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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: 9607-290 (03)  
פקס: 9607-289 (03)

### EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:

M.M. Hendel

### ENGLISH EDITOR:

Boruch Merkur  
editor@beismoshiach.org

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# WHAT RELEVANCE DOES THE CONCEPT OF GOING INTO EXILE HAVE FOR US?

SICHOS IN ENGLISH



## SHABBOS PARSHAS SHMOS; 19TH DAY OF TEIVES, 5751

1. This week's Torah reading begins, "These are the names of the children of Yisroel coming into Egypt with Yaakov. They came with their households." This verse raises several questions: a) Why does the verse use the present tense, "coming"? The descent of the Jews had taken place hundreds of years beforehand and seemingly, the past tense would be more appropriate. Indeed, in Parshas VaYigash, where the Jews' descent into Egypt is first described, the verse states, "And Yaakov and all his descendants came into Egypt." b) What is the significance of the mention of both names, Yaakov and Yisroel, in our verse? c) Parshas VaYigash mentions "Yaakov and his sons coming into Egypt." In contrast, our Torah portion mentions "the children of Yisroel coming into Egypt with Yaakov."

These questions can be resolved within the context of the Midrash's interpretation of this verse. The Midrash states:

Did they enter [Egypt] that day? Behold many days passed from the time they had entered Egypt. Nevertheless, as long as Yosef was

alive, they were not burdened by the Egyptians. When Yosef died, the Egyptians imposed burdens upon them. Therefore, the verse describes them as "coming into Egypt." It was as if they first entered Egypt that day.

Since "the Torah is eternal," this teaching must also contain a lesson relevant to the present. It is, however, difficult to appreciate that lesson. On the contrary, we are in the last days of the exile. "All the appointed times for Moshiach's coming have passed and the matter depends on t'shuva alone." Furthermore, we have already carried out the service of t'shuva and have, to quote the Previous Rebbe, "polished the buttons," and are prepared to greet Moshiach. What relevance therefore, does the concept of going into exile today have for us?

To explain: There is a difference between the Book of Shmos and the Book of B'Reishis. The Book of B'Reishis is described as "the Book of the Just," i.e., it relates the stories of the Patriarchs who were just. In contrast, Shmos begins the chronicles of their descendants, the narrative of the Jewish people as a communal entity. B'Reishis is a necessary preliminary to such a narrative for the lives of the Patriarchs grant us the potential to carry out all the mitzvos

mentioned in the later books.

This concept is based on the transition brought about by the giving of the Torah. The Midrash relates that before the giving of the Torah, spirituality was totally separate from our material existence. When the Torah was given, however, the potential was granted to infuse holiness into the material substance of the world (revelation from above) and also elevate that material substance, transforming it into a sacred object.

The service of the Patriarchs, however, was necessary to bring about such a transition. This was accomplished by their complete self-nullification to G-dliness to the extent that they are described as G-d's "chariot." This implies that even as they existed within this material world, they were a "chariot," [i.e., an intermediary which transfers an entity from one place to another,] for G-d as He is manifest in the spiritual realms, [252] to be revealed within this material world. This granted the potential for their descendants, the Jewish people, to draw down G-dliness through the observance of the Torah and its mitzvos. [253]

There is, however, an advantage to our observance of the Torah and its mitzvos over the service of the

Patriarchs. The Patriarch's service was preparatory in nature, granting the potential for drawing holiness into this material world. The actual service of drawing down holiness, the establishment of a dwelling for G-d in this material world, is accomplished through the observance of the Torah and its mitzvos. This observance brings G-dliness into this world in an open and manifest manner.

The beginning of the service of the Jewish people in actually drawing G-dliness into this world is reflected in the verse, "These are the names of the children of Yisroel coming into Egypt with Yaakov. They came with their households."

The Jewish people descended to Egypt to draw G-dliness into the lowest levels of material existence. To emphasize their potential to carry out this service, they are described as "the children of Yisroel." Yisroel was "the chosen of the Patriarchs," and his spiritual qualities were passed on to his descendants.

To explain: Yaakov was given the name Yisroel because he "strove with angels and men and prevailed." Similarly the name Yisroel contains the letters of the words li rosh "a head for Me," i.e., the Jews are a head for G-d, as it were. Indeed, the Jews are above the level of G-d's "head," for a Jewish soul is "an actual part of G-d Above," one with G-d's very essence.

Thus, the level of Yisroel stands above all connection to Egypt (Mitzrayim), the boundaries and limitations (meitzarim) of worldly existence. Surely, it is above the concept of exile, in which the ruling authorities causes difficulty to the Jews. Since Yisroel has the power to "strive with angels and men and prevail" and is "a head for Me" as it were, this level cannot be contained within any limits and surely, is not subject to exile.

Who can descend to Egypt? "The descendants (i.e., the extension) of Yisroel." Similarly, Yaakov, which refers to a lower level than Yisroel, the aspect

in the Jewish soul which descends to and permeates the heel (eikev)[254] can enter Egypt.

Based on the above, we can explain the difference between the Torah's expressions in our Torah portion and in Parshas VaYigash. Parshas VaYigash describes the Jews' descent to Egypt, the boundaries and limitations of worldly existence. They were not, however, enslaved or in exile per se. Therefore, the Torah relates that Yaakov went down to Egypt. Our Torah portion, in contrast, describes "the children of Yisroel... coming... with Yaakov," this implies a lower level.

*Since we have already carried out the service of t'shuva and have "polished the buttons," and are prepared to greet Moshiach, what relevance does the concept of going into exile today have for us?*

Although the children of Yisroel are on a lower level than Yisroel himself and thus can descend into exile, nevertheless, because they are the "children of Yisroel," they are full heirs to the legacy left them by the Patriarchs. Therefore, the descent into Egypt cannot affect them in a negative way. On the contrary, they have the potential to refine and elevate Egypt, taking from it all the sparks of G-dliness invested in it, leaving it like "a silo without any grain."

Based on the above, we can understand why the Jews are described as "coming into Egypt," in the present

tense. Despite the many years which they had been in Egypt, on any – every – given day, it could be considered as if they had entered Egypt that very day. Since the Jews inherit all the qualities of the Patriarchs, including those of Yaakov, i.e., the potential to "strive with angels and men and prevail," they are, in essence, above the exile. Thus, their existence within the exile is a new development, a present happening.

This infinite potential bequeathed by the Patriarchs to their descendants gives them the opportunity to accomplish the purpose of the exile, to draw G-dliness into the world and establish a dwelling for G-d. When a Jew is aware of the infinite potential that he possesses and thus feels that his existence within the exile is a new development, he becomes aware of the purpose of the exile and this enables him to accomplish this purpose. Thus each moment the Jews are in exile is not a continuation of the previous years of exile, but a new moment, in which our service should be fulfilled with new energy, with the hope of redemption in the near future.

This is reflected in each person's individual service each day for "in each and every generation (and as the Alter Rebbe adds, in each and every day), a person is obligated to see himself as if he is leaving Egypt (that day)." This is reflected in the service of, redeeming the G-dly soul from the imprisonment of the body to be included in union with the light of the Ein Sof through the service of Torah and mitzvos... and in particular through the yoke of G-d's kingdom in Krias Shma.... This is [comparable to] the exodus from Egypt. For this reason, it was ordained to mention the exodus from Egypt in the recitation of the Shma.

The potential to experience an exodus from Egypt every day also includes the awareness that each moment, the entry into exile is a new and present happening. Since yesterday, a Jew left Egypt, i.e., went

beyond his personal limitations, the fact that today he also finds himself within limitations – even though those limitations could be considered as transcendent when compared to his situation of the previous day – is a new entry into exile.

Each morning, when a person wakes up, he is “a new creation,” and G-d has returned his soul, “an actual part of G-d,” to him. Thus, his nature is above all connection to the limitations of the body. It is as if “today he entered into Egypt.” And the awareness of this concept will inspire him to carry out his service of refining the body with new and increased power. Since, in essence, he is above the exile, even when he is found within the exile, it does not limit him. Although he has spent years in Egypt, i.e., in the personal sense, years confined by the body and the animal soul, since his soul is “an actual part of G-d,” he is fundamentally above the exile.[255]

The concept that, at every moment, the Jews are entering exile anew because essentially, they are above the exile, is also reflected in the events described subsequently in our Torah portion. When G-d told Moshe to collect the elders of the Jewish people, Moshe protested that they would not believe him. Our Sages explained that Moshe:

spoke improperly at that time. The Holy One, blessed be He, told him, “They will listen to your voice,” and he protested, “They will not believe me.” [G-d told Moshe:] “They are believers and the descendants of believers.”

The Maharsha explains that Moshe’s error came from his underestimation of the impact of the sign which G-d had given him to convey to the Jewish people. Since both Yaakov and Yosef had told the Jewish people that a repetition of the word Pakod would be a sign of the redemption, as soon as Moshe would give them this sign, they would respond to him.

It is easy to understand the source for Moshe’s error. Moshe knew that the Jews had been in exile for many years and felt that even when they heard the sign which they had been promised, they would not respond quickly. It would be difficult for them to actually feel that the time for their redemption had come. G-d told Moshe that he did not appreciate the nature of the Jews; they are “believers and the descendants of believers.” This is their essential nature and therefore, they will never consider exile as the norm. On the contrary, it is as if “today they entered Egypt.” Therefore, as soon as Moshe would communicate the sign, they would believe that their redemption was imminent.

This concept is also reflected in the conclusion of the Torah reading which relates that, after Moshe delivered G-d’s message to Pharaoh, Pharaoh responded by increasing the severity of his oppression. When this transpired, Moshe protested to G-d, “O L-rd, why have You harmed Your people.... From the time, I came to speak to Pharaoh in Your name... You have not saved Your people.”

G-d responded by telling Moshe, “Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh...,” promising Moshe that the redemption would come immediately. From the very opposite extreme, the most severe moments of slavery, G-d redeemed the Jews. Why did this come about? Because the Jews are the children of Avrohom, Yitzchok, and Yaakov. Since they are the descendants of the Patriarchs, they are totally above exile and, therefore, G-d will redeem them immediately.

The unique nature of the Jews is further emphasized by the conclusion of the Haftora: “Yaakov will no longer be ashamed... when he sees his children, the work of My hands in his midst, that they sanctify My name.” Even though the Jews are in exile, Yaakov has no reason to be ashamed with his descendants. G-d testifies that each one of them is “the work of My

hands” and that they “sanctify My name.”

2. The above concepts provide us with a lesson relevant to our present situation. Although the Jews have been in exile for 2000 years, a Jew is, in essence, above exile. On the contrary, each moment in which a Jew finds himself in exile is a totally new development, against his nature. At every moment, he is filled with trust and faith that G-d’s promise of the Future Redemption will be fulfilled in the near future. This is particularly true since the Previous Rebbe told us to prepare ourselves to greet Moshiach and now, forty years after his passing, we have been granted the “knowing heart, eyes to see, and ears to hear” to appreciate his teachings. Furthermore, this is a year when “I will show you wonders.”

Therefore, now is a time when we must encourage the Jewish people by telling them how near we are to Moshiach’s coming, how “he is standing behind our wall, peeking through the lattice.” We must prepare ourselves to greet Moshiach by increasing our observance of the Torah and its mitzvos and then, as the Rambam states,[256] “With one mitzva, one can tip his personal balance and that of the entire world to the side of merit and bring deliverance and salvation.” Surely, a contrary approach is out of the question, to break the Jews’ spirit by threatening them with Divine retribution, heaven forbid.

We must learn from the example of Moshe. When Moshe described the Jews as lacking in virtues,[257] G-d asked him, “What is that in your hand?” And he answered, ‘A staff.’ “Rashi explains that G-d was intimating to Moshe, “You are worthy to have been beaten for speaking unfavorably about My children.” Similarly, the signs Moshe was given, his staff turning into a snake[258] and his hand turning leprous are interpreted as reflecting G-d’s displeasure with

Moshe's statements about the Jews.

Why does the Torah relate these matters to us? As a lesson; to teach us how careful we must be not to speak unfavorably about our fellow Jews.[259] The above occurred before the giving of the Torah. Even then, G-d punished Moshe for speaking unfavorably about the Jews and told him that they are all "believers and the descendants of believers." Surely, this applies after the giving of the Torah when the Jews were selected as G-d's chosen people, "a nation of priests and a holy people." How much more so does it apply since in the thousands of years after the giving of the Torah, the Jews have sanctified G-d's name through their observance of the Torah and its mitzvos, including their recitation of the Shma.[260]

Since the Jewish people today are heirs to this great legacy of holiness – for the positive effects of the mitzvos our people have performed are eternal, while, in contrast, the negative effects of undesirable conduct are temporary and will be erased – it is impossible to appreciate the great merit possessed by the Jewish people today. Heaven forbid that someone should speak unfavorably about a fellow Jew, one of G-d's children.

The fact that a Jew's conduct does not reflect these positive qualities does not detract from their existence. Thus the Rambam rules that every Jew, even one who protests the contrary, "wants to be part of the Jewish people and desires to fulfill all the mitzvos and separate himself from sin, and it is only his Evil Inclination which forces him [to do otherwise]." Particularly, in our days, a Jew whose performance of the commandments of the Torah is imperfect must be judged leniently according to the principle of tinok sh'nishba, (meaning one who was deprived of a childhood environment conducive to Torah observance). Conversely, if despite the pressures of his environment, he fulfills any mitzva – and, "even the least worthy member

of our people possesses as many mitzvos as a pomegranate possesses seeds" – he and his deeds will surely be cherished in the Heavenly Court. Indeed, G-d takes pride in every Jew as it is written, "Your people are all righteous..., They are the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, in which I take pride."

