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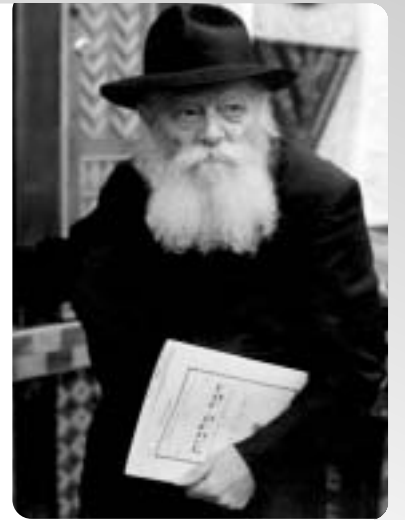
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A HIGHER PEACE AFTER STRIFE

SICHOS IN ENGLISH



SHABBOS PARSHAS EMOR; 8TH DAY OF IYAR, 5749

1. This Shabbos falls in the midst of the counting of the Omer and is the third Shabbos after the holiday of Pesach. The number three shares a unique connection to the giving of the Torah. Our Sages emphasize how the Torah, “a threefold light,” was given to the Jews, “a threefold people” in “the third month” by third [of Amram’s children, Moshe].

Three is associated with the concept of peace. The number one refers to a state of unity above division. Thus, our Sages note that, in the narrative of creation, the Torah states “one day,” rather than “the first day” to emphasize how then, “G-d was at one in His world.”

Two reflects a state of division, the opposite of unity. Thus, our Sages state that division was created on the second day and therefore, the expression “And G-d saw that it was good” is not mentioned on that day.

Three refers to the potential to establish unity within the context of the division brought about by the number two. This is a higher level of unity. The unity associated with the number one refers to a unity that

exists before individual existence (which allows for division). Therefore, it does not represent complete unity (since it is not known what will happen after entities take on their own individual existence). In contrast, the number three refers to unity as it is established within the context of division. Because this is an expression of true unity, the statement “And G-d saw that it was good” is repeated twice on that day.

This concept is exemplified in the principle:

When two Biblical passages contradict each other, the meaning can be determined by a third Biblical text which reconciles them.

The intent is not that the third text supports one of the two positions and thus, outweighs the other, but rather that the third text will reconcile the two and bring out a new perspective which is acceptable to both positions.

There is a parallel to the above concepts in our service of G-d. G-d is essentially one. This unity was revealed on the first day of creation. However, since G-d desired “a dwelling place in the lower worlds,” He created a world (the Hebrew for “world” — olam — is related to the word “helam” — concealment) which

appears to be separate from G-d (division as symbolized by the second day). The purpose of such a creation was that a Jew will become “a partner with G-d in creation” and establish unity between the creation and G-d. This unity comes, not through nullifying the existence of the world, but rather through fusing the world — as it exists within its own context — with G-dliness.

This represents true unity, the unity expressed by the third day. Our Sages associated the contribution of the third day with the expression: “Good for the heavens and good for the creatures.” This unity brings together “the heavens” and “the creatures,” fusing them into a single entity.

On the basis of the above, we can appreciate the connection between the Torah and the number three. Our Sages state: “The entire Torah was given only to establish peace in the world,” i.e., peace and unity between the world and G-d.

Before the giving of the Torah, there was a decree separating the higher spiritual realms from our physical world. At the giving of the Torah, G-d nullified that decree. He “descended on Mount Sinai” and also

gave the potential for the Jews to elevate the physical world and impart holiness to material objects. Similarly, before the giving of the Torah, the Torah's place was in the spiritual worlds. After the giving of the Torah, the Torah "is not in the heavens," but rather, its permanent place is in this world [and halachic decisions are determined by men].

On the basis of the above, we can understand why the giving of the Torah did not come immediately after the exodus from Egypt, but rather was preceded by the counting of the Omer. This service was necessary because the intent of the giving of the Torah was to establish the Torah within this world in a permanent manner and thus, establish peace (in the fullest sense of the world without either entity sacrificing its qualities as explained above) between the spiritual and physical realms.

The exodus from Egypt (which took place in the first month) is insufficient. Though "the King of kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He, revealed Himself to them," this was a revelation from above which did not permeate the nature of the world itself and, therefore, was only temporary in nature. The world itself remained as it was, an entity separate from the Divine revelation.

Only after the service within the world itself — although this came about through the arousal from above associated with the exodus — was the world ready to receive the Torah in a manner in which it could be internalized and thus effect the world in a permanent manner.

This is the contribution of the days of the counting of the Omer which connect Pesach to the giving of the Torah. Thus, the Omer offering was of barley, described by our Sages as "animal food," indicating that the service during this period revolves around refining the emotional qualities of the animal soul.

Even though this service is not as elevated as the revelation of "the King of kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He," it is precisely this service which allows for the giving of the Torah. At that time, the fiftieth gate of understanding, a level which surpasses those revealed in the exodus, is drawn down. Furthermore, because this revelation is preceded by the service of the Jews, it can be internalized to the extent that it becomes a permanent part of their beings.

Even if strife and discord have already arisen, efforts must be made to correct the situation by overextending oneself in the direction of peace. This approach will ultimately bring about a higher level of peace than existed before the outbreak of strife.

2. The concept explained above is also related to the customs which the Shulchan Aruch associates with the counting of the Omer, the atmosphere of semi-mourning that is associated with the death of Rabbi Akiva's students.

The Talmud explains that these students died because they did not show appropriate respect to each other. These laws are part of the Torah — which is the "Torah of kindness." Thus, it follows that they teach us an

important lesson: not only to observe the customs of semi-mourning, but also to correct the cause of this tragedy, the lack of respect for one's fellowman by increasing our ahavas Yisroel. This is associated with the service mentioned above, refining the emotional qualities of the animal soul.

Why won't a person show proper respect for a colleague? Because G-d created each person with different thinking processes. However, G-d did not intend that these differences cause division or strife. His intent was to allow for the higher level of peace and unity that can be established within a place where there is the potential for difference (as explained above). When people with different opinions work together, they develop a multitude of different perspectives which brings about a clearer and better solution. Reaching such a solution requires each person to forego his natural tendency to adhere to his own viewpoint and consider the matter from other perspectives, showing respect for the other people.

This is the service appropriate during the counting of the Omer, it requires a person to work on himself and change his nature — his intellect and emotions — which were he not to work on, might cause him to show a lack of respect for others similar to that shown by Rabbi Akiva's students. He must refine and develop these qualities to the extent that they will help bring out the advantage that can come from different people having a variety of perspectives.

Even if strife and discord have already arisen, efforts must be made to correct the situation by overextending oneself in the direction of peace.[75] This approach will ultimately bring about a higher level of peace than existed before the outbreak of strife.[76]

[In this context, we can understand the unique importance of Lag B'Omer. Lag B'Omer is the

yahrtzeit of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. He was one of the students of Rabbi Akiva who remained alive. As evident from a number of Talmudic passages, he expressed the principle of ahavas Yisroel, which his teacher, Rabbi Akiva, considered “a great principle of the Torah,” in a complete manner. Therefore, Lag B’Omer, his yahrtzeit, is a day of celebration, not only when compared to the days of the counting of the Omer, but also to the entire year.][77]

Similarly, this is also a proper preparation for the giving of the Torah. Our Sages note that when the Torah describes the camping of the Jewish people before Mount Sinai, it uses the verb va’yichan, a singular conjugation. They comment that this shows that the people camped “as one man, with one heart.” This unity was one of the necessary steps in preparation for the giving of the Torah.

The above is also related to the custom of studying Pirkei Avos on the Shabbasos between Pesach and Shavuos. Pirkei Avos focuses on the refinement of our ethical behavior.[78] This concept is emphasized by a teaching contained in the first Mishna: “Make a fence around the Torah.” The Sages appreciated the tendencies of our animal souls and found it necessary to impose new restrictions to curb those tendencies.

To explain in greater detail: The Torah was given in our material world in order to establish peace and unity between the Creator and the creation. Furthermore, as explained above, this unity is intended to encompass the creations as they are within the context of their own existence. This also involves taking into consideration the changes people will undergo over the passage of time, when, with each generation, the concealment of G-dliness in the world has increased. To prevent this from

weakening our observance of Torah, the Sages “made a fence around the Torah,” i.e., established safeguards — restrictions which were themselves not commanded by the Torah — to ensure the continued observance of Torah.

This week, we study the third chapter of Pirkei Avos, which also begins in a manner that emphasizes the concept of three, “Reflect on three things and you will not come to sin.” In addition to the three concepts mentioned specifically in the Mishna, the Mishna is also teaching us to reflect on the concept of three and that this reflection will prevent one from sinning. From the standpoint of one, there is a possibility of sin — for there is still the possibility of the existence of other entities. Surely, this is true from the perspective of two. However, when a person reflects on three, i.e., realizes how unity can be established within the context of division, he will not sin.

This is also associated with the week’s Torah portion which begins: “Say unto the priests... and you shall say unto them...” Our Sages explain that this apparent redundancy teaches the obligation “to make the adults responsible for the children.” They cannot remain satisfied with their own service, but must teach others. Furthermore, the verb, l’hazhir also has the meaning “to make shine.” The adults must teach the children in a manner which makes them shine.

This, in turn, will bring advantages to the adults as well as our Sages explain, “I received more from my students than from others” and thus, establish unity between the adults and the children.

3. The above is also connected to the daily portion of Rambam, the conclusion of the study of Hilchos Shmita V’Yovel. The latter is also connected to Parshas B’Har whose reading is begun in today’s Mincha service. Many of the laws of Shmita

are contained in this Torah portion. (These laws are also connected to the present year whose Hebrew letters form the word Tishmat, “release,” the mitzvah associated with Shmita).

In today’s portion of study, the Rambam discusses the laws of a Pruzbol:

When Hillel, the Elder, saw that people hesitated to lend to each other and thus, transgressed the Torah’s admonition: “Take great care lest you will have an unworthy [thought in your heart.... ‘The seventh year, the year of release, is coming.’ And you will look unkindly at your poor brother and will not give him.]”

Therefore, he instituted the practice of a Pruzbol so that a debt would not be released and people would lend one to each other.

Thus, a Pruzbol is one of the practices instituted by the Sages as “a fence around the Torah.” Originally, there was no need for such a safeguard. However, with the descent of the ethical level of the Jewish people, the practice was necessary to ensure the observance of Torah law. Nevertheless, once this practice was instituted, it led to an increase in generosity.

The practice of writing a Pruzbol also brings out another positive dimension. A Pruzbol is only effective when the borrower owns land. Nevertheless, our Rabbis explain that we can assume that every Jew possesses land. Furthermore, some authorities explain that a Pruzbol is effective for everyone, for “every Jew possesses a portion of land in Eretz Yisroel.” Thus, the practice of Pruzbol reveals how each Jew has a portion of Eretz Yisroel even during the time of exile.

The Rambam concludes these Halachos with a description of the positive qualities of the tribe of Levi:

Why didn’t Levi merit a portion of Eretz Yisroel?... Because he was

distinguished to serve G-d... and to teach His straight ways and righteous judgments to the masses... Therefore, he was set above the ways of the world.

