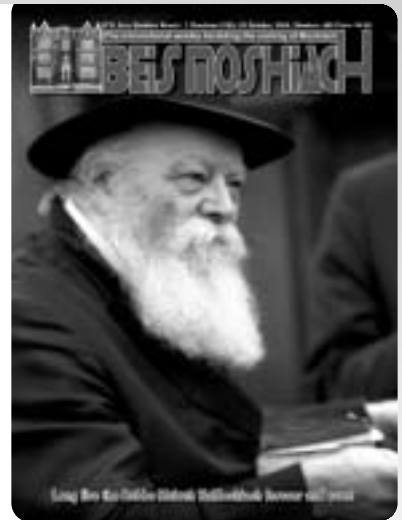


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THE CORRECT APPROACH: "GOING OUT"

SICHOS IN ENGLISH



SHABBOS PARSHAS, LECH LECHA; 8TH DAY OF MARCHESHVAN, 5751; SIYUM OF RAMBAM

1. This Shabbos is distinguished by the fact that those who study three chapters of the Rambam's Mishneh Torah complete the study of that text in its totality today.[171] This completes the seventh cycle of the study of the Mishneh Torah and directly afterwards, we begin the eighth cycle of study.

Whenever the study of a Torah text is concluded – even by a single individual, it is proper to make a celebration[172] to be attended by others. Surely this applies when many Jews have joined together in studying a text like the Mishneh Torah which includes the entire Oral Torah.

Even those who, at present, do not study three chapters a day themselves should also join in this celebration. The Talmud relates that Abayei would hold a celebration when he saw another sage finish a Talmudic tractate. Thus even those who themselves did not study that tractate shared the happiness of the individual who did, to the point where the celebration became “theirs.”

The rationale for the above is that since all are participating in a single study – although one is studying one

tractate and the other a different one – all have a share in the celebration.[173] Thus, in regard to the study of the Rambam's works, even those who study one chapter a day or who study Seifer HaMitzvos have a share in the celebration of those who study three chapters a day.[174]

Furthermore, since the study of the Mishneh Torah has spread throughout the international Jewish community – and thus, is considered as an established custom – the celebration of the conclusion of its study relates to the entire Jewish people. To draw a parallel to the Written Torah: Since the Torah is “the inheritance of the congregation of Yaakov,” the heritage of every Jew, even those Jews who are presently not involved with Torah study celebrate on Simchas Torah. Similarly, since the study of the Mishneh Torah has become an accepted Jewish custom, every Jew has a connection with it.

In particular, there is a unique significance to the fact that we are concluding the seventh cycle of study and beginning the eighth. In general, each time we start a new cycle of study we must follow the principle, “Always ascend higher in holy matters,” and reach a higher level of study. Furthermore, each increase must be greater and more inclusive than the

increase which preceded it. Beyond this, however, there is a unique significance to the numbers seven and eight.

Seven represents a complete cycle. Thus, in the realm of time – which together with space defines the basic condition of our material world – we find that the week is divided into seven days and similarly, there will be seven millennia of creation.[175] Similarly, the Jewish people are divided into seven groups as reflected in the use of the Menorah with its seven branches as a metaphor for the Jewish people. Each branch represents a different path of service which, in turn, has its source in one of G-d's seven emotional qualities. Thus, completing the seventh cycle of the study of the Mishneh Torah reflects a state of completion within the natural order.

In contrast, the number eight reflects an ascent above all limits for the number eight is above the cycle of the natural order and draws down an encompassing light which “protects the cycle.” Thus, eight is connected with the concept of redemption as reflected by our Sages' statement that the harp of the Messianic age will have eight strands. Similarly, cheirus, the Hebrew word for “freedom” begins with the letter Ches which is numerically

equivalent to eight.[176]

There is an allusion to this concept in the conclusion of the Mishneh Torah which quotes the verse, “And the earth will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the water covers up the ocean bed.” “The earth” refers to the natural order. It will be “filled with the knowledge of G-d,” i.e., reach a state of fulfillment. This reflects the level of the number seven.[177] The phrase, “as the water covers up the ocean bed,” implies a state of fulfillment that transcends the natural order in which the earth is covered up by the waters [“the waters of pure knowledge”] until all that is perceived is the water itself. This reflects the level of the number eight.

The significance of the completion of the study of the Mishneh Torah is enhanced by the day on which its study is completed, the eighth of Cheshvan. The seventh of Cheshvan is the day when “the last person in Israel (who took part in the pilgrimage to the Beis HaMikdash) returned to (his home on) the Euphrates.” Thus, on the day after the direct influence of Simchas Torah – the celebration of the conclusion of the reading of the Written Law – is concluded, we complete the study of the Oral Law, the Mishneh Torah.

The connection between the numbers seven and eight is also reflected in that the Mishneh Torah’s study is concluded on the eighth day of the month. It is also Shabbos, the seventh day of the week. The above is also connected to the present year, 5751, a year when, “I will show you wonders.” The latter phrase refers to the Messianic age which, as explained above, is connected with the number eight.

2. This week’s Torah portion, Parshas Lech Lecha, shares a connection to the above concepts: This portion begins with the command, “Go out of your land, your native country, and your father’s house,” which is interpreted by Chassidic thought as a directive to leave one’s habits and

regular pattern of daily life.

Before receiving this command, Avrohom had reached a high spiritual level. At the age of three, he “recognized his Creator,” and from then onward, he advanced in the service of G-d. Nevertheless, at the age of seventy five, he was given this command to leave his previous rung of service, a rung that was connected with service within the limits of the world, and told to proceed to a higher level, “the land which I (G-d) will show you,”[178] a level above the world’s limits.

This relates to the difference

One might think that, rather than involve himself in spreading the wellsprings outward, it is preferable for him to devote his time to studying Chassidus himself. He must realize that this is an incorrect approach...

between the service of emotion and intellect mentioned previously. Seventy five represents the ultimate in emotional service for seventy is seven times ten, i.e., a complete expression of all seven emotional qualities and five represents the five expressions of chesed which are the source for our emotional qualities. After reaching this level, Avrohom was instructed to ascend higher, to leave Charan (which represents the throat, the intermediary between intellect and emotion) and reach the level of the intellect itself.[179]

For this reason, the covenant

promising Avrohom the lands of the Keini, K’nizi and the Kadmoni (who represent the three intellectual qualities) was made at that time. This higher level is also reflected at the conclusion of the Torah portion which describes the covenant of circumcision. A circumcision is made on the eighth day of a child’s life, a level of completion that transcends the level of seven.[180]

This leads to a transcendent revelation of G-dliness as described in Parshas VaYeira. Before the circumcision, only those levels of G-dliness which related to creation could be revealed to Avrohom. After the circumcision, he could appreciate even those levels which transcend creation.

3. The conclusion of the Mishneh Torah gives us the potential to increase our study of the Mishneh Torah beyond its previous levels. We should publicize the study of the Mishneh Torah and interest more Jews in joining one of the study cycles (preferably, the cycle of three chapters a day; if not, one chapter a day or the study of Seifer HaMitzvos). In this manner, more Jews will become involved in the study of this text which includes the entire Oral Law.

Even a person who has himself completed seven cycles of study of the Mishneh Torah should involve himself in the efforts to spread this study to others. He might think that, rather than try to influence another person to study, he should do something in which he knows he will be successful, study the Mishneh Torah himself. Nevertheless, it is appropriate for him to go out and try to influence another person who has never studied the text.

The same applies to our efforts to spread the wellsprings of Yiddishkeit and Chassidus outward. One might think that, rather than involve himself in these activities, it is preferable for him to devote his time to studying Chassidus himself. He must realize that this is an incorrect approach. Today, spreading Yiddishkeit is a matter of pikuach nefesh, i.e., the very existence of many members of our people are

threatened and can be saved by these activities. As such, everyone even a person who has already reached a high level of study should involve himself in these activities. Indeed, in regard to pikuach nefesh, our Sages have taught that, a gadol, a person who has already reached an advanced level should set an example and show others how important it is to be involved in these activities.

There is an allusion to such efforts in the beginning of Parshas VaYeira. There, the Torah relates how G-d saw that Avrohom desired guests and, therefore, sent him angels who appeared to him as guests.

There is a difficulty in this explanation. Why did G-d send angels who did not eat and have them appear to eat? On the surface, by showing hospitality to such angels Avrohom would not have fulfilled the mitzvah of hachnasas orchim (showing hospitality to guests). Why would G-d fool Avrohom and have him think that he is

fulfilling the mitzvah of hachnasas orchim when he is not? Furthermore, from this passage, our Sages derive the principle, "Hachnasas orchim is greater than receiving the Divine Presence." How can such a concept be derived from an activity which was really not hachnasas orchim?

These questions force us to say that, in fact, Avrohom's activity was an expression of hachnasas orchim. When the angels descended to this world, they took on the characteristics of men. Although their own level was above that of our material world, they descended into this world and, for the time being, acted like men of this world. Therefore, in tending to them, Avrohom actually fulfilled the mitzvah of hachnasas orchim.

The angels' behavior teaches us an important lesson regarding our activities with others. When involving ourselves with people on a lower level, we must be willing to descend temporarily, to enter their frame of

reference and way of thinking. Only in this manner will our efforts have a real effect upon them.

May our activities in spreading Yiddishkeit and Chassidus, and in particular, spreading the Rambam's teachings, hasten the coming of the time when G-d will lead the entire Jewish people to Eretz Yisroel,[181] as it exists in a complete manner, "from the land of Egypt until the Euphrates River," including the lands of the Keini, K'nizi, and the Kadmoni with the coming of Moshiach. Then, we will merit the ultimate revelation of G-dliness as the Rambam writes:

The occupation of the entire world will be only to know G-d. The Jews will be great Sages and know hidden matters, attaining knowledge of their Creator to [the full extent of human potential as it is written, "The earth will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover up the ocean bed."

NOTES:

171. There is also a program of study in which one chapter of the Mishneh Torah is studied each day. The program in which three chapters are studied each day is preferable since it allows the entire text to be completed within a year. Thus, it resembles the Torah whose public reading is completed over a yearly cycle. (There is, however, also a three year cycle of Torah readings.) This is particularly appropriate for, as the name Mishneh Torah implies, the Rambam intended his text to be studied directly after one completes the study of the Torah.

172. The halachic authorities have conveyed the status of a seudas mitzvah on celebrations of this nature.

173. This concept is also explained in regard to the division of the study of the Talmud among many individuals to be completed within a single year. Since it is impossible for a single person to complete the study of the entire Talmud in this time, by learning a single tractate and combining and sharing one's study with others, it is considered as if they each completed the entire Talmud.

174. To refer back to the annual and tri-annual cycles of Torah readings: Even a person who followed a tri-annual cycle would surely join in the Simchas Torah celebrations of one who followed an annual cycle.

175. Within this cycle, the seventh day is unique for it is Shabbos. Similarly, the seventh millennium will be the Messianic age.

176. In Chassidic terminology, the number seven is, as explained above, associated with the seven emotions. The service associated with it is the conquest of the seven nations who inhabited Eretz Yisroel which reflects the refinement of our seven emotional

qualities. In contrast, eight is associated with the service of intellect which will characterize the Messianic age.

177. In Hilchos T'shuva, when describing the Messianic age, the Rambam quotes only this portion of the verse. Hilchos T'shuva relates to perfection within the context of the natural order. Therefore, it does not quote the entire verse. In contrast, Hilchos Melachim which represents the completion of the entire Mishneh Torah and thus, the state of ultimate fulfillment, quotes the verse in its entirety.

178. The Hebrew word "ar'echa" translated as "I will show you," can also be rendered as "I will reveal you." Through this journey, Avrohom revealed his essential self.

179. There is a level of intellect which is intended to stimulate our emotional service. This, however, does not represent the essence of intellect which is entirely above the level of emotions.

180. The ultimate level of circumcision will also come in the Messianic age (which is associated with eight as mentioned above). Then, "the L-rd, your G-d, will circumcise the foreskin of your hearts."

181. There is a connection between the Rambam and Eretz Yisroel. Although he was not able to actually move to Eretz Yisroel, throughout his entire life, the Rambam desired to live there and, ultimately, was buried there. Perhaps this indicates that his mission in life was to refine the Diaspora, particularly the land of Egypt where he spent many years of his life and composed the Mishneh Torah. Indeed, this is alluded to in his name which serves as an acronym for the Hebrew words meaning, "to multiply My wonders in the land of Egypt."

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WHAT WERE WE DOING IN THE MARKET?

BY RABBI CHAIM ASHKENAZI
MASHPIA, YESHIVAS TOMCHEI T'MIMIM, LOD

TRANSLATED BY MICHOEL LEIB DOBRY



The bazaar begins on Rosh HaShana, the day of inner kabbalas ol that brings about the coronation of the king, and we conclude with the great and boundless joy of Simchas Torah. What is the connection between the beginning and the end? There must be a connection, for this is not some mishmash of a marketplace with items sold by merchants whose only desire is to make profit. There must be a connection between all the items sold at this bazaar.

