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YOU ANSWERED ME IN THE FULLNESS OF G-D

SICHOS IN ENGLISH



**MOTZOEI SHABBOS
KODESH PARSHAS MATTOS
& MASSEI; SHABBOS
MEVARCHIM HA'CHODESH
MENACHEM AV, 5739**

1. Parshas Massei is always read on or close to Shabbos Mevarchim Av. (This year Shabbos Mevarchim Av is connected with the double parsha of Mattos and Masai). An intrinsic relationship exists between Parshas Massei and the month of Av. Parshas Masai mentions Rosh Chodesh Av explicitly, describing how Aharon passed away in “the fifth month, on the first of the month.”[248]

As a priest, the fundamental aspect of Aharon’s service was to draw G-dliness down into the world. On the day which a Tzaddik passes away, the spiritual source of his soul becomes manifested here in this world, causing powerful revelations of G-dliness. These revelations have an effect on the lowest levels of our world, upon which even the effect caused by the sacrifices has no bearing.

The same concept can be derived from Av’s position in the Hebrew calendar. Av is the 5th month. Kabbala explains that the entire

world is structured in a sequence of 4. There are four spiritual worlds, four means of interpreting Torah, four letters of G-d’s name. The number 5 is considered either above or below this order.[249] These two extremes are connected. The lowest depths has its source in the higher peaks. It is because of its high source that it fell so low. Likewise, it is only through the medium of the highest levels that the lowest depths can be refined.

This concept is also reflected in the events of the month of Av. On one hand Av is connected with Tisha B’Av, the lowest point of destruction. On the other hand, the 15th of Av was a holiday about which the Mishna declares “the Jewish people never celebrated a holiday as great as the 15th of Av and Yom Kippur.”

The above suggests a practical lesson. When the month of Av comes, the Yetzer ha’ra tries to make the Jew sad, even bring him to despair. Despite all the service of the great Tzaddikim, over the ages, the month of Av has approached and the Geula has not come. As a reply, the Torah teaches that Av is connected with the Yahrzeit of Aharon, the High Priest, when all of

his good deeds are brought to a fulfillment. Realizing this, we serve G-d with joy and we bless the month praying that it be a month of life, peace, joy, and happiness, salvation and comfort.

These blessings will come through our service of increasing our study of Torah and gifts to Tz’daka. Then, with happiness and joy, we will greet Moshiach speedily in our days.

2. The service that is particularly appropriate for these nine days is expressed in the verse “Zion will be redeemed by judgment (interpreted in Likkutei Torah to mean — Torah study) and those who return by Tz’daka.” Both of these activities (and particularly in the realm of Torah, the study of Halacha) help bring about the transformation of these days from a period of mourning into days of rejoicing as our Sages commented “Tz’daka brings close the redemption” and “the exiles will be gathered through the merit of the study of Mishnayos.”

The study of the laws of the construction of the Beis HaMikdash carry particular importance. The Midrash declares that G-d considers the study of the laws of the Beis

HaMikdash's construction equivalent to actually working to build the Beis HaMikdash.[250]

In his treatise on the laws of the Beis HaMikdash, the Rambam writes (Chapter 1 Law 4) "the measurements of the sanctuary built by Shlomo are explicitly mentioned in the Book of Kings. Ezekiel prophesied about the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash. However, his instructions were not specific. When the Exile returned from Babylon, they built the Beis HaMikdash according to the specifications of Shlomo's Beis HaMikdash, including certain characteristics of Ezekiel's prophecies."

At this point the question arises: The Rambam explains that the purpose for studying the laws of the construction of the Beis HaMikdash in the tractate of Middos is to know how to build the Third Beis HaMikdash when the time comes. The Tosfos YomTov asks "since the Third Beis HaMikdash will be built totally accordingly to all the prophecies of Ezekiel, of what value will be the knowledge of how the Second Beis HaMikdash was built, since it included only selected features of the Third Temple?"

The answer can be understood through the preface of another question. The Rambam writes that the Third Beis HaMikdash will be built by man: the Moshiach and the entire Jewish people. On the other hand, the commentaries, including Rashi and Tosfos[251] maintain that the Third Beis HaMikdash will be built by G-d and descend from heaven, as the Torah declares "the sanctuary of G-d, established by your hands."

Some commentaries have based the dispute on the passage in Isaiah that declares that the future redemption will come "in its time, I (G-d) will hasten it." The Sages interpret the passage as follows — "if they merit, G-d will hasten the

redemption. If not, then the redemption will come in its appointed time." i.e. If the Jews do not merit, the Beis HaMikdash will be built in its time by Moshiach. If however, the Jews merit, G-d will hasten its building by bringing it down from heaven.

In view of the above, the Rambam had to decide that the Beis HaMikdash would be built by man. The Jewish people have free choice. "Everything is in the hands of heaven, except the fear of heaven." Therefore, the Rambam would not be able to pronounce in a Torah law that the Beis HaMikdash would be built by G-d. Such a declaration would force the Jewish people's behavior to be meritorious since the

Torah and Mitzvos must be performed out of commitment to G-d and not because of our natural inclination.

declaration of a Torah law influences events in this world.[252] For that reason, he describes what would happen if they did not merit. A revelation on that level will definitely occur. However, if the Jews merit, there will be an even greater and more inclusive revelation.

Another solution to the same question has been offered. The work of constructing the Beis HaMikdash will be done by man. (through following the instructions in the Rambam and in the tractate of Middos and then through listening to Ezekiel, etc.) However, after that work will be completed G-d will rest His Presence there. That

revelation will change the entire nature of the building and a completely new entity will emerge. A similar pattern occurred during the dedication of the sanctuary in the desert. For seven days, only a physical fire burnt in the Mishkan. Only on the eighth day did a "heavenly fire" descend and G-d's presence was revealed and the sanctuary completed.

Through this we can reconcile the two opinions: the actual construction will be done by man, however, the revelation of the Sh'china will change the building to the point where it is considered a new entity[253] built by G-d.[254]

With this preface the initial question can be answered. Through studying the laws of the construction of the Second Beis HaMikdash, G-d will consider it as if we built the Beis HaMikdash. Then, with the actual building of the Third Beis HaMikdash, we will build it according to the specifications which we have learned. Then Ezekiel and the other prophets of that day will give us instructions on the further details of the Third Beis HaMikdash's features Which differ from those of the Second Beis HaMikdash.

Why is it so important that the Third Beis HaMikdash be built by man? So its revelations will not be considered "bread of shame." (i.e. — . unearned bread) Although throughout the dark Galus we have performed a greater service than could be demanded from a creation of flesh and blood[255] and one might have thought that our work is completed, nevertheless, it is important that man also play a role in the actual building of the Beis HaMikdash.

May it be G-d's will that we witness the Beis HaMikdash's construction: Through the hand of G-d, or through man's hand; what's most important is that: "Jews do

T'shuva and they are immediately redeemed" — in one moment as T'shuva can be performed in one moment — may it be, speedily in our days.

3. In order that the above mentioned increase in Torah and Tz'daka be carried out in the fullest and most energetic manner, it is necessary that we be involved in meditation on G-d, the Giver of the Torah and commander of its Mitzvos. Torah and Mitzvos must be performed out of commitment to G-d and not because of our natural inclination.[256]

Chassidic thought explains this concept in great length, using the example of our forefather, Avraham. Avraham had a natural tendency to do good. However, he worked on himself and was able to progress even beyond his own nature. In that vein, the Midrash explains how Avraham provided his guests with food and drink. He then requested that they "bless the G-d of the world from whose food we have eaten." If they refused, he began to chastise them and charge an exorbitant amount of money for the food. The question arises: How could Avraham who was so good-natured cause other people so much discomfort?

However, Avraham had worked on himself to the point where all of his actions were related to his central purpose in life. He dedicated all his energies to making others aware of the existence of G-d.[257] He began working with people in a generous manner. However, if that failed he would use the opposite approach. He had conquered his personal nature[258] and subordinated it to his greater goal.

To apply the above to ourselves, in order that our efforts of Torah and Tz'daka be complete, it is necessary to increase our devotion in prayer. Prayer is a process of connection between a Jew and G-d. Our morning prayers influence and

effect our study and our Tz'daka.[259]

Also in addition to our increase in Torah study (particularly the laws of the construction of the Beis HaMikdash) and Tz'daka, we should intensify our efforts in the other Mivtzaim: Mivtza Ahavas Yisroel, Mivtza Chinuch, Mivtza Torah, Mivtza T'fillin, Mivtza Mezuzah, Mivtza Tz'daka, Bayis Malay S'farim, (the campaign to acquire Holy Jewish books), Mivtza Neiros Shabbos Kodesh, Mivtza Kashrus, and Mivtza Taharas Ha'mishpacha. This will surely bring about the fulfillment of the promise: "I will sprinkle pure water upon you and you will become pure," — speedily in our days.

4. It is customary to explain a question on an aspect of Rashi's commentary on the weekly portion. Parshas Massei describes the boundaries of the Land of Israel. In that context, Rashi quotes the word "G'vul" and interprets it as meaning "boundary." He continues to explain the purpose for including this passage in the Torah. "Since many Mitzvos must be carried out in the Land of Israel, and cannot be carried out outside of it, the Torah found it necessary to clarify the boundaries of Israel." In his commentary on this Parsha Rashi explains (several times) that the word "G'vul" means boundary. This presents a difficulty. Many times previously the Torah uses the word "G'vul" or its derivation e.g. Exodus 19:12, 19:23 and Rashi doesn't explain the word's meaning. What factors require him to explain it in this case?

The answer to this question depends on the comprehension of the full meaning of the word "G'vul." In addition to meaning boundary, there are times when "G'vul" means the entire bounded areas. For example, a few verses previously, in Numbers 33:54, Rashi

says "Twelve boundaries, corresponding to the number of tribes." There the meaning of "G'vul" is the entire area. Since there are two possible meanings, Rashi felt it necessary to explain the precise meaning in this case.

From the "Wine of Torah" (the Torah secrets) hidden in Rashi's commentary is the concept that the entire existence of "G'vul," boundaries and limitations regarding Israel and the world at large; is for the sake of the performance of Mitzvos. All the Mitzvos have specific limitations. (e.g. T'fillin 4 sections, four fringes, not 3 or 5.) To allow for their fulfillment G-d created a limited world.

5. The above is also connected with Rashi's commentary in the book of Eicha on the verse "all of her pursuers caught her "Bain HaMeitzarim" (Generally translated as between the straits). Rashi brings down the word Meitzarim and connects it with "a place with an elevation on one side and an elevation on the other side with no place to flee." Afterwards,[260] he brings down the word HaMeitzarim and comments "the boundaries of a field or vineyard." He continues "in the Midrash, our Sages taught the phrase Bain HaMeitzarim refers to the three weeks between the 17th of Tammuz and Tisha B'Av.

This commentary raises a number of questions:

1) What does Rashi add by writing that the boundaries of a field or vineyard?

2) The sea also presents a natural boundary. If a sea was on one side, the Jews also would have had no place to flee. How does Rashi know that Meitzarim refer to high obstacles?

3) There are also boundaries of a city. Why did Rashi ignore them as well?

4) Whenever Rashi brings two

explanations, that implies that neither is completely adequate. Each one contributes a factor absent from the other. However, the first interpretation is always closer to the verse's simple explanation.

a) What is lacking in both explanations?

b) Why is the first closer to the P'shat?

These questions can be answered by viewing the verse within its historical context. The prophet Yirmiyahu recited this verse concerning the destruction of the First Beis HaMikdash. At that time, the Jews fled Jerusalem and their pursuers captured them. Rashi mentions fields and vineyards because they surrounded Jerusalem. He did not mention a sea because there is no sea near that area. Likewise, he did not mention the boundaries of a city, because the city of Jerusalem (and all the other neighboring cities as well) had been conquered. The Jews would be fleeing away from them.

The insufficiency Rashi sees in that explanation stems from the addition of the prefix, Ha — the definite article. Such a prefix applies emphasis on a specific, previously known subject. That was not the case when the Jews fled Jerusalem. There were no specific places where they were captured. Therefore Rashi searched for another explanation.

The interpretation “between the 17th of Tammuz and Tisha B'Av” fits that description. Even before the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, these days had been the occasion of ill-fated events. On the 17th of Tammuz, the Tablets were destroyed. On Tisha B'Av, G-d punished the Jewish people and declared that they would wander 40 years in the desert. From then on, the ominous portent of these days was known.

However, a greater difficulty prevents this interpretation from

being the primary explanation of the verse. The verse declares that her pursuers captured her between the Meitzarim (straits).

The majority of the Jews fled and were captured after Tisha B'Av. However, according to the latter interpretation it would seem that they were captured between the 17th of Tammuz and Tisha B'Av. Because of this difficulty, the other explanation is given prominence.

The Tzemach Tzedek explained how the book of Eicha can be interpreted in a positive manner. The prophecy “I will transform their

The whole purpose of the existence of Meitzarim (straits) for the Jewish people is related to the verse “out of the straits I called to You, You answered me in the fullness of G-d.”

mourning into joy” applies to each verse of the book.