The Rambam continues, explaining how this concept is relevant to every Jew:

Not only the tribe of Levi, but each and every person... whose generous spirit motivated him...to set himself apart and to stand before G-d to serve Him,...removing from himself the yoke of the different [worldly] concerns which are sought by people. He is sanctified as the holiest of the holy. G-d will be his portion and inheritance forever.

The Torah itself mentions the potential for such service only in regard to the tribe of Levi. Nevertheless, “the Torah was given together with its explanation,” i.e. the oral tradition. That tradition taught by our Sages[79] reveals how every Jew has the potential to become “the holiest of the holy,” i.e., to reach the level of the High Priest on Yom Kippur. Each Jew, no matter where he is or what age he is living in, can make an unbounded commitment to the service of G-d and thus, reach the highest levels of holiness.

This is also related to the next order of Halachos in the Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Beis HaBechira, The Laws of [G-d’s] Chosen House. Those laws begin stating, “It is a positive commandment to construct a house for G-d which is prepared for sacrifices to be offered within.” By building a Beis HaMikdash (“a house for G-d”) in this world, we fulfill the intention of creation, that this lowly world should be transformed into a dwelling place for Him. The ultimate revelation of this intent will be in the construction of the Third Temple. This, in turn, is dependent on our work and service in the time of exile, being “motivated by a generous spirit, removing from himself the yoke of the

different [worldly] concerns.”

In this light, we can understand the verse chosen by the Rambam as an introduction to Seifer Avoda (The Book of [G-d’s] Service) and in particular, Hilchos Beis HaBechira, “Seek out the welfare of Jerusalem. Those who love her shall prosper.” A Jew must long for Jerusalem[80] and seek out her welfare. This service will bring about prosperity, not only the ultimate prosperity we will enjoy in the Messianic age, but even at present, in the time of exile, we will be blessed with prosperity.

Each Jew, no matter where he is or what age he is living in, can make an unbounded commitment to the service of G-d and thus, reach the highest levels of holiness.

To summarize with practical directives, efforts must be made:

1. To spread ahavas Yisroel and thus, correct the reason for the mourning practices observed during this period. These practices indicate that this is an appropriate time to increase this service and correct any inadequacies.
2. To spread Torah study, particular public study, putting special stress on studying Pirkei Avos.
3. To make siyumim, including siyumim of the Halachos in the Mishneh Torah.

4. To prepare for Lag B’Omer, the yahrtzeit of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. In regard to P’nimius HaTorah (Torah’s mystic teachings), Lag B’Omer is “the day of the giving of the Torah.” Hence, in this context, special emphasis should be placed on the study of P’nimius HaTorah.

May these efforts hasten the time when the Third Temple will be built and then we will offer sacrifices to G-d. May the time come immediately.

NOTES:

75. In particular, the way to bring out peace when a dispute has arisen is to bring the matter to a Rabbinic court for judgment. Their decision should — as the third passage mentioned above — be rendered in a manner that will reconcile the differences between the parties involved. Should a dispute arise between members of one community, they should present the matter to the community’s Rabbis for arbitration.

76. We see a parallel to this concept in halacha. A shtar (legal document) whose validity has been questioned and later affirmed has greater legal power than a shtar about which a question has never arisen.

77. Thus, HaYom Yom relates that “in regard to the Mittlerer Rebbe, Lag B’Omer was one of the special holidays.... Then, we witnessed many miracles, particularly, in regard to children.... Throughout the entire year, we would wait for Lag B’Omer.”

78. Pirkei Avos includes statements authored by the Sages. Thus, it represents the aspect of Torah which is the contribution of man in contrast to that which is revealed from above. Hence, its study parallels the service of the month of Iyar which is associated with man’s efforts.

79. The fact it is the oral tradition which brings out this teaching is similar to the concept explained above, that the decrees of the Sages, e.g., Pruzbol, can bring out a higher dimension of Torah observance.

80. The longing for Jerusalem also has a parallel in our service of G-d. Yerushalayim — Hebrew for Jerusalem — can be divided into two words, Yira Shaleim — complete fear. A Jew must yearn to have complete fear of G-d.

WHO GIVES US THE STRENGTH TO SUCCEED IN THIS IMPOSSIBLE MISSION?

BY MENACHEM SHAKED
TRANSLATED BY MICHOEL LEIB DOBRY

Surprisingly, at the conclusion of this detailed description where we declare that despite all this we are unable to thank G-d for all that we have received from Him, we suddenly continue with a totally opposite description, seeming to express that we do possess the ability to thank G-d!

I heard the following story from HaRav HaChassid R. **Yosef Yitzchak Wilschanski**, Rosh Yeshivas Chassidei Chabad in Tzfas, Eretz Yisroel:

This story took place during the early years of the Rebbe MH"M's leadership. A chareidi Jew, a plumber by profession, was called to the Rebbe's house to do a repair job. The problem was apparently a serious one, requiring several hours of work over more than just one day. At the end of the day's work,

the plumber told the Rebbetzin that he will have to come back again tomorrow to complete the repairs, and then headed home.

He left the Rebbe's house in the direction of the shul in his neighborhood to daven Mincha and Maariv, and to learn in a shiur together with other workingmen in his community. An unofficial custom among them was for each to tell about anything unique they experienced during their working day in their contact with clients and

customers. Though our friend the plumber really wanted to participate in this daily schmooze, he didn't always have much to say that would prove interesting or enlightening. Thus, he usually had to settle for sitting in as a mere listener.

This time, however, his heart was overflowing with joy as he said to himself, "Today, I am going to be the center of attention," and he was quite right. When he told them that he had been called to do a job at the home of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, they all surrounded him as if all the news and gossip in the world was meaningless compared to what he had to say.

"Nu, R. Yankel," his friends asked, "maybe you can tell us some words of wisdom that you heard from the Lubavitcher Rebbe?"

"No," he was forced to reply.

His listeners would not relent. "Just a small *vort*." No reply.

“Oy, R. Yankel, R. Yankel,” they admonished him. “To be in the house of the Lubavitcher Rebbe and to come back empty-handed?”...

Our friend the plumber absorbed the insults, and then decided that the next day, when he would go back to work in the Rebbe’s house, he would ask the Rebbetzin to arrange for him to meet the Rebbe, and hear some Torah that he could give over when he came to shul.

When he arrived at the Rebbe’s home, he asked the Rebbetzin if there was a possibility that he could hear a vort from the Rebbe. The Rebbetzin, who intuitively had great concern for every Jew, understood immediately what the man had endured the previous evening in shul. She went to the Rebbe with the Jew’s fervent request, and it was granted.

“In the Shacharis davening on Shabbos,” the Rebbe began to tell the plumber, “in the portion that begins with the words ‘*Nishmas Kol Chai*,’ we praise G-d by saying, ‘Even if our mouth were filled with song as the sea (is filled with water), and our tongue with joy as the sound of its waves, and our lips with praise as the breadth of the heaven, and our eyes shining as the sun and the moon, and our hands spread out as eagles of the sky, and our legs as swift as deer,’ yet despite all this, “we would still

be unable to thank You, Hashem, our G-d and the G-d of our fathers, for one of the many thousands and myriads of favors, miracles, and wonders that You have done for us and for our fathers before us.’

“We now come to briefly enumerate some of the many



miracles and acts of mercy of the Creator: ‘You have delivered us from Egypt, redeemed us from the house of bondage, sustained us in famine and nourished us in plenty, rescued us from the sword and saved us from the plague, and kept us from long and serious illnesses.’

“Yet, surprisingly, at the conclusion of this detailed description where we declare that despite all this we are unable to thank G-d for all that we have received from Him, we suddenly continue with a totally opposite description, seeming to express that **we do possess the ability** to thank G-d.

“The following section begins with the word, ‘Therefore’ (*Al kein*), indicating a continuation of this lengthy description, ‘the limbs that You have arranged within us, the spirit and the soul that You have breathed into our nostrils, and the tongue that You have placed into our mouth – they will all **thank, bless, praise, glorify, uplift, adore, sanctify, and proclaim the sovereignty of Your Name, our King...**’

We’re not talking about some mere mention of His Name, but a detailed description of a variety of ways of offering thanks. How can this be?”

The plumber had no answer, so the Rebbe proceeded to evoke one with a story:

A great king once went out on a pleasant stroll through the forest with his royal entourage. Suddenly, the king found himself alone, deep in the forest without the slightest idea where to turn. All of his efforts to find his way back only made matters worse. He was hungry, thirsty, exhausted, and getting even more lost with every

passing moment. Faced with no alternative, he decided to take a different course of action, and tried instead to find a quiet and safe place to sleep until daybreak.

Then, as in a dream, he suddenly noticed the light of a lonely hovel not far away. He quickly walked towards it, praying to G-d that he was not entering a lair of murderers.

Trembling with fear, he knocked on the door. An elderly man opened, and graciously invited him to come in. The host tried to the best of his ability to make the king's brief stay as comfortable as possible. While the man lived in dire poverty, nevertheless, he tended to the king's needs as best he could. As for the king, considering his sad state, even just a glass of water, some dry bread, and a straw mattress were gifts from Heaven.

Morning came, and the king awoke, as his host already stood ready to serve him. After breakfast, he sketched out a drawing of the forest for the king that showed him how to find the way home. Only after he was absolutely certain that the king understood the instructions, he escorted him on his way, thanking him profusely for giving him the great privilege of having the king as his guest.

"If only things were under normal circumstances," the king told his host shortly before parting from him, "I would bestow great wealth upon you for saving my life. However, to my great regret, I have nothing to give you. All I have is a minimal set of eating utensils – a plate, a cup, a fork, a tablespoon, and a teaspoon. Please let me give this to you as a parting gift as a token of appreciation and thanks for all your efforts."

Thus, after presenting the utensil set to his gracious host, the king waved goodbye, and the two warmly departed from one another.

Years later, the king went on an urgent journey, requiring him to go through the forest again. The memories of his kind benefactor remained with him, and he commanded his servants to go quickly to the man's house and prepare him for an impending royal visit from the king and his entourage.

When the king's official delegation arrived at the old farmer's house, he went into a

*We must know that
we are the shluchim
of Melech
HaMoshiach, who
asked us to announce
to the entire
generation that
Moshiach is coming
now and that we must
prepare for his
arrival.*

panic. "How can I possibly host the king like this? Poverty eats away at this house from every corner!"

Realizing that there was no time to waste, he quickly cleaned up every particle of dust on the old furniture, swept the floor, and got dressed in his most presentable clothes. The refreshments on the table were not much more than the

last time, but that's all there was.

Not long afterwards, the king entered the house in all his glory and sat at the rickety table.

"Excuse me, Your Majesty," the farmer addressed his guest. "Hosting such a distinguished guest is no small matter, however, as His Majesty surely knows, I am simply unable, even if I so desired, to purchase those items necessary to please the king. Then, I had an idea. I will serve the meager refreshments that the king tasted the last time he was here, but this time, I will serve them with the utensils that I received from the king as a gift. I felt that the best way to thank the king for the privilege of hosting him, together with his royal entourage, would be through the gift that I had personally received from the king himself..."