If anything, our complaints and demands should be directed toward G-d, demanding as Moshe did, "O L-rd, why have You harmed Your people.... You

*After all the suffering which our people have endured in Exile, particularly, after the suffering of the last generation, it is proper that we cry out to G-d over the length of the Exile, and our demands will hasten the coming of the Redemption.*

have not saved Your people." Similarly, we find that Gideon demanded of G-d, "If G-d is with us, why has all this befallen us? Where are all His miracles of which our fathers have told us?" G-d responded to his demand positively, telling him, "Go in this your strength [i.e., in the strength of your positive statements about the Jews] and you will deliver Israel." Surely, after all the suffering which our people have endured in exile, particularly, after the suffering of the last generation, it is proper that we cry out to G-d over the

length of the exile, and our demands will hasten the coming of the redemption.

There are those who maintain that the approach of chastising harshly and threatening with Divine retribution has a source, that it reflects the approach of musar and that of the preachers of the previous generations. Furthermore, they explain, we find the Books of the Prophets full with harsh rebuke and threats of retribution.

There are several replies to such attempts at self-justification: Firstly, during the last several generations, the approach of Chassidus has spread throughout the entire Jewish community. This approach which stresses the fundamental positive qualities which each Jew possesses has been demonstrated to be more effective in drawing Jews closer to G-dliness and particularly, in drawing close the tinokos sh'nishba of the present generation.

Furthermore, even according to the approach of musar itself, there are several faults with such an approach. Musar requires several prerequisites; among them:

#### AHAVAS YISROEL

It is written, "Listen my son to the musar of your father," and "The one who loves [his son] gives him musar early." These quotes imply that musar depends on a father-son relationship. Because a father loves his son with an essential love, he reproves him [and punishes him from time to time]. Nevertheless, the manner in which he does clearly indicates that he loves him with an all-encompassing love.

Similarly, in regard to the mitzva of rebuking a colleague, the rebukes must be filled with ahavas Yisroel, for loving a fellow Jew is "a great general principle within the Torah," and indeed, "the entire Torah." [261] This love must be felt by the person receiving the reprove. He must sense that it is being given because the other person loves him.

## HUMILITY

A person who gives musar to others should not try to lift himself above them. Instead, he must try to establish a commonality with the people he is reproving. It must be obvious that he is making his statements only because he feels pain for the low level of the people and not as a way of raising himself up. Furthermore, he must include himself in the reproof, finding at least in a refined way, similar faults in his own conduct and attempting to correct them. When his listeners see that he is reproving himself as well, his words will evoke a far greater response.

Furthermore, one should have in mind the Baal Shem Tov's teaching that when a person sees a fault in a colleague, he must realize that his colleague is merely a mirror for him to recognize failings in his own conduct. Therefore, before he criticizes a colleague, he should correct his own faults as our Sages commented, "Correct yourself, and then correct others."

Thus, when a person reproves others without mentioning any faults in his own conduct or in that of the people surrounding him, and threatens them with severe retribution, without at all indicating that their transgressions cause him pain, and without doing anything to reach out to them in a loving manner and encourage them to observe the Torah and its mitzvos, he cannot say that he is perpetuating the tradition of musar.

In regard to the reproofs found in the works of prophets: a) The prophets' words were not their own personal statements, but rather, "the word of G-d." When, however, a person makes his own statements, he must speak with mercy and kindness. b) Even in regard to the prophets, we find the prophets being rebuked for making unfavorable statements about the Jews. Although their statements were made with Ruach HaKodesh (Divine inspiration), since they were

unfavorable to the Jews, G-d did not desire them. How much more so is it improper for a person to choose [262] to make such statements on his own. [263]

What is required of us at present is to emphasize the virtues of every Jew and to spread love and unity among the Jewish people. This will nullify the reason for the exile, unwonted hatred. And when the cause is nullified the result will also disappear and we will merit the coming of the redemption when, as it is stated in the Haftora, "Those lost in the land of Ashur and those dispersed in the land of Egypt will come and bow to G-d in [His] holy mountain in Jerusalem."

*This love must be felt  
by the person receiving  
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### NOTES:

252. This is implied by the name "just" (yesharim) in Hebrew. Yesharim also means "straight ones," i.e., the Patriarchs drew down G-dliness in a straight line (without interruption or change) from the spiritual realms to this material world. This granted the potential for our subsequent service of Torah and mitzvos which is also referred to with the term yashar as it is written, "The ways of G-d are yesharim."

253. In this context, the Book of B'Reishis can be compared to the S'fira of Chochma and the Book of Shmos and similarly, the subsequent books, to the S'fira of Bina. Bina amplifies and broadens the influence received from Chochma.

254. Indeed, the very name Yaakov was given because he was born, "holding onto the heel of Eisav."

255. This teaches us that our existence in exile is only a temporary matter. "The Torah has promised that Jews will turn [to

G-d] in t'shuva and they will be redeemed immediately." After the redemption, we will see how the exile was merely like a dream, a temporary matter that does not make a permanent impression.

256. Significantly, the Rambam's yahrtzait, the 20th of Teives, begins directly after this Shabbos.

257. Moshe did not intend to speak adversely against these Jews. On the contrary, his intent was for their good, so that G-d would assist him and enable his mission, the redemption of the Jews, to be successful. Despite this positive intent, since the actual content of his words was unfavorable, G-d considered him worthy of rebuke.

258. The continuation of the narrative, that G-d told Moshe to take the snake by its tail and this would cause it to revert to a staff, also teaches us a significant lesson regarding how to correct the tendency to speak unfavorably about others. A tail is a symbol of humility. When a person takes a firm hold of this quality, the negative aspects of the snake will be transformed and it will revert to being "the staff of G-d."

259. It can be explained that Moshe made these statements in order to show the path for t'shuva and to teach this important lesson to the Jewish people.

260. It was with the Shma on their lips that thousands of Jews sanctified G-d's Name in holy martyrdom throughout the generations, including the six million martyrs of the last generation.

261. Indeed, we must try to emulate the great love which G-d shows every Jew for ahavas Yisroel involves, "loving the ones whom the Beloved loves."

262. Furthermore, we find our Sages looking critically at individuals who choose to study unfavorable prophecies. Thus, when Rabbi Eliezer heard a person reciting the verse "Make known to Jerusalem her sins," he told him, "Before you seek out the sins of Jerusalem, seek out your own sins." Rabbi Eliezer's students investigated this individual's conduct and found undesirable elements.

263. See Likkutei Dibburim p. 436, which states that the manner in which a person reproves a colleague reflects his own character. When a person's nature is refined and generous, he will be able to deliver even the most severe reproof in a refined and merciful manner.

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# LETTERS

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RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON  
Lubovitch  
770 Eastern Parkway  
Brooklyn 13, N. Y.  
NYceden 3-8223

מונהג סגורל שניאורסאהן  
ליובאוויטש  
770 איסטען פארקוויי  
ברוקלין 13 נ. י.

By the Grace of G-d  
15th of Kislav, 5730  
Brooklyn, N. Y.

200  
Arlington, Va. 22202

Greeting and Blessing:

I am in receipt of your letter of November 14th, in which you ask my opinion "as to whether it is a weakness or impropriety" to avoid the purchase of goods made in Germany. You add that you ask this question as a Jew, in the light of Jewish law and custom.

Surely this is more a matter of feeling rather than a question of Jewish law and custom. Consequently, as in all matters of sentiment, it is difficult to express an opinion that would have universal application.

At any rate, it certainly cannot be categorized as a "weakness." On the contrary, a decision of this kind bespeaks strength of will, all the more so since it entails some inconvenience.

Nor can it be considered an "impropriety," since it is based on a principle which may be considered to come under the category of "Remember what Amalek did unto you." For, as is well known, the inhuman atrocities, etc., against our defenseless and innocent brethren were not perpetrated by a small group, but was carried out with the knowledge, consent and even cooperation of the vast majority of the German nation. Moreover, I do not think that anyone seriously believes that the Germany of today is entirely different from the Germany of the decades ago.

While on this subject a point must be made which, unfortunately, is often overlooked. It is that the so-called "final solution," which Hitler wished to bring about, can take various forms. It can take the form of an overt attempt at physical extermination, or it can be an insidious process which is no less destructive, and perhaps even more so, namely through assimilation and intermarriage, a process which began in Germany long before Hitler, when Jews tried to hide their Jewish identity and conduct their daily life like their German neighbors and associates, etc. This process, most unfortunately, is very much in evidence all around us. Whatever explanation may be given, the effect is the same. Hitler, too, had a "philosophy" that "justified" his actions.

It is too painful a subject to dwell on here, but the conclusion is obvious. Each and every one of us who is aware

[Continuation missing.]



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.

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# VERY CLOSE TO YOU

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

TRANSLATED BY MICHOEL LEIB DOBRY

*In the first sixteen chapters of the Tanya, the Alter Rebbe describes the two worlds in order for man to know what to seek and what to avoid. When we are in the world of the G-dly soul, we can understand that “it is very close to you.” Excerpts from a Chassidic farbrengen.*

## CLOSE TO US – CAN IT BE?

As is known, the *Tanya* is based upon the pasuk, “For the matter is very close to you in your mouth and in your heart to do it.” The well-known question is asked: How is it possible to say that avodas Hashem is “close”? The question receives greater emphasis in connection with “your heart,” as changing one’s heart is no easy task. Therefore, how can we say that the avoda of the heart and all that is dependent upon it are close to apprehension and execution?

This is the Alter Rebbe’s question in *Tanya*, and in addition, every Jew asks not just specifically about the service of the heart, but regarding avodas Hashem in general. Even if it is actually possible to affect changes in our thought, speech, and action, how can we say that it is “close,” or for

that matter, “very close”?

As we live our daily lives with the serious trials we confront every day, every hour, and every minute, this does not seem close at all. In the face of these constant tests, how can it be said that the matter is very close to us? It is written that the Torah is eternal and speaks to all generations. Thus, we’re not just talking about the generation of Moshe, which was not subjected to the harsh and bitter trials of the generations that followed; this pertains also to our generation, where the world is overflowing with **evil** right before our eyes. How then can we say that this avoda is **close** to us?

To answer this properly, we must first ask an additional question. The Alter Rebbe explains (*Tanya*, Chapter 17) that “close...in your heart” refers to the love of G-d that

brings the Jew *to fulfill mitzvos*, or as the explanation continues in later chapters, to the latent and hidden love in a Jew’s heart. The question is asked: Why was there a need for a lengthy discussion of this subject in the first sixteen chapters? The Alter Rebbe could have gotten right to the point with the above explanation! If you want to suggest that it was necessary to explain the meaning of love in the recesses of the mind and the hidden love in the heart, this still could have been done with greater brevity.

## IN WHAT WORLD DO I LIVE?

The answer to this is hidden in the explanation of the word “**close**.” The tendency is to believe that “close” means that there is no need to toil; I already have a hold on it, etc. But that is plainly wrong! On the contrary, according to Torah, this term refers to the need for **avoda**, toiling in body and soul. “Close” means that something is within reach, but you still have to extend yourself to attain it.

Torah teaches that a person acquires that which is within his *Dalet amos*. Why specifically *Dalet amos*? Because the Sages estimated that this is the area that someone

reaches when he stretches out his hands and feet. Therefore, anything that enters and is found in these *Dalet amos* belongs to the person and is within his grasp. Similarly, in our discussion, when Torah says that *avodas Hashem* is close, this means that it is within your world.

When the Alter Rebbe explains how *avodas Hashem* is within one's reach, this means within his world. He provides a lengthy description of the two souls, which are two completely different worlds, totally distant from one another – the world of the G-dly soul and its **polar opposite**, the world of the animal soul. If the distance between them were measured merely in **quantitative** terms, it would be possible to bridge the gap, as they are in the same world, albeit very far from one another. However, this is not the case: There is an **essential, qualitative** difference between the two souls – two total opposites, literally worlds apart. This is the meaning of “opposites”: they do not come close to each other, and thus, it is impossible to connect them in any way.

After this whole description, we can understand that if *avodas Hashem* is not close to a person, this is because he lives in another world where no such thing exists. In the words of Chassidus, he lives like an animal in a radically foreign world than the world of man.

The animal sees only material things, the type that can either be chewed or rubbed against, and this is what exists in its world. Everything is measured with a fixed value, and the degree of attention, attraction, and interest something receives, to the point of active pursuit (even fighting to the last drop of blood!), depends upon the level of physical pleasure that can be derived from it. Is it possible to sit next to this animal and read it

an exciting story or explain to it some new scientific discovery? Such things have no relevance to it whatsoever, since they don't exist in



*The yetzer ha'ra tells the Jew today, “Do this,” implying coercion, i.e., force yourself to do mitzvos. In this manner, he sends the message that in essence one's role is (ch"v) not to do G-d's will; his world is something else entirely, something foreign.*

the animal's world, nor would the animal ever imagine that they could.

When the Chassid R. Reuven Dunin, of blessed memory, wanted to illustrate the vast difference between the G-dly soul and the animal soul, he brought the following scenario: Imagine a father and a son walking along the seashore at sunset. The father turns to his son with great excitement, points to the sky's glorious colors, and says, “Look how beautiful!” The son yanks his father's hand in the other direction and says, “But, Tatty, I have to go to the bathroom...” The father's enthusiasm at the majestic sight continues to overflow, “Look at the sky! Quickly before everything disappears, look how beautiful!” The son's response: Tatty, I have to go...

