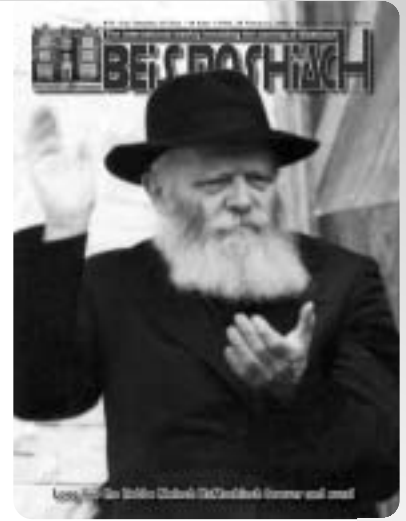


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Tel: (718) 778-8000
Fax: (718) 778-0800
admin@beismoshiach.org
www.beismoshiach.org

ERETZ HA'KODESH

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

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:

M.M. Hendel

ENGLISH EDITOR:

Boruch Merkur
editor@beismoshiach.org

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FROM THE GOLDEN CALF TO T'SHUVA

SICHOS IN ENGLISH



SHABBOS PARSHAS KI SISSA; 16TH DAY OF ADAR, 5751

Parshas Ki Sisa possesses a problematic dimension. The literal meaning of the opening verse of Parshas Ki Sisa is: "When you will lift up the heads of the children of Israel," elevating the level of the Jewish people, and indeed elevating their "heads," their loftiest potential. Nevertheless, the body of the Torah reading concerns the sin of the Golden Calf, the most serious of all sins, the ultimate source for the exile. How does such a series of events correlate to the theme of Ki Sisa, the elevation of the Jewish people?

It is possible to explain the connection between the two themes as follows: The elevation of the Jews to the highest peaks can come despite the fact that one has descended to the lowest depths. Furthermore, the descent is itself a phase in the ascent. Every descent is in essence for the purpose of ascent, and is capable of bringing one to a level higher than that enjoyed before the descent. Thus it is through the descent of the sin of the Golden Calf that the Jews can reach the peaks of Ki Sisa.[359] After the sin of the Golden Calf, the Jews were able to rise to the level of baalei t'shuva, and

"In the place where baalei t'shuva stand, even the totally righteous are not able to stand."

Similarly, this concept is reflected in the advantage possessed by the Second Tablets, the giving of which is described in our Torah portion, over the First Tablets to the extent that G-d thanked Moshe for breaking them, as it were. The first tablets were associated with the level of "the righteous," while the second tablets were associated with the higher rung of baalei t'shuva.

This explanation, however, is insufficient. Firstly, the very principle that an ascent requires a descent requires explanation. Furthermore, the wording of the opening verse, "When you will lift up the heads of the children of Israel," appears to indicate that everything which follows in the Torah reading comes as a result of this elevation. The converse, that the elevation comes as a result of the descent of the sin, does not fit the simple meaning of the Torah's verses.

Furthermore, the concept that Ki Sisa, i.e., the elevation experienced by the Jewish people, is associated with the giving of the second tablets also raises a question. It is in Parshas Ki Sisa that the great qualities possessed by the first tablets are mentioned.[360]

These points lead to the following conclusion: The process of the Jews' elevation, Ki Sisa, is many-phased. One of those phases involves the first tablets, i.e., the service of the righteous before the sin of the Golden Calf. Then, we precede to the Golden Calf. The intent, however, is not the sin of the Golden Calf, but rather, how the Golden Calf exists in the Torah, i.e., a high spiritual rung as will be explained. Indeed, it is the potential generated by this service which brings about – when necessary – the nullification and the transformation of the sin of the Golden Calf.

To explain: As mentioned above, the expression "When you lift up the heads of the children of Israel" indicates that: a) one rises to a level above the head, i.e., the quality of faith which transcends the intellect. This is an innate potential possessed by every Jew. As the Alter Rebbe writes in *Tanya*, this potential "transcends intellect." Therefore:

Even the most simple among the people and the sinners of Israel sacrifice their souls for the Sanctification of G-d's Name... so that they will not deny [the existence of] the One G-d. [This service is carried out] without any knowledge or meditation, but rather [emanates from

a level which] transcends knowledge and understanding.

The head itself is raised to this level. The intellect is raised to the point where it negates avoda zara, the service of other gods, not only as an act of faith which transcends intellect, but as an expression of the intellect itself.

The internalization of this quality of faith represents an elevation of the Jews' potential. By expressing an affirmation of G-dliness and a negation of other gods, [sources of influence,] not only on a level where intellect does not operate, but within the context of our understanding, the worship of other gods is utterly negated and G-d's Oneness is affirmed in the most complete manner.

[Were this affirmation to be made on the level of faith alone, the possibility would exist that although one believes, one would think differently. Thus, on the levels of conduct where "the light of faith" does not shine, G-d's Oneness would not be affirmed. When this oneness is internalized within the power of intellect, however, it permeates every dimension of our conduct.]

This concept, the negation of belief in other gods and the affirmation of G-d's Oneness, also lies at the heart of the Haftora which describes the confrontation between the prophet Eliyahu and the prophets of Baal [I Melachim, Chapter 18]. As a result of Eliyahu's challenge to the prophets of Baal, their failure in evoking a response from their divinity, and G-d's miraculous wonders, the people proclaimed, "G-d is the L-rd, G-d is the L-rd."

This narrative describes a very low spiritual state for the Jewish people, a time in which they were unable to appreciate who to believe in Baal or, l'havdil, G-d. Nevertheless, through the confrontation arranged by Eliyahu,[361] the people were able to know – i.e., grasp with their intellect, not only with their power of faith –

that "G-d is the L-rd."

In order for a Jew to negate belief in other gods – not only through the service of t'shuvah which transcends intellect, but also on the level of intellect, it is necessary to "lift up one's head." A Jew's head refers to his study of the Torah. "Lifting up one's head," refers to reaching a higher plane of Torah study.

To illustrate this concept: Yerovam ben Nevat is connected with the concept of idol worship. He made, not only one Golden Calf as the Jews did in the desert, but two. Nevertheless, despite this descent, his potential was

***Through the
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great and he had reached a very high peak of Torah study. Thus, our Sages relate that Achiya HaShiloni[362] could find no fault in Yerovam's Torah knowledge and together with him, developed new insights into the Torah. Indeed, Yerovam was able to understand the teachings of the Book of VaYikra which deals with the sacrificial offerings on 103 different levels.[363]

Here we see a connection to idol worship, because 103 is numerical equivalent to the Hebrew for "calf" (*egel*). Thus, in its source, Yerovam's potential was on a very high rung, a

rung that is connected with the ultimate source for a "calf," the "face of an ox," which makes up "G-d's Chariot" in Ezekiel's mystic vision.

Thus we see a two dimensional process: a very high source, but – to allow for free choice – a potential for descent to the very lowest levels, and ultimately, the correction of that descent, and a new ascent. Nevertheless, the descent and the subsequent ascent need not be part of the process of Ki Sisa. Ideally, as the "calf" exists within the Torah, it refers to an elevation of the head, a high level of Torah study which negates totally – not only from the point of view of faith, but also from the perspective of intellect – the possibility of believing in other gods.

To cite a parallel to this concept: In Hilchos Avodas Kochavim, the Rambam writes:

The worshipers of false gods have composed many texts concerning their service, [describing] what is the essence of their service, what practices are involved, and what are its statutes. The Holy One, blessed be He, has commanded us not to read those books at all, nor to think about them or any matters involved with them.... This prohibits enquiring about the nature of their service even if you, yourself, do not serve them.

Nevertheless, this prohibition applies only for a common person. In contrast, a court *must* know the types of worship [practiced by gentiles] because an idolater is only stoned to death when we know that [he has worshiped a false god] in the mode in which it is traditionally worshiped.

Thus, although a common person is forbidden to study the nature of idol worship, a Torah judge is required to study these subjects. Because of his elevated spiritual level, his connection with idol worship helps bring about the nullification of idolatry. Thus his involvement with such matters is a holy service, the very opposite of idolatry in its usual sense.

Similarly, our Sages praise Yisro's declaration, "Now I know that the G-d, the L-rd, is greater than all the other gods." Because he had served "all the other gods," his statement of awareness of G-d's existence was all the more powerful, reflecting the transformation of evil into good. This statement represented a complete nullification of idolatry which, as the Zohar explains, was one of the necessary preparatory steps for the giving of the Torah. Here again idolatry ultimately serves a positive purpose.

In this context, we can explain the place of the narrative of the Golden Calf within the process of Ki Sisa. In an ideal sense, the nullification of idolatry should be expressed in a manner that precludes any connection to such service (the first tablets). If, however, for some reason, there is a descent into idolatry, there is the potential for an ascent to a higher level through the service of t'shuva. Indeed, the sin itself can be transformed into a positive influence (the second tablets).

The latter process, however, must involve a slightly different approach. After the descent of sin, it is impossible to begin directly with the nullification of idolatry by elevating one's intellectual faculties. Instead, one must first arouse a level that shares no connection to idolatry whatsoever, the essence of the soul which transcends intellect.[364] Afterwards, the process of Ki Sisa involves having the essence of soul influence the powers of intellect and emotion. Thus, the negation of the worship of idolatry will come, not only from the essence of the soul, but also from our conscious powers.

This is also implied by the verse, "Hew out two tablets of stone like the first ones." The second tablets involve, not only the arousal of the essence of the soul, but also that – like the service associated with the first tablets – the essence permeate through our conscious powers.

This concept is also alluded to in

the verse which precedes the entire narrative of the sin of the Golden Calf and the giving of the second tablets: "And He gave to Moshe... the two tablets of the testimony." Our Sages note that the word "Luchos" appears without a Vav. They interpret this as an allusion, teaching us that the right and the left tablets were equal.

The two tablets correspond to the positive mitzvos – the fundamental thrust of the first five commandments – and the negative commandments – the basic thrust of the second five commandments. Thus this relates to our Sages' teaching, "G-d made a single statement. I heard two things;" that the first two commandments, the affirmation of G-d's presence and the negation of other gods, and similarly the positive and negative dimensions of the Shabbos laws were communicated at once, because they share a singleness of purpose.[365]

This emphasizes how even the negative commandments which warn us to refrain from action are mitzvos and thus share the intent of establishing a tzavsa, connection and bond of unity, between G-d and man and between Him and the world at large. Furthermore, this goal is reflected in the potential we are granted to fulfill the negative commandments through positive action, i.e., through studying the laws of the negative commandments, it is considered as if one actually observed them.

This leads to another concept, that the fundamental aspect of the negative commandments is the form in which they exist in their source. There they represent elevated levels of holiness as explained above in regard to the connection between the negation of idolatry and the 103 planes of Torah study. Through emphasizing the source of the negative commandments, a powerful dimension of the light of Torah is revealed.[366] This light shines in all places, even where there are negative forces involved, negating

those negative forces and nullifying their influence.[367]

This then represents the process of Ki Sisa, the elevation of the Jewish people, and its connection with the first and the second set of tablets. Both sets of tablets share the same thrust, the negation of idolatry and all the negative forces which stem from it,[368] not only from the standpoint of faith, but also from the perspective of intellect. Because of the negative dimensions brought about by the sin of the Golden Calf, the second tablets also required the arousal of the essence of the soul. However, their ultimate intent is the same, revealing the complete level of service that can be achieved through Torah study, when that Torah study is elevated and enhanced through the service of "lifting up the heads of the children of Israel."

2. A connection can be established between the above concepts and the Purim holiday which we have just celebrated. This is of greater significance this year, because this year the celebration of Purim is unique, involving a three day continuum of happiness for Purim is followed by Shushan Purim and Shabbos, which the Torah calls "the day of your rejoicing." [369]

Purim is associated with the service of mesirus nefesh (self-sacrifice) for the Sanctification of G-d's name as epitomized by Mordechai's refusal to bow for Haman. His example inspired the entire people as reflected by the verse, "And they told him of Mordechai's people." Throughout the entire year, the Jews displayed mesirus nefesh which transcended intellect. And to commemorate this, our celebration on Purim is Ad d'lo yada, above the confines of intellect.