The whole purpose of the existence of Meitzarim (straits) for the Jewish people is related to the verse “out of the straits I called to You, You answered me in the fullness of G-d.” Through meditation on how the entire order of creation is connected with straits and limitations, we come to the awareness of the fullness and infinity of G-d.

May we experience that infinity soon. However, G-d forbid we should have to wait until after Bain

HaMeitzarim for the Geula. Rather, may it come to pass that in the last days of Galus the Jews have “light, happiness, joy, and honor and then proceed to the Messianic redemption speedily in our days.

6. In the first chapter of Pirkei Avos, the Mishna declares: Yosei ben Yoezer of Tzreda said: Let your house be a meeting place for Sages, sit in the soil (‘Afar’) at their feet; and drink in their words thirstily.”

A number of questions result from this statement: the phrase “sit in the soil of their feet” can be more literally translated as “become dusty with the soil of their feet.” Dust and soil are two different words. Why didn't the Mishna use the phrase “become soiled?”

This question becomes particularly powerful from the standpoint of the Zohar. The Zohar explains that soil is still connected with holiness, it can still bear fruit, but dust cannot. Therefore, when Esau's archangel wrestled with Yaakov, the Torah uses the term ‘Va'yisabek,’ indicating that unholy powers were at work. How then can such a term be used in connection with Torah Sages?

Also, the question arises: How are the Mishna's three clauses related? What personal connection does the Mishna have to its author Yosei ben Yoezer of Tzreda?

A historical perspective helps answer the question. Yosei ben Yoezer and Yosei ben Yochanan argued on the issue of Smicha. (The act of placing one's hands on a sacrifice.) This was the first recorded argument in the history of the Sages.

This fact answers an obvious question. On the surface, the entire necessity for a command “make your houses a meeting place for Sages” is superfluous. Any person would naturally appreciate and be honored by the presence of Sages in his home. However, those feelings

would apply if there was no argument among the Sages. However, after the Sages began to argue (and during their argument they would become excited so much so that at one point a sword was implanted in the floor of the House of Study and it was announced that no-one would be allowed to leave until that particular dispute was resolved.) It was in times like these that Yosei ben Yoezer felt it necessary to advise people to open their homes to the Torah Sages.

The same basic premise also explains how “dust” became connected with the Sages. When the Sages would come into a house, their students would accompany them. Included among their students were those who “had served their master insufficiently.” Such a student would be likely to interject his personal self into the argument.[261] However even in such a case, we must open our homes and “sit [cling] (‘Mis’abek’ — which refers to the lower level of the Talmidim) to the soil of their feet.”

[By using the word soil, the Mishna stresses the importance of the attitude of humility, how the Sages (and for the most part) their students were able to “make my soul as soil” to all.”][262]

On the surface, the dust of the students can be harmful. Why should the Mishna teach to become involved in such a situation? The Mishna answers that question with the next clause “Drink in their words thirstily.” Dirt naturally arouses thirst. Through drinking the Sages’ words with thirst, we can insure that the dust will not harm us. In fact, we can elevate it to holiness.

Regarding the wrestle between Yaakov and Eisav’s archangel, the Zohar comments “they stirred up dust that reached G-d’s throne.” How can dust, the element of evil

be associated with G-d’s throne? The answer is, however, that Yaakov was able to refine Eisav’s archangel and transform his efforts into holiness.

The same applies in a personal sense. If we see a Jew involved in a struggle, we are obligated to help him. Then we can truly appreciate the quality of thirst. The Rambam explains that a Baal T’shuva goes through a process of personal transformation conquering his own desires. The Alter Rebbe explains how a Baal T’shuva’s distance from G-d, his presence in a dry and parched land arouses him to a greater thirst for connection to G-d than experienced by Tzaddikim.

Through helping another Jew achieve this quality of thirst, T’shuva, we can receive an awareness of this quality ourselves. Therefore we should not regard our work with others as a regrettable necessity that we must undertake but rather become actively involved.

7. People have asked how can we continue in such an age, when there is so much darkness and when our Sages have passed away. The Previous Rebbe answered this question when speaking about his own father. He declared “He will not separate himself from his flock. Even after his passing, he arouses G-d’s mercy, drawing down G-dly influence just as when he was alive.” What the Previous Rebbe said about his father applies to himself.[263] He is carrying out those functions now.

The Previous Rebbe declared that this redemption was connected to all Jews “the lovers of Torah, the followers of its commandments, and everyone who is called by the name of Israel.” In the same letter, he sent the Chassidic discourse “Ten who sit together and study Torah.” Each person has the power to involve all of his ten powers[264] in Torah study and also fix study sessions with others.[265]

NOTES:

248. This is one of the few times the Tanach explicitly mentions the date of someone’s passing.

249. The same concept can be seen concerning the number 13. Ten represents the Ten S’firos of Atzilus (the ten powers of G-d).. Thirteen represents either the Shlosha Roshei Roshim (three transcendent levels of G-dliness — a Kabbalistic concept) or the three worlds, Bria, Yetzira and Asiya, that are lower than the ten S’firos of Atzilus.

250. (C) There are a number of examples in Torah law that demonstrate how even though a sacrifice has not been brought, G-d considers it as if it has. For example: a) T’shuva — a Jew in the time of the Beis HaMikdash had to bring a sacrifice as part of his repentance, yet nowadays, even without the sacrifice, whenever a Jew does T’shuva in one moment, he becomes totally transformed. He can pass from one end of the spectrum to the other. This principle has a bearing on Torah law. If someone marries a woman on the condition that he is a complete Tzaddik, he is considered married even if a moment before he was totally wicked. This is because it is possible that “he repented in his heart” (Kiddushin 49b). Even before he brought a sacrifice he was considered a Tzaddik.

b) Conversion — (there is a connection between conversion and T’shuva since both transform a person into a new entity). During the time of the Beis HaMikdash, a convert brought a sacrifice. Now, even though those sacrifices are not offered, we still accept converts.

From all this is evident that nowadays a person can perform the mitzva of repentance in its entirety even without a sacrifice. Note however, that when the Beis HaMikdash will be rebuilt, all the outstanding sacrifices will have to be offered. This is evident from the story that the Talmud relates about Rabbi Yishmoel who “wrote in his notebook ... when the Beis HaMikdash will be rebuilt I will bring a (plump) ‘Chatas’ offering.”

251. The question is reinforced by Kabbala. The Zohar states openly that the Third Beis HaMikdash will be built by G-d. Why did all the commentaries on the Rambam including Rabbi Yosef

Karo, an eminent Kabbalist, not object to the Rambam's statement that it would be built by man?

252. Even though G-d is Omniscient, His knowledge does not effect the choice of the Jewish people. (See Rambam Laws of T'shuva Ch. 5) However, "Torah will never be changed." Therefore, in Torah the different possibilities for choice must be left open.

253. Another example of an addition creating an entirely new entity, is the following. The Talmud comments that two hundred includes one hundred. However, there are two ways to analyze that statement. One is that 200 is merely double 100, or that 200 represents a new entity, a totally different dimension than 100. The difference can be seen in the Mitzvah of Tz'daka. According to Torah if someone has 100 'zuz' he is considered a poor man and entitled to public support. If he has 200 he is removed from that category.

The same applies to the Beis HaMikdash: The addition caused by the revelation of the Sh'china is not quantitative but qualitative. It adds an entirely new dimension to the Beis HaMikdash. (The same applies to the examples given before T'shuva and conversion. The sacrifices connected with them elevate them to a totally different dimension.)

254. There is another means of resolving the same question. The Beis HaMikdash will descend from heaven. However, the gates of the First Beis HaMikdash had been swallowed by the earth. They will arrive when the Beis HaMikdash descends. Moshiach, acting as the delegate of the entire Jewish people, will affix the gates to the building. Torah law considers that act significant enough to acquire ownership over the entire

building. Hence, it will be built by heaven and by man.

255. The Berditchever Rebbe once complained to G-d: The subject Gan Eden and Gehinom, is written in a book and the pleasures of this world are openly revealed and readily accessible. In such a situation what would you expect of man.

256. This commitment is articulated each morning in the blessings we say, prior to learning Torah.

257. The Torah declares: "And he (Avraham) called on the name of G-d, G-d of the world." The Talmud comments "don't read 'he called,' but read 'he made others call.'" On that same verse, Chassidus explains that the actual Hebrew phraseology omits the word "of" from the phrase of G-d "of" the world. It reads G-d world. Avraham showed there was no difference between G-d and the world. On the contrary, they were one entity. As the Tanya explains each moment the world is created anew from utter nothingness. It is not a separate entity, but totally one with G-d, its Creator. In other words, Avrohom's mission was to make everyone aware that G-d and the world are one.

258. Chassidic thought explains that G-d's command to Avraham. "Leave your land, your fathers home, etc." was in effect telling him to leave his natural tendencies and overcome his personal nature and desires.

259. Though there is a concept of giving Tz'daka before prayer as a preparation for prayer, our Tz'daka and our Mitzvos in general, attain their ultimate perfection after davening.

260. On the surface, the order of these two comments should have been reversed. However, it is possible that Rashi had in fact planned they appear in

an opposite order and the present form resulted from a printing error.

261. In the initial stages of learning, it is natural for one's personal desires and ulterior motives to be connected with his Torah studies. The Rambam explains that Torah study must begin Sh'lo Lishma (for one's own intentions). Even as great a Sage as R. Nechunia ben HaKaneh would make the following prayer as he entered the House of Study: "...May I not err... and that my colleagues rejoice in my mistake ... May they not err and that I rejoice in their error..."

262. Trans. note: Generally the verse is translated: "let my soul be as dust to all." However in these translations, "dust" is used in a wider sense, whereas in the present translation, the term "dust" and "soil" are used to fit the content of the Sicha.

263. On the Mishna "the heavenly court exacts payment from a man with or without his knowledge." The Baal Shem Tov explained that even the heavenly court cannot judge a Jew. Therefore, he must be the judge. He is presented with someone else in a similar situation, and asked to judge him. Then that judgment is executed in regards to him. Similarly with the Previous Rebbe o.b.m. whatever he decided concerning his father, now applies to him.

264. When the Rebbe Rashab's father in law, (R. Yosef Yitzchok whom the Previous Rebbe was named after) was asked if he prayed with a minyan he replied positively. Later when it was found that he prayed individually he explained "I prayed with all my ten powers."

265. In Tanya, the Alter Rebbe explains the great spiritual manifestations that are aroused by ten Jew's coming together.



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LETTERS TO A SCIENTIST

PART 13

Please send copies of the Rebbe's letters to:

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By the Grace of G-d
17th of Shevat, 5740
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Prof. Zeev Greene
2722 Vale Crest
Minneapolis, Minn. 55422

Greeting and Blessing:

I was pleased to receive your letter of the 9th of Shevat, on the eve of your departure to Australia, and previous correspondence.

It is truly gratifying to read the good news about your Hatzlocho, both in your public and personal affairs. I hope and pray and, indeed, am quite confident that you will be blessed with much Hatzlocho in your activities in Australia.

Especially as we have just observed the Yahrzeit-Hilulo of my father-in-law of saintly memory on Yud Shevat. And recalling his total dedication to the spreading and strengthening of Yiddishkeit, Torah and Mitzvoth, and how much he urged everyone to be involved in this vital activity, assuring us of his personal intercession and blessing for Hatzlocho, everyone of us will surely redouble our efforts in this direction.

I heartily appreciate your good wishes on the occasion of this 30th anniversary. In accordance with G-d's Promise to our Father Abraham, "I will bless them that bless you," may you and all yours be blessed from the Source of all blessings for a growing measure of Hatzlocho, both in your work to spread the light of the Torah and Mitzvoth, as well as in all personal needs, materially and spiritually.

With blessing, /signature

NOT FROM THE OUTSET

BY RABBI YISROEL HALPERIN
RAV AND HEAD SHLIACH, HERZLIYA, ERETZ YISROEL

Regarding the time of the Redemption, we don't apply the usual laws of sh'chita from the outset, regarding the place of the Beis HaMikdash, we don't apply the laws of Shabbos from the outset, and regarding the neshama of Melech HaMoshiach, we don't apply the laws that pertain to those who are no longer among the living, as his seed is alive only because he is alive! Delivered at the central Gimmel Tammuz farbrengen held in Bat Yam, Eretz Yisroel.

THE HIGHEST AND PUREST FORM OF FAITH

What is the difference between Beis Tammuz and Gimmel Tammuz 5754?

On Beis Tammuz 5754, it was clear that **everyone** thought the same thing: The Rebbe says that he is Melech HaMoshiach – **period**. The Rebbe says that he is a soul within a body without any temporary interruption – **period**. The Rebbe says that he experiences no change due to a state of hiding and concealment – **period**.

If so, why is it that on Gimmel Tammuz we require renewed strength in the belief that these things will continue to exist as clear as day?

Prior to Gimmel Tammuz, we saw with our own eyes that the medical situation was very critical, and the chances that someone could recover from such a condition were extremely slim. But the following day, Gimmel Tammuz, even our last small shred of logical and rational hope that some miracle was bound to happen was taken from us.