#### JUST REACH OUT YOUR HAND AND TOUCH IT

It's no wonder that someone who lives like an animal will ask, “How is it possible for *avodas Hashem* to be close?” Since this is not in his world, he wages an intense war at every moment with every thought, etc. So the Alter Rebbe comes and explains clearly that as long as the person remains in the animal's world, it is in fact not close. However, even while he is there in the animal's world, he has no exemption from his *avodas Hashem*. As a result, he is faced with this tremendous battle.

What is he supposed to do? He must go out from the animal world and enter the world of men. This is his *avoda*: **to reach out and get it**. However, this can be achieved only after he gains entry to the world of men, and this is the objective of Chassidus: to raise the person to the world of men, and then the matter will be close.

There are a variety of approaches to reach this objective. In addition to learning Chassidus, it is necessary to participate in Chassidic

farbrengens and to be among Chassidim in general, i.e., people whose lives are not on the level of an animal. This brings to mind the story about R. Yekusiel Lipler, whom the Alter Rebbe wanted to give a bracha for long life. R. Yekusiel told the Alter Rebbe that if they will be years lived like an ignoramus, whose eyes don't see G-dliness and ears don't hear G-dliness (or in the language of Chassidus, someone who sees only as an animal does) – I don't need that type of life.

We find several practical cases of prominent Chassidim who really had no connection whatsoever to the animal world, living beyond such crude matter and despising it.

For example, when the Chassid R. Itche der Masmid made his famous visit to the United States, he was amazed to discover that people there “eat meat literally every day.” The Chassid R. Nissan Nemenov was a guest at a meal when to his great shock, he was served ice cream for dessert. “*Morozhoneh* (ice cream, in Russian)?! Absolutely not!” he asserted. There have also been such incidents in our generation: Once during a visit to the Rebbe's court, I was a guest for the evening meal of Rosh HaShana together with R. Sholom Dovber Kesselman, of blessed memory. When the ice cream for dessert was served, I noticed that R. Berel simply couldn't get himself to sit at the table. “Rosh HaShana and ice cream,” he muttered again and again. “Rosh HaShana and ice cream...”

Rabbi Nota Malestirtchiner, a Chassid of the Alter Rebbe and the Mittlerer Rebbe, displayed absolute estrangement from the physical world. Once he was walking in the street, thinking about very lofty matters, and he failed to notice that he was heading straight for a heap

of garbage that had accumulated in the path. Suddenly, he found that he was stuck deep in the disgusting filth, and he couldn't get himself out. What did he do? He pulled a Chassidic maamer out of his breastpocket and peacefully began to learn in depth until the local residents came out looking for their rav who had suddenly disappeared...

## BE CLOSE TO THE HEAVENS

Many other countless examples in Torah sources – *p'sukim*, sayings from the Sages, etc. – deal with this

*The Rebbe shlita was extremely stringent that children, even in their infancy, should not see anything impure, in order that the first world that they encounter should not be lowly and inferior.*

concept of connecting to the higher worlds:

1. It is written in Parshas Ha'azinu, “Listen, heavens...and the earth will hear.” Listening – up close; hearing – from afar. Therefore, it says, “**Listen**, heavens,” i.e., the essence of a Jew must be **close to the heavens**.

2. The ten types of Jews, from “your heads, your tribes” to “your woodcutters and water drawers” also exist within each person in his avoda. The avoda begins with “your water drawers” – to **remove** the

water that brings forth the **pleasure in worldly matters**.

3. “Amalek was the first of the nations” – why was he the first in all matters of evil? Because his purpose is to cool off matters of holiness, and thus leave only the animal world.

4. The whole idea of *Mitzrayim* (Egypt) is based on the root *meitzarim* (boundaries and limitations), i.e., narrowing our soul's field of vision so that we see only the physical world. Similarly, the entire concept of Galus comes from the fact that it lacks the letter *Alef* (of Geula), meaning that we see only the world without *Alufo Shel Olam* (the Master of the World).

This selection of sources fulfills the role of the wise person in the Chassidic story about three men imprisoned in a dark pit. One of them was a fool who couldn't figure out the different eating utensils that were sent down into the pit, as their captors deliberately switched them each day to increase his feeling of confusion and despair. The second prisoner tried his best to help him by explaining what each utensil was. However, the third prisoner, the smartest of all of them, just sat there and stared into space. “Why don't you help me?” the second prisoner asked the third. “I am,” he replied. “I'm trying to devise a plan on how to open a hole in the roof of this pit to let some light in. Then the fool will be able to see what they're serving him and won't need our help.”

## THE REBBE'S WAGON

Similar to the wise prisoner, all the Chassidic explanations mentioned briefly above (and others like them) are an attempt to break through the wall of animalism and shed light upon the issue at hand in order to show us the place that we

should truly strive to reach.

This is also the inner meaning behind what the Gemara states at the beginning at Tractate Kiddushin. It explains there that the word “*m’kudeshes*” (sanctified), as in “you are sanctified to me,” means that in order to be “to **me**” or because you are “to **me**,” you are forbidden to the whole world. In a larger sense, when G-d sanctifies His people to Him, this means that in order for us to be sanctified and completely devoted **to Him**, the world must not have any relevance to us whatsoever.

This is the avoda according to Chassidus: to instill within our

mind and heart that the animalistic world is totally inappropriate for us. As we see in *Kuntres U’Maayon* regarding the temptations of the yetzer ha’ra, the Rebbe Rashab does not debate whether they are right or wrong or why they occur. He simply says that such desires are not suitable – period! This is not our world.

In this light, there have been certain tzaddikim who were known to rise above the world. This is also the meaning of the Chassidic bracha – “*M’zehl zoche zain aroif gein oif dem Rebbins vahgen*” (we should be privileged to **get on** the Rebbe’s wagon).

## A CHASSIDIC LIFTING OF THE HEAD

Many modes of Chassidic conduct are for the purpose of attaining this level of closeness to G-d and lifting oneself above the animal world. For example, there is the conduct of contemplation, especially during davening, which serves as a source of spiritual uplifting. Similarly, when we travel to the Rebbe shlita, we can lift ourselves above this lowly world, through our *hiskashrus* to him. This concept appears clearly in the words “**Ki Sisa**” and “**Naso**” (referring literally to a lifting of the head), as the Rebbe is the **nasi** – beyond any consideration to living



an animal life. This is the meaning of “He who rises above the days of the world.” G-d is exalted above the days of the world, i.e., the vitality of the Creation’s whole existence. Thus, even though He exists and gives them life, He remains above them.

Thus, the Rebbe shlita was extremely stringent that children, even in their infancy, **should not see anything impure**, in order that the first world that they encounter should not be lowly and inferior. The Rebbe MH”M asks that all images that surround them and the songs that they sing should contain holiness. Similarly, the Rebbe demanded that their learning institutions should be based upon pure Torah education “*al taharas ha’kodesh*,” and they should not study any secular subjects there, even those that are halachically permissible. All this must be so that the child’s beginning years should be in a world on a much holier level.

In essence, placing the child in a state of holiness starts even before its birth. The Alter Rebbe explains in *Tanya*, Chapter 2, something called **sanctification by the parents**, which draws down a holy garment upon the soul of their child. What is the nature of this garment? There are many explanations, but they have one common theme: the world that enwraps our soul must be on a higher and holier level. The Alter Rebbe writes further (ibid.), “And all the mitzvos that he does and all the spiritual influence he is given from Heaven, everything is through this garment.” This means that his material and spiritual life are dependent on which world he lives in and the spiritual level of that world as established by the parents.

If he lives in a loftier world, the mitzvos that he does and the spiritual influences that constantly

is drawn down from Above will all be on the level of “close to you.” If not, then avodas Hashem is in one world and he is in another. This means that there are mitzvos and he fulfills them, however, he does so with great difficulty and after a constant struggle. Similarly, there are many positive spiritual influences, yet they remain in their world; they don’t move him, as he has no connection to them. He’s tuned to a different channel – and not just any channel, but the total opposite: stocks and bonds, expensive cars, computers, furniture, flashy wardrobes, and who knows what else...

The Gemara states: “This is the way of the yetzer ha’ra: Today, it tells him, ‘Do this,’ etc., until eventually it tells him, ‘Go and serve idols.’” How is it possible that from a ‘Do this’ and a ‘Do that’ he will come to avoda *zara* (literally, strange or foreign)? Chassidus explains that we’re talking about avoda that is strange to a Jew. This is the yetzer ha’ra’s objective: to bring the person to a world that is totally foreign to him. How does he do this? He tells the Jew today, “**Do this**,” implying coercion, i.e., force yourself to do mitzvos. In this manner, he sends the message that in essence one’s role is (*ch”v*) not to do G-d’s will; his world is something else entirely, something foreign.

### **DON’T GET STUCK IN THE MUD OF THE PERMISSIBLE BUT UNNECESSARY**

Therefore, Chassidus gives great emphasis to the importance of “Sanctify yourself in what is permissible to you,” since from the permissible, one can come *ch”v* to the forbidden. If he invests his time in worldly matters, even if they are permissible – e.g., dining at expensive restaurants, being fashion

conscious, vacationing – his soul comes to learn that you have to **live** in the real world, and he does so in every sense of the word. As a result, he proceeds to chase, with growing intensity, after the mundane aspects of the world.

R. Shlomo Chaim Kesselman, of blessed memory, used to describe at farbrengens a certain animal that lived in the mud, etc., getting in up to its nose. But it would still not be satisfied, because it wants the mud to cover its head, and it doesn’t even feel the slightest bit repulsed. After all, this is its world.

This is the reason why Chassidus was revealed in the world. It was once possible to become uplifted through Torah study in general, as Torah was a spiritual world to those who learned it. However, in today’s lowly state of affairs, we don’t see our real world in Torah. Instead, our material world relates to Torah as a source of marvelous intellectual ideas and miraculous innovations. But as Kabbala and Chassidus explain, this represents the study of Torah without any connection to He who gave the Torah. Such study leaves the Jew at the same physical level that he was at the very start and does nothing more than to provide him with the intellectual acuity he needs to help him get through life. However, it does not bring him to the desired purpose of connecting G-d and the Jewish people, i.e., living in the material world, but on a much loftier level. At such a time, the study of Chassidus is most critical, as we need the revelation of the precious stone in the king’s crown in order to preserve the **life** of the king’s son. We must reveal the deepest aspects of Torah so that no one can erroneously think that we are in this world in order that we should live on its level.

## WHAT DOES A CHASSID FEAR?

This is the aspiration of a Chassid, an aspiration that intensifies each year on his birthday, on the world's birthday (Rosh HaShana), on the Rebbe's birthday, and on all auspicious days of the Chabad calendar. His desire is to feel more from his true world; he wants G-d to have mercy on him and help him to get the *geshmak* – at least at the start, and then he'll run with it. As is known from all those who have come to Chabad Chassidus over the generations, they did so because they saw that there is no need to wait until the next life to experience the true life; even in this world, we can get a taste of G-dliness.

This is what the Alter Rebbe meant during the debate with numerous prominent misnagdim, when he said, "Taste and see that G-d is good," translating it into Yiddish with the familiar singsong. This made a tremendous arousal, and many good Jews were thus drawn to Chassidus, as they understood that there is a way to **feel** in this world that G-d is good.

A Chassid distances himself from anything that gives him an additional **feeling and sense of awareness**, i.e., **knowledge**, in worldly matters. The depth of this awareness and knowledge in worldly affairs sinks the Chassid into greater spiritual exile. Chassidus explains this in the meaning behind the exile in Egypt (the source of all subsequent exiles), as is written, "**I do not know G-d.**" This means that instead of feeling and knowledge in G-d, the knowledge is in Galus, figuratively and literally, since he knows and feels the world as he grasps it through his animal senses. Therefore, it would be best not to dabble in *Galus'dike* matters; we

should limit our involvement to the barest minimum, i.e., only that which is absolutely necessary.

This brings to mind the Chassid who said about the saying of our Sages, "A lovely wife, a lovely home, and lovely items expand a person's knowledge" – "**That's what I'm afraid of!** These three things will give me a strong connection – knowledge – in worldly matters..." (It should be noted that the Rebbe explains "a lovely wife, etc." as

***"Look at the difference between my son and, etc.?" the Tzemach Tzedek said. "What issue does each one of them discuss? What matter troubles their soul? Which world occupies their time? – that is, despite that fact that 'It is all Torah, and I must learn...'"***

meaning a lovely soul that prepares a dwelling place for G-d Alm-ghty, thus expanding the Higher Knowledge.)

## STOP THE DISENGAGEMENT!

Until now, we've been discussing the danger of involvement in **permissible desires**. All this applies in far greater measure in connection with *ch"v* **forbidden** matters, which cause a cutting off between us and

G-d. Chassidus explains that a *yerei cheit* is someone who fears the very essence of sin because of the severance it creates, as is written, "your sins **separate**." This separation means a disengagement from living and feeling the truly enlightened world, as is written, "they have eyes and do not see," etc. The thickness of the partition between G-d and us depends upon the severity of the forbidden act, according to the punishment that it carries, which serves as a healing and treatment that helps to restore the connection. If the forbidden act was done *ch"v* with enjoyment or preparation, this makes the partition much thicker *r"l*.

This is the meaning of the term "Chassid," as our Sages say, "Who is a Chassid? One who does kindness with his Maker." Chassidus explains that even when he is alone with his Maker he is punctilious in his behavior. The Chassid's problem is not "What will people say?" rather "What will this do to my connection with G-d?" Therefore, he neither accepts nor listens to the excuses of the animal soul. Furthermore, even if there is some excuse for his actions, it still creates a barrier. This tears him away from the true life, similar to a fruit that is plucked off its branch before it is fully ripened. What difference does it make if this was done intentionally, accidentally, or by force? The result remains the same: it has been plucked off.