Purim, however, also has an effect on our conscious powers as reflected in our Sages' interpretation of the verse, "And the Jews had light" as referring to the study of the Torah. Even the mitzvah of becoming drunk

on Purim can be interpreted as becoming involved in the study of the secrets of the Torah as hinted at in our Sages' statement, "When wine goes in, the secrets come out."

In a complete manner, this involves the study of the teachings of Chassidus. And it is through this study that the belief in the potential for other gods [i.e., sources of influence] is nullified, not only from the perspective of faith, but also from the standpoint of our conscious powers. This will "raise up the heads of the children of Israel," elevating their intellectual potential through the study of Chassidus. Furthermore, this will lead to the ultimate elevation, the coming of Moshiach[370] who will reveal the secrets of the Torah and, indeed, reveal "the new Torah that will emerge from Me."

3. Purim is thirty days before Pesach. As the Alter Rebbe writes in his Shulchan Aruch, thirty days before Pesach, we should begin studying the laws of the holiday. Similarly, since the celebration of the Pesach holiday involves many expenses, it is proper that efforts be made to provide everyone who lacks with their Pesach needs. Although there are organizations that are involved with these activities throughout the entire year, there must be an increase in these efforts in connection with the Pesach holiday, providing them with both food and clothing so that they can celebrate the holiday in an ample manner, as befits "free men."

Our Sages teach that tz'daka brings close the redemption.[371] May our efforts bring close the ultimate redemption and thus we will proceed to Parshas VaYakhel in its most complete expression, "the great congregation" which "will return here" with the coming of Moshiach. May it be in the immediate future.

4. Our Sages note that even after the Purim miracle, we remained servants of Achashverosh. Similarly, we are also "servants of Achashverosh."

Nevertheless, although we are in the midst of exile, the dominant nation in this exile is a generous country, a country who offers assistance to many nations and offers assistance to its Jewish residents. In appreciation, may G-d grant that country success in its war against Basra and may we soon merit the fulfillment of the prophecy, "Who is that coming in soiled garments from Basra?" with the coming of redemption.

NOTES:

359. This is reflected in Rashi's commentary which associates the command to give the half-shekel, the opening passage of Ki Sisa, with the atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf.

360. Indeed, when G-d instructed Moshe

Because of the negative dimensions brought about by the sin of the Golden Calf, the second tablets also required the arousal of the essence of the soul.

to hew out the second tablets, He told him, "Hew out two tablets... like the first ones," i.e., He informed him that the second tablets could only resemble, but could not be identical with, the first tablets which were, "the work of G-d."

361. Significantly, although Eliyahu was one against the 450 prophets of the Baal, it was he who spelled out the details of the confrontation, dictating to them exactly what should be done. This reflects how even though the Jews as a whole were in a state of descent, because Eliyahu was a true prophet, it was he who controlled the circumstances.

362. The connection of Yeravam with Achiya HaShiloni is significant because the ultimate correction of the sin of the worship of false gods came about through two of Achiya's students. It was, as

mentioned above, the prophet Eliyahu who confronted the prophets of the Baal and it was the Baal Shem Tov, who studied with Achiya HaShiloni for ten years who revealed P'nimius HaTorah in a manner that made it accessible to the public at large. P'nimius HaTorah has in it the potential to elevate and transform even the sin of idolatry.

363. Significantly, this concept is found on page 103 of the tractate of Sanhedrin. This implies that this level of Torah study is associated with the Sanhedrin, Israel's highest Torah authority.

364. This level relates to the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy which transcend the limitations of the Torah and are revealed through the service of t'shuva.

365. See the sichos of Parshas Yisro, 5751, where this concept is explained at length.

366. Indeed, as explained in several places in Chassidic thought, the negative commandments draw down higher and more transcendent G-dly light than the positive commandments.

367. According to the Kabbala, the negative commandments are associated with the left vector of the S'firos, which is characterized by the quality of G'vura, might. The potential to illuminate a realm where there are undesirable influences with G-dly light requires "might." Furthermore, as a complement to the concept expressed in note 8, the S'fira of G'vura has a higher source than the S'fira of Chesed, "kindness," and leads to greater and more powerful revelations.

368. For the prohibition against idolatry is the source for all 365 negative commandments.

369. The connection of Purim to the Torah is also reflected by our Sages statement that it was on Purim that the Jews confirmed their initial acceptance of the Torah. (Here we also see a connection to Shabbos because "Everyone agrees that the Torah was given on Shabbos.")

370. Moshiach's coming is also related to the first and second tablets mentioned in Parshas Ki Sisa, for his service will involve motivating the righteous (the first tablets) to turn to G-d in t'shuva (the second tablets).

371. Here we also have a connection to Parshas Ki Sisa, for in an expanded sense, the gifts made by the Jewish people described at the beginning of this parsha are associated with gifts to tz'daka.



NO EFFORT SHOULD BE SPARED TO SAVE THEM FROM THE GREAT TRAGEDY OF INTERMARRIAGE

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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By the Grace of G-d
Erev Pesach, 5745
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

Thank you for your letter and telegram with the birthday greetings, which I heartily reciprocate in the words of our Sages, "Whoever blesses others is blessed by HaShem Himself." Accordingly, may HaShem bestow His blessings on you and your wife and family in a generous measure, both materially and spiritually.

With regard to the problem concerning your nephew, there is no need to emphasize to you the great tragedy of intermarriage, ~~especially~~ a Jew marrying a non-Jew. Therefore, no effort should be spared to save both parties from such a situation. Indeed, if there is true feeling between the two persons involved, neither of them should wish to drag the other into such a tragedy and should not let a personal desire or passion, which in most cases is short-lived in any case, blind him and her to one's elementary human duty, not to mention the religious aspect and the fact that it is entirely unacceptable from the Torah viewpoint.

I am aware, of course, of the common argument that there seem to be many intermarried couples who are apparently happy. But the bitter truth is that in most, if not all, such cases, this is only because such couples are too ashamed to reveal the true situation at home and in their private life, for obvious reasons, especially if they had been warned about it and chose to ignore such warnings.

The same may be said of another common argument that since both parties involved are adults and are prepared to take their chances, no one should interfere with their decision. The fallacy of such an argument is obvious if we consider a simple illustration of a person standing on top of a bridge and preparing to jump, claiming aloud that it is no one's business to stop him, etc. In any civilized society, it would be the duty of anyone who can do something about it to save the person from committing suicide, or harming himself, and, indeed, very often the fire department and police department are mobilized to save the person despite his or her protestations.

There is surely no need to elaborate on the above.

To conclude on a happy note, especially as we are now about to celebrate Pesach, the Festival of Our Liberation, may HaShem grant you and all yours, in the midst of all our people, a growing measure of liberation from all negative aspects and distractions, materially and spiritually, so as to serve HaShem wholeheartedly and with joy.

Wishing you and all yours a joyous and inspiring Pesach, מנחם מענדל שניאורסאהן

With blessing, מ. שניאורסאהן

THE MAIN POINT OF CHAF-ZAYIN ADAR

BY RABBI NOAM HARPAZ
TRANSLATED BY MICHOEL LEIB DOBRY

What happened on Chaf-Zayin Adar Rishon 5752 is not an occurrence that is meant to cause us pain ch"v, rather it is something that helps to intensify our thirst for the revelation of Moshiach, and to prepare us to merit the Redemption. Similarly, we don't eat bread close to Shabbos in order to go into Shabbos with an appetite, not out of grief, but from the joy over the Shabbos delicacies we will receive.

"As I have mentioned repeatedly, not only will the Redemption come [imminently], but the Redemption is already at the threshold, waiting for every Jew to open the door and drag the Redemption into the room!" With these words to then-Chief Rabbi of Israel, HaRav Mordechai Eliyahu shlita, the Rebbe MH"M shlita describes his estimation of the situation at the beginning of 5752. The Redemption is already at the threshold.

In the weeks that followed, things continued along this line, and accelerated further when the Rebbe shlita proclaimed in a sicha from Shabbos Parshas VaYishlach:

"Not only has the avoda been completed and we must [merely] bring about the revelation in the

world (as mentioned above), but more than this: it is already [here] in an actual and revealed sense, and all we have to do is open our eyes, for He has long since "given you ...eyes to see."

Things continued to progress, week by week, day by day, minute by minute. Indeed, it was clear to all of us that we were taking giant steps towards the true and complete Redemption. Even when there were events that were not central in our lives – e.g., the agreement made by the world's two major superpowers on the cessation of armaments production – the Rebbe shlita immediately connected them to the overall world scenario, identifying them as milestones in the process of Redemption.

This naturally applies in a similar fashion to the date that followed several weeks later – Chaf-Zayin Adar Rishon 5752 – a date that Chassidim connect with everything beforehand, seeing it as an additional step towards our entry into the era of the days of Moshiach. However, as with all things, we must contemplate the details of this event – since from then until this day, we have not been privileged to hear sichos and maamarim from our king and Moshiach, the Rebbe shlita, or to behold him with our eyes in all his glory – and try and understand how this too is a progression towards the complete Redemption.

We have discussed on more than one occasion at Chassidic farbrengens about the Rebbe MH"M shlita's unique innovation on the subject of simcha in our generation. At every such opportunity, the discussion turns to the well-known maamer of "M'Ragla B'Puma D'Rabba" (5746), where the Rebbe shlita explains how vital simcha is in our generation, not only as a special avoda, but also as an essential avoda that cannot be done without.

The Alter Rebbe explains that there are two levels in the avoda of t'shuva. The first is called *t'shuva tataa*, stemming from fear, connected to some extent with



feelings of pain and bitterness (but not sadness *ch"v*). Then, only afterwards, there comes the second level, *t'shuva ilaa*, derived from love and simcha.

However, the Rebbe shlita explains that in our generation, we don't possess the spiritual fortitude to deal with pain or even bitterness. We are unable to do *t'shuva* out of sadness, proven by the fact that such *avoda* is not required in our times. Today, the Rebbe concludes, we pursue only simcha and *t'shuva* derived from simcha, similar to Shabbos that has no sadness.

We find once more a need for an explanation:

How does this approach fall in line with what is explained in the *kuntres* from Purim Katan 5752 about the need for a Jew to be totally crushed by the fact that Moshiach Tzidkeinu has not yet arrived? In the Rebbe's holy words: "Even when Jews are in a state of growth – material growth and also spiritual growth – yet they are in exile...they are broken and dejected (crushed) because they are in exile, but through the Jew's being crushed because he is in Galus, he reaches the source of the light." This means that specifically as a result of being broken and dejected, we will reach the source. Likewise, the Rebbe said on Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz 5752: "[A Jew] should feel that as long as Moshiach has not come in an actual and revealed sense, his days are lacking."

Thus, it is clear from all the aforementioned that these two paths go together, though the main thing is not the grief and bitterness over the length of the exile, but the feeling of simcha from the trust and faith that Moshiach is coming.

In the booklet *Seven Teachings That Our Teacher, The Baal Shem Tov, Said in Gan Eden*, with the Rebbe shlita's explanations, we find the

Rebbe Rashab's description regarding the event when the Baal Shem Tov said these seven teachings, including the fact that women only heard two of them.

The Rebbe asks the question: Why was it necessary for women to know this? Even if for some reason, they did not merit the privilege of hearing five of the teachings, it still would have been possible to save them the anguish of knowing this by simply not telling them.

(Similarly, the Rebbe asks in the

Thus, it is clear from all the aforementioned that these two paths go together, though the main thing is not the grief and bitterness over the length of the exile, but the feeling of simcha from the trust and faith that Moshiach is coming.

D'var Malchus from Parshas Ki Sisa about the description of the first set of *luchos* during the portion discussing the second set. After the first set had been broken, the Torah suddenly returns with some marvelous details about them that had not been previously mentioned – as if to mock or ridicule *ch"v*.)

The Rebbe responds that specifically through the women's sorrow that they did not merit the privilege of hearing these teachings,

they would rise to a level where they actually would be so worthy. This means that the sorrow is not according to its simple interpretation. Rather, it is manifest as a fervent desire and longing to reach the level where they would deserve to hear the *maamarim*, thus assisting them in that process.