There is a well-known saying from the Rebbe's sichos that the month of Tishrei is Bazaar Month. It was once customary that a bazaar would be held one month out of the year, where various merchants would gather and purchase merchandise and supplies for the entire year. Everyone would fill up their sacks and crates, and afterwards, they would head home, unload the packages, and arrange the merchandise so it can be used accordingly at the proper time and occasion. Similarly, G-d has given us one month to buy "merchandise"

for the whole year.

At the Rosh HaShana "stand," we find *kabbalas ol*. At the Yom Kippur "stand," there is the heartfelt awakening to return to the source. At the Sukkos "stand," there is the joy of a mitzva. Finally, when we come to the Simchas Torah "stand," we get the tremendous and intense joy, all hours of the night and day, in accordance with longstanding Chabad custom. We fill our suitcases, then – "and Yaakov went on his way" – we return with the packages. And assuming we encounter no strikes at the airports or

delays at the customs check, we come home and unpack in order to begin using what we bought, according to the prevailing need throughout the year. Essentially, we need all these Tishrei "sale-of-the-month" items all year long, and in large quantity.

Let's pause here for a moment and consider a most interesting and remarkable aspect of this entire subject. The bazaar begins on Rosh HaShana, which as mentioned above, is the day of inner *kabbalas ol* that brings about the coronation of the king, and we conclude with the great and boundless joy of Simchas Torah.

A question arises: What is the connection between the beginning and the end? There must be a connection, for this is not some mishmash of a marketplace with items sold by merchants whose only desire is to "make profit." These items are "sold" by G-d, as the pasuk says, "my beloved is to me," standing in the marketplace and selling his wares. The purchasers are the People of Israel, who buy these items for the needs of the body and the soul. Therefore, there must be a connection between all the items that are being sold at this bazaar.

Of course, someone who is

unfamiliar with the teachings of Chabad chassidus looks at this month as two unrelated parts. In the first part, people “buy” fear and sadness, while in the second part, they “buy” simcha. How do these two go together? There are the general principles that “there is no chronological sequence in the Torah,” “there is no order to the Mishna,” and other explanations of this type.

However, based on the pasuk, “His left hand is under my head and His right hand embraces me,” chassidus explains that the first part of the month corresponds to G-d’s left hand, which supports a Jew’s head. Thus, the pasuk says, “His left hand is **under** my head,” not “upon my head,” or else it would mean that He is hitting or striking me with His left hand. G-d places His hand under the Jew’s head, as a father and mother

would place their hand under their son’s head when it hurts him, or to prevent him from receiving a blow, etc. Therefore, this represents a great expression of kinship and closeness, though it comes through the left hand, which arouses bitterness over the lack of true *kabbalas ol*.

After this avoda, which continues until after Yom Kippur, G-d then adds His right hand and embraces the Jew’s essence, as is written, “His right hand embraces me.” This finds expression in the mitzva of *sukka*, as a Jew is obligated to bring everything he has into the *sukka*. In other words, the mitzva is not only to learn and daven in the *sukka*, but also to eat, drink, vacation, hold meetings, etc. – everything becomes a mitzva when it’s done in the *sukka*.

The *sukka* must have three walls, just like the three sections of the arm.

Furthermore, just as the hand is the smallest section, similarly, the third *sukka* wall needs only a handbreadth, because the *sukka* is comparable to G-d’s arm, which embraces all that a Jew has. G-d doesn’t just want his learning and davening; He also wants to embrace his personal business, his eating and drinking, and all his other needs – everything must enter the realm of holiness.

This is also most fitting in connection with the pasuk: “*ba’keseh l’yom chageinu*” (on the appointed day of our holiday). On Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur, the embrace is still in a state of concealment (*b’kisui*), as we only see G-d’s left hand “under my head.” On the holiday of Sukkos, it becomes “the day of our holiday” – the day that the embrace is revealed. When? On “our holiday,” the holiday of Sukkos, the time of the revelation



of the true depth of the kinship between a Jew and G-d.

In what way does a Jew find true favor in G-d's eyes? There is an essential connection a Jew has to G-d that is independent of mitzva fulfillment. However, here we are dealing with an expression of endearment, an embrace resulting from our avoda from Rosh HaShana to Simchas Torah. As mentioned above, Rosh HaShana is the day of inner *kabbalas ol*, when we crown the king.

Kabbalas ol means putting aside one's entire existence, as expressed by prostration, as if to say, "I am as the floor upon which everyone treads, and I have no existence at all." This is demonstrated in greater depth on Yom Kippur with numerous prostrations, and especially during N'ila, when we are "locked in" with G-d on account of our essential bittul to Him. As a result, during the holiday of Sukkos, a Jew places all that he has into G-d's right hand, no matter what – his muddy clothes and shoes, even his laptop computer with his growing list of contacts – everything into His infinite hand. This is another expression of self-nullification, showing the depth of one's *kabbalas ol*. No difference here between Torah study and our day-to-day business; everything is holiness, everything enters His embrace.

Thus, we find that Sukkos has an expression of unity. From the aspect of *kabbalas ol*, there is no difference between fulfilling Torah and mitzvos and our other involvements, since everything is done with *kabbalas ol*. Similarly, in a sukka, no difference is recognized between Jews. Indeed, "**all Jews** are fit to dwell in **one** sukka." Unity is also emphasized in the shaking of the lulav and esrog, which takes place ideally in the sukka itself.

The conclusion comes with Simchas Torah. Chassidus explains that the avoda of Simchas Torah is with the legs. While we do take a

Torah scroll, it is not for the purpose of opening it to learn and understand its contents with novel insights; the Torah scroll remains rolled up and covered, with only our legs in action for the forty-eight hours in Chutz LaAretz and the twenty-four hours in Eretz Yisroel. Every Jew, regardless of where he is holding in his Torah study, whether he is an ignoramus or a diligent scholar, does this.

What exactly is this peculiar custom? We are the legs of the Torah, as only the Torah determines every facet of our lives, and therefore, we are similar to legs that go in the direction that the Torah commands.

Even our heads and our hearts are essentially just legs for the Torah. But while we must understand with our intellect and feel with our hearts, nevertheless, we must also know that they are not the true authorities. Just as the legs have to walk, the head has to understand what it is told and the heart has to feel. In short, we are all legs for carrying out the instructions of the Torah.

Thus, Simchas Torah is the successful conclusion of the process that began on Rosh HaShana through *kabbalas ol*. Here, we implement it through a multitude of actions, demonstrated by our dancing with a rolled up and covered Torah scroll, as we are merely the legs of the Torah. This is perhaps the reason why chassidim have the custom at Simchas Torah farbrengens – when they've had a bit of "mashkeh" – to do "somersaults," exemplifying how our head is really our legs. The mitzva of the day to lift our legs up high! This is what chassidim would do at every farbrengen, when the mashkeh was flowing, and they got the farbrengen's main message, i.e., after all is said and done, after all the wonderful chassidic explanations, the conclusion is that we are the legs, and this is best expressed by doing "somersaults."

This can all be explained with the

following allegory:

Anyone who has ever learned how to drive knows that first you learn about the parts of the car, traffic signs, in order to know how to relate to them properly. That is the easy part, because it requires only the ability to understand and remember things, i.e., intellect. Afterwards comes the actual driving instruction, which demands continuous practice to train the new driver in realizing that his feet – despite the fact that they're down under the dashboard and they can't see what's happening up on the road at all – know that they must obey the head, which does see what's going on. All they have to do is just follow the head's instructions to start, slow down, or slam on the brakes instantly, as a moment's hesitation could be critical and *ch"v* might even create a life-and-death situation, as any driver knows.

This means that the main part of a driver's education and the determining factor whether he can actually receive his license is how responsive the legs are to the head and how quickly they follow instructions. There are differences when someone is learning how to drive a standard automobile, a truck, a bus (especially a school bus), or an ambulance, etc. Each one carries additional demands upon the legs for even greater control to execute the required functions with lightning speed.

From this allegory, we can understand the entire exercise that already began in Elul as simple *kabbalas ol*, then attaining inner *kabbalas ol* on Rosh HaShana, etc., as mentioned above, culminating with Simchas Torah, when we fulfill in practical terms what we learned in this exercise in body and soul: We must be subservient to Him and His Will.

As mentioned earlier, we practically implement this on Simchas Torah, when we take the test

to receive our license, as our entire being becomes legs for the Torah, dancing with our legs day and night. It's not the intellect that stands out here; it's not merely the emotion that dictates our conduct, rather, it's the mitzva of the day to dance with our legs. This comes as a continuation of Rosh HaShana, when the mitzva of the day is to say the words of T'hillim. Then, the Jew again functions as a leg, as the uttering of holy yet inanimate words of Torah serve as a passageway for the intellect.

Thus, the first thing we must take out of the packages we purchased at the Tishrei bazaar is the most important and valuable item – twenty-four hours a day throughout the year – the knowledge that we are merely legs of the Torah. What is the legs' job? To go where the head wants to go, and to do so immediately without the slightest delay, otherwise, they will *ch"v* revoke our license.

As mentioned in the driving analogy, the demands upon the driver of a private automobile are not the same as the driver of a public vehicle, particularly one who transports children. Clearly, the latter must have a much higher level of skill and ability.

As Lubavitcher chassidim, all of us, willingly or not, are drivers for the public. We must bring people to their proper destination, especially those who are intellectual "children." Therefore, it is our obligation to be especially careful not to hesitate in immediately fulfilling the head's instructions that come to the leg instantaneously.

This is particularly fitting in connection with the pasuk, "Six hundred thousand on **foot** that **I** (Anochi) am in their midst." The simple interpretation is that Moshe Rabbeinu is saying: I am among six hundred thousand people who are foot soldiers. Chassidus, however, in its customary fashion of shedding

innovative light on every pasuk in Torah or saying from our Sages, explains the meaning as follows:

The Jewish People are Moshe's legs – the legs of the Torah, as is written, "Moshe commanded us Torah" – and when they act accordingly, they merit having the aspect of "Anochi" shines within each one of them.

According to a different interpretation, this reveals the "Anochi" within Moshe.

This "Anochi" represents the revelation of Moshiach, the aspect of "yechida" within Klal Yisroel and the world. For this reason, it is called

The first thing we must take out of the packages we purchased at the Tishrei bazaar is the most important and valuable item: the knowledge that we are merely legs of the Torah.

"Anochi," simply "I Am Who I Am," G-d's Essence.

Therefore, we are compared to the legs down below the driver's seat, receiving messages from the head, which is located above, watching all that is happening on the road. And as mentioned earlier, we must obey. Similarly, there were occasions at farbrengens when the Rebbe shlita commanded people to whistle, turn their hats and jackets inside out, their cups upside down, and other strange modes of conduct. Anyone who knows that he is a leg doesn't hesitate in fulfilling the head's command.

This is essentially the whole point behind *aliya l'regel* (going up to the Beis HaMikdash in Yerushalayim) on *shloshes ha'regalim* (the three Yomim Tovim). Everything revolves around this one central point of Lubavitch thinking: Even if we have a head and a heart – we are merely legs, which must obey the head! Therefore, the festivals are called *regalim*, as such conduct can only be grasped through *aliya l'regel*, which Jews observed scrupulously as a fitting preparation for Yom Tov. For this reason, chassidim back in Russia were stringent about traveling to Lubavitch by foot, in order to emphasize to themselves and to others: You are merely the legs of the Sh'china.

In our times, when our head is the Rebbe – *Rosh B'nei Yisroel* – who sees what's happening on the road Am Yisroel has been traveling along since it became a nation, and now he sees that "Here comes Moshiach!" we, the legs, must immediately obey and prepare ourselves, our family, our community, and the whole world for his imminent arrival. We must not try and argue with the head, "We don't see anything! It's dark down below under the seat!"

Such an argument sounds so ridiculous that it would make a person say, "You're the legs sitting in the dark under the seat, and you're arguing with the head, who sees Moshiach actively involved in revealing himself?" One could also say that hearing such nonsensical expressions could make a person start saying T'hillim to pray for mercy upon the souls of such poor wretched people who think that the head is below and the legs are above...

May it be G-d's Will that there should be fulfilled the request by so many good Jews on the first night of Rosh HaShana, "may we be as a head," i.e., we know that we are not the head, yet we long to be connected to the head.

WHOEVER SEES A TABLE SHOULD OPEN HIS EYES AND SEE G-DLINESS

PREPARED FOR PUBLICATION BY SHNEUR ZALMAN BERGER

Stories, anecdotes, and quotes from the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach, from the archives of R' Yoel Blinitzky of New York.

NO TALKING

The Rebbe once said the following regarding those who speak during davening in 770:

“Free choice is not taken away. You want to talk? Go to another room, daven and begin talking so you can fulfill your custom of talking while davening, but why must you drag me into a minyan where you’re talking?”

DID YOU SAY CHITAS TODAY?

It was in the month of Tishrei 5738 (1977), when the Rebbe came in to daven Maariv. After he got to his usual place, the Rebbe clapped his hands facing the congregation.

