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U.S.A

744 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn, NY 11213-3409
Tel: (718) 778-8000
Fax: (718) 778-0800
admin@beismoshiach.org
www.beismoshiach.org

ERETZ HA'KODESH

ת.ד. 102 כפר חב"ד 72915
טלפון: (03) 9607-290
פקס: (03) 9607-289

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:

M.M. Hendel

ENGLISH EDITOR:

Boruch Merkur
editor@beismoshiach.org

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ELEVATING EISAV

SICHOS IN ENGLISH



SHABBOS PARSHAS VAYISHLACH; 14TH DAY OF KISLEV, 5751

1. This week's Torah portion begins by relating how Yaakov completed his service in Charan, establishing his family, and then sent messengers to Eisav, his brother, to the land of Seir. This act is slightly problematic: Yaakov was commanded by G-d to return to Eretz Yisroel and G-d promised him, "I will be with you." Accordingly, it does not seem appropriate for him to tarry and send messengers. On the contrary, seemingly, he should have proceeded directly to Eretz Yisroel without any hesitation. This difficulty leads us to the conclusion that, as will be explained, in order for Yaakov to return to Eretz Yisroel in a full and complete manner, he had to send messengers to Eisav.

There is another somewhat problematic point concerning Eisav in this week's Torah portion. After the portion relates the events which transpired until Yaakov returned to the home of Yitzchok, his father, it chronicles Eisav's family and the nation, Edom, which descended from him. Thus, the Torah interrupts the narrative of Yaakov's return to Eretz

Yisroel and the events which transpired afterwards with what appears to be a totally tangential matter, the chronicles of Eisav. What is the reason for this?

Rashi addresses himself to this difficulty in the beginning of his commentary to Parshas VaYeishev, relating:

After [the Torah] relates the... chronicles of Eisav in brief because they are not important... It relates the... chronicles of Yaakov in detail for they are important and worthy of elaboration... To cite an analogy, a pearl fell into sand. A person began... sifting through the sand to try to find the pearl. He would discard the pebbles and take the pearl.

The analog is that at the outset, the pearl, Yaakov and his descendants, were mixed together with sand, Eisav and his descendants. Relating the story of Eisav in brief reflects the sifting away of the sand so that the full attention could be paid to Yaakov and his descendants.

Nevertheless, the very fact that the Torah does relate – albeit in brief – the chronicles of Eisav implies that they possess a certain importance

and are necessary to appreciate by way of contrast the chronicles of Yaakov. Furthermore, their having been recorded in the Torah conveys upon them an eternal importance[248] and indeed implies that they convey an independent lesson and are not mentioned merely to serve as a contrast to the chronicles of Yaakov.

There is another problematic aspect to the chronicles of Eisav mentioned in this Torah reading. At the conclusion of the parsha, Rashi interprets the "lord of Magdiel" as referring to Rome. We must understand: a) On what does Rashi base this interpretation? b) What is his intent in conveying this information to us?

These difficulties can be resolved in the context of an analysis of this week's Haftora, "The vision of Ovadia." The connection to the Torah reading lies in that Ovadia's vision relates what, "The L-rd, G-d, says concerning Edom," describing in detail the retribution Edom will ultimately receive:

The house of Yaakov will be a fire and the house of Yosef a flame and the house of Eisav will be stubble. They will set them ablaze and

consume them [until] there will be no remnant of the house of Eisav... Saviors will ascend Mount Zion to judge the Mount of Eisav, and the sovereignty will be the L-rd's.

On the latter verse, Rashi comments, "[G-d's] sovereignty will not be complete until He exacts retribution from the descendants of Eisav."

The choice of this reading for the Haftora raises several questions. The Haftora is intended to parallel the content of the Torah reading. In this instance, although the Torah reading mentions Eisav and Edom extensively, there is seemingly no allusion to the retribution Eisav will receive. On the contrary, the Torah reading relates how Yaakov subjugated himself to Eisav, while the Haftora prophesies how Yaakov's descendants will obliterate the house of Eisav.

In this context, there are two other questions of general significance: a) Why is "the house of Eisav" so significant that it opposes G-d's sovereignty, as it were? b) The Hebrew for retribution *perayon* also has the connotation of repaying a debt. What debt is there to be repaid?

These difficulties can be resolved as follows: The Haftora represents the conclusion of the matters discussed in the Torah portion. Thus, it brings out the inner meaning of the Torah portion. The encounter between Yaakov and Eisav should not be perceived as merely an isolated event. Rather, it reflects a pattern of service for Yaakov that is also relevant in subsequent generations until the final confrontation of these two powers during the future redemption.

Yaakov and Eisav represent the kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Edom. The Torah relates, "The upper hand will go from one to

another." Rashi explains, "They will not share greatness. When one ascends, the other will fall." This implies that in addition to his individual service, Yaakov's sphere of activity must involve the refinement of Eisav, the father of Edom (symbol of all gentile nations). In a larger sense, this refers to our service in refining the world at large, elevating the Divine sparks that have become enclotted in the material substance of the world. According to Kabbala, these sparks fell from the realm of

The gentiles possess an advantage in the realm of eichus as well, for the refinement of the gentiles – who on an apparent level are lower – elevates a higher level of Divine sparks, the sparks which fell from the world of Tohu.

Tohu. Thus, they contain particularly high spiritual potentials and their elevation can be compared to the repayment of a debt.

To accomplish this purpose, Yaakov sent emissaries to Eisav his brother in Edom. After he had completed establishing his own household in Charan, he realized that to complete his purpose within the world, it was necessary for him to begin the refinement of Eisav. In Kabbalistic terms, he had completed

the refinement of the realm of Tikkun (the realm which is intrinsically related to him) and he had to begin the refinement of Tohu, Eisav's realm, where Divine energies that transcend the level of Tikkun are revealed. To facilitate this objective, he sent messengers to notify Eisav that this process was about to begin.

The messengers informed him, however, that Eisav was not ready for such refinement. On the contrary, he was marching against Yaakov with four hundred men of war. When Yaakov realized this, he saw that his objective could not be accomplished immediately. Therefore, he decided, "I will proceed slowly, at the pace of the work that is before me... until I come to my lord in Seir." When will he come? Rashi explains, After the coming of Moshiach, when "saviors will ascend Mount Zion to judge the Mount of Eisav and the sovereignty will be the L-rd's." Then, G-d's sovereignty will be revealed over all the inhabitants of the earth for eternity.

Based on the above, we can understand why Rashi interprets Magdiel as referring to Rome. After Rashi explains that the confrontation between Yaakov and Eisav will continue until the future redemption, a question arises: What connection does the present exile have with Eisav? Rashi clarifies by explaining that one of Eisav's lords, Magdiel, is identified with Rome,[249] the power which destroyed the Beis HaMikdash and under whose authority the Jews will remain until Moshiach comes.[250]

It is still necessary to understand: Why is the refinement of the gentiles so important that it represents the fulfillment of Yaakov's service? The resolution to this question relates to the Jew's position as "the smallest among the nations" and is connected with the interrelation between eichus ("quality" or "inner content") and

kamus (“quantity”). Generally, it is explained that the Jews possess the dimension of eichus and the gentiles, kamus. This, however, is an under-developed approach.

It is wrong to say that the gentiles possess only the dimension of kamus and do not possess any eichus whatsoever. On the contrary, eichus and kamus are interrelated. Particularly, when we are speaking about beings created by G-d from absolute nothingness, their very existence – and surely their quantity – is directly connected with their eichus, the Divine life-force which brings them into being.[251] Thus, the fact that the kamus of the gentile nations is more than that of the Jews forces us to say that they also possess, at least from one perspective, an advantage over the Jews.

The advantage possessed by the gentiles parallels the advantage possessed by the t’shuva for sins over the essential service of t’shuva which is t’shuva that is not to compensate for sin, but rather – as implied by the simple meaning of the term – the return of the soul to its Divine source.

To explain: Most people’s conception of t’shuva is to repent for sin. Although this is a mistaken perspective – and, indeed, the essence of t’shuva is for the soul to return and cling to its G-dly source – the fact that this perspective exists[252] indicates that even in truth, from a certain standpoint, t’shuva for sins does possess a superior dimension.

The advantage of that form of t’shuva is that it has an effect on – and transforms into holiness – a lower level of existence, a form of conduct which is against G-d’s will. The highest sparks of G-dliness are en clothed in this form of conduct[253] and through t’shuva, they are elevated to their source.

Nevertheless, in an ultimate sense, there is an advantage to t’shuva which has no connection to sin, for through this form of t’shuva, we connect our souls to their source, the essence of G-d.[254] Indeed, it is this essential connection which generates the potential for repentance for sin and endows the t’shuva connected with repentance to lead to the reestablishment of the Jew’s ultimate essential bond with G-d.

A similar concept applies in regard to the contrast between the Jews and the gentiles mentioned above. The gentiles possess an advantage in the realm of eichus as well, for the refinement of the gentiles – who on an apparent level are lower – elevates a higher level of Divine sparks, the sparks which fell from the world of Tohu. Nevertheless, ultimately, the intent is for the service of the Jews, for their source transcends the levels of Tohu and Tikkun. Furthermore, it is the service of the Jews which makes possible the refinement of the gentiles[255] as reflected in the Rambam’s statement that the Jews are “commanded by Moshe our teacher from the Almighty to compel all the inhabitants of the world to accept [the seven] mitzvos which were commanded to Noach’s descendants.”

These concepts can be related to the Torah’s mention of Eisav and his descendants. This serves not only as a mere preparation for the description of the chronicles of Yaakov and his descendants. Rather, it emphasizes that there is an advantage to the service of the refinement of the gentile and that this advantage can be achieved through the service of the Jews. Indeed, the most complete level of a Jew’s service must include these activities as well.

Based on the above, we can also appreciate the connection between the Torah portion and the Haftora

which is, “The vision of Ovadia.” Our Sages explain that Ovadia was an Edomite convert. Therefore, G-d’s revelation of the vision concerning the retribution to be given to Edom reflects a pattern of “From [the forest] itself, comes [the handle of the axe] which fells it,” transforming the negative aspects of Edom, the lowest aspects of existence, and thus, preparing the world for the revelation of G-d’s sovereignty and the advent of the Era when “I will make the peoples pure of speech that they will all call on the name of G-d and serve Him with a single purpose.”[256]

Based on the above, we can appreciate the sequence of the three Torah portions, VaYeitzei, VaYishlach, and VaYeishev and the phases in Yaakov’s service that they reflect.

Parshas VaYeitzei describes Yaakov’s service in establishing his own household and acquiring his personal property, i.e., elevating his portion in the world at large. It concludes with his arrival at Machanayim, a name which he gave[257] in recognition of the two camps of angels, the angels of Eretz Yisroel and the angels of the Diaspora, which he saw there. As explained,[258] these camps of angels refer to service in the realm of holiness and service in the realm of permitted things respectively.

This, however, is insufficient. The complete fulfillment of Yaakov’s potential also involves his refinement of the lowest aspects of existence, those which are not permitted. For that reason, Yaakov sent messengers to Eisav. This service came as a result of his previous activity, i.e., Yaakov’s efforts to establish his home and refine his surrounding environment generated the power necessary for him to elevate Eisav,[259] the lowest aspects of existence.

After completing the refinement of Eisav to the extent of his capacity,

Yaakov was able, as related in Parshas VaYeishev, “to dwell in the land where his father lived,” to the extent that he “desired to live in prosperity.” Surely, this does not refer to material prosperity alone, but rather, spiritual prosperity which reflects, in microcosm, the prosperity of the Era of Redemption.

Since, however, Yaakov had not completed the refinement of Eisav – as of yet, he had not come to “my lord in Seir” – he was not able to appreciate the full dimension of prosperity in this world. To enable him to do so, he became beset with the difficulties resulting from Yosef’s sale, which ultimately led him to descend to Egypt. Yaakov’s continued progress in those years and the refinement of Egypt – which is connected with the transformation of the lowest aspects of existence – which he accomplished, allowed him to enjoy true prosperity there.

The refinement of Eisav which Yaakov did not complete was left for us, his descendants. Through our service in the present exile, the exile of Edom (Rome), we bring about (through the power endowed us by Yaakov our ancestor), the refinement of the gentile nations and thus, prepare the world for the revelation of G-d’s sovereignty. Then, we will appreciate true prosperity even in this material world.

2. Parshas VaYishlach which describes the refinement of Eisav is connected with Yud-Tes Kislev, which marks the beginning of the service of “spreading the wellsprings of Chassidus outward,” refining even the lowest elements of existence by making them a source for spread of the deepest dimensions of Torah.

This concept is reflected in the letter sent by the Alter Rebbe to Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev in which he describes how:

G-d wrought wonders and

performed great [miracles] within the world... sanctifying His name in public, in particular, before the officers... of the king.[260] They were also amazed by the circumstances... and recognized that “This is from G-d, it is wondrous in our eyes.”

Nevertheless, despite the widespread effects of the redemption of Yud-Tes Kislev, the Russian government remained in power and, continued to oppose Yiddishkeit and Chassidus. Thus, the Mittlerer Rebbe was also imprisoned. Although he was redeemed on Yud Kislev, and this caused an even further refinement of the power of Edom,

Nevertheless, ultimately, the intent is for the service of the Jews, for their source transcends the levels of Tohu and Tikkun.

this also did not change the fundamental stance of the Russian government vis-à-vis the Jews and thus, in subsequent generations, each Rebbe in his generation had to confront and fight against the decrees of that government.

This pattern continued after the Revolution and ultimately, led to the arrest of the Previous Rebbe. Although his redemption brought about a powerful refinement of Edom, he was still forced to leave that country and move the center of Chabad activities to the United States. Nevertheless, after our service in the present generation, spreading the wellsprings of Chassidus

outward, [the power of Edom has been broken, and we have reached the phase of Iram]. Eisav’s power will be used to collect the treasures of the world and present them to the Jews as they are collected in a chest. Furthermore, the Jews are also given the key to the chest.

All that is necessary is for, to quote the Rambam, a Jew to perform one good deed, and thus, “tilt the balance of the entire world to good and bring deliverance and salvation.” This is particularly true in light of the Previous Rebbe’s statement – which was made years ago – that all that is necessary is to polish the button and to “stand ready and prepared” to greet Moshiach.