"So it is with us," the Rebbe continued. "If we come to thank the king based on our talents and aptitude, or as we say in the Shabbos liturgy, 'Even if our mouth were filled with song as the sea (with water),' this is merely **our** mouth, **our** tongue, **our** lips, **our** eyes, **our** hands, **our** legs – indeed, our thanks would never be sufficient..."

"However, when we are talking about 'the limbs that **You** (as they belong to You, and which You in Your abundant mercy) have arranged within us, the spirit and the soul that **You** have breathed into our nostrils, and the tongue that **You** have placed into our mouth – they will all thank, bless, praise, glorify, uplift, adore, sanctify, and proclaim the sovereignty of Your Name, our King.'"

Thus concludes the story that the plumber heard from the mouth

of the king.

* * *

When we come on the Rebbe's shlichus to publicize the announcement of the Redemption, it does not have to be from our own strengths and talents. These capacities exist only for the purpose of serving the king, the Rebbe. We must know that we are the shluchim of Melech HaMoshiach, who asked us to announce to the entire generation that Moshiach is coming now and that we must prepare for his arrival.

In connection with these days following the Yom Tov of Pesach, this concept also comes into play

regarding the first besuras ha'geula, when G-d asked Moshe Rabbeinu to return to Egypt and spread the announcement of "I have surely remembered." Moshe Rabbeinu proceeded to "argue" with G-d, and while he eventually accepted the shlichus, he came with yet another claim at the last moment: "I am not a man of words – not yesterday, not the day before, not since You have spoken to Your servant, for I am heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue." Moshe Rabbeinu apologetically tried to explain that since he is a poor speaker, they will not listen to him.

Moshe Rabbeinu was absolutely right, however, G-d made it clear that Moshe would not be coming in

his own name, but in the name of G-d and with the strength that He bestows: "Who gave man a mouth, or who makes a person dumb or deaf, sighted or blind? Is it not I, G-d? And now go, and I will be with your mouth."

"As in the days of your going out from the land of Egypt," we must also act in a similar manner on the threshold of the current Redemption. Thus, as the Rebbe's chassidim, when our approach will be as mere shluchim, then the announcement of the Redemption will undoubtedly be accepted warmly and with great joy, stemming from the knowledge that the Redemption has indeed truly arrived.

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FOLLOW THE REBBE'S INSTRUCTIONS, LIKE A SOLDIER

BY MENACHEM ZIEGELBOIM

A military unit of the Czar filled the pasture fields near Lubavitch. The soldiers set up a temporary military base and slept in tents, waiting for orders to proceed. Among them was a group of Jewish soldiers, who kept their fathers' traditions despite the difficulties and insults their fellow soldiers hurled at them.

A few days before Pesach, the commanding officer convened the soldiers and ordered them to prepare to move, for soon they would be leaving for training exercises in training camps within Russia. The officer marked the long route they would be taking on their way to the training camps.

The Jewish soldiers, who had hoped they could spend the holiday right there, near a Jewish settlement, were greatly disappointed. They checked the timetables the officer had given them and realized they would have to spend Pesach in cities without Jews. This would be difficult on any holiday, but on Pesach it would be far harder, because this holiday requires extra care when it comes to kashrus.

That evening, the Jewish soldiers got together to discuss their options. After a protracted conversation, they decided that one of them should go to nearby Lubavitch to consult with the

Tzemach Tzedek, who was renowned among the Jews.

The next day, one of the soldiers

The soldiers looked at one another in astonishment. The idea was a fine one but which soldier would dare to go to their commanding officer and tell him his plan was no good? The soldiers debated amongst themselves for days but the time for their departure was approaching...

left for Lubavitch. When he arrived there, he had a private audience with the Rebbe. The soldier told the

Tzemach Tzedek about how difficult it was for them to observe kashrus in the army, and said they had hoped to celebrate Pesach in the area near Lubavitch so they could eat at Jewish homes. Now they were at a loss as to what to do, since their commanding officer had told them their new schedule.

The Rebbe looked calm and he gazed upon the soldier with a soothing look.

"I suggest," began the Rebbe, "that a delegation of soldiers go to your officer and tell him that his plan to enter Russia via Smolensk is no good, since the Russian cities are fifty viorsts apart and a man on foot doesn't have the strength to walk fifty viorsts in one day. So they will not be able to buy food and won't find a suitable place to sleep and will have to sleep in the field.

"And tell him," continued the Tzemach Tzedek, "that you have a better way of getting to the training camps, by changing the route to travel via the White Russian cities, Arshe, Shklov, Kapost, Mohilov. Over there, the towns are near one another, and it will be easy to arrange food and places to sleep for the tired soldiers. And this way, you too will be able to celebrate Pesach with the Jews of these towns."

The Tzemach Tzedek concluded with a personal request of the soldier.

“Aside from this, I have a personal request to make of you.”

The soldier stood even straighter and nodded, as though to say, “Yes sir.”

“I am certain that the officer will accept your request. If so, according to my calculations, you will spend the first days of Pesach in Shklov. You will certainly go to the shul to daven. After the davening, you will certainly be invited by one of the householders for the meal, and he will even invite you to sleep in his house overnight.

“I am asking you to go to his house for the seider but not to sleep there. Go sleep in the Green Beis Midrash, one of the well-known battei midrash in the town. On the last days of Pesach, you will have already arrived in Mohilov, and you will go to the shul and certainly one of the householders will invite you for the meal and to sleep in his house. After the meal, refuse to sleep there and go and sleep in the *hekdesh* (public area for wayfarers to sleep).”

The soldier nodded. Why the Rebbe requested what he did was beyond him. He returned to his fellow soldiers at the military base and told them what the Rebbe had said.

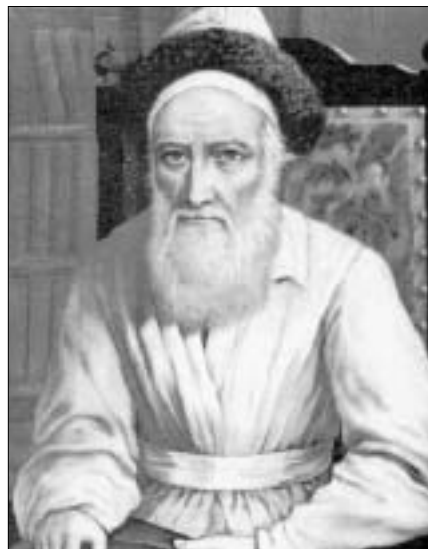
The soldiers looked at one another in astonishment. The idea was a fine one but which soldier would dare to go to their commanding officer and tell him his plan was no good? The soldiers debated amongst themselves for days but the time for their departure was approaching. They finally concluded that since the tzaddik had given them this advice, there was nothing to fear.

The soldiers sent a delegation, which tremblingly presented the change in route, explaining that this was the Rebbe’s idea. The officer’s face crinkled in concentration as he examined his maps again and again.

He found what the Rebbe said to be correct.

“Bravo!” he exclaimed in wonder, and on the spot, he ordered the change in their route, saying they would be marching through White Russia. The Jewish soldiers were thrilled, for they themselves hadn’t realized how easy it would be to convince him.

The tired unit of soldiers finished the first part of their long journey and entered Shklov on Erev Pesach, a few hours before Yom Tov. Their officer gave them leave for the first two days of the holiday.



The soldiers ran off to bathe and to change their clothes, and then went to shul. After the davening, the householders invited the soldiers to their homes. One of the householders invited the soldier who had had the yechidus with the Rebbe.

The soldier wondered what would happen next, knowing that the Rebbe had given him precise instructions and that something was afoot. He kept the information to himself and waited to see what would happen.

When the seider was over, the soldier got up to go. The balabus got up and exclaimed, “I didn’t only invite

you for the meal, but for sleeping too! It would be a great honor for me if you slept here. How can I let you go?”

The soldier swallowed a grin and politely thanked the man and said he was told not to sleep in his host’s house, and he left for the Green Shul.

It was dark in the shul, with only a faint glimmer from the *ner tamid*. The soldier sighed contentedly as he removed his boots and lay down to sleep.

Suddenly, he heard a moan from a corner of the shul. The soldier sprang up. He hadn’t realized somebody else was in the shul at this hour. He went over to where the sound had emanated from and made out the shadow of a man on one of the benches. He squinted and thought it was a homeless beggar.

“Why did you moan?” asked the soldier.

The beggar lifted a bony hand in a dismissive motion and said, “Ah, you are a strong soldier, and what would it help me to tell you? Go to sleep and sleep soundly.”

From the beggar’s voice, it sounded as though he was an older man who suffered. The soldier went back to his place to sleep but the old beggar’s moans pierced his heart. He got up once again and begged the man to tell him why he was moaning. It was only after he pleaded with him that the beggar agreed to talk.

“My name is Efraim, and throughout my life I worked as a tailor. I was well off. After many years of marriage, I was suddenly widowed. I was offered a shidduch with a young woman. We met and married.

“We lived happily and peacefully for a few weeks until a band of gypsy musicians came to town. My wife became friends with one of them, Vashka was his name, and I didn’t know about this.

“One time, when I wasn’t home,

the two of them took all my possessions and fled. If that wasn't enough, my creditors seized my home in exchange for what I owed them, and now I am without a wife, a home, and money. I don't even have a cent, and this happened because of my wayward wife and the wicked Vashka."

The soldier felt terrible when he heard this awful story. He began to console the old beggar and finally even suggested, "Since I am going with my unit from city to city, perhaps you can describe your wife and the gypsy to me, so in case I encounter them, I will recognize them."

The beggar sighed deeply and said, "Oh, the likelihood of that happening is so remote."

The soldier insisted though, until the old man described their appearance and gave him some clear signs by which he could identify them.

Immediately after the first two days of Yom Tov, the soldiers continued on their way. Erev Shvii Shel Pesach, the soldiers arrived in Mohilov on the banks of the Dnieper River.

Their commander allowed the Jewish soldiers two days off for Yom Tov. Once again, after the davening, the householders invited the soldiers to their homes. Our soldier was also invited.

After the meal, he went to sleep at the hekdesch, as the Rebbe had told him to do. He fell into a deep sleep. Late at night, he woke up to the sound of a racket. He jumped up in a fright. He quickly noticed a group of men talking in loud, coarse voices.

He had nearly gone back to "bed," when one of the men caught his attention. He stared for a while and thought it was the gypsy, the one who had robbed the old man! His suspicions were confirmed when he saw the gypsy approach a young



woman sitting on the side and exchange some joking words with her.

When he looked at her he realized that she matched the description he had been given, and it was the young wife who had stolen the old man's money.

Early in the morning, the soldier got up, ran to the home of the rav of Mohilev and woke him up. He apologized for waking him up so early and told the rav everything that had happened.

The rav realized this was serious and quickly got dressed, and together with the soldier they went to the home of the chief of police in Mohilev

and told him the story. The chief of police respected the rav and quickly sent officers to arrest the pair of rogues. The gypsy and the man's wife were quickly placed behind bars.