Then he gazed seriously towards the eastern side of the shul and pointed at a bachur who stood

there with a camera. “Did you say Chitas today?”

The bachur didn’t answer, and the Rebbe continued, “There’s someone there taking pictures,” and the Rebbe motioned to ask him whether he said Chitas yet that day. When the bachur didn’t reply, the Rebbe said, “What is more important, saying Chitas or taking pictures in shul? They should explain this to him in English.”

WHO WILL HELP WHOM?

A distinguished man who was supposed to go to England to serve as a rav had a long yechidus with the Rebbe. He told the Rebbe that he hoped to help the Lubavitch mosdos in England. The Rebbe said the Lubavitch mosdos would help him.

IN THE HANDS OF HIS MASHPIA

The Rebbe once said that the *nefesh, ruach, neshama* of a Tamim is in the hands of his mashpia.

JEWISH DRIVER

In 5710 (1950), when the Rebbe went to the Ohel, a group of T’mimim and Anash went along so there would be a minyan. It once happened that they were missing a tenth man, and the Rebbe asked them to find out whether the taxi driver was Jewish. He was.

THE REBBE PREPARED HIS CHASSIDIM

When the Rebbe announced the mitvza of having a letter in a Torah in 5741 (1981), questions were raised, many of them contesting the campaign. The Rebbe responded to all these questions at farbrengens, prefacing his remarks by saying that he was preempting questions that might be posed.

A few weeks later, the mashpia R’ Mendel Futerfas was standing at

Farbrengen with the Rebbe



a registration stand in the center of B'nei Brak. A misnaged who was a rosh kollel passed by and began asking questions about the “new mitzva” of buying a letter in a Torah. R' Mendel was prepared to answer based on the Rebbe's explanations at the farbrengens.

After the misnaged asked four questions, R' Mendel said that the Hagada shel Pesach has only Four Questions. “Do you want to register your children, or not?”

After some hesitation, the man agreed to register his children and gave the information, but he

The shliach agreed to help him on condition that when he returned to New York, he would tell the Rebbe that the Chassid, Rabbi Meir Avtzon, is telling people that the Rebbe is Moshiach.

refused to say which kollel he headed.

SHIRAYIM IN LUBAVITCH?!

At the end of the farbrengen on Shavuos 5713 (1953), the Rebbe told one of the Chassidim to say l'chaim. The man said l'chaim and then asked the Rebbe for challa. The Rebbe gave him a whole challa from the table. Other Chassidim immediately grabbed pieces from the challa.

Seeing this, the Rebbe began giving out a few slices of challa, but many Chassidim put out their hands and asked for challa too.

The Rebbe gave a piece of challa to whoever held out his hand, but said, "What, do you want Polish *shetik* of grabbing shirayim? In Lubavitch there was no such thing."

HE MEANS IT

In the early years of the Rebbe's nesius, *shadar* R' Moshe Dubinsky went to Detroit to fundraise. He went to one of the shluchim and asked him to help him out by giving him addresses of well-to-do people. The shliach agreed to help him on condition that when he returned to New York, he would tell the Rebbe that the Chassid, Rabbi Meir Avtzon, is telling people that the Rebbe is Moshiach.

R' Moshe had no choice but to comply. When he returned to New York, he told the Rebbe.

The Rebbe responded, "What can I do when he means it truthfully?"

NOTHING LESS THAN MOSHIACH!

A distinguished rosh yeshiva in New York once had a yechidus with the Rebbe. He asked the Rebbe: We know that after every descent the Jewish people experiences, throughout the generations, an ascent of some sort followed. What was the ascent after the Holocaust?

The Rebbe responded with a question. "And what do you think is the ascent after the Holocaust?"

"The founding of the State of Israel," said the rosh yeshiva.

The Rebbe said this was not an ascent. The Holocaust caused a descent in Yiddishkeit and the State of Israel did not cause an ascent in Yiddishkeit. The Rebbe continued saying that he was sure that the ascent after the Holocaust was the coming of Moshiach, and he wouldn't concede on that!

CLEAR VISION

On Shabbos, the 20th of Cheshvan 5735, the birthday of the Rebbe Rashab, the Rebbe farbrenge to mark the occasion. After the first sicha, the Rebbe said that all those who had seen the Rebbe Rashab should picture the Rebbe Rashab's face and how it impacted on them.

The Chassidim began singing a niggun. The Rebbe was in a state of great joy, encouraging the singing with both hands.

As the Rebbe said this, he held the table with both hands and said that it wasn't a physical table but G-dly light that gave it life, and whoever said he saw a table should open his eyes and see G-dliness.

The Chassid Rabbi Alter Hilvitz a"h sat behind the Rebbe. In the middle of the singing, the Rebbe turned around to him and asked him whether he had already pictured the Rebbe Rashab.

R' Alter said that he sees, with clear vision, the Rebbe Rashab in the Rebbe. The Rebbe immediately looked somber, turned back around, and looked down for some time.

ZEALOUS BACHURIM

A tune was composed from chapter 72 in T'hillim for the

Rebbe's 71st birthday. The words were, "*yifrach b'yamav tzaddik.*" The Chassid Zalman Jaffe commented to the Rebbe that we should say, "*yifrach b'yameinu tzaddik.*"

The Rebbe smiled and said that he wouldn't publicize the comment since the bachurim would then go and reprint the T'hillim!

THE EXPANSION OF 770

770 was expanded for the first time in 5728. The Rebbe said that the time would come when it would be too small and they would have to expand it further to Kingston, and even that wouldn't be enough.

TORAH T'MIMA

When talmidim in 770 planned on publishing a *kovetz pilpulim*, the Rebbe told the hanhala that they should include *pilpulim* on both Nigleh and Chassidus (as opposed to printing them separately), because in Chabad, Nigleh and Chassidus are one and the same thing.

TO LIVE WITH THE REBBE

After Tishrei 5736 (1975), a bachur from Australia had a yechidus and asked the Rebbe how he could continue and remember and live with everything he saw and heard in 770 throughout Tishrei.

The Rebbe said that upon his return home, he should repeat his experiences to others, and that way he would remember and live with it.

SAY L'CHAIM WITHOUT LIMITS

In 5741 (1981), Purim was on a Friday. The Rebbe came out for Mincha at 3:15 and then returned to his room. A few minutes later, the Rebbe returned to the small zal. There were only ten to fifteen bachurim and men there at that time, and to their surprise, the



R' Alter Hilvitz a"h

Rebbe began saying a maamer for ten minutes.

Upon concluding the maamer, the Rebbe told those present, "Say l'chaim without limits as long as I am here."

OPEN YOUR EYES AND SEE G-DLINESS

At the farbrengen of Acharon shel Pesach 5735 (1975), the Rebbe said, "The revelation of Moshiach is shining now. Just as when Moshiach comes the entire world will see that 'the mouth of Hashem has spoken,' this is openly shining now too. 'Mouth of Hashem' means a revelation of the light of Havayah in the world."

As the Rebbe said this, he held the table with both hands and said that it wasn't a physical table but G-dly light that gave it life, and whoever said he saw a table should open his eyes and see G-dliness.

THE REBBE WANTED TO ANSWER AMEN

A couple went to the Rebbe, and the husband said that his wife was very ill. The Rebbe told her to drink a cup of wine, and even poured a cup of wine then and there, and said she would be well.

The woman took the cup of wine and intended on drinking it outside the Rebbe's room. The Rebbe said she should drink it in his room because he wanted to answer "amen" to her bracha.

WHEN THEY SING IN 770...

At the farbrengen on 15 Tammuz 5745 (1985), before the singing of *Sh'Yibaneh Beis HaMikdash* the Rebbe said: I assume that when *Sh'Yibaneh* is sung here, it is also sung in Olam HaBa and in the lower and upper Gan Eden. Whoever does not assume so, that is his prerogative.



T'mimim involved in expanding 770

CHASSIDIM'S LOVE FOR THE REBBE

On Rosh Chodesh Kislev 5738, the Rebbe said when he would be leaving for his house. This was after the Rebbe's heart attack, when he spent many weeks in 770. A large crowd waited to see the Rebbe after not having seen him for a long time.

When the Rebbe went out, the crowd burst into a mighty rendition of "Napoleon's March." The Rebbetzin was on the second floor of 770, looking down in a way that she could not be seen. Afterwards, she told one of the aides that she didn't imagine the great love the Chassidim had for the Rebbe.

CHINUCH IS ALSO SHLICHUS

Someone wanted to go on shlichus to Australia but the Rebbe did not respond. He tried a few times to get the Rebbe's consent but the Rebbe told him to remain and work in yeshiva, because "educating bachurim is also shlichus."

NO ULTERIOR MOTIVES

A Chassid asked the Rebbe for advice to ward off ulterior motives. The Rebbe answered with a parable of a businessman who did a deal which could earn him a million dollars. If this businessman would have the opportunity of doing another deal which would earn him only a thousand dollars, obviously he wouldn't do it.

If one is immersed in the study of Torah and Chassidus, "ulterior motives" will have no value.

LOVE AND HISKASHRUS

The Rebbe once told someone in yechidus: Love and hiskashrus are not produced on demand, nor through a segula, but by inner awareness.

HE FOUND IT

A Belzer Chassid once had a yechidus, and he asked for a bracha for his sick wife. The Rebbe asked him whether he had a prescription for medication from the doctor, but the man said he did not. The Rebbe repeated the question and once again, the man said he did not.

The Rebbe told him to check his pocket and the man found the prescription.

The Chassid was amazed because he did not have a prescription in his pocket before he went to the Rebbe.

A NIGGUN FOR EVERY OCCASION

At the end of a farbrengen, the Rebbe once said, when a Jew has a thirst for G-dliness, he begins to sing, "Tzama Lecha Nafshi," and the Rebbe immediately began singing "Tzama Lecha Nafshi."

Then the Rebbe said, "All this is when he has a thirst, but what do you do when you don't have a thirst? For this we say, 'Esen Est Zich...'"

GOOD NEWS

One Sunday in 5749, an Iranian immigrant passed by for dollars. After receiving a dollar, the Rebbe called him back and gave him another dollar for his father, and said he should tell his father that he would soon hear good news.

Three days later, one of his father's relatives incarcerated in Iran was released.

FEELING THE DISTANCE

In the 50's the hanhala of the yeshiva in 770 would go to the Rebbe every Thursday to report about the bachurim. Among those who went were the mashpia Rabbi Shmuel Levitin and Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson.

If one is immersed in the study of Torah and Chassidus, "ulterior motives" will have no value.

Among the talmidim were Rabbi Gershon Mendel Garelik, who constantly tried to be close with R' Yisroel and would ask him to relate what he heard in yechidus.

Once, after the weekly yechidus, R' Gershon Mendel saw that R' Yisroel was in an emotional upheaval. When R' Gershon Mendel asked him what had happened, R' Yisroel sighed and said, "What can I tell you. The more time goes by and the more coarsened we become, the greater is the distance between us and the Rebbe..."

MANUSCRIPT OF THE RAMAK

One year, Rabbi Nissan Pinson brought the Rebbe some manuscripts of the Ramak. When he entered the room, the Rebbe stood up and took the manuscripts with two hands, saying that in exchange, R' Nissan could take anything he wanted from the s'farim in the room.

R' Pinson took a set of the Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*.

"Today the avoda has to be with chesed, and this is what brings success, as is plainly seen."



The Rebbe holding Moshiach's Seifer Torah

AVODA OF CHESED

The Rebbe once told a mashpia in one of the Tomchei T'mimim

yeshivos in Eretz Yisroel, "Today the avoda has to be with chesed, and this is what brings success, as is plainly seen."

SIGNIFICANCE OF REMOVING THE BEARD

Rabbi Yeshua Chadad, shliach in Italy, relates that one time a man had a yechidus and he told the Rebbe about his son who learned in yeshiva and grew a beard. The boy was going to attend university and the parents wanted the Rebbe to tell him to remove his beard, since the boy refused to listen to them.

The Rebbe said that removing the beard was akin to taking down the third floor of a building after the entire building was built.

TO STUDY THE CHASSIDISHE PARSHA

In 5725, a mekurav to Chabad who learned in a certain yeshiva had a yechidus. He told the Rebbe it was hard for him to learn the entire parsha in *Likkutei Torah* in depth and he asked for advice.

The Rebbe told him to first learn the entire parsha in *Likkutei Torah* superficially, and only after that to study in depth at least the first *os* of one maamer, because the beginning of a maamer contains the contents of the entire maamer.

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LEARNING MATH AL TAHARAS HA'KODESH

BY AVROHOM RAYNITZ

*Is the study of mathematics a “secular” study or something that can be learned “al taharas ha’kodesh”? * Mrs. Chana Liberow has, thus far, published math books for first through third grades. * When the project is completed, girls in sixth grade will be able to compute the Jewish calendar!*

Who hasn't encountered the following situation: one of the children is doing problems in their math homework and gets stuck. The child approaches a parent for help. When the parent looks at the question, he or she sees that the child is having difficulty because they don't understand the background of the question (e.g., a girl who has to figure out something to do with a soccer game).