The above has special relevance this year, a year when, “I will show you wonders.” Greater importance is placed on the wonders that occurred in connection with the Alter Rebbe’s redemption and the appreciation of these wonders by the nations throughout the world.

This should arouse great happiness on the part of the Jewish people and inspire them to increase their study of Torah and, in particular, P’nimius HaTorah as revealed in the teachings of Chabad Chassidus. In this form, it can be studied together with Nigleh, the revealed aspects of Torah law, and they can be appreciated as two dimensions of “the perfect Torah.”

This study should lead to deed, an increase in the performance of mitzvos b’hiddur and an increase in one’s efforts to motivate others to similar activities, spreading Yiddishkeit and Chassidus throughout the world. The above is particularly relevant in the month of Kislev which shares a special connection to the revelation of P’nimius HaTorah as evidenced by its inclusion of the festivals of redemption, Yud and Yud-Tes Kislev, Tes Kislev (the Mittlerer Rebbe’s

birthday and yahrtzeit), Rosh Chodesh Kislev (the beginning of the month) and Yud-Daled and Tes-Vav Kislev (which are connected with the shining of the full moon, which reflects the idea of a wedding). Surely, these unique days should be utilized in a complete manner to spread Chassidus and Yiddishkeit.

In this context, it is worthy to stress the importance of organizing farbrengens for Yud-Tes Kislev in each and every place as is customary. As is appropriate for 5751, a year

when, "I will show you wonders," these should be "wondrous farbrengens." The potential for this is enhanced by the fact that Yud-Tes Kislev falls on Thursday. Thus the three days from Yud-Tes Kislev to Shabbos should be used for a three day continuum of chassidic farbrengens, the first to be held on Wednesday night, the beginning of Yud-Tes Kislev, the major farbrengen to be held on Thursday night (the night between Yud-Tes and Chaf Kislev when it is customary to hold the major Yud-Tes Kislev

farbrengen), and to hold farbrengens on Friday night and Shabbos day.

To make sure that these farbrengens are successful and "wondrous," one should consult with others and begin the preparations immediately.

May these activities lead to the coming of Moshiach even before Yud-Tes Kislev and the revelation – in a full and complete manner – of G-d's sovereignty throughout the world.

NOTES:

248. Note the explanation of the Rogatchover Gaon in regard to the oath which Moshe gave Yisro. Although that oath was nullified, since it is alluded to in the Torah, it continues to have an effect forever.

249. The connection between Rome and Magdiel can be explained as follows: The word Rome in Hebrew means "majesty." Similarly, Magdiel can be interpreted to mean, "Who has been made great by G-d;" i.e., Rome is a power whom G-d granted greatness to. Alternatively, Magdiel can be interpreted to mean, "who became greater than all gods;" i.e., referring to the spread of the Roman empire and its emergence as supreme over all other pagan deities.

250. In particular, Magdiel is not the final "lord" of Eisav mentioned in the Torah, Iram is. Iram can be interpreted as referring to a second stage in the rule of Rome. First, Rome will become "greater than all gods." Then, the Roman authority will be used for a second purpose, "to collect (which relates to the root of the name Iram) treasuries for Moshiach."

251. This is particularly true according to the Baal Shem Tov's explanation that creation is an ongoing process and at every moment, all entities are being brought into existence anew.

252. The fact a supposition to this effect exists within Torah indicates that this perspective has eternal significance. As a corollary to the idea cited in Note 1, every concept mentioned by the Torah, in the Oral as well as the Written Law – even a supposition which is later refuted – is eternal.

253. This parallels the fall and the elevation of the sparks of Tohu mentioned previously. In contrast, t'shuva which is not connected with sin relates to the realm of Tikkun which is, on a revealed level, below the realm of Tohu.

254. G-d's essence being a level which transcends both Tohu and Tikkun.

255. A parallel to this exists in the relationship between Shabbos and the days of the week. The weekdays correspond to the service of the gentiles and Shabbos corresponds to that of the Jewish people. The Zohar teaches that "all the days of the week

are blessed from Shabbos," i.e., it is the spiritual service of Shabbos which generates the potential for the service of refinement during the week.

256. Based on the above, we can understand why the Book of Ovadia, in contrast to all the other books of the Bible, consists of only one chapter. The transformation of Edom reflected in this book represents a complete expression of G-d's Oneness.

257. Yaakov's ability to name the place indicates how he became master of it and influenced it in a complete manner.

258. See the sichos of Parshas VaYeitzei, 5751.

259. To state the above in Midrashic terminology: It is related that Yaakov sent the angels he saw in Machanayim as emissaries to Eisav. Furthermore, when describing this vision of the angels, the Torah uses the term va'yifgu. P'gia, the root of that word, connotes "prayer," i.e., the angels prayed that Yaakov would use them for this purpose.

260. Ultimately, in fact, the Russian government assisted in the Alter Rebbe's redemption. This transformation of our enemies relates to our Sages' interpretation of the verse, "He redeemed my soul in peace because the many were with me." Our Sages explain, "Even Avshalom's soldiers prayed for David's success."

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LETTERS

IN THE Z'CHUS OF SPREADING YIDDISHKAIT

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By the Grace of G-d
 10th of Kislev, 5743
 Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mrs.

New York, N. Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

Thank you very much for your recent correspondence about all the family. May G-d grant that you and your esteemed husband should have true Yiddish Nachas from each and all of them in every respect.

I was particularly glad to receive the good news about your youngest married daughter, May G-d grant that she should have a normal and complete pregnancy, and normal and easy delivery of a healthy offspring, in a happy and auspicious hour.

The Zechus of your and your husband's activities in spreading Yiddishkeit, and particularly helping our brethren from behind the Iron Curtain, will additionally stand you all in good stead for Hatzlocho in a growing measure.

At this time, with the approach of Yud-Tes Kislev, followed by Chanukah, I send you and yours prayerful wishes for an inspiring Chag HaGeulo and a bright and happy Chanukah, and may all things get brighter and brighter for you and yours.

With blessing *My Schneerson*

Readers and collectors of the Rebbe's letters: We urge you to send in the Rebbe's English correspondence which was not yet published in the 7 English existing volumes and which pertain to issues of general relevance. Please send them in so that the letters can be published for everybody's benefit and thereby preserved forever.

You can send or deliver the correspondence to:

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Again, any correspondence you may have please send in, and please encourage your friends neighbors and family to do so as well. Please inquire also your non-Lubavitch acquaintances, as many who received these letters were not necessarily Lubavitcher Chassidim.

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BY RABBI CHAIM ASHKENAZI, MASHPIA, YESHIVAS TOMCHEI T'MIMIM, LOD
TRANSLATED BY MICHOEL LEIB DOBRY



After being released from his second imprisonment, the Alter Rebbe traveled to visit three leading figures in the misnagdic community. One of them asked, “What is the innovation of chassidus?” The Rebbe’s reply: Fixing times for Torah. The answer perplexed this great Torah scholar. “The Jewish People have fixed times for Torah for as long as can be remembered,” he queried. The Alter Rebbe explained to him that chassidus provides for a fixing in the soul, and not just at a certain time. What does “fixing in the soul” mean, and how is this achieved through chassidus? What type of cheshbon ha’nefesh must we make leading up to “The Rosh HaShana of chassidus”?

WE WON’T FORGET

The Rebbe shlita once told a story about someone who was extremely forgetful, to the point that every time he awoke from his sleep he was at a loss as to where he had placed his clothes. One day, he had an idea. He would write on a piece of paper that his hat is near his head, his shirt is near his body, etc. – and it worked. The Rebbe then said that there seemed to be a question here: How is it that he didn’t forget where his head and body were?! The answer is that it is possible to forget about things that are external to your existence, but you simply can’t forget about yourself...

For example, when a person eats, he doesn’t do so because the clock on the wall says that it’s time to eat, but because his biological clock tells him so. It is possible to forget about eating for a period of time if we’re overly preoccupied with other matters. However, it’s much harder not to drink, although even this is possible to forget if we’re extremely busy, albeit for a much shorter time. Similarly, it’s difficult to go without sleeping (in fact, the Gemara states that someone who vows not to sleep for three days is punished with flogging, and then may go to sleep immediately), and it is

virtually impossible to go even a short duration without breathing.

The common denominator to all these examples is that a person does not do them because the time has come, but because he feels the need and the obligation. According to the need, it is determined that “you simply can’t go without.”

No one would ever ask, “What difference does it make if he eats and drinks because the clock tells him that it’s time or because he feels he must?” as everyone realizes that there is a tremendous difference. In fact, it is most unsettling when someone doesn’t eat and drink unless the clock indicates the time to do so, thus indicating a lack of feeling hungry or satiated, a most unhealthy state indeed. In such a case, he requires advice for something as basic and simple as eating...

In connection with our discussion, when a person establishes his Torah learning simply in terms of time, it is possible to forget. Furthermore, the Torah study remains external to his existence and being, and therefore, it can neither purify nor delight him.

A TRUE GIANT IN ISRAEL

There is a story about the Baal Shem Tov, who once, on Rosh Chodesh, participated in a meeting among the leading Torah scholars of his generation. One of these scholars wanted to ridicule the Baal Shem Tov, as he believed him to be an ignoramus. He asked him what the halacha is if you forget to say “*Yaaleh V’Yavo*” during the Mincha prayers of Rosh Chodesh. “There’s no practical difference for either one of us in this question,” the Baal Shem Tov replied. “I won’t forget from the very outset, and you’ll forget even the second time...”

How do we interpret this story? Did the Baal Shem Tov not forget because he davened from a siddur and saw that it was written that on Rosh Chodesh you are supposed to say

“*Yaaleh V’Yavo*,” and this reminded him that it was Rosh Chodesh that day? Of course not. But so worked the “memory” of this Torah scholar who wanted to make fun of the Baal Shem Tov. Therefore, the moment he lifted his eyes from the siddur, he forgot that it was Rosh Chodesh. On the other hand, the Baal Shem Tov **felt** Rosh Chodesh; he breathed the air of Rosh Chodesh. Thus, since Rosh Chodesh radiated greater holiness than on a regular day, and holiness for the Baal Shem Tov was his very life, the very air that he breathed – how could he possibly forget?

This is the meaning of the saying of our Sages, as explained in *Tanya*, “The Avos are the chariot,” i.e., throughout

their entire lives they were on the level of a “chariot” to G-dliness.

G-dliness was the essential core of the Avos, and therefore, they passed this on to their descendants throughout all the generations, without change or interruption. Similarly, this has been the true nature of true Torah giants for generations. Everything they said or did was not due to external compulsions – e.g., the clock determines that now is the time – rather, because they breathed G-dliness. Thus, it is forbidden for us to dispute their words, and needless to say, we must not *ch”v* disgrace them. (Even when there were disagreements among them, and we render a decision only according to one opinion, this is



because with regard to rendering a halachic decision other rules apply. There was none greater than Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai – of whom Rabbi Akiva said, “It is enough for you that I and your Creator know your strength” – nevertheless, the halacha in nigleh usually did not go according to his opinion.)

The Rebbe Rayatz brings in his sichos that the Rebbe Maharash said that German Jews cannot be chassidim, because when he was in Germany, he saw that it was written on the synagogue bulletin board that weekday morning prayers last fifteen minutes, on Mondays and Thursdays – eighteen minutes, and on Shabbos – twenty-five minutes. A chassid standing and davening doesn’t know when he will finish, for if his davening arouses a feeling of G-dliness, then how could he stop? Furthermore, if he hasn’t aroused this feeling, it means that he hasn’t even started davening.

(Similarly, it has been told that when people asked R. Reuven Dunin, of blessed memory, whether he had davened, he would reply, “If you mean, ‘Did I flip the pages?’ – yes, I did.”)

AS IN LEIPZIG

The Rebbe shlita often told the famous story about the Mezritcher Maggid, who had a friend from the days before he became a follower of the Baal Shem Tov. Both of them were *mekubalim*, and they used to daven according to the *kavanos* of the Arizal. After becoming the Baal Shem Tov’s disciple, the Maggid started davening at much greater length. One day, his friend told him, “I also daven according to the *kavanos* of the Arizal, but this doesn’t cause me to extend the duration of my prayers so long.”

“What do you do for a living?” the Maggid asked him. The friend replied that he is a merchant and he travels every once in a while to the fair in Leipzig. This venture takes several weeks of preparation, followed by a

lengthy trip, spending a certain period of time at the fair, and then finally, the long trip home.

“Why is all that necessary?” the Maggid asked. “Can’t you just stay in your home and picture to yourself the whole journey and the business dealings at the fair?”

“Don’t be such a loafer!” the friend retorted. “I need money, and that’s why I have to be there personally.”

“You should listen to what you just said,” the Maggid said to him. “I need to be at all the spiritual levels where

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we derive the proper intentions at every portion of davening – not to remain in one place and imagine that I’m ascending from one world to the next. All this takes time.”

This is what happens when we study Torah and fulfill mitzvos according to the clock. The time is an indication that now we have to put on t’fillin, now we have to sit and learn Torah. The result is a situation where our only connection to Torah and mitzvos is determined by the clock. Once, one of the chassidim boasted to

the Rebbe Rashab that his son had learned the entire *Tanya* by heart. “And what did the *Tanya* teach your son?” the Rebbe Rashab asked the chassid.

The well-known saying goes, “a mule bearing *s’farim*,” i.e., even if the mule carries the entire Talmud and all the commentaries on its back, it remains a mule. (There is some refining process involved, as the mule serves as a vessel for holiness. Nevertheless, it still remains a mule.) As the Rebbe Rayatz says in connection with what is written about the cows that bore the *Aron*, “and the cows sang” – even though the *Aron* had a purification effect upon the cows and they began to sing, they remained cows. They underwent no essential change.

BY WHAT DO WE LIVE?

