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MODERN SCIENCE AS A PRELUDE TO MOSHIACH

MOSHIACH AND SCIENCE¹
LIKKUTEI SICHOS, VOL. 15, P. 42FF



The Torah tells us:² “In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life... all the fountains of the great deep burst forth (and the windows of the heavens were opened).” On this verse the *Zohar* comments:³ “And six hundred years into the sixth millennium the gates of wisdom from above and the fountains of wisdom from below will open, and the world will be corrected as a preparation for its elevation in the seventh [millennium.]”

There are two concepts hinted at in the verse: “fountains of the great deep” (wisdom from below) and “windows of the heavens” (wisdom on high). Higher wisdom refers to Torah and lower wisdom refers to the sciences.⁴

Indeed, we see that around that time there started an additional revelation of Torah wisdom, especially of the inner dimension of Torah.⁵

There was a calculation in several holy books that implied that *Moshiach* would arrive in the year 5608 (1848). The *Tzemach Tzedek* explained that, [in a certain sense, that prediction] was actually fulfilled, since in that year the *Likkutei Torah* was printed. (After all, the focus of *Moshiach*’s arrival is that then “the world will be filled with knowledge of G-d.”⁶) Also, several years earlier, *Torah Ohr* was printed (in 5597—1837). Only when the study of *Chassidus* reached the clarity and depth made possible through those books could one truly say that people were “sustained” by the *Zohar*,⁷ and that a “dissemination” of the wellsprings of the Baal Shem Tov had been achieved.⁸ (Interestingly, the Baal Shem Tov’s revelation occurred around the beginning of the sixth century, 5500—1740.⁹)

Furthermore, there also began in that era an increased development in areas of worldly wisdom.

But a question remains. We can understand how the revelation of the inner dimension of Torah is a preparation for

the world’s “elevation in the seventh,” since when *Moshiach* comes “the world will be filled with knowledge of G-d as waters cover the sea.” Therefore it makes sense that prior to his arrival—as a preparation—there should be a revelation of the inner dimension of Torah, which is a foretaste of the Torah of *Moshiach*. The question is, however, what relationship is there between the progress and discoveries of science and the era of *Moshiach*?

Moreover: Since the *Zohar* brings both of these ideas together, it is obvious that they are related to one another. Indeed, the new revelation in areas of Torah wisdom, which came as a preparation for *Moshiach*, is what “caused” the discoveries and development of the sciences. The two disciplines seem quite disparate, being that the sciences—“from below”—are incomparably lower than the wisdom of Torah—“from above”—and especially in comparison to the inner dimension of Torah. Why then should the revelation of one depend on the revelation of the other?

ELEVATING SCIENCE: A RISKY BUSINESS

The entire world and everything in it was created “for the Torah and for Israel.”¹⁰ “All that G-d created in His world, He created solely for His honor.”¹¹ Thus, it is understood that the ultimate purpose of every created entity is that a Jew use it for Divine service.

The same applies to worldly wisdom: the Divine purpose behind the recent development of the sciences is—as the *Tanya* puts it—“to use them for the service of G-d and His Torah.”¹²

However, not every person can achieve this goal, as the Alter Rebbe concludes, “This was the intention of the Rambam and the Ramban, of blessed memory, and their associates, who studied secular knowledge.” In other words, it is only fitting for special people of this sort. Anyone else is,

on the contrary, “defiling the intellectual faculties of his Divine soul” by pursuing such studies.¹³

THE CASE AGAINST COLLEGE

Something must be pointed out, although truly it is obvious:

What was said above has no bearing whatsoever on the question of studying in college or university.¹⁴ Such study involves a strict prohibition and danger (“danger is even more severe than prohibition”¹⁵), since the entire atmosphere, environment, and outlook of such institutions nowadays is permeated with denial of the Almighty’s providence and involvement in the world. In their view there is no entity or power that can influence the way the world runs or the laws of nature. (In fact, this is accepted as something that is so obvious (and need not even be proven) and is the basis of many areas of study; so much so that it need not even be openly discussed.) In most such institutions, they also study heretical teachings, idolatrous beliefs¹⁶ etc.

Furthermore, in just about all of them the boundaries of shame and modesty have been completely broken down, so much so that they laugh and ridicule those who do take modesty into account. On the contrary, according to them, the more vulgar, the better, etc.

The terrible situation on campuses, in dormitories, meeting places, etc., is infamous, and there is no need to discuss at length something so distressing, especially when it is to such an awful extent.