There is a story about R. Mendel Futerfas in Siberia, who once went for several days without food, because there was nothing kosher to eat. As he was walking once with the other prisoners to work duty, feeling utterly bereft of energy, he saw a river filled with non-kosher creatures. Naturally, the other prisoners caught some, and began frying and eating them. R. Mendel

felt that his end was near, and he also considered partaking, in order to sustain his life. After all, according to *Shulchan Aruch*, this would be totally permissible, and even the Alter Rebbe says in *Tanya* that eating non-kosher food is permitted in the event of *pikuach nefesh*. At that moment, R. Mendel said to himself, "Who says that G-d wants me to live? Maybe that's not what He wants, *ch"v*..." In the end, he didn't eat! Shortly afterwards, he came across some kosher food, and he ate. His life was saved.

### ULTIMATE CLOSENESS TO G-D

Someone who follows the guidance of Chassidus will merit to raise himself and become closer to G-d. The proof to this success can be found in a story about two authors who brought their most recent works to the Tzemach Tzedek. The first was a Chassid, R. Eliyahu Yosef Dribiner, who wrote a seifer about whether it is permissible to have self-sacrifice for other lesser mitzvos of the Torah. The second writer was not a student of Chassidus, and he composed a scholarly text on the question: Has someone who fathered a mamzer fulfilled the mitzva of having children? "Look at the difference between my son and, etc.?" the Tzemach Tzedek said. "What issue does each one of them discuss?"

*The Chassid's problem is not "What will people say?" rather "What will this do to my connection with G-d?" Therefore, he neither accepts nor listens to the excuses of the animal soul.*

What matter troubles their soul? Which world occupies their time? – that is, despite that fact that 'It is all Torah, and I must learn...'"

This is what the Alter Rebbe deals with in the first sixteen chapters of *Tanya*. He describes the two worlds in order for man to know what to seek and what to avoid. Then, when we are in the world of the G-dly soul, or at least when we aren't submerged in the world of the animal soul, we can say that "it is very close to you." The Jew now also understands that this doesn't mean that he no longer needs to do his avoda, but that it is within his grasp, and thus the Torah demands it of him.

However, as long as we are still in exile, the elevation is not complete, and the world tries again and again to drag the Jew down into the depths. The ability to look at the animal world from Above to below will only be fulfilled at the time of the Redemption. Thus, the Chassid does not relate to Torah and mitzva observance and the yearning for the Redemption as two parallel yet different objectives; he is instilled with the feeling that they are actually one united coexisting purpose.

As a result, a Chassid awaits for the moment when he will see the revelation of the Rebbe shlita, with the full knowledge that only then will he be able to live **the true life**. Therefore, the Rebbe persistently emphasizes that a Jew's existence in Galus is not the true state of affairs. On the contrary, it's merely a dream. The essential nature of a Jew has no relevance whatsoever to the concept of Galus, which lacks the letter *Alef*, as mentioned above.

Thus the Rebbe, the loftiest of all Am Yisroel, is Melech HaMoshiach, and with his hisgalus, we shall see the *Alef* of *Elokus* (G-dliness) that is instilled within the world, and we shall merit to experience the true state of the Jewish people – close to Heaven at the table of our Father in Heaven.

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# T'MIMIM ON SHLICHUS IN TASHKENT

*Excerpts from a shlichus diary in Tashkent, Uzbekistan 12 years ago.*

BY SHNEUR ZALMAN BERGER

## WE WERE LIKE DREAMERS

Tuesday, 24 Elul 5752-1992. For a moment, it seemed as though I was dreaming. The arrivals lounge of the airport in Tashkent, capitol of Uzbekistan, was mostly dark. The "terminal" is built of old wood and the people working there try to

write legibly since you can be sure they do not have computers! Outside the glass door are dozens of soldiers, armed with Kalashnikov rifles. They are there to protect the fifty passengers who arrived from Eretz Yisroel.

Shmuel Steinberger and I

carried our suitcases and bundles and walked towards Customs. Luggage carts are nowhere to be found. We left Ben Gurion airport just five hours ago, and there's just no comparison between the two terminals! (And this was true even before the recent renovations at Ben Gurion airport.)



The customs inspection is thorough. I was asked to open my luggage. The official removed a t'fillin bag from the hand luggage, and this quickly became an object of suspicion. He opened the bag with the two pairs of t'fillin. I tried using the few words in Russian I had learned before the flight for "mitzva" and "prayer." I kept on repeating these words, but the official ignored me. He wanted to see what was in the bags. I finally called over another Israeli passenger who knew Russian, to explain to the official what t'fillin are all about.

It was only after a long and careful check that we left the terminal, which looked more like an abandoned warehouse.

Rabbi Abba Dovid Gurewitz, shliach and chief rabbi of Middle Asia, whose center of operations is Tashkent, welcomed us. Looking out the car window, I could see gray buildings, roads full of deep potholes and old dilapidated cars.

Rabbi Gurewitz told us a little about Tashkent from both a material and spiritual perspective. There was a lot of work to do!

Tashkent is the capitol of Uzbekistan, one of the former states of the Soviet Union. 5.2 million people live in Tashkent, among them 50,000 Jews. There are four active shuls, three of them for Bucharim and one for Ashkenazim. The latter arrived in the city after fleeing the front lines in World War II.

The outreach work revolves around the t'fillin in the shuls, and there are programs on Shabbos and on Sundays, with the children.

Yeshivas Achei T'mimim is where young people learn, Alef-Beis through Gemara and Chassidus.

## THE REBBE'S BRACHA

There are many problems with the baking here, and there isn't much of a demand for baked goods, so they bake once a week. There is no kosher milk, and there is very little meat which comes from abroad once in a while. On Shabbos, you eat just a little bit of meat to fulfill the mitzva. Sugar, flour, rice, and other staples are sold to residents at a rate of a kilo (2.2 lbs.) per person per month!

The Rebbe's bracha, which I received before I left, accompanies

*This was the first time we were going so far and it was a very interesting walk. The passersby gawked at us, two bearded young men in dark suits and black hats, speaking a foreign language.*

me constantly. What first seemed to me to be a dream, immediately, on the very first day, became a way of life.

Despite the food problems, the Jews here have an enormous thirst to learn about Judaism. We were busy from morning until night.

## A REAL CHANUKAS HA'BAYIS

Wednesday, 25 Elul. Shmuel and I davened Shacharis in the Ashkenazi shul. The people there, who are mostly elderly, warmly

welcomed the shluchim from Eretz Yisroel. From the shul we went to the yeshiva, where we met another three T'mimim who had been in Tashkent for a few months: Yaakov Granshtat, Moshe Latinsky, and Yitzchok Mushinsky. The first two are from Brazil, while the third emigrated a few years ago from Russia to the US. He now serves as our guide and translator.

The classes at the yeshiva take place in the afternoon, and in the meantime, we went on Mivtza T'fillin and Mezuzah at the offices of the Jewish Agency. Yaakov said that the director of the Agency asked him to put up a mezuzah on the front door that leads to the offices. We went prepared with t'fillin, mezuzos, a shofar, and brochures in Russian.

Dozens of Jews waited in line in the waiting room of the Agency building, all wanting to emigrate to Eretz Yisroel. The Agency arranges their tickets and other necessary paperwork. We met with the director of the Agency in Tashkent, Mr. Simon, and he was happy to announce that just that day he had received permission from the authorities to operate as an official and legal entity.

"Now we'll put up the mezuzah, and this will be a real dedication," he said with undisguised joy.

The director put up the mezuzah as other employees and people waiting in line watched. After a brief explanation about mezuzah and the month of Elul, they all heard the shofar. We began putting t'fillin on people, many of whom were *karkafta* (had never put t'fillin on before). All asked for explanations about the mitzva. We invited all of them to the davening on Rosh HaShana.

From the Agency, we went back to the yeshiva. The students filed

in, some of them having just finished their day at public high school or university, while others had families and came after work. We put t'fillin on with them and the learning began in small groups.

I taught a *sugya* in Meseches Bava Basra to a few senior students who already knew how to daven and basic halachos. They daven three times a day and want to learn more. It wasn't easy teaching in Ivrit when their mother tongue was Russian. They knew Ivrit already but it was still hard for them. I tried to explain things in simple Ivrit.

When we finished learning, Eliyahu, one of the students, joined us on our way to the house. Eliyahu is a relative of neighbors of ours. We told him to explain to them that we would put t'fillin on with them the next morning.

Three generations live next door: a grandfather and grandmother, a son, and grandchildren. The grandfather knew what t'fillin were and said he would be happy to put them on after so many years.

### MIVTZA T'FILLIN NEAR THE BUSY STREET

Friday, 27 Elul. Today we were independent for the first time. Until now, we didn't go anywhere alone because we were unfamiliar with the area. But now, when we saw there was nobody who could walk us home from shul, we decided to go alone, even though it was a three-quarters of an hour walk. We knew we had to get to the main street and when we got to the right corner, to make a right and a left.

This was the first time we were going so far and it was a very interesting walk. The passersby gawked at us, two bearded young

men in dark suits and black hats, speaking a foreign language. Some people asked us where we were from and what we were doing in Tashkent, while others just stared in amazement.

Some Jews who saw us were excited by our appearance and greeted us with "shalom" in Ivrit with a heavy Russian accent. In the little Russian that we had learned, we invited them to come daven at the shul on Rosh HaShana.

When we met a father and son who knew how to say a few sentences in Hebrew, we suggested that they put on t'fillin, and they agreed. That's how Mivtza T'fillin on the main street of Tashkent began. I truly admire these Jews, who put t'fillin on, unashamed, right there on the street, in a country where, up to a few years before, t'fillin were put on only in secret.

After the first two men, we had the courage to say something in Russian in order to convince other Jews to put on t'fillin. We put t'fillin on with a few other Jews.

Then we realized we were lost. With the bit of broken Russian that we had, we tried to explain where we wanted to go. I suggested that we call Rabbi Gurewitz from a public phone, so he could tell us



**Putting up a mezuzah at the Jewish Agency.**  
The Director of the Agency (right) with Moshe Letinsky

how to get to the house. It took a long time until we could get the tokens we need, and after a few failed attempts, we got through by phone.

Mrs. Malka Gurewitz answered the phone. She was worried and said they were out searching for us. "Where did you disappear to?" she exclaimed.

### PREPARING FOR THE NEW YEAR

Sunday, Erev Rosh HaShana. We began the day with the Annulment of Vows, which took a long time. The old men, who comprised the minyan in shul, had already learned how to daven but it was still hard for them to read the

### TASHKENT AND KIRYAT MALACHI – TWIN CITIES

Rabbi Avrohom Beckerman, current dean of the girls seminary in Moscow, began his shlichus in the CIS in Tashkent. He came up with the idea of pairing up cities in the CIS with Chabad communities around the world.

Avrohom connected Rabbi Gurewitz in Tashkent with Rabbi Lipa Kurtzweil in Kiryat Malachi, and with the Rebbe's blessings, they signed an agreement saying they were twin cities. Under the terms of this agreement, R' Kurtzweil sent a great deal of aid to Tashkent such as kosher food, Judaica, and shluchim.

My trip to Tashkent was funded by R' Kurtzweil, whereas the Ezras Achim organization was responsible for most of the activities of the shluchim in the CIS at that time.



With some students of the yeshiva

*Hataras Nedarim*. With a good attitude and some patience, however, they all managed.

After the davening, we went to the Center, the local Jewish cultural center, which is operative on Sundays. We set up a table there, and for a few hours we put t'fillin on with the boys who came. A special program had taken place that day for the upcoming Rosh HaShana, and hundreds of Jews had come. We put t'fillin on them, one after the other, distributed brochures, and announced the times for the davening on Rosh HaShana.

One woman who saw the t'fillin, came over and asked us, "How much would it cost to photograph my daughter?" She thought the



Rabbi Gurewitz blowing the shofar

t'fillin were a new-fangled camera.

Many had no idea what the black boxes were. Still others were old men who put t'fillin on after a fifty-year break. The latter couldn't hide their great emotion, and one of them burst into tears.

It was a special scene when a Jewish soldier in the Uzbek army put on t'fillin. Dozens of people crowded around him to see this interesting sight.

About 300 Jews put t'fillin on that day, many of them never having done so before. This was the z'chus we took with us to greet the new year.

### AN IMPRESSIVE SIGHT AT TASHLICH

Rosh HaShana 5753. Hundreds of Jews came Rosh HaShana night to the Bucharin shul called Gravinova. Shmuel and I helped them daven properly. We gave out machzorim with translations, and during the davening, we guided the people in how to pray.

When the davening was over I recited Kiddush, and we gave out apples and honey.

The next day, we helped out in the same shul. Shmuel blew the shofar and I helped the people daven: when to stand and when to

sit, which paragraphs to say along with the chazan and which to say quietly, etc.

After Mincha, Rabbi Gurewitz announced that we were going to Tashlich. Hundreds of people left in a huge group from the shul. On our way to the river, we sang holiday songs and when we met Jews along the way, we invited them to join us. Tashkent hadn't seen a sight like this in dozens of years, if ever.

The next day, we davened in the Ashkenazi shul. The shul was too small to contain the hundreds of people who came, and many had to stay outside in the yard, which was covered by a roof. I was moved to see the old men, many of whom were raised in religious homes, opening a machzor and trying to read. Who knows, perhaps they would remember the letters and vowels they had learned sixty and more years before...

