatives. If the Right were following a sound plan, serious and trustworthy, and seriously tackled the Oslo War, the traitors in Geneva wouldn't be able to get very far among the Israeli populace. Only 39% support it now, and naturally some are Arabs, but just as in the past they didn't believe they would support Arafat and the establishment of a Palestinian state, so too now it's clear that the ones who will carry the day in the future are Beilin and company. Not because the Right is wrong or because public opinion doesn't lean to the Right, but because of one reason only: the Right doesn't know what it wants. Is it the Right or perhaps it's actually a band of



Leftists with a veneer of the Right. Sometimes Right and Left are mixed up and try to “dance at all weddings.”

So the complaints about the Geneva meeting should not be addressed to Beilin, nor to the European countries that offered millions of dollars to Beilin in order to advance and market the Geneva ideas. The real problem is the government and its supporters from the Right.

The time has come for them to make a serious accounting: Who has brought Israel to the edge of the abyss (if not beyond)? Who prepared the public for the Geneva Accords? Who, instead of using the current Oslo War as a springboard to reclaim all the territories and completely eradicate the terrorists, turned this terrible war into the promotion of a Palestinian state, and prepared public opinion to agree to any and all concessions out of utter despair?

The real focus ought to be on Sharon, as well as the leaders of Mafdal and Moledet. They are the problem. Beilin is the consequence.

If we honestly examine what has taken place here for the last three years, we'll see clearly how it's the Right who made Beilin into what he is. Beilin was thrown out of his Leftist party in ignominy since they realized that he was no longer relevant. He didn't even manage to get elected to the Knesset. He became an untouchable in all respects. But now the public has begun to wise up and to realize that those on the Right are not only not leading the people anywhere, but are a cheap and pathetic imitation of the Oslo architects, and so they prefer the original.

If you look at it professionally, you see that to our sorrow and

shame, the next victor will be Yossi Beilin, who will profit from the *hefkerus*. This is the absolute truth, and it needs to be said loudly. If in another few months or years, Benny Alon and Shaul Yahalom will support the Geneva Initiative in some form or another, don't be surprised.

So there's no reason to be unduly impressed by the cries from the Right. It's only when they do *t'shuva* and *klap al cheit* and loudly proclaim: We have no part in Oslo. We don't support any political process which includes sovereignty for Arabs, and most importantly, when they put the Oslo criminals on trial, only then will we know that they've done a true *t'shuva*. As long as the Right are just the lowly and shameful toadies of the Oslo criminals, and further their work, let them keep quiet and not come with complaints.

CHAVER, YOU ARE CHASER (FRIEND, YOU ARE MISSED)

Two years have passed since the despicable murder of Rechavam Ze'evi (may Hashem avenge his blood) by terrorists, in the heart of Yerushalayim. We can certainly say that Ze'evi was one of the few remaining people of a generation that was proud of its belief in *shleimus ha'Aretz* (unlike those members of the Right who drag their feet after the extreme Left).

We, as *chassidei Chabad*, remember his tireless battles to implement his ideas. More than once we were amazed by how a Jew that was not raised as a *chassid*, was so loyal to the Rebbe's teachings on *shleimus ha'Aretz*, and was ready to do whatever it took to implement these principles. The bitter end of the moment of glory in his life, took place just hours before he was to resign as a minister, after

*“Suddenly, the
remember democracy!
Where is democracy
when you're supposed
to reckon with the real
views of the majority
of the nation, as they
vote in accordance
with their views and
conscience?”*

declaring that Sharon had turned into a prophet for the Palestinian state.

Unfortunately, those vile murderers have still not been brought to justice. They sit and smoke a distance of three minutes from Sharon's office, as Yiftach, Ze'evi's son, said.

Time and again it's painful to see how the party that is supposed to, as it were, continue his legacy, has betrayed not only the man who started the movement that believed with all his heart and might in *shleimus ha'Aretz*, but the entire platform that Ze'evi had outlined.

Who would have believed that this party would be a collaborator with a government that accepted all of Oslo and the Road Map and the establishment of a Palestinian state?

As we mark the second anniversary of his murder, we should remember the amazing man who was willing to forego the trappings of ministerial power and privilege, and wasn't afraid to topple governments when he saw that they were veering from the path and were causing damage and danger to the Jewish people. Perhaps it wasn't popular, but today everybody knows to respect his strong and intrepid position.