It seems that this would also explain the reason why the Alter Rebbe gives such a wondrous description in *Tanya* (Ch. 16) of the level of revealed *ahavas Hashem*, "that his heart should blaze as coals of fire, and desire with a longing and heartfelt yearning to cleave to Him," specifically during an explanation of how the *beinoni* cannot reach this level, due to his limited knowledge... For the very same reason, specifically through the longing of the *beinoni* for this level, he will attain it, with G-d's help.

Similarly, Chassidim also explain how on the one hand, the Zohar says the esoteric teachings of the Torah have neither questions nor disputes, while on the other hand, we frequently find, in Zohar, the writings of the Arizal, and Chassidus, difficult questions and mention of the phrase, "it must be understood..."

The explanation comes according to the general principle that "the hidden teachings of Torah are only given over to someone whose heart is anxious within him." This means that the questions in Chassidus will arouse anxiety and a thirst within him to understand them – something that makes him worthy and ready to accept them.

We now return to our initial discussion of the point behind Chaf-Zayin Adar Rishon with an absolutely renewed sense of understanding. We're not talking about an occurrence that was meant to cause us pain *ch"v*. Rather it is

something that helps to intensify our thirst for the revelation of Moshiach, in a manner of “Do everything in your ability,” and to prepare us to merit the Redemption.

Similarly, we don’t eat bread close to Shabbos in order to go into Shabbos with an appetite, not out of grief, but from the joy over the Shabbos delicacies we will receive. It is specifically this momentary loss that builds the hunger to eat, as the pasuk says (Mishlei 27:7): “A satiated soul detests a honeycomb, but to a hungry soul everything bitter is sweet.”

The reason for this is also simple: Constant pleasure is not pleasure; specifically the feeling that we are lacking something helps us to receive the revelation. In order to have enjoyment, there must be a sense of longing, and in order to merit the hisgalus, one first must be crushed. As a result, this brings the simcha out of the knowledge that everything is in order to intensify the desire.

This point is also brought in the Rebbe’s sicha to the women from the D’var Malchus of Parshas B’Sshalach. The Rebbe discusses how on the one hand, it is written, “*Goel* (redeemer) – this is Miriam” – i.e., Miriam’s name is connected with the Redemption – while on the other hand, it is written elsewhere that Miriam’s name is derived from the *merirus* (bitterness) of the exile.

The Rebbe explains that it was especially the tremendous bitterness that Miriam had over the lengthy Galus that brought her to the great simcha of the Redemption, to the point that she was the one who led the singing and dancing with tambourines at the time of the Geula.

It is interesting to note another point when we read between the lines. There’s an even greater quality to our generation: it is not that we

will only begin to sing with tambourines after the Redemption; we’re doing that now! Furthermore, we can safely say that it is all due to this very reason: the knowledge that everything that is happening now is merely another stage to prepare us for the Redemption, and thus, we are already now in the days of Moshiach.

In the Rebbe’s holy words, “Together with the feeling of longing, yearning, and desire for the Redemption (up until now), now we must also – and primarily –

How does this approach fall in line with what is explained in the kuntres from Purim Katan 5752 about the need for a Jew to be totally crushed by the fact that Moshiach Tzidkeinu has not yet arrived?

have the feeling of joy from the fact that the Redemption is actually coming at this very moment.”

The Chassid, R. Yekusiel Liepler, was initially very “inadequate in his abilities” (to put it mildly), to the point that the Alter Rebbe called him “a block of wood,” as he was unable to understand anything in Chassidus, even the simplest concepts.

At a certain stage, the Mittlerer Rebbe told him, “If you want, you

can.” He did want, and in fact, he could, to the point that he was privileged to have the Mittlerer Rebbe write the seifer *Imrei Bina* especially for him, a text so deep in concepts in Chassidus that even the greatest Chassidim toiled to understand it.

It is interesting to note that even afterwards, his understanding of nigleh remained the same as it was before. This means that it was specifically his intense longing for Chassidus that laid the groundwork...

It is quite apparent that in all the aforementioned examples that we’re talking about exactly this type of case. We appear as “blocks of wood” without any natural connection to our desired objective and no possibility of attaining it – e.g., the *beinoni* who cannot reach that level of true ahavas Hashem. There is the simple R. Yekusiel, who had no understanding of Chassidus, and the women, who were simply not worthy of hearing the Baal Shem Tov’s teachings. In the *HaYom Yom* calendar entry from the 9th of Elul, the Rebbe Rayatz writes, “When the matter has relevance, even those weak in knowledge display deep intellect.” This means that the fervent longing and intense thirst can raise a person to a level that has no relation to him whatsoever, a lofty state totally incomparable to where he was holding up until now.

Similarly we find with regard to the new era beginning on Chaf-Zayin Adar 5752, which raised us to a level of unquenchable thirst to behold the holy countenance of our King and Moshiach, preparing us to enter an even loftier state that we had never known before: the days of Moshiach.

In light of this understanding, it is clear that the concealment and descent of Chaf-Zayin Adar Rishon

brings us yet another step closer to the days of Moshiach.

Yet, we now come to an even more amazing and deeper point, according to the Rebbe MH" M's wondrous explanation from the D'var Malchus of Parshas Ki Sisa (the last D'var Malchus we have heard for the time being, in which the Rebbe seems to be preparing us for what was coming, discussing the test in the weekly Torah portion of "for Moshe delayed," etc.).

In this sicha, the Rebbe relates to a seemingly painful step that Moshe Rabbeinu took, when he decided to place a veil upon his face, apparently in order to prevent the Jewish people from looking upon him.

However, the Rebbe explains, the real reason for placing the veil upon Moshe was not due to something lacking *ch"v*, but the exact opposite. The veil came as a result of the new virtue that Moshe received: "his shining face." Moshe decided to place the veil on his face in order to prevent the light from reaching places that are not proper vessels to receive it, possibly causing their complete nullification.

However, when he spoke to G-d and also to the Jewish people, he removed the veil, so the children of Israel didn't lose out on anything

The Rebbe asks the question: Why was it necessary for women to know this? Even if for some reason, they did not merit the privilege of hearing five of the teachings, it still would have been possible to save them the anguish of knowing this by simply not telling them.

ch"v, they actually benefited instead. Through the avoda of Am Yisroel, the world became purified and the light could be revealed to the world. Thus, Moshe no longer needed to wear the veil.

This message goes well with the Rebbe shlita's overall interpretation in the D'var Malchus, explaining that G-d established a general rule in his world: every accomplishment

must go through three stages: a) the planning stage; b) the descending stage, as it were, where plans are carried out; c) the final stage, where the objective is actually attained to the fullest.

Accordingly, there is absolutely no reason for us to be sorry when we're at the second stage, the stage of descent. On the contrary, it should make us happy to know that we are already at the necessary second stage, en route to the third and final stage.

This means that not only is the descent for the sake of an ascent, but more than this, it is actually part of the ascent. Furthermore, even this descent is only external (as it appears before our physical eyes) and temporary ('I will leave you for a little while'), and everything is in order to reach the greater ascent.

May it be G-d's Will that even before concluding these words, we shall merit the results of our thirst, our avoda, and our simcha, with the revelation of the Rebbe MH" M shlita, to behold with our very eyes in all his glory, and we will proclaim before him:

*Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu
v'Rabbeinu Melech HaMoshiach L'olam
Va'ed!*



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THE TORAH OF THE ROGATCHOVER

AND ITS CONNECTION TO YEMOS HA'MOSHIACH

INTERVIEW BY SHAI GEFEN

*Rabbi M.M. Tenenbaum has worked for over twenty years on deciphering the Torah of the Rogatchover Gaon, Rabbi Yosef Rosen. He received answers and brachos from the Rebbe in this regard. * In an interview with Beis Moshiach, Rabbi Tenenbaum tells us when and why he got involved with this project, about the Rebbe's personal connection with the Rogatchover, and about the s'farim he has published thus far. * 69 years since the passing of the Gaon on 11 Adar.*

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Tenenbaum has a holy obsession. He spends all his time on the endless Torah of the Rogatchover Gaon, Rabbi Yosef Rosen. He sees it not only as a means of disseminating the teachings of the "Prince of Torah," (as in the directive he received from the Rebbe to be involved in the teachings of the Rogatchover "in a way of alacrity.") But, primarily as an expression of our living in "Moshiach's Times," as the Rebbe said in a sicha on Purim 5747.

How did a young man get involved with the difficult Torah of the Rogatchover?

Even in my youth, I was drawn to the teachings of the Rogatchover. I remember that I read many books of *chakira* (philosophy), such as the *Guide for the Perplexed*. When my father bought me the *Tzafnas Paneiach* with the chiddushim of the Rogatchover Gaon, I began to learn it. Since then, I haven't stopped!

I first began deciphering and publishing the s'farim of the Rogatchover Gaon over twenty years ago, when I began working at the Torah Shleima institute of Rabbi Menachem Kasher z"l. There I worked on deciphering thousands of

handwritten pages of the Rogatchover that the institute had obtained. That is why I started working at Rav Kasher's institute.

How did Machon Torah Shleima obtain these manuscripts?

It's an amazing story of hashgacha pratis. The Rogatchover's daughter, Mrs. Citron, who lived in Eretz Yisroel (her husband was Rabbi Yisroel of Petach Tikva) decided after her father's passing that she had to rescue his manuscripts, which she was afraid would be lost. She made a special trip to Dvinsk for this purpose. She was unable to take the manuscripts with her since the Russians didn't allow that, but she photographed the manuscripts on microfilm and sent them to the U.S. to the mother of the man who served as rav of Dvinsk after the Rogatchover, Rabbi Mendel Fuchs-Safran. His mother lived in the Bronx.

There were 8000 handwritten pages! She copied all the Gemaras and Rambams on which the Rogatchover had jotted his notes. This was in addition to other manuscripts as well as responsa. All the microfilm together took up less space than a box of matches. She was moser nefesh to save her father's writings.

Sadly, both she and Rabbi Fuchs, who had been designated by the Rogatchover to serve as rav after him, were killed in the Holocaust, but they

managed to save the Rogatchover's priceless writings. The Germans, who conquered Dvinsk, burned the originals.

Deciphering the manuscripts afterwards was hard work. It calls for people who are very familiar with his teachings to be able to figure out his handwriting and the contents of his writing.

How did it get to Rav Mendel Kasher?

More amazing hashgacha pratis! Rav Kasher visited the Bronx in 1956. A woman approached him and told him about the manuscripts that her

son, Rav Mendel Fuchs-Safrin, had sent her from Dvinsk. She wanted to give them to Rav Kasher and didn't even want to be paid.

Rav Kasher who immediately realized what a treasure this was, took it all. He received many brachos from the Rebbe, and had a long conversation in yechidus about this. I myself gave the Rebbe s'farim that he published. As I said, there are thousands of pages of manuscripts and most of them were not deciphered yet.

What has been published thus far?

The Rogatchover's chiddushim on tractates Bava Kama, Sanhedrin,

Horiyos, Eduyos, and Mesechtos Ketanos. There is also *Tzafnas Paneiach* on Torah, and Responsa that were printed on a regular basis in *Noam*, a publication dedicated to halachic research. Responsa from manuscripts were also published. I prepared the chiddushim on tractate Brachos, but in the meantime, after Rav Kasher passed away and the upheavals at the Machon, it has still not been printed.

Why?

Rav Kasher passed away 18 years ago. His son, Rav Moshe Kasher, who took over the Machon, passed away shortly thereafter, as did his son-in-law who next took over the Machon. So the project of deciphering and printing the Rogatchover's work has been held up.

In the meantime, I published some of the Rogatchover's s'farim on my own.

What did you publish?

I published a work on the Rogatchover's approach to learning, called *Shitas Limudo shel HaRogatchover*. A few years ago, I published *Tzafnas Paneiach* on the first ten folios of the chapter *shnayim ochazin* in Bava Metzia. It was published by Rav Lipa Kurtzweil's Machon Har HaMelech. On just the first ten folios of the chapter, there were hundreds of pages of chiddushim!

I also published an interesting pamphlet on the Rogatchover's approach to civil marriage. The Rogatchover held that this constituted marriage, and that the woman must receive a *geht* if they part ways. This is a very pertinent topic today.

I also published the writings of R' Yechiel Gewirth, who corresponded a great deal with the Rogatchover, and his family printed all the responses of the Rogatchover in two volumes. These consisted of 45 postcards that the Rogatchover sent him. We deciphered the cryptic answers (which contained a list of references!) and



The Rogatchover Gaon

added indexes. It was a very arduous task.