We periodically need to make a personal accounting: I have already put on t’fillin hundreds and thousands of times, I have mentioned G-d’s name tens of thousands of times in brachos and davening, etc., and I have learned many pages of Gemara, halachos in *Shulchan Aruch*, chapters of *Tanya*, *maamarim*, and sichos. However, if that is the case, then why does there appear to be such a wide gap? We say every evening “for they are our life and the length of our days” in reference to “Torah and mitzvos, laws and statutes, You have taught us,” yet one has to look deeply to determine exactly how much of an effect they have had upon me and to what extent I actually feel that they are “our life,” whereas, things like eating and drinking are fixed within my soul?!

If a doctor comes and tells someone who is ill that if he eats certain foods or does certain activities, it will seriously affect his health, *ch”v*, his words are accepted immediately without hesitation, even if the doctor doesn’t appear to be a great embodiment of honesty and integrity. (Proof of this is when the doctor will come to ask for a **small** loan, we won’t

give to him without supportive documentation.) However, when the Torah says, as stated in Rambam, *Shulchan Aruch*, *Tanya*, or chassidus, that if you do a certain thing it will be very good, but if you don't *ch"v*, it will be very bad, it doesn't speak to him!...

The Rambam, the Beis Yosef, the Alter Rebbe, and the other Rebbeim are surely more trustworthy to him than the doctor. And if they would ask for a **large** loan, he would give it to them without any request for collateral. Of course, the problem here is not *ch"v* "a lack of confidence" in them and greater confidence in the doctor. The doctor speaks to him about matters that pertain to the very essence of his life, whereas, the Rambam, the Beis Yosef, etc., speak about things that he feels are beyond his worldly existence. These are not things that he lives and breathes. Yes, he's heard about them, believes in them, and does not even have the slightest doubt that they are all true. But in spite of all this, it has no perceptible effect upon him.

Thus, chassidus teaches us that worldly matters are on the level of seeing, while the needs of the soul are on the level of hearing. We're not talking *ch"v* about some non-believer. He believes all of it, and the fact is that he sets times for Torah study, mitzva observance, and other things that we are obligated to do according to Torah – but it's not on the level of "our life."

The mashpia, R. Chaim Shaul Brook, of blessed memory, used to say that there are three types of "*heim*" ("they" in Hebrew or "home" in Yiddish):

1. "*heim chayeinu*" (they are our life) – this is holiness;
2. "*heim v'nasheiheim u'b'neiheim*" (they and their wives and children) – this is *klipas noga*;
3. "*heim lo yadu d'rachai*" (they have not known My ways) – this is the three completely impure levels of *klipa*.

Subsequently, people are

distinguished, one from the other, through the determination of what a person's true "*heim*" is – holiness, *klipas noga*, or *ch"v* the three completely impure levels of *klipa*.

It is impossible to make holiness into your "*heim*" by learning musar. This will just frighten a person into thinking that all other forms of "*heim*" are bad, and it will not succeed in getting him to feel that the true life is found only in G-dliness. This can only be achieved with the study of chassidus; specifically through the teachings of our Rebbeim can a person attain the intellectual understanding to comprehend how material life of itself

"There's no practical difference for either one of us in this question," the Baal Shem Tov replied. "I won't forget from the very outset, and you'll forget even the second time..."

has no true purpose. Thus, when chassidus brings him to a much higher level, worldly matters are transformed to things that we just hear about, while spiritual matters become more real and tangible.

As Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev said to G-d in his defense of the Jewish People, "If all worldly desires would be placed in *s'farim*, and if Gan Eden and Gehinom were to appear before our very eyes – who would possibly commit a sin?" This is precisely the innovation and objective of chassidus: to place the life of the spirit and all that pertains to it squarely before us, and subsequently,

the life of the body will become more distant within the limits of hearing.

(I recall once hearing how a leading rabbinical figure was offered something to eat, and he replied that the doctor forbid it. They asked him which doctor, and he said that the Rambam in *Hilchos Deios* says not to eat such things. If some other doctor would say that, he continued, he wouldn't accept it as a prohibition, but as advice. However, if the Rambam says so, it's a Torah prohibition, and therefore, it is forbidden.)

THIS IS MOSHIACH!

Why does this feeling come specifically from chassidus? Because chassidus is a taste of the Future to Come, and then it will shine in a revealed manner in every world, truly demonstrating that "our life" is G-dliness, Torah, and mitzvos. It is said that in the Future to Come, if someone will want to pick figs on Shabbos, the fig will cry out, "It's Shabbos today!" (This doesn't necessarily mean that the fig will have the power to speak in an audible voice, though "Is anything hidden from G-d?") However, in simple terms, this can be compared to a person not putting his finger into a fire, because the fire "screams" that it's dangerous, as the danger is so concrete. Similarly, the resulting spiritual danger from picking a fig on Shabbos will be so clear, it will be as if the fig actually cries out, "Shabbos!") Afterwards, at a much higher level, when the mitzvos will be nullified in the Future to Come, the Rebbe shlita explains that things will be so obvious that there will **no longer be a need** for a command.

It is thus understood why this is achieved specifically through chassidus. Furthermore, when we say "chassidus," this doesn't refer just to "the study of chassidic philosophy," but also to "the path of chassidic teachings," i.e., chassidishe conduct. As R. Hillel Paritcher would say, chassidim customarily keep all these

many hiddurim in order that “*es zahl zich ahpleigen besser a vort chassidus*” (the chassidic teaching should be absorbed better). But first and foremost, chassidus provides and reveals the foundation of our hiskashrus to the Rebbe.

Once at a meeting of prominent rabbinical figures, the Chafetz Chaim asked the Rebbe Rashab how he succeeded in getting his students to have such a refined look to them. The Rebbe Rashab responded that this comes from the study of chassidus. “If so,” the Chafetz Chaim replied, “I’ll establish a shiur in chassidus for my students.” The Rebbe Rashab smiled. Afterwards, the Rebbe Rayatz asked him what was the meaning of the smile. “It’s not enough to study chassidus,” the Rebbe Rashab answered him. “You also need a Rebbe.”

Therefore, one of the more distinguishable characteristics among chassidim is *hiddur mitzva*, as we see in the stringency of the fulfillment of

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such mitzvos as esrog, matza, tzitzis, t’fillin, kashrus, etc. For anyone whose connection is based solely upon time, it is enough to fulfill the minimum obligatory requirements. However, if this is fixed in his soul, he won’t just settle for that. A person who is in a place with a minimal supply of oxygen

will get out of there as fast as he can. Similarly, we find regarding other physical needs – e.g., food, clothing, shelter – he won’t settle for anything less than the very best. This is how a person must pursue his spiritual needs, while he can easily get by with the basics regarding his more worldly and physical needs.

Thus, we can understand why especially Lubavitcher chassidim learn chassidus and their whole desire is to feel the “for they are our life” of Torah and mitzvos. They want to see the revelation of our King, our Moshiach, whose life is pure G-dliness in the most actual sense. As the Rebbe shlita writes about our Rebbeim, they are from the souls of “those for whom the partition has been broken,” and the radiance shines here below in a physical body just as it does above. Therefore, only he can be the Moshiach, who will reveal himself at any moment and bring us all to the true life.

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SHLUCHIM IN ACADEMIA

BY SHAI GEFEN

*Shlichus on campus is common in the United States but not in Eretz Yisroel. Whether in the U.S. or Eretz Yisroel, campus shlichus is particularly difficult. * Shai Gefen spoke with two shluchim to universities: Rabbi Fishel Jacobs, shliach at the University of Tel Aviv, and Rabbi Gil Blizovski, shliach at the Ben Gurion University of Be'er Sheva. * The challenges and triumphs of campus shlichus.*

One of the most difficult fortresses to penetrate, from an outreach perspective, is the university. The shluchim in Eretz Yisroel, who began working in this area, encountered a solid wall of indifference at best and animosity at worst. Even today, after years of campus outreach, it's still not easy. Those in the Israeli intellectual strongholds hate seeing religious activity. Nevertheless, these shluchim have managed to get in and have achieved some impressive results.

Outreach on campus is completely different than the work done at Chabad houses. The people you deal with, the mentality, their feelings about religion, all are different. Still and all, Chabad has found a way to bring G-dliness to

the campus and to prepare the entire world to greet Moshiach.

When did you start your work on campus?

R' Blizovski: I have been at Ben Gurion University for twenty years, first as a physics and engineering student. I first started working there as a rav ten years ago, when Rabbi Yechezkel Sofer, who served as rav at the university, left.

R' Jacobs: I began working on campus exactly fifteen years ago. I was learning in kollel in Kfar Chabad, quite a few years after I got married. At that time, some of the fellows from Kfar Chabad began doing mitzvaim at the University of Tel Aviv, and they wanted to get their work firmly established.

They decided that I could help

them, and they met with me in the kollel and told me there was a bomb shelter on campus that belonged to the Einstein Campus, and I could work from there. I was 33 at the time.

So you accepted the shlichus?

At that time, it was a new thing for Chabad in Eretz Yisroel to work on campus. In principle, I agreed with their suggestion, but of course, I had to ask the Rebbe. I was surprised when, within a short period of time, I received an answer that okayed the idea.

Do you have a university background?

I felt I was closing a circle. My coming to Chabad began when Lubavitch was mekarev me when I was 21, and a student at the University of Vermont. I'll never



Rabbi Jacobs



forget this. One day, a Lubavitcher came to the university, seeking the Jewish students. He found me first and asked me to bring him all the Jewish students, and I did just that!

I yelled, "Attention all Jews, there's a rabbi here who is looking for Jews and everybody has to show



Rabbi Blizovski

up!" Within a few minutes, thirty Jewish students got together. I said to my fellow students, "There's a rabbi here and what he wants, we'll give him." I was a well-known karate expert and they all respected me.

That shliach was Rabbi Shmuel Hecht a"h, and from then on, during my four years at the university, I was invited to his house every Friday night. Thanks to him, I became a Chassid and afterwards, I went to learn in 770 for half a year, and from there I went to Kfar Chabad. I learned in the yeshiva and kollel there for 14 years. So the suggestion that I work as a shliach at a university was exciting to me.

R' Blizovski: And as I said, I was a student at the University in Be'er Sheva, so for me too, it was coming full circle.

What was it like when you first

started working on campus? Neither the University of Tel Aviv nor in Be'er Sheva are exactly pro-religion...

R' Jacobs: I'll tell you a story so you can understand the situation. The dean of the university in those days was Mr. Gideon Fishelson a"h, a friend of the Meidanchek family. He had a warm Jewish heart. He helped me obtain a permit from the university's legal advisor for the t'fillos, Kabbalas Shabbos, and other mitvtzaim.

We set up a shul that had a seifer Torah, a Torah library, etc. When I spoke to him about his speaking with the administration about our getting a more spacious place, he laughed. He lovingly said, "Listen my friend, they'll kill me if they hear that I allowed a shul and religious activity here."

That's when I began to

understand the constraints under which I would have to operate, though at the same time, I could see the enormous possibilities.

R' Blizovski: The work we do is done officially, with the permission of the university. The Rebbe insisted that we do it this way, and we were able to do so thanks to Professor Branover, who was a lecturer here for many years. The Rebbe guided us as to how to get this religious institution into the university. I think that this is unique that the

thanks to our work, mostly thanks to the Shabbos meals.

Speaking of the shul, a few months ago, the shul underwent extensive renovations in memory of my father a"h. Since then, our work focuses primarily on shiurim during the week, but what really makes things happen are the Shabbos meals that we've been running for 15 years now. Many neshamos were touched at these meals.

R' Blizovski: Our work is divided over a number of areas. We have a

whomever is interested. In the evening, we have the Night Kollel, which takes place four nights a week.

In addition to the ongoing classes, there are other programs, like a big Rosh Chodesh party every month, and other events during the month that are connected to special days in the calendar. These are aimed primarily at those who are less connected to Judaism, who do not participate in the learning. Every day we have five minyanim for davening.

We also have two clubs, a Kabbala club, which teaches the basics of Chassidus, and a Jewish Psychology club. My wife gives the female students classes on Jewish Personalities. This is how we reach students who would never enter the Midrasha. You can see male students with ponytails and earrings at these clubs. Baruch Hashem, we are very successful.

R' Jacobs: Our most successful and familiar program is Kabbalas Shabbos followed by the Shabbos meal. Between 50-80 students join us every week. Since we began doing the Shabbos program, three times a month, I spend Shabbos at the university. It's hard to describe the amazing atmosphere at the davening and meals.

It's fair to say that the real revolution comes from there, far more than from the shiurim. Every Friday night meal turns into a farbrengen that ends late at night.

We learn *Tanya* and it's just so special, I can't begin to describe it. These are full-course meals with fish, meat, etc., which we order every week from a catering place in Kfar Chabad. The d'veikus and Chassidic song pulls everyone in. The hearts, of even those who are the furthest away, melt.

What topics come up at these

ANONYMOUS KIRUV

Within the Internet site of the University in Be'er Sheva, there's a section for Chabad. It's a very interesting site where you can get information on all the work of the shluchim, the times, the classes, divrei Torah, archives, inyanei Moshiach and Geula, laws pertaining to weddings, funerals etc.

"Through this website people are able to ask me questions anonymously," says Rabbi Blizovski. "Many use this to get in touch with me. Each day, I get between five and ten questions, from questions concerning problems with friends to halachic queries, to questions about emuna, etc. You see how important it is for students and others to be in touch with a rabbi. Many people, who are ashamed or afraid to approach a rabbi, contact a rabbi through modern technology.

"One of the students, whose father had died, came over to me to ask me some questions. In the course of our conversation she said, 'We've been corresponding for a while now...' That's when I realized who she was. Previously, she had asked me many questions, and chose that encounter to reveal her identity. Most of the time I don't know who the people are and I never find out."

rabbi of a university, appointed by the administration, is a Lubavitcher.

As for your question, despite the backing of the administration, there are mighty battles that take place here regarding Reform, etc. Despite the difficulties, we see the Rebbe in everything we do. We are growing and getting stronger.

R' Jacobs: Baruch Hashem, from when we began until today, I see an enormous revolution. There are many dozens of baalei t'shuva

Beis Midrash Govoha, which is actually a sort of kollel for men only. We have classes in Gemara and Chassidus every day of the week. There is also a Midrasha for women, which operates four times a week.