Like many other mothers, Mrs. Chana Liberow, shlucha in Flatbush, experienced situations like these dozens of times. She was shocked to discover what secular topics Jewish girls had to work with in the attempt to solve math problems.

Mrs. Liberow was bothered by the waste of precious time in the quest to figure out the difference in ages between three fictitious sisters, when our girls are clueless when it comes to the number of cows that were sacrificed during Sukkos.

She wondered why our children have to compare the numbers of

players in a soccer game, when we can enable them to decipher the language of the Torah and compare the number of people counted in the tribe of Shimon to the tribe of Yehuda in the census taken in the desert before the Jewish people entered Eretz Yisroel.

This line of thinking sparked the idea of using the subject of math in order to instill valuable information in the pure minds of our girls.

WHAT DOES THE REBBE THINK ABOUT OUR CHILDREN LEARNING MATH?

When Mrs. Liberow began preparing a math workbook, little did she dream of the revolution she would be creating in people's way of thinking about math.

“I didn't purport to invent a new method of learning math,” says Mrs. Liberow. “All I wanted to do was change the math problems that appear in the textbooks to examples that relate to our children and *their* world.”

Mrs. Liberow began going through all five books of the Chumash in order

to find appropriate examples, and while doing so, she realized that there are many topics that are glossed over at all levels of the school system. The census that Moshe made four times in the desert, which was previously a blur of names and numbers, became an interesting topic. She discovered fascinating questions on the p'sukim that were resolved with the help of the commentaries, and little by little, she began to feel a strong connection to these neglected parts of Torah.

That's when she realized that it wasn't enough to merely change the examples in the math workbooks. Rather, she decided that these topics in the Torah wouldn't just appear as examples to illustrate mathematical operations, **but the new workbooks would use the four basic mathematical operations to instill Torah values, facts, and halachos.**

She wrote to the Rebbe and received an amazingly pertinent answer in the *Igros Kodesh*, in a letter written to someone who wanted to be involved in Torah publications. The Rebbe wrote:

“Regarding your question about my opinion about participating in the Torah publications, it depends on the nature of the publication. That is, if it will be used to ‘make kosher’ various things. The earlier things are bad enough. But if it's a matter of *yagdil Torah v'yaadir* (aggrandizing Torah), then obviously the decision would change accordingly...”

Mrs. Liberow got the support and push she needed when she saw that the Rebbe related directly to this topic.

On 12 Tammuz 5742, the Rebbe said:

“I don’t want to call these studies ‘limudei chol’ (secular studies), because they really ought to try to make these studies *al taharas ha’kodesh*. That is, to learn mathematics in order to be able to learn and know the calculations and measurements connected with the laws of eirubin or the calendar. The Gemara says regarding this, ‘for this is your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the nations’ ... Therefore, I do not want to call these studies ‘limudei chol,’ since these studies ought to be *al taharas ha’kodesh*.”

How apt that the first school in the United States that was founded as a school *al taharas ha’kodesh*, Oholei Torah, was the first school to get the new math workbooks. This was after Oholei Torah’s administration took the workbooks and consulted with the rabbanim of Crown Heights and the Vaad HaRuchni of the yeshiva.

Beis Chaya Mushka, which is also a school *al taharas ha’kodesh*, also ordered the workbooks. In fact, they use a Yiddish version, since Yiddish is the language of the school. Mrs. Liberow was assisted by Mrs. Chana Goldschmidt, who oversees Beis Chaya Mushka’s curriculum.

WHAT DOES A MATH WORKBOOK HAVE TO DO WITH GEULA?

Mrs. Liberow prepared a math curriculum for grades one to six. Over the years, the children will become familiar with Torah topics such as: 1) trumos and maasros, 2) the census of the Jewish people 3) the Jewish calendar, 4) the history of our forefathers, 5) the construction of the Mishkan, 6) gematriyos.

In the chapter “The Census of B’nei Yisroel,” the children will study the various censuses, starting with the enumeration of the children of Yaakov and ending with the final census recorded at the end of the book of BaMidbar. The children will see how our nation developed from a small

family of twelve sons and a daughter to a family of seventy people, to a nation of 600,000 men between the ages of 20 and 60.

They will learn the circumstances of each census, and the time and place it occurred. They’ll examine the sources and gather information, and will conclude by comparing the results of the different censuses. Midrashim will help them resolve mathematical difficulties that arise, such as: how is it that in the second year after leaving Egypt, the Jewish population numbered 603,550 people but forty years later the number dropped to 601,150? Mrs. Liberow connects the topics with Geula and Moshiach, so



the children learn, for example, that the tenth census will take place very soon with the coming of Moshiach.

CALENDAR IN SIXTH GRADE

In the *HaYom Yom* for 7 Shvat, the Rebbe writes that when the Alter Rebbe was nine years old, he studied geometry and astronomy. At ten, he composed a calendar for fifteen years. Even as we anticipate the complete Geula, at which time we will once again sanctify the new moon with witnesses, every child still ought to know how to create a Jewish calendar.

Sounds extreme? The Rambam believed in the abilities of children in this regard. He writes, “This is the

calculation, nowadays when the Jewish court does not establish [the new month] according to witnesses, that we calculate the day; even children can figure it out in three to four days.”

In the new math workbooks it doesn’t go that fast, but according to the curriculum, in sixth grade the children will be able to create a calendar good for dozens of years.

The uniqueness of the Jewish calendar is that it takes both the solar and the lunar cycles into account. We count our months according to the moon’s orbit around the earth, but we have to see to it that the month of Nissan falls out in the spring, and the seasons are established by the sun’s orbit of the earth.

These calculations require some basic astronomy like the relationship between the size of the sun, moon and earth, and their location in the heavens, as well as mathematical knowledge. In first grade, for example, they will learn about the sun and the moon orbiting the earth (as opposed to the secular view of the solar system). As the class makes its way through the workbook, the material gets increasingly challenging. Step by step, they will learn what it takes to make a calendar so they can create one in sixth grade.

* * *

The new math workbooks are designed based on guidelines from the Board of Education and have clear cognitive goals, which give the children knowledge, understanding, and enable them to apply what they learn. Yet they are suitable for schools that have limudei kodesh exclusively, for the approach and all the examples are kodesh.

Thus far, workbooks in Yiddish were published for grades one to three, and in Hebrew for grade one. Last year, the workbooks were used in a number of schools in Eretz Yisroel, New York, France, and Russia, and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

ANOTHER MUST

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The screenshot shows the website for Beis Moshiach. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for HOME, PDF VERSION, ARCHIVES, and language options (English/Hebrew). The main header features the Beis Moshiach logo, a bhTech advertisement, and the Hebrew title 'בית משיח'. Below the header, the 'Chabad World' logo is visible, along with a greeting 'Long live the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach forever and ever'. The main content area displays the magazine cover for issue 439, dated 3 Kislev 5764. The cover features a portrait of a man and the title 'BEIS MOSHIACH'. Below the cover, there are three article teasers: 1. 'WE HAD NEVER HEARD IT LIKE THIS BEFORE!' presented in honor of the birthday of the Mittler Rebbe. 2. 'FARBENGEN OF MASHPIM' about farbrengens in Crown Heights. 3. 'CHASDEI BRACHA: SPREADING JOY' about Chasdei Bracha in Flatbush. A sidebar on the right contains an 'Archive' section with a dropdown menu set to '439' and an 'Advanced Search' button. The bottom of the page shows the Internet Explorer browser interface.

ENCOUNTER ON 42ND STREET

*Stories of Divine Providence experienced
by T'mimim on mivtzaim*

INCREDIBLE HASHGACHA PRATIS

Yossi Dvush relates:

For a year and a half now, Shmuel Levkivker, Tuvia Levy and I go on Mivtza T'fillin on 42nd Street in Manhattan. We often explain various topics in Judaism and inyanei Moshiach and Geula, and help many people write to the Rebbe.

The following story took place a few months ago. We were on the busy street and watching masses of people coming and going. Suddenly, I noticed a young man who looked very familiar. Hundreds of people were passing by, and he stopped for a minute at a traffic light. In the seconds that remained before the traffic light would turn green, I tried to remember where I knew him from, but could not place him.

When the light changed and hundreds of people began crossing the street, I called out, "Be'er Sheva?" I have no idea how my voice could be heard over the noise of the street but he heard me and turned around.

I was surprised that he responded, and I asked him whether he was, in fact, from Be'er Sheva, and he said that he was. He said that he remembered me too, but couldn't place me either. All our attempts at trying to remember our connection failed.

I suggested that he put on t'fillin and he agreed. I quickly saw that he had a positive and warm feeling towards Judaism. As I do in all such situations, I took his name and phone number in order to add him to my files, because I give shiurim via telephone during the week.

On Sunday, when I looked for his

Now we spoke as old friends, not as "rabbi" and "student." He was very interested in hearing how I had become a baal t'shuva, and it was obvious that he was very affected by what I told him.

phone number, I couldn't find the paper I had written it on. I was very upset, but as time went on I forgot about it completely.

Two weeks later on mivtzaim I had to ask a traffic-cop for help when I was looking for a certain street. He helped me out even though my English isn't

that great. We even got into a friendly conversation and the officer told me, to my great surprise, that he wanted to learn more about Judaism. I took his phone number and promised to have someone with fluent English call him.

When I got back to 770, I met Yosef Yitzchok and asked him to call the man, since his English was good. He said he couldn't take this on since his day was full, and he had just gotten a new Israeli on his list who was showing great interest in their learning.

I offered him an exchange. I would take his Israeli and he would take the police officer. He agreed, and we exchanged phone numbers.

When I looked at the name and number he gave me, they looked familiar. After a few seconds, it hit me. It was the name and number I had lost! I was amazed by the hashgacha pratis.

I didn't tell the Israeli what had happened. I just called him once a week and we learned over the phone.

Since he lived with a few other young Israelis in a rented apartment, he managed to convince them to listen to the shiur too.

We once got into a personal conversation in which he told me that his life's dream was to develop a career in music. He said he knew how to play a number of instruments and that he



had a lot of musical experience.

That's when it clicked for me. I asked him whether he had worked, seven years before, at a certain club in Be'er Sheva. He was taken aback by the question and said yes, he had.

I am Yossi, the barman, I told him excitedly.

"What?! I can't believe it!" he yelled into the phone.

We had met before I had done t'shuva, when we worked at the same club. He was a waiter and I was the bartender.

Now we spoke as old friends, not as "rabbi" and "student." He was very interested in hearing how I had become a baal t'shuva, and it was obvious that he was very affected by what I told him.

A few weeks later, he returned to Eretz Yisroel, and he is now taking his first steps on his way back to Yiddishkeit.

THE POWER OF A STORY IN SICHAT HA'GEULA

Meir Dovid relates:

We have been going on Mivtza T'fillin to Spanish Harlem, between 103rd and 110th streets in Manhattan, for almost a year. We experienced a number of miracles and incredible hashgacha pratis stories there, but I think that the following story tops them all, and not just because the miracle took place before our eyes.

This is what happened:

Among the stores and hotels where we put t'fillin on the workers, there's an apartment building with a number of Jewish tenants. One of these tenants is named Yonatan. He's an Israeli who moved to New York in the beginning of the 80's. We visit him every week and cheer him up.

Yonatan suffered from a chronic sinus infection for twenty years. All the doctors he ever visited gave up on him

after all the medication they prescribed failed to help him. A world-renowned doctor in the field gave him a powerful antibiotic, which she said he would have to take for the rest of his life.

When Yonatan saw that the medical world had nothing to offer him, he visited a practitioner of the occult in his neighborhood, who gave him various herbs. After blessing him in different languages, he promised that his illness would not recur, but it actually became worse than ever, and was absolutely intolerable.

One week, we brought him a copy of the weekly pamphlet *Sichat Ha'Geula* and then went on our way. The following Friday he told us that he read the story about a woman who asked the Rebbe for a bracha before having an operation, and the Rebbe said she didn't need an operation but she had to observe the laws of kashrus. When Yonatan read this, he decided to kasher his kitchen and to begin keeping kosher. Maybe this would cure

him of his chronic illness, he thought.

Our amazement grew as he told us that he had already taken all his kitchen utensils to immerse them in a nearby river. Before we left, we blessed him that with Hashem's help he be completely cured. We were amazed at the powerful influence of the story.

The following Friday he greeted us happily. It was hard to recognize him as the same man who was usually depressed and withdrawn. He told us that he was feeling much better. A few months later, the infection was completely gone, and his physical and spiritual state had improved tremendously.

ONE MITZVA LEADS TO ANOTHER

Dovid Kirzenschaft relates:

Every Friday we go on mitzvaim to the area between 64th and 108th streets in Queens. Many Jews live there, including many Russian immigrants, so it's not surprising that nearly every week we have the z'chus of removing yet another Jew from the category of *karkafta d'lo monach t'fillin* (someone who never put on t'fillin).

On a recent Friday, we put t'fillin on three older Russian Jews who had never put t'fillin on before. Later on, when we left our stand to visit stores, we saw one of the three men eating in a kosher restaurant.