Right after Pesach, the rav sent for the beggar from Shklov, who identified the woman and the gypsy. He gave his wife a *get* and all his money was returned to him, down to the last penny.

The soldier saw how far-reaching and prophetic was the Tzemach Tzedek's gaze, for he anticipated all the events the soldier was to experience.

(From Reshimos D'varim, vol. 1 from the stories of

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CELEBRATING PESACH IN EGYPT

Hundreds of Israelis sat on mats near low tables and lived their dream of celebrating Pesach in Sinai, in the desert where the Jews wandered after leaving Egypt.

A MIRACLE ON THE WAY TO THEIR DESTINATION

“We felt a mighty blow and we all woke up,” relates Ofer Krifur [see “My Sister the Shlucha” in issue 498 for more about Ofer and his wife Yaell]. “We immediately understood what had happened. We had all been up for the third night in a row. The first night, we packed food, clothes, Hagados, brochures, s’farim, everything! The second night, we went to Eilat. Now, the third night, we left on the long trip to the Sinai peninsula.

“One by one, everybody fell asleep. The last one to fall asleep was the driver. That’s when the car veered off the road and smashed into the guard rail on the side of the road. From the force of the crash, the car then flew back to the road and a passing car nearly collided with us. Our driver woke up and within seconds, he managed to straighten out the car and miraculously prevent another accident.

“He stopped the car and we all

got out, shocked when we saw the damage. The entire length of the car was banged up but the Rebbe’s picture was untouched. How was that possible? We all knew it was miraculous, and that it happened in the Rebbe’s merit. Thus, accustomed to miracles, we continued on our way to the area where many Israelis congregated.”

* * *

The suggestion to hold a Pesach seider in Sinai was put forth at the yeshivas Daas, a yeshiva for baalei t’shuva in Rechovot run by Rabbi Yitzchok Ered. Ofer, one of the talmidim in the yeshiva, had married two months before and still felt like a talmid in the yeshiva. He took on this project of making a seider for hundreds of Israeli tourists in the Sinai.

Ofer organized a group of men and T’mimim, talmidim and graduates of the yeshiva, as well as Menachem Mendel Kenig, a Tamimshliach to the yeshiva. The first thing that needed to be done was to raise the money for the trip and to

buy supplies and food. The members of the group donated the money from their own pockets and also raised additional money from amongst Anash.

The members of the group received positive answers from the Rebbe MH”M through the Igros Kodesh. Rabbi Ered pushed the project through and Rabbi M.M. Gluckowsky, rav of the Chabad community in Rechovot, guided them through the halachic end of things.

Three weeks before Pesach, Ofer and some of the others, made a pilot trip to Sinai to check things out. “We went via Eilat where we met Rabbi Shimon Eisenbach, who was happy to hear about our project and promised to help us.

“In Sinai, a friend of mine came along with us. He was studying ethnology and was doing research on the Bedouins who live in Sinai. He introduced us to Bedouins and we arranged that they would prepare a space and buildings for our group as well as a large tent for the seider.”

SINGING YECHI SAVED THE WINE

“We left Rechovot with a pickup packed with matzos, wine, grape juice, bugless lettuce, fish, vegetables, pots and other supplies, and lots of food. We were men,



Huts and camels in the desert - a typical sight in Sinai.

women, and children as well as some T'mimim.

“When we got to Eilat, we found out that at the border with Egypt they were only allowing private vehicles through, not commercial vehicles. How would we get all our stuff through? Rabbi Menachem

Klein, of the Chabad house in Eilat, came to our aid. He found us a truck with a driver who agreed to take our load until the border crossing where we would transfer to a vehicle rented from the local Bedouins.

“I knew that between the border crossings there was a distance of

some kilometers, and that between the crossings a commercial vehicle couldn't enter. I didn't know how we would manage to transfer all our stuff between border crossings.

“At night we traveled with Rabbi Eisenbach who brought a Torah with him, until the border crossing. Miraculously, they allowed the truck to cross until the next border crossing, and this made transferring the supplies to the pickup truck waiting on the Egyptian side easier.

“Then we had to go through a meticulous customs check. The Egyptians began checking box after box and we prayed they wouldn't get to the boxes of wine. We knew that in Moslem countries there's a big problem with bringing in alcoholic beverages.

“We spontaneously began singing Yechi, and starting dancing too. We thought we would distract the officials from their work. In the end, the customs official exempted us from the rest of the search.



Ofer near the “first Chabad house” in Sinai

“After a long trip, as a new day began on Thursday, the 10th of Nissan, we arrived at the Hassan Beach area where many Israelis congregate. On this shore, which is on the eastern side of the Sinai peninsula, there are dozens of huts and a few cement buildings. One of them became our shul and another one became our kitchen.

“It took hours until we set up the electricity. Water came once a week in containers. The containers fill a large reservoir on the roof of one of the buildings, and the water comes down to the entire area in pipes.

“Some of the group began organizing our supplies as Rabbi Eisenbach, along with some of the guys, set up an eiruv so we could carry on Shabbos.

“In the evening, we farbrenged with a group of Israeli students touring the area. Rabbi Eisenbach, who came just for one day, farbrenged for hours. He said that today is Yud Nissan, the day that Miriam the Prophetess passed away. It was in her merit that the Jews had water in the desert.

“On Friday, Yud-Alef Nissan and the Rebbe’s birthday, our group did mitzva t’fillin with the Israelis in the area. We invited them all to the seider with Chabad.

“Naveh, a member of our group, hung up a huge sign which said, ‘The Seder Night with Chabad.’ Many Israelis, who were in Sinai for a long time, had forgotten that Pesach was approaching.

“On Shabbos we davened and had the meals with many Israelis. They were amazed that the Chabadnikim had come to Sinai. A fellow by the name of Avshalom recognized one of the T’mimim in our group, from when he was on shlichus in India. Avshalom was touched, and he decided to help us. He did a lot to bring Israelis to the



Eren Bar-Shalom inviting an Israeli to the seider



Low tables and mats for the seider

davening and the Shabbos and Yom Tov meals.”

“...THAT OUR FATHERS ATE IN EGYPT?!”

“On Erev Yom Tov a huge tent was erected in which low tables and mats and cushions were arranged in the traditional Bedouin way. In the kitchen, it looked like any Chassidic kitchen, as members of the group and many tourists who came to help,

got the simanim and food for the seider ready. One peeled tomatoes and another squeezed oranges. Since the bug-free lettuce had rotted, we had to buy regular lettuce and check it carefully.

“Yom Tov night, many Israelis convened in the shul. The women lit candles and the men began davening Mincha, followed by a festive Maariv. Then everybody went to the large tent and sat around the tables for the



The Rebbe's picture wasn't damaged in the accident

during the course of the seider. 'This is the poor bread that our fathers ate in Egypt,' was read and many smiled. Our fathers in Egypt ate matza? We too were eating matzos in Egypt. Everybody recited the Ma Nishtana together and it was a joyous atmosphere.

"In the meantime, Egyptian security personnel had come, including the official in charge of the eastern Sinai coast. About 200 police officers were posted along all the roads that led to our area in order to protect the celebrating Jews. Bedouins and their friends who came received Sheva Mitzvos brochures.

"At the end of the seider, the tourists thanked us for making a seider in the Sinai, and said goodbye."

* * *

The next day and in the days that followed, the group continued their work. "We had t'fillos and shiurim, we gave out matza and spread the besuras ha'Geula to Jews and gave out Sheva Mitzvos brochures to Arabs."

On Motzaei Shabbos, ten days after they arrived, the group left Egypt and returned to Eretz Yisroel.

I asked Ofer if this was a one-time event and he said, "Our plan is to print a Tanya on Lag B'Omer in the place where we made the seider, but getting there with the printing equipment and everything we would need, costs a lot of money. If we get a donor, we'll do it."



Rabbi Eisenbach with the seifer Torah

first seider ever made in the Sinai desert under Egyptian sovereignty.

"There were children too, and they got nuts for good answers

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THE CHASSID WHO EXEMPLIFIED MESIRUS NEFESH

BY MENACHEM ZIEGELBOIM

*We recently lost the great Chassid, R' Michoel Teitelbaum a"h. Aside from being an outstanding Chassid, he fearlessly fought to spread Torah and Chassidus during the terror-filled days in Soviet Russia. He never thought of himself, but did what had to be done with great courage. He was also goodhearted and was a "Nachshon" for every good thing. * Part 1 of 3.*

Rav Michoel Teitelbaum a"h was born in Veliki-loki in 5672 (1912). His parents were Rav Chaim Moshe and Tzivya. The exact date of his birth is not known, but his son, R' Lazer, relates that his father would celebrate his birthday in Cheshvan, the day he first saw the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach!

A few weeks before he was born, his great-uncle, R' Michoel Bliner ("Der Alter"), the famous mashpia in Lubavitch who was known for his outstanding middos and his devotion to the T'mimim, passed away. Relatives did not tell Tzivya about

this, fearing that the news would be harmful in her condition.

One night, Tzivya had a strange dream. In her dream, she was lost in a big forest and suddenly her uncle, Michoel der Alter, appeared and extricated her from the forest. Before they parted, he told her that since she would be giving birth to a boy, she should name the baby after him.

When Tzivya woke up and understood the significance of the dream, she suspected the truth about her uncle and found out about his passing. Naturally, when she gave birth to a son, she knew what to

name him.

Later, it became clear that R' Michoel did not only receive his great-uncle's name but had also inherited his sterling character and his mesirus nefesh for everything associated with Chassidus.

We do not know much about R' Michoel's childhood except that the Rebbe Rayatz told him to live near the Charitonov family, who were known as *baalei menagnim* (musical talents). R' Michoel had a good voice, which he inherited from his father who was a chazan, and the Rebbe told him to learn niggunim from the Charitonovs.

In his youth, R' Michoel had the privilege of spending time with the Rebbe Rayatz in Leningrad.

In 5687 (1927), when he was fifteen years old, R' Michoel entered Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim, which was run by the Rebbe Rayatz. This was despite the great danger at the time because of the persecution by the G.P.U. and later the NKVD.

R' Michoel learned in Vitebsk for a while. R' Michel Rapaport tells us about the yeshiva there:

"The learning began each day at 4:30 a.m. All talmidim were in their

place and nothing stopped us, not the bitter cold nor the frost and snow. We learned in the Ezras Nashim (women's section) of the

Chabad shul. We closed the doors, the windows, and the curtains, so our presence wouldn't be noticed. There was no electricity and we

learned by the weak light of lamps.
"We learned until seven o'clock, and then went down to the shul so that people wouldn't realize we had



צילום: מיטל

Rabbi Michael Teitelbaum

been in the Ezras Nashim, and it would seem to them that we had just come to shul. A few of us slept with baalei battim in the city, while others slept on benches in the shul, each one having a pillow, sheet, and blanket. ...

“The next winter they arrested fifteen people, rabbanim, askanim, and distinguished members of the city, and they threw us out. We had to leave Vitebsk.”

Rabbi Yisroel Levin describes the painful scene, from which we can see how sensitive R' Michoel was even as a young man: “The mashgiach and mashpia said that each of us should travel with a friend to his city, where they could study. I stayed with R' Michoel Teitelbaum and we split the money for the expenses of the trip.