Are there other projects in the works?

The Rogatchover's Torah is endless. His commentary on Torah is the next project, and this time it will be something that the average person can understand. There are other s'farim we are working on, which will illustrate his unique approach to Torah.

What else can you tell us about the Rogatchover's manuscripts?

The Rogatchover closely guarded his writings. As is known, his chiddushim on the Rambam only go up until Hilchos Trumos, on account of a robbery in which his manuscripts were stolen. He was very distressed by this and from then on, he did not let anybody look at his writings. He said that his bread had been stolen from him.

In general, the Rogatchover's teachings are incredible, and the public is still not aware of this. Our goal is to bring the Rogatchover's chiddushim and explanations to the b'nei ha'yeshivos. I plan on publishing topics of his Torah so that someone who is learning a sugya, can study what the Rogatchover has to say on the topic.

Is anybody else working on deciphering the Torah of the Rogatchover?

Sad to say, there's hardly anybody who's working on the Rogatchover's Torah, especially since the Machon closed. I can mention the dayan, Rabbi Avrohom Atlas of Chaifa, who is working on the Rogatchover's Torah. He came to me for help in deciphering the sources that the Rogatchover provides. Unfortunately, I see serious obstacles to the spreading of the amazing teachings of the Rogatchover.

As far as deciphering the handwritten manuscripts, what makes the work so difficult?

Today, with modern technology, it's

much easier to decipher. The manuscripts on microfilm are tiny and need tremendous work to decipher. Aside from that, the Rogatchover's way of writing is extremely concise, and you must be extremely knowledgeable in his Torah and his way of thinking.

When the volume *Har HaMelech* (a compendium of novella on the Rambam by many authors) appeared, I contributed a handwritten piece of the Rogatchover's that I had deciphered. The Rebbe insisted that they hurry up with the publishing of the *Har HaMelech* work, and when it was brought to the Rebbe, he had much nachas. The Rebbe focused on the Rogatchover manuscript, asking how it was deciphered and were they faithful to the original.

Through Rabbi Groner, the Rebbe sent a message encouraging the involvement in deciphering his Torah. The Rebbe said that nowadays there are technological developments that can assist us, and we should consult with the police in that regard.

So we went to the criminal identification unit of the police with the Hilchos T'filla of the Rambam. A few days later, they called us and said that it was very hard to decipher and it needed someone who understood the topics. So it's very hard work, but the Rebbe really wanted us to continue, and he was extremely encouraging about it.

For example?

When my first wife a"h was sick, I went through a hard time, and the

THE WONDROUS CONNECTION BETWEEN THE REBBE MH"M AND THE ROGATCHOVER GAON

The Rebbe and the Rogatchover Gaon had a special bond. When the Rebbe still lived at home with his parents in Yekaterinaslav, he corresponded with the gaon. Today we have more than ten letters on halachic matters and Torah discussions that the Rebbe sent him.

When the Rogatchover stayed in Leningrad, the Rebbe was a regular visitor. The Rebbe said he was a "ben-bayis" by the Rogatchover. From one of the letters we learn that the Rebbe traveled with the gaon by train, where they discussed divrei Torah at length, and the Rebbe asked the gaon to continue the topic via letter.

When the Rebbe Rayatz moved to Riga, the Rogatchover left Leningrad unexpectedly, and returned to Dvinsk. There too, the Rebbe kept up his personal connection with the gaon, which continued even after the Rebbe moved to Berlin.

The esteem the Rebbe had for the Rogatchover is apparent in his deference to him. In his letters, the Rebbe refers to the Rogatchover as the "Sar Ha'Torah." It was first published in the *HaYom Yom* that the Rebbe received smicha from the Rogatchover Gaon. The Rebbe said he participated in a number of rabbinic conferences in which the gaon participated.

The Rebbe said that his approach to learning is "like that of the Rogatchover Gaon." Furthermore, the Rebbe said that the Rogatchover's learning testified to our approaching the true and complete Geula.

In 5740, when Rabbi Teitz wanted to send the Rebbe a volume of the gaon's chiddushei Torah, the Rebbe said he had to send someone to fetch it, and it should not be brought to him because it wasn't fitting, considering how much he esteemed the Rogatchover's Torah.

Rebbe told me to be involved as much as possible in the Torah of the Rogatchover, which made things easier for me. When I passed by for dollars, Rabbi Groner introduced me as a person who published the Torah of the Rogatchover. The Rebbe asked me to do it all speedily, and noted that everything the Rogatchover did, he did quickly, including eating, and the Rebbe said it was surprising that nobody noted this.

We know that the Rebbe had a special interest in the Rogatchover's teachings. How do you understand this?

Rav Kasher once said to me that the Rebbe is the "biggest maven and the biggest disseminator of the Rogatchover's Torah," as he put it, and this is meant very precisely.

We, with our *daas tachton*, don't understand the soul connection between the Rebbe and the Rogatchover, but the Rebbe himself explained it in the sicha of Purim 5747. He said that the Torah of the Rogatchover expresses our approaching the Yemos HaMoshiach. The Rogatchover's Torah is incredible and unprecedented, and it was revealed only recently, in the previous generation. Unbelievably, the Rebbe quotes it in a maamer!

Rabbi Michoel Halperin, rav of French Hill in Yerushalayim, told me that Rav Zevin, who worked on the Rogatchover's Torah, told him that he thought he was a big maven in the Rogatchover's Torah, but after he saw a letter from the Rebbe with an explanation on the Rogatchover, he realized that nobody matches the Rebbe in understanding the Rogatchover.

Tell us about the Rebbe and the Rogatchover's Torah.

On hundreds of occasions, the Rebbe explains the teachings of the Rogatchover. Sometimes, the Rebbe disagrees with him, one example being T'fillas HaDerech when flying. Another

disagreement is the reason why the Rambam studied books of *avoda zara*.

The Rogatchover explains it by saying that *avoda zara* is not extant today. But the Rebbe says we see that in India and other places, *avoda zara* is practiced today as well.

You mentioned earlier about the special connection between the Rogatchover's Torah and Yemos HaMoshiach. Are there specific things the Rebbe said about the Rogatchover's

He said that the Torah of the Rogatchover expresses our approaching the Yemos HaMoshiach. The Rogatchover's Torah is incredible and unprecedented, and it was revealed only recently, in the previous generation. Unbelievably, the Rebbe quotes it in a maamer!

teachings as being connected to Moshiach?

People certainly know the famous sicha in which the Rebbe spoke emotionally and said, "*ker a velt haint!*" (turn the world over, today!). This sicha is based on a chiddush of the Rogatchover that the churban of the Beis HaMikdash was not a one-time event, but is ongoing. Therefore, every moment that it is not rebuilt, there's an ongoing churban. The Rebbe cried

out, "*ker a velt haint,*" encouraging and demanding of us to bring Moshiach now to stop the churban.

The Rebbe Rashab passed away on 2 Nissan, but the Rogatchover only heard about it two days before Shavuos. The Rogatchover then said that according to halacha it was a "distant report" and it was forbidden to announce it before Yom Tov, but then he explained that the death of tzaddikim is like the churban of the Beis HaMikdash, and therefore, it's ongoing and it does not have the din of a "distant report."

In the *Tzafnas Paneiach* on Torah, there's an interesting chiddush on the Haftora of Parshas VaYigash. There it says, "and My servant Dovid will be Nasi over them forever." The Rogatchover is mechadesh that there are three generations in connection with Moshiach, which fits nicely with the Rebbe's sicha about the word "miyad" alluding to three generations associated with Moshiach. The Rebbe says these are the generations from the Rebbe Rashab to the Rebbe MH"M, whose names are alluded to in the letters of the word "miyad."

The Rogatchover was closely connected with these three generations, with the Rebbe Rashab, the Rebbe Rayatz, and the Rebbe MH"M.

Do Chassidic ideas appear in the Rogatchover's Torah?

The idea of showing a common thread in the different views expressed by the same Sage, which the Rogatchover innovated, he said he took from the introduction to *Tanya*. There it says that the machlokes between Beis Hillel and Beis Shammai was chesed vs. g'vura, and it all came from one common theme, therefore there is a common thread between every disagreement they had.

As someone who is so involved in the Rogatchover's Torah, what can you tell us about the uniqueness of his approach?

There are two things that are unique. One is his brilliance. There are topics that no other commentators dealt with. All the commentators on Shas or Rambam move forward, and only the Rogatchover stops to comment. Each time this happens, I'm amazed all over again.

A second quality, aside from the vast scope of his Torah, is that often the Rogatchover takes one point and uses it throughout Shas, proving how everything is derived from that one point. We have never seen the likes of such genius, and as the Rebbe notes, this approach is evidence pointing to the coming of Moshiach.

Did the Rebbe see him?

In a yechidus that Rabbi Avrohom Savitzky had, the Rebbe told him, "I was a ben-bayis by him." There's a letter in which the Rebbe writes the Rogatchover, "We were on the train together and you spoke about *"y'fas toar v'y'fas mar'eh."* The Rebbe asks him to continue writing him about this. They corresponded a lot.

The Rebbe once said that the Rogatchover did not deal at all with the inyan of kiddush ha'chodesh, and he explained that this was because it was a matter of simple arithmetic, and the Rogatchover didn't see a need to deal with it.

I decided to look into this, and over the years I have gone through thousands of pages of manuscript, and amazingly the Rogatchover doesn't discuss kiddush ha'chodesh. Aside from the fact that I validated the Rebbe's claim, I saw that the Rebbe was familiar with every detail of the Rogatchover's Torah in the most amazing way.

In the Rebbe's sichos, he quotes the Rogatchover, without exaggeration, thousands of times, and on hundreds of occasions he stops to explain them.

The Rebbe refers to the Rogatchover as "Sar HaTorah," which is what the Rebbe Rayatz called him, as the Rebbe related. The Rebbe has a



The gaon's chiddushim written down in the margins of the tractate Brachos

STILL CONNECTED TO THE SOURCE

As someone who is very involved in the Rogatchover's teachings, Rabbi M.M. Tenenbaum points out the following:

"The Rogatchover discusses the bracha one makes on bread crumbs, whether it's HaMotzi or not. He concludes that if you don't know what the bread crumbs were made of, you do not say HaMotzi, but if it's obvious what they were made of, and there are clear signs as to the source, then you say HaMotzi. And the Rogatchover brings 17 proofs from Shas!

"It seems to me that the same is true for a Jew who doesn't behave 100% as he should, he is still connected to the source and it's clear that he has a connection to the source, what Chassidim call holding on to the Rebbe's *klamke* (doorknob). His still has a connection and he is still deserving of a bracha."



Rabbi Menachem Mendel Tenenbaum with the s'farim published on the Rogatchover Gaon's Torah

collection of pictures of the Rogatchover, and on one of them the Rebbe wrote, "HaGaon HaRogatchover." The Rebbe Rayatz once sent a pidyon nefesh to the Rogatchover for him to daven for him.

Let's talk about the Rogatchover. Was he involved in public work?

The Rebbe Rayatz wanted the Rogatchover to be chairman of the Igud HaRabbanim in Russia but the Rogatchover refused, explaining, as the Rebbe related, that it's a machlokes between the Bavli and the Yerushalmi. It's written that the "Chassidim" of the time of the Gemara, used to daven for

three hours: one hour of preparation before the davening, one hour for davening, and one hour following the davening. So with three prayers a day, they spent nine hours on t'filla.

The Gemara asks: What about their learning? The Talmud Bavli answers, "their Torah is preserved." The Talmud Yerushalmi answers, "their Torah is blessed." The difference between the two is that when Torah is preserved, although it doesn't get lost, it also doesn't increase. While according to the Yerushalmi, their Torah was blessed, and increased.

The Rogatchover explained that

since the halacha is like the Bavli, he didn't want to take on the job as chairman, since his Torah wouldn't increase.

Was the Rogatchover a nazir?

We know that he recited Havdala on milk, and we have testimony to that from Rav Medallia. Once, at the seider with the Rebbe, a discussion began about how he drank the four cups of wine.