When he spotted us, he came towards us with a big smile and he said, "I don't usually eat kosher, but after putting on t'fillin for the first time in my life, I feel like a complete Jew and I can't eat non-kosher food."

THE CHILD JUMPED AND KISSED THE PICTURE

Dovid Kirzenschaft relates:

Every Friday a certain woman would pass our t'fillin stand on her way home from work. From our brief conversations with her we learned that

she was making progress, albeit slowly, towards Yiddishkeit.

One week, she came to our stand with a child of about ten years old. We were sad to see that he was afflicted with Down's Syndrome. The woman asked for our help, saying that she didn't know what to do with her son, who was not developing. His responses to his environment were diminishing.

He read the story about a woman who asked the Rebbe for a bracha before having an operation, and the Rebbe said she didn't need an operation but she had to observe the laws of kashrus. When Yonatan read this, he decided to kasher his kitchen and to begin keeping kosher. Maybe this would cure him of his chronic illness, he thought.

We had beautiful pictures of the Rebbe with us and we gave her one of them. Before we realized what was going on, the child jumped forward and kissed the picture. The mother was in utter shock.

Let me tell you: we were also moved. Incredibly, from then on, the boy began to slowly improve. The situation is still far from satisfactory,

but the mother no longer despairs.

THE JUDGE TOOK THE HALACHIC POSITION

Lior Ebadeh relates:

In the course of my work at yishuv Gilat in Eretz Yisroel, I got to know someone who was slowly becoming more observant. I often visit him, and baruch Hashem, he is making good progress in his mitzva observance. He doesn't live in the yishuv on a permanent basis, but recently he had been making the finishing touches to the house he built in the yishuv.

A few months ago, he was driving towards the yishuv to supervise the construction when his car went out of control and overturned. He miraculously got out without a scratch, but his car was seriously damaged. It was assessed at 16,000 shekels worth of damage. Since the accident took place during work hours, the company he works for paid the entire amount, figuring they would get it back from the insurance company.

But when the claim was presented to the insurance company, they refused to pay it, saying that the man didn't live in the yishuv as of yet. When his company saw that getting the money entailed a battle, they asked the man for the money back.

He looked into the situation and learned that the insurance company's claim was correct and even accepted in court. He didn't know how to proceed, so at a certain point he called me and told me the story and asked me to write to the Rebbe.

I went to his house and we wrote a letter together. We put it in the *Igros Kodesh* and the answer was about giving maaser. On the spot, he decided to separate maaser from the amount he would receive if he would get it.

The situation resolved itself when the judge presiding over his case dismissed the insurance company's claim and used the man's halachic



and Chassidus five years ago. I loved learning the Rebbe's sichos and maamerim in the yeshiva in Ramat Aviv, and it paved the way for me to return to authentic Judaism.

One day I felt the urge to get a dollar from the Rebbe. Someone in Crown Heights, who knew I wanted one of these dollars, agreed to give me one of his dollars on condition that I learned chapter 32 of *Tanya* by heart. I was thrilled by the offer and I learned the chapter by heart and got the dollar.

A few days later, I thought it would only be right for me to give the dollar to my mother as a segula for protection and to help in parnasa. I really wanted the dollar for myself but I gave it to my mother anyway.

In the meantime, I went about my daily routine. One thing I am involved in is that I have a gemach for t'fillin. I put a lot of energy and all my maaser money into it.

One morning I took stock of what I had and I noticed a dollar with some writing on it. I removed it from the other bills and read what it said: Received from the holy hand of the Rebbe shlita b'ohr l'Rosh Chodesh Teives 5751, K'vutza year.

I was astounded. The Rebbe had sent me a dollar! I put a different dollar into my box and kept looking at the "Rebbe dollar" that had come my way. I was thrilled not only by having received the dollar, but that the date on it was my birthday and that it was received during the K'vutza year.

reasoning that since his house was nearing completion, it was like he lived there. The judge said the insurance company had to pay him the entire amount.

IT CAME ON TIME

Uriel Perl, a talmid on K'vutza, relates the following story:

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SOMERSAULTS YEAR ROUND

BY RABBI BORUCH KAHANA

MASHPIA, YESHIVAS TOMCHEI T'MIMIM KIRYAT GAT, ERETZ YISROEL

TRANSLATED BY MICHOEL LEIB DOBRY



Everyone has surely heard about the exceptional expressions of affection the Rebbe showed HaRav HaChassid R. Reuven Dunin, of blessed memory (see *Beis Moshiach* #471). R. Reuven once told that when he was a bachur in 5718, the Rebbe would always show special affection for him, which each time caused him to experience a unique feeling of excitement and joy. This was usually expressed in the form of a chassidic dance and doing “somersaults.”

Anyone who knew R. Reuven can imagine that “somersaults” didn’t come to him *ch”v* due to personal requests. R. Reuven Dunin was a chassid whose uniqueness came from the fact that he was never impressed by “what will people say?” He simply felt that such conduct demonstrated an expression of his true joy over the tremendous privilege of receiving such warmth from the Rebbe, and for this reason alone, he acted as he did.

Yet, there were many T’mimim in 770 who saw such “unconventional” conduct as a bit strange, and they scoffed at him for it. While R. Reuven was not bothered by their laughter, still, he began to think that perhaps those bachurim were right, and that he should change this mode

of conduct. So he decided that the next time he went in for yechidus, he would ask the Rebbe if he should take the reaction of those bachurim into consideration or if he should continue with his present conduct as an expression of his feelings of simcha. When R. Reuven went into yechidus, he asked the Rebbe, who replied:

“When a Jew is happy about something in the middle of the year, he must express this through an increase in Torah and mitzvos or *hiddur mitzva*. Once a year, on Simchas Torah, he also has to do ‘somersaults.’”

* * *

Every chassid who comes to the Rebbe for Tishrei feels that every day that he is in the Rebbe MH”M’s *Daled Amos* is a day of an entirely different nature. It’s not just “another day”; this is a day with the Rebbe! Each person feels within himself a certain sense of satisfaction: I’ve come home again.

This feeling of elation is not merely in the spiritual sense, but also in the physical sense; when we come to the Rebbe, even the **body** feels special joy. Tishrei is a month filled with such an abundance of unique

moments that they can awaken every chassid and even every Jew in every place in the world. As a result, when we are with the Rebbe at that time, this awakening receives a totally different meaning. This applies during the *t’kios* on Rosh HaShana, *Birchas HaBanim* moments before Kol Nidrei, the march at the conclusion of N’ila, Hakafof on Simchas Torah, and dozens of other events throughout the month, such as *farbrenge*s, *t’fillos*, etc.

Anyone who has spent Tishrei with the Rebbe can testify that all irresponsible feelings of a *yetzer ha’ra* or an animal soul melt away at such moments. There is nothing except the Rebbe, and this is the essence of Tishrei in 770.

However, when the month of Tishrei goes by, and the time comes for everyone to return to his place, “each under his vineyard,” that feeling of excitement that we had during Tishrei suddenly starts to be forgotten. We all go back to our normal routine lives, the bachurim resume their regular study schedule, and chassidim return to work. All of a sudden, those special moments that only a short while ago managed to melt away all the difficulties begin to disappear. *Ach*, we say longingly,

what a pity that those wonderful times went by so quickly...

What are we supposed to do? How can we retain all those glorious moments so they will continue to accompany us throughout the year?

This is precisely what we learn from the aforementioned story:

It's true that on Simchas Torah we have to do "somersaults," however, we must not forget that the joy and enthusiasm must take expression by some increase in Torah and mitzvos. Those wonderful moments that we experienced during Tishrei must be translated into our daily mundane lives, as is known from the expression (which the Rebbe constantly repeats to those returning home from their visit to his holy courtyard): "We must open the packages."

This refers to those packages that we accumulated, the special times that elated us, which we will now take and distribute into the world of normal year-round experience. In this way, we will ensure that those special moments will not remain with us merely in an encompassing aura, but will penetrate our very essence and continue to accompany us even during the mundane days throughout the rest of the year.

In this connection, I would like to tell a personal story on the unique treatment that I received from the Rebbe, when I expressed this sublime feeling with a good resolution:

About twenty years ago, as I was sitting in 770 at a farbrengen with the Rebbe during Tishrei, I experienced a most unique feeling, and I knew that I had to translate it into practical action. Right then and there, I resolved to establish a *Tanya* class at the central yeshiva in

Anyone who has spent Tishrei with the Rebbe can testify that all irresponsible feelings of a yetzer ha'ra or an animal soul melt away at such moments. There is nothing except the Rebbe, and this is the essence of Tishrei in 770.

Beersheva.

Upon my return to Eretz Yisroel, I got to work on the creation of this class, and despite all the delays and obstacles I encountered, I succeeded in establishing a regular *Tanya* class on the premises. This class proved

most successful, and in the month of Menachem Av, as the yeshiva prepared to recess for its summer break, we wrote a letter to the Rebbe, signed by all the shiur's participants. I also enclosed a report on class activities, but I did not include anything personal in the correspondence.

Some time later, I received an envelope from the Rebbe's secretariat, containing **three** letters. The first, dated the 5th of Menachem Av, the Arizal's yahrtzait, was addressed to the shiur's participants, with the closing words "B'chavod u'v'hatzlacha" (respectfully and with success) appearing by the Rebbe's holy signature. The second one was a general letter, and the third was addressed to me, dated one month earlier.

At first, I was a bit shocked, but then I immediately remembered that exactly one month before, I had written a personal letter to the Rebbe, albeit less specific than many other letters I had written without receiving a response. However, in this case, the Rebbe answered me in a letter placed **in the same envelope** with a letter to the shiur's participants. For me, this represented a message from the highest authority that "there is a reward for your actions" – the Rebbe appreciates the resolution you made.

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THE GAON AND RISHON L'TZIYON¹: RABBI ELIYAHU BAKSHI-DORON SHLITA

From Shemen Sasson Meichaveirecha

BY RABBI SHALOM BER WOLPO
TRANSLATED BY ALEXANDER ZUSHE KOHN



Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron *shlita* was born in Israel in the year 5701 (1940-41). As a youngster he was known one of the geniuses of Chevron. After his marriage to the daughter of Rabbi Sholom Lufs *zatzal*, the rav of Acco, he continued his studies in Mosad HaRav Kook, and then in the Kol Yaakov *kollel*. In 5730 (1969-70), he was selected as the rav of the Ramat Yosef and Ramat HaNasi neighborhoods in Bat Yam, and in 5732 (1971-72), he became the chief rabbi of Bat Yam.

In his role as rav, Rabbi Bakshi-Doron brought many improvements to the cities religious aspects. His house became a popular address for residents of the city seeking advice and guidance on matters of halacha, and also in personal matters.

While still rav of the Ramat Yosef and Ramat HaNasi neighborhoods in Bat Yam, Rabbi Bakshi-Doron established a *kollel* in Tel Aviv's HaTikva neighborhood. He then established a learning academy in Bat Yam,

where he trained tens of students in the issuing of halachic rulings. These students later became rabbis all throughout the Holy Land.

His success in Bat Yam eventually led him to become the chief rabbi of Haifa, in 5735 (1974-75). In Haifa too, Rabbi Bakshi-Doron established a Torah center, which included the Morosha yeshiva, where he delivered in-depth study classes for young married men.

After 18 years of service as the chief rabbi of Haifa, Rabbi Bakshi-Doron was elected as the chief rabbi of Israel. As chief rabbi, he greatly improved the efficacy of Israel's Battei Din, by focusing a lot of attention on the local rabbis. He also made many appearances in Israel and abroad delivering Torah lectures and addresses.

Rabbi Bakshi-Doron's halachic responsa — encompassing all four books of the Shulchan Aruch — and his explanations of the Talmud, which he taught before the students of the yeshivas that he headed, have been published in two volumes of his *seifer*, *Binyan*

Av. A third volume of *Binyan Av* contains his insights on Jewish thought, *Agada*, and the Torah readings.

“HARD TO FATHOM”

In an interview held after his election as chief rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Bakshi-Doron testified that his connection with the Rebbe concerned not only the rabbinical side of his life, but also the personal and familial side:

“More than once, I was fortunate enough to receive the Rebbe *shlita*'s blessing — signed in his holy handwriting — for a family celebration. Every such letter was a great joy and honor for our family.”

In all the phases and places of Rabbi Bakshi-Doron's rabbinical leadership in Israel, he was very close to the Chabad Chassidim, and expressed great admiration for the Rebbe:

In the Torah journal *Hadar HaKarmel*, published in 5742 (1981-82) in honor of the Rebbe's eightieth birthday, Rabbi Bakshi-Doron wrote the following in the introduction to his Torah insights:

¹ Sephardic chief rabbi.