“There were boys who cried and said that when they got home they would have sisters and aunts and other relatives who were communists, and they would be ruined. R' Michoel cried when hearing this, but we had no choice, we had to flee quickly.”

In the winter of 5691 (1931), R' Michoel learned in the branch of Tomchei T'mimim in Zarutzei, but one day the police came and arrested him along with other T'mimim who were learning with him: Hertzel Minkowitz and Avrohom Aharon Mann.

It wasn't hard to feel the noose tighten, but R' Michoel got up the courage to ask for a visa from Riga so he could go there. We know this from a letter that the Rebbe Rayatz sent to the famous Chassid, R' Chonye Morozov (may Hashem avenge his blood) about obtaining exit papers to Riga, at the end of which he writes:

Regarding what Mendel and Michoel think, it is correct and Hashem should help them and to be shortly by the Rav of Nevel.



Young R' Michoel in a picture he sent to the Rebbe Rayatz

Apparently, R' Mendel Morozov and R' Michoel Teitelbaum tried to get papers for Riga. They asked the Rebbe Rayatz about this and R' Michoel himself got an answer from the Rebbe:

Regarding your question and the question of your friend, Menachem Mendel, you should submit for [a

visa to] Riga by regular means, and Hashem should help you succeed and obtain permission. I was very pleased to hear how you and your friend are, and want to know about the children of your father.

However, the two of them were unable to leave Russia, apparently because of the decision of the government of Latvia to stop giving visas to Russian refugees. So the two of them decided to try and obtain a visa and tickets for Eretz Yisroel.

At that time, a letter was received from Rav Yehuda Eber, approving the efforts being made to obtain fifteen visas for fifteen T'mimim, including R' Michoel. R' Eber's writing was tiny and written in code. He wrote “15” and the letter **Samech** (with the letter Samech written as a period). The hanhala of the yeshiva knew that the period was the letter Samech and that it was the first letter of the word “simanim,” the code word for bachurim.

The letter was confiscated by the GPU, and they asked Anash who were imprisoned to explain the letter. Anash didn't know the code. The



2 Shvat 5750, R' Michoel receiving a dollar from the Rebbe

head of the GPU, who was a gentile, said to them, "Just now, I had one of your old people who explained that the period is 'simanim' and 'simanim' are bachurim. You want to send fifteen bachurim abroad. For this crime, the Chassidim will sit in jail for a long time."

Shortly afterwards, R' Michoel was freed, but he continued to learn Torah, being a model of a Chassid. R' Yehoshua Katzenelbogen relates:

"In the years 5692-3 (1932-33), when the communists and their helpers, the Yevsektzia (the Jewish communists), ran roughshod so that Jews would send their children to state schools, our parents – Rav Michoel and Mrs. Sarah Katzenelbogen – sent us away from home to wander to other cities and various secret places, so we could learn Torah. Our parents were so concerned about kosher chinuch for their children that they brought six older bachurim to their home, including Michoel Teitelbaum. Our home was a place of Torah and t'filla and took care of everyone's needs. Our parents disregarded the burden of supporting six additional bachurim (when it was hard to support themselves), and took care of them lovingly. This was in order that the bachurim serve as role models for their children."

The persecutions intensified. The T'mimim were pursued wherever and whenever they were discovered. However, the T'mimim continued fearlessly preserving the flame of Torah and Judaism, to the point of mesirus nefesh.

A member of the hanhala of yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim wrote a letter to the Rebbe Rayatz at the beginning of the summer of 5693, reporting about the talmidim. He mentioned R' Michoel Teitelbaum, who was learning in Starya Russia:

Michoel (son of the Chassidishe chazan z"l) his kishronos are good,

he is an ovoid and very diligent, completely G-d-fearing, a scholar.

R' Michoel learned at this branch until the end of 5694 and then he went to learn in Kursk. You can read about the yeshiva in Kursk in the memoirs of Rabbi Binyamin Gorodetzky a"h, who lists the talmidim who learned there. The

"Now, years later, it sounds like a nice story, but when it happened, we were in literal danger of life. Each move entailed fear of death. If I aroused any suspicion, my life was in danger. Don't forget, this was about kidnapping children from a government institution, and something like this could end in a death sentence on the spot, without a trial!"

branch in Kursk lasted until Elul 5695, when a new branch opened for older students in the city of Voronizh. R' Michoel went there to learn, together with R' Sholom Vilenkin and R' Shaul Steinbach.

Rabbi Yisroel Levin writes the following in his memoirs:

"...because R' Yona (Cohen, may Hashem avenge his blood, the menahel of the network of yeshivos Tomchei T'mimim) wanted the older bachurim, who would soon need shidduchim, to first receive hashpaa from the Chassid Rav Betzalel Wilschansky. I came to Voronizh, where R' Michoel Teitelbaum, R' Shaul Proiposker, Sholom Vilenkin...and R' Betzalel Wilschansky farbrenged with us often."

One day in the year 5697, a group of senior T'mimim were called to a secret meeting. The meeting took place in the home of R' Zalman Pruss a"h. It was a terrible time. The communists intensified the persecution. They frequently and suddenly arrested people as they walked down the street, and sent them to Siberia for years. People were terrified.

R' Yona Cohen called the meeting and somberly said that a number of young men had just been arrested and sent to exile, leaving behind young wives, and some of them left young children too, and who knew whether they would ever be seen again.

In order not to endanger young married men even more, it was decided that senior bachurim would take over, and would teach in the different branches. This way, if they were arrested, they wouldn't be leaving wives who were agunos.

After giving out the jobs, the meeting ended, though not before the ironic and frightening announcement, "When we meet again, if they don't take us to jail in the meantime, we'll speak further."

R' Michoel, who always felt ahavas Yisroel and a sense of responsibility, began bringing young bachurim to other yeshivos. He left immediately and brought four young boys – Leib Mochkin, Yoel Duchman, Mendel Raskin, and Yehoshua

Katzenellenbogen – to the yeshiva in Krivirog, and from there he went to Zhitomir, where he ran the yeshiva in place of the rosh yeshiva, Rabbi Eliezer Pinsky, who married in the interim. R' Michoel did his job with great mesirus nefesh and fearlessly, although he knew what awaited him if he was caught.

R' Michoel wrote the following at the end of Shvat 5697, in a letter:

“I had to travel here to Zhitomir and for a number of reasons, I was delayed for about two months...and I am here three weeks...to complete the work imposed upon me according to the true (Divine) intent.”

R' Michoel put himself on the front lines and he did his work faithfully, being an outstanding role model for his talmidim.

Rabbi Moshe Aharon Geisinsky, who was one of R' Michoel's talmidim at that time, describes R' Michoel from the perspective of the talmidim: “The position [of Rabbi Eliezer Pinsky] in Zhitomir was filled by a bachur, ha'Tamim, a Chassid who conducts himself with Chassidus, etc., etc., Michoel Teitelbaum.”

The branch in Zhitomir lasted three years, a long period of time considering the conditions. At the end of the summer 5697, the yeshiva was closed and R' Michoel, as a loyal soldier, traveled on to the branch in Voronizh. R' Sholom Vilenkin wrote the following to the Rebbe Rayatz (on 19 Cheshvan 5698):

“We have here with us my son, Michoel Etz-Tamar [lit. date tree, i.e., Teitelbaum] and Yisroel Levin of Lipovitz and Shaul Steinbach. In general, the place is fairly suitable for our work, and may Hashem grant us success.”

When R' Sholom Vilenkin was forced to leave town, R' Michoel was appointed mashgiach in his place. He

taught and was mashgiach and made sure things were as they should be. The learning continued until the middle of the winter when the talmidim heard about the anticipated arrival in the city of the “known informer.” The talmidim, who were familiar with the danger of this informer, left town.

While R' Michoel was in Voronizh, he met two young, talented boys, Refael Wilschansky

and Refael Brook. The first was the son of his mashpia, Rabbi Betzael Wilschansky, and R' Michoel convinced him to travel to learn in the yeshiva in Zhitomir. R' Michoel also persuaded the parents of Refael Brook to send their son there, and the two boys left for Zhitomir.

The night of 24 Teives 5698, the two boys sat together with the other talmidim at a Chassidishe farbrengen with their teacher, Rabbi Moshe



Rubinson, in the cellar of the Berditchever Kloiz. Suddenly, the police burst in and arrested the nine boys.

“The farbrengen began pleasantly,” relates Rabbi Yechezkel Brod, over fifty years later. “We sat around a big table and had bread, herring, boiled potatoes, and mashke of course. We washed and farbrenged. We sat with R’ Moshe Rubinson and R’ Berel Gurewitz, who told stories and said words of inspiration. The main point was about the need to serve Hashem with complete kabbalas ol, without asking why, serving Hashem because this is the will of G-d. R’ Moshe explained at length, the sin of Shaul HaMelech, who, despite his high spiritual level, sinned and fell, since he sought reasons. We were also urged to be punctilious about the times for s’darim and to value every minute.

“We sat and thirstily drank in every word. Intermittently, we sang niggunei Chabad, which pulled at my heartstrings. The atmosphere was amazing.”

They didn’t feel the cold that prevailed outdoors. They sat around the table and spoke and sang, said l’chaim, and then quietly sang another Chabad niggun.

It was one in the morning, when they suddenly heard noises at the door and voices in Russian demanding that they open the door. There was no need to say a word. They knew who was there. Someone mumbled, “At least we got to farbreng.”

The boys worked quickly, as though they had trained for this moment. Everything was removed from the table and within seconds, not even a talmid was visible. Each one found a hiding place at the other end of the cellar, behind the junk lying around.

In the meantime, the pounding at

the door got louder and the door broke. The angels of destruction entered, brandishing revolvers. After a careful search, they found everyone. Herschel Tzeitlin sat squeezed into his hiding place as he heard the footsteps of the approaching police. His heart raced in fear but he mouthed a prayer that they wouldn’t be discovered, that they should vanish.

The police used lanterns to search every corner of the cellar and that is how they discovered all the boys. They put them, one by one, at the doorway. Those already found watched sadly as the wicked ones pulled out another one and another

In the meantime, the pounding at the door got louder and the door broke. The angels of destruction entered, brandishing revolvers...

one.

Later they discovered that they had been informed on. The police knew the precise number of talmidim and teachers, and when they counted them and saw that the number matched their list, they stopped searching.

The boys were taken to jail, where they were interrogated for a month. Since they maintained that they did not have parents, or that their parents were far away, they were sent to be reeducated at a government school for orphans.

The boys, however, did not conform to their new environment.

They refrained from eating non-kosher food, and did not remove their caps. They were taken to a different orphanage, a tougher place that was run by the NKVD.

The one who mobilized to help them, while putting his own life on the line, was R’ Michoel Teitelbaum. In an interview two years ago, for the book, *Chassidim V’Anshei Maaseh*, R’ Teitelbaum agreed to reminisce about those days, along with the boys who had, in the meantime, grown up and become grandfathers and great-grandfathers.