There were also children and grandchildren of Chassidic families, including the Galperin and Gurary families.

### THE REBBE LEFT HIS ROOM

Late at night, the phone rang in our house. I nervously picked up the phone, wondering who would be calling at this hour. It was Rabbi Gurewitz, who was thrilled to tell us, "The Rebbe left his room for the davening! They saw the Rebbe!"

Who? What? When?

"I just heard this from Berel Lazar," and he had no more information than that.

We were so excited by this news, and were extremely curious to know what had happened and how it had happened, after months of not seeing the Rebbe.

### "ONE WHO BRINGS A GET

## FROM OVERSEAS

Wednesday, Tzom Gedalya. We awoke to the sounds of banging at the door. It was Betzalel Gurewitz who was waking us up and telling us to hurry so we could be witnesses to a "legal empowerment." Many Jewish couples in the CIS had had a civil divorce, but when one of them moved to Eretz Yisroel, they wanted to arrange a get according to halacha so they could rebuild their lives. Since there was no beis din in Tashkent to arrange gittin, the husband writes a "legal empowerment" document to the beis din in Yerushalayim, to write a get for him, and this is sent to Yerushalayim.

Rabbi Abba Dovid Gurewitz is responsible for arranging these



Mivtza T'fillin in the center of Tashkent

documents in Tashkent, but the work actually falls on Betzalel's shoulders.

The husband waited for us in the Gravinova shul. We signed the document as witnesses, and then heard Betzalel explain the process

of sending it off and the sending of the get to Tashkent.

During the day, we got more information about how on Rosh HaShana, the Rebbe had gone out on a balcony in 770 and after the t'kios, the crowd saw the Rebbe.

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# THE DREAM AND THE APOLOGY

BY NOSSON AVROHOM

Moshe Mendel was born in a suburb of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. His family had a successful business refurbishing and selling vintage automobiles. The entire family worked at their garage, from grandparents down to children and grandchildren. At a relatively young age, Moshe Mendel knew the names of different makes and models of old cars that had become collector's items. This was his whole world and it took up most of his time.

But this idyllic situation didn't last. Within a short time, his brother, father, and mother passed away. If that wasn't enough, shortly thereafter some other garages specializing in vintage model cars opened in his area and they replaced his family's aging business. Moshe Mendel saw that the one thing he had left in the world was slipping through his fingers.

Their lot became desolate and the lack of profits led to the closing of the business. Moshe felt his world cave in on him. His life became a burden and he couldn't find any source of consolation. He spent days like a sleepwalker, sunk in his apathy and depression.

Like an angel from Heaven, he met the Rebbe's shliach to Petropoulos, Rabbi Chaim Binyamini. With the shliach's help, Moshe Mendel took a step towards observant Yiddishkeit. Being involved in mitzvos and Chassidus took him out of himself a

bit.

One day, Moshe Mendel sat down to write to the Rebbe. He poured out his heart and ended his letter with a plea, "I don't want anything except for a happy life."

Judaism gave him reason to lift up his head and to try to seek out a path

*The administrator of the bank he worked in didn't approve of Moshe Mendel's new attire. She didn't mince words, and whenever the opportunity arose, she made cutting remarks...*

in life, despite what he had gone through. He saw an ad and began studying banking and management. He even took national exams, which were taken by a million and a half people, out of which only hundreds would be accepted to work at Brazil's national bank.

A few days after the exam, Moshe Mendel received a phone call and was informed that he had passed the test in ninth place in his city and eighteenth place in the area.

He was invited to take another test and an interview, and then began working at a branch of the bank in a small neighborhood in the center of Rio. He worked there for almost four years, while strengthening his knowledge of Judaism at the same time. He even switched to wearing a suit and hat.

But then once again, he ran into difficulties. The administrator of the bank he worked in didn't approve of Moshe Mendel's new attire. She didn't mince words, and whenever the opportunity arose, she made cutting remarks. Other employees followed her lead in the hopes that it would serve them well in their jobs, albeit at their colleague's expense.

Moshe was the last person to get into an argument, and he accepted the nastiness with love and made a point of ignoring his tormentors.

To the disappointment of some of the employees, the upper echelons decided to appoint Moshe Mendel as the head of a division. They had observed his great potential and thought he would be wonderful for their bank's advancement. This step surprised many of his colleagues, considering his strained relationship

with his administrator.

Days went by, and if at first Moshe Mendel thought that not responding to the insults would diminish their shameful behavior towards him, it turned out to be just the opposite. Things got worse, and working at the bank became intolerable.

One day, Moshe Mendel felt he couldn't take it anymore. He wrote to the Rebbe and listed everything the woman had done. After making a good resolution, he put the letter into a volume of *Igros Kodesh*. He opened the volume and read an encouraging letter from the Rebbe, but felt it wasn't the answer he had anticipated.

Yet the administrator's persecution had not only not stopped, but had gotten worse.

A few days later, the administrator made the surprising announcement that she would be retiring. A party was held in her honor, which was attended by everyone. Moshe Mendel felt he had to attend, despite her horrible interactions with him.

As soon as he walked in to the office where the party was going on, the administrator came over to him, looking overwrought, and asking to speak to him. Moshe, who was used to her ways, left the room and the bank.

The next day, as soon as he walked in to the bank, the administrator asked him to come to her room because of an urgent matter. Moshe Mendel detected a pleading rather than a demanding tone in her voice.

***“It was clear, and I remember every word of it. I could see myself sitting on a wooden bench in a park, when suddenly a handsome Jew approached me. He had a white beard and his eyes were wise. He wore a long coat and a hat.”***

Moshe slowly climbed the stairs that led to her room and prepared himself for any eventuality. Thoughts raced through his mind about what new trick she had waiting in store for him, but to his astonishment, he saw the administrator sitting quietly, tears in her eyes.

“I want to apologize to you,” she began, getting straight to her point, “for what I did to you.”

She found it hard to continue speaking, and it took many minutes before she could compose herself. Moshe sat there in shock, not believing this woman was the same woman who

had so tormented him.

She finally told him that two days earlier she had had a frightening dream, and the previous night she had had another dream, and she still hadn't calmed down.

“It was clear, and I remember every word of it. I could see myself sitting on a wooden bench in a park, when suddenly a handsome Jew approached me. He had a white beard and his eyes were wise. He wore a long coat and a hat.

“He spoke to me in German and asked me why I was bothering you. He didn't wait for me to respond but asked me never to bother Jews again.”

Moshe sat riveted in his place. Based on the woman's description, it was clear to him that she had seen the Rebbe. He continued listening to her apology and her promise to honor the request of the Jew she had seen in her dream.

At the first opportunity, Moshe called the shliach to tell him what had happened.

\* \* \*

Moshe continued working at the bank for six months, but a clear answer from the Rebbe, indicated leaving it all in order for him to further his knowledge in Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim, made him leave his promising career. He went to Tzfas, where he learned last year. Now he is in 770, about to get married.



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# FROM MISSILE LAUNCHERS IN THE RED ARMY TO BEIS CHAYEINU

By Nosson Avrohom

*Born in Odessa, in the Ukraine, he knew nothing about Judaism. The first to inform him were anti-Semites in his unit in the Red Army. Since then, Chaim Moskowitz has had many fascinating adventures, with Divine providence leading him from place to place. He finally found himself squashed among thousands of Chassidim on the first night of Rosh HaShana in 770.*

I first met Chaim Moskowitz on Gimmel Tammuz. It was after the official farbrengen, and about twenty students from Yeshiva Tiferes Menachem in Seagate were sitting in a corner of 770 farbrenging.

Chaim's beard is graying and his brow is furrowed. You can see the intelligence in his eyes. This is his story.

\* \* \*

## AT THE MISSILE FACTORY IN THE RED ARMY

Chaim's story of kiruv to Yiddishkait and the Rebbe MH"M is

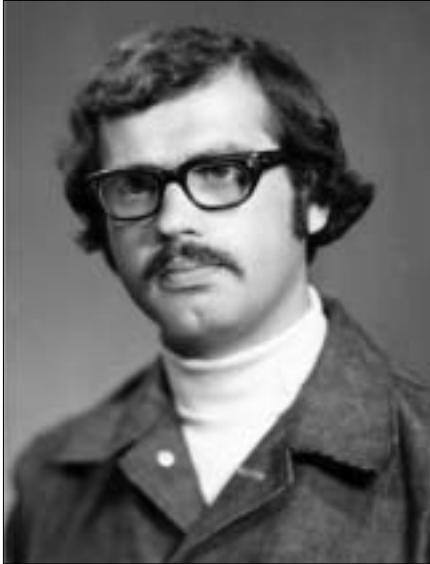
amazing and moving. He was born in Odessa, in the Ukraine, under the Communist boot. His parents, who were scions of a Chassidic family, couldn't take the pressure from the Communist police, and moved from Moldavia to Odessa. There, any vestiges of Yiddishkait disappeared.

Chaim is the youngest of four siblings, three boys and a girl. He attended public school like everyone else. He still remembers his classmates' anti-Semitic jeers. This was his only reminder that he belonged to the Jewish people.

When Chaim finished school, he enlisted in the Red Army, as did most of his friends. In the army, he became an expert in building missile launchers. Chaim enjoyed the esteem of his commanding officers for his work. The other soldiers resented him, and did all they could to make trouble for him. They cursed him and made dastardly accusations against him.

One day, one of the units on base transgressed the army rule about drinking alcoholic beverages, and was punished by having to peel an enormous pile of potatoes. It was only after they finished the job, deep into the night, that the soldiers were permitted to go to bed. One of the soldiers in this unit decided to start up with Chaim, and he slandered him by saying he was also guilty. The other soldiers backed him up in this lie, and Chaim had to join the soldiers peeling potatoes.

With gritted teeth, Chaim joined the endless labor. To make matters even worse, the soldier who had gotten him into this mess came and yelled at him. Chaim was furious and he said, "How did you dare lie so



Chaim as a 24-year-old student

*The Rebbe's uniqueness of appearance thrilled me and made an unforgettable impression on me.*

brazenly?"

The soldier responded mockingly, "The Jewish nation was born to work..." The soldier's laughter was

just too much and Chaim punched him in the face and the soldier crumpled to the ground.

From then on, Chaim was respected by his comrades in arms for

his courage.

After three years of hard work, Chaim was released from the army. He then began training in welding oil pipelines, traveling to Siberia to gain experience. From there he returned to the Russian capitol to complete his studies.

He was appointed manager of a department in a company that exported pipes around the world. He worked for this company for three years until...

### THE HORROR

His sister died after medical complications caused by criminal negligence on the part of the doctors regarding the diagnosis of her illness. She was only sixteen years old at the time. If that wasn't enough, his older brother died in a work-related incident.



Chaim Moskowicz

The sudden deaths of his siblings broke his mother and she fell into a deep depression. A few months later, she presented a request to emigrate from the Soviet Union, and after getting her permit, she moved to Eretz Yisroel and remarried, hoping to start life afresh.

Upon receiving an invitation from his mother to join her, in the summer of 5737 (1977), Chaim obtained an exit visa and left the country.

Chaim spent a few months in Austria and from there he went to Italy. After a brief stay in Rome, he headed for Portland, Oregon, to visit a good friend. He soon found work in a local plumbing company, whose administrators were thrilled to have someone so well trained on the team.

When he had finally settled down somewhat and felt that his life was quiet once again, he was thrown off by a letter he received from his mother. She wrote about her illness and ended with the bleak prognostications of her doctors that she had only days left to live.

Chaim quickly packed up his belongings, borrowed money from a friend, and headed off for Eretz Yisroel. His mother was happy to see him, but this joy was short lived as she passed away on 3 Elul 5739.

Chaim was all alone in Carmiel. After the funeral, he returned to his mother's house and wracked his brains wondering what he could do for his mother now. He knew nothing about Judaism and wasn't even circumcised.

His strong desire to do something to please his mother (before he knew the concept of *l'ilui nishmas*) and his lacking the wherewithal to do so, saddened him greatly. After hours of wandering the streets of Carmiel, he found himself in the entrance of a little shul in a bomb shelter. It happened to be a shul for Russian



Chaim on the left, with one of his brothers

immigrants. The gabbai heard Chaim's story and was happy to help him. He explained the significance of the Kaddish prayer that is said for the dead, and even wrote out the Kaddish in Russian letters.

From the elderly Jews there, Chaim got a little information about

the significance of the prayers and the mourning customs. They gave him a kippa and told him not to shave or cut his hair for a month.

This little bit of Judaism ignited his Jewish spark. He began feeling a strong desire to learn more about Judaism, but realized that his new friends didn't know much themselves. After spending a few days with this congregation, he bought a ticket and flew back to Oregon.

\* \* \*

"It was Erev Rosh HaShana. The first hour of the flight was uneventful but then three bachurim came over to me, wearing hats and suits. One of them, who spoke fluent English, by the name of Yosef Solomon, asked me whether I was Jewish. When I said that I was, he asked me whether I had put on t'fillin yet that day.

"Although I said Kaddish, I didn't know what t'fillin were. Only after getting a detailed explanation did I agree to put them on, because I felt that anything connected with Judaism would honor my mother's memory.

"I was very moved by the t'fillin experience, and after I had taken them off, the bachurim and I got into

*When they saw that the luggage wasn't coming out, they dragged me with them to the exit. "What are you doing? What about our suitcases?" I yelled in a panic. One of them explained that we had no time to wait and the sun would be setting soon...*

a friendly conversation. When they realized that my connecting flight to Oregon would have me flying on Rosh HaShana, they tried to dissuade me from making the trip.