In addition, there's a shliach who is responsible for the English speaking students, and another shliach who deals with the students from the C.I.S.

In the morning, we have chavrusa learning. We bring Lubavitchers to learn with

farbrengens?

What's the question?! We talk about the Rebbe, Moshiach, inyanei Geula and Chassidus. We learn *Tanya*. We live in the atmosphere of 770.

Do you have any stories for us, from those Friday night meals?

During the 15 years of work at the university, thousands of students have passed through, dozens of whom have become baalei t'shuva with *sirtukim*, etc.

A large part of our work is also focused on those students who come from abroad. During the last two years, we've had a boy come to us whose mother is a Reform "rabbi." He learns *Tanya* with us every week, and if we need him, he joins the minyan.

We have plenty of stories of students who felt totally alienated from Judaism, and it was those Shabbos meals that changed them from one extreme to another.

Do you keep in touch with them?

Definitely. I marry them off too, sometimes. Then they invite me to the bris of their baby. We are in

People want to see real Judaism. They wait for a real smile, for a good word, for something deeper. In general, today people are searching for p'nimius. They want to see a p'nimi with a smile.

touch with many students, even after they leave the university. We recently made a wedding for a couple from the Ukraine. At first, they came to shul and I noticed that they made a good match and I introduced them to each other. Baruch Hashem, now they're married and building a home on a foundation of Torah and mitzvos.

One day I got a phone call from someone who wanted to visit me at my home in Kfar Chabad. I was

happy to have him come for I realized he had something on his mind. He told me that he felt he had to make a serious change in his life.

I called Rabbi Tuvia Bolton, who came right over and spoke with him. That bachur is a full-fledged Tamim today. R' Bolton told me that his greatest nachas is from that bachur. In 770, you can meet guys who were students who spent time with us. There are also those I discover years later, and it turns out that the changes in them began with us. You can never anticipate what the results will be.

For example?

In Crown Heights there's a lawyer whom I met to take care of something. He said, "You don't recognize me?" Then he told me that he was one of the regulars at our Shabbos meals on campus. And he's not the only one. Over the years I've met Jews I didn't recognize, about whom I had no idea what had happened to them, and then I suddenly discovered that they had changed their lives around thanks to those Shabbos meals.

R' Blizovski: Speaking about results, often you don't see immediate results, or at all, and sometimes you see them years later. But in hindsight, we see that through our work on campus, many Jews were mekurav. There are the old timers like Chanoch Maidovnik and his wife who are themselves involved in outreach through terrific lectures, Dr. Tal Nir of Nachalat Har Chabad, Yaakov Ben-Ari, each one of them being a "candle that illuminates" his environment. They were part of the core group that began the revolution here.

Aside from the many who became more involved in Yiddishkait, there are so many more who are exposed to authentic Judaism. Even if they don't turn



A Chassidus class at the university

their lives upside-down, they definitely got what they needed to get, and discovered the light.

How does your work differ from that of a typical Chabad house?

R' Jacobs: The university has tens of thousands of people, students and staff, and every three to four years, most of them leave, so you don't know what happened to the people you worked with. This is vastly different than the ongoing activities of the typical Chabad house. Here you sow with tears and don't necessarily reap with joy...

R' Blizovski: The university here is a complete city. 17,000 students study here and there are 10,000 staff members. We reach out to both students and staff. On the one hand, we're a regular Chabad house. We reach out to the staff, make weddings, and *l'havdil* are involved on sad occasions too. We help staff members prepare their sons for bar mitzva.

On the other hand, our work goes beyond what a Chabad house does. We serve here as a Ministry of Rabbanus, and even as a Ministry of Shidduchim. We have a shidduch office within the university. I prepare chassanim and my wife prepares the kallos for their weddings, and we are with them throughout. Many of them have their Sheva Brachos on campus too.

Thanks to outreach that is done *b'darkei noam*, many of them have incorporated Jewish customs into their homes.

What special programs do you run?

R' Blizovski: We have to have unique programming in order to attract the students. We have barbeques every so often, and use the opportunity to teach Chassidus and Judaism. We also visit the dormitories. On Shabbos, we have mesibos Shabbos for students.

IN THE BEGINNING

Outreach at the University of Be'er Sheva began with the appointment of Rabbi Yechezkel Sofer as campus rabbi. The administration gave him a place to operate from in the bomb shelter of the university. There was a shul there and place for activities. Many students went there to learn about Judaism.

This shul also served the few Lubavitchers there. "I would walk an hour each way in order to get to shul," recalls Rabbi Moshe Dickstein, one of the old time Anash in Be'er Sheva. We all had a long walk to get there but it was the one place where we could feel at home. It was the center of Chassidic life."

Since it was hard for the Lubavitchers to walk home, some of them stayed to farbreng until Mincha, during the winter Shabbasos. "Those were farbrengens!" reminisces R' Dickstein. "One of us, or one of the students, would occasionally share what was weighing on his heart. Until this day, I meet people who lived nearby and who davened with us, and they say, 'It's too bad that the shul isn't open on Shabbos.'"

Quite a few students became frum because of this, like Yaakov (Kobi) Ben-Ari, Chanoch Maidovnik, Tal Nir, and many others.

Tal Nir: "I remember the shul at the university, down there in the bomb shelter."

Today, Tal Nir is a distinguished member of Anash in Nachalat Har Chabad, a sought-after lecturer on Judaism and Chassidus. Back then, he studied medicine at the university.

"I saw a Chassidic farbrengen there for the first time in my life. It was the bris mila of the son of Tanchum Boroshansky, one of the old time Lubavitchers in the city. I didn't know what a farbrengen was, and I saw that Rabbi Sofer and other Lubavitchers that I respected were drinking a lot and this seemed strange to me. At the end of the farbrengen, when I saw Rabbi Sofer under the table, I was speechless. It was a traumatic experience for me..."

The outreach at the university continues till this very day, but it's very different than it used to be. The Chabad community in Be'er Sheva grew and the people aren't the same people, but the work continues.

The outreach at the university is benefiting the Chabad community in Be'er Sheva. Many of the mekuravim remain in the city and join the Chabad community. Chanoch Maidovnik and his wife are good examples.

Chanoch came fifteen years ago from Chaifa in order to study medicine. Today he runs a department at a psychiatric hospital. His wife Einat came from Gedera and studied psychology. She lectures in that field at the university. She just completed her doctorate.

Both became frum through Rabbi Sofer. They had heard about him and attended his lectures. Today they themselves give lectures on Jewish thought throughout the city and are mekarev other Jews to Yiddishkai.

I also write for the university paper, published weekly, 17,000 copies. I began writing a weekly column on various Jewish topics. I use the weekly sidra and bring stories of the Rebbe, and answers to questions that I was asked. I get lots of feedback on this column.

How does the general anti-religious sentiment in Eretz Yisroel, especially at the universities, affect your work?

It's interesting that when they come to you, the atmosphere is very good. Even those who seem distant get involved and enjoy it. The general atmosphere out there is cold and sometimes hostile, primarily because of stigmas and a biased media, but when we get closer, we see that each one has a spark burning within. People want to see real Judaism. They wait for a real smile, for a good word, for something deeper. In general, today people are searching for p'nimius. They want to see a p'nimi with a smile.

How do you break the ice?

R' Blizovski: It's a tough crowd to break into. I'll give you an example. We do Mivtza T'fillin every day for an hour and a half. On average, we put t'fillin on five people a day. We really work at a snail's pace. Most of the people don't even want to reveal that they have any connection with us.

Despite this, with all the difficulties, we see how a little light dispels a great deal of darkness, and there's a lot of satisfaction when you see results. Quite a few have become Lubavitchers thanks to our outreach; some of them are members of the Anash community in Be'er Sheva.

I'll tell you a story of something that happened recently which shows us how the work here is special and gives the Rebbe great nachas. A



Gil Blizovski and friends at a barbeque

student who is about to graduate came over to me and said that he had a dream about me. (smiling) Nu, it's no big deal to dream about me... Then he went on to say that in the dream he saw me smiling and

approaching him, and slowly, the image of me changed, and he suddenly saw the Rebbe in front of him.

This dream moved me. I felt even more strongly how the Rebbe has nachas from the work we do.

R' Jacobs: I'll tell you an interesting hashgacha pratis story. Everybody is welcome to our Shabbos meals; nobody is excluded. There was a black-skinned student, who regularly joined our meals. We welcomed her as graciously as we did anybody else.

One day, I was sitting in the office of one of the administrators at the university, a woman who is very anti-religious and is in favor of Reform, etc. She said to me, "You are all extremists." I tried to explain that we welcome everyone, but her



Rabbi Jacobs lighting a menorah with a student

ears were closed even before I began talking.

Just at that moment, who should walk by but that girl, and when she saw me she said, “Rabbi Jacobs, will you be here this Shabbos too?”

With that one line, she managed to destroy the administrator’s image of us and since then, the attitude of that administrator has completely changed. It was incredible hashgacha pratis.

How do the students relate to you, the rabbis at the university?

R’ Blizovski: The students feel that I am part of them. I have an academic background, having studied physics and engineering at this same university. It definitely makes a great impact when you teach them Judaism and Chassidus. Suddenly they see that the rabbi with the hat and jacket didn’t fall from the moon. He also has a degree.

R’ Jacobs: Every year on Purim, we have a big party when I tell the crowd about my karate expertise and I do a karate presentation. I had no interest in doing this but I know that this makes a tremendous impression on the students, and if because of my karate presentation one Jew will put on t’fillin, it’s worth it.

They see that it’s possible to be a religious Jew, even a rabbi, and not be closed off and extreme, which is what the media constantly tells them. In order to show them the beauty and inner truth of Judaism, I am willing to use gimmicks.

I remember how one year, at the Purim party, I broke nine blocks with one blow. I was drunk and didn’t know whether I would be able to do this, but apparently in order to be mekarev Jews, I was successful. I feel that with that karate blow, I also broke lots of hard “klipos.”



Gil Blizovski at a Rosh Chodesh party with students



The president of the University of Be’er Sheva lighting the menorah at Chabad’s public menorah lighting

So you have special programming on the holidays?

R’ Jacobs: On Chanuka, we have a huge public menorah lighting. The bachurim come and give out menorahs and doughnuts to the students. We have parties with prizes and quizzes. On Sukkos, we put up a large sukka and have large meals and farbreng. On Rosh HaShana, I am there, every year, and we organize the davening and t’kias shofar so everybody can hear it.

R’ Blizovski: Every year on Pesach, we make a seider on campus which every student can attend without a reservation, just as the



Gil Blizovski dancing

Rebbe told Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, that everybody should feel absolutely free.



Gil Blizovski with a student at the Purim seuda

It works, and many people join us. There are Chanuka parties and activities around the clock. On Lag B'Omer, we organize a trip to Miron.

Every Chanuka we have a central menorah lighting and we invite the staff and all the distinguished members of the university. The president of the university himself lights the menorah, and even brings his children and family.

Are you in touch with the parents of the students?

R' Jacobs: You would be surprised to know that many parents call me and ask me to watch over their child, or to be in touch with their child.

Would you say that Chabad has succeeded in breaking in to the

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universities in Eretz Yisroel?

R' Jacobs: In Eretz Yisroel there are limitations that you don't have abroad, but there are also many more opportunities for success here. There are shlichim in the U.S. who put in hundreds of thousands of dollars but only see results a long time later. If a shliach over there manages to get a minyan of students together, it's nice. Here, you can see greater results.

What are your plans for the future?

Our committee recently met in order to prepare a plan to double and even triple our activities. We want to develop and deepen our work. There's so much more to do, and we're always aiming to grow in order to ensure that yet another Jew is ready to greet Moshiach.

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ב"ה

‘NO MORE WILL LIONS ROAR’

BY SHAI GEFEN

*Twenty-one years ago, the Rebbe said we should try to show babies only images of kosher animals. This chinuch approach has been adopted by many outside of Lubavitch as well. * Beis Moshiach tells us how this directive has been implemented. * Yet another way to prepare for Yemos HaMoshiach when “I will remove the spirit of impurity from the land.”*

At the Chaf Cheshvan 5740 (1980) farbrengen, the Rebbe MH”M said, “It would be proper to try and see to it that Jewish children of the age of chinuch only come in contact with toys with kosher animals on them. So too, regarding the publishing of books and the like with pictures of animals: try to use kosher animals.”

These lines, cited in the brief biographical data printed in the beginning of *HaYom Yom*, encapsulate the Rebbe’s surprising directive of that special farbrengen, regarding the special purity Jewish children need to have when greeting Moshiach.

The Rebbe himself, in that sicha, emphasized that the reason for bringing this up now is because we are in the *Ikvisa d’Meshicha*, and we need to prepare for the time when, “I will remove the spirit of impurity from the earth,” and therefore “we need to ‘taste’ of those things of the

future. So we should try to use drawings of only kosher animals wherever possible.”

The Rebbe’s directive/request brought about an instant revolution, as Chassidim and others who respected the Rebbe’s directives, began to use illustrations of only kosher animals. The garbage cans in Chabad neighborhoods filled up with games, toys, books, and pictures of non-kosher animals. Naturally, the demand for toys and children’s clothing (most of which have non-kosher animals on them) without animals on them, or at least with only kosher animals, grew.

From the informal research we have done (in Eretz Yisroel), it seems that there are hardly any stores in chareidi neighborhoods that carry a selection of children’s items with non-kosher animals on them. In fact, there are lots of games, clothes, books, and pictures with kosher animals. The manufacturers and importers are well aware of the demand for kosher animal products.

BEING EXTRA CAREFUL

The Rebbe first mentioned the topic of seeing kosher animals back in 5733, but the clear directive was first stated in 5740. After the sicha was said, there were many questions on the part of the people who wrote up the sicha, and the Rebbe answered all the questions, defining what is acceptable and what is not. Some of those notes are still extant, from which we can see how the Rebbe





related to every detail.

When the Rebbe introduced this topic, he explained that seeing things affects the soul of a child for better and for worse. Since young children absorb everything, what they see has an effect on them for the rest of their lives. For this reason, said the Rebbe, as soon as a child is born, he is surrounded by holy objects, such as “Shir HaMaalos,” etc.