There are various reasons for his nezirus, one of them being that the Tzemach Tzedek told him to learn the tractate Nazir, and he understood from that that he should become a nazir. This is also the reason why he didn't cut his hair.

In conclusion:

Since we are involved in the Torah of the Rogatchover, we know how much he yearned for Moshiach and Geula, as we see in his chiddush regarding the churban that it's an ongoing activity. And especially after the Rebbe told us that the Rogatchover's teachings are connected with Moshiach, so it's clear that as we enter the Yemos HaMoshiach, we should delve into the Rogatchover's Torah. First and foremost, we need to fulfill all the Rebbe's instructions, especially about publicizing the prophecy of "behold, Moshiach comes."

The Rambam writes to one of his students about intellectual matters that it's all good and well until it comes to prophecy. At that point, all the wisdoms, as great as they are, are like nothing in comparison.

Since the Rebbe revealed to us that the Geula is coming, we may not approach this intellectually, because intellect is nothing compared to prophecy. Even after Gimmel Tammuz, our belief that the Rebbe is Moshiach hasn't changed. I say this to everyone, Chassidim and Misnagdim. This belief is based on Torah and on what the Rebbe said. May we immediately see the hisgalus of the Rebbe.

MY SISTER, THE SHLUCHA

BY OFRA TAMARKIN

*I have known my sister Yael for many years, but I never knew her in this capacity, when despite the difficulties, she went on shlichus to India for a few months to check it out before going there permanently. * A subjective interview with moving stories told by a sister.*

I went to visit my sister Yael, Ofer her husband, and baby Rochel, as I do every week, but this time with another purpose in mind. I went to hear the story of their shlichus in Dramsala. This was my little sister whom I had seen in so many situations. We walked side by side for years, influencing and being influenced by one another.

I was with her during her process of moving towards a life of Torah, her decision to marry and to go on shlichus a few months after their wedding. Her first shlichus was last Pesach in Sinai. I joined them to help, to peel, to set up, to cook, and to do what needed doing. Thanks to them, I tasted, for the first time, the sweet taste of shlichus.

A few months later, when Yael went to India, we spent hours on the phone, as if I was in Tel Aviv and she was in Rechovot. She told me what life was like, her experiences, the miracles, the difficulties, and about her turning into a shlucha.

This interview could not have been objective. I always knew that my sister Yael was talented, but during this process, I saw that Yael possessed far more abilities than she thought she had. I watched her as she bravely decided to go on shlichus to the other side of the world, in order to bring people the light of the Rebbe MH" M. Through her, I understood the meaning of operating with the strength of the meshaleiach, and the power of the Rebbe and his shluchim.

What made you so determined to be a shlucha of the Rebbe in a Chabad house in India, no less?

Yael: When I became a baalas t'shuva, I studied in Machon Alte in Tzfas and after a few months, I went to the Rebbe for Tishrei. It was there that I began to understand what shlichus is. I also started to appreciate the importance of spreading the wellsprings, and the significance of influencing others.

A friend, who was with me, spoke

a lot about wanting to go on shlichus to India after she got married. Until then, I didn't know what it was about, and my conversations with her gave a push to the idea that had just begun forming in my mind.

When I returned to Eretz Yisroel, a shidduch was suggested with my husband. Before we married we spoke about going on shlichus, and we met with Rabbi Dror Moshe Shaul (the shliach in Dramsala), to check it out to see if it was for us.

* * *

Even before traveling to India, Yael and Ofer went on shlichus to Sinai to make the seider there.

"It was the first time that I saw what shlichus actually is," says Yael. "All the preparations, down to the last details of the food, the location, the Torah we brought with us from Eilat, were not at all simple. We experienced miracles, many of which occurred during the preparations and the actual shlichus.

"We celebrated Pesach in Egypt with another 200 Israelis. It was very successful but I felt we were too busy with the preparations and didn't reach the people enough. This shlichus left me with a desire for more."

THE TRIP TO DRAMSALA

A few weeks after my sister and brother-in-law returned from Sinai, Ofer asked Yael what she thought

about going to India for Shavuos.

Yael: I was shocked at first. It was a few months after our wedding but I knew that this was something I wanted. We consulted with our mashpiim. With their encouragement, we decided to go. Within three weeks, we had packed up our apartment and were prepared for the trip.

Dramasla – kind of far, isn't it?

Yael: I was in Dramasla a few times before doing t'shuva, and knew many people there. I was very excited about going back there as a shlucha. It provided closure for me.

Excitement and anticipation aside, what was it like to actually arrive there?

Yael: When we got there, I was in shock by what I saw. I knew ahead of time that the house was in the middle of renovations, but to actually see it was another thing entirely. It looked like a construction site!

The previous shlucha had returned to Eretz Yisroel the week before and her husband was there with two T'mimim who were there to help. There had been no running water for two weeks already. We didn't even have a towel because there was no water for washing, and so we dried ourselves on our shirts.

You have to understand that the physical conditions in India are difficult to begin with. There is almost no kosher food and there is virtually nothing you can buy. We had to make most things ourselves. For milk, you have to go and watch the milking. If we wanted cheese, we had to make it.

Let's hear about the Chabad house in Dramasla

Yael: The Chabad house is open to tourists. We were like a little embassy that helped the Israeli tourists with whatever they needed.

If they were hungry, we fed them. If it rained, they came inside for shelter. If a package came for them, they jumped to take it. If they were feeling down, we listened to them. And of course they came for shiurim in Torah and Chassidus.

Ofer gave five-day courses on Chassidus and Kabbala in the morning. In the afternoon, after his lectures were over, those who remained joined us for a meal, and together we sat and talked. In the evening, we had a *Tanya* class, and after the shiur was supper, which usually turned into a farbrengen that lasted into the night.

I often felt that my presence there

I joined them to help, to peel, to set up, to cook, and to do what needed doing. Thanks to them, I tasted, for the first time, the sweet taste of shlichus.

enabled confused or lost people, or those who wanted to talk, to open their hearts. At a time like that, the heart is also open to hear about the Rebbe and Chassidus.

On Erev Shabbos, we had 100-300 people coming for the Shabbos meals. We never knew how many tourists would show up, and Friday morning we began preparing for Shabbos along with the tourists who came to help. Incredibly, we always had enough food for all.

MILLY'S STORY

Dramasla is a small, picturesque town in northern India at the foot of the Himalayan Mountains. Most of

the year the weather is rainy, and sometimes you feel like you're living in a cloud. Many Israelis go to Dramasla to hike through the fantastic vistas and also to take courses, most of which have a connection to idol worship.

Yael: One of the Chabad house's important roles is to provide an alternative to the tourists who innocently take these courses. We try to teach them about the Rebbe and Chassidus.

At a certain point, we realized it wasn't effective to bash these courses to the tourists, since this makes some of them automatically resistant to what we have to say. We took a different approach.

One day, a tourist named Milly stopped by and told me she was going to participate in a course as an assistant. I didn't react, and she understood what my silence meant. She asked me what I was thinking. I told her she might not like what I had to tell her but she insisted on hearing it.

I began telling her, from my personal experience, about the limitations and lack of purpose in the approach she wanted to try. I suggested that she do what she thought was right, and she decided to take the course anyway.

A few days later, she appeared for a Shabbos meal and she told us that there were more than enough assistants at the course, and she was released. She decided to come and take one of *our* courses.

At one of the shiurim, I told the girls that I had gotten a dollar from the Rebbe with a bracha for marriage, a week before I met my husband. Milly stared at me and said that she also wanted a dollar to get married. Ofer explained that she had to learn a chapter of *Tanya* by heart. I saw that she felt uncomfortable about learning something by heart in

exchange for a bracha. Ofer also noticed this, and he asked her to learn the chapter without connecting it to the dollar.

These dollars from the Rebbe are dollars that Boaz Lerner gave us. He came to Dramsala in order to check on the mikva and to help build it, and he was excited about the work being done here. He decided to set aside a certain number of dollars that he got from the Rebbe, for those who learn chapter 41 of *Tanya*.

A few days later, Milly left us, and Dramsala, for Delhi intent on returning to Eretz Yisroel.

Did she learn it?

On Sunday, we received an e-mail from her, with the first chapter typed. She said she was typing it from memory. We were very excited. We thought Milly was on her way to Eretz Yisroel, but a few days later, she appeared in our kitchen. She said she wanted us to teach her how to do mitzvos. I was astounded! Hadn't she been heading for Eretz Yisroel? She told us about the astonishing chain of events which occurred since she had left us. This is what she said.

She had arrived in Delhi intent on continuing on to Eretz Yisroel and two hours before Shabbos, her purse with her passport, ten dollars, and the dollar from the Rebbe were stolen. She decided not to do anything about it right then, even though this meant canceling her Monday flight. She felt she had to keep Shabbos (the third Shabbos in a row that she was keeping in her life). Throughout that Shabbos, she sat and studied the chapter by heart and on Sunday she sent it by e-mail.

On Sunday, she called the airline to postpone her flight and then she went to the embassy to take care of her passport. The rickshaw driver asked for what she thought was a ridiculous price. She decided to check out the price of rickshaws at



Farbrenging at the Chabad house



Ofer Krifor cleaning fish for Rosh HaShana

the nearby travel agency. When she entered, she saw an Indian standing there, handing a clerk eleven dollars. She identified one of the dollars as the dollar from the Rebbe that had been stolen from her.

Milly loudly said it was her money and he went out with her and showed her the man who was the thief's brother. After a nice bribe, he took her to a mail box where he had dropped her passport. An Indian standing there said they had just emptied the box. He took them in a

rickshaw to the post offices of Delhi in order to find the lost passport. After passing a few post offices, they arrived at the central post office. Milly had just about given up when suddenly one of the clerks took out her passport.

After this open miracle Milly decided to return to the Chabad house in Dramsala to learn about Torah and mitzvos. Today Milly is studying at Ohr Chaya in Yerushalayim.

Did you have other miracle

stories during shlichus?

There was a fellow who wanted a dollar but he didn't agree to learn in exchange for it. One night he dreamt that he was standing by the Rebbe and the Rebbe motioned to the person standing near him to give him a dollar. Mind you, this fellow had never seen or heard about the Rebbe giving out dollars. When he came to the Chabad house in the morning and told Rabbi Lerner his dream, he gave him the dollar without his having to learn anything.

THE MIKVA

One of the important projects that Ofer and Yael were involved in was building the mikva. Until then, whoever wanted to immerse had to travel eight hours, or immerse in a river. It's not pleasant immersing in the melting snows from the Himalayas.

Yael: My job was to oversee the decorating of the mikva. By hashgacha pratis, a couple came to

the Chabad house and he was a contractor by profession and she was an architect. Both of them helped us and even postponed their trip in order to help us finish the work.

It sounds difficult, building a mikva in India, far from any Jewish center

Yael: It wasn't at all easy, but it was moving. The mikva was dedicated on Chamisha-Asar B'Av. The construction was still not finished. There was no floor or walls. The rainwater pit was full but the immersion pit had no water. The mikva was used for the first time one Sunday, late one afternoon with no prior warning. That evening we had planned a goodbye party for the two T'mimim who helped us. The party was supposed to take place on the lower floor of the house, right near the mikva.

We didn't know what to do, i.e., how to have the party and fill the empty mikva too, with the sensitivity that required. Ofer and some Indian

workers worked for five hours to fill the mikva with pails of water.

That night the first kosher mikva in India was used for the first time.

As a shlucha, I did all sorts of work that surprised even me. I gave shiurim, prepared meals for hordes of people, and listened to people. Both Ofer and I wore many hats. He gave shiurim and farbrenge with tourists, was in charge of the construction, and did whatever had to be done at any given time, even cleaning fish before Rosh HaShana. It was special to experience things that, under ordinary circumstances, we never would have experienced.

How did it feel to return to India?

Yael: It was harder than I thought it would be. I was in Dramsala before I became a baalas t'shuva, at a completely different point in my life. To go back there, this time as a shlucha of the Rebbe, was an enormous change for me. In addition to that, I was well along in a



Donkeys bringing blocks to build the mikva at the Chabad house in Dramsala

pregnancy. The living conditions were trying, and the intensive work left us with barely any time for ourselves. Yet, I felt this was my place. I was able to reach many girls and have an impact on them. I knew just what they were feeling.