Chaval al d'avdin

RUSSIA IS HERE

The shutting down of Arutz 7 in a brutal manner while incriminating senior members of Arutz and its broadcasters, at this crazy time, illustrates what we knew all along but preferred to ignore. We always wanted to believe that we live in a democratic state, even if it wasn't always actually expressed. We wanted to think that the Thought Police didn't rule here, and that there was still freedom of expression. We were sure that Arutz 7 wouldn't be shut down after it had gained a large following of listeners in its fifteen years of broadcasting. But apparently Russia is here after all.

On Motzaei Zos Chanuka 5746, the Rebbe said that the situation in Eretz Yisroel was worse than that in Soviet Russia, and if a dictatorship like the one in Eretz Yisroel was called a democracy, then it was no wonder that a piece of paper was called "Peace."

"A dictatorship like this" – under the guise of a democracy – cannot be found anywhere else in

the world, not even in Soviet Russia! ... Oy that we have reached a state like this in which we have to bring proofs from them – that even the "corrupt among the nations" don't act like this!

"I myself was in Soviet Russia and I know how they operate. When they compel you to do something they explain that the 'conscience' requires this behavior according to the dictates of Communism, this is what Marx's system requires, the rules of 'righteousness and justice,' the approach that you may not cut the salary of a worker, and other similar ideas. And they add that if someone expresses his personal

They tell us that of course the people of Arutz 7 should be allowed to speak, but it has to be done legally.

conscience in another way, he'll sit in jail or they'll send him to Siberia ... but to openly announce in an official way that someone should vote the opposite of his personal conscience?! No leader in the Kremlin would do such a thing!

"However, in the Holy Land the situation today is otherwise: they openly and officially announce that even if one's personal conscience dictates otherwise, one should not take that into consideration, but one should vote against one's conscience, not because of any explanation that says the conscience should conclude otherwise, but because the Party said so!

"There are 3-5 people who are leaders of the party, and it's according to them that all members of the party act, without taking their opinions into consideration. Each member of the party is busy with the work in the sector given to him, but when it comes to matters associated with the general leadership of the State, the heads of the party are the ones to decide, and all members of the party must vote based on their decision, with nary a care as to their view and conscience.

"Suddenly, they remember democracy! Where is democracy when you're supposed to reckon with the real views of the majority of the nation, as they vote in accordance with their views and conscience?

"When a dictatorship like this – the likes of which you can't find anywhere in the world, not even in Soviet Russia – is called a democracy, it's no wonder that a piece of paper is called "Peace," and the killing of Jewish soldiers, *r"l*, is called "open goodness!"

We don't need additional explanations in order to understand what kind of democracy we live in, a democracy in which you are not allowed to speak. They tell us that of course the people of Arutz 7 should be allowed to speak, but it has to be done legally.

The question is, how come, for fifteen years it wasn't legally arranged? How come, when they legally approved Arutz 7, the courts came and annulled the law of the Knesset? How come, whenever there was a shred of hope for the legality of Arutz 7, the prosecutors did all they could to torpedo it?

As far as we are concerned, Arutz 7 is the only thing legal around here.

CONCERN FOR A FELLOW JEW

BY MENACHEM ZIEGELBOIM



Rabbi Dovber Lipschitz

I heard Rabbi Dovber Lipschitz, director of Yad L'Achim, tell the following story at a Shabbos *farbrengen*. It's a short story, but one that touched me, because it illustrates the love, care, and attention the Rebbe devotes to every Jew.

* * *

This incident took place decades ago. I had traveled to the U.S. for communal matters, and I also wanted to see the Rebbe, of course. My original plan was to be in Canada for Shabbos.

One day I went into the secretaries' office, and when R' Leibel Groner saw me he asked me where I was planning on being for Shabbos.

"In Canada," I said.

"You won't be here for Shabbos?" he asked, with an emphasis that, if you know about these things, you know is not in vain.

"Why do you ask?" I asked.

He didn't respond to my question. He just said, "If you stay here, let me know; there might be something for you."

"Did the Rebbe say I should stay here for Shabbos?" I asked.

He immediately said, "No. The Rebbe merely inquired."

Something was up, and I decided to remain in Crown Heights for Shabbos. I told him of my change in plan and his face lit up.

"Then I have a *shlichus* for you," he said. And he told me that in Crown Heights lived a Jew "whom you certainly know since you went to *yeshiva* with him. This Jew is sad, and the Rebbe wants you to go to him to cheer him up."