“For a period of time, I lived in Voronizh, where two special boys, Refael Wilschansky and Refael Brook, lived. I taught them for a while, and afterwards, when I heard that there was a yeshiva ketana in Berditchev, I convinced them to go there to learn. After they were imprisoned, their parents came to me and said, ‘You sent them there, now you get them back!’

“I went to Zhitomir, which is near Berditchev, where I met the Tamim, R’ Mordechai Lazer Lapatovsky. When I told him what had happened and asked him whether I should put myself in danger, and whether I should do so on Shabbos, when the chances of success were greater, he told me I should. He said, ‘You must go to Berditchev and see what’s happening with the boys, and do everything you can to rescue them, even if it’s Shabbos, for it’s pikuach nefesh.’ R’ Binyamin Gorodetzky sent me money from Voronizh for this rescue mission.

“I decided to get the boys out, no matter what, and to bring them to a safe place. I was ready to do this even if it took mesirus nefesh. Should six precious souls, children of Torah observant Jews, remain among gentiles?!

“I didn’t know what to do though, especially when I had grown a small beard, which made traveling

dangerous. I wrapped a bandage around my face as people with a toothache would do, and went to Berditchev. Upon my arrival there, I didn't know where to sleep. Someone told me about an older couple who lived on a side street. They agreed to host me.

"In the morning, I went to the 'Kloiz' shul of Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev. I went to a side room and put on t'fillin and davened. Then I went to the market and began wandering around, devising a plan and checking out possibilities of how to rescue the boys. At that time, many townspeople, Jews and l'havdil, gentiles, had been imprisoned, and it was very dangerous to walk the streets.

"Suddenly, I noticed two boys from the yeshiva walking through the crowded marketplace. One of them was Refael Wilschansky, whom I had taught in Voronizh. I motioned to them to follow me to the shul, where I asked them how they were and where the other boys were.

"They said they had been taken to the orphanage on the outskirts of Berditchev, where the authorities wanted to uproot religion from them. They constantly reiterated that the boys should be like everyone else and not different in their Judaism. The boys said they had not been contaminated by non-kosher food, and managed to subsist on crumbs.

"I told them why I was there in Berditchev, to help them escape. I said that it was worthwhile attempting to flee on Shabbos because they weren't as closely guarded. We all knew the punishment for running away was severe, and the chances of success weren't great, but the youth leaders didn't suspect that the boys had the courage to carry this out. I suggested that they leave in pairs, in a seemingly innocent fashion."

Thoughts of escaping preoccupied

the six boys in the orphanage. They walked around with sharpened senses, on the alert for a way out. One day, Herschel Tzeitlin, one of the boys, overheard a telephone conversation between one of the directors and his superior. The director complained that the six boys were tough and suggested that they be transferred to an even harsher institution. Heschel told the other boys what he had heard.

On their next walk, they boys told R' Michoel about the phone

"I decided to get the boys out, no matter what, and to bring them to a safe place. I was ready to do this even if it took mesirus nefesh. Should six precious souls, children of Torah observant Jews, remain among gentiles?!"

conversation. It served as a warning and speeded up their plans to escape. About a month after they had arrived at the orphanage, they got the signal from the rescuers about Escape Day. It was agreed that they would flee on Shabbos afternoon, when some of the staff went home before their day of rest, and the supervision was weaker.

At first, the boys refused to flee and travel on Shabbos, and they conveyed this in hints. In the "return mail" of the next day, they were told

that Rabbi Mordechai Eliezer Lapatovsky had told R' Michoel that it was a mitzva, and there was no greater pikuach nefesh. Hearing this, the boys agreed to leave on Shabbos, and even said amongst themselves that in the merit of the holiness of Shabbos, they would be successful.

R' Michoel Teitelbaum:

"In the meantime, until Shabbos, I checked out different escape routes, for walking on the main street was dangerous. In the end, I found roundabout ways, through gardens and fields, until the train station. It was a long way.

"Shabbos arrived. I got up early in the morning and davened and took money with me, as R' Mordechai Lazer had told me this was allowed because it was the mitzva of redeeming captives. I went to the train station and bought six tickets, each pair to a different destination: two to Kiev, two to Zhlobin, and two to Moscow. How do you buy six tickets at one time? The cashier and the ever-present eyes would certainly notice something peculiar!

"I had one choice and that was to give money to one of the porters who worked at the train station, so he could buy the tickets for me. He stood in line, bought a ticket, and left. A few minutes later, he got back in line and bought another ticket. The third time, he went to a different cashier, stood in line, and bought a ticket. He left the line and went to a different cashier.

"Now, years later, it sounds like a nice story, but when it happened, we were in literal danger of life. Each move entailed fear of death. If I aroused any suspicion, my life was in danger. Don't forget, this was about kidnapping children from a government institution, and something like this could end in a death sentence on the spot, without a trial!

“Their leaving was timed to coincide, as closely as possible, with the train timetables. I waited for them outside the fence that surrounded the orphanage, and from that moment on, we began a race against the clock. I knew that every minute counted, every second had to be reckoned, otherwise we could be discovered.

“I began to walk towards the train station along the roundabout route I had previously mapped, while the boys followed me in pairs. They were at a great distance from one another so they wouldn't be conspicuous. When I got to the station, I bent over for a moment, as a signal, and they knew that the time had come. The six boys entered a pre-determined hiding place near the station, where

they waited until shortly before the trains would leave so they wouldn't be seen at the train station. In the meantime, I distributed the tickets.

“That day was a busy one at the train station. I

stood on the side and watched the six boys, to make sure that they all boarded trains, each pair off to its destination. I waited with my own train ticket until I saw the trains had left. It was only then that I returned to my hosts, and on Motzaei Shabbos, I fled the city. I went to Kiev and from there, I returned to Voronizh.

“We were overjoyed. We drank l'chaim together and thanked the good G-d for the kindness He had done to us. We had rescued innocent children from the hands of the wicked. Today, I can see how 'young kids became mature goats,' and upright generations descended from these children, precious Jews, T'mimim and Chassidim, with children and grandchildren who perpetuate the Torah of their fathers and teachers.”

(To be continued.)

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ב"ה

WHAT'S THE EXCITEMENT?

BY RABBI NAFTALI ESTULIN
TRANSLATED BY MICHOEL LEIB DOBRY

There's a story about the Rebbe MH" M's chief secretary, Rabbi Chaim Mordechai Isaac Chadakov, of blessed memory, who once spoke with one of the shlichim about the need to expand his activities and purchase a new building. When the shliach said that he encountered great difficulties in the construction of the previous building and had no money for another building, Rabbi Chadakov replied that he should be fired for saying such a thing!

"You don't believe that I have no money?" the shliach asked.

"I believe you," Rabbi Chadakov said. "But your problem is that you think that **you** built the first building! If it had been clear to you that the first building was built with the strength of the Rebbe, you would build another building!"

I was reminded of this story when I heard the broken spirited voices rising within our ranks after all the chances to bring down the disengagement plan politically had failed.

Our problem is that we think that our entire foothold in Eretz Yisroel is a natural phenomenon, dependent upon which government runs the country at the time. The truth is that if things depended upon Israeli governments, all of the territories would have been returned long ago,

including the Old City of Jerusalem, and we would be faced with a war over the Jewish settlement of the rest of tiny Eretz Yisroel. The Rebbe has already revealed to us that immediately after the Six Day War, an Israeli delegation was sent to Washington to determine ways to give back all the liberated territories to the Arabs.

Beis Moshiach recently printed an answer from the Rebbe in connection with the Likud Party, where he writes that after Camp David, it became a political party just like all the others. Therefore, since all parties were now prepared to weigh political considerations in order to return portions of Eretz Yisroel, it would be a tragic mistake to rely upon a political party, thinking that it would never agree to give away parts of Eretz Yisroel.

We have been eulogizing Israeli democracy lately. However, anyone who knows what true democracy is knows that Israel was never such a democracy. The little politicians of the major political parties have never abhorred any means to achieve their objectives. The scandals regarding the children of Yemen and Tehran prove that we're dealing with cold and heartless people who are ready to sell everything for graft and power. They're even ready to sell Eretz Yisroel for political honor in the world at-

large...

The real reason why Jews continue to live and settle throughout Eretz Yisroel is the war being fought by the Rebbe MH" M. The Rebbe is waging the war of G-d, and has succeeded in a most supernatural manner in preventing the handover of the liberated territories of Eretz Yisroel. Peace plans have come and gone, but the Jewish settlements continue to stand firm – all due to the revealed miracles of the Rebbe MH" M.

Just as the children of Israel before *Krias Yam Suf*, we are also bearing witness to an miraculous salvation of our people, as we can already hear the sound of the hoofbeats of the horses in Pharaoh's army. This reminds us of Rashi's question: "Where did they have these animals...for it is said, 'And there died all the cattle of Egypt'? Whose were they? From those who feared the Word of G-d (as they brought in their animals from the fields, and they were saved)."

The problem is not with Sharon and the ruling party. They draw their strength from the chareidi parties, those who pretend to "fear the word of G-d."

I have heard people expressing their hopes for Sharon's demise. First of all, as Jews, our way is to hope that "**sins** should be destroyed; not sinners," and expressions of that type

are totally unacceptable. The most we should hope for is for him to go back and tend to the sheep on his farm, and not the sheep in his government. However, even his departure from political life will be to no avail, as the whole Knesset is utterly rotted down to the core.

The problem is that there are some among us who have placed their faith in certain politicians. The Rebbe Rayatz was known to say that when a pious Jew of great stature misses out on a minute of his studies, this leads another Jew to desecrate Yom Kippur. If certain Chabad chassidim reason that the salvation will come through Israeli politics, it's no wonder that there are those who still think that the founding of the State of Israel marked "Is'chalta d'Geula" (the advent of the Redemption). Thus, while I have heard many prominent rabbis in the national-religious camp who have called for the removal of the words "the start of the sprouting of our Redemption" from prayer liturgy, nevertheless, many others still believe that in spite of everything, the state is still considered "kodesh ha'kadashim."

My father, of blessed memory, told me a story about the chassid, R. Shmuel Munkes, who made a shidduch between his daughter and the son of a very prominent chassid. When the *mechusan* arrived at R. Shmuel's home, he saw his future daughter-in-law dressed in tatters. In utter astonishment, he turned to R. Shmuel and said, "How can this be? I'm also not a wealthy man, but such

poverty?!"

"You're lucky that we've already agreed to the shidduch," R. Shmuel replied. "If I would have known that you were such a 'baal hispaalus' (excitable type), I wouldn't have entered into such a match with you. I've seen her this way for eighteen years, and I didn't reach the degree of astonishment that you did after just

"Your problem is that you think that you built the first building! If it had been clear to you that the first building was built with the strength of the Rebbe, you would build another building!"

one minute..."

Almost forty years have passed since the Six Day War. Forty years of tireless efforts by successive Israeli governments to *ch"v* give away portions of Eretz Yisroel to the Arabs. The only one who stood up to prevent this from happening was the Rebbe MH"M.