On Beis Tammuz 5754, our faith in the Rebbe and every word that he uttered was 99.99% based on faith above intellect. However, there was still a tiny sliver of .01% based upon our intellect and perceptions. As long as there remained the slightest connection between pure faith and a

little intellect, it would be most difficult to rise to the level of completely pure faith.

On Gimmel Tammuz 5754, there was no longer any room for intellect, as it were. From that day forward, the state of pure unvarnished faith commenced, faith beyond all limitations of nature and intellect that will accompany us until the True and Complete Redemption.

Together with the **anguish** connected with Gimmel Tammuz, the Rebbe has provided us with an instilment of strength to reach the treasures of pure faith from the depths of the soul.

WHERE ARE WE?

This brings us to a greater sense of understanding that the real question is not “Where is the Rebbe?” but rather “Where are we?”

In the kuntres of “Beis Rabbeinu Sh'B'Bavel,” the Rebbe writes that “there he is found, waiting and anticipating,” and we know exactly where he is, as “there he is found.” All that remains is for us to determine where we are.

The Rebbe is *chai v'kayam* **in its most literal sense**, soul in body **in its most literal sense**, without any change **in its most literal sense**.

A hilula is a day of joy commemorating the passing of a tzaddik, as represented by Yud Shvat,

Chaf-Daled Teives, etc. However, this does not apply to Gimmel Tammuz in any way, shape, or form.

AND THE SUN STOOD STILL

The entire essence of the day of Gimmel Tammuz is the revelation of eternal life, as the Rebbe shlita MH" M indicates in his sicha on how Yehoshua made the sun stand still in Givon during the process of conquering Eretz Yisroel. In connection with our discussion, we can say the following:

We know that the Midrash compares tzaddikim to the sun.

Regarding Yud Shvat we say "before this one's sun set, the sun of this one shone," i.e., the setting of the sun – the histalkus of the Rebbe Rayatz, on the one hand, and the rising of the sun – the Rebbe MH" M shlita's elevation to the leadership.

However, the main concept to Gimmel Tammuz is a day when **the sun does not set**, "the sun stood still in Givon." And who made the sun stand? Yehoshua, the student of Moshe and the leader of that generation.

In 5687, when the Rebbe Rayatz

went out from his imprisonment, as brought in the Rebbe MH" M shlita's sichos, the day represents going out from a place where there hovers a sentence of the opposite of life to a place of life.

In other words, with respect to the Rebbe Rayatz, Gimmel Tammuz means **going out towards life**.

THE THIRD DAY OF THE FOURTH MONTH

We can understand the point behind the third day of the month of Tammuz from the chassidic explanation of the statement of our Sages, "the threefold Torah to the threefold people in the third month." Chassidus explains the meaning of numbers one, two, and three: one is the higher realm, two is the lower realm, three is what connects them.

Nissan represents the concept of "the Holy One, Blessed Be He, the King of all kings, was **revealed** to them and redeemed them," revelation from the aspect of the higher realm. This is still not a dwelling place **in the lower realms**, as even when He reveals Himself "down below" it is still a "high-level" revelation. Iyar represents Divine service **in the lower realms**, S'firas HaOmer, preparing for Mattan Torah. Sivan is the time of Mattan Torah, connecting the higher realms with the lower realms.

However, even this connection remains supernal in nature, as we are still talking about "the lower realm" in the context of Torah and mitzvos, and not the "world" as we know it. (This can be compared to the month of Tishrei, as the concept of "And Yaakov went on his way" applies primarily after Tishrei, on Shabbos B'Reishis and Shabbos Noach, when we descend into the physical world in its most literal sense.) The "world" really begins after the conclusion of the month of Sivan.

Thus, we come to the month of Tammuz, the month of literally



descending into the world, a very great descent. And when is the connection between the higher realms and the lower realms expressed in its fullest sense, as it will be revealed in the very near future? On the third day of the month of Tammuz, the culmination of the three months. On Gimmel Tammuz, we were given the job of revealing the pure faith that the eternal soul, the essence and being of the Rebbe MH”M shlita, stands forever in a physical body, specifically in the lowest of all possible realms, while things appear before our physical eyes to be the exact opposite.

As we come from this holy and auspicious day, it is quite easy to understand what the Rebbe MH”M shlita told us that the main avoda is to bring “the lights of Tohu specifically into vessels of Tikkun”: The lights are above – the aspect of “one,” the vessels of Tikkun are below – the lower realms and the world, and the Rebbe said, “I give the matter over to **you**” – the connection of the lights of Tohu with the vessels of Tikkun, which will bring us speedily and immediately to the hisgalus of the Rebbe MH”M, when we will be in a situation where any other situation will be, in the Rebbe’s words, totally groundless.

THE REDEMPTION IN THE TIME, THE PLACE, AND THE SOUL OF THE REDEEMER

We see this connection in the Rebbe’s teachings. The Rebbe says that this is the worst of all exiles, together with the fact that it is “*di hechste tzait*,” the high and lofty days of Moshiach and all matters pertaining to the Redemption are ready and waiting.

How exactly do we see this? In what way do we still find Exile on the one hand (because we have yet to open our eyes), while on the other hand, where the abovementioned connection exists, there is Redemption in its fullest sense?

We recently learned Rashi’s

commentary from Parshas Chukas: “The leader of the generation is as the entire generation...the nasi everything,” and this connection exists within the leader of this generation. When the Rebbe says that “we are the last generation of Exile and the first generation of the Redemption,” within whom is this revealed? The Rebbe MH”M! For we find that **already in these times**, the limitations of Galus do not take hold in the Rebbe MH”M.

Therefore, when we take a look in the Shavuos 5751 kuntres of “*Torah Chadasha M’iti Teitzei*,” the Rebbe explains that despite the fact that “the

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matter is clear and explicit that the Torah stands forever eternal without change, without addition, without detracting,” etc., nevertheless, “a new Torah will come out from me,” the innovation of the teachings of Moshiach, to the point that the Torah of this world will seem as nothing compared to the teachings of Moshiach. Thus, if there is to be no change or innovation, then how can there be a change as great as doing sh’chita on the Shor HaBar with the fins of the Leviyasan?

The Rebbe proceeds to explain at great length and in much depth by

establishing the principle of “*L’chat’chilla Lo Ne’emar*” (it was not said “from the outset”).

In other words, regarding the slaughtering of the Shor HaBar with the jagged fins of the Leviyasan, thus at first glance, rendering the meat completely treif, all the laws of sh’chita were meant to be applied during the time of the Exile. However, this is not the case whatsoever regarding the lofty period of the time of the Redemption, when G-d will stage a confrontation between the Shor HaBar and the Leviyasan, resulting in sh’chita on the Shor HaBar with the fins of the Leviyasan. We find a similar situation regarding the strict prohibition of chametz **on Pesach**. Does this prohibition apply now, during the month of Tammuz? No, because “from the outset,” it was not said in reference to this time of year, rather during the holiday of Pesach only.

Just as this principle applies in matters of “*shana*” (time), similarly, we find regarding “*olam*” (place):

With regard to pikuach nefesh, we say “Desecrate one Shabbos,” i.e., one must **postpone** or **permit** the violations of Shabbos, because while they **exist** in pikuach nefesh, nevertheless, it is an obligation and a mitzva to **desecrate** Shabbos by permitting these violations. However, regarding the offering of sacrifices on Shabbos in the Beis HaMikdash, the principle of “Desecrate one Shabbos” is not said. Why? The Rebbe explains that in a **place** as lofty as the Beis HaMikdash these Shabbos prohibitions were not said “from the outset.”

A CLEAR P’SAC DIN

Who gives validity to “*L’chat’chilla Lo Ne’emar*,” the lofty halachic state in the world where the laws of Torah as they apply in the Exile are not said? The Rebbe MH”M. Thus, if in fact he is the one who enforces this principle in both time and place, then it must apply first within him before anywhere

else.

As the Rebbe brings in the D'var Malchus from Parshas Bo 5752, the concept of "Bo" is Moshe Rabbeinu going to unite himself with G-d in body and soul, with His very essence and being. For even if there is still exile, and the Jewish People at-large will only experience this state of unity upon their redemption from Egypt at Mattan Torah on Mt. Sinai, nevertheless, in order to instill this lofty connection within Am Yisroel at their time of redemption, it must **first** exist within the connecting intermediary force, Moshe Rabbeinu, even before the redemption actually takes place – while they are still exiled in Egypt. Only then can he draw this into all the people.

The Creation is divided into three aspects: "*Olam, Shana, Nefesh*" (world, year, soul), an acronym for the word "*ashan*" (smoke), as in "the entire mountain was smoking." Thus, since the Rebbe MH" M's job is to apply the lofty state of "a new Torah" upon **time** (*shana*) and **place** (*olam*), it is equally clear that it also exists within the Rebbe MH" M in **soul**.

In other words, **everything that the**

Rebbe says to the effect that he is literally *chai v'kayam*, soul in body, is no contradiction to the *Galus'dike* reality of life and the opposite of life, because any determination regarding the opposite of life in connection with the eternal life of the Rebbe MH" M is not said "from the outset."

We know that when two citations appear to be contradictory, but there is a way to understand them so that they go well with each other, it is the latter approach that stands forever as the true Word of G-d.

Therefore, it is a clear halachic ruling that the Rebbe MH" M is literally *chai v'kayam*. That is, "Just as his seed is alive, so is he alive" means: How are **we** considered to be alive? In virtue of the fact that **the Rebbe MH" M is alive** – in the most literal and actual sense!

"YECHI" WITH ALL THE STRENGTH OF OUR SOUL

In this same kuntres, the Rebbe continues to discuss the nature of the mitzvos that Moshiach will fulfill at the Redemption, e.g., adding three cities of refuge. What is this? There will be murderers? This is Redemption?

The Rebbe proceeds to explain that

the inner meaning of a city of refuge is that the blood avenger cannot take the life of someone who has escaped there. The purpose of the cities of refuge is the adding of life and preventing the cessation of life. Thus, since this is the whole idea of the mitzvos that the Rebbe MH" M will immediately add at the onset of the Redemption, this concept must already exist in the Rebbe himself – eternal life in its most actual sense.

Therefore, if we accept upon ourselves what the Rebbe said in his famous sicha from Chaf-Ches Nissan 5751, i.e., if we would **really** request and cry out "Ad Masai?" Moshiach would surely come already, doing so in our **thought** and **speech**, to the point that "all of my bones will say," with the whole body – then we would be immediately redeemed without the slightest doubt.

Let us now accept upon ourselves the yoke of the Rebbe MH" M's sovereignty, as each one of us gives over his entire life's force and strength with all the ten powers of his soul, crying out with our strength for the imminent Redemption: *Yechi Adoneinu Moreinu v'Rabbeinu melech HaMoshiach l'olam va'ed!*

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WOMEN ON THE FRONTLINES

BY DAFNA CHAIM

*We are living through critical times. The earth is burning beneath our feet and the danger of the impending expulsion looms over us. Every Chassid feels he cannot stand off to the side without expressing his anguish over the endangerment of millions of Jews. Jewish women and girls must also do their share. The question is how? What can women do? * An interview with three active shluchos, all of whom are greatly involved in chinuch and spreading the wellsprings.*

The sand is running out and the danger of expulsion looms ever closer. What is required of us as women at a time like this?

Mrs. Hendel: The main focus of women must be in the spiritual arena, for this is our primary strength. We should be making emergency gatherings for women to address this topic at which time hachlatos should be made to increase in Torah, t'filla, and tz'daka. Rallies for children should also be made. Children have awesome power to avert decrees. I think there should be a massive children's rally at

the Kosel.

Before the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War, the Rebbe asked that gatherings of children be held so that the p'sukim and T'hilim could be said with them. In Eretz Yisroel, there were two large gatherings at the Kosel, one in Elul and the other during the Aseres Yemei T'shuva. At that time there was a great spiritual arousal among Lubavitchers. Chassidim realized that something was afoot but they didn't know what it was.

It was only afterwards, after war broke out, that everybody realized that

the Rebbe had sought to nullify the terrible decrees on Am Yisroel with the power of Jewish children. "From the mouths of babes and sucklings you founded strength to stop the enemy and avenger." With the breath of the schoolchildren, we can vanquish our enemies who rise up to destroy us, and we can nullify their evil designs against us.

Back at Yetzias Mitzrayim it was "in the merit of the righteous women that our ancestors were redeemed." And the children were the first to recognize G-d when they said, "This is my G-d and I will beautify Him." So too with the present Geula, the women and children need to lead the battle.

Mrs. Esther Piekarski: We must examine the types of possible activities. There are askanim and rabbanim whom the Rebbe picked to be involved in this and they are the ones who need to operate on the political front and who need to establish Chabad's policies. They are also the ones who should be paving the way for the rest of Anash and the T'mimim, showing them what to do and how.

As far as us women, the Rebbe said a number of things that pertain especially to women, and these are the areas to strengthen ourselves in. There are a number of things that I took upon myself and I think these are areas that should be emphasized.

First of all, the area of tznius – in a sicha to N'shei Chabad, the Rebbe spoke about the enormous power inherent in tznius, to the extent that it impacts on the security situation in Eretz Yisroel. Here is what the Rebbe said:

One of Hashem's blessings to the Jewish people, which are said at the end of the book of VaYikra is, "and you will dwell securely in your land." This is a bracha that the Jewish people will dwell securely in Eretz Yisroel in a way of "and you will lie down and not fear," for even while sleeping there will be no need for guards because of the security "and no one will fear."