On Erev Lag B’Omer 5750, the Rebbe added that even before a child is born, mothers should be careful not to look at non-kosher things. This is based on the saying of our Sages that non-kosher animals have negative characteristics which can influence a person. This fact is even established in halacha.

One of the directives was that when you teach a child the Alef-Beis, and you associate a letter with a picture to make it easier for the child, these pictures should only be of kosher animals. The Rebbe even gave an example, saying, that when you draw the letter Alef and show the

WARNING

“As was said a number of times, about the need to be careful with toys and pictures of impure animals, so that children will see only pure things, even holy things. One should be careful from the beginning, right after the child is born and emerges into the air of the world, to put and hang [only] pure and holy objects around him. Furthermore, one should be careful even before the child is born, during pregnancy. Jewish women have the custom that while pregnant, they are very careful not to look at things that are impure, rather [they look] at only pure and holy things.”

*(Sicha Parshas Emor
Erev Lag B’Omer 5750)*

child a water drawer with two buckets in the shape of an Alef (the stick in between and the two buckets on either side), and a river is added to the picture, with fish, and on the bank of the river is a cat... The Rebbe described this in detail, and with a smile he added that they should try to remove the cat from the picture and replace it with a kosher animal.

The Rebbe told those who wrote up the sicha that the point was not to censor pictures of not-kosher animals that appear in Tanach, from which we can learn what is forbidden and what is permitted. And when illustrating a story from Chazal, there is no need to omit things, since “this is a teaching and explanation of Torah, obviously.”

Another question that came up was about visiting zoos, and the Rebbe wrote explicitly that this is included in meditating upon the wonders of Hashem’s creations, though there is no need to gaze upon the animals intently, but casually looking at the animals in the zoo is fine.

A MOTHER'S PERSPECTIVE

BY FAIGY KAMINKER

The Rebbe was asked about shuls that have eagles and lions on the aron kodesh and paroches. The Rebbe answered that it serves as a reminder to be “strong as a lion, fast as a deer, and light as an eagle” in serving Hashem. Additionally, the faces of a lion and an eagle appear on the Supernal Chariot.

A similar question was raised regarding the flags of the tribes, some of which depict non-kosher animals. The Rebbe referred to the Midrash that each image is associated with the characteristic of that tribe, “and this tribe needed a particular animal (a snake, etc.).” The Rebbe wrote, “A number of individuals had the picture of a lion in their personal seal.” (It should be noted that in the *Tanya* in the edition printed for the Israel Museum in Tel Aviv, which Rechavam Ze’evi (may Hashem avenge his blood) printed, is the museum’s symbol of a lion, and this was approved by the Rebbe.)

The Rebbe once spoke, sadly, about how not-kosher animals had made their way into Jewish booklets and magazines:

Even though, according to the custom of the country, there are certain things that are associated with a...mouse, and another matter which is associated with another animal which is not-kosher, etc., and it has become customary to use these drawings – and unfortunately, [these images appear] even in booklets and magazines that are, in other respects, al taharas ha’kodesh – there is no need for mesirus nefesh to get rid of this custom; it can be done easily. In our generation, the generation of Ikvisa d’Meshicha, which is the time to prepare for the revelations of Geula, it is very important to be careful about this. For about the future it says, “and I will remove the spirit of impurity from the earth.” Therefore, it is worthwhile conducting oneself now the way it will be in the future.

As a mother of a six-month-old baby girl who had many toys, I remember feeling surprised as well as a feeling of having missed out, when we heard the Rebbe MH”M’s directive about chinuch and kosher toys.

Why the surprise? Why the feeling of having missed out? Because of another “decree” imposed upon us?

No! It’s because I thought to myself. Such pure Chassidic thinking. How come, as young parents who think of ourselves as people with a “Chassidic head,” we didn’t think of this ourselves? Why do we need an “arousal from above” in order to get us moving in the right direction?

Implementing it wasn’t that difficult. When we checked things out, we saw that, baruch Hashem, there wasn’t much to get rid of. One toy mouse, some of the objects on the Fisher Price mobile that revolved around the pure head of our daughter, and a beat-up Teddy bear.

It was the Teddy bear we had some trouble with. Our mekuraves, an older lady, was so happy when I gave birth to my daughter. She brought as a gift, something very personal, the Teddy bear of her *ben z’kunim* (child born in her old age, and here I ought to apologize to the child who is today, a shliach). Whenever they came to visit, she checked to see whether my daughter enjoyed the Teddy bear.

So what could we do? Just throw it out? What about ahavas Yisroel? Give it back to her? Her son also has to listen to the Rebbe. He is also a Jewish boy. So what could we do? It was simple. After a minute of pondering this, we put the Teddy bear in the plastic bag that already contained the blanket and a bath-toy, the Fisher Price toys, and the mouse.

The Rebbe made us into detectives who closely examined the outfit with the chick, lamb, etc., who taught the shopkeepers that yes, even a butterfly isn’t kosher. Every game, item of clothing, pacifier, bottle, undergoes thorough inspection, two and three times. Maybe there’s a sticker with a non-kosher animal on it. The children are used to this, and sometimes they discover something we missed. We have to remember to keep a supply of kosher prizes in the event that their teacher wasn’t careful.

Our quality of life has risen, no doubt about that. Our awareness has gotten keener, and we have learned to value our role as parents and educators, those who are shaping the generation of “my anointed ones.”

I learned the “*v’niflinu*” (we are distinguished) in one short lesson. In my naiveté, I had thought that if the Rebbe announced such a logical and Jewish request, then all our religious brethren would jump on the bandwagon, but this is not the case. What a pity.

When we left our apartment for some time and a couple, Polish Chassidim, sublet our apartment, they decorated the children’s bedroom with all sorts of things. How shocked we were when we moved back in, to find, firmly stuck on the wall, a poster of the epitome of impure animals.

“V’niflinu!”

“Fortunate are we, how good is our lot.”

The way to make positive changes, said the Rebbe, and this is obvious, is not to do it in a way of debate and triumph, but to show that this is written in holy s'farim which everybody can read for themselves.

CHANGING SYMBOLS

That year, Tzivos Hashem sent in an illustrated story to the Rebbe for the new issue of *The Moshiach Times*. The Rebbe commented as follows: **The publication is primarily for young children, and therefore, experienced educators of young children need to decide about this. In general, there is no need for pictures of non-kosher animals.**

The Rebbe wrote to the Hatzala organization, which had a snake in its symbol, in Adar 5740: **Eliminate the snake from the symbol...**

There was a big change that year, for the Lag B'Omer parade. When the floats were constructed, the new directive was taken into account and the pictures of non-kosher animals that were used in previous years were replaced.

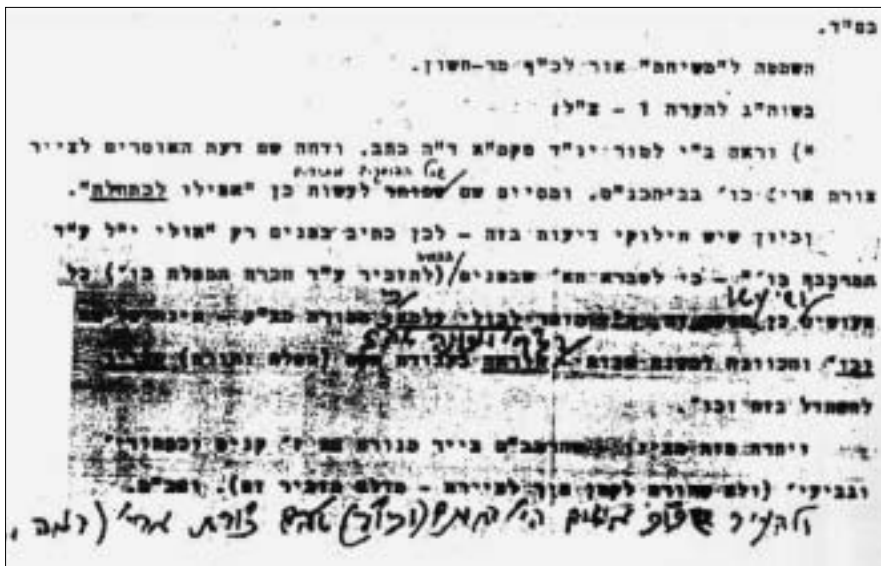
Thus, little by little, the Rebbe's directive not to use non-kosher animals began to change the way many things looked.

STORE-OWNERS RELATE

Naturally, the first ones to implement this directive were Chabad Chassidim. Books with non-kosher animals were no longer used in schools.

If at first, this all seemed strange, and difficult too, since it was hard to find acceptable toys, thanks to the newfound demand for products illustrated only with images of kosher animal, many more such products have since been manufactured.

The children's clothing store called Osher, in Yaffo, which has been importing clothing for the religious sector for thirty years, is well aware of the changes since the Rebbe's sicha. We called the store and asked them about this. This was their response:



One of the Rebbe's answers concerning serving Hashem in a way as "strong as a lion"

"In recent years there has definitely been a change in the dati sector, primarily among chareidim. Today there is no demand for things with non-kosher animals," says Yaakov, one of the owners of the chain of stores. "We are seeing more and

more of an interest in kosher animals, and so we don't print or embroider any non-kosher animals on our clothes."

Are there differences among your clientele?

"Lubavitchers don't even allow a butterfly. Other groups...it depends... Some are more particular, others less so. But if you do your research you will see that as time goes by, people are becoming more and more particular about this. I won't tell you there was never an interest in this, but in recent years people are more particular.

"Many store owners are saying they only want to carry clothing without non-kosher animals on them. I know that there are importers who don't want to deal with the religious sector solely because of the problems this causes them."

In another conversation with the owner of a store in B'nei Brak, the owner was quite familiar with Lubavitchers' aversion to buying anything with non-kosher animals on it, "Although," he emphasized, "in recent years, other groups have also been requesting kosher animals. With Chabad though, it's all forbidden, whereas with others, each one has

I thought to myself. Such pure Chassidic thinking. How come, as young parents who think of ourselves as people with a "Chassidic head," we didn't think of this ourselves? Why do we need an "arousal from above" in order to get us moving in the right direction?

their level of sensitivity to it.”

Are the manufacturers more aware of this these days?

“Definitely. You can find a substitute for everything. It used to be a problem, but today, the manufacturers have learned that there’s a market for items with only kosher animals on them.”

We spoke with the owner of a store in B’nei Brak that has been around for fifty years, who said, “We feel it very strongly the past six or seven years. More and more groups are requesting kosher animals only. At first, it was only the Lubavitchers, and one or two a day would insist on this. Today, we are used to it. It’s interesting that even among the Litvish, we are finding that they are more particular about this, as well as with certain groups of Chassidim. For Lubavitch, well of course for them, it’s verboten!”

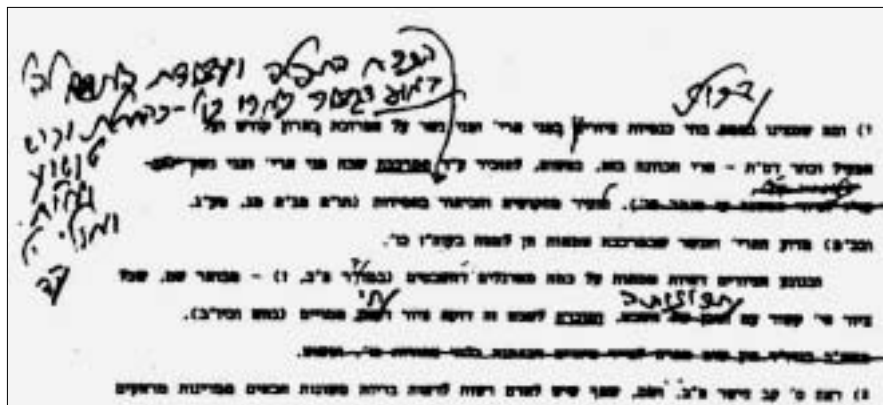
Do you remember how it began?

“I remember how at first it sounded bizarre. Suddenly people were demanding only kosher animals, and we didn’t have them. Then they wanted cars for children with only

EVEN NON-JEWISH DOCTORS AGREE

The Rebbe spoke about not looking at non-kosher animals many times. At a general yechidus that took place on 16 Adar 5747, the Rebbe called this directive, “a custom that was observed in Jewish homes.” The Rebbe added that today, even non-Jewish doctors agree that what a baby sees or hears influences him when he’s older.

The Rebbe said that a child’s room should have holy books and added, “It was customary in Jewish homes to be careful not to have pictures of non-kosher animals on children’s toys; just kosher animals and birds.”



One of the Rebbe’s answers regarding the image of a lion

kosher animals, or other drawings. We’re used to it by now and we make sure there is always a substitute. There was a time when they only imported things with non-kosher animals on them, but today there are either kosher animals or no animals altogether.”

And the manufacturers have gotten used to it too?

“The demands from the consumers have educated the manufacturers. When it comes to our clothing collection, we are very particular about what we take in. Sometimes there are little animals and we ignore those, or some items can be fixed with an appliqué.

“I once had to return a collection of clothing that had not-kosher animals on them, and they took it back. The importers understood the problem. I can tell you that there are parents who were not particular about this, but whose children are, and they alert their parents. You can definitely say that this has penetrated deeply into the religious sector, mostly among the chareidim.”

“LOOKING FOR THE LUBAVITCHER”

There have been many stories over the years about a change in a child after removing non-kosher animals. On an Israeli website called, *HaGil HaRach*, for professionals who work with children, there’s an interesting story posted as follows:

“Hello. My husband’s oldest son,

who is now seventeen, was very fearful of sleeping alone at night when he was three and four years old. My husband told me that he and the child’s mother tried everything. They consulted with doctors, psychologists, and homoeopaths, and nothing helped. The child was afraid of sleeping alone.

“One day, he went to be menachem avel and he met a Lubavitcher. He told the Lubavitcher about his concerns for his son and the Lubavitcher looked at him and without thinking much about it said, ‘Go home and remove all the non-kosher animals from his room.’