Anyone who looks at this picture

in the proper manner will have no need to get overexcited about what has been happening recently. True, we must vehemently protest the government's policies in every possible manner with all our strength, and to do everything in our ability to thwart these dangerous proposals. However, by the same token, we must know the truth, and it is most appropriate to publicize it everywhere: **The real solution does not depend upon a certain political party or politician. The real solution will come from hiskashrus to the Rebbe MH"M and the fulfillment of his instructions, especially publicizing the announcement of the true Redemption, as a weighted response to the erroneous concept of "Is'chalta d'Geula."**

We must strengthen and encourage the residents of Gush Katif, and explain to them that the Rebbe is conducting everything through sheer miracles. Ehud Barak was ready to give everything to Arafat, and according to the natural way of things, there was nothing that could stop him. Nevertheless, the Rebbe managed to foil everything at the last minute, and he will do the same with Sharon's plans in his most miraculous fashion, immediately *mamash*.

In the meantime, we must continue with full force with the great campaign to hasten the revelation of the Rebbe MH"M, and proclaim together loudly:

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“THEY WANT TO KILL MY SON AGAIN!”

FRIDAY, 21 ADAR II, NEVE DEKALIM, GUSH KATIF. Life carries on as usual, despite the decree. In Gush Katif there's an inexplicable calm. It's emuna that is above reason; complete bitachon that the terrible decree will be annulled.

We went to the Yolles family, residents of Neve Dekalim. Friday marked 12 years since their son, Itai, passed away. Before he died, he asked to be buried here, in Gush Katif. They plan to visit his gravesite before noon. The decree that hovers over them and their son is apparent on the faces of the family. The very thought that a Jew would dare to violate a grave, reopens the family's wound. Nevertheless, they have bitachon that a miracle will take place.

The father, Shlomo, is a man of incredible faith. He radiates bitachon. He sees his son's request to be buried in Gush Katif as a sort of minor prophecy.

After visiting his son's grave, where he prayed and asked his son to create a tumult in heaven to get the Disengagement decree annulled, Shlomo spoke with us and told us what he thinks and feels.

Sometimes it seems as though the thought that someone will touch your son's grave is far worse than the whole expulsion plan.

Around the world, when Jewish

graves are attacked, everybody screams, “anti-Semitism!” But over here, this is a relatively fresh grave. It wasn't hundreds of years ago that we buried my son, Itai, whom we lost, and there are people who intend on desecrating his grave. It's not gentiles who are planning this, but our fellow Jews! They don't even allow us to demonstrate outside the home of the chief



military chaplain.

Tell us about your family.

We are the sixth generation in Yerushalayim. My wife, on her mother's side, are also sixth generation in Yerushalayim. My grandfather's grandfather, wrote the book *B'Sh'orayich Yerushalayim*. I am a descendent of the Maggid of

Zlotchov and a grandson of the talmid of the Chasam Sofer, Maharam Schick. After we married, I worked as a secretary of the yeshiva in Kfar Maimon, and then it was suggested that we move to Gush Katif.

At first, we lived in Yishuv Gadid, and 23 years ago, for Rosh HaShana 5742, we moved to Neve Dekalim. Gush Katif is a place of Yiddishkeit, Torah, and chesed; everything a Jew needs.

In Gush Katif, the residents have to deal with enemies from within and without. Those who know Gush, know how much Torah and chesed is here. I experienced it myself. At the bar mitzva celebration of my son, Itai, I told my guests that Chazal says, “a person should always live in a place which has Torah scholars.” The support I received here... I couldn't manage without them. It's only in a place of k'dusha and tahara that you find such warmth, love, and mutual aid.

You have no idea how many loads of vegetables go out of Gush Katif daily to be distributed to the needy around the country. There's so much Torah and chesed here. If only in this merit, Hashem should annul the decree.

12 years ago, your family had a terrible tragedy with the loss of your son after an illness. How did



you manage?

Itai Refael became sick with leukemia at the age of eleven and a half. At first, we thought he had recovered. We were able to celebrate his bar mitzva. He underwent a bone marrow transplant. But he died at age fourteen and a half, on 21 Adar, 5753. Itai was buried in Gush Katif, as he requested. When the doctors said they could do nothing more, Itai told his mother that he wanted to be buried here.

He would never have dreamed of such a horror: the exhuming of bodies buried in Gush Katif.

He definitely considered the possibility that they might want to give Gush Katif away. He referred to Yosef's prophecy, "pakod pakad'ti" (I will surely remember). It was definitely a minor prophecy that Itai had. Till this day, we derive much bitachon and emuna from him.

Itai's emuna is indescribable. He felt that Gush Katif is our home. He was proud of this place and proud of its people. His emuna gives us the strength to remain and deal with the hardships.

How do you see the situation

now?

It's the day after the courts decided to recognize Reform conversions from abroad, and I say something that says it all: The Knesset had disengaged from Eretz Yisroel and the Supreme Court has disengaged from Am Yisroel. That sums up everything going on here. Disengagement from everything of holiness.

One would expect the situation to lead you to despair.

Emuna doesn't need explanations. You can't argue with faith. We believe that Hashem, in His great mercy and kindness, will annul this evil decree. With our son, the doctors gave up at some point, but until the last minute we believed that Hashem could change the situation. Today too, I believe and I'm sure that it won't happen, but we need mesirus nefesh.

I was at a wedding recently and we spoke about mesirus nefesh. I focused on the topic of Krias Yam Suf, when all of Egypt's mighty chariots were there and Moshe stood and prayed. Hashem told Moshe, "Speak to the Jewish people and they should journey onwards." That's when Nachshon ben Aminadav jumped into the sea, with

*The Disengagement Plan doesn't only entail Jews expelling Jews from our land and destroying beautiful yishuvim, but also affects the dozens of Jews buried there, including some who were killed al kiddush Hashem. * A memorial was held for the boy, Itai Yolles a"h, the son of Shlomo and Udi Yolles, residents of Neve Dekalim. * Shai Gefen spent the day with the family that remains strong in its faith and anticipates Hashem's salvation.*



mesirus nefesh, and the sea split.

The point is that we need to act with mesirus nefesh, and surely Hashem will have mercy and split the sea for us. In the present situation, we can't suffice with prayer. We have to take action.

How do you think the situation will change?

I am asked about this a lot, and I say: Did anybody dream 60 years ago, that here in Eretz Yisroel there would be six million Jews? Did anybody dream that in the Six Day War we would recapture the Temple Mount and all the holy sites? Anyone who suggested such things would have been looked upon as a lunatic. So too, now, I am confident that Hashem will perform a miracle and save us from the harsh decree.

Do you see any indications of a plan to uproot your son's grave?

The Gemara says that without the Torah, the Jewish people are the most destructive of all the nations. Similarly, it says, "When they descend, they descend to the dust." I can think of no other explanation for the lack of sensitivity on the part of the people who work for the Disengagement Authority. There is a fellow, who works for the Authority under the leadership of Bassi, who is going around identifying how many Jewish graves there are. In his boundless arrogance, he told people that the Authority is prepared to fund the Seudas Havraa (traditional mourners meal following a burial) after the graves are exhumed.

On the other hand, I gave an interview to correspondents from Russian television. I spoke to them about the graveyard, and told them the story of my child and the painful feelings we are experiencing, and the woman interviewer burst into tears...

I believe that the Jewish spark will shine forth and not allow the

implementation of this tragic action.

What do you plan on doing if, G-d forbid, the worst comes to pass?

I am not thinking about that at all. I prefer not to even consider it. From my point of view, it is killing the child a second time. I was told by a journalist who asked the representatives of the Authority, what about the graves, which are not mentioned in the law. They told

I gave an interview to correspondents from Russian television. I spoke to them about the graveyard, and told them the story of my child and the painful feelings we are experiencing, and the woman interviewer burst into tears...

him that there are two possibilities. Either to leave the graveyards where they are, or to move the graves to a temporary location for a year, after which they will be interred in a permanent place. They are not even discussing it with the families. Their cruelty knows no bounds.

Do you have an explanation for this?

Ikvisa D'Meshicha (the footsteps of Moshiach). As the Mishna at the end of Tractate Sota states, "we have no one to rely on except our Father

in Heaven." The Chafetz Chaim explains this to be one of the painful birth pangs of the Messianic Era.

I have expended a great deal of energy over my son's grave. I have wasted a lot of time and pinned a lot of hope on different people. I tried to arouse some feelings of compassion. There are a few people involved in the Disengagement who still have some compassion. Sadly, the more religious showed less sensitivity, and they are the ones who purport to represent Judaism. Yet, a Jew like Ruby Rivlin, the Chairman of the Knesset, simply sat and cried with us copious tears. His heart was simply torn.

What can we do?

We can take a stand and cry out about the situation. To visit embassies around the world and scream bloody murder, so as not to allow this to occur. We have to expose the depravities of Sharon, to show that he is a lowlife who only cares about himself.

I am an old-time Herut member, and I was furious at Menachem Begin for what he did in Yamit. Back then, I also took action against the retreat from Sinai, but at least I knew that Begin had a Jewish soul.

If after everything the dark day arrives, what will you do then?

Firstly, I want to make one thing clear, I will not lift my hand against a Jewish soldier or police officer. On the other hand, I will not budge from here, and will do everything in my power to remain. The hundreds of thousands of Jews who will come, have the power to stop the horror that Sharon plans. Sharon is looking for violence because it suits his agenda, but we're not going to give him that. With Hashem's help, we will win this struggle in the merit of the *mesirus nefesh* of the Jewish nation.

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HU RA! – THE REST OF THE STORY

BY PROF. SHIMON SILMAN, RYAL INSTITUTE AND TOURO COLLEGE

*In Part 1 we began to trace the threads – the sequence of intertwining events – that led to the “Doctors’ Plot.” We now continue the development and identify the point at which the plot was actually formulated by Stalin. In Part 3 we will cover the death of Stalin, which coincided with the Purim farbrengen of 5753, at which the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach had everyone call out, “Hu Ra” (“he is evil”). * Part 2 of 3.*

THE SECOND THREAD: THE ARREST OF DR. ETTINGER

The second major stream of events leading to the Doctors’ Plot was set in motion with the arrest of Dr. Yakov Ettinger, a professor at the Moscow Medical Institute, on November 18, 1950. Ettinger, however, was not arrested in connection with any charge of medical sabotage but rather as a “Jewish nationalist” and a supporter of the state of Israel.

Since 1947, Stalin had been waging a war against the Jews of Russia under the title of “the anti-cosmopolitan campaign” charging that Jews felt themselves superior to Russians and were sabotaging Russian culture. When the state of Israel was

established in 1948 and a lot of pro-Israel feeling was expressed by Russian Jews, it was claimed that Jews could not be trusted to be loyal to the Soviet Union and the campaign intensified. As Israel began to develop a close relationship with the United States, Russia’s new post war enemy, official anti-Semitism became even more viscous. Thousands of Jewish professionals, scientists, political leaders and security personnel, as well as private individuals, were mercilessly persecuted, dismissed from their positions and imprisoned. Many were shot.

A major event of this campaign was the execution of the members of the Jewish Antifascist Committee

which had been organized by the Soviet government during World War II for propaganda purposes. After the war, it promoted the establishment of a Jewish republic in the Crimea.