In other words, not only will nobody harm Yisroel, there won't even be anybody that will frighten them. And this is because Hashem guards you ... "and the Guardian of Israel does not slumber nor sleep." Furthermore, Hashem says, "and you will lie down and your sleep will be sweet." You will be able to sleep and relax because I am standing guard over you.

Therefore, tznius is necessary, as it says, "for Hashem your G-d walks within your camp," because "no nakedness is visible among you." When Hashem sees that among the Jewish people there is nothing contrary to tznius anywhere, then Hashem walks among them, "to save you and give your enemies before you." Thus, they do not have to do anything themselves in order to be saved, since Hashem Himself saves them. All the enemies melt and submit before Am Yisroel. Ultimately, "when Hashem finds man's ways desirable, even his enemies make peace with him." "And I will give peace in the land," that the enemies themselves will become transformed and they will make peace and seek peace with Am Yisroel.

So if women truly want to do something to strengthen the security in Eretz Yisroel, they should strengthen tznius among us.

Second of all, saying T'hillim – another way to express our pain is by saying T'hillim. T'hillim has the power to annul decrees. The Rebbe Rashab once said that his success in askanus for the benefit of Am Yisroel was in large part thanks to the T'hillim his wife said.

If women gather once a week and complete the entire T'hillim together, this would be a tremendous accomplishment. If this is not convenient for some women, then just adding one chapter of T'hillim a day can certainly help.

Here in Tel Aviv we meet every Monday at 4:30 in the afternoon to say the entire T'hillim together. When we are finished, I teach a portion from a sicha on shleimus ha'Aretz.

Rebbetzin Shterna Drukman: I

PARTICIPANTS:

REBBETZIN SHTERNA DRUKMAN

Kiryat Mochkin

MRS. ROCHEL HENDEL

Shlucha in Tzfas

MRS. ESTHER PIEKARSKI

Shlucha in northern Tel Aviv

think women can do their share in this battle in a number of ways that suit women:

There should be gatherings of women in which the main topic is shleimus ha'Aretz. This week, for example, we had a gathering like this in Gush Katif, and women came from all over the country (a similar gathering took place in Tzfas). There should be more and more such gatherings. The more shleimus ha'Aretz is spoken about, the more it heightens awareness and makes people care.

The topic of the gathering does not have to be shleimus ha'Aretz, but of course, the topic should be a prominent part of the program. Lecturers who are familiar with the topic should be brought to speak.

Similarly, within the existing shiurim, the opportunity should be taken to raise the topic of shleimus ha'Aretz.

Those who make house calls or go on mitvzaim can distribute stickers and brochures on shleimus ha'Aretz.

I also call upon women to do more davening and say T'hillim. Whoever can organize her friends and neighbors to say the entire T'hillim together is making a valuable contribution.

Still and all, women want to take action that is directly connected to the fight.

Mrs. Hendel: There is a sicha the Rebbe said on Purim, in which the Rebbe describes what Mordechai did when he heard about the decree against the Jews. Mordechai did not go to lobby at the palace even though he was a respected figure there. Mordechai put on sackcloth and ashes and went to teach the Jewish children Torah. This is the approach we must follow.

Mrs. Piekarski: People think that *doing something* means going out to the highways and giving out brochures. Actually doing something means making an **actual hachlata**, for example, regarding tznius.

When a woman stands in front of her closet in the morning and says she won't wear a certain blouse anymore, and another item needs the sleeves or hem lengthened because the situation in Eretz Yisroel bothers her – this is actively doing something! And this is the Rebbe's chiddush.

In my opinion, doing this is far more powerful than standing at junctions, and it pertains to us wherever we are, not only in Eretz Yisroel. Study what the Rebbe said (which I quoted earlier), that by guarding the k'dusha of the camp we are bringing the Sh'china down to us – what greater protection could we have than that?

Public opinion makes a huge

difference. Unfortunately, there is still a majority of the country in favor of the Disengagement, though the gap is narrowing. As women who lecture a lot and come in contact with all sorts of people, how do you convince those who support the Disengagement plan to change their minds?

Mrs. Hendel: We must try to rouse public opinion against the Disengagement. Just as the government is trying its best to brainwash the public in favor of the plan, we have to do what we can to counter this, by distributing material and by talking to people. We must quote the Rebbe. The Rebbe spoke strongly against returning land and what the Rebbe says is true now and forever!

The Rebbe wasn't afraid of anybody, and he expressed his clear view on shleimus ha'Aretz. As Chassidim, we must follow the Rebbe's lead. We have nothing to be ashamed about, and we mustn't stammer and sound confused!

There are three concepts that require shleimus: Eretz Yisroel shleima, t'shuva shleima, and refua shleima. Just as a partial recovery or partial t'shuva is not good enough, so too, we cannot accept only part of Eretz Yisroel!

Rebbetzin Drukman: I would divide the topic of how to explain it into three central points. 1) Shleimus ha'Aretz, 2) the anguish of the families who are threatened by expulsion and creating a feeling of empathy with them, 3) pikuach nefesh – that this plan endangers all residents of Eretz Yisroel, and not just those living in Gush Katif and northern Shomron.

Mrs. Piekarski: Every woman who gives shiurim or a shlucha who comes in contact with people, should take the opportunity to convey the Rebbe's message about shleimus ha'Aretz.

As a speaker, I speak to women all over the country. I always dedicate the first five minutes of my speech to the situation in Eretz Yisroel. Most of the

time I teach the halacha in Shulchan Aruch, siman 329 of Hilchos Shabbos, which says not to open the land up before the goyim. This is so even if they come in peace, all the more so if they are our enemies!

Sometimes I quote from the book *Karati V'Ein Oneh*, like the Rebbe saying that nobody is a balabus over Eretz Yisroel and therefore nobody has the right to return its land. It all depends on my audience. If they are not yet religious then I quote what the Rebbe said on the pasuk, "and I will

When a woman says she won't wear a certain blouse anymore, and another item needs the sleeves or hem lengthened because the situation in Eretz Yisroel bothers her – this is actively doing something! And this is the Rebbe's chiddush.

lead you upright..." Chazal explain "upright" to mean standing tall. The Rebbe says, "Even when still in Galus, it [Galus] does not adversely affect our enthusiasm in doing Torah and mitzvos and it doesn't cause the Jewish people, chalila, to want to hide their Judaism. On the contrary, the Galus influences and strengthens our fulfillment of mitzvot."

From my personal experience I see that when we come with the strength of Torah and halacha, it makes an impact, and I speak to all sorts of

women, religious, chareidi, and not yet religious.

As soon as we explain that this affects the lives of those who live in Tel Aviv, for this process endangers everybody in the land and it is literally a situation of pikuach nefesh, there is a chance that we can change their opinion. This is not a battle for those living in Gush Katif alone, but a battle for all of us.

What about protesting in orange? This is a quiet, non-violent protest that has succeeded in rousing a lot of people, from all walks of life, and getting them to

identify with the cause. Should women and girls take part in this kind of protesting?

Mrs. Piekarski: Orange is a color that draws attention and a woman should not draw attention to herself. It's not befitting for a bas Chabad. In my opinion, it's not proper for a Lubavitcher girl to put an orange ribbon anywhere on her body, and not even on her bag, and she certainly should not wear an orange shirt.

I should point out that my objection is from the tznius aspect and not because I object to orange as a symbol of the fight. If you can express yourself without violating the principles of tznius, then go ahead!

The Rebbe says something very interesting in connection to tznius. Generally speaking, the idea of tznius is not to stand out. How should Jewish women stand out? In their tznius! This is what the Rebbe says:

"This is especially important for N'shei U'Bnos Yisroel, that the difference in their outer dress as compared to that of the gentiles should stand out with their being careful about wearing modest, Jewish clothing as is fitting for a Bas Yisroel, who conducts herself as the Imahos: Sara, Rivka, Rochel, and Leah."

Jewish women ought to stand out

in their tznius.

Rebbetzin Drukman: A woman should not have orange on her, that's obvious. It attracts attention and is not appropriate, but it's certainly okay to put an orange ribbon on your car. It creates an atmosphere in the street and raises public consciousness on a steady basis. It makes a tremendous impact. People see it wherever they go and talk about it and think about it.

What about demonstrations?

Rebbetzin Drukman: Regarding demonstrations, you have to ask the rabbanim and do as they say. In general, my husband is not in favor of women participating in demonstrations, but there was one demonstration a few months ago that took place in Tel Aviv and I went. It was a demonstration *al taharas ha'kodesh* with separate areas for men and women. Many distinguished rabbanim were there. The entire

There are three concepts that require shleimus: Eretz Yisroel shleima, t'shuva shleima, and refua shleima. Just as a partial recovery or partial t'shuva is not good enough, so too, we cannot accept only part of Eretz Yisroel!

program was *al taharas ha'kodesh*. T'hillim was recited, shofaros were blown, and all in all, it was very moving.

Mrs. Piekarski: It's important to note that when rabbanim tell Anash to participate in a demonstration, they are usually not referring to women.

Mrs. Hendel: Demonstrations are not for women. To the best of my knowledge, the Rebbe did not encourage women to participate in demonstrations. Women can travel to Gush Katif as individuals or as part of groups. This is very important. The residents themselves say that when people visit them it encourages them very much. You can also express your support by contributing money and writing letters of support to the residents.

* * *

In conclusion, we pray that we merit to see how this is a "land with Hashem your G-d's eyes upon it from the beginning of the year until the end of the year," the complete land, together with Moshiach.



A BALSHEMSKE MAASEH, A BAALSHEMSKE YID!

BY S. NAHARI

At first it seemed as though R' Yosef Plavitz was delusional. He excitedly told about his soul connection to the Baal Shem Tov and Mezhibozh, but his story was authenticated three months later in an unexpected way. There was an incredible chain of Hashgacha Pratis events that culminated in R' Yosef's being buried near the Baal Shem Tov in the cemetery in Mezhibozh.

The following story happened in the Ukraine, in Mezhibozh this year. I read about it in the Hebrew edition of *Mishpacha*, and considering that the story took place where many shlichim operate, I looked for some mention of Chabad. Sure enough, I soon came across the words "shliach of the Rebbe" in the article. It was just a passing mention but it was enough to arouse my curiosity.

I looked up the shliach who was mentioned and discovered a fantastic story. I also learned that the shliach's role in the story was much greater than *Mishpacha* let on. I wrote down what I heard from Rabbi Menachem Mendel Teichman, shliach in Ozgorod (formerly Ungvar) in the Carpathian Mountains. Here is the *Balshemske maaseh* (story with a miraculous Baal Shem Tov flavor) he related:

We got the news while I was in Peritchin, which is a few hours north of our city of Ozgorod. We had gone there in order to rescue three Jewish children from a Christian orphanage. This wasn't easy, because the director of the orphanage didn't readily give up the three children. He wanted their relatives to state that they were really Jewish.

We left the orphanage with the job of tracking down the Jewish relatives, for this was truly pidyon shvuyim. From there we went to Vilki Brazani, where there is a furniture factory owned by one of our Jewish friends. It was a warm and friendly visit, but it was interrupted by my cell phone.

On the line was a woman who said she wasn't Jewish. She asked to speak with the rabbi. This was somewhat surprising since our shlichus deals primarily with local Jews. I wondered what she wanted.

"Do you know a Jew by the name of Yosef Plavitz?"



Mordechai Ben David and other guests in Mezhibozh

“Yes.”

The woman told me the sad news that Yosef had passed away at the young age of 48. I was shocked at the news. I questioned her to verify the details. R' Yosef had died the night before, on Wednesday, in our city Ozgorod! I was shocked once again, as I hadn't known he had come to our city.

I arranged that the woman would come to my house, to the Chabad house on Podgornya Olitza, in an hour.

Who was Yosef Plavitz? How did I know him? The man's story is connected with a series of Hashgacha Pratiyos that only shluchim of the Rebbe experience. We knew him only briefly, for three months. It was a short acquaintanceship, but deep.

He came to us under somewhat

strange circumstances. To be honest, at first we were suspicious of him, since there are many frauds who circulate among us and take advantage of the innocence and enthusiasm of the shluchim to help any Jew. His story was typical of some of these rogues.

Yosef introduced himself as a resident of Chmelnitzki, a religious Jew who respected Jewish tradition and felt warmly towards Chassidus. He spoke a lot about the holy Baal Shem Tov with great admiration. He excitedly told us about his many visits to the Baal Shem Tov's grave in Mezhibozh, since he felt a soul connection to the Baal Shem Tov. We listened avidly to every word and his connection to the Baal Shem Tov was a wonder to us.

Three months went by before this connection was clarified to us, and it happened just like in a Baal

Shem Tov story!

Yosef, a man in his late forties, was not in the best of health to say the least. According to his story, he was affected terribly by the Chernobyl nuclear reactor disaster, and since then he suffered from cancer of the blood. He traveled a lot for medical treatment abroad. When we met for the first time, he was on his way on a trip like this.