Did you experience any contact between the world before you did t'shuva and your world today as a shlucha?

Yael: There were some instances of that. One time, a group of girls came to the Chabad house. Their group leader stood with them outside and explained to them what the Chabad house is. I opened the door and realized I knew the leader from the time I worked with him for the same tour agency.

Not only did I know him, but I also knew some good friends of my parents who were surprised to see me after so many years, looking a bit different. They came in and we happily hosted them. I told them about our work and they surprised us with a nice donation.

What was it like to celebrate Rosh HaShana in Dramsala?

Rosh HaShana was a huge project. We began preparations a week before Yom Tov. We hung up flyers about the meals and davening. We asked people to reserve for meals in advance. Dror, who came the week before, shechted lots of chickens in the yard. This was the first time I was seeing kosher sh'chita.

A few days went by and nobody had registered for the meals. Three days before Rosh HaShana, many Israelis flooded the area. They had come for Yom Tov. Hordes of people came into the house. Many tourists wanted to join in Hataras Nedarim. For two days before Yom Tov, dozens of tourists helped prepare the meals (and I was in my eighth month and directing all the preparations). It was amazing to see tourists convening



Hataras Nedarim for Israeli tourists Erev Rosh HaShana at the Chabad house

I saw how when you are far from the familiar, it's possible to have open dialogue. When was the last time they spoke with Chassidim about Torah and mitzvos or even had a mundane conversation with religious Jews? The presence of a couple there, on shlichus, made a tremendous impression on them.

from all over, and taking part in the preparations for Yom Tov.

When they all went down for the meal, I remained in the kitchen to take care of some things. When I went downstairs, I saw a moving sight: 300 tourists sitting together and celebrating Rosh HaShana. They all sat quietly and listened to Rabbi Dror Shaul talk about the significance of the day. You could feel

a powerful sense of achdus there.

What did the tourists think of you and the Chabad house?

We had all sorts of interactions with the tourists. Some came only for Shabbos meals, or to eat kosher food. Some got their mail through us. As a result of this connection, some of them began attending shiurim.

Some tourists became regulars at the Chabad house and helped us out. They took a great interest in Yiddishkeit. I saw how when you are far from the familiar, it's possible to have open dialogue. When was the last time they spoke with Chassidim about Torah and mitzvos or even had a mundane conversation with religious Jews? The presence of a couple there, on shlichus (who had themselves toured India not that long before), made a tremendous impression on them.

SHLUCHIM ON THE ROAD TOO

On 5 Tishrei, Yael and Ofer boarded the plane back to Eretz Yisroel, but due to the strike that took place in Ben Gurion airport at that time, their flight landed in Tashkent.

Yael: It was chaotic. It wasn't clear how long we'd have to remain there and whether we'd make it to Eretz Yisroel before Yom Kippur. In addition, we had no kosher food. We



A Chassidic dance one night, with T'mimim Menachem Mendel Kaplan and Nadav Menachem Bechar

opened a mobile Chabad house. Whoever needed anything, turned to us. People derived strength from us during this difficult time, and especially from the fact that despite

my advanced pregnancy, I managed to remain cheerful.

We called the shliach in Tashkent, Rabbi Abba Dovid Gurewitz, who came to the airport despite all the

difficulties along the way, with kosher food for all. The tourists were surprised to see that even in Tashkent there is a Chabad house which looks out for them. They farbrenged with Rabbi Gurewitz in the airport.

We returned to Rechovot about a month before I gave birth to my daughter Rochel, who was born on 11 Cheshvan, the yahrtzait of Rochel Imeinu.

We are looking into the possibility of our continuing our shlichus until the fulfillment of the prophecy, "and the lost ones will come from the land of Ashur, and the forsaken ones from the land of Egypt," with the true and complete Geula now!

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“I FINALLY FOUND AUTHENTIC JUDAISM”

BY NOSSON AVROHOM

*He learned about Judaism from the Reform and searched for answers to pressing questions among Christians. * He went to Eretz Yisroel to study at Hebrew University, and after rooming with a priest, he got himself on track. * Profile of a Lubavitcher.*

I spoke with Yosef Spaiter of Kfar Chabad for two hours and his smile was there throughout. You don't often meet people with such a pleasant personality. He speaks about the Rebbe with emuna that is real and tangible. Yosef told me how he had become a baal t'shuva and a Lubavitcher Chassid. This is the story he told me.

GENTILES VS. REFORM

Yosef was born in the late 50's in a suburb of Wilmington, Delaware. His father was an engineer with the large and successful DuPont company, which manufactures synthetic fibers, such as nylon and rayon, plastic and paint. His mother was a homemaker. In short, it was the typical American family of that era.

It was a liberal Jewish home in which Yosef's mother gave the children a strong Jewish identity after having received it from her parents. Her mother was very active in Jewish organizations and her father had

fought in a Jewish unit in the area of Ramle, during World War I. It was very important to Yosef's mother that her children know about Jewish history and about Eretz Yisroel.

“Because of my father's job, we

had to move every few years. Wherever we moved to, my parents looked for a Jewish program for us. Most of the time these were Reform programs, though sometimes it was Conservative. I usually attended public school and went to Sunday School. A few nights a week I studied Hebrew for my bar mitzva. Naturally, I didn't learn much Judaism, but for my parents, it was good enough.

“It was my gentile friends who reminded me, more than anything else, of my Judaism. In Delaware, I was the only Jewish child in the class. At the time, I enjoyed sports, and my friends nicknamed me, “the Jewish acrobat of the group.” The



Yosef Spaiter way back when

Reform teachers were the ones who constantly rejected our uniqueness as members of the Jewish nation. I remember that they once told us that the Jews who wore beards and peios were the survivors of authentic Judaism, who insisted on holding on to old ways, but that they were slowly diminishing in number.”

RESTLESS YOSEF

While in high school, his family moved to Livingston, New Jersey. A third of the city was Jewish, and students were able to pick Hebrew as a foreign language in school, which thrilled Yosef.

“Although I studied Hebrew, it did nothing to advance my knowledge of Yiddishkait. I didn’t keep basic mitzvos – like t’fillin, Shabbos, and kashrus – because I knew nothing about them.”

When Yosef finished high school, he was accepted as a student at the

“This made a very strong impression on me, and in hindsight I can say that this was what initiated my move towards authentic Judaism. It finally hit me that there is an authentic Judaism and I had to find it.”

University of Pennsylvania. At this point, he began to feel uncomfortable with his lack of Jewish knowledge, and he sought to understand what he

was lacking.

“I felt very confused and couldn’t find peace. Perhaps it had something to do with the fact that I had cut off ties with the Reform, and was friends with gentiles. In conversations with them, I raised many questions about their faith. I quickly realized that they didn’t have the answers for me. Throughout that year at university, I puzzled over my identity. When I concluded that Christianity didn’t have the answers for me, I was utterly befuddled. I couldn’t understand how Truth couldn’t be found in either Judaism (the version Reform had taught me) or Christianity.”

Yosef was bothered by questions like: What is a Jew? Why does it matter? How are Jews different from everybody else? What makes them different? These questions gave him no rest and he found it hard to study the courses he was taking at the university. At the end of the school year, he returned home without great marks to show for himself.

At home, he met a childhood friend who was making his final preparations for a trip to Israel to last a year, as part of a program of the Reform movement. The trip was to a kibbutz, where he would work the land and learn Jewish history and about Eretz Yisroel.

“I loved the idea and asked my parents if I could go too. My mother was an ardent Zionist and she loved the idea too, but my father wanted me to learn a profession, not to “waste my life.”

“I ended up joining my friend at Kibbutz Maaleh HaChamisha situated at the entrance to Yerushalayim. We learned Jewish history, about Zionism, and Israeli politics. I spent a lot of time growing cotton. The fields were on the outskirts of the city of Ashkelon, and I spent hours toiling under the hot sun. I felt so patriotic. I was finishing the work begun by



Yosef Spaiter at home in Kfar Chabad

my grandfather when he fought in the Jewish unit before the founding of the State.”

After a year on the kibbutz, Yosef wanted to stay on, and he joined a special program of the Reform community to bring young people to settle on kibbutzim. First, he went to visit his parents, where his father pressured him to finish the sociology-education degree he had started. Yosef decided to continue his studies at Hebrew U. in Yerushalayim.

“When I got there, they asked me whether I minded sharing a room with a priest, also from America. I didn’t see a problem with that and said it would be fine.

“It was during the tense time preceding the Peace in Galilee war. I got acquainted with the priest, and he told me that his purpose in coming to Israel was to learn about Judaism. He said that after many years of studying his religion, he realized that its source was Judaism, and he thought that before entering the priesthood he should get to know Judaism, the source of all religions.

“This made a very strong impression on me, and in hindsight I can say that this was what initiated my move towards authentic Judaism. It finally hit me that that there is an authentic Judaism and I had to find it.

“The priest sought answers to his many questions, and when his studies at university proved unsatisfactory, he asked *me* questions, since I was Jewish. That’s when I realized that I knew less than him about Judaism! He was very interested in the laws of Shabbos and the topic of Who is a Jew, which was spoken about a great deal at that time.

“To tell you the truth, I was embarrassed that the gentile priest knew more than me, and his purpose



With the family at a simcha

in coming to Israel was to learn about Judaism while I, the Jew, knew next to nothing. I could only respond to his questions with difficulty, and only after sitting in the university library and boning up on the topic.

“I knew that the time had come for me to seriously study Judaism, even though I had no clue as to how and where I would do this.”

BECOMING A BELIEVER

One day, Yosef went to a certain yeshiva to visit his old friend who had worked with him on the kibbutz. He was amazed to see that his friend was wearing a suit and had a beard. After recovering from the shock he blurted out, “Are you crazy?”

“It seemed like going back to the Middle Ages, the Prophets or the

A MIRACLE JUST HAPPENED

Yosef Spaiter relates:

The following story happened when we lived in Crown Heights. We once had a guest from Eretz Yisroel who had an older, single daughter. She was very worried about her.

On Sunday, the woman went for dollars to get a bracha for a shidduch for her daughter. After hours of waiting in line, it was finally her turn but she couldn’t get the words out! The Rebbe gave her a dollar and she was swept along and out the door. In those seconds, she felt terrible for not having asked the Rebbe for a bracha for her daughter, the reason she had come to the Rebbe in the first place.

“But her anguish only lasted seconds because she was called back by the Rebbe, and the Rebbe gave her another dollar and said, ‘This is for your daughter.’

“I’ll never forget how she returned to our house crying out, ‘A miracle just happened!’”

Amoraim, and I had heard that these people were vanishing.”

Yosef decided to pepper him with questions, but the friend wasn't fazed; he answered each question, letting Yosef know that not everything the Reform had told him was true.

“I was in shock. He was the last person I would have thought would have made a step like this.

“He learned a little bit with me and put t'fillin on with me for the first time in my life, though not before my asking him what the strange boxes were for.

I remembered that when my grandfather had passed away, my mother had brought me some of his belongings. When I opened one of the bags, I saw leather straps and boxes. I didn't know what they were, and I stuck them away in a drawer. By the way, when I became a mekurav of Chabad and I checked those t'fillin, I discovered that the letter shin on the battim was made according to shitas Chabad.

“I went with my friend to lectures that were given by the rabbis of the yeshiva he learned in, while attending university at the same time. Another friend who also began becoming religious at that time and was attending Machon Meir in Yerushalayim, who heard that I wanted to learn more about Judaism, invited me to his rabbis' lectures.

“I especially enjoyed the lectures of Rav Lifshitz, who was a former psychology professor. He showed how western psychology is nothing compared to Jewish psychology, which has solid foundations.

“I finally began to feel that I was beginning to find what I had been searching for all along. I began to understand the lies of non-Torah-true Judaism, and the truth in real Judaism. This truth, said without attacking anyone else, led me to



“It was the niggunim that captivated me”

taking the first step in the t'shuva process. So I went to a Judaica store and bought a kippa.

“When I went to the university my friends were none too happy with the kippa. They were certain I had gone nuts. They didn't hide their discomfort, and being confused by their questions I told them that I was wearing a kippa because my head was cold.

“I was so surprised. I mean here I was, a Jew from the Diaspora who came to Israel, and to Jerusalem the capitol, and they were looking at me in surprise for going back to my Jewish roots.”