Dr. Ettinger, a very prominent, highly educated physician, was considered the greatest Russian diagnostician of his time. He had many contacts in the U.S. and was very open about his political views. He criticized Stalin for his anti-Semitic campaign and for his lack of support of Israel. In a phone conversation which was bugged by the MGB he remarked, “Whoever could liberate the country from such a monster as Stalin would be a hero.”

Ettinger had been interrogated 37 times when suddenly, in January 1951, an order came from Stalin to halt the interrogations. It appears that that it was at this point that Stalin conceived the Doctors’ Plot. He wanted to redefine Ettinger’s crime as being part of a conspiracy of Jewish doctors to commit medical sabotage. The interrogations would have to take a different direction.

The order to stop the interrogations was delivered by V.S. Abakumov, the minister of state security to the senior investigator M.D. Ryumin. But Ryumin violated this order and, despite warnings from the medical staff that Ettinger might die from the stress of the interrogations, continued to

interrogate Ettinger another 39 times until March 2, 1951 when Ettinger collapsed and died following an interrogation.

Ryumin was a Haman in his own right. He was described by his own colleagues as “a primitive anti-Semite” and “dimwitted, an egoist by nature, a deceiver, capable of showing any fact in a way that served his own plan.” He was cruel, vulgar and vindictive. His MGB colleagues hated him and feared him. In his interrogation of one Jewish officer he said, “In Moscow there live more than a million and a half Jews. They have seized the medical posts, the legal profession, the union of composers and the union of writers. I’m not even speaking of the trade networks. Meanwhile, of these Jews only a handful are useful to the state. All the rest are potential enemies of the state.” He said further that he was going to propose the expulsion of the Jews from Moscow....

Ryumin was now in serious trouble for violating his orders and causing the death of such a valuable prisoner as Ettinger. To cover for himself he wrote a letter to Stalin on July 2, 1951 denouncing Abakumov for “concealing the terrorist aims of

Dr. Ettinger’s medical treatment of Kremlin leaders.” Of course, Ettinger had not mistreated any Soviet leaders and had not even been accused of it. (A “confession” that Ryumin extracted from Ettinger on this matter was rejected by Abakumov as nonsense.) This was a complete fabrication on the part of Ryumin that was going to be extended to the full blown “Doctor’s Plot”. It would link alleged medical sabotage with MGB complicity and incompetence which would necessitate a purge of the MGB. If Ettinger, the Jewish nationalist, could now have a charge of medical sabotage pinned on him, this could be extended to a conspiracy of Jewish doctors – and Jews in general – to murder Soviet government officials.

Abakumov was arrested and accused of planning a coup d’etat. Abakumov, the anti-Semite who had overseen the execution of the Jewish Antifascist Committee, was now being accused of conspiring with the Jewish doctors and MGB officers to overthrow the government. In the purge of the MGB that followed tens of thousands of officers were arrested or dismissed. Most of them were Jewish. Many of the Jewish officers

were Abakumov loyalists who were directly involved in the falsifications in the case of the Jewish Antifascist Committee.

This brings to mind the warning that the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe gave to Nachmanson and Lulav, the two GPU officers who arrested him in 1927. He said that under the current regime in Russia, those who come to arrest others can rest assured that the time will come when they too will be arrested.

There were two reasons why Stalin needed to link the alleged conspiracy of the Jewish doctors to an accusation of a conspiracy within the MGB. Firstly, this would make the case against the Jews that much stronger since it would mean that the medical sabotage of the Jewish doctors was part of a conspiracy to overthrow the entire Soviet government. Secondly, to achieve the maximum effect, he wanted the case against the doctors to be a public trial. This would rile up the Russian population against the Jews. For this to be successful the case against the doctors had to appear credible. It was thus necessary to get rid of those in the MGB who knew too much i.e. those who knew that the alleged conspiracy was a complete fabrication.

THE NEED FOR AN ENEMY

For evil dictators such as Stalin, anti-Semitism was more than just an expression of their evil hate. To consolidate and maintain absolute power they needed to invent an enemy and a crisis. As Brent and Naumov write, “The utility of the purge was that it was a vehicle not for destroying enemies but for creating them. It did not produce stability. Rather its function was to destabilize the country, because supreme power could be achieved and held only in crisis conditions.” We have seen this combination of anti-Semitism and setting up the Jews as a national enemy more recently in Arab



countries. Indeed, as we mentioned above, Sadam Hussein used Stalin as the model for his own dictatorship.

For Stalin the external enemy was the United States, against whom he could not easily take action. But he created an internal enemy - the Jews - who he could easily persecute. The accusations against the Jewish doctors claimed that they were carrying out their medical sabotage at the direction of United States (and British) intelligence. The Jews became the channel through which American subversion flowed directly into the Soviet government, threatening to destroy it. As Stalin declared to a meeting of the Presidium, "Every Jew is a potential spy for the United States."

THE PERSECUTION INTENSIFIES

In July 1951 Stalin put his plot against the doctors into action. On July 11 the Central Committee of the Communist Party issued a decree which stated that there exists a "real conspiratorial group among the doctors who were fulfilling the instructions of foreign agents in terrorist activities against the leadership of the party and the government." A purge of the MGB (accused of covering up the conspiracy) began immediately.

Stalin himself directed the implementation of the plot. As Khrushchev later described it: "There was no need in Stalin's mind for an investigation....He spoke and they

A special detail of "helpers" was recruited to carry out the torture. This new method produced many extraordinary "confessions" from all the doctors - except for Karpai...

were arrested....He himself called the investigators, himself instructed them, himself ordered the method of the investigation - and there was only one method - beat them." But Stalin concealed his role in the investigation. Rather it was made to look like the investigators were *discovering* many "facts" and connections as they carried out their investigations. Orders from Stalin would be attributed to others. He kept his name out of it so that no one could testify against him. The day to day direction of the plot was supervised by S.A. Goglidze, deputy minister of state security and a close associate of Beria.

The first Jewish doctor to be arrested after the decree of the Central Committee was Dr. Sophia Karpai, on July 16. It is not completely clear why she was arrested, but she was the only Jewish doctor who had treated Zhdanov and it appears that they

wanted to extract a confession from her regarding medical sabotage in Zhdanov's treatment. She continued to maintain, however, that Zhdanov's EKG did not necessarily indicate a heart attack. (see Part 1)

Karpai was a young woman and the interrogators may have thought that they could get an easy confession out of her. But the opposite turned out to be the case. Although she was treated with great cruelty and kept in a damp refrigerated cell, she demonstrated great courage. She was not intimidated and they did not succeed in breaking her. Brent and Naumov call her a "latter day Esther" (as will be explained later).

On November 12, 1952 Stalin's policy of torturing and beating the imprisoned doctors was implemented. The investigators were ordered to beat the doctors with "death blows." "Beat them to a pulp and grind them into powder," were Stalin's words according to Khrushchev. The next day Ryumin was removed from his position, apparently because he was not effective in getting the required confessions. Also, he knew too much.

A special torture chamber was set up in Lefortovo prison, fitted with special screens to muffle shrieks of pain. A special detail of "helpers" was recruited to carry out the torture. This new method produced many extraordinary "confessions" from all the doctors - except for Karpai.

(To be continued.)



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יחי אדונינו מוריט ורבינו מלך המשיח לשלום ועד

A MASSIVE SHOWING IN GUSH KATIF

BY C. KATZ

When Shabsai Bloch recruited neshamos for a 10-hour round-trip bus ride to Gush Katif, I didn't see it as just another Pesach outing; I saw it as Pikuach Nefesh, just as the Rebbe Melech HaMoshiach cried. Not a matter of waiting three months from now to see what would happen. But on this day, the day of a mass rally in Gush Katif, of every Jew opposed to the horrific plan, showing up and being counted.

Surely, if millions of Jews did show up, then it would send a major signal to the world. This is our land, we're not going to give it up, and we're not going to lay back while the government foolishly and dangerously allows the land to be opened wide to our enemies.

That 80,000 Jews did show up, was not insignificant. But I don't think it was enough. At most it just garnered a headline in the Israeli papers, and not a mention in the international papers. The government probably yawned.

What if every Jew opposed to the pullout would have dropped what he or she was doing and stood united?

It is a matter of how important it is to us. Do we see it as attending another rally. Or do we see it as taking a stand in a war that – if we don't stop it right now – will find its way to our cities. The Rebbe said that if we lay the land open for our enemies and return land, millions of Jewish lives are in danger and no place is safe.

This fight must be seen not only as a fight for Gush Katif and the cities of Shomron, Judea, and Samaria. It must be seen as a fight for our lives and our homes. Why wait until push comes to shove, r"l?

From Tzfas to Gush Katif is a five-hour trip. So we packed the matzos,

juice, nuts and cracker, fruits and peeler.

When you have a bus filled with other families and other children, it's not bad at all. Kind of like a portable playground.

Soon enough the signs became recognizable. Sderot. Ashkelon...Ashdod. Gush Katif.

While 80,000 souls isn't enough compared to what it would have been like if millions would have come to Gush Katif that day, it was still a massive showing.

My husband took the children to the beach about 10 minutes from the rally site. Tens of thousands of others had the same idea. The clean and

We're talking about protecting their homes and our own homes and our own lives.

beautiful beaches hadn't seen so many tourists for a long time. The hotel that once housed beach guests had closed its doors long ago, unable to survive with hardly a trickle of tourists.

Suddenly, the Gush Katif insect-free lettuce and other greens have become the most valued vegetables in our home.

The other day, an Arab on the Egyptian side of the border of Gaza, summed up the situation with exactness in a newspaper interview. "We have (Gaza). Soon they (all the Jews) will be gone from their. Al Quds (Jerusalem) is only 200 meters away."

We must all remain on the highest level of inner and communal alertness.

We're not just talking about dropping whatever we're doing and taking a pleasure trip to a beautiful strip of land. We're talking about protecting their homes and our own homes and our own lives.

On the return trip to Tzfas, Shabsai Bloch announced that in the morning, a bus would be available to visit the Shomron communities of Sa-Nur and Chomesh, slated for evacuation along with Gush Katif – may their plans be foiled.

Despite the long trip to Gush Katif, half the bus was ready to go again the next day, and Bloch went to round up more. Was this another outing, or a part of the fight for our own lives and homes.

Shake out the crumbs from the travel bag. Load up again with matzos, fruits, nuts, chicken. OK, kids, ready?

This is our land, the part of Eretz Yisroel that is the most earthy, the most natural, the most beautiful. Standing on the mountaintop of the settlement of Chomesh, anyone can see that it's also crucially strategic. On a clear day, as the missiles fly, one can ascend to the peak of Chomesh in the middle of the country, and see as far as Netanya and Tel Aviv.

We are here "netzach, netzachim" read the big banner on the rally stage at Chomesh. If everyone who is here today is here the day of the planned expulsion, r"l, the government would not succeed, the founder of Chomesh said.

Why wait until then?

The ten-hour bus ride wasn't really anything. Hats off to the Jews all over the world who will drop everything they are doing and cross oceans to come lay claim to our land. What a kiddush Hashem.