After some thought, I remembered that I had learned with this person thirty years before! I didn't know what I was supposed to do. How was I to cheer him up? Was I supposed to knock on his door and say, "Hello, I came to cheer you up"? But a *shlichus* is a *shlichus* and I did it.

I knocked at his door and introduced myself. He was very happy and graciously invited me in. We sat down to talk and reminisce. We began singing *niggunei simcha* and he sang with great pleasure (he had a good voice). Then I suggested that we dance together, and so we did. We put our hands on each other's shoulder and danced.

I spent a few hours there, and he

was happy the entire time. We finally said goodbye and I left.

The next day, Sunday, I went to the secretaries' office and told R' Groner that I had done the Rebbe's *shlichus*. On the spot he said, "Then you have a *yechidus* right now!"

I didn't have a chance to prepare (fortunately I had been to the *mikva*), and two minutes later I was face to face with the Rebbe. The Rebbe questioned me about the visit. For twenty minutes he asked how it was, what had happened, what had he said, how did he feel, how the dancing was, and how happy he was.

It was amazing to me how the Rebbe was interested in every detail. Then the Rebbe said, "He is very sad, and I don't see the reason why."

Then the Rebbe spoke to me about the *askanus* I was involved in at the time.

You can learn a lot from this incident, concluded R' Lipschitz. But the main thing is how much the Rebbe cares about every Jew. The man wasn't even a Lubavitcher. On the contrary, he was Litvish. The Rebbe was concerned about cheering him up, and he devoted his precious time to this.

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH YIGAL KIRSHNZAFIT:

THE ONE WHO EXPERIENCED THE MIRACLE RECOGNIZED THE MIRACLE

Rabbi Kirshnzafit, you are accustomed to miracles, but even you have never seen an open miracle like this. Tell us what happened.

“It was the Thursday night after Sukkos when I was returning from Kfar Chabad after being *menachem avel* at the home of my aunt, Mrs. Bella Golombovitz, *a”h*. My wife was driving and I dozed off. It was 8:30 p.m., and a terrorist, hiding on the side of the road about a hundred meters after the entrance to Kvish Kisufin, began shooting at us. I felt that he was very close to our car. He shot dozens of bullets, some of them penetrating the car.

“I told my wife to quickly get out of there, but I could see we were standing still. Glass splinters from the shattered window struck her eyes and she couldn’t see the road ahead of her. Miraculously, she hit the gas pedal and got away from the source of the shooting.”

What are your first thoughts at a time like that?

“First of all, we began to check and see whether everyone was all right. There were nine passengers,

including family members and hitchhikers we had picked up. In the meantime, soldiers arrived and miraculously caught the terrorist and killed him.”

It says, “the one who experiences a miracle doesn’t recognize the miracle that happened to him,” but you saw an open miracle.

“It was an open miracle. The bullets entered the front window of the car and exited the back window



and no one was hurt, except of course for the glass shards. We all remember what happened on other occasions when cars were shot at, like the Dickstein family.

“Even though I’m used to difficult situations, I was never in a situation like this. I was sitting in the car with my wife and children and at that moment you don’t know where you are and what’s happening to you. All you can do is pray to Hashem to be saved from disaster.

“If you’re asking about miracles, two grenades were found in the area and the terrorist had other grenades on him, ready to be used.”

Was everybody moved by the amazing miracle?

“The officer of the unit that arrived reminded me that I had visited him with the *minim* just a few days before, and he said to me emotionally that we were saved in the *z’chus* of the *bracha* we made with the soldiers. I explained to him that the four *minim* are the best weapons against the enemy.

“We used this experience to give

out a picture of the Rebbe with *T'fillas HaDerech* to all the soldiers at roadblocks.”

How many bullets entered the car?

“Dozens of bullets were shot at us, some of which entered through the front window, passed over the passengers’ heads, and exited the back window. Whoever sees the car cannot believe that the people in it got out alive. All of them. A neighbor of mine who saw the car from up close was amazed. He simply couldn’t believe what an awesome miracle took place.”

Did you make a *seudas hodaas*?



“Of course. On Shabbos B’Reishis we had a large *seudas hodaas* in our house in Neve Dekalim. All the *rabbanim* and residents of the *yishuv* came on Friday night to our house, said *l’chaim*, and made good resolutions to join in *mitvzaim* and to spread the wellsprings. Shabbos morning we *bentched HaGomel*.”

* * *

In the last three years, Gush Katif in the Gaza Strip has become the scene of numerous miracles. Everybody living there has miracles to relate. 4300 mortars have fallen on

the Gush, and *baruch Hashem*, miraculously, there have been no fatalities.