MY FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE REBBE

Yosef's parents, who heard about his interest in Judaism, also thought it was a passing phase. His father even told him, “If you're happy, I have no problem, but you must learn a profession.” That's all his father asked of him.

Some time later, Yosef got a phone call from his parents with bad news – that his paternal grandmother was very sick. Yosef left everything

and flew home.

“It was almost Pesach and I knew that I couldn't be home for Pesach because of the chametz. I took out a phone book and looked for the number of a rabbi that I could ask where I could spend Pesach. I noticed a listing for the Rabbinical College of America. I called them and got to Chabad in Morristown. They gave me the address of a frum family in my area, where I spent Pesach.

“After Pesach I heard that I could attend yeshiva in Morristown and get a degree, something which made my father happy. So instead of returning to Eretz Yisroel, I went to the baal t'shuva yeshiva in Morristown, though not without some reservations.

“The thing that grabbed me, more than anything else, was when I entered the zal and I saw bachurim dancing after the davening and singing a happy niggun.”

Despite his first positive impression, Yosef didn't get into things that quickly. It wasn't easy for him, after years of a liberal and Reform education.

“It was hard for me to hear Rabbi



Chassidische nachas from his children

Lipskier, the rosh yeshiva, say things like, 'The Rebbe is our whole world and we are not even a metzius.' I thought that perhaps the Rebbe is a big rabbi and wise in Torah and halacha, but he wasn't the entire world..."

When did your attitude change?

"My first encounter with the Rebbe resolved all my questions. After that encounter, I became mekushar to the Rebbe and to Chassidus. I was captivated by the Rebbe.

"It was a Shabbos Mevarchim when the talmidim of the yeshiva went to 770 for Shabbos. I remember the first farbrengen. I stood in amazement as the thousands of Chassidim crowded together in pyramids, facing the Rebbe. The Rebbe himself sat in the center, and his face shone. He spoke for hours without a book or notes in front of him. This amazed me, even though I didn't understand what he was saying. Later on, when I learned in yeshiva about the Nasi HaDor, I understood what it was all about."

SHLICHUS AT WORK

Yosef's journey was completed after two and a half years of intensive studying at Morristown. A year later, he married Yael, who had come from Eretz Yisroel to Crown Heights to be close to the Rebbe.

After marrying, Yosef worked as an accountant in his father's business,

THE IMPACT OF LETTERS

In my last year in Morristown, the Rebbe announced the mitvza of writing a seifer Torah to Unite the Jewish people, and said that we should make sure that every Jew had a letter. At that time, I was in charge of mitvzaim in yeshiva, and I had the idea of going to where my parents lived in New Jersey and making sure that every single Jew in that city had a letter.

I bought maps of the city and along with all the talmidim of the yeshiva we went every day and covered the city, like a military operation, asking Jews to buy a letter in a Torah. I can testify that at that time, there wasn't a single Jew in that city without a letter!

I saw the fruits of my labor years later, when I went to visit my parents. I was amazed to see that the one Orthodox shul where Rabbi Moshe Kozinitz was rabbi had grown and was full of people. There was also a kosher restaurant in town, and a local millionaire had built a talmud Torah for the shliach. In general, the place was a hive of authentic Jewish activity.

but Yosef realized this wasn't his mission in life. He wanted to be involved in matters of k'dusha, so he moved to Eretz Yisroel, where he began working as an accountant for the Chabad Mobile Mitzva Tanks. His family grew and today he is the proud father of a Chassidishe family.

In addition to his work as an accountant and being responsible for data processing at Bank Poalei Agudas Yisroel in Tel Aviv, he goes with his friend Tzvi Marantz, who is also an employee of the bank, on mitvzaim to the other employees of the bank. He brings them the light of Yiddishkait along with the besuras ha'Geula.



Yosef Spaiter with one of his boys



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THE ADMUR REB AVROHOM YEHOSHUA HESCHEL ZATZAL OF KOPISHNITZ

From Shemen Sasson Meichaveirecha

BY RABBI SHALOM BER WOLPO
TRANSLATED BY ALEXANDER ZUSHE KOHN



PART III

FIERCE OPPOSITION TO ZIONISM

In the beginning of Iyar, 5718 (April-May, 1958), the *Admur* went on a trip to Israel. Two days before his departure, he phoned the Rebbe MH”M to get a blessing for the trip. (I think he was one of the select few with whom the Rebbe spoke on the phone. [The Rebbe customarily avoided speaking to people via phone.]) The Rebbe told the *Admur* that if he had known about the latter’s plans earlier he would have advised him not to travel at the current time since Israel was celebrating a decade since the founding of the State, and the Israeli government had issued a call for Jews all over the world to come visit Israel as a sign of solidarity with the State. The Rebbe argued that if the *Admur* would travel during this period, and especially in the month of Iyar, then, even though he surly had no connection with the Zionists, nevertheless, since a *tzaddik’s* arrival in a given place makes an impression upon that place, and the news of his coming would thus be widely know, the Zionists might utilize this toward their end, and claim that the *Admur* is among this who came to Israel in

honor of this special year.

The *Admur* replied that it was too late to postpone the trip because all the arrangements had already been made, and he is supposed to be in Miron for the lighting of the fire on the eve of Lag B’Omer, and to visit “my holy brother-in-law,” the *Admur* Reb Avrohom Yaakov of Sadigura.

(When the *Admur* arrived in Israel on the ninth of Iyar, he was informed of the passing of his sister, the Sadigura *Rebbetzin*, Bluma Reizel, o.b.m. Some of the *Admur’s* family members conjecture that in addition to the reason the Rebbe gave him for not going to Israel at that time, the Rebbe also wanted to spare him the pain of having his trip to Israel marred by this tragic event).

During the summer of that year, The *Admur* Reb Avrohom of Sadigura met the *gaon* Rav Shlomo Yosef Zevin at a rehabilitation center in Chaifa. The *Admur* asked Rav Zevin to write to the Rebbe on his behalf, and tell him that he had been pained by the fact that the Rebbe tried to prevent his brother-in-law from visiting him during the State’s decade celebration — after all, he argued, it was precisely the Chabad Chassidim who were involved in bringing Zionists closer to

Judaism. (The Rebbe has responded to many similar accusations by noting that while it is very important to draw every Jew closer to Judaism, and to love every Jew regardless of his actions or affiliation, one must at the same time reject the corrupt beliefs they adhere to — there is no contradiction between the two.)

JOY IN B’NEI BRAK

On 10 Adar II, 5714 (March 15, 1954), the Rebbe paid the *Admur* a *Shiva* call upon the passing of his sister, *Rebbetzin* Chava, o.b.m., wife of the *Admur* Reb Eliezer Hager of Vizhnitz, who passed away on the third of Adar II (see *Toras Menachem* — *Menachem Tzion*, p. 252-253.) The *Admur* explained that joy is a predominant factor in the Vizhnitz approach to divine service. He then related the following story:

The wife of the *Admur* Reb Yisroel of Vizhnitz passed away on 13 Menachem Av, 5674 (August 5, 1914), at the beginning of World War I. After the seven day mourning period, his *mechutan*, the *Admur* Reb Yitzchok Meir of Kopishnitz visited his home. (Reb Yitzchok Meir was in the midst of wandering from place to place after fleeing Kopishnitz for fear of the Russian army, which had

conquered Galicia.) Despite the fact that they were still in the *Shloshim*, the *Admur* of Vizhnitz instructed his sons to sing some jolly tunes to cheer up his *mechutan*. (Reb Yitzchak Meir Flintshtein, the *Admur* of Kopishnitz of Yerushalayim, and the grandson of the *Admur* Reb Avrohom Yehoshua Heschel, confirmed this version of the story for me.)

The Rebbe reacted to this story by saying that surely Vizhnitz continues to promote the path of joy in B'nei Brak, its current location, to counteract the yeshivas that emphasize an approach of bitterness. The Rebbe pointed out that *ahavas Yisroel* was also strongly emphasized in Vizhnitz (as reflected in the name of the *seifer*, *Ahavas Yisroel*, written by Reb Yisroel of Vizhnitz).

When it was time to *daven Maariv*, the crowd went into the *beis midrash*, and the Rebbe and the *Admur* were

The Rebbe told the Admur that if he had known about the latter's plans earlier he would have advised him not to travel at the current time since Israel was celebrating a decade since the founding of the State...

able to converse privately for a few minutes.

RICHES?

On Shabbos, 24 Tammuz, 5718 (July 12, 1958), the *Admur's* brother, Reb Mordechai Shraga ("Mottele"), passed away. On 3 Menachem-Av (July 20), which was apparently the last day of the seven-day mourning period, the Rebbe paid the *Admur* a *Shiva* call. They spoke about many things, including: the *Admur's* visits to Israel's holy sites, the sanctity of the cemetery in Tiveria (Tiberius), the indwelling of the Divine Presence on account of the Jews ascending to Miron to celebrate the *Yom Hilula* of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, and the need for a community of Torah students in the holy city of Tzfas (Safed). The *Admur* related that he visited Kfar Chabad, where he observed the Torah study and Divine service of the Lubavitcher Chassidim. "I envy them materially and spiritually," he remarked. The Rebbe



responded: "They've already been through the stage of "by your blood you shall live," and therefore, deserve to experience only good, materially and spiritually, henceforth."

They had an interesting discussion regarding the need for Jews to be wealthy. The Rebbe brought proof from the Torah and Talmud that Jews need wealth, and the *Admur* Kopishnitz brought proof that wealth can interfere with a Jew's loyalty to G-d. In the end, the Rebbe asked the *Admur* and implored him: "I want you to agree that the Jewish people should be wealthy." The *Admur* replied, "I agree wholeheartedly." (See *B'tzel Hachma* for the full transcript of this discussion.)

Reb Schneur Zalman Gurary told me that the conversation really revolved around him, for he was in dire need of a blessing for wealth, but his father-in-law, the *Admur*, did not want him to be wealthy; nor did

The Admur did not want him to be wealthy; nor did the Admur want any of his offspring to be wealthy, for he held that the challenge wealth presented to one's connection with G-d was overwhelming...

the *Admur* want any of his offspring to be wealthy, for he held that the challenge wealth presented to one's connection with G-d was overwhelming. The Rebbe, on the

other hand, wanted the *Admur* to bless his son-in-law with wealth. In the end, the *Admur* agreed, but only with regard to Rav Gurary, because being a Lubavitcher Rav Gurary 'belonged' to the Rebbe. A non-chassidic Jew present at the time of this Heavenly conversation was so amazed by all of it, he eventually became a devout chassid of the Rebbe.

Reb Yitzchak Meir Flintshtien told me that his grandfather's opposition to any of his offspring becoming wealthy was well known among the family members. This opposition of his was so great that he would actually pray for those offspring of his involved in business that they not get rich. He said: Even if they manage to withstand the temptations of money, who knows if their children and grandchildren will be able to do the same? Therefore, he prayed that they should earn a livelihood, but not riches.

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CRUEL TO BE KIND TO THE CRUEL

BY SHAI GEFEN

THE DEMISE OF RELIGIOUS ZIONISM

Zionist rabbis and public figures from these religious-Zionist groups are supporting a referendum. They are promising that they are ready to withdraw “sadly but without opposition,” if the nation decides in favor of withdrawal. They claim this will save Gush Katif and there’s no other choice...

It’s frightening to think that rabbanim are ready to go through with this. A referendum in favor or in opposition to expelling Jews is a chilul Hashem for which there is no atonement. As the Rebbe told Moshe Katzav, “It would be better if goyim, Heaven forbid, returned land and not Jews because of the chilul Hashem involved.”

Another serious issue is that such a referendum puts millions of Jews into a position worse than desecrating the Shabbos and endangering the Jewish people. A referendum such as this would mean that the Jewish people are voting about their own destruction, G-d forbid! This just cannot take place!

Only those with little faith and fighting spirit can suggest and support a referendum, letting the nation decide. Just as we cannot

make a referendum about bris mila or Shabbos observance, even if there is “no other choice,” the same applies to endangering the lives of millions of Jews.