“The Lubavitcher explained that according to kabbala, non-kosher animals (kosher animals are those animals that a Jew may eat, like sheep, chickens, fish, geese), contaminate the soul and give the child fears.

“My husband went home, told the child’s mother, and they both decided they had nothing to lose. They removed all the dolls, toys, pictures, etc. My husband, thirteen years later, is still looking for the Lubavitcher in order to thank him, because from that night and on, his son slept alone without being scared.

“My husband and his previous wife were nowhere close to being religious. When I heard the story, I checked into what Kabbala says and it’s unbelievable. Good luck.

THE REBBE'S DIRECT INVOLVEMENT

BY NOSSON AVROHOM

Mashpiim and shluchim participated in the Chaf Av farbrengen that took place in Beis Chayeinu. Among the many stories that were told that night, the following story stood out. Rabbi Shemaryahu Matusof, mashpia in Tomchei T'mimim in Brunoy, related the story, which he had heard from Rabbi Shmuel Frankel, ra"m in the yeshiva.

"I'M TESTING YOU"

The story took place with a mekurav of Rabbi Onlesburg, who lives in Paris and owns a kosher restaurant. Rabbi Onlesburg's mekurav manages a betting parlor, which is part of a chain of betting parlors all over Europe.

When this mekurav began taking his first steps towards observing mitzvos, he learned about how the Rebbe has direct influence on every Jew – even after Gimmel Tammuz – and is accessible especially through the *Igros Kodesh*. Ironically, despite his skepticism, the man decided to write a letter to the Rebbe to ask him about this – in effect, testing it out for himself.

In fact, he went so far as to demand proof, a sign that the Rebbe is here and affects the world. The

litmus test, the man decided, would be whether his father would agree to put on t'fillin. That would be the sign that the Rebbe is here, affecting the world. Since the man's father had absolutely nothing to do with tradition and religion, putting t'fillin on would be proof enough for him. The man put his letter into a volume of *Igros Kodesh* and awaited the outcome.

A few days later was his father's birthday. Friends and relatives came to celebrate with him, and brought presents. The son was shocked to see that one of the gifts that a close friend brought was a pair of t'fillin!

The father, amazingly, was moved by the gift. He immediately rolled up his sleeve and put on the t'fillin, praying with them with great emotion. His son stood there in shock.

This made such a strong impression on him that he said to himself and all those around him, that the Rebbe MH"M indeed is actively affecting the world. He had seen this himself, right before his eyes.

As a result, the man strengthened his commitment to Torah and mitzvos, and influenced his entire family to do the same.

A DREAM

As the man progressed in his observance, a problem arose. In his business, most of the bets are placed on the weekend. Since his betting parlor was part of a chain, he was afraid that he would not be permitted to close his business on Shabbos.

But the man knew who to turn to. He wrote a letter to the Rebbe and put it in a volume of *Igros Kodesh*. Then he went to the office of the director in order to request permission to stop working on Shabbos.

Little did he dream that things would go so smoothly. The director readily agreed to his closing the store, on condition that this didn't get out to the other managers of betting parlors!

So he continued running the betting parlor without it interfering with his progress in religious observance.

Regardless of these signs, the man still wasn't fully aware to what extent the Rebbe had entered his life and how this would influence his family.

One morning, his two little daughters woke him up from a deep sleep. When he finally managed to pry his eyes open, they said, "Abba, register us in the Jewish school."

"Why are you suddenly asking me that?" he said, his voice still groggy.

"A tzaddik came to us in a dream and asked us to go to a Jewish school!" came the reply.

That sure woke the man up. Hastily, the man got dressed and dashed off in the car with his girls. He was heading for a Judaica store he knew about in the city. The store had many pictures of tzaddikim, such as the Baba Sali, Rav Kaduri, and others. When they arrived, he asked his daughters to point out the

When he finally managed to open his eyes, they said, "Abba, register us in the Jewish school..."

tzaddik they had seen in their dream. He shivered and then smiled as they both pointed at a picture of the Rebbe.

Needless to say, the girls were registered at a Jewish school.

WHEN THE CEILING FALLS

The chain of hashgacha pratit didn't end there. One day, he felt ready to begin observing the laws of family purity. When he introduced the topic to his wife, he was met with adamant refusal. She said, "Yeah, I'll keep those laws – when

the roof caves in!"

He realized there was nothing to talk about, and he believed with all his heart that just as until now, the Rebbe had helped him, the Rebbe would help him now too.

A few days went by and they received a notice from the municipality saying that since their house had been built in a certain year and it had a number of problems, they had to make renovations. The city would help pay for the renovations. A municipal engineer even told them to break down some of the walls of the house, as well as the ceiling!

All the husband had to do was read the letter to his wife, and she immediately understood what this meant and agreed to observe the laws of family purity.

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THE GAON & TZADDIK: RABBI ELIYAHU ELIEZER DESSLER ZATZAL

BY REB SHALOM BER WOLPO
TRANSLATED BY ALEXANDER ZUSHE KOHN



PART I

Rav Eliyahu Dessler was born in 5652 (1891-92) in the city of Libo, in Kurland (near Lithuania). His father, Reb Reuven Dov, of blessed memory, was outstanding in his Torah diligence and Divine Service, and was a close disciple of Reb Simcha Zissel, *zatzal*, the Saba¹ of Kelm. Rav Eliyahu's mother was the granddaughter of the *Musser* giant, Reb Yisroel Salanter, *zatzal* (and the sister of the wife of Reb Chaim Ozer Grudinsky of Vilna).

At the age of twelve, Rav Dessler traveled to the yeshiva of Kelm, where he studied under the *geonim*, Rabbis Tzvi Hersh Broda, and Nachum Zev, the Saba's son, who later became his father-in-law. Later, Rav Dessler moved to Homil, where his parents were living at the time, and studied there at a yeshiva for outstanding *bachurim* originating in Litvisher yeshivas, where his father was the dean.

After the Russian Revolution in 5678 (1917-18), Rav Dessler returned to Kelm. In 5687 (1926-27), he moved to London, where he served as a *rav*. A short time before the outbreak of World War II, his wife and daughter traveled to Lithuania to visit their family, and while they were there, the war broke out, causing Rabbi Dessler to lose all

contact with them — an occurrence that caused him much anguish. He later received the news that they had made it to Australia and the United States, but he did not see them again until after the war.

In 5701 (1940-41), Rabbi Dessler was among the establishers and *roshei yeshiva v'kollel* of the Gateshead yeshiva, which was established for Torah

Throughout the duration of Reb Itche's stay, the two of them toured all of Pardes.

students who were refugees of the war. Many of the yeshiva's alumni became *rabbanim* throughout England. At Rabbi Dessler's initiative, various educational institutions were established near the *kollel*, and their influence revolutionized Jewish education in England.

By this time, Rabbi Dessler was already renowned as one of the giants of

the *Musser* movement. In particular, he was distinguished in his brilliance in both the revealed and esoteric dimensions of Torah, and in the way he prayed. As such, when the Ponovitz yeshiva was founded in B'nei Brak, the *gaon* Rabbi Yosef Kahanaman *zatzal*, invited Rabbi Dessler to come to Israel, and assume the position of spiritual dean of the yeshiva, an offer he accepted. When his wife passed away in 5712 (1951-52), Rav Dessler applied himself with even more vigor to educating his disciples in Israel. At the same time, however, he did not forsake the institutions he founded in England, but made sure to visit them almost every year, and assess their development.

Even after falling ill, Rabbi Dessler continued to deliver his Torah addresses. Indeed, he began to deliver more of these, and to increase his writing of novel Torah insights and essays. On the twenty-fourth of Teives, 5714, the Ponovitzer *rosh yeshiva*, the *gaon* Reb Dovid Pubarski *zatzal*, and some of Rabbi Dessler's family members, were sitting by the latter's bedside, when he suffered a sudden massive heart attack. A few minutes later, he looked at those surrounding him, a hint of a pleasant smile on his face, and returned his soul to his Maker.

His *Musser* discussions are collected in the five volumes of *Michtav M'Eliyahu*.

Rabbi Dessler left behind his son, Reb Nachum Zev, dean of the educational institute in Cleveland (under the auspices of the Telzer yeshiva), and his daughter, who married Rabbi Eliyohu Yehoshua Geldtzeller, author of *Kodshei Yehoshua* on *Kodshim*, who was one of the important students of Monsey's Beis Midrash HaElyon, and, today, serves as the *rosh yeshiva* of Ohr Yisroel in Queens.

ONLY IN A LUBAVITCH SHUL

In a letter dated 22 Iyar, 5755, Reb Eliyahu Yehoshua Geldtzeller *shlita*, Rabbi Dessler's son-in-law, describes to me how his father-in-law was drawn to the spirit of Chabad Chassidus at a very young age:

1. When he was learning in Homil, which, as known, was a chassidic city, he became exposed to Lubavitcher chassidim and Chabad Chassidus, and prayed regularly at the Chabad shul with his father, Reb Reuven Ber.

2. I heard from my father-in-law, of blessed memory, that when he was twelve years old — that is, in the year 5664 (1903-04) — his father asked Reb Chaim Ozer, his father's brother-in-law, to send him an outstanding *bachur* to learn with his son. Reb Chaim Ozer sent him a nineteen-year-old *bachur* by the name of Reb Bentzion Natlavitch. (Reb Chaim Ozer wrote to him that this *bachur* is such a Torah scholar, he is proficient in the entire *Mishna LMelech*).

Long after I heard this story, I was already living in Forest Hills, when I found out that this Reb Bentzion Natlavitch (who had already

immigrated to the U.S. and was an important member of Agudas HaRabbanim) was living right near my apartment. I visited him a number of times, and he joined me for the Shabbos meals when his wife was sick. He told me all about that time period in which he learnt with my father-in-law when he was a child in Homil. He also told me an interesting thing: Reb Reuven Ber, my father-in-law's father made him agree in writing that he would pray at the *beis ha'midrash* of



Reb Itche der Masmid

the Lubavitcher Chassidim, because the Bundisten had already infiltrated all the other shuls, and he didn't want his son to be influenced by them in any way, G-d forbid. The only shul that the Bundistin had not infiltrated was the Chabad *beis midrash*. One can thus appreciate the attitude toward Chabad Chassidus that my father-in-law, Rav Dessler *zatzal*, picked up at home.

3. Reb Reuven Ber's first wife

passed away after she gave birth to my father-in-law. He then married the daughter of the great rabbi, Reb Yaakov Rabinovitz of Telz. She was also the sister of the wife of the gaon and chassid, Rav Yaakov Landau *zatzal*, chief rabbinical judge of B'nei Brak. This [second wife of Reb Reuven Ber] was the woman who raised my father-in-law. [My father-in-law] thus always called Rav Landau "uncle."

4. He had a wide range of knowledge of Chassidic texts — not only Chabad Chassidus, but also the works of Reb Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin, and *Likkutei Moharan*.

5. When he was a young man of about twenty-five, he traveled to the Rebbe Rashab, who had already moved to Rostov. This is documented in *Marbitzei Torah U'Muser*, volume 3, page 55: "He once traveled to see the *Admur* Reb Shalom Ber Schneerson at his court in Rostov, and they spoke about profound matters."

6. In 5708 (1947-48), Rav Dessler visited the U.S. and he went into the Rebbe Rayatz for a private audience. On Erev Rosh HaShana, 5710 (1949-50), he wrote the Rebbe Rayatz a letter of blessing, concluding with: "I count myself among the masses who esteem his splendid holiness."

7. In 5748 (1947-48), I went to the Rebbe in fulfillment of the mitzvah of comforting a mourner. I told the Rebbe that my father-in-law, Rav Dessler *zatzal*, saw both the Rebbe Rashab and the Rebbe Rayatz, and that he was influential in disseminating Chassidus — especially the *Tanya* — in the yeshiva world.

TOURING PARDES TOGETHER

Rav Dessler began his learning of Chabad Chassidus at a young age. "The

leading Lubavitcher Chassidim of Homil opened before him the gates of wisdom, understanding and knowledge.”

Many years later, during his tenure in London, the *gaon* continued to discuss Chassidus with elderly Chabad scholars, such as the *gaon* and *chassid*, Reb Yerachmiel Binyominson, o.b.m., and the *gaon* and *chassid*, Reb Yitzchok of Homil, o.b.m. (“*Itche Der Masmid*”). The following appear in *Marbitzei Torah U’Muser*, *ibid*, pages 65-66:

“One of the great Chabad *mashpiim*, Rabbi Yitzchak Horowitz, nicknamed *Itche Der Masmid*, once stayed at the home [of Rav Dessler] in London for a considerable amount of time. Throughout the duration of Reb Itche’s stay, the two of them toured all of *Pardes*.² There was not a single matter that Rav Eliyahu Eliezer [Dessler] did not clarify with [Reb Itche], to the extent that he would later say that the days he spent exposed to the profoundest secrets, clarifying the

He would later say that the days he spent exposed to the profoundest secrets, clarifying the hidden matters with Reb Itche, were the best days of his life.

hidden matters with Reb Itche, were the best days of his life. In the ensuing years, this time period was to leave its mark on his spiritual development. When he became the *rosh kollel* of Gateshead, he established a *Tanya* class. He once visited Monsey, and was invited to give a *Musser* talk in Beis Midrash HaElyon. For an hour and a half he clarified the Alter Rebbe’s

profound footnote in Chapter 2 of *Tanya*, regarding Chabad of Atzilus and that which is higher than Atzilus.”

In a letter to Rav Dessler dated 4 Nissan, 5697, the Rebbe Rayatz addresses him with the following titles: “The honorable, very noble, and celebrated *rav* and *gaon*, lover of uprightness, man of fine character and fear of G-d, our teacher, the *rav*, Rabbi E.E. Dessler *shlita*, [of] London.” The Rebbe proceeds to thank him for “the great affection you honor is showing him [the *gaon* and *chassid*, Reb Itche *Der Masmid*], and the good efforts you are making to assist him with his matters.” The Rebbe blesses him “that G-d should assist you and all who help you, in all spiritual and material matters.”

NOTES:

1 I.e., sage.

2 Literally, orchard, *Pardes* is also an acronym for Pshat (Basic), Remez (Allegorical), Drush (Expositional) and Sod (Esoteric), the four dimensions of Torah.