The attack on the Kirshnzafts’ car was not the first one that night. A quarter of an hour before that, two mortars were shot towards the *yishuvim*, and one of them made a direct hit on a factory in the industrial area of Neve Dekalim. Before that, there was shooting at a nearby outpost, and before that, a terrorist tried to penetrate the Jewish area, and he was shot and wounded near Eli Sinai. 75 mortars were shot at the *yishuvim* since Rosh HaShana.



“They’re all talking about the great miracle. From their perspective, there was a big screw-up, because a year ago, on the same spot, Rabbi Arama was killed, and since then it’s all lit up. There are cameras, patrols, and a tank that is supposed to protect the area. As far as the army is concerned, the area is considered protected, but at the moment of truth you see that it’s not the army and not security, only Hashem who is protecting you. We felt how Hashem was taking us in His hands and removing us from the disaster.”

This happened after a week of non-stop activity.

“Absolutely. *Mivtza Sukkos* is the biggest logistical *mitvza*, when we go to every single area in the Strip and don’t overlook a single area. This year too we went to every spot throughout the Gaza Strip, and despite the obstacles and problems we prevailed and went to the furthest outposts and bases. We even got to Motzav Girit in Rafiach.

Lately there has been talk about evacuation because of the tragedy of three soldiers being killed. How do the residents of the Strip react to this?

“*Baruch Hashem*, the Jewish people are tougher than the *sitra achra*, inside and out. I don’t know who’s talking

This wasn’t the first time you have encountered terrorists, right?

“Correct. Last year, on the first day of Sukkos, a projectile fell in the middle of the table during our *seuda* and embedded itself in the table. Another time, a mortar fell on our immediate neighbors.

I want to mention another miracle, when nine years ago a terrorist penetrated Neve Dekalim and I had the *z’chus* of killing him. Still and all, what we went through this week was unprecedented.”

How does the army react?

about evacuations, maybe the media. I can tell you that the people think otherwise. In recent days, I've received hundreds of responses from citizens, and they're all encouraging and all from people I don't know.

"With all the talk about evacuations, you can't even buy a house here. Everything is full. The Jews of Gush Katif are proud. There are Jews here who are living through a war these past three years, and despite this they haven't lost their *joie de vivre*. There's no Shabbos without a *Birkas HaGomel*. You have to see the *achdus* and *ahavas Yisroel* we have here. These are things you can't explain intellectually in light of what is going on here. In the end, we'll prevail, even over the media."

How are the injured?

"*Baruch Hashem*, they got the glass out of my wife's eyes. I wasn't injured and the others, who were hurt by broken glass, feel fine. My personal feeling is that we were born anew on Erev Shabbos B'Reishis. Everybody hugs and kisses us.

HOLDING THE REBBE'S PICTURE

Rabbi Yigal Kirshnzaft: I want to tell you about the miracle we had with our Menachem Mendel. He was in his toddler seat holding a picture of the Rebbe. Every night, before he goes to sleep, he takes a picture of the Rebbe and looks at it. When we were shot at he was holding the picture and miraculously, nothing happened to him except getting hit by some pieces of glass.

After the attack, when the local council speaker photographed his seat, he got the picture of the Rebbe lying on the seat among the shards of glass (you can see the blood on Menachem Mendel's *tzitzis* in the picture of him). In the front window, underneath the flying bullets, was a *Chitas*.

This miracle made a tremendous *Kiddush shem Shamayim* and gave a boost to *hafatzas ha'maayanos* and support for *Chitas* and *mitzvaim*.



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LIFE AT THE STREET LEVEL

BY SARAH GRANOVETTER, JERUSALEM

As far as the political/economic situation here and the Oslo war, it sometimes seem like things couldn't be worse in Israel. However, life at the "street level" is very encouraging. When we first made *aliya* ten years ago, there was a great deal of tension and division between religious and non-religious people. In my experience, that has changed a great deal. There is a much greater feeling of unity now, and most people are aware that we can't get out of this mess without Divine intervention. I'm pleased to say that the changes include an awareness of who the Rebbe MH" M is (naturally). Here are but a few examples from my personal life.