When Yosef told us how and why he came to us on this particular visit we grew only more suspicious. He said he was heading for Vienna in order to raise money to be able to continue his urgent treatment, but when he was on the train he suddenly noticed that his wallet was stolen.

He couldn't continue his trip without a penny in his pocket, so he got off at the nearest station that

had a Jewish community – our city of Ozgorod – to ask us, the local shluchim, for help.

To authenticate what he was saying he showed us documents and approbations from rabbanim who confirmed the story he told us. We were ambivalent because he was asking for a large sum of money. In the end, we decided to listen to our inner, Chassidic voice and help him, although we still had our doubts. He promised that on his way back from Vienna to the Ukraine he would repay the loan.

After a short stay, he left by train for Vienna.

True to his word, Yosef reappeared at the Chabad house a while later to repay the loan. We got into a conversation and the idea came up for him to try and get people interested in supporting our mosdos in Ozgorod while doing his fundraising. Like most shluchim, our financial state needed improvement and we jumped at the opportunity of being able to tap into new sources of funding.

We gave Yosef a letter of recommendation, authorizing him as a representative of the mosdos, and he asked that we take a deposit as a sign of his trustworthiness. It was hard for us to accept the deposit he gave us. We thought it was unnecessary as he had already shown that he was reliable when he returned to repay the loan, and the collateral he offered was much too valuable: it was a dollar Yosef received directly from the Rebbe. We refused to accept it, even temporarily until he would come back with our hoped for donations.

Yosef insisted that the dollar remain with us. We explained to him that it was a precious item, which he should keep on him. Especially, since he traveled a lot. However, he believed that the dollar

would protect him wherever it was, even if the dollar wasn't actually on his person.

In the end, Yosef had his way and the dollar stayed with us. Yosef left to fundraise and get medical treatment. When he returned to Ozgorod the next time, he called us from the train station and asked to meet with us. He said he had interested potential donors in contributing towards our mosdos but they wanted to see pictures of our work. We got some pictures together for him and asked him to

Yosef spoke from the depths of his heart about the Baal Shem Tov and Mezhibozh. We were all spellbound. This was the highlight of every conversation with him, the Baal Shem Tov and Mezhibozh.

come to the community's dining room, where we would host him.

In the short time between his visits, we noticed a great deterioration in his appearance. We saw how ill he felt and he had to receive medical treatment then and there. When he recovered somewhat, he went on his way again.

On this and subsequent visits, Yosef spoke from the depths of his heart about the Baal Shem Tov and Mezhibozh. We were all spellbound.

This was the highlight of every conversation with him, the Baal Shem Tov and Mezhibozh.

None of us dreamed that Yosef's condition was that bad. The week of Parshas Zachor, he came to our city once again and before he could call, he collapsed in the hotel. Workers there took him to the hospital, where he passed away, all alone.

Now here we were hearing about his passing via a gentile woman, on Thursday night. We immediately set to work. Since in Yosef's hometown of Chmelnitzki there was no Jewish cemetery, our first thought was to bury him in the Jewish cemetery in our town of Ozgorod.

We informed the woman of our decision, but she was strongly opposed. "His children are in Israel and who will take care of the grave? Send him back to his city and my family and I will take responsibility to look after the grave with the proper devotion."

Having no other choice, we agreed. The gentile woman promised that the burial would be taken care of before Shabbos.

Now that the decision had been made to send the body to his hometown, time was against us. It was Thursday night and we had to bring him to burial in Chmelnitzki before the onset of Shabbos.

We had no documents, and the deceased was in the category of a meis mitzva. There was no coffin, no shrouds, and no car to transport him. The deceased was in the morgue and we had to get him released. We needed a release paper from the doctor at the hospital.

For us, this was a sort of welcome back to life on shlichus. When we chose to go on shlichus to the Ukraine, we imagined working with Jews who were thirsty to learn, the mosdos we would build in the

land that the Rebbe had plowed and sowed for us. We would sanctify the name of Lubavitch, would be beloved and welcome everywhere, and the daily work would flow nicely along.

We knew that shlichus entailed things we weren't used to before, like wearing a tie, smiling politely to all sorts of official people, and making noise and publicizing ourselves, but we knew that with the Rebbe's help we would make it. The main thing was to be the Rebbe's shliach. We never dreamed

Chabad and Crown Heights would be left to a professional.

I can't call my father or the local rav to come and do the work instead of me because **I am the rav!** Everything rests on my young and narrow shoulders. But one minute! A Chassid is not alone, all the more so a shliach! The Rebbe is with me and I am working on his shlichus! I lean on the broad shoulders of the meshaleiach and inch forward.

I knew that there wasn't time for thinking. The first thing that needed to be done was to get the body

main thing being to get Yosef a Jewish burial before Shabbos.

The next item on the agenda was getting a coffin. I wracked my brains to find a quick solution, because outside of Eretz Yisroel you must bury the dead in a coffin by law.

I suddenly recalled a store of gravestones and coffins that was near the shul. I quickly drove over and found, with Hashem's help, a note on the door with emergency information so that I could contact the owner. What was more of an emergency than getting this Jew buried before Shabbos?

Another phone call and I spoke quickly, for every minute that I did not have what I needed was a wasted precious minute. Yes, he had a coffin. We could not use just any coffin, but a simple one, without any ornaments, made out of plain wood. He had just what we needed. I felt that the Rebbe was with me, pushing everything along in the best possible way. I saw that the bottom of the coffin could be easily removed.

The next step: shrouds. Shrouds are not readily available in the Ukraine. Even the active chevra kadisha doesn't keep any in reserve. When there's a need, they sew them. I needed shrouds immediately. What could I do?

Another phone call, this time to the city of Munkatch, where there was a chevra kadisha. Here too, I felt that somebody was orchestrating all this!

In incredible hashgacha pratit, a wonderful Jew in Munkatch, R' Avrohom Leibowitz, told me that for some reason unknown even to himself, he had prepared a set of shrouds to keep in reserve. It just so happened that he thought of doing this yesterday!



The coffin on the back of a horse drawn wagon

that the day would come when we'd need to look at bodies in a morgue in order to identify a lone Jew among the gentiles lying there, to run after doctors, to deal with hooligans, and all the other adventures we had in getting a Jew a proper Jewish burial.

We discovered that shlichus is not a string of successes. Shlichus means to be available to any Jew and any Jewish situation, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This means dealing with every issue under the sun, including those, which in Kfar

released. All the medical personnel who were qualified to do this were long since home. Work was over for the day some time before.

I had to call the head doctor at home in order to get the forms I needed. At first, I presented my request, and that didn't work. I then began pleading. Negative. Importuning - nyet. Bribery. Ah, now you're talking. Baruch Hashem, I had the papers I needed.

That night, in order to get things moving at ultimate speed, I had to do everything I possibly could, the

I made up with him that he would leave them at the Jewish hotel of Alex Roth and the driver would pass by on his way to Chmelnitzki.

Things were moving along at a dizzying pace and I was enjoying success every step of the way. I paused to take inventory of what I had and what I still needed. Although I had to work quickly, I had to be thorough and not leave anything out!

The release form: I had it.

The coffin: I had it.

The shrouds: I had it.

A driver: driver???

At this point, it got complicated. At that time of year, the roads in the Ukraine were still frozen and snowy. The intercity highways were dark and not pleasant to drive at night. If you wanted a driver to travel at night you had to give him at least twelve hours notice for him to get ready. He had to be well rested so he could be alert. Where would I find a driver who would be willing to drive at night without prior notice? And if I would find a driver, where he would get a vehicle from to transport the body?

That started another round of exhausting phone calls. I was asked time and again whether I was sane, whether I wasn't pulling their leg, and so on. No, this wasn't a joke. If only it was! I was very serious and I needed a driver, the earlier the better.

After many tries, we found a driver who was ready (for the right price plus another piece of my endangered Gan Eden...) to go. Okay, we were almost there. Now I needed to get the body and we could set out!

The final obstacle was the actual release of the body from the

morgue. When I arrived there, my heart sank at the sight of two goons on "guard," as though anybody was going to try to escape from the morgue... But I quickly discovered that their job was to make sure that nobody entered the place. Yes, even those with the right papers were not permitted to enter.

The goons made themselves quite clear but I was thinking along altogether different lines. I had to get the body out! It was a matter of pidyon shvuyim, a meis mitzva, and kavod ha'meis.

The goons made themselves quite clear but I was thinking along altogether different lines. I had to get the body out! It was a matter of pidyon shvuyim, a meis mitzva, and kavod ha'meis.

The goons were completely unimpressed by me so I had to try a different approach. Money talks you know. I offered a large sum, higher than the driver liked. I was afraid they would refuse and had to go all the way. Time was running out, the roads were difficult and Shabbos was approaching. The driver had a long and difficult trip to make and I had no time to haggle.

After discussing it (an understatement) the goons agreed to accept the "gift" and everything worked out. I blessed the driver

with success, gave him all the necessary information, and went home to finish arranging the final details with my fellow shliach, Yehoshua Raskin, the shliach in Chmelnitzki.

Yehoshua got my urgent call as he and his wife were in the midst of preparing for a women's event. He was completely focused on the details of the program, the food, etc., and it was hard to switch gears to an entirely different topic.

In short, I asked him to get a minyan of Jews together and to make a proper funeral with all the hiddurim, taking into account the deceased's background and his special feelings towards the Baal Shem Tov and the gravesite in Mezhibozh.

After handing over the baton to Yehoshua, I was sure that my part in this adventure was over. The phone was quiet and I was able to rest from the mental, physical, and emotional burdens of the day. I could get back to the more enjoyable aspects of my shlichus work.

The phone rang. Yes, it was my friend Yehoshua. He had astonishing news. A Baalshemske report.

Just that day, Erev Shabbos Parshas Zachor, there was a group of Jews who were staying in Mezhibozh, including the world famous singer, Mordechai Ben David Werdyger. With them were two Jews, who, in their private lives, served on the chevra kadisha. Being that this was the case, Yosef should be buried in Mezhibozh, which also had a Jewish cemetery. He would be taken care of by two official members of a chevra kadisha who were right there!

Yehoshua did not know the deceased and his special feeling for the Baal Shem Tov and the gravesite in Mezhibozh. He presented the idea

because it seemed practical. It would be much easier for professionals to bury him as opposed to a young shliach who knew nothing about burying people!

Yehoshua did not realize how his suggestion would hit me like a bolt from the blue. I felt like I was taking part in a story out of the Zichronos or the Baal Shem Tov storybooks.

Rabbi Yisroel Meir Gabbai got word about the funeral from Yehoshua Raskin, and on Friday, while the guests were making their final preparations for Shabbos, the car arrived and deposited the coffin with Yosef in it.

Nobody knows what merit Yosef, a Jew who always lived in Chmelnitzki, had for his funeral to take place in Mezhibozh when no

Jewish funeral had taken place there in fifty years. Yosef had a large funeral on the special day of 7 Adar, with a minyan of distinguished men from Eretz Yisroel and the U.S. who had come to spend Shabbos there together. Any other day, there wouldn't have even been a minyan to make a proper funeral.

And thus, Yosef, who was mekushar to the Baal Shem Tov, who constantly visited the gravesite, was buried right there near the tzaddik whom he so cherished.

And the dollar? What happened to the Rebbe's dollar?

I had an idea. I could use the dollar for something practical. I called Yosef's children who live in Eretz Yisroel and they told me they would be coming to Ozgorod for the Shloshim in order to visit his grave

and say Kaddish. They also planned on visiting the Chabad house of Ozgorod, where we would have a Chassidische farbrengen in Yosef's merit. At the end of the farbrengen, they would be able to receive their father's precious dollar that he had entrusted with me.

After all the bribe money I had given out, I decided to stop giving and to insist on something in return. I would ask them for a gift in exchange for the dollar – that they put on t'fillin. They certainly wouldn't refuse to put on t'fillin l'ilui their father's neshama, the Jew who wanted to be close to the Baal Shem Tov, and whom apparently, the Baal Shem Tov wanted to be close with!

(Photos by Meir Haltobaski)



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FIRE IN TOWN AND FIRE OF CHASSIDIC LOVE

BY RABBI SCHNEUR ZALMAN CHANIN

*In the town of Beshenkowitz, young Chaikel Chanin was raised in a large house, full of chesed and Chassidic warmth, in the shadow of Chassidic giants, and under the tutelage of esteemed melamdim. It was there that his “natural Chassidishe middos,” which became an inseparable part of his personality, were implanted. * Chapter One: His Childhood*

DESCENDED FROM CHASSIDIM OF THE TZEMACH TZEDEK

My father was born on 17 Sivan 5664 (1904) in the Chassidic town of Beshenkowitz, near Vitebsk in White Russia. His father was Rabbi Shneur Zalman Yitzchok Chanin, and his mother was Baila Zelda, formerly Shulman.

The Chanin family is descended from the early Chassidim. My father knew his grandparents, his paternal grandfather, Rabbi Moshe Chaim, and his grandfather's father, Rabbi Asher. They were Chassidim of the Tzemach Tzedek and walked to him, to Lubavitch, every year.