“Where else should I go?’ I shrugged.

“Come with us to the Rebbe!’ was their response.

I knew nothing about Rosh HaShana, and I was definitely clueless about the Rebbe. After hearing a lengthy explanation from the bachurim, I said that during the year of mourning for my mother I didn’t want to celebrate – and I didn’t want to lose my job either.

“One of the bachurim said, with Jewish pride that still rings in my ears, ‘You have nothing to worry about. You are going to the house of the Nasi HaDor and everything will work out just fine. You definitely won’t lose out!’

“I was amazed by what he said. Where did he get the confidence to say that? I concluded that these guys were either crazy or bored kids having a good time. I went back to my seat, considering their wild idea.

“A Jew sitting next to me was also from the Soviet Union. He lived in Eretz Yisroel and was traveling to the U.S. for a family party. He wasn’t religious but he had heard what the bachurim had said, and he dared to mix in, saying, ‘These boys are the elite of the Jewish nation. They definitely have no ulterior motives.’

“This man’s words, said with such seriousness, made a tremendous

impression on me. I went back to the bachurim and told them that I had thought over their request and had decided to join them.

“When the plane landed in New York, it was two hours before sunset. The bachurim rushed and I followed them, though I didn’t know why. We were the first off the plane and we ran over to customs. When they saw



**In the Red Army**

that the luggage wasn’t coming out, they dragged me with them to the exit. ‘What are you doing? What about our suitcases?’ I yelled in a panic. One of them explained that we had no time to wait and the sun would be setting soon. I ran after them as they went to catch a taxi.

“I sat in the taxi in utter confusion, regretting that I had agreed to join them. After about half an hour, we had arrived at our destination, which was Flatbush. We quickly went into a house and the bachurim left their wallets there. They asked me to do the same. I didn’t want to leave my wallet behind. With each passing minute I was more and more sorry that I had taken part in this nutty adventure.

“All sorts of ideas flitted through my mind as I tried to get to the bottom of what the bachurim wanted with me. I knew that I had to be vigilant and prepared for what came next. Then I saw the bachurim take out their money and give it to the person whose house it was. One of the bachurim gently asked that I do the same. That’s when I finally realized that I had fallen in with a band of scoundrels. I had no choice. I kept some of the money in my pocket and gave them the rest.

“We walked a long way towards Crown Heights, and the bachurim explained who the Rebbe is, his greatness... I pretended I was listening but I spent the walk utterly befuddled and in deep regret that I had joined these fellows.

“When we finally arrived at 770, I was exhausted, but when we entered the shul I was woken up by the amazing sight of so many rabbis in beards, hats, and suits. It was the first time in my life that I had seen anything like this.

“I was taking it all in when I heard cries of ‘sha, sha, the Rebbe...’ and everybody fell silent. Among the

thousands of people, a path opened, and an older man walked in with measured steps. His erect posture and face radiated a special light. The Rebbe's uniqueness of appearance thrilled me and made an unforgettable impression on me. Now I was truly confused. I didn't know where I was. There were moments when I pinched myself to make sure I was really there. Throughout the davening, my gaze was focused on the Rebbe.

"After the davening, the bachurim introduced me to Mendel Okunov, who speaks Russian. Mendel arranged a place for me to sleep and eat. In the days that followed, he introduced me to a group of Russian Jews who sat together in 770. They gave me my first insight into the concepts of 'Chassidus' and 'Rebbe.' Stories of heroism concerning preserving Judaism in Russia amazed me. I began to have a strong feeling that I wanted to know more about Judaism and to be a part of it.

"On Motzaei Rosh HaShana, I received kos shel bracha from the Rebbe. The Rebbe looked at me for a few seconds (that seemed like an eternity) and nodded. I felt new strength flowing through me.

"The Rebbe seemed to me like an angel of G-d. I was glued to Mendel Okunov throughout my stay and he dedicated endless hours to explaining numerous things to me about Judaism and the life of Chassidim. I almost forgot that I had a job waiting for me. What reminded me of it was the fact that I had to pay back my friend who had loaned me money.

"I met the three bachurim again, the ones who had brought me to 770. When they heard that I wanted to leave, they asked that I stay on, and said that I had nothing to worry about concerning my job – Hashem would help.

"I was moved by their faith.



In the Chabad shul for Russians in L.A.

Although at first I had thought they were crazy, at this point I could only envy them and their way of life. Rabbi Okunov advised me to call my boss and to ask whether I could return after Yom Kippur. I was sorry that the answer was no, and they said that if I didn't return immediately, they would seek a replacement for me.

"I picked up my stuff from the airport and from the house of the Chassid in Flatbush. Before I left, R' Okunov asked me whether I would put on t'fillin every day if he bought me t'fillin. I thought a little bit and agreed to do it, and he bought me a

### THE MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF THE KEYS

When I lived in Portland, my brother-in-law moved and the family asked me to help him with my car. It was a Shabbos, and I didn't want to desecrate the Shabbos even though I was just becoming religious. One of the people present said that the mitzva of ahavas Yisroel was the most important mitzva in Judaism and it was therefore permissible to desecrate the Shabbos for it.

He said this with so much confidence, and I knew so little, that I believed him. I went over to the table where I was sure I had put my car keys, but couldn't find them. The family and friends in the house helped me look for them, but the keys were nowhere to be found.

On Motzaei Shabbos, to the amazement of all, we found the keys right there on the table, in plain sight. I saw this as tremendous help from Heaven.



Chaim in his car in Portland.



Chaim (third from the left in the middle row) with talmidim and staff of Yeshiva Tiferes Menachem. Rabbi Avrohom Lipskier, the rosh yeshiva, is in the center and mashpia Rabbi Y.Y. Greenberg is to his right.

beautiful pair of t'fillin.

“When I heard how expensive they were, I admired him very much. After that, whenever I didn't feel in the mood of putting on t'fillin, I said to myself: if a young man invested so much money in order to buy me t'fillin, I have to do this mitzva. Before I boarded the plane, Okunov gave me a stack of Jewish books.”

#### THE PRIEST SENT A DONATION

When Chaim returned to Portland, he yearned to continue saying Kaddish and to continue learning about Judaism, but he didn't know where to find a shul in his area. He discovered a Conservative synagogue some distance from his house. He was happy, because he

*Now I was truly  
confused. I didn't  
know where I was.  
There were moments  
when I pinched  
myself to make sure I  
was really there.  
Throughout the  
davening, my gaze  
was focused on  
the Rebbe.*

would be able to say Kaddish, but when he went to the synagogue, he was in for an unpleasant surprise. When he started saying Kaddish, they silenced him, and told him that only the chazan said Kaddish, and he could respond.

This incident and the appearance of the worshippers, which was so different than the people he had met in 770, made him realize that this congregation was definitely not for him.

“I returned home very sad about not being able to recite the Kaddish, but Hashem guided me. A few hours later, an old friend came by and he innocently told me that he was just coming from downtown, where he saw a sign on a house with Hebrew letters on it. When he walked in, he



was surprised to see men with beards wearing hats, and they were sitting together at a table that had vodka and herring on it. He couldn't get over the sight, because that was just the way he remembered the Jews in Russia.

"I immediately jumped up, sensing that this was the place for me.

"The next Shabbos I went to that shul. It was a fifteen kilometer walk but that didn't deter me, and indeed I found what I was looking for. I met Rabbi Daniel Rottenberg, a Chabad Chassid, a man I loved to talk to. It was a small shul and there was an intimate atmosphere, a feeling of true brotherly love.

"A few Shabbasos later, a terrible thing happened. When the congregants arrived at the shul, they were shocked to see the parchment of the sifrei Torah torn and thrown shamefully on the floor. Siddurim and Chumashim were also torn and thrown on the floor, and the place was a mess. It was an anti-Semitic act of vandalism. My heart cringed at the horrible sight. I couldn't help but cry. We didn't have a Torah, and we all stood around helplessly. I wondered, 'Why did Hashem do this? It's the only shul in town, and now, what would we do?'

"Television crews appeared and the crime was reported on all the stations. It became the talk of the town. As a result, letters of support as well as donations began to pour in. I remember that there was even a donation from a Catholic priest of \$500!

"But the main thing was that dozens of Jews became acquainted with the place for the first time, and began attending regularly. The shul became too small for us all. That's when I really understood what Rabbi Akiva meant when he said, 'everything that Hashem does, he



**Chaim meeting his neighbor from Los Angeles in Washington, and putting t'fillin on him for the first time in his life**

does for the good."

### **THE REBBE TOOK THE DOLLAR FROM ME AND GAVE IT BACK TO ME**

As the days passed, Chaim made progress in Torah and mitzvos. First, he started keeping kosher on Shabbos only, and then he expanded to keeping kosher all week long. He also put on t'fillin and davened daily.

That year he married a lady who agreed to his religious practices, and together they established a real Jewish and Chassidic home. At this point, living in Portland became difficult because there wasn't a Jewish community for frum people. After consulting with friends, they moved to Los Angeles and joined the Russian Chabad community, led by Rabbi Naftali Estulin.

In Los Angeles, he found a broad market for his profession, after meeting Zalman Roth, who worked in the field. Later on, he started his own successful business. He also became the father of two daughters.

Chaim visited the Rebbe on many occasions, but his visit in 5745 was the most special one of all. He went

to the Rebbe with Rabbi Estulin and a group of congregants. When they passed by the door of the Rebbe's room, they found themselves in a mob with tremendous pushing.

"Amidst the crowd and commotion I found myself suddenly facing the Rebbe. I was so confused that I took the dollar lying on the table. I was almost ready to continue walking when I realized my mistake and stood there at a loss as to what to do next. The Rebbe smiled at me in a fatherly way and without saying anything, he took my hand and with his other hand, he removed the dollar I was holding and then handed it back to me. I left the Rebbe in a turmoil of emotion."

\* \* \*

Chaim is currently learning in Tiferes Menachem in Seagate, realizing his dream to sit and learn Torah. His friends say that he isn't a youngster but he's the Chassidic spirit of the yeshiva. Aside from his spiritual work, he also prepares the food for the bachurim. "I have merited," he says with a smile, "two mitzvos: to labor in Torah and to serve Torah scholars."



# THE HOLY ADMUR: REB MOSHE YEHOSHUA SHLITA OF VIZHNITZ

*From Shemen Sasson Meichaveirecha*

BY RABBI SHALOM BER WOLPO  
TRANSLATED BY ALEXANDER ZUSHE KOHN



Reb Moshe Yehoshua Hager was born on thirteen Sivan, 5776 (June 14, 1916), to his father, Reb Chaim Meir *zatzal*. He was only a *bachur* when he began substituting for his father, who served as *rav* of Vilchovitz, and in 5706 (1945-46), he received an independent rabbinical post in his father's court. The young Torah scholar also served as the *rosh yeshiva* of the Vizhnitzer yeshiva in Grosverdin. In 5702 (1941-42), he married the daughter of the *gaon* and *tzaddik*, Reb Chaim Menachem Mendel of Dezh.

In 5704 (1943-44), the *Admur-to-be* escaped the evils of the Holocaust, and arrived in the Holy Land. There, he served as the *rosh yeshiva* of the Vizhnitzer yeshiva in Tel Aviv, and as the *rav* of Kiryat Vizhnitz in B'nei Brak. In 5732 (1971-72), he succeeded his father as *Admur* of Vizhnitz. Under his leadership, the Vizhnitz institutions in Israel and around the world have flourished greatly. The *Admur* also serves as one of the heads of the Moetzes G'dolei

HaTorah, and is very active in all matters relating to the *chareidi* public. He is regarded today as one of the great spiritual leaders of the *chareidi* community in Israel.



With Reb Moshe Yehuda Leib Landau, *shlita*.

## SATISFACTION

The *Admur shlita* is a great admirer of the Rebbe MH"M, and has always lent his support to all of the Rebbe's efforts at disseminating

Torah and Judaism. He thus supported the institution of the daily study of Rambam, for example, and in 5741 (1980-81), was among the first *Admurim* to purchase a letter in the special children's Torah scroll.

Chabad *rabbanim* paid the *Admur* a visit at his home during the month of Teives, 5743 (1982-83). The *Admur* took the opportunity to express strong criticism of "those who oppose every one of the Rebbe's *shlita's* Torah and Judaism initiatives." He also noted that when his four-year-old granddaughter lights candles with a blessing on Erev Shabbos, he derives "tremendous satisfaction — it enlivens my spirit."

## SANDEK IN BERDITCHEV

On a number of occasions, the *Admur* expressed his awe at the great scope of the Rebbe's holy work, and at the self-sacrifice of his emissaries around the world.

On 18 Menachem-Av, 5754 (July 26, 1994), the *Admur* visited Berditchev, a town in the Ukraine.

Prior to his arrival, the local Chabad emissaries were in the midst of trying to persuade a young Jew to undergo circumcision. The main obstacle to the performance of this mitzvah was the individual's grandmother, who found the rite of circumcision rather frightening. Knowing that the *Admur* of Vizhnitz was coming, the emissaries told the elderly woman that if she allowed them to perform the circumcision, they would ask the *Admur* to be the *sandek*. When she heard this, the woman consented. The *Admur* accepted the honor, and at the *bris* celebration, he was moved to tears.

The *Admur* expressed great interest in Chabad's activities throughout the Ukraine, and was deeply impressed by what he heard. On a number of subsequent occasions, he told his chassidim how impressed he was by the self-sacrifice of the Chabad emissaries in Russia.