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HIS FIRST PRAYER – SAVE ME FROM THESE ANGRY MONKEYS!

BY NOSSON AVROHOM

*He encountered Chabad wherever he turned – in Thailand, Australia, India, and in the United States. * The story of a young Lubavitcher baal t’shuva.*

Even his best friends would have a hard time identifying Dan Ben-Chur; his appearance has changed to that of a Chassid. His prayers and desire for all things holy have earned him the respect of all those around him. He has a reddish beard and a Chassidic cap, and is a true Tamim.

Dan is a fascinating and charismatic guy. He has recently discovered that he is a scion to illustrious rabbinic families, including Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik of Brisk.

MEETING UP WITH CHABAD WHEREVER HE GOES

When Dan was a young child his family moved from New York, his birthplace, to Eretz Yisroel. They settled in Chaifa, where he attended school until he was of draft age.

When he was drafted he tried his luck at qualifying for an elite unit, but dropped out at the last minute and was incorporated into the armored division, where his older

brother served. After a brief stint he had to stop combat training because of back trouble. He took a course for medics and became a combat medic.

Since his childhood, he had always strongly felt that there is good in the world, Absolute Good. However, when he debated this with his friends he couldn't define precisely what he believed. At that time of his life he was completely ignorant of Judaism.

Like many of his friends, when he finished his army service, he flew to the Far East, where he believed he could find inner peace.

“When I landed in Bangkok, I went with my fellow backpackers to a place called Kova-San, a tourist center where there are representatives of many religions who offer their religious wares to passersby. There, I met many Israelis who suggested I visit the Chabad house.

“I knew what Chabad was but I

never had any connection with them, and I wasn't interested in going to the Chabad house. The fellows urged me to go, saying, ‘The rabbis there are great and you can get free food, so why not?’ They convinced me.

“I knew so little about Judaism that when the Lubavitcher bachurim spoke about Jewish topics during the meal, and told stories of the Rebbe, I had no idea what they were talking about. This feeling of ignorance intensified at the end of the meal, when they politely asked me to say the *Birkas HaMazon*. I wondered, ‘What do they want from me? I just came to eat, and not to recite things!’ I didn't even know what bentching was.

“Friends that I met suggested that I continue on to Kompangan, a stunning place on an island to the south of Thailand. I didn't lose a minute; I left that same day.

“I would spend hours alone, playing guitar. Along with some other Israelis I met, I spent my time playing cards on the beach. One day we rented scooters and traveled around the island for a week. I spent two weeks on the island, and then one day, I packed my stuff and returned to Bangkok and flew to Australia.

“A day after I arrived in Australia

I met Yoni, a childhood friend. He brought me to an apartment where a few Israelis were living. I began selling pictures to make a living, a popular Israeli livelihood in Australia and in many other countries. It's hard work but you make lots of money, which we tourists needed to pay for our ongoing trip. I got more involved in selling pictures and was very successful.

"This work entails lying, because in order to sell as many pictures as possible, we had to make up stories about the importance of the picture and the prestige of the artist who drew it. I made a good return. My friends were amazed by how well I did.

"One night I had a dream that made me extremely uncomfortable. I suddenly felt the severity of the offense I was committing and I thought of all the people I had cheated. I got up in a fright. When everybody else was getting ready to leave for work, I told them I wasn't going and explained why.

"They were surprised by my sudden pangs of conscience, and

"Suddenly, at the end of the bridge, I saw a Mitzva Tank, and near it were Lubavitcher bachurim giving out drinks to passersby. For a few long seconds I stood and watched. At that moment, I felt proud to belong to the Jewish people!"

they tried to convince me to continue working. I finally decided that I would go and sell pictures but I wouldn't lie. Guess what? I didn't sell a single picture!

"The same thing happened the

rest of the week, despite my efforts and the fact that it's very easy to sell pictures. When I saw that I was wasting my time, and that I was bringing the pictures back home with me every day, I switched to picking grapes in the vineyards of Mildora, but there too I didn't do well.

"While visiting Australia I encountered Chabad the second time. That's when I began to understand who these Chabad Chassidim are and why they are so highly regarded. One Friday, a Lubavitcher bachur came to our apartment to see how we were doing. He invited us for the Shabbos meals and t'fillos at the Chabad house.

"The following Shabbos I went to shul. I enjoyed the meals and the shiurim on the Rebbe's sichos, but I couldn't follow everything that was going on. I thanked my hosts and went home. Shortly thereafter, the same bachur met me on the street, recalled my name, and asked how I was doing. I was amazed. After all, I had met him only once, yet he remembered my name and seemed interested in my welfare."

FROM A CLIFF TO THE ABYSS

The hard work in the vineyards and the meager pay broke Dan, and after a week, he decided on the spur of the moment to fly to the United States. In hindsight, says Dan, this was a very difficult period for him. He had no idea what he wanted from himself, and a feeling of emptiness gave him no rest.

Within a few days, he had packed up his belongings and had gone to the airport for his flight to New York.

"I lived with my brother's friends in Coney Island, and wonder of wonders, I encountered Chabad yet again! Isn't it amazing how wherever I went I met Chabad? They didn't let us forget that we're Jewish. Every



Dan in the days of searching for meaning in life

Friday, two bachurim came to our apartment and put t'fillin on with us.

"After a month I moved to Williamsburg and I worked in a housewares store in Manhattan. You'll remember that at the end of 5763 there was a blackout, and since the trains weren't running I had to walk for hours. It was very hot and humid and I walked over the Brooklyn Bridge, sweating and wishing for a cold drink.

"Suddenly, at the end of the bridge, I saw a Mitzva Tank, and near it were Lubavitcher bachurim giving out drinks to passersby. For a few long seconds I stood and watched. At that moment, I felt proud to belong to the Jewish people!

"When I had put away a nice sum of money, I decided to realize my dream and to go to India. I had a strong desire to still the empty feeling within me with meditation. I hoped that by getting involved in things like that, I would be able to rid myself of the strange feeling of emptiness that became more pressing every day.

"When I arrived in India, I met Israeli acquaintances. We lived in a small farmhouse in the village of Tosh in the Pravati Valley area. We would sit together for hours and play musical instruments. We would also go on trips that entailed hair-raising adventures, and sometimes this was really dangerous. We called it "thrills."

"We once took an Indian guide and climbed Mt. Kriganga, a beautiful place 2000 meters above the Himalayas. The place had a number of attractions, including hot

springs that came from way up high, and in the early hours of the evening and morning, you could contemplate a magnificent view of the blossoming valley.

"We walked on winding trails. At times it was extremely dangerous, because long sections of the ascent were only a narrow path in the side of the mountain, with the wall on one side and the abyss on the other side.



Dan Ben-Chur standing near the Aron Kodesh in 770

"While we were climbing, a cow came towards us that didn't seem particularly threatening. As you know, cows in India roam freely because they are considered sacred.

"After the cow passed my friends who were ahead of me, I noticed a sudden change, and the cow turned and menaced my friend. He managed to shove the cow away from him and

that left me alone, facing it, with the abyss on my right and the mountain on my left. There was nowhere to run. I tried getting out of its way, but there was nowhere to go! I fell into the abyss.

"My fall was broken by thick shrubs, which I managed to grab hold of, and with the help of some friends, I managed to get up. I was just one step away from death.

"From there I continued my journey to the village of Vashisht in the Manli area. It was Yom Kippur and I decided to fast. It wasn't that I planned on becoming a baal t'shuva or intended on joining the t'fillos in shul; I simply saw it as a challenge and a show of Jewish pride. My friends weren't thrilled with my decision and didn't join me. I didn't care; I stuck to my guns and completed the fast.

"My faith in G-d at that time was expressed every night, before I went to sleep, when I placed my hands on my eyes and asked for success. I didn't know who I was praying to, but I believed with all my heart that there was a force of good in the world.

"During my stay in a primitive village called Ksol, I had to go to a friend one night, who lived in Jelal, a half an hour away. I had to traverse a thick forest and cross a river, and all this, in utter darkness.

"I took a lantern and decided to go for it. All along the way, I kept repeating my belief in the power of good that would help me. There were many scary moments. I was startled by the roar of wild animals and the shrieking wind that made all the trees shake and bang into each



Dan talking to the mashpia, Rabbi Yitzchok Springer

other, making a tremendous noise. Nevertheless, I walked on determinedly and with faith, until I arrived at my destination.”

MIRACLE WITH THE MONKEYS

“This period in my life was the worst.”

Dan was more confused than ever, and his soul knew no peace. The search for meaning in life constantly plagued him.

“One day I walked into the Chabad house as though it was a natural thing to do. The shliach, Rabbi Dror Moshe Shaul, welcomed me. He suggested that I put on t’fillin, and I agreed. I put on t’fillin and then left.

“The next day was Friday, 28 Tishrei, Erev Shabbos B’Reishis, and I went back to the Chabad house. Rav Shaul welcomed me once more and asked me to come back that night for the Shabbos davening.

“I went back to the Chabad house in the evening and it was buzzing with dozens of Israeli tourists. Jews were dressed in Shabbos clothes and

were davening. I walked in with my big backpack on my shoulders, wearing rags, and with long hair. They all davened while I sat quietly. The words of the davening were foreign to me and I didn’t understand them. I didn’t know how to open a siddur and what you do when you daven. I sat there and began to think about my situation. The present and the past mixed in my mind and I realized that I was at a crossroads.

“I saw they were all serious about their davening, whereas I, who was I? What was I? My Jewish spark ignited and an inner voice shouted to me: ‘Dan, where are you at? Look at yourself. Look at how different you are from the other people here.’ If at first I hoped the davening would end, the sooner the better, at this point I began to cry. I yearned to connect to Hashem.

“That evening I resolved to make a real change in my life. I suddenly understood that the long search for myself was for the purpose of finding my Judaism. That night I couldn’t sleep.

“The next morning I experienced

an open miracle which strengthened my resolve. It was when I went down with some friends to the valley. I suddenly remembered that it was time to daven Shacharis and I wanted to go back to the Chabad house. I left the group and headed for the Chabad house. That’s when I noticed a group of children throwing stones. I remembered that my friends had warned me in the past that a dangerous species of monkey lived there and that if you started up with them they could hurt you or even kill you.

“I asked the children to stop throwing rocks, but of course they just laughed and continued what they were doing. I walked a little further when I was suddenly face to face with a large band of monkeys. They looked angry and were approaching. I didn’t know what to do. I just stood there and prayed for Hashem to save me.

“Incredibly, the band of monkeys passed me by.”

THE CHANGE

That Friday night, Dan decided to finally make a change in his life. He went to the Chabad house and spoke at length with Rav Shaul, telling him what he had experienced and felt. It was at this Chabad house that Dan learned his first concepts in Judaism.

For three months he continued to travel around India, but at the same time he learned more and more about Judaism. He visited the Chabad houses in Poona and Delhi, where he broadened his knowledge of Judaism even further, and became well acquainted with Chabad Chassidus.

He went to 770 and after a short period there he returned to Eretz Yisroel and began learning in the Chabad yeshiva in Tzfas, where he is making great progress.

WE STILL HAVE OUR WORK CUT OUT FOR US

BY SHAI GEFEN

“AND FOR THE JEWS THERE WAS LIGHT AND JOY!”

It's been a long time since we could begin this column with good news about the situation in Eretz Yisroel. The death of Arafat (may his name be erased), enemy of the Jews, is definitely good news. Every normal Jew who loves his people and land, couldn't help but mark the day of his death as one of great joy. It was a day to give praise to Hashem for eliminating a man whose hands dripped with the blood of thousands of Jews, men, women, and children; tens of thousands of wounded; one who wreaked havoc and destruction in our land.

Arafat, like Haman in his day, had one goal: to destroy all the Jewish people, young and old. The Rebbe MH"M called the P.L.O. “the offspring of Haman.” There's no question that the death of this evil man is good for the Jewish people, and is a big step forward to the true and complete Redemption. In the merit of the simcha and thanks to Hashem, may we be redeemed immediately, with chesed and mercy.

However, even at this time, we mustn't forget to offer thanks to the one who transformed this arch-terrorist from a two-bit, has-been, terrorist, to the man who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Thanks to the one who enabled Arafat to murder thousands of Jews? Who gave Arafat and his terrorist cohorts billions of dollars. Who gave weapons to his

policemen. Who gave him parts of Eretz Yisroel as a gift for the horrors he inflicted on us. Who promised him Yerushalayim. Sad to say, it wasn't the European Union, not the Third World countries, and not even his friends who rule Arab countries. To our everlasting shame, all this was accomplished thanks to the government of the “Mixed Multitude,” the government that daily decrees open war against Hashem and His Torah.

It's a government that has no self-respect. Sometimes it's a Labor government, and sometimes it's a Likud, Ichud Leumi, and Mafdal government. The differences aren't great.

Somebody commented that this is a mark of shame for the Israeli government that this evil pervert died a natural death in a hospital and wasn't rubbed out like his friends Yassin and Rantisi. How humiliating to see that even the government's decision to expel him wasn't carried out.

It was even sadder to see how the Israeli media mourned for Arafat. To see to what extent Israel debases itself. The Israeli government didn't even dare to make an official announcement about Arafat's death and to tell the truth. It's painful to see how much the “gaon Yaakov” (pride of Yaakov) is in Galus.

In one of his letters, the Rebbe writes about some people that the reason why they lack the “gaon Yaakov,” even though it's our

inheritance, is because of the terrible darkness of Galus that conceals it. In order to be saved from this terrible state of affairs we need the complete Redemption with the revelation of Moshiach Tzidkeinu.

NEGOTIATING = CAPITULATION

It's hard to comprehend the moral and ideological deterioration of all those who in the past championed an Eretz Yisroel shleima.

The death of the arch-terrorist definitely marks a new era. Immediately, members of both the Right and Left got up and demanded an end to the Disengagement Plan. This is legitimate and desirable, when you consider the insanity, or more accurately, the “dibbuk” which has possessed the prime minister, and refuses to be exorcised. Suddenly, those on the Right are demanding that the prime minister negotiate with the Palestinians in an orderly fashion.