Rabbi Asher and his son, Rabbi Moshe Chaim, both had large families and worked as melamdim for children up to the age of bar mitzva age. They taught the youngest children the Alef-beis, nekudos, and how to read from the Siddur. The older children, they taught Gemara with Rashi and Tosfos. Their reputation as successful melamdim did not help them financially though. That is why they could not afford to hire a coach and wagon and so they walked to Lubavitch instead.

As a boy, my father knew his grandfather, R' Asher, and visited him a number of times at his home in Vitebsk. R' Asher was already a

very old man at that time, in his nineties. I think my father said he was 93 or 94.

My paternal grandfather, R' Shneur Zalman Yitzchok, moved to Beshenkowitz after he married. That is where his father-in-law, R' Yaakov Shulman, a Chassid of the Rebbe Maharash, lived. His father was a merchant and his partner was HaRav HaGaon HaMekubal HaChassid, Rabbi Zalman Schneerson of Lodz. Together with his father, he traveled a lot beyond the borders of Russia, to Warsaw, Poland in particular. He did a lot of business there, including deals with the wealthy Chassid, R' Yozik Gurevitz of Warsaw.

Already in his youth, he was involved in public works and was involved in efforts to have our grandfather Rabbi Yehoshua Nimotin, appointed rav of Beshenkowitz.

LIFE IN THOSE DAYS

My father's mother, Baila Zelda, had a fabric store in Beshenkowitz. The store was successful, and supported the family honorably and well. They were considered a wealthy family. Their house in Beshenkowitz was very big and had

a large dining room and a large kitchen, a separate bedroom for the parents, and some other bedrooms for their sons and daughters. The kitchen had a Russian coal stove, and in order to heat the other rooms of the house every room had an additional stove with a chimney.

In the courtyard was another room for the two gentile maids. The name of one was Katza "der krumer" (the crippled) and the other was Katza "der glaicher" (the straight). The first one did all the hard work, like cleaning the house, emptying the chamber pots since there was no plumbing, doing the laundry, milking the cow, feeding the chickens, and cleaning the coop and the yard. She also had to heat the water and fill the tub with warm water so the family could bathe for Shabbos.

Smiling, my father would relate how they all washed once a week, in the same water, one after the other, and Katza washed their hair and scrubbed their backs.

Katza der glaicher's job was in the kitchen, cooking, and baking bread, challa, and cakes with the children.

Like the rest of the town, they had no electricity, but they had an

***"What's the problem,"
said my grandfather.
"We have a tin roof
and we had more
time, because until
the fire reached our
house we were able to
run out of the town."***

oil lamp with many wicks, which hung in the dining room and spread precious light during the nighttime hours. The house, like all houses in Beshenkowitz, was made of wood, but since they were well to do, they had a wooden floor and a tin roof. The rest of the townspeople had a sand floor and a straw roof.

They stored food in the cool cellar of the house. There was no refrigeration and no icebox. My father told us that at the end of every summer, they stored potatoes, carrots, beets, and onions in the cellar for the winter. Out of the fruits that could spoil they made jam: apple jam, plum jam, and pear

jam, but raspberry jam was the best of all. When Bunia der kecherke (the cook) made raspberry jam, his mother would pray: "We should need it and we should not need it," i.e. we should need the jam for simchos, like for a mother who just gave birth, and so on, and we should not need it for the sick. For raspberry jam and a cup of tea were treats at engagement or wedding feasts, and at that time, a hot cup of tea with raspberry jam did wonders, or so they believed, for all that ailed one. This covered colds and lung inflammations, viruses and various other illnesses.

In Beshenkowitz there was a doctor and a pharmacy, but my father did not know how they helped people. Aspirin, antibiotics, and penicillin were not yet discovered, but he told us how the felsher (a pseudo doctor) put bankes (glass cups that were heated and applied to the skin) on someone with the flu or bronchitis, and he made an enema for stomach ailments.

My father would tell how they were saved from the fire in Beshenkowitz thanks to the tin roof: In 5671 (1911), a fire broke out in the middle of the night. The firefighters brought pails of water from the river by horse and wagon, but most of the homes, made of wood and straw, turned to ashes.

People could only hope that the fire would reach the river and be stopped there. The next day, they chopped down trees in order to build new homes.

When they heard cries of "fire," my grandfather was the first to run and help save the men, women, and children, and remove them from their homes. It was only after he helped them all that he went back to his own home to save his wife and children. His wife yelled: "You abandoned your children in order



to help the neighbors? Yours come first!”

“What’s the problem,” said my grandfather. “We have a tin roof and we had more time, because until the fire reached our house we were able to run out of the town. But the rest of the people have straw roofs that easily send the fire from one house to the next.”

My father would finish this story by saying, “We saw the great love and brotherhood among the Chassidim, for how could a tin roof withstand fire? Yet, he relied on those few minutes in order to save yet another Jew!”

After the second fire in Beshenkowitz, in the year 5681, my father’s family decided to move to a nearby town where the grandfather lived. He had a house in Nevel, and it was made of stone.

“WITH ME IN MY SECTION”

My father told me about the town of Beshenkowitz. He said that it was a small town founded in the time of the Czar, and was outside the area where Jews were permitted to live. It had eight large battei Midrash and two shuls, which had the women’s section on the upper floor (like a porch with small windows).

One shul belonged to the Chabad Chassidim and the other shul to the misnagdim. The misnagdim’s shul was open only on the Yomim Noraim, and a few times a year when they had a minyan on Shabbos.

Rabbi Yehoshua Nimotin was the rav of the Chassidic shul, as well as rav of the town. Every Shabbos, he would review Chassidus — once before Kabbalas Shabbos, and again during the third Shabbos meal.

2000 Jewish families lived in Beshenkowitz, as opposed to the 500 gentile families. There were

about twenty streets. No newspapers were sold there; if someone had a newspaper, it was a novelty.

Beshenkowitz had a water carrier who brought water from the river and filled the barrels in the

houses that served as individual reservoirs.

My father remembered the joyous dancing in the streets when they heard the good news that Mendel Beilis was exonerated in court. People kissed one another in

8 7

ברכה קאשר חשבו. וקסמו ויבדקו עליו וישאו
 לו תעודות רב וזכרה ויראת. ואמרו אשר נשא
 לו אשה כקטת גדולי הארץ. ונחמל לרב באשה
 הנשים הקדושות. ונאמ שמו ככל הארץ. כי לא
 קר סודו ויתורה אי בקלא השערה. וילמד
 גם את בני עירו לנאור ארצות הים. וישפך לוח
 הקליא השביל לעשות הקד וצדקה כל הנשים.
 וישבע טוב. עשר וקבוד כל ימי. וישם רוב
 רבי שלמה היה לתורה והתפארת וילמדו בקר
 כדפי הארץ.

סודעות.

(א) כל ילד המתרב בכל שבוע חזר שמו ק"כ. נדפוס איה את סך נדבתי בסוף כל חצי שנה.
 (ב) כל ילד אשר כפסך הוסים הבאים עליו לשונה הסלמה לו שלש עשרה שנה. מתבקש להודיע את
 שמו ואת יום הבר מצוה שלו בחוק נדפוס איה ברבה לשון. ואם יתר ברבה כפי השנה יודו נדפוס
 איה את סכום הברכה.

נרות אחים		סעות תנוכה	
הילדים והתמימים הנומדים פה.			
18 ק'	סודו ונחמל איה	70 ק'	הילדה תנה שוארשמן תחי
30	סודו נור איה סודעמנענע יחי	50	סווא
25	ניסן יפה סודעמנענעמנע	20	שוינדל
25	חיים וקפי ראובנבולום	25	הילד ישראל רובער יחי
20	אשר לויסק מסוסקבה	30	ברוך באקשוין מסוסקבה
20	צבי הורש לעדוואמן סודעמנע	30	הילדה חי' שרה
15	רובעי נאויק סאשמן	20	הואסא נוסל לויסק
15	יצחק שורא סודעמנע	30	הילד יהושע ארי' לוי
15	שפואל באקשוין מסוסקבה	18	אברהם ונחמל איה

הילד חסכן כר יהושע נרמן וזאקשוין חר' בער זאראוויץ פלך סודעמנע תבלאנה לו שלש
 עשרה שנה כפסך זה וום ו' כ' סבת. יאריך ימים ושנים ביראת השם ובעשרי ונכבוד סלה. את נדבתי
 נדפוס בכליאת הבאים איה.

שמות אחי-התמימים יחי וירבו.

ביתשעקראדיין	אב וואלף חפן	יודא זלמן לויטוין	יעקב מנשה נעשעך
(חסין מליון חי')	זלמן בליקסאן	יעקב לויטוין	ישראל זלמן אפנעוויץ
זלמן סעריילסאן	זלמן קראמבנע	ישראל פינק	יודא זלמן זאדאין
זלמן בניסין לאבאקאוויץ	אב וואלף חפן	ישראל אלזאראדיין	יעקב באויערען
זלמן דזשאן	חיים וועלדקסאן	יהושע תרדוין	יקוחאל סאלאוועי
זלמן חלל ליענעוויץ	חיים יעקב אקסעלראד	יהושע זשאן	ישראל נייסאן
זשאן אקסל	חיים יפה	יודא קראמבנע	יעקב מאיר האלברייך
זלמן סעריאי	חייקל חפן	יעקב תרדוין	יעד יבא בעדה

Контора І. Шнейермана, Любавичи, Мог. Губ.; וירושם:

Телло-Литература І. Лурия в ІІ*, Горьковск № 65. ש"ס ת"ב, ד'תש"א יתק' לוח'א, מ'תמוז' ס"ה.

R' Chaikel mentioned in the publication HaAch (at the bottom of the second row) in the year 5671 (1911)



R' Chaikel (center) at a farbrengen

the street and danced for joy.

My father knew the Chassid, R' Sholom R' Hillel's, who was called thus by the Chassidim because he devoted his life to serving as an assistant to the righteous gaon and Chassid, Rabbi Hillel of Paritch.

His father took him to see R' Sholom a number of times and said to him, "It's a z'chus to see such a Chassid." R' Sholom would review a maamer on Shabbos during the third meal. Whoever could go and hear him, went. R' Sholom was already quite old and an invalid. He

Every year, R' Mendel walked to the Rebbe Maharash in Lubavitch, and in later years, to the Rebbe Rashab.



R' Chaim Shaul Brook with Yisroel Chain

had a terrible illness in which chunks of his flesh fell off, and he suffered terribly.

His father told him then, in the name of the Chassidim, that R' Sholom would travel with R' Hillel Paritcher and serve him. Before R' Hillel passed away, R' Sholom said to him, "Rebbi, up until now we were together, but what will be now? (After R' Hillel passes away.)

R' Hillel answered, "You will be with me in my section!"

Chassidim said that R' Hillel had a refined body and in order to be with him one also needed a refined body. Therefore, because R' Hillel said, "You will be with me," R' Sholom had to endure suffering in order to refine his body in this world so he could be with R' Hillel in the World to Come.

CHASSIDIC MELAMDIM

One of my father's earliest memories was how on his fifth birthday, his father wrapped him in a tallis and brought him to cheider, the traditional religious school. There were two melamdin in town, R' Mendel, who taught the younger children, and R' Peretz who taught Gemara.

My father went to R' Mendel and there were twenty-five children in the class, divided into two groups according to their abilities and knowledge. When he taught one class to read Hebrew, the other class, which already studied Chumash and Rashi, would play, and vice versa.

Every year, R' Mendel walked to the Rebbe Maharash in Lubavitch, and in later years, to the Rebbe Rashab. He was a big Chassid and a yerei Shamayim. When my father was seven years old, he was supposed to go to R' Peretz's class, but R' Mendel's son-in-law, R' Shaul Brook, became a melamed and my

father went to his class.

R' Shaul was poverty-stricken. In his home, he didn't have a regular table, and chairs to sit on, but logs of wood. While learning, R' Shaul would rock the baby in the carriage while holding a kantchik (a whip) in his hand.

R' Shaul wanted to devote himself to each talmid; therefore, he only had six students. For this reason, he charged a high tuition for each child, unlike his father-in-law. Only the wealthy sent their sons to him.

My father described his daily schedule thus: At eight in the morning, he had to be in the beis midrash after breakfast, which consisted of an egg and a slice of bread. His mother provided him with a snack: an apple or a slice of bread and honey. They davened and learned until one o'clock and then he went home for a hot fleishige lunch. Then he returned to the beis midrash to learn and daven until seven in the evening.

EDUCATED TO GIVE TZEDAKA

His mother gave him a kopeke coin every week for his allowance, so he could buy sweets or something to eat. He bought bread and dessert, halva, a sausage, herring, or a pickle. But he spent only half a kopeke, and the other half he saved until Friday, when he

***My father protested:
"He came over to me
and gave me shalom,
and I answered
aleichem shalom,
that's all! Why did I
deserve a slap for
that?"***

gave it towards the printing of the publication "HaAch", and for yeshivas Tomchei Tmimim.

The melamed's house had a sand floor that was dirty during the week. For Shabbos, they brought clean, white sand, and when they did so, my father (other children did likewise) took his half kopoke coin and polished it with the sand. This way, when the man came to collect the money for Tomchei Tmimim at the end of the month, he would have a shiny coin to give him. This gave him great pleasure.