That is the substance of the argument posed by the Rebbe against all those who want to be “realistic,” and make various concessions in order to save what remains. Today, in hindsight, we all know what remains of those suggestions and where those people stand today. The Jewish people exist only because of our uncompromising devotion to Torah.

Lately, the Zionist-religious people love to say that secular Zionism has died. Yet, their own philosophy of is’chalta d’Geula has died! If the leaders of settlers in Yesha dare to suggest and support a referendum such as this, it proves that their ideology has gone bust.

The bursting of the Zionist-religious ideological bubble is undoubtedly connected with the dawning light of the real Geula, when “many are clarified, whitened, and refined.” It’s vital that we convey the true message, the Rebbe’s message, and base the prohibition of returning land on halacha. That’s the only way we will succeed.

ADIR ZIK: SYMBOL OF THE BATTLE

All those who love Eretz Yisroel and who fight on behalf of shleimus ha’Aretz, saw Adir Zik a”h [see interview with him in this issue] as a symbol of the battle. Adir Zik fought the shleimus ha’Aretz battle even from his sickbed. He was an amazing model of uncompromising determination.

Many people remember how Adir was attacked from within. Even his friends considered him extreme in his views. He continued to see the truth and ignored all those flatterers who sought his “good.” Truth was important to him even if it made life difficult for him.

The words he wrote in his last column, against the belief of the people at Merkaz HaRav, that the secular government has the authority of the Jewish kings of old, are definitely part of his awakening in recent years. This is what he wrote:

“Until this day, in circles around Yeshivas Merkaz HaRav and many other yeshivos, there is a sanctification of the ‘kingdom’ approach. This belief is still strong and influential. Arik Sharon, with his usual political cynicism, uses this outlook and the strong desire to serve in the army, in order to pit religious-nationalists against each



other in the battle over transfer, uprooting, and what he calls 'disengagement.' Arik Sharon is recruiting religious officers or those with a religious-nationalist background, so that they will be responsible for carrying out the expulsion."

Adir Zik saw how all those who worship the State, became, against their will, slaves of that same State, which gives them the job of self-destruction, and this is what Zik warned about. Although raised on religious-Zionism, he eschewed its ideology and chose another path, the path of truth.

I knew Adir Zik personally, and I can say that he was a soldier who defended Eretz Yisroel. Any initiative or project that he was asked to carry out or take part in, he did, without a murmur. He stood up first, at any time and in any place, in order to take part in the fight.

He had undergone chemotherapy before the last interview he gave *Beis Moshiach* a year ago. He told me then that although, usually, after such treatment, the average person rests up for a week at home, he didn't have time to rest. The day after he finished treatment, he went to Givot in order to encourage the settlers. He let me interview him shortly after he came back. Despite his exhaustion, he was energetic and he spoke, outlining his views in an orderly way.

In that interview he spoke sadly about how right the Rebbe was in predicted where the leaders would take the people, and how only the Rebbe's approach would lead to victory. Adir Zik knew what many people find it hard to understand – that all the problems and tzaros we have are derived from the terrible mistake of the original Camp David Accords.

TAKING PITY ON THE CRUEL

500 terrorists are being released from jail and will be considered heroes, while the settlers who are moser nefesh daily, are branded lepers and lawbreakers and will replace the terrorists in jail for opposing their own expulsion. A Jew like Yitzchok Pass, whose baby daughter was murdered, rots in jail while terrorists are freed. Jews are threatened with administrative detention for wanting to protest the dangerous expulsion plan, but those who help destroy the land are turned into heroes.

Our Sages tell us that whoever has compassion on the cruel, will end up being cruel to those who deserve compassion. He who has compassion on the cruel does just the opposite when it comes to his own brothers and sisters.

Whoever hears about the diabolical plan to expel Jews from Gush Katif is shocked by how Jews can behave. The source for this cruelty is that these same people are releasing terrorists and are extending goodwill gestures to the enemies of our people, thus turning on their own people.

It's hard to imagine such an insane situation, but it's happening before our very eyes. What would we say if this took place a hundred years ago? What would we think of those Jews who turned light into darkness and darkness into light?

WE SURVIVED STALIN, AND WE WILL SURVIVE SHARON TOO!

The conspiracy is complete. You don't even need Adir Zik a"h to explain it to us. When Sharon felt that his ministers were beginning to wake up and more public figures

While the settlers who are moser nefesh daily, are branded lepers and lawbreakers and will replace the terrorists in jail for opposing their own expulsion. A Jew like Yitzchok Pass, whose baby daughter was murdered, rots in jail while terrorists are freed. Jews are threatened with administrative detention for wanting to protest the dangerous expulsion plan, but those who help destroy the land are turned into heroes.

were beginning to express their fears of a civil war too loudly, he threatened them. Now they're all threatened. Every minister can tell you about letters he receives daily. The media, with help from the powers-that-be, promote made-up stories about the ministers' attacks.

The most famous one is the story of the attack that didn't happen at Kfar Chabad on Thursday, March 10th. The media and some of our own concocted a story of an attack on Bibi Netanyahu in Kfar Chabad, ostensibly protesting his role in giving away land. In an attempt to quiet legitimate protest against the destruction of settlements and the endangering of millions of Jews, they began attacking Chabad Chassidim and their center in Kfar Chabad.

What took place in Kfar Chabad demands serious self-examination.

Even Soviet Russia and the Yevsektzia were unable to quash Chabad. So too now, nothing will prevent us from saying the truth.

How did people from among us, without any shame, become collaborators and dump mud on us, solely for the purpose of playing the public relations game. Even before matters were clarified, they tried to lie and make up stories that never happened.

Chabad Chassidim have a long history of standing up to threats

from the government. Even Soviet Russia and the Yevsektzia were unable to quash Chabad. So too now, nothing will prevent us from saying the truth, even if it's not what people in the government want to hear.

The Rebbe told the story of his father, R' Levi Yitzchok, when the government wanted him to give a hechsher on a matza bakery. The other rabbanim had obeyed the government and given their hechsher, but R' Levi Yitzchok did not cave in to threats and was willing to pay the price. The Rebbe once said that he learned from his father that when a Jew is in danger, it is prohibited to remain quiet!

All their vile scare tactics won't help. Chabad survived Stalin and it will survive Sharon too!

B.H

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ADIR ZIK A”H

A man of truth, a man of vision, a man of faith

On 27 Shvat, a wonderful Jew by the name of Adir Zik, passed away at the age of 66 after a long illness. The news of his passing saddened not only his friends but also his thousands of listeners and admirers in Yesha, in Eretz Yisroel, and the Jewish world.

Adir, known for his uncompromising views and battles on behalf of shleimus Eretz Yisroel, didn't hesitate to say things as they were, even when his friends didn't like to hear it, not to mention his political rivals. He expressed his views for 15 years on his program on Channel 7. His program was very popular and immediately captured a large listening audience from all parts of the dati and chareidi world, in Eretz Yisroel and abroad.

Ever since the government shut the station down, he began writing a weekly column in *B'Sheva*. Here too, he wasn't afraid to say some very courageous things, even when the media and the authorities didn't like what he had to say.

In recent years, he started and ran the "Yesha Fund to Help Residents of Yesha," and threw himself into helping the settlers of

HaGivot, who acquired their share of the land with their physical presence.

HIS CONNECTION WITH THE REBBE AND CHABAD

Adir gave *Beis Moshiach* an



interview a year ago, under the headline, "I Am Optimistic." Adir spoke about his warm connection with the Lubavitch movement and about his visits to the Rebbe. Here are some excerpts of that interview:

Can you tell us about your

connection with Chabad?

I had a strong connection with Chabad throughout the years that I was in television. I helped Chabad a lot in producing movies of the Rebbe on television, etc. I was very close with R' Berke Wolf a”h, who served as a spokesman for Chabad in Eretz Yisroel. We were great friends. I remember how he brought the Rebbe's message about shleimus ha'Aretz and MiHu Yehudi, to all the media.

I first became acquainted with Chabad when I was a student in Los Angeles in the early 60's. Rabbi Cunin had just begun working there, and the Reform tried to interfere with his work. I was a young student and I worked as an organizer for B'nei Akiva. I organized a big demonstration on behalf of Rabbi Cunin's work in which 500 members of B'nei Akiva participated. Boruch Hashem, today he has an empire, thanks to the

Rebbe.

I want to tell you something. When you look back, you see how the Rebbe screamed about Eretz Yisroel, how the Rebbe, with his ruach ha'kodesh, saw everything that is happening now. He is the

only one who accurately predicted what would happen if they concede to the Arabs.

Look at the Rebbe's war to get the Law of Return amended. I remember those days very well. Today, two out of three people who leave Russia for the Holy Land are goyim! The Jews migrate to Germany, and the goyim come here, because the German government is only interested in helping real Jews. The goyim come here because they are welcomed with open arms. Everybody fought the Rebbe on this, including the religious. They all wanted government positions.

Did you have a personal connection with the Rebbe?

I attended many farbrengens but did not have a yechidus. I was scheduled to have a yechidus in 5738, but the Rebbe had a heart attack and the appointment was canceled. In Teives 5752, I received a dollar from the Rebbe and a bracha.

Tell us about your amazing miracle story with the Rebbe.

We had two daughters and a son, but wanted more children. My wife had miscarriages and many tzaros along the way. I had a neighbor by the name of Efraim Komar who was planning a trip to the Rebbe. This was around 5740. He told me to write a letter to the Rebbe and he would bring it.

So I wrote to the Rebbe about the problems we were experiencing, but we received no reply. A month after I wrote to the Rebbe, my wife was pregnant. After the doctor examined her, he told her that he thought she was carrying more than one baby.

We went for ultrasound, which was unusual at the time. There were only two machines in the country. It confirmed that she was carrying twins. It was big surprise and we

We were dumbfounded. The Rebbe blessed us with a double bracha and we had just gotten the news about the twins!

were thrilled. We went home to celebrate the good news and another surprise awaited us. A typewritten letter from the Rebbe was waiting for us in the mailbox in which the Rebbe blessed us with a "double bracha" for children. We were dumbfounded. The Rebbe blessed us with a double bracha and we had just gotten the news about the twins!

Seven months later, our twins were born and we called them Yachin and Boaz for the pillars in the Beis HaMikdash. May we speedily merit to see the rebuilding of the third Beis HaMikdash with the coming of Moshiach.

* * *

In his last column, Adir Zik wrote about his illness:

A severe case of pneumonia has

me hospitalized in the Hadassah Ein Kerem Medical Center. Like other good Jews, I prefer the positive term "Beit Refua" or "Merkaz Refui" than the negative "Beit Cholim."

I receive medical treatment from the doctors of Ein Kerem, but aside from that, I am also showered with endless chesed. The organization Ezer Mitziyon, other organizations, and private people, come here day and night to help. My family members receive food, clothes and hot meals from these chesed organizations.

Four times a day, a band plays in the oncology department in order to lift our spirits. On Shabbos, there are t'fillos and meals for whoever remains in the Hadassah building. Wonderful Jews make kiddush in each of the rooms, and it's all done with tznius, kashrus, humility. They say, please, give us the privilege by being helped through us, to do a mitzva. I am getting excellent medical care and I am enveloped with Jewish chesed.

* * *

We will conclude with Adir Zik's usual, positive bracha with which he concluded his regular column: **Shabbat shalom, Yehudim. B'ezrat Hashem, we will be victorious!**

בייה

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The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the website <http://www.beismoshiach.org>. The page features a header with the site's name in Hebrew (BEIS MOSHIACH), a logo for bhTech, and the Hebrew text "בית משיח". Below the header, the text "Chabad World" is visible, along with navigation links for "HOME", "PDF VERSION", "ARCHIVES", and "English Edition". A banner reads "Long live the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach forever and ever." The main content area includes a large heading "BEIS MOSHIACH" and several articles. The first article is titled "WE HAD NEVER HEARD IT LIKE THIS BEFORE" and is presented in honor of the birthday of the Mittler Rebbe. The second article is titled "FARBRENGEN OF MASHPIM" and describes a farbrengen in Crown Heights. The third article is titled "CHASDEI BRACHA: SPREADING JOY" and describes the Chasdei Bracha initiative. The right sidebar contains an "Archive" section with a dropdown menu set to "438" and an "Advanced Search" button. The bottom of the page shows the browser's status bar with the text "Internet".