What I wonder is, have they lost their minds? Who do they think we should negotiate with? This is the solution to torpedo the Disengagement Plan? We have been through this before! What this negotiation really means is endless giving until even Yerushalayim is included. The request for negotiation is like the attempt at extinguishing a fire with gasoline.

Here is where we can see the difference between the Rebbe's approach and that of the fools on the Right, who are actually twins of their



brothers on the Left. The Rebbe said that negotiating with Arabs about giving up land is tantamount to shedding blood, as the Rebbe said quite clearly to Rabbi Elimelech Naiman on Pesach 5750. Yet they, including those on the Right, suggest negotiating in order to prevent the Disengagement, when the very act of negotiating is in the category of murder!

There is no difference today between the Right and the Left. The Right is simply following Beilin and Ami Eilon.

Only one who follows the Rebbe's approach can protect Eretz Yisroel. All those people who did their own thing fell.

It's difficult to talk this way, but apparently, in this period of darkness, when the truth comes out, we have to see how all those parties, from the Right and the Left, are all the same. The ones who demand negotiations are actually demanding that we divide Yerushalayim, even if they don't say so openly. This is how we must relate to this suggestion.

It's time we realized that the Rebbe's words were precise, and only by closely adhering to his guidance can we truly achieve shleimus ha'Aretz, shleimus ha'Torah, and shleimus ha'Am. It is now, when nobody else is doing it, that we must publicize the Rebbe's approach, and make sure that Jews get up and raise the flag of halacha, as the Rebbe has taught us.

HIDING THE TRUTH FROM THE PUBLIC!

The Rebbe's sichos on shleimus ha'Aretz are amazingly pertinent. The **real news** is in the series of s'farim called, *Karati V'Ein Oneh*. Rechavam Ze'evi (may Hashem avenge his blood) would say that when he learned the Rebbe's sichos on shleimus ha'Aretz it seemed to him as though he was reading tomorrow's paper! We saw an example of this just last week.

Here's a report that appeared last week in the media:

"If until now, it seemed as though the katyusha which was shot two weeks ago [from Lebanon!] was an isolated incident, Defense Minister Mofaz, at a Knesset session, said that this was the fourth incident of shooting of katyushas at Israel from Lebanon during the past year.

"Last week, Channel Two revealed the shooting of a katyusha at a field in a northern yishuv, two weeks before. Now it seems that this was not a one-time event. They reported that the defense establishment asked that the information about the landing of a katyusha in a banana grove on the northern border be withheld.

"In yesterday's Knesset session, Defense Minister Mofaz related that during the past eleven months, the terrorists have sent no fewer than four katyushas at Israel. This information was also apparently suppressed."

* * *

This important information was hidden from us for a year! The reporters who consider "the public's right to know" to be the supreme value, don't tell us about the thousands of rockets in Lebanon that are aimed at Israeli cities. Even when they actually fire katyushas, they hide this information from the public.

19 years ago, on Zos Chanuka 5746, the Rebbe cried out about their hiding the truth from the public. The Rebbe addressed every single detail, even the most marginal, when it came to shleimus ha'Aretz, and exposed every evil, and even their most minor attempts, to propagandize for peace. The Rebbe announced that this approach of hiding the facts would not succeed.

"...Another 'eitza' they have is not to publicize incidents like this in the media! When they hear about a Jew being stabbed in the Old City of Yerushalayim, and similarly, about a

It wasn't the European Union, not the Third World countries, and not even his friends who rule Arab countries. To our everlasting shame, all this was accomplished thanks to the government of the "Mixed Multitude," the government that daily decrees open war against Hashem and His Torah.

number of incidents in which Jews were killed in Yehuda and Shomron, they give orders to conceal these incidents, and not to report them in the media, in order not to rouse public opinion! Is this about arousing public opinion?!

"This is about pikuach nefesh of Jews in the future, for those terrorists who carried out these actions in the past are not finished with their work and going for a walk or to sleep; their hand is still outstretched, Heaven forbid, and when they see they have succeeded in killing a Jew, and

continue to roam free, it spurs them on to continue their deeds with greater zeal, Heaven forbid!

“This is not a guess but incidents that actually happened!

“And so, what is the benefit in hiding the facts about these many incidents?”

“In the end, a certain incident is disclosed and then another incident, and then there’s no choice and they have to admit that the incident did indeed take place, but they immediately publicize that it wasn’t a terrorist act but an ‘incident.’

“But this ‘eitza’ doesn’t help either, for even when they hide many incidents and don’t allow them to be publicized in the media in Eretz Yisroel, ultimately it is publicized in the media abroad, especially when the terrorists themselves publicize to the entire world that their organization did such-and-such. Then it turns out that there were dozens of these ‘incidents,’ and it wasn’t just an isolated incident but the intensification of the terrorists’ activities in the most serious way that never before existed in the world!”

THE WORLD BANK DECLARES: DISENGAGEMENT WILL LEAD TO BLOODSHED

Another important bit of news that they tried to marginalize, and so we barely heard about it, concerns an announcement from the World Bank. It’s unbelievable how they try to hide this information from the public! A few days ago, the newspaper *HaAretz* had an article which contained some excerpts from a report of the World Bank, “which leveled veiled criticism,” as the reporter put it, about the Disengagement Plan. The Bank said that the plan would not help the reconstruction of the Palestinian economy, which is in a state of crisis, “one of the most serious in modern history.”

According to statistics from the World Bank, nearly half the residents of the P.A. are living below the poverty

line, and the income went down to a third of what it was in 2000. “Without hope for economic improvement among the Palestinian population, the inclination towards violence will increase, and then the Israelis security achievements are likely to be undermined. They warn that if as part of the Disengagement, the Gaza Strip will be closed to traffic of people and business, and as a result, the economic situation will get worse, then Israel is liable to “lose the good will of the international community that supported Disengagement.”

Apparently, even this economic motive is not enough to dissuade Sharon from his delusional plans. We

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recently quoted the report that was prepared by the legal advisors of the Foreign, Legal, and Commerce Ministries – that even after Disengagement, Israel will remain responsible for what goes on in Gaza. Israel will end up sitting on the defendant’s bench, and even then, we won’t be able to justify ourselves because Israel was the one who initiated this plan.

THERE ARE NO WORDS

When they brought Arafat to Israel they told us that the purpose was to reduce the tensions. They also told us that the fact that they gave him tens of thousands of weapons was in order for them to deal with terror properly. The

fact that they gave them land and gave them non-stop concessions was in order to help the Palestinian leadership gain legitimacy on the street. This baloney they fed the Israeli public for ten years only led to blood and tears, death and non-stop bereavement.

Now they’re continuing with the same old line. This is what was publicized in the media:

“A senior military figure in the Central Command confirms that the I.D.F. has ceased, in the last two days, arresting wanted terrorists, and have limited their patrols in cities of Yehuda and Shomron. This is as per instructions from the government to “reduce tensions.” The senior military figure said this was also true for Jenin and Sh’chem, which have been encircled due to Intelligence information regarding impending terrorist attacks.

If that wasn’t enough, at the beginning of this week, the defense minister announced that permission has been renewed for Palestinian policemen to be armed with weapons.

For your information: Until now, the Palestinian policemen we aware that they had no permit to go around with weapons, even those given to them “officially” by the P.A. When Israeli soldiers encountered a policeman carrying weapons, they regarded him as they would any armed terrorist. Now, the situation has changed.

What can we say in light of this ever-worsening madness? Our government is simply not interested in our security. They dress up their crimes with pretty words, like “reducing tensions,” and that’s how they pacify the nation. This “reducing tensions,” has cost us plenty – in blood. We’ve also paid quite a high price for lovely words such as “partition,” “partition fence,” “disengagement,” “to part in peace.” Why do they continue doing this? *Ad masai?*

A STORY UNEARTHED

BY CHANA KATZ

It was a stunningly quiet, private moment... A simple but moving expression of love and honor for a mother's soul, of blessing... A struggle of a Jew returning to Torah searching for some kind of light in the thick of Galus... A reminder of the Rebbe's words to his children, the "lamplighters": Continue to plant seeds and don't be disheartened if the fruits aren't always visible because ... somewhere, someday, those seeds can sprout and blossom...

* * *

Last week, Shmuel Daffner, a 36-year-old Jew who lives in California with his wife and two young daughters, came all the way to Tzfas with his eldest daughter, Zoya Bracha, 8. It was their first trip to Eretz Yisroel and they came to search for a spot to bury a special *tallit* that once enwrapped the body of their mother/grandmother, a Jewish neshama who became lost among the "kidnapped children" of Galus...

Here, in the serene, beautiful hills

Were it not for a local tour guide whom Hashgacha Pratis brought to a Shabbos table in Tzfas, the story may have remained buried along with the other secrets privy only to the awesome hills and valleys and the prophets, Torah sages and tzaddikim who traversed them over the millennia...

California, dug up some earth and buried the *tallit*. He lingered at the site to say some prayers and then walked back up the hill a few hundred feet or so to the site of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, where he immersed in a mikveh – "rinsing myself, getting clean."

Were it not for a local tour guide whom Hashgacha Pratis brought to a Shabbos table in Tzfas, the story may have remained buried along with the other secrets privy only to the awesome hills and valleys and the prophets, Torah sages and tzaddikim who traversed them over the millennia...

"My mom, Aliza bas Shmuel, was very spiritual, generous and kind," recalled R. Shmuel. "She would light Shabbos candles, she gave my brother and I a bar mitzva and taught us to light Chanuka candles."

When he was young, his parents became divorced and his mother moved to California with her three children. As the oldest, R. Shmuel always had the job of keeping peace between his siblings. His mother always stressed that *Shalom Bayis* between them was so important.

In 1991, when he was a student at the University of California, he met the shliach at Chabad of Berkeley, and was introduced to a deeper Torah life. During those fertile years, a seed had been planted...

Over the years, R. Shmuel, a technical trainer with the Pixar Animated Film Company, "got more into it," while his mother, in the last ten years of her life, began to search for meaning among a foreign religion, r"l, whose practice is to be cremated after death.



The site where Shmuel buried the tallit

and valleys surrounding the holy city of Tzfas, R. Shmuel found just the spot he felt his mother would have liked. He crawled into a cave not more than three-and-a-half-feet high, took the little hand shovel he had brought specially from

* * *

In her last years, his mother was afflicted with a disease that increasingly waned her strength.

R. Shmuel recalled the last Shabbos they spent together.

The family had gathered for a program at the shul close to his home. The mother, her two sons and three granddaughters, including Zoya and her three-year-old sister Chaya Tova, spent the "Tot Shabbat" together, lighting Shabbos candles, listening to the beautiful Shabbos melodies and happily sharing the Shabbos seuda.

The following Tuesday his mother was hospitalized and R. Shmuel's family went to say T'hillim with her. The next day a call came from the hospital.

It was January first. We weren't expecting a phone call at 6 a.m. that day, and so when we got it we unfortunately knew what it was.

"We went to the hospital and I took my big tallit and wrapped my mother in it."

The following hours were extremely difficult as the three siblings discussed their mother's wish to be cremated. R. Shmuel was totally against it but his brother and sister, who were in the majority, insisting on fulfilling their mother's request. R. Shmuel remembered his mother's second request – that the siblings never lose their *shalom bayis*.

Until the decision was made, R. Shmuel kept his tallit wrapped around his mother. Once it was decided, against his urgings, he removed the tallit and brought it to his home. He was very meticulous about saying Kaddish every day and he already had it in mind then to make his first visit to Eretz Yisroel to say some of the Kaddish prayers in a place "as spiritual and powerful as possible."

Last week, as the eleven-month mourning period came toward an end, R. Shmuel and Zoya Bracha arrived at the Kotel. Soon after, they headed

north to the holy city of Tzfas.

"I knew in Tzfas we would find something appropriate...a way of connecting to our spiritual ancestors."

The Chabad shliach at Berkeley connected R. Shmuel to another *mekarev* of his, a tour

guide *mekushar* to the Rebbe, who spent the entire day taking R. Shmuel and Zoya Brocha to at least a dozen special burial sites around Tzfat.

"My daughter (a student in kita Gimmel at a Hebrew day school in Oakland) was such an integral part of the trip. She was so focused on saying T'hillim everywhere we went. She was also very close to my mom and this was her mission as much as mine."

"When we got to the burial site of R. Shimon Bar Yochai it was around 1 p.m. A minyan formed and I davened Mincha with the group and started to walk down the valley. It was kind of muddy (due to the heavy rain the day before) and in a state of disrepair, so my daughter and our tour guide waited..."

"I took the tallis and went by the kever of Rabbi Hillel. Then I went another couple hundred yards and there was another cave by the side of the hill. I had to crawl in. It looked like an improvised g'niza. There were about a dozen s'farim stacked in there. I had the tallis and a hand shovel I brought from America in a backpack... I thought it was something my mom would like. It had a beautiful view, a cactus plant in front, a picturesque natural setting. And these were all things important to her in her life... I was bent over and dug a hole... I buried the tallis and then I sat and prayed for awhile..."

* * *



I went back to Zoya and Yehudit (the tour guide) and immersed myself in a mikveh (at R. Shimon bar Yochai). And that was kind of like the last phase of the whole thing, rinsing myself, getting clean..."

They toured more k'varim after that with Zoya saying her T'hillim especially beautifully at each site before they settled in for the Shabbat in Tzfat.

"...The last day (of my mother's life) she said T'hillim, psalm 23. She was the 'kidnapped child,' like a lot of people. The beautiful thing is that things come full circle and Hashem has a way of bringing closure to a situation which may be off track. That's really the whole beauty of this; even the last Shabbos of her life she lit Chanuka candles and Shabbos candles and the whole family shared a meal together Friday night... "So everything didn't work out by the books, but there was still so much there and this (trip to Eretz Yisroel) was the last little piece."

This past Shabbos, Parshas VaYeitzei, R. Shmuel said Kaddish with a Tzfat minyan. It marked the last day of his eleventh month as an avel.

"G-d willing, no one should have to go through what I went through... The main thing for me is that I love my mom and wanted to acknowledge her in all the ways that I could... I hope she should have an aliya through this process..."