“Whoever hears about the *Admur*, stands in awe at the greatness of his personality, knowledge, influence, and activities. Aside from the aura of awe and exaltedness that he radiates, we learn from [him] the meaning of greatness, the meaning of perfection, and the power of Torah. The human mind finds it hard to fathom: how can a human being, whose abilities are limited, and whose time is limited, attain such a broad range of knowledge? How can one individual lead with grandeur such a large enterprise of activity? How can one man provide guidance, assistance, and strength to millions of Jews as a whole, and to all of them as individuals? Even more difficult to comprehend is how all these people are integrated within, and embodied by, this one individual, renowned as a *tzaddik*, *chassid*, and *anav* in all his ways?”

CONDEMNATION

In the month of Menachem Av 5743 (July-August, 1983), when word spread of the violent harassment in Williamsburg of those who taught the holy *Tanya*, Rabbi Bakshi-Doron publicized the following letter (which contained also the signatures of Rabbi Sholom Mashash *zatzal*, and Rabbi Chaim Dovid HaLevi *shlita*):

“We hereby join the great condemnation issued by America’s Torah giants, led by our teacher, the great *gaon*, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein *shlita*, of the despicable crime performed by evil and sinful people, who harmed and beat scholars of Torah who are distinguished in their pure awe [of G-d], destroying also their beards, Heaven protect us.

“And for what?! For disseminating Torah and Chabad Chassidism, and for the [victims’] joining of the holy community of Chabad Chassidim, which from the time of its founding by our great and G-dly teacher — author of the *Tanya* and the *Shulchan Aruch*, may his merit shield us — until the time of the leadership of the *gaon* and *tzaddik* of our generation . . . his holy honor, our master the *Admur* of Lubavitch *shlita*, has led the Jewish people, in Torah, awe of G-d, and self-sacrifice for the



holy and sacred and the dissemination of the word of G-d throughout the entire world.

THE VIRTUE OF RAMBAM YOMI

At the *siyum* celebrating the conclusion of the second cycle of daily Rambam study, which took place in Kiryat Motzkin in 5756 (1995-96), Rabbi Bakshi-Doron addressed the crowd:

“Come, let us express our gratitude to the people of Chabad, the strong warriors who do the

bidding of the holy *Admur* of Lubavitch *shlita*, who has given the Jewish people the merit of an additional dimension of Torah . . . that every Jew . . . has an opportunity to complete the study of all Torah subjects in a short period of time . . . Fortunate is the person who has merited to learn and to conclude the Rambam . . . We have merited that this awareness is spreading more and more. I therefore declare to the public: this is the greatest honor of G-d.”
(Appears in the Torah journal *Kiryas Melech Rav*.)

BRINGING THE LIGHT OF TORAH TO FAR FLUNG PLACES

At a *shluchim* conference in Eilat, 5748 (1987-88): “Our generation is fortunate to have in its midst the holy fire that blazes within the holy *Admur* of Lubavitch *shlita* — a fire that is completely coated with the love and fear of G-d; a fire that is rooted in love, kindness, and concern for the Jewish nation. Whoever lingers in its shadow, and warms himself in its light knows the greatness of its value and power. But a fire that is not a flame does not reach the far places. The

emissaries of the Rebbe *shlita* are the flame — you who bring the light to the distance and the warmth to the House of Israel.

19 Kislev 5754 (December 3, 1993), Kfar Chabad: “These days, we hear about millions of gentiles threatening us from all directions . . . but our nation does not follow the ways of nature . . . one Jewish spark can consume it all. And it is you, Chabad *chassidim*, who have the ability to ignite this spark, through the power of the one who sent you, the holy *Admur shlita*.”

**RABBI YIGAL KIRSHNZAF, SHLIACH IN THE GAZA STRIP,
IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH BEIS MOSHIACH:**

MOSHIACH'S TIMES IN GUSH KATIF

BY SHAI GEFEN

As the media reports about the letters concerning compensation that were sent to the residents of Gush Katif, and the preparations for the withdrawal, we interviewed Yigal Kirshnzaft, director of the Chabad house in Gush Katif. We asked him what is really going on, and whether the residents are truly getting ready to leave.

In the past two months, I have visited Gush Katif three times. It's difficult to comprehend the huge disparity between the media reports and real-life in Gush Katif. The media goes on and on about the evacuation and despair, while the situation in Gush Katif is completely different.

The media is a propaganda tool used as part of P.M. Sharon's psychological war against his own people. Every day we hear about the extreme Right and threats against the prime minister. This is a strategy on the part of Sharon and those directing his Judenrein plans. It's all for the purpose of frightening and breaking the spirit of the people. It's this abuse of the residents of Gush Katif which is one of the most disgusting aspects of the whole business.

Rabbi Yigal Kirshnzaft, director of the Chabad house in Gush Katif, is a vital force in the battle against the disengagement plan. Aside from the usual Chabad house activities, he is over his head in work to prevent this disastrous move.

The interview with Yigal is fascinating, if only because of the calm and strength he radiates. He draws his strength from his incredible emuna. While everybody talks about the evacuation letters that were sent by Yonatan Bashi to the settlers, and about Sharon who insists on implementing a plan that guarantees nothing but danger for Jews, Yigal promises, "Next year I will be interviewed for *Beis Moshiach* as a resident of Neve Dekalim. The disengagement will not happen. Period."

Zero hour is approaching. What are you thinking?

"The residents of Gush Katif are fulfilling the Rebbe's advice of 'think good and it will be good.' We know from Chassidus that thought has the power to change reality."

Are you really thinking positively or are you hoping that it will work out well?

"We don't just say the words; we act on them. We are busy building. A new neighborhood is being built in Neve Dekalim, which will have 240 new homes. Just this evening, we had a party for 80 families that recently moved to Neve Dekalim. It's just unbelievable. The government, like Egypt of old, says, "lest they increase," and Hashem says, "they will increase."

"At the bureau of statistics they say that the population in Yesha has grown more than that within the Green Line. The rate of acquisition in Yesha is far higher. I am a member of the Absorption Committee of Gush Katif, and baruch Hashem, we are seeing people come to Gush Katif.

"We simply have no place for all of them. They even had to take the Chabad house guest-apartment from me, because there's no place. The price of apartments has skyrocketed because of the shortage of homes."

What are you busy with these days?



“We are preparing like Yaakov Avinu did, with gifts, prayer, and war. The Jews of Gush Katif, in case you haven’t noticed, are very determined. We may be nice and refined, but we are very determined and we know how to fight and to dig our heels into the ground. Many of us are farmers, Jews who came and transformed sand into arable land and into a veritable Eden. There are 70 shuls and Battei Midrash here. There is no other place with so much Torah and k’dusha in proportion to the number of people living there.

“We’ve broken world records when it comes to growing vegetables within one acre and at such a speedy rate of growth. You can see the determination of the precious Jews of Gush Katif. It’s mamash Moshiach’s times. I’ll tell it to you straight: The Jews of Gush Katif live closer to G-d, are more spiritual, and daily see G-d’s acts of chesed and His wonders.”

Meaning?

“Throughout the four years of the Intifada, about **5000 rockets** have

landed here. There’s not one Jew in Gush Katif who hasn’t experienced a miracle. And baruch Hashem, nobody has been hurt [ed. – sadly, this Erev Yom Kippur a woman was killed by a mortar attack on Neve Dekalim]. What can you say about a father who is holding his year-and-a-half-old daughter on Motzaei Rosh HaShana when he suddenly feels the roof land on him. A missile landed on his house. What did he do? He shook off the cement and went on with his life! Where else are there so many daily, open miracles?

“Whoever doesn’t understand the enormity of the miracles should see what one mortar did in Sderot. We had one person killed here, a Thai worker. Jews get up here every morning, to a new day of miracles. It definitely changes your feeling and closeness to Hashem. Over here, we really live in the era of Geula, as the Rebbe wants and demands.”

You live in a state of war with Qassam rockets landing regularly, and you also fight a Jewish government

“You can see the determination of the precious Jews of Gush Katif. It’s mamash Moshiach’s times. I’ll tell it to you straight: The Jews of Gush Katif live closer to G-d, are more spiritual, and daily see G-d’s acts of chesed and His wonders.”

which fights you. How do you manage?

“It’s not easy, but as I stressed, I myself am surprised by the tremendous emuna people have. When we went out to fight public opinion before the Likud referendum, everybody laughed at us, including the Yesha council. They viewed our undertaking as futile. They said that there’s a doctor by the name of Minna Tzemach who said that 70% of Likud is in favor of disengaging from Gaza. You all know how that referendum



R’ Yigal Kirshnzaft displaying the remains of a mortar that exploded in Gush Katif

worked out.

“And when we decided to make the Human Chain, a demonstration the likes of which Israel had never seen before, they told us it would end in abysmal failure.

“Our success comes from one thing: our fiery faith in Hashem. We live in the era of Geula and we know that we are hastening the Geula, and this is why the fight here has such enormous spiritual power, to counter the power of the ‘other side.’ It’s not that I ignore that other power. There’s no area of Israel like this, where people live in a state of war on a daily basis, while at the same time we have to put up with the unprecedented ugly media propaganda.”

And you’re optimistic?

“We see the love that the Jewish people have for the Jews of Gush Katif. On the Shabbos following Rosh HaShana, we spread out to over 1000 shuls around the country. The Jews of Gush Katif met with tens of thousands of traditional Jews. We see how the people feel connected to Gush Katif.”

Sharon says that in 2005 Gush Katif will be Judenrein.

“As far as I know, Hashem runs the world. I’m living in Neve Dekalim for 23 years. I lived in the first caravan there. Before I came to Gush Katif they told me they’d be giving it back, and there was no point in my coming. When I built my home, they told me, ‘Isn’t it a shame to waste that money?’

“Now we have 600 families here, and as I mentioned before, there’s a severe housing shortage and the price of apartments has doubled.

“As far as what Sharon said, many leaders in history planned terrible decrees against the Jews, and we all know where they are today and where the Jewish people are. The time has come for us to deeply internalize the idea that the ‘One’ who decides what will be, is neither Sharon nor Netanyahu. We have a G-d. He runs the show, and with the power of emuna, we will triumph.”

We spoke a lot about emuna. What practical efforts are you making to fight the evacuation?

“We are working on winning people over, on changing the heart of the nation. The Rebbe always said that our generation is the last generation of Galus and the first of Geula; we are the reincarnation of the generation that left Egypt. We are correcting the sin of the Spies, and are teaching our people to love our land.

“We see how much Jews love the land and what the people are telling us. They say: you are the pioneers and you need to move forward and we’ll be behind you.

***A missile landed on his house. What did he do? He shook off the cement and went on with his life!
Where else are there so many daily, open miracles?***

“It’s no secret that before the Geula the Jewish people are extremely weak in all areas. It is from this weakness that the Jewish people hope we will lead the battle. They see how the Jews of Gush Katif are sacrificing for principles, and are standing courageously on the border and are boldly protecting the Jews of Eretz Yisroel. They believe in us. Many people, some of them people in top positions, tell us: We don’t have the strength to lead the battle but you lead and we’re behind you.”

In the newspapers and other media it sounds completely different!

“There’s a serious propaganda effort

being made throughout the media. The radio, television, and newspapers are against us. They all write and speak in favor of our expulsion. It’s hard to believe this. It begins with a potential murderer who supposedly is waiting to kill Sharon, and ends with violent behavior. They have already transformed the settlers into enemies of the people. They do this non-stop and it’s all coming from the prime minister’s office.

“To counter this, I can tell you that there’s an interesting phenomenon here. A few journalists who came here are quietly in the process of becoming baalei t’shuva. They put on t’fillin and are becoming mekurav to Yiddishkeit.

“Gentile journalists who have come here, and there have been many, are amazed by this phenomenon. A German writer told me that we are literally a light unto the nations with our behavior. It’s definitely a kiddush Hashem. These gentile journalists see things very differently than the Israeli media.”

The media reports that many settlers have accepted compensation for leaving.

“That’s pathetic. I can tell you for a fact that the vast majority of settlers are here to stay and will not cave in to missionary tactics. Even Yonatan Bashi openly said that only a few dozen have left, including settlers from northern Shomron. People are not buying the hangman’s promises. We don’t believe their lies; we know that it’s all one big show.

“There’s no question that it’s very hard to live here. People are suffering financially. The agricultural situation is bad because Europeans have canceled contracts with farmers from Gush Katif because they heard that Sharon is expelling Jews. Yet people are made of iron. There’s only one explanation for this: faith in the justness of our position, and knowing that our battle is a battle of the light of Geula within the darkness of Galus. In these last moments, before the light of Moshiach

breaks through, there is confusion and difficult tests, and baruch Hashem, we are rising to the occasion.”

But what will you do at zero hour?

“We are not talking about that at all. I can tell you clearly that whoever thinks he knows the Jews of Gush Katif is mistaken. Instead of accepting what is handed us, we influence others. Every night there are lectures and activities all over the country. Thousands of people come to visit us here.”

That’s all well and good, but what will it all help when the prime minister acts like a dictator?

“The will of the people is stronger than anything. There have been dictators in the past whom the people threw out. I really hope that we won’t need to physically fight, and that Sharon will give up before that. But if, G-d forbid, it comes to a physical fight, we are ready for that too.”