### THE REBBE'S POWER

As mentioned, the *Admur* strongly supported the Rebbe's "daily Rambam initiative." He sent the following blessing for the completion of the study cycle in 5745 (1984-85): "I hereby join the Torah-learning community in celebrating the conclusion of the first study cycle of Rambam, a practice initiated by the Lubavitcher Rebbe *shlita*, and I extend my blessing to all the participants of this mitzvah celebration."

The *Admur's* son, the *gaon* Reb Menachem Mendel Hager *shlita*, represented him at the Rambam *siyum* celebration in Jerusalem in 5749 (1988-89): "At the behest of my father, the *Admur* of Vizhnitz *shlita*, I extend his holy blessing, and his prayer that the honor of Heaven

and the honor of Chassidus may be increased. My father [also] instructed me to utilize this holy, well-attended occasion to send the Lubavitcher Rebbe *shlita* his blessing and prayers, that G-d keep him healthy and strong, and that he succeed in his holy work of spreading the wellsprings outward, and disseminating Judaism and Chassidus. May he merit to increase the glory of Heaven and the glory of Chassidus, until the coming of Moshiach.

In a visit to him by Chabad



The *Admur* of Vizhnitz, *shlita*, distributing prizes to winners of the Sefer HaMitzvos quiz

*rabbanim* in 5753 (1992-93), the *Admur* stressed how important it was to pray for the Rebbe: "We need to add in prayer, until G-d has mercy on the Jewish people and sends the Rebbe *shlita* a complete and swift recovery. The Rebbe's net is spread across the entire world; there is not a place where his influence is not felt. We need him to have a complete recovery quickly, so that he may continue to disseminate Torah and Chassidus throughout the world.

Someone of the *Admur's* inner circle wrote to me as follows: "Every

time there was a report of a deterioration in the Lubavitcher Rebbe's condition, the *Admur* of Vizhnitz *shlita* sent his attendant<sup>1</sup> to interrupt the learning in the yeshiva in order to say *T'hillim* for the Rebbe, who is so needed by the generation."

### LEARNING FROM THE LUBAVITCHER CHASSIDIM

Following is an excerpt from a statement made by the *gaon*, Reb Mordechai Shlomo Shteinmetz, *rosh ha'kollel* of the Vizhniter *kollel* in Har Nof, Jerusalem:

"We heard from his honor, the *Admur* of Vizhnitz *shlita*, quite a number of times, that in addition to his high regard for the Rebbe's profound knowledge in absolutely all parts of Torah — both the revealed and esoteric — and his great holiness and transcendence, he also has tremendous regard for the Rebbe's leadership qualities, and for the Rebbe's constant concern for the dissemination of Judaism throughout the world — even in the most far-flung places.

"We heard from the *Admur shlita* that on various occasions people living in remote places asked him about the existence of Jewish spiritual facilities in their area, and the *Admur* told them that the Lubavitcher Rebbe made sure to build mikvaos, Jewish schools, and so on, even in far away places.

"Thirty years ago, when his father, the holy Imrei Chaim was still alive, I heard from the *Admur shlita* that he once visited the Vizhnitz chassidic community in Europe on a fundraising mission for Vizhnitz institutions. In the airport, he met a *chareidi* Jew, and they exchanged good wishes. When the

Admur asked the fellow where he was headed, the man said he did not know. The Admur expressed his great surprise at the fact that someone would buy a ticket and sit on a plane without knowing where he was going. The man then explained that he was a Lubavitcher chassid, and his Rebbe had instructed him to go the airport in London, where he would discover the next phase of a very urgent mission he was to carry out.

“This teaches us,’ the Admur had later explained, ‘how great must be the faith of chassidim in Torah sages. [It teaches us] that a chassid should be ready at every moment to fulfill to the letter, without question and

***The Rebbe’s net is spread across the entire world; there is not a place where his influence is not felt.***

without knowing why, the instructions and directives of his Rebbe.”

**FIGHTING FOR THE HONOR OF CHASSIDUS**

Especially remarkable was the Admur’s rock-hard stance against

those who attempted to cut-off Lubavitch from the rest of the Torah world. His strong posture united all who followed the Baal Shem Tov’s path in opposition to this attempt, and publicly sanctified the Name of Heaven.

Similarly, when the dispute arose regarding who would succeed the chassidic gaon, Reb Yaakov Landau zatzal as rav of B’nei Brak, the Admur came out in open support of the gaon’s son, Reb Moshe Yehuda Leib shlita, and strengthened his hand against those seeking to prevent him from assuming the role on account of his being a Lubavitcher chassid.

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# THEY CERTAINLY DON'T MEAN ME!

BY SHAI GEFEN

## THE FIGHT MOVES INTO THE PUBLIC ARENA

We have reached the end of the line. If you've been following politics the past few years, you know that there's no one to rely on. Everything has come crashing down. Even those who deluded themselves into thinking that they would conquer Likud from within and make it into "*manhigut Yehudit*" (Judaism-inspired leadership) were proven wrong. The parties on the Right long ago ceased operating, and in the worst-case scenario, as happened in this case, they themselves brought the Disengagement upon us.

There's nothing to say about the chareidi parties, which are careful to act on the saying, "money answers everything."

Naturally, a situation like this would lead one to despair. The settlers have discovered how everyone has abandoned them, starting with Sharon, the one who was "good for the Jews," and even Lieberman, who is ready to divide Yerushalayim (at least according to his latest pronouncements at the recent prestigious 5th Herzliya Conference).

The crisis is far greater than people think. Those who try to maintain that the fall began only in the past year or the past two years are mistaken. It all began when the Right decided it would join the bandwagon

of concessions. Although the Right said it would only support "concessions-lite," in the end, the Rebbe's view proved itself, that whoever is ready to concede an inch, will concede Yerushalayim too. The ones who spoke about "cantonim" [autonomous districts] in Yesha for the Arabs in the previous elections, are also talking about dividing Yerushalayim.

This is essentially the difference between the Rebbe's view and everybody else's. Today, in the final moments of Galus and on the eve of Geula, we are seeing how "many will be selected and clarified and refined." It's all out in the open, and every one of us sees precisely where people stand. More surprises await us. We have a reliable compass to know who is really loyal to Eretz Yisroel and who betrays it.

We can only rely on those who wage war on behalf of Eretz Yisroel from the Rebbe's perspective, from the halachic aspect, from the vantage point of Torah, minus any nationalism and Zionism.

Time is pressing. The prime minister is preparing the groundwork to expel thousands of Jews from their homes. The only solution is a public fight. Many spoke about the demonstrations in the Ukraine as a model for saving Gush Katif, referring to the hundreds of thousands of people who went out, right after the

elections in the Ukraine, into the streets of the capitol and complained that the election results had been fixed. They were successful.

Right now, it looks as though, through natural means, only protests in the public squares and thoroughfares will bring us salvation. The Yesha Council and the extra-governmental groups on the Right must plan, organize, and ensure that there's a wave of stormy protests. Only a mass protest of tens of thousands of Jews in Gush Katif on "judgment day" will undermine Sharon.

Kudos to Pinchas Wallerstein, who was the first to jump into the water when he announced that we must act out in ways of civil disobedience and that he's ready to face arrest for doing so. We hope he will succeed in getting the ball rolling.

It's only if Jews are ready to be arrested and pay the price that we'll be able to stop the planned destruction. Sharon himself knows that it's the fight out in the streets that will break him. Those who observe the signals from the prime minister's office know how nervous they are of tens of thousands of Jews going to Gush Katif. The more we succeed in ensuring that soldiers refuse to raise a hand against fellow Jews (and they need to be prepared now), and the more thousands show up to Gush Katif at zero hour, the more likely we



are to win.

The political leadership in Israel is in crisis, and only public opinion expressed loudly in the streets will carry the day.

“Faithful are the wounds inflicted by one’s beloved.” Now is the time to tell the settlers and their supporters in no uncertain terms: you planned to conquer the Likud from within; you relied on the ‘rebels,’ you depended on Ichud Leumi and the like. It didn’t work. The slogan, “We’ve got love, and it will be victorious,” failed. We must change direction, the quicker the better.

Michoel Ben-Churin from the Golan Heights went to Gush Katif and built himself a tent for Shabbos. Despite the cold he chose to stay in his tent rather than with the locals, in order to warn the residents of Gush Katif to go out and fight for their lives and homes – otherwise they will be forced to live in tents.

We have already passed the stage of *doron u’t’filla* (gifts and prayer) and we’re up to preparing for war [ala Yaakov Avinu’s three-pronged approach to preparing to confront Eisav]. Sharon will send in soldiers to uproot and destroy, even if it means attacking the settlers, and we must be prepared.

We have the power to win. Those who think otherwise are mistaken. We can definitely halt the Disengagement. The real question lies in our readiness for sacrifice. We must change the whole framework of public thinking; and not allow this miserable government to do whatever it pleases. This is an opportunity to prove we can carry out a quiet revolution without violence, and without allowing a predatory government to carry out crimes against humanity. Expelling Jews from their homes is an unthinkable racist crime. Since the Holocaust, no Jews have been

expelled from their homes, and no European country dared to think of expelling Jews.

Sharon and his cronies have no real power. If we put up a real fight, they will cave in and disappear from the political scene as though they never existed. We just need to be determined and unequivocally say: No more!

#### WHY DOESN’T ANYBODY SPEAK UP?

We all know how upset the Rebbe was by the pullout from Sinai. What really bothered the Rebbe was the silence, which gave the impression of collaboration, on the part of those within and without, with that withdrawal. The religious and chareidi parties also supported this retreat.

“Rabbanim, make a commotion!” screamed the Rebbe. “Why are you silent? Why aren’t you protesting in the streets?” This point came up repeatedly in the Rebbe’s sichos. Numerous sichos were devoted to the obligation to protest.

In an unusual letter the Rebbe wrote at the end of 5741, on the eve of the withdrawal from Sinai, you can discern a drop of the pain the Rebbe felt about the silence and those who sit on the sidelines:

**“As to my inquiring among various groups: how is it possible, and why is it that nobody speaks up? I was told that the nation is weary from 33 years of non-stop tension, and a (subconscious) reaction of defensiveness, and ‘desensitization’ was created, that all this pertains to the leaders; as for the others, ‘he sits under his grape vine and under his fig tree.’”**

From this letter, we can see what our way of thinking should really be like. As opposed to the answer the Rebbe received that “the nation is

*We have the power to win. We can definitely halt the Disengagement. The real question lies in our readiness for sacrifice. We must change the whole framework of public thinking. Expelling Jews from their homes is an unthinkable racist crime. Since the Holocaust, no Jews have been expelled from their homes, and no European country dared to think of expelling Jews.*

wearily,” the Rebbe demands an energetic struggle, that we cry out, and not remain silent, and not allow this crime to be perpetrated.

Today, it is clearer than ever, that if we sit quietly and don't stand up on the front lines, it will all topple like a house of cards. If we listened to the leader of the generation and fought like lions back during the period of Camp David, and didn't snooze on the sidelines, perhaps we would have prevented the situation we have to contend with today, in which the entire country is in danger.

We can remain silent no longer. Whoever still remains quiet, collaborates thereby with this crime, and willingly or unwillingly is part of that program of destruction that wants everybody to sit with hands folded, while they continue their work of destruction.

Now is the time to join the fight, and not to worry about our being few against the many. We go with the power of the Rebbe, and with the power of the holy Torah, and in the name of G-d we will succeed. As opposed to all the sycophants, mockers, and bribe-takers, we have “broad shoulders” to rest upon because we derive our strength from the Torah.

We are the king's legions and we are loyal to the Rebbe MH”M. We must be “candles that illuminate,” and lead the battle of the “wars of G-d.” If not us, then who? Only we, Chabad Chassidim, who learned the unadulterated truth, can lead us to victory.

### **A LETTER FROM A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR**

The chareidi parties' behavior is shameful. It's all about money. They're not even ashamed to say so; this has become part of their ideology.

They certainly won't see blessings

from this money drenched in Jewish blood. You cannot see success in money given in exchange for establishing a government whose goal it is to carry out the Disengagement. Yahadus HaTorah, by joining the government, bears direct responsibility for the Disengagement, and all that it implies. It's hard to understand the logic of those who operate in its name. How will they come and scream about the desecration of graves in Acko, when

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they themselves are ready to desecrate the graves of dozens of Jews who were murdered al kiddush Hashem; to destroy shuls and battei midrashos, to expel thousands of Jews; to bring missiles closer to the center of the country.

I would like to quote from a letter that a Holocaust survivor wrote to the Knesset members of the Yahadus HaTorah party:

“Rabbosai, I am disappointed. I emerged from the Holocaust without a stain. I didn't save my life at the price of the lives of others. I didn't build my house on the destruction of others. The Torah – so I learned – must be fulfilled with ahavas Yisroel. History is repeating itself. With my own eyes, I saw how Hitler and his followers brought about destructions, each time with a different group. One time with professors and doctors, and another time with merchants; one time with the wealthy, and another time with the poor; one time with the elderly, and another time with the children ... Each time, those who did not belong to that particular group thought: they certainly don't mean me!

“You want to maintain: ‘We are neutral,’ and ‘our hands did not shed this blood’ And you imagine that they don't mean you. Do you think they don't mean you?! Of course they mean you, just as they mean all the Jewish people and the entire land of Israel, even that which lies under the soles of your shoes.

“You declare your neutrality?! Gifts obligate you, Rabbosai. Gifts obligate you to, at the very least, not interfere with the expulsion of our brothers from their homes and land. You want to receive gifts, to be quiet about this expulsion and to continue to say, ‘We are neutral.’