1. When our two *yeshiva bachurim* answer our phone, they say: "*Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Melech HaMoshiach l'olam va'ed!*" One boy answered the phone one day and it was the Russian tailor down the street calling to say that some repairs he made for us were finished. I went to pick up the clothes. The non-religious tailor, whose name is Pasha (and I didn't know if he was even Jewish), asked what did my son say when he answered the phone. I told him "*Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Melech HaMoshiach l'olam va'ed!*" and he responded with a loud, crisp

"Amen!" Then he pointed to the Rebbe MH" M's picture which he has pasted on his wall.

2. Along the same lines, I was having some jewelry repairs done by a non-religious Israeli woman (mind you, in Israel, there probably isn't such a thing as non-religious; people who don't appear to be religious here do a lot of *mitzvos*, including *t'fillin*, *mikva*, *kashrus*, etc.), and this involved a few phone calls during the "*bein z'man*" period. My sons happened to answer the phone the first couple of times she called to speak to me about the work she was doing. She called again to say everything was ready, and this time I answered, "Hello?" and she told me to come pick up my stuff. When I arrived she told me she had been disappointed not to hear "*Yechi*" when she called she said hearing my sons say "*Yechi*" makes her very happy. She said she's impatient for the Rebbe MH" M to save the Israeli government from itself, and when I told her she should come to my regular Moshiach class to learn about it, she asked me to find someone who would teach *inayanei Moshiach* to her and her friends in Hebrew!

3. We went to Tzfat for the first night of Sukkos. On the highway,

we spotted a van with a *Yechi* sticker on it. We followed it for a while, and then it signaled that it was turning off the road. We passed by and made sure to get a good look at the driver to see if it was a Lubavitcher we recognized. Surprise. The driver was a man with no beard and no *kippa!*

4. A non-religious couple from New Jersey came to visit us with their two kids and his two parents. The parents' eyes lit up when they saw the poster of the Rebbe MH" M on our front door. The woman excitedly reached into her purse and pulled out some pictures of the Rebbe MH" M, which, she explained, she carries with her always!

5. I decided to give a French non-religious shopkeeper I go to regularly a Chabad calendar. He smiled and told me that someone had just given him a Chabad book in French, and then the next day someone brought in a Chabad *tz'daka* container, and now I brought in the calendar! I told him: "The Rebbe is speaking to you!" The next time I went in there the calendar was hanging prominently on the wall.

6. Finally, there is a fancy art gallery on King George Street called "The Mayonot Gallery." We were charmed to see a painting of the Rebbe MH" M in the front window. It's a painting of the Rebbe standing and *davening*. The Rebbe's tallis covers his face, but you can tell it's the Rebbe, and the Rebbe's red chair is painted perfectly. My 9-year-old son and I went inside the gallery to ask about it. It turns out that the painter, a famous Israeli artist named Zvi Malnovitzer, had a dream in which the Rebbe MH" M said to him, "Why aren't you painting me?!" So he did! (The painting is gorgeous.)

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CHOVEVEI TORAH BACHURIM ORGANIZE FLEET OF SUKKA-MOBILES

A dedicated group of *bachurim*, headed by Emanuel Storfer and Shmuel Turk, organized, built and manned a fleet of 5 Sukka Mobiles that operated all over New York City. After dancing all night, *bachurim* from Tomchei Tmimim Chovevei Torah did *mitzvaim* from 9:30 a.m. until night fall throughout Chol HaMoed.

You may have seen them lined up on Kingston & Eastern Parkway.



Three of the five Sukka Mobiles were huge 18-foot flatbed trucks. They traveled around the city bringing the *mitzvos* of the Yom Tov to thousands of Jews. They attracted Jews at Yankee Stadium who thought they were only coming to watch the playoffs. They were at 37th & Broadway, Times Square, Ground Zero, Union Square Park, and New York University and many other important locations.

The Daily News on October 14th described the beautiful Sukka Mobiles in a half-page article and included the following quotes:

"I've never seen a sukka on a truck before," Orly said. "It made me feel good to say the blessings and it gave me a sense of being Jewish."

"As a Jewish mother, I feel proud," said Yaffa Bertel. "This mobile sukka gave me a good sense of a Jewish environment."

The *bachurim* averaged 200 *brachos* for *lulav* & *esrog* and 70 *brachos* for *Leishev BaSukka* per Sukka Mobile per day.

Rabbi Levi Baumgarten, the well-known *shliach* of the NYC Mitzvah tank, led one group of the *bachurim* into Manhattan. Among the *bachurim* who participated were: Zushe Wilmowsky, Ari Rendler, Mendel Wilansky, Zalman Rothchild, Yehuda Tamir, Hershey Raskin, and Yitzchok Rosenstein.

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