How do you explain what happened to Sharon?

“I’m not a psychologist, but if you want an explanation, I read in *HaAretz* that the Sharon family sells rabbits for human consumption. We know from the Torah that someone who contaminates his soul simultaneously

contaminates his mind. There’s no other explanation for what’s going on here, aside from *timtum ha’mochin*.

There’s no reasonable explanation for this. Even people from the Left can’t explain Sharon’s decisions rationally.

“The one who recently declared that Netzarim has the same law as Tel Aviv, and the one who built up the settlements in Gush Katif, is making disastrous decisions that will lead to chaos and worse.

“Look at the Intelligence reports and listen to what the head of the Shin-Bet has to say. The ticking time bomb, which is Gaza, will explode. Today the army can divide the Strip and take control (not that they do what they need to do, but they retain control). What will happen if Sharon carries out his plans?

“Today, it’s already prohibited to fly over Gaza because they know the enemy has anti-aircraft missiles. The Hezbollah is deep in Gaza. More tunnels will sprout. The situation today is child’s play compared to what will be. And after all this you still ask for a rational explanation?”

Speaking of Gush Katif, do the residents of Sderot want to join the Disengagement Plan?

(Yigal laughing) “From Heaven they are showing us what’s going to happen. Gush Katif is only the beginning. If, G-d forbid, we break here, we’ll fall on all fronts. I know someone who left Sderot and bought an apartment on Kibbutz Karmia. He has hired a lawyer and is demanding compensation from the government. He’s a friend of mine.

“The mayor of Sderot, Eli Muell, is a good friend of ours. We have a good relationship with many residents of Sderot. We see how there’s no Green Line and no Red Line. It’s one land. If you withdraw from Sinai and Gush Katif, you’ll have to withdraw from Sderot, Ashdod, Acco, and Tzfas, and from the entire country.”

Another plan Sharon has is to set up holding pens for settlers.

“One hand offers the carrot while the other hand wields the stick. We’re familiar with this. They tap our phones. There are strange phone calls under the guise of surveys, in order to know what we think. But with Hashem’s help, we’ll overcome this too.”

There isn’t a single politician who helps Gush Katif, not from the Right or the Left, except for a few individuals who don’t have real clout.

“With Hashem’s help, our victory will be supernatural so that not one politician will be able to say that he helped. It seems that it’s part of Hashem’s plan. The miracle will take place without the aid of a single politician. We are truly living in a time in which we can see falsehood being separated from truth. It’s not Bibi nor Livnat, nor anyone else who can say that they helped Gush Katif. Not Orlev from Mafdal either.”

Yet you still think you’ll win!

“Today there was a meeting, and someone compared the situation to a child who cries out, ‘the emperor has no clothes!’ and just by saying that, he manages to change the entire story. Indeed, we are small, but when we cry out, ‘the emperor has no clothes!’ the people see it. In the past it was more



R’ Kirshnzaft (second from the left on the bottom) with a group of shluchim

hidden, but now it's open for all to see.

"As I said before, the Jews of Gush Katif are especially close to Hashem. We are so accustomed to miracles that even we don't know the miracles that happen to us. Just today, I was at the mechanic when he discovered another hole in the car's windshield, a result of a shooting.

"In Neve Dekalim alone, over 2000 mortars have fallen! Due to the regularity of the miracles, there are new ways of saying the HaGomel bracha around here. Every time we read from the Torah, someone is *motzi* his friends with the bracha.

"Another new thing, thanks to the mortars, is that whoever experiences a miracle immediately opens a table in his yard, brings out mashke, and we say l'chaim together. The neighbors come to thank and praise Hashem for the miracle. Nu, where else does this go on?"

What are you doing with the letters Bashi sent you?

"According to the p'sak of the Pikuach Nefesh rabbanim, they are organizing for a central letter-burning. There are other suggestions about what to do with the letters..."

"I can tell you that Bashi himself destroyed his life both in this world and the world to come. He can't attend family simchos, and he is accompanied by bodyguards daily. He won't succeed in the end, but history will remember him in infamy, as it does for other traitors to our people."

He maintains that he's just following orders.

"He's not the first one to say that. The Nazis said the same thing, and you know that this claim was not accepted at the war crimes trials."

A lot is being said about civil war. Are you afraid about this?

"I received a letter from a Jew in Chaifa who wrote me that he personally identifies with us, but we must agree to the expulsion in order to prevent civil war. I told him that he is

right, but why is he telling this to me rather than to Sharon? We are living here quietly; we don't bother anyone. We raise our kids and build up the area. We don't hurt anyone. Yet, suddenly, without any reason, a man gets up and decides to throw us out of our homes! Talk to *him*!

"We had the chairman of the Foreign Affairs and Security Committee, Mr. Yuval Steinitz, visit us. He officially supports the expulsion.

"It's part of Hashem's plan. The miracle will take place without the aid of a single politician. We are truly living in a time in which we can see falsehood being separated from truth. It's not Bibi nor Livnat, nor anyone else who can say that they helped Gush Katif. Not Orlev from Mafdal either."

When we were alone, we said to him: Tell us what's the logic in this plan?

"He had nothing to say. People who come here immediately understand the insanity of the plan. They suddenly see that this isn't just some outpost but dozens of yishuvim. Even the president, Moshe Katzav, after visiting Gush Katif, changed to an ardent supporter. He helps us a lot. When you come here you see how it's not like

the media portrays it, as though we're a few caravans."

So you have to bring people to Gush Katif!

"We've had tens of thousands of visitors in recent months, and hope to bring more. Bringing Jews here is definitely one of the most effective projects.

"I'd like to thank Matteh Moshiach and the organization headed by Rabbi Yekusiel Rapp, for organizing and helping the group that came here. I hope many more groups of Chabad Chassidim will come visit."

How long have you been shlichim in Gush Katif?

"We've been here for over twenty years as a Chabad house. We do all the things a regular Chabad house does. We make Lag B'Omer parades and have mobile sukkos that go visit all the soldiers here, no matter what forsaken corner he is in. We see this as our holy shlichus.

"We have a vast library, and many Jews have become mekushar to the Rebbe. They write to the Rebbe and participate in the farbrengens we organize."

We haven't forgotten the mikva, built according to Chabad specifications, that you are hoping to complete soon.

"Baruch Hashem, we began building the mikva and have put a lot of money into it already. Just getting it approved was miraculous, because the Ministry of Religion didn't want a Chabad mikva to be built here because they say there aren't any Lubavitchers living in Gush Katif. But that's when we saw how the residents of Gush Katif are ardent Lubavitchers.

"Many families announced that they *only* wanted a Chabad mikva. They said that if the Rebbe wants it, then they want it too!

"So construction began, but now we're \$80,000 short. I really hope someone will take care of the rest, because this is so important and it will



Visiting the IDF commander of the Gaza division – Sukkos 5754

service all the dozens of yishuvim in Gush Katif.

“Another thing, in my humble opinion, is that building a mikva has the power to stop the disengagement. The Rebbe said (Motzaei Shabbos Lech Lecha 5738) that the way to stop the withdrawals is by building Torah and tahara in the settlements.”

As someone who wears two hats, one as director of a Chabad house and one as a leader in the war against the withdrawal, what do you think Chabad

has to do now? How can we prevent the withdrawal?

“We, the Rebbe’s children, who were raised on the Rebbe’s teachings and know how pained the Rebbe is by all this, have to lead the way. Certain things were done, but generally speaking, there’s a dangerous complacency. Chabad has to wake up and act in unity. There’s nothing that can unite all of Chabad today like shleimus ha’Aretz.

“In these final moments, Erev

ha’Geula, we can’t sit back. We won’t be able to forgive ourselves. We’ve seen that when we do something seriously, we get results, and this is true for the battle against expulsion because the ko’ach for the battle is from the Rebbe.

“Increase your davening, give tz’daka, say Chitas as a z’chus for the Jews of Gush Katif. Ask the Rebbe to arouse great mercy on us. When you go to shuls to speak or when you go on mitzvaim, tell them about us. You never know which activity will succeed in renting the heavens and annulling the decree.”

What is the secret of the Jews of Gush Katif?

“Gaza was always the tough core of the Jewish nation. Shimshon defeated the Philistines (Palestinians?) in Gaza. The Rebbe also said at dollars that Gaza-Aza means strength. The strength here is an inner strength.

“Not many know it but Gush Katif is a source of chesed activities. Dozens of chesed organizations come here to get fruits and vegetables for the needy. Hundreds of tons are taken by the chesed organizations.

“As I said before, in Gaza you can see that it’s Moshiach’s times and you can smell the Geula. I see this in two other ways: the B’nei Menasheh come here and are undergoing proper conversions. It says in the Midrash that the first ones to return to Eretz Yisroel before Moshiach will be the B’nei Menasheh, as a reward for burying Shlomo. Another thing, today everybody realizes that the war against Yerushalayim begins in Gush Katif. Olmert himself said that it won’t end with Gush Katif, but will continue with concessions in Yerushalayim.”

In conclusion?

“We hope to see all Lubavitcher Chassidim taking part in this fight. The fight for shleimus ha’Aretz is an inseparable part of the Geula process. May we witness continued wonders and miracles. We invite all of you to come and visit us.”



A personal connection with soldiers in Gush Katif

THE DANGEROUS TREK TO MITZRAYIM

BY CHANA KATZ

Egypt is the kind of place we thought we finished with. Gnucht! Mitzraim was behind us... No, something from the pit of Galus, the ancestor of all exiles, remained enticing and enchanting.

Tens of thousands of Israelis made their way to the Sinai every year. For some reason, the numbers swelled even more on Jewish holidays. How fast they ran again from the “straits” back to the land of Israel after suicide bombers detonated deadly charges in their midst this past Motzaei Simchas Torah. This was *no* simcha, blood everywhere, rescue workers, search teams, racing ambulances, chaos and disorientation, devastation and, r”l, death.

While the world learned of the tragedy, shock waves especially rippled among four young Israeli Anash families who – with their infants in tow – made the dangerous trek down into Sinai just two weeks earlier for the Rosh HaShana holidays. While some headed to the seeming paradise with suntan lotion, bestselling books and an appetite for beach parties, these young shlichim packed up wine and challo, cakes and chickens, diapers and strollers, shofars and prayer books and prepared for a difficult *mitzvaim*.

Terrorist alerts were in high gear, advisories against travel to Sinai were issued before Rosh HaShana and they weren’t even sure that many Israelis would come. In the end, the warnings were mostly ignored as droves of Israelis crossed nonchalantly across the Egyptian border. The couples spoke with their mashpiim and received a go-ahead. And most

importantly, they received a very encouraging and direct blessing from the Rebbe, who wrote not to worry about people coming to Torah classes – and to continue teaching Torah all over the world!

Strengthened by the Rebbe’s blessings, Mayer Tzvi Turkoff from central Israel and his brother Menachem Asher, who lives in Dimona, Neve Merchav of Rechovot and Eliyahu Biton of Beersheva – all married within recent years – set out early Wednesday morning with their wives, infants and toddlers and two cars packed from trunk-to-roof with food and resources.

Although chapters could be written about their four-day journey into Sinai, this story aims to share but some of their many thoughts, experiences and challenges. It’s worth noting that just like the women were particularly strong in the time of the Egyptian exile, so did they show exceptional strength during this brief mission.

All the time the group was under the suspicious watch of Egyptian policeman, who wanted to make sure that the rules at these tourist resorts, such as no public gatherings for prayer, were observed. While some of the young male shlichim admitted being fearful of these policemen, they said they were encouraged by their wives’ strong urgings to continue without fear.

“The Egyptians sent a police just to watch us,” said Ruthi Merchav. “We felt like we were in Communist Russia. We told people to go one by one and not in groups. Menachem Asher and his wife baked a lot, a lot of cakes.

They were planning to go to the areas where the Israelis gathered to give out cakes and blow the shofar and we couldn’t do that. They didn’t let us. My husband even went to the police and asked for permission. They told us, “You want to pray, go to Israel.” So we did it in quiet. We didn’t want to make a mess there. It was Egypt.”

As we said, most of the couples were recently married and just making the trip alone was difficult for the women, one with twin babies less than two-years-old, another with an eight-month-old baby and another with her toddler.

BM: How did you cook for more than 100 people in one day?

Ruthi Merchav: It was a miracle. A big miracle. We were four women, although others came to help us. We made seven kinds of salads and fish and chicken... The babies were great. Everything was great. We had the Rebbe’s bracha. We felt that he was with us all the way. My girl, she’s not quiet, and she was quiet there.

Mrs. Merchav and her husband Neve were the veterans of the group. Last Pesach they went to Sinai with another couple and conducted a seider for more than 200 Israelis. They don’t know of any other similar *mitzvaim* there before that. Also then they encountered great difficulties as well as terrorist travel advisories and had asked the Rebbe for a blessing. And also then they were advised to go “with courage and courage.” If you’re all set to go and made all the preparations, then why are you asking now whether or not to go! the Rebbe wrote.

Some of the guests at their Rosh HaShana meals remembered the Sinai Pesach seider.