EDUCATIONAL PUNISHMENT

In the town, there was a boy named Leibke Pazarnik, who was expelled from school because of his behavior. He wore modern clothes — a suit with golden buttons —

and acted wantonly. Since there was no public school in Beshenkowitz, he traveled out of town to learn in the gymnasium (as the public school was called).

One time, he returned to Beshenkowitz and went to shul. I was nine, said my father, and Leibke was already twelve or more. Leibke came over to me and said shalom aleichem, and I responded with aleichem shalom.

When R' Shaul saw this, he came over and gave me a slap, saying, "How can you be friends with Leibka 'Padzar' (a Russian pejorative that was a play on Leibka's name)?"

My father protested: "He came over to me and gave me shalom, and I answered aleichem shalom, that's all! Why did I deserve a slap for that?"

R' Shaul answered, "The problem is not that you answered aleichem shalom, but that you gave him too hearty an aleichem shalom. You deserve the slap for the warmth of your response!"

My father loved R' Shaul and he said that even when R' Shaul slapped him, he did so lovingly, and he truly felt that it came from R' Shaul's love for him. The feeling was mutual, as we will continue to see in the stories of the friendship and love between them, which continued for the next fifty years.

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THE SIEGE OF GUSH KATIF

BY SHAI GEFEN

The date 6 Tammuz 5765 will be noted in our history as a day of infamy, ch"v. PM Sharon ordered that the residents of Gush Katif be placed under siege and ghettoized. The stories and dark days of our history are coming to life right here in our homeland. "The king of Bavel lay siege on Yerushalayim" is being fulfilled by Jews, against the Jews of Gush Katif.

The residents of Gush Katif are used to dealing with problems more severe than a siege. They are accustomed to miracles. They are not giving in. They are not going along with the government's dictates and are not showing their identity cards as the Israeli dictatorship demands. Nor are they fleeing the barrage of mortars that has intensified since the siege began.

There have been serious confrontations at the Kissufim crossing and under cover of these confrontations, many Lubavitchers crossed over into Gush Katif. The shliach Rabbi Yigal Kirschzaf (seriously injured by a mortar attack last week) greeted us all graciously. Rabbi Yehuda Friedman, shliach in Mill Basin, Brooklyn was also one of the Lubavitchers who came to provide moral support to the residents.

Many people are unaware of the fact that a new Chabad yeshiva just opened in Gush Katif, headed by





Rabbi Eli Poltorak. It has a regular course of study of Nigleh and Chassidus, and then in the afternoon, the chevra goes on mitzvaim. The bachurim feel that they are on a holy mission, to defend Gush Katif from its enemies. It's only with the Rebbe's ko'ach that they will succeed in vanquishing the enemies, just as in Soviet Russia, when underground Chabad yeshivos were established.

Isn't it incredible that even under

siege conditions, Rabbi Kirschznafz is carrying on the work of completing the Chabad mikva in Neve Dekalim? He has to hide this work from the authorities so when a truck brought tiles, sinks, and tubs for the mikva, what happened when the soldiers did not allow the truck in? What happened was that in the tumult with the soldiers, the truck managed to drive in and this was completely miraculous. It was the only truck that managed to drive in. Workers

*The siege on Gush Katif began shortly before 17 Tammuz, the day that marks the siege on Yerushalayim, which preceded the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. * Shai Gefen visited Gush Katif to stand by the residents. He reports about Chabad's outstanding preemptive work there.*

there say they see the Rebbe's miracles wherever they turn.

Rabbi Kirschznafz invites us to the celebration marking the completion of the mikva on Chamisha-Asar B'Av, along with thousands of others. "Building the Chabad mikva in Gush Katif began with open miracles, and its completion will coincide with Katif's own 'Purim miracle,'" he says.

During Israel's previous wars, Chabad's mitzva tanks were a symbol. Now too, in the battle to save Gush Katif, Chabad's mitzva



tank has penetrated the walls of the siege, and as the Rebbe says, when a tank enters an area, the area is already conquered.

Rabbi Dovid Nachshon, director of the Chabad Mobile Mitzva Tanks, sent a tank to the battleground of Gush Katif. The tank is used by the T'mimim in the yeshiva for their mitzvaim and it breathes a breath of hope and emuna within the besieged Gush.

Dovid Kirschznafz tells us of the miracle that took place when the tank arrived:

“The police did not allow the tank to enter. A police escort accompanied the tank until the Reim junction and didn't let it enter Gush Katif. We wrote to the Rebbe for a bracha so we could get the tank in. In the answer, the Rebbe wrote, ‘the evil angel, against its will, will answer amen.’

“While I was reading this answer, I was told that there was a resident of the Gush that was willing to have the tank enter under his responsibility. We went back to the Kissufim blockade and continued arguing. The driver refused to identify himself. More discussion, and then, amazingly, they suddenly allowed the tank to enter the Gush.

“Since it arrived, the tank has been constantly busy, reaching out to residents and soldiers. The response is unprecedented. Chabad's tanks conquer hearts here too.”

The scenes at the blockades are touching sometimes. Soldiers and police are torn up inside. You sometimes see the security forces in tears as they wonder why they were brought here. Why are they at fault because someone decided to turn them into armed guards whose job it is to fight their fellow Jews? Here in the Gush, people fervently hope that more and more soldiers and police will refuse orders. It's the only way to stop the madness.



“We wrote to the Rebbe for a bracha so we could get the tank in. In the answer, the Rebbe wrote, ‘the evil angel, against its will, will answer amen.’”

At the Chabad house in the Gaza Strip, they got ready for the live Internet broadcast of the huge children's rally in Gush Katif, which was joined by children all over the world. The rally took place on the Chag Ha'Geula, 12 Tammuz. They just can't help comparing what Chabad Chassidim went through in Russia to what is going on now in Gush Katif.

We met with R' Eli Poltorak, the one whose idea it was to start a yeshiva in Gush Katif, shortly after a Kassam missile landed on the roof of his new house. He wasn't home and his wife had just gone to a neighbor. Yet another miracle.

R' Poltorak feels it is his holy mission to help save Gush Katif. He knows that the yeshiva has the power to make an enormous difference. As far as he is concerned, the yeshiva is permanent, not temporary. There are 16 bachurim learning there now and they all feel a sense of responsibility.

What made you leave your home in New York to start a yeshiva in Gush Katif?

“For a long time now, I've felt that not enough is being done to save the yishuvim of Gush Katif and northern Shomron, and ultimately the lives of millions of Jews. I felt that something had to be done and that I could no longer sit idly by. It's just inconceivable that Jews are about to expel thousands of Jews from their homes in Eretz Yisroel, while we continue to stand by quietly.

“If we don't do anything, we won't be able to say that our hands did not spill this blood. So, I thought of what I could do to strengthen the people here and concluded that the most important thing to do is to live here. This way, the settlers will feel that it's not *their* battle, but that they represent all the Jewish people in this historic battle.”

Why did you choose to open a yeshiva here?

“The yeshiva was supposed to be located in the Maoz HaYam Hotel, but after they illegally evicted us, we rented other quarters in Neve Dekalim. In 5738, the Rebbe spoke about the importance of settling the new areas being developed then, and to establish houses of t’filla and Torah. The Rebbe spoke about the strength and protection that shuls and yeshivos provide for these places.

“I thought that a yeshiva in the spirit of Tomchei T’mimim was a good idea, since this yeshiva and its students were known for their mesirus nefesh during the communist regime. T’mimim, wherever they are, are a lighthouse that illuminates wherever they are with the light of the holy Torah.



One of the talmidim with a Kassam missile

“I hope that here in Gush Katif, the merit of the mesirus nefesh of the T’mimim, who are connected to the ‘tree of life’ will stand by us. Yeshivas Tomchei T’mimim and its leaders vanquished Stalin with the kocho of the Rebbeim, and our yeshiva will be victorious over Sharon’s folly.

“The yeshiva is run in the spirit of hiskashrus to the Rebbe with an emphasis on inyanei Moshiach and Geula. There is no doubt that its strength is a z’chus for the people here.”

Did you receive answers from the Rebbe about starting this yeshiva?

“We saw incredible help from Above in founding this yeshiva. I thought of the idea a couple of weeks ago, and since then I have seen the Rebbe’s brachos lead us step by step. Right after I received my wife’s consent to move to Gush Katif, I consulted with some askanim in Crown Heights, and after they agreed to cooperate, we wrote to the Rebbe together.

“The amazing answer we got in volume 26 was a letter the Rebbe wrote to Rechavam Zeevi (may Hashem avenge his blood) in which the Rebbe told him about the z’chus

“I have this to say to all of Anash: The time is now! No more excuses. The future of Eretz Yisroel is in the balance. Will we allow the expulsion and destruction of yishuvim in Eretz Yisroel or will we prevent it? We have enormous strength in order to stop it. Sharon himself knows this and the army knows it too. If we work effectively and with determination, there won’t be a Disengagement Period.”

he has in standing strong for shleimus ha’Aretz.”

Where were you when the siege began?

“The talmidim of the yeshiva were planning on going to Chevron that day, to daven at the M’aras HaMachpella, but when they heard about the siege they went right back to Gush Katif.”

Rabbi Tuvia Bolton farbrenged with the T’mimim with his guitar and many residents joined in. On the eve of the siege, R’ Yosef Gutnick of



Eli Poltorak in a shiur at his yeshiva

Australia came to visit, as did Rabbi Dovid Drukman, rav of Kiryat Mochkin.

The yeshiva's staff includes Rabbi Tzvi Bogomilsky and the T'mimim-shluchim Dovid Okanov, Dovid Kirschnzaft, and the madrich Chaim Seewald. They are waiting for another mitzva tank so they can do even more work.

We asked one of the T'mimim what it's like to be in yeshiva under siege. He said:

"Since the Gush was closed, hundreds of people have been coming every day. We feel, now more than ever, that we are on a holy mission. There is a special feeling of taking part in the battle. It's moving to see Yigal Kirschnzaft with his boundless energy. He's building a mikva, believing that the mikva will be in use for years to come, and I am sure his faith will win out."

Even though it looks hopeless?

R' Yigal: "The only chance for success is emuna. To say that it's a done deal gives victory to Sharon. As long as we fight, Sharon has no chance of winning. Soldiers yelled out to us, 'We are with you!'"

"The media is covering up the numbers of soldiers and policemen who are refusing orders. On the day that they closed the Gush, one of the men here decided that he was going to Chevron anyway. When he returned in the evening, he couldn't get back in. A police officer said to him, 'Follow me,' and took him in. The policeman circumvented all the blockades and asked him not to tell anybody. Many soldiers are wearing orange bracelets."

We met with R' Yigal on Sunday morning, July 17th, before he was injured. His emuna and optimism are overpowering.

R' Yigal, they closed the Gush. The worst happened!

"No evil descends from Above," declared R' Yigal. "These are the final



Rabbi Yigal Kirschnzaft and Rabbi Meir Gutnick of NY with a Kassam missile fired at the Gush

birth pangs before the Geula and we will definitely win. When I want to enter the Gush, I do not identify myself. I am not a criminal who must identify himself.

What do you need now?

"We need more people! The numbers and our stubbornness will win out in the end. For example, Thursday night, from 8 p.m. until 4 a.m. there were serious confrontations at the blockade and in the end, we won. Everybody got in without identifying themselves, so the more people who come, the

bigger the victory.

"I have this to say to all of Anash: The time is now! No more excuses. The future of Eretz Yisroel is in the balance. Will we allow the expulsion and destruction of yishuvim in Eretz Yisroel or will we prevent it? We have enormous strength in order to stop it. Sharon himself knows this and the army knows it too. If we work effectively and with determination, there won't be a Disengagement. Period.

"Whoever wants to come should give me a call and we'll welcome



Dancing with Rabbi Tuvia Bolton

everybody. We have a yeshiva and guests from all over the world. Join

“If there will be tens of thousands of people, they won’t throw us out.



A daily reality

us!”

We will stop the expulsion?



Yigal’s car riddled with bullet holes

The chief of staff himself said that he will not be able to implement the Disengagement if tens of thousands show up to prevent it. Everybody must know that each of us has the power to stop the expulsion. This is not just any protest demonstration but a way of physically stopping the expulsion.”

What is happening with security forces refusing orders?

“I can tell you that many people are refusing orders. The Parachutists

Brigade 623, about twenty guys, most of them not religious, announced that they are not participating in the expulsion. They were released from the army early so as not to be in the unit.

“Many soldiers would rather sit in jail than be a partner to this crime. A soldier deserted and joined the demonstrators and was received with hugs. The army is covering over the reports of the large numbers of soldiers who are refusing orders.”

Are you still optimistic?

“I am always optimistic. I was just at the Ministry of Education in Yerushalayim in connection with my job as principal of the Talmud Torah in Atzmona. They have to stamp the permit for the upcoming school year but they didn’t stamp it, for obvious reasons.

“I told them I am not interested in their reasons and that I want the permit stamped. They looked at me as though I’m crazy. Now we have to finish the job. Baruch Hashem there’s a meeting of the minds here and everybody knows that this is zero hour. This is the time to come and save Eretz Yisroel and Am Yisroel.”