“The politician and world leader, Winston Churchill already said, ‘There is no middle ground. You are either with us or against us.’ Are you enemies of your own people? Of your brothers who live in Gush Katif and northern Shomron?

“I have no relatives in Gush Katif or in northern Shomron for whom I am writing this letter. I feel that they are all my brothers and sisters. Perhaps this is the reason that their blood cries out to me even before tragedy strikes.

“Are you deaf? Are they less your brothers than they are mine? There is a halacha that in critical situations like those of pikuach nefesh, it is permissible to even sell a seifer Torah... And in light of that halacha, I will allow myself to ask some questions:

“Is there a halacha that says it is permissible to be quiet when brothers are sold or exposed to danger, in order to maintain mosdos Torah (of Agudas Yisroel)? Is this a ‘new halacha in the laws of capitulation’?

“Is it worth being quiet over the destruction of shuls and yeshivos in Gush Katif and northern Shomron in order to maintain some shtiblach and kollelim in chareidi neighborhoods? Is it right to close one’s eyes to the forced expulsion of entire congregations, from their homes and places – in order to receive money for young couples of Agudas Yisroel for apartments?”

### LIKE A HOUSE OF CARDS

In the context of Lieberman’s statements at the meeting in Hertzeliya, in which he said that he’s in favor of dividing Yerushalayim and Beilin’s plan and beyond, it’s time that we Lubavitchers examined what the Rebbe said.

We can see that today there is no difference between Right and Left. We don’t belong to the political right that crawls after Beilin. We have nothing to do with those who offer concessions, whether more or less painful. Whoever touches one inch of Eretz Yisroel is just as unfit as one who is ready to give it all away.

Thirteen years ago, I was personally standing there when Katzav heard the Rebbe strongly attack the Madrid Conference, saying:

**These talks about an autonomy plan are a first step towards giving away parts of Eretz Yisroel, and not**

**just little parts but large parts like Yehuda, Shomron, Gaza, Chevron, and Yerushalayim, etc. It is a matter of literal danger to life.**

Unfortunately, not too many people appreciated what the Rebbe had to say. Some people asked: So what’s the alternative, to topple the Right and put the Left into power?

But the Rebbe said that those who follow Shamir’s approach will concede on everything! The Rebbe added that he would fight to topple Shamir and referred to himself by name, saying he personally would see to it.

Today, thirteen years later, we see how the Rebbe’s conversation with Katzav was open prophecy. Every word there is engraved in stone and as solid as ever, as opposed to the softness of the miserable and lying Right. Who believed, back then, that Likud would concede on Chevron, expel Jews from Gush Katif, and would openly talk about dividing Yerushalayim?

At first, they spoke about partial autonomy, then about cantonim for Arabs, and in the end, the Left stands in amazement as it watches how the Right adopts the Left’s ideology.

We are not on the Right or the Left. We go with the strength of the Torah, and as Rabbi Menachem Ziemba z’l (may Hashem avenge his blood) said at the meeting of the Council of Torah Sages in 5697 (1937) in which it was decided that not one inch of Eretz Yisroel can be conceded, Eretz Yisroel is like a seifer Torah. If a Torah is missing even one letter, it invalidates the entire Torah.

This is the time and place for all those amongst us who took on the idea of “the lesser of evils” to understand that evil flourishes in the face of such an attitude. It will only be “good for the Jews” when we follow the Torah’s dictates without compromising.

*History is repeating itself. With my own eyes, I saw how Hitler and his followers brought about destructions, each time with a different group. One time with professors and doctors, and another time with merchants; one time with the wealthy, and another time with the poor; one time with the elderly, and another time with the children ... Each time, those who did not belong to that particular group thought: they certainly don’t mean me!*

# ARIK, THE MERKOS IS BEHIND YOU

BY A. AVROHOM

*Among the Sharon family's documents given to the police, the investigators found a personal letter sent to the prime minister by a friend overseas. The letter reveals sources of the prime minister's strategies. The classified material was leaked to a number of journalists, and is being presented to the public for the first time. \* A satirical letter to the prime minister with advice on how to stop the civil disobedience. Any similarities to reality are definitely coincidental.*

Good evening, Arik. What's new? How are the children? What did you say – they're at the police now? Nu, we are also spending a lot of time there lately, though we are primarily the plaintiffs and not the defendants, but we'll get to that soon.

I wanted to write you a few words, in my name and in the name of my friends, to give the support of the "Merkos" in your latest goings on. I don't mean the Merkaz of Likud, Heaven forbid. I am referring to the organization that I made myself the head of, through which I rule the entire movement – like you.

The full name of this organization was once "Merkos l'Inyanei" whatever, it doesn't matter what the ending

was. It was once fitting. Today I just call it "Merkos," the center of power, dictatorial and exclusive amongst the institutions of an entire movement. Our approach is simple: We don't mix in with the people running the organization; they can fundraise themselves, they can collapse under the pressure and the burden, they can take care of themselves when it comes to the apostasy and libertinism we injected into the movement. We have only one demand: We will tell you what to think and what to say, and once a year come and be photographed with us.

So you know, when two thousand hats and ties are photographed with you, you have no problem saying that you are the movement and the movement is you. But what happens? There are several tens of thousands of crazies and another two or three or twenty rabbis. Okay, that's why there's the police.

I am sitting now in my office and watching the calming effects of the blue flashing lights. A few of New York's Finest stand around the police cars, waiting for some skinny little Tamim to enter the sterile area – a radius of twenty feet around the infuriating marble plaque I put up, cutting down the cornerstone to accommodate the frame – and then they will teach him a lesson. Yesterday, they threw one of them down on the ground, yanked his hands behind his back, and tossed him into the paddy wagon. Good job, NYPD!

You have many similar problems, Arik, as I alluded to earlier. You got to the top position the way you got there, and now all the extremists around you are screaming. Dear Arik, don't give in to the pressure! The law is on your side, the army is with you, and the police are with you. You just have to use them, and make sure that moderate religious individuals give you a hechsher. If you attain that, believe me, the Disengagement will pass before anybody knows it. (By the way, I think that some of the troublemakers over here are the same ones who demonstrate against you over there. So if you're interested, send me a list of names with pictures...)

As it is over there, the main problem here is the



rabbanim. They have unwritten immunity, and for some reason, they stubbornly stick to the ancient text of the *Shulchan Aruch* and are unwilling to be flexible. I must tell you, I have suffered a lot from them. The worst experience I ever had was on my biggest day – at the yearly photographic conference – the Rebbe forced me to invite them to the kinus. You know how I need them like I need... I had to crawl on the tables, as hundreds of ties watched me, and ask the rav to come. Until this day, I am humiliated at the thought.

But since then, thank G-d, a lot of water has gone under the bridge. There is nobody to force me to listen to the rabbanim, and for the religious branch of my party, it's enough to organize a few available rabbis to provide a hechsher to various steps I take. Sometimes I don't even need that. After all, according to their *Shulchan Aruch*, they are not allowed to tattle and to hand over a Jew to the gentile authorities. Did anybody complain that I sent more than a minyan of nuts to jail, and a couple of ladies? No! You see, sometimes you don't even need a kashrus certification. It's enough if you wear a yarmulke and a few religious guys eat with you. Believe me, a lot of people eat at my banquet.

I don't have to tell you how important our connection with the media is. The most important thing is to keep on repeating: democracy, tiny minority, violence, the law. Don't attempt to explain the steps you take, just keep on reminding them that a prime minister was assassinated here and how serious incitement is, blah blah blah. Put your opponents up against the wall.

This method works great for me, because the hands of the Shulchanistim (those who follow the *Shulchan Aruch*, wear full beards, and a Moshiach yarmulke/flag) are tied. They will never consider hanging our dirty laundry in front of the media. So figure it out: during the past decade not a month has gone by without my dumping on them in the papers (you know, you don't have to do it all alone, there are volunteers to do the dirty work), while they – BUPKES! Even when they have a chance at the microphone, they just confuse people with talk about Moshiach and adding in mitzva observance. So what do you think the typical reader of the *New York Times* thinks? – that they are the crazies and we are the normal ones!

This problem – that you don't have much of in Israel, is balanced out by the fact that the media over there is in your hands. As is the court system. Over here, things are more complicated. Sometimes we win in court and sometimes we lose. In such a case, you have to immediately run and present it as an achievement. Whatever. On the other hand, we will never have a civil war over here; there are enough cops to take care of the Jewboys. We just have to take care of

the marble and armored glass and the rest is up to them.

You just have to be strong and not cave in when you know that little children are crying for their father who was arrested. It's important to remember that as things start to heat up down there, and if it still bothers your conscience, plaintively say that you've reached the point where you need so many security guards (like me) and you're doing this, basically, for the future of the children.

As you know, these guys, these crazies, maintain that you can't return land. I don't say you have to return land either. I even remember times that the Rebbe wasn't too happy about it, but again, like with the rabbanim, lots of years have passed since then, and what we see now, wasn't known then.

One of my friends from the Philadelphia Corridor, a fiery redhead (I have some problems with him lately too, but it's not too bad) even said this explicitly at the annual photographic conference, and he didn't raise any eyebrows by saying so.

They served the main course and nobody wanted to waste time. Those who managed to hear it, consoled themselves that better their ears should ring at what he said than they should start a machlokes (you see, our people buy that nonsense).

In any case, I'm against demonstrations, on principle. You must always follow the leaders, especially in a dictatorship (look at our terrific relations with Kotchma and Putin). The days have passed since our boys went out to demonstrate with signs, "Israel is in danger." The slogans today are far more toned-down. We spend a fortune on public relations, and they ensure that we look good on the screen. Fortunately, the chevra don't read the papers or watch TV. If they knew what sort of ads I put out there, I would have to bring the Sixth Fleet to the neighborhood.

The thing is, it makes no difference what ideology or leader you present; you must always stress that you are the real successor of this movement, even if everything that he said and the entire platform of your party are opposites. As it is with you, these chevra drive me crazy with their quotes. Once it's, "you have to publicize to all members of the generation," and another time it's about the obligation to obey the rabbanim, and that this is literally an issue of pikuach nefesh.

No matter what they do to you over there, one thing you surely don't have to deal with. They can say that you oppose Jabotinsky, that you oppose Begin, that you oppose Shamir, but they definitely don't claim that Begin is still the prime minister, and not you! Believe me, consider yourself fortunate, because I have to deal with this here.

The truth is, there is such a thing in Judaism. For example, Jews say, "Dovid King of Israel chai v'kayam." That doesn't bother me at all, because did I ever say that I am Dovid HaMelech?

Or for example, it says in the Gemara that Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi would visit his home, after his passing, and make Kiddush for his family. So what? Did I ever say I wanted to be Yehuda HaNasi and make Kiddush for his family?

It's all good and well, until they say that the Lubavitcher Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach chai v'kayam, because that means **I am not the leader**. If the Rebbe is chai v'kayam, and we must listen to him exactly as we did before Gimmel Tammuz, that means I am a zero, a nothing, nada, zilch. If the Lubavitcher Rebbe is chai v'kayam, then how can it say, in a book of Jewish leaders in the U.S., that I lead the Lubavitch movement? That's the rub.

Thirty years at the wheel, I spun leadership fantasies (because he didn't even let me dream about getting a new car), and I'm not willing to give it all up because of some edited sicha. But they scream it, and so many times too, that I wake up from nightmares in which I have to crawl over tables and invite the rabbanim to the kinus again.

When that happens, I wake up in a cold sweat. The first thing I do is call the bank in order to make sure that nobody has taken over control of the accounts. Then I call my lawyer and have him read to me, yet again, all the documents which have my name on the top. Then I begin to calm down and I can order a bagel and coffee from the bakery out of the neighborhood (because I don't eat the rabbanim's hechsher). Now can you understand why I insist on the marble? Do you understand why it's important for the entire world to know that there was a Gimmel Tammuz, because otherwise, what am I about?

There was only one time that they forced me to say this in court. It was nearly twenty years ago. One of the family members maintained that the s'farim belonged to him too, not just to the Rebbe. The truth is, I hired the best lawyers and we tried to take the logical defense. We could also have finished the whole thing off with a million dollars or two. But the Rebbe didn't want to hear of it. He said that the Rebbe Rayatz is alive, and there is no inheritance. He is in this physical world and he is more alive and active than ever.

Arik, I could swear to you, during the proceedings, my kishkes turned over. I didn't know where to bury myself while facing the lawyers. I wanted to disappear from the scene, but you know, I had no choice back then. I went like sheep to the slaughter and feared for the worst. But listen, a miracle happened and the

gentile judge bought the story. Who says there aren't any miracles?

There was another problem back then, I had to maintain that Rebbeim don't say anything just like that; that they mean what they say, literally. They don't say anything just for public consumption, to put on a front. So you ask, what's the problem? Of course, this is a problem! If everything the Rebbe said in the last years is literally true, then first of all, he's alive. Second of all, he is about to redeem the Jewish people, and third and worst of all – we have to publicize this!

Truth to tell, on this one you and I are in the same boat. If he shows up, then you won't be here either. There's no Disengagement and no State. Without moving a muscle, just with a look, he will make all evil dissipate like smoke. You will go back to your ranch and I, I hope, will be the chauffeur once again.

Between you, me and myself, I worry that this is actually going to happen, and then, all the guys downstairs are going to begin singing and screaming that song, you know, the one with the eight words that I've forgotten. And in front of the cameras and microphones that they'll stick in my face, I will have to say, for the second time in my career, "I was mistaken."