Mrs. Merchav: People were very happy that we were there. They helped us cook. Families were coming at one or two in the morning just to sit with us and hear Chassidic stories. We had 50 or 60 people the first night for dinner and many came back the next night, some even only to sit with us and sing. We felt like one big family. It was really amazing. People from all over Israel. We told them stories about us, about how we returned to t'shuva.

...
We had one Kohen whose birthday was on Shabbat T'shuva and we celebrated his birthday. There were two girls from India who went to a Beis Chabad there and they were so happy to see us here. There was a blind lady who asked if she could help us. I didn't see that she was blind because she was cutting tomatoes like she could see. We asked for a bracha and the Rebbe said that she would see.

While the women experienced miracles with the food preparations the men were having their own tests on their end of things. Of course, things don't always turn out as planned...

Menachem Asher Turkoff: Me, my brother, and Neve went a week before Rosh HaShana to find a place. We went to Ras-a-Satun. Neve said that's the place where all the Israelis were. (Beis Moshich: It's also the place where one of the terror attacks killed two Israelis). First we met a couple of Israelis and they were very surprised and interested in seeing Chabad in the Sinai. With all the beaches, what could a frum person do there? We said we came to make the Rosh HaShana holidays, and they became interested and said they may come.

On the beach we saw maybe 25 Israelis playing the darbuka (drums) and singing with the Bedouin. We sat down and gave a d'var Torah until about 1 a.m. Then we slept in one of the bungalows, woke up early, and went to the mikveh (the ocean!). We tried to make arrangements for a hotel

for the holidays, but it's very hard to work with the Arabs. If you go to Thailand and India, they want you. But (in Sinai) if they see you're not going to give them a lot of money they aren't interested.

Not discouraged by the rebuff, Menachem Asher, Mayer Tzvi and Neve set out for the other popular Israeli spots such as Nuwieba and Tarabin. At the latter, which turned out to be another of the terrorist bomber's targets, they made a deal

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with the manager. At least that's what they thought....

Arising early Wednesday morning, Erev Rosh HaShana, the families made the two-and-a half hour trip from southern Israel to Sinai. There, they bought vegetables so their wives could start their cooking and the men went to the beach to search for guests.

Menachem Asher: We took flyers

to the beach and invited everyone to come to the night seuda. A policeman came over and told me to sit down and someone came over and started asking me all kinds of questions in Hebrew. They thought the flyers were something against the Sinai. We said don't worry, it's only about the holidays. He called many people and then he gave me back the flyers.

Meanwhile, back at the hotel, the cooking was finished and last minute preparations were underway. It was only one hour away from the start of Rosh HaShana. Suddenly, Menachem Asher had an encounter with the hotel manager that was far from the amicable conversation they had over cake when he thought they had closed the deal the week before.

Menachem Asher: He said his boss wanted twenty dollars for every guest that came to eat with us. We said we couldn't do it, we were making it free. We went and found another hotel that was willing to make a similar deal as the first (without the extra payments) and when we went back to the first hotel to pack everything up the manager came over to us and told us the man at the second hotel wanted to tell us the deal was off... He told us he was afraid to let us be there because of the police.

So we went back to the first place and told our guests that if anyone asks them for money not to pay because we had made a deal and that was not part of it. We said it was our food and we were going to sit down and eat it. If anyone wanted to come join us, we weren't going to turn them away.

Everyone came and ate, and the manager came over and this time he changed his request and asked for only five additional five dollars for each guest. He saw we weren't going to give it. So we started to make Kiddush, dipped the apples in the honey and ate the rimon (pomegranate).

Rosh HaShana we had a hard time making the minyan. People go to sleep late and wake up late. Hashem helped us. One woman, a bachura from Costa Rica remembered me and asked if I had a brother there this year. I told her that my brother Schneur Zalman and his wife were there for the holidays. This woman had a lot of friends at the resort and she told them all that Schneur Zalman was a good person and they should come help make the minyan.

It was like in Communist Russia. We prayed fast. If the police see you they make trouble. We made Kiddush outside afterwards and when we stood up the hotel owner came over and asked us why we were praying. We said we were only making Kiddush and standing to give a word of Torah. He told us that if we wanted to speak we should sit, because if you stand up and move around it looks like praying.

After Shabbos when we were all packed up and ready to go the hotel

“I was sorry that we didn’t go Sukkos and Simchas Torah. Who knows? In a place where there are seifer Torahs and Jews praying and doing mitzvos it surely sweetens the dinim.”

manager who had bothered us the whole time, told us that if we didn’t pay him the five dollars for each guest he wouldn’t give us back our passports. We told him we didn’t have the money, and we really didn’t. He didn’t believe us and asked then for five dollars for only 25 of the guests. But we told him we didn’t have that either. Neve, who knew how to speak

Arabic (from his work on archeological projects in southern Israel near the Bedouin) screamed at him and told him we had already closed on the deal and that he had given us a lot of trouble the whole time. He saw that nothing was going to help so he gave us back our passports. Then we went back to Eretz Yisroel.

When they returned they learned that a major terrorist attack in the Sinai had been thwarted.

“The Israeli army caught something like 14 terrorists in Gaza that were about to go to Sinai,” said Neve Merchav, who became connected to Chabad over recent years and now heads the maintenance of Chabad mosdos in Rechovot. “I was sorry that we didn’t go Sukkos and Simchas Torah. Who knows? In a place where there are seifer Torahs and Jews praying and doing mitzvos it surely sweetens the dinim.”



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TO IGNITE THE SOUL

YEHUDAH AVNER, THE JERUSALEM POST OCT. 5, 2004

Yitzhak Rabin was a straight-as-a-die agnostic, and shy to a fault. So, when on a spring day in 1972 he was kept waiting at 770 Eastern Parkway, Crown Heights, Brooklyn, for his appointment with the Lubavitcher Rebbe, he became fidgety.

He was distinctly uncomfortable among the multitude of bearded men bustling to and fro around him, all identically clad in black suits and fedoras, and all seemingly indifferent to the peeling paint, cracked linoleum, and indefinable odor of the Tudor-style edifice that housed the headquarters of the world Lubavitch movement.

Yitzhak Rabin was then Israel's ambassador to Washington, and his president, Zalman Shazar, had asked him to convey his greetings personally to the Lubavitcher Rebbe – Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson – on the occasion of the Rebbe's 70th birthday. So there Rabin sat, a blue and gold velvet bar-mitzva yarmulke perched precariously on his head, like an alien in a foreign land.

When he was finally ushered into the inner sanctum, the Rebbe's face beamed. It was an angelic face, half curtained by a square gray beard, and topped by the trademark black fedora, with the effect of a bastion that protected the mind from iniquitous invasions.

But what lured Rabin most were the eyes. They were wide apart, sheltered under heavy brows and arched over by fine eyebrows. Their hue was the azure of the deep sea, intense and compelling, exuding

wisdom, awareness, kindness, and good fellowship. Yet, as I was later to learn, when the Rebbe's soul turned turbulent, they could dim into an ominous gray, like a leaden sky.

These were the eyes of one who could see mystery in the obvious, poetry in the mundane, and large issues in small things; eyes that enthralled believers until captivated in gladness, and joy, and sacrifice – all of which was wacky to the nonsense, secular diehard, Yitzhak Rabin.

He and the Rebbe spoke mainly

I rose and took my leave, pausing at the door to ask, "My candle – has the Rebbe lit it?" ...

of Washington affairs; but when the sage turned to things celestial, like Torah, eternity, and spiritual destiny, the ambassador's eyes glazed over. Dogmas of this sort were too inscrutable for this Palmach-bred, austere old soldier to whom reality was a physical phenomenon, not a metaphysical marvel.

Nonetheless, he was impressed. Exiting, he confided to me, "That man knows more about what's going on in Israel and the Middle East than most members of the Knesset."

President Shazar was pleased to hear of the encounter. As a youngster, Shazar had been nurtured in Lubavitch lore; and now, in the twilight of his life, he was elated to rediscover its enchantment, like some forgotten bead from a broken thread.

On his rare visits to New York he would abjure diplomatic protocol, choosing to call on the Rebbe in Brooklyn as a disciple, rather than solicit the Rebbe to call on him at the Waldorf as a head of state. This aroused the ire of members of the Israeli government and press, prompting an exasperated Shazar to exclaim one Purim eve en route to 770, while lolling in a limousine escorted by siren-shrieking NYPD outriders, "What do they want of me back home? I may be the president of Israel, but I'm also a simple chassid going to meet his rebbe. Who can object to that?"

SOME TIME later, on a balmy July day in 1977, Menachem Begin was similarly confronted. A bushy-haired reporter in a baggy suit asked him with Village Voice effrontery, "You are the newly elected prime minister of Israel, so why have you come to see Rabbi Schneerson? Surely, protocol requires he come to you."

This altercation took place on the steps of the Lubavitch headquarters, where the Rebbe was welcoming Mr. Begin amid a blaze of photo flashes. "Why, indeed?" the prime minister began with easy rapport. "A good question."

And then, with an air of deep

reverence, “I have come here because I am en route to Washington to meet president Jimmy Carter for the first time. So it is most natural for me to want to seek the blessings of this great sage of the Jewish people. Rabbi Schneerson is one of the paramount Jewish personalities of our time. His status is unique among our people. So yes, certainly, his blessings will strengthen me as I embark on a mission of acute importance for our future.”

“Would the rabbi care to comment on that?” asked the reporter.

He said, “Only to reiterate my fullest blessings. And to add, I accept the honor of the prime minister’s visit to me not on my own account but in recognition of the Lubavitch movement’s dedicated work in spreading the love of God and His Torah among our fellow Jews, wherever they be.”

The two men had been friends for years, and they closeted themselves for a good hour, at the end of which Mr. Begin informed Rabbi Schneerson that I would return to New York from Washington to brief him on the White House talks.

THUS IT was that five days later I found myself ensconced alone with the Rebbe in his wood-paneled chamber, its simple furnishings antique with time-worn distinction. Dog-eared Talmud tomes and other heavy, well-thumbed volumes lined his bookshelves, redolent of centuries of scholarship and disputations conducted by generations of swaying, chanting, thumb-stabbing, skull-capped learners, inhabiting an academic world in which students don’t study and teachers don’t teach. Everybody learns.

We spoke in Hebrew – the Rebbe’s classic, mine modern. And

as he dissected my Washington report, his air of authority deepened. It came of something beyond knowledge. It was in his state of being, something he possessed in his soul, something given to him under the chestnut and maple trees of Brooklyn rather than under the poplars and pines of Jerusalem – to which, mysteriously, he had never journeyed.

The presentation, interrogation, and clarification had taken close to three hours. It was now after two in the morning, and I was exhausted. The Rebbe, full of vim and vigor, asked me to communicate the following message to Mr. Begin: “By maintaining your firm stand on Eretz Yisroel in the White House, you have given strength to the whole of the Jewish people. You have succeeded in safeguarding the integrity of Eretz Yisroel while avoiding a confrontation with the United States. That is true Jewish statesmanship: forthright, bold, without pretense, or apology. Be strong and of good courage.”

He dictated this in a voice that was soft but touched with fire.

And now relaxing, he made a tent of his slender fingers, fixed me with his eyes, and said with a surprisingly sweet smile, “How come you visit us so often and appear to be so close to us, yet you never became a Lubavitcher? Why?”

I sat back stunned at the directness of the question. It was true. This probably was my third or fourth meeting with the Rebbe. Over the years I had become a sort of unofficial liaison between various Israeli prime ministers and the Lubavitch court.

Swallowing thickly, I muttered, “Maybe it is because I have met so many people who ascribe to the Rebbe powers which the Rebbe does not ascribe to himself.”

Even as I spoke, I realized I had

presumed too much. I could hear my voice trailing away.

The Rebbe’s brows knitted, and his deep blue eyes grayed into sadness. Softly, he said, “Yesh k’nireh anoshim hazekukim l’kobayim – There are evidently people who need crutches.”

A long and pregnant pause followed. Perhaps his secret threads of perception and communication were tracking my thoughts, for what he said next answered my unspoken question.

Raising his palm in a gesture of reassurance, and with an encouraging smile, he said, “Let me tell you what I try to do. Imagine you’re looking at a candle. What you are really seeing is a mere lump of wax with a thread down its middle. So when do the thread and wax become a candle? Or, in other words, when do they fulfill the purpose for which they were created? When you put a flame to the thread, then the candle becomes a candle.”

As he was speaking, a rhythmic cadence crept into his voice in the manner of a Talmudist poring over his text, so that what he said next came out as a chant: “The wax is the body, and the wick the soul. Ignite the soul with the fire of Torah and a person will then fulfill the purpose for which he or she was created. And that is what I try to do – to ignite the soul of our people with the fire of Torah.”

A buzzer had been sounding periodically, indicating that others were awaiting their audience. So I rose and took my leave, pausing at the door to ask, “My candle – has the Rebbe lit it?”

“No,” he said, clasping my hand. “I have given you the match. Only you can light your candle.”

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