* * *

Rabbi Kirschznazft’s Chabad house is the only Chabad house in the world that the government wants to shut down. Even in Morocco and Tunisia, the Chabad houses operate as usual. It’s only here, in Eretz Yisroel, that Jews want to make the area Judenrein.

Women, as always, are also involved in helping out. A large group of women recently came to the Gush in order to hold a farbrengen, which can accomplish what the Angel Michael cannot accomplish.

We are living through critical times. May we see these days of sorrow, of the Three Weeks, be transformed into days of rejoicing.

RE-SUFFERING THE TRAGEDY

BY CHANA KATZ

SAFON HA'SHOMRON— Things are happening quickly and comforts – in fact, basics – aren't a priority.

The roads to Gush Katif have been closed to all non-residents, and no one knows how much longer the roads will remain open to non-residents here in the northern Shomron.

For those who understand...

In recent days a group of bachurim moved, with alacrity and complete mesirus nefesh, to Sa-Nur, where they've already made significant progress in setting up a summer yeshiva. With this groundwork (and more) quickly being laid, dozens of T'mimim are expected to arrive within the coming days.

This core group has been living in tents and spending half of the day learning. The rest of the day is spent in the sweltering summer sun building makeshift facilities, such as a sukka which will serve as their kitchen. They are working with limited resources but an enormous amount of emuna, ko'ach of the Rebbe, and ahavas Yisroel.

Still, their food situation "is not so good, and their gashmius needs a lot of help," according to the mother of one of the bachurim who came to Sa-Nur with her husband and family for Shabbos. "I looked at

them and they look pretty run down," the mother said.

They don't have a washing machine and one bachur was trying to hand-wash his clothes in the communal sink. Sa-Nur is a beautiful place, but the work is hard, the sun is strong, and the tent city is dusty and earthy.

* * *

Dr. and Mrs. F, of Beit Shemesh, spent the Shabbos in a tent at Sa-Nur, arriving with a large pot of cholent, a bounty of chicken, and a case of vegetables that was donated by the Chabad store owner in Beit Shemesh – when it was learned that the boys had gone most of the week without fresh fruits and vegetables. Their son G. is a key organizer of the project.

It was startling to learn that when Mrs. F was about the same age as her son G. is now, she underwent the tragedy of being evicted from her home in the Sinai. That was some 25 years ago!

"I see him going through the whole thing and I understand him. You just can't sit around and do nothing," said Mrs. F. Yet, she continued, "I have an awful memory of being pulled out of our home. I don't want him to go through that. It was traumatic..."

"Back then there was no such thing as police beating up people brutally. Now there is. I'm a little worried."

* * *

Dr. F said he is "very proud" of his son and the bachurim. But even he is struck by the glaring lack of consensus among Chabad leadership about how to confront the situation.

Surely the fact that these bachurim are living with mesirus nefesh at Sa-Nur – learning Chassidus and doing mitzvaim – can only be positive. Yet the fact that they may face confrontations with police and soldiers, "this is sticky stuff," said Dr. F.

"We, as parents of two boys who learn in Tzfas, feel there needs to be a clear voice regarding how to behave toward police and the army. What's the red line?" he said.

* * *

It happened 25 years ago when Yamit and the Sinai settlements were evacuated by then Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, that the young Mrs. F and other members of her settlement were dragged out by the evacuating forces and placed on buses. They were dropped off in the middle of nowhere. She recalls that her settlement had been the most

recently built and was the first to be dismantled. She and others tried to rebuild it. Sharon's forces ordered it destroyed again. After several times of this repetition, the game was over. Am Yisroel lost. To this day, Mrs. F believes that if more people would have gone to the Sinai to help out, the evacuation could not have taken place.

"Now it's up to everybody to say, 'If it's not me, then who will do it.' If everyone does it we can stop it. If it's just a fringe group (who comes to try to thwart the evacuation) it will be (nothing more than) a show."

Interestingly, Gush Katif Chabad House Director Yigal Kirschezaft, who is recovering from wounds received in a rocket attack on Gush Katif last week, was also in Sinai during the evacuation. He was the secretary at Mrs. F's settlement!

Then too, they gathered at Kfar Maimon in an attempt to rally for the Sinai. And last week, the F's found themselves back at Kfar Maimon 25 years later, rallying for the residents of Gush Katif.

Unfortunately, the rally struck a dead end when a decision was made by the leaders of the rally to abide by the position of the police, which declared the march to Gush Katif illegal.

There are those among Anash who bitterly lamented that Chabad cast its lot with the leaders of the Zionist movement in Israel, who still hail the state of Israel and sing

"HaTikva."

A story was told that an 80-year-old man at Kfar Maimon approached the barbed wire fence police had placed around Kfar Maimon in order to keep the protestors from heading toward Gush Katif to help their fellow Jew. The elderly man told the large masses of police and army forces that the barbed wire and the entire

It was startling to learn that when Mrs. F was about the same age as her son is now, she underwent the tragedy of being evicted from her home in the Sinai. That was some 25 years ago!

situation reminded him of the Holocaust he had suffered through as a youth. At that point, five men of the knitted kippa variety, jumped on the elderly man and kept him from confronting police. The decision had been made not to tussle with police and the army but rather to sit before them, strum the guitar and sing love songs, literally. They didn't want this elderly man,

who was re-suffering a tragedy once again, to stand up to the truth.

Many in Chabad lamented this. A seifer Torah had been finished and was ready to lead the parade to Gush Katif. And although it was much publicized, the fact is that Chabadnikim there, as well as their seifer Torah, had to turn back from Gush Katif. Unfortunately, there was no unified Chabad leadership and there was a feeling that they should have kept going. There were 20,000 police and army troops there, but the protestors outnumbered the tired forces two to one. Why didn't they keep going?

F noted the lack of true Chabad direction. There simply wasn't the ko'ach to face the four massive water cannons and special riot troops. Ironically, it was the largest amassment of military and police forces in recent history. Yet those massive forces were amassed not to fight the terrorists, but to fight against their fellow Jews. It was a tragedy, and meanwhile the terrorists used the time to plan their next step.

Within days, more rockets were fired at Gush Katif. And a Jerusalem couple in their 50s was murdered by Arab snipers as they returned from a Shabbos visit with relatives in Gush Katif. The couple had only a month to enjoy their first grandchild and left behind two other teenage children. Five more Jews were wounded in those attacks. The couple was laid to rest today – the 17th of Tammuz.

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“ENLIST TO HELP THE NORTHERN SHOMRON”

TRANSLATED BY MICHOEL LEIB DOBRY

Rabbi Uriel Gorfinkle, shliach in the northern Shomron, tells Beis Moshiach reporter Shai Gefen about the state of preparedness leading up to D-Day, calling upon all Lubavitcher chassidim to join the great struggle.

How are you preparing as D-Day in the northern Shomron approaches?

We are presently establishing a summer yeshiva on the settlement of Avnei Chafetz, which will then send T'mimim to strengthen and encourage other settlements throughout the region. As of last week, thirty bachurim had already arrived in the northern Shomron. Not far from the new branch in Sa-Nur, we have also established a large encampment in Chomesh to strengthen the location and its residents.

What is happening now with the proposed closure of the northern Shomron?

Gen. Yair Naveh of the IDF Central Command preferred not to close the area immediately. The appointed date for the expulsion from the northern Shomron is the first day of Rosh Chodesh Elul. He preferred to limit confrontations with the local residents as much as possible.

Are there preparations taking place on the ground?

People are beginning to stream into the area. We have purchased many tents. Everyone is getting ready for the moment of truth. They are preparing

in accordance with the principles that had been established previously.

What essentially are you doing in



the area now?

Our objective now is to expand the number of people in the region and to get people to work at various levels of activities, as it is quite clear that the more people that arrive, the greater the likelihood that we can disrupt the IDF's ability to carry out the expulsion. Reaching the northern Shomron is far easier and more accessible than Gush Katif. The whole matter depends upon our resolve, and therefore, it is most important that we take action.

Does it leave an impression that the northern Shomron has been neglected

in favor of Gush Katif?

To my regret, we are hearing virtually nothing about the northern Shomron, but it will be clear that if ch"v the government hands over the northern Shomron, the danger will be far greater than with Gush Katif. We are talking about the establishment of a PLO state in every sense of the word that will provide a vast area of territorial continuity for the Arabs. If mortar shells and Kassam rockets can today reach the southern city of Sderot, we will soon see them ch"v in Netanya, Hadera, and Afula. The struggle for the northern Shomron is no less important and vital than the activities on behalf of Gush Katif.

Are you preparing for a determined battle?

We will wage our battle with great determination. Those who say that they are very concerned about Sa-Nur know exactly what they are talking about. It is much easier here to break through army roadblocks. There are hilltops and other places from where the settlements can be accessed with great ease. We will not despair. Our chances of victory remain great, yet we need the help of all our Jewish brethren.

What do you require?

I turn to Anash with a request to come and provide bodily support. We also need financial contributions, mainly dry goods and foodstuffs for the period of the battle ahead. Those who are able to offer such assistance are asked to contact us at +972-54-691-5956 or +972-54-656-0980.

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STORY OF A SHIUR

BY DAFNA CHAIM

It was 20 Av 5760, late at night, when a friend from Crown Heights called me (I was living there at the time). She asked me whether I could come the next day to help set up the shul for a class that would be taking place with Mrs. Esther Piekarski of Tel Aviv. I agreed to help out but didn't plan on staying for the class.

I ended up staying for the class though, and Mrs. Piekarski began the class by saying, "Today we will talk about relationships the way I teach it to Mizrahi (Zionistic modern Orthodox) women.

I thought to myself – not only hadn't I planned to attend this class, now I'll have to sit here and be bored. However, to my delight, not only was I not bored, but I enjoyed the class tremendously. The proof is that I had left the house without eating breakfast, having assumed I would be back home soon, and despite my hunger I didn't want the class to end. Today I know that aside from enjoying the class, it was also amazing Divine providence.

I come from a Mizrahi background, and the story I'm about to tell is connected with my Mizrahi relatives. My brother and sister both got married in the summer of 5751 (both of them received the Rebbe's bracha for their marriages which was read under the chuppa). The two new couples each had a boy a year later. After a break of five years (5756), two babies were born, one to each couple. Another five years went by without any new additions to the family.

In 5760, the two women were expecting again, but sadly, they miscarried. In one of my trans-Atlantic conversations with my family, my mother asked me to write to the Rebbe

and ask for his bracha. I immediately sat down to do so. I didn't save the number of the page I opened to in the *Igros Kodesh*, but the content of the letter was a bracha for children.

I immediately told Michal and Iris, my sister and sister-in-law, that there was nothing to worry about, that there was a bracha and they needed to make a vessel. "How do you make a vessel?" I was asked, and I answered that the most appropriate way was to strengthen their observance of Family Purity. I suggested that they start a shiur where they would review the halachos.

They both agreed and I wrote to the Rebbe about this. The Rebbe's letter was about the importance of a mikva, which is constructed *bor al gabbei bor* (one pit over another). I understood from this that the Rebbe wanted them to observe the laws with the hiddurim of Chabad.

I had the job of finding a woman who could give the shiurim. Since I lived in New York and they lived in Yerushalayim, it wasn't easy. When I found someone who could give the shiur, the day she picked wasn't good for them, and when I finally found someone, she canceled at the last minute. A few months went by and the class had not begun.

A tape of Mrs. Piekarski's class was available in Tishrei 5761, and since I had enjoyed the class, I bought five tapes for each of my sisters and sisters-in-law and sent them to Eretz Yisroel. I figured that even if there was no shiur yet, they could listen to the tapes in the meantime.

The tapes arrived on Sukkos. After Yom Tov, I spoke with my sister Michal on the phone and she told me how

much she had enjoyed the tape. "It's in my car and I listen to it over and over again. I may have listened to it a hundred times by now!"

When I hung up the phone, it hit me. Now I understood why Mrs. Piekarski had spoken to Lubavitcher women in Crown Heights the way she taught Mizrahi women and why I had to be there.

I didn't really know Mrs. Piekarski at the time, but I knew her sister, Mrs. Sarah Zalmanov who lives in Crown Heights. I called Sarah, told her the story and asked her to speak to her sister. The next day, Sarah told me, "I spoke with my sister and she said she would learn with them. Tell them to be in touch with her."

When I told Michal and Iris the news, I was taken aback by the reaction. It was the beginning of the Intifada, and who dared to leave their home in Yerushalayim to go to Tel Aviv? "Are you crazy? No way!" they said. I explained that if they really wanted more children they needed some mesirus nefesh, and they gave in.

In the middle of Cheshvan, they went to Tel Aviv to study with Mrs. Piekarski. As soon as they got home, Michal informed her husband that from that day on, "We are keeping the laws of Family Purity with all the hiddurim and details."

Nine months later, on 18 Av 5761, a year after the shiur in Crown Heights, she gave birth to twins, Achiad Meir and Meitav Esther. Iris, who didn't go l'chat'chilla aribber, gave birth to Ayal a year after that, on 18 Elul 5762.

To conclude, it always pays to go to a shiur, even if you don't really feel like it, because you never know what it might lead to.