The famous “argument” that it won’t hurt this particular student, since he or she will be able to withstand the test, etc., has an equally famous, and simple, response: Even a perfectly righteous person on the last day of his one hundred twenty year life petitions G-d in his morning prayers, “bring me not to a test.”¹⁷ There is plenty more that can be said, but here is not the place.

A TASTE OF THINGS TO COME

Since the *Zohar* associates the development of science with preparing for the seventh millennium, it must be that the benefit of scientific knowledge is expressed in something that serves as a preparation for the attainments of the Messianic era.

One of the main accomplishments of the Messianic era is the fulfillment of the promise¹⁸ “And the glory of G-d will be

revealed, and all flesh will see together that the mouth of the L-rd has spoken.” In other words, the Divine revelation will not be only in a manner of “the world will be filled with knowledge of G-d,” but even “all flesh will see,” i.e., that even our physical flesh will see that “the mouth of the L-rd has spoken.”

Thus, we will not merely perceive G-dliness in our “spiritual, mind’s eye”; we will also “see physically with our physical eyes.”¹⁹ Furthermore, the verse states, “all flesh will see,” not “the eyes of all flesh will see” [similar to “may our eyes behold”²⁰]. This implies that not only will our “physical eyes” see G-dliness, but even physical flesh itself will behold that “the mouth of the L-rd has spoken.”

Herein lies the connection between the strides made in the sciences and the preparation for “being elevated in the seventh.” Our using worldly knowledge “for the service of G-d or for His Torah,” helps to ready us for a taste of “all flesh will see”—a physical, tangible, seeing—in matters of Divine service.

“AN EYE THAT SEES AND AN EAR THAT HEARS”

To illustrate, consider one of the powers inherent in nature that has existed in full strength ever since the six days of creation, and yet was previously unknown to man and has only been revealed and developed recently, namely the ability for the sound of a person talking in a given place to be instantaneously heard in a remote location, even on the far side of the earth, on the moon, etc. This is possible through telephone, or—even more so—via radio. And also, more recently, this includes the ability to see someone from afar, with all his movements, etc.

This achievement in the world—the ability to hear every sound a person makes, or see him, at the very same second in all corners of the globe—acts as a very tangible and real example for the concept of “an Eye that sees and an Ear that hears.”²¹ After all, if the “ear” down here in the physical world can immediately hear [and similarly the “eye” down here—through the development of yet another potential in nature—can see] what is happening on the other side of the world, how much more so can the supernal “ear” and “eye.” “Shall He who implants the ear not hear? Shall He who forms the eye not see?”²² He is not bound by any limitations, Heaven forbid. Everything that man does, even be it hidden in the most private of inner chambers, is—at that very same moment—caught by “an eye sees, an ear hears, and

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(therefore) all your actions are recorded in a ledger.”

When one has such a tangible example for this concept, his meditation about the concept that “behold G-d stands over him... and looks at him, and searches kidneys and heart to see if he is serving Him properly”²³ becomes something that is not merely understood in his mind’s eye alone. That does not always have a full effect on a person. Rather, it becomes much closer to the person’s physical senses and feelings, and therefore has a greater effect on his emotions, and even on his thoughts, speech, and actions.

SCIENCE IS GOLDEN

Although everything in this world was created “for Torah and for Israel,” the Sages singled out certain things by emphasizing that they were created solely for a specific use for Torah and *mitzvos*. For instance: “The world was not worthy of using gold. Why, then, was it created? For the Tabernacle and for the Holy Temple.”²⁴

The difference between these most distinguished items and all other created entities is: All other entities, although they exist “for Torah and for Israel,” may still fulfill their purpose in creation through being used for physical matters (permitted pursuits, etc.), as long as those pursuits themselves (eventually) provide a benefit for Divine service.

Regarding gold, on the other hand, we are told, “the world was not worthy of using gold.” Using gold for worldly needs is a descent for the gold. Its entire *raison d’être* was only to be utilized directly for the needs of the Tabernacle and Temple. [It is just so that people should have free choice that G-d allows it to be used for other purposes as well.]

The same is true in our context: The *Zohar*’s association of the development of secular wisdom with the revelation of (the inner dimension of) Torah and with “being elevated in the seventh” is in itself clear proof that this is the entire purpose²⁵ of this development. [The fact that the benefits of this advancement can be used for other areas is only so that man should have free will, as discussed earlier.]

In other words: The fact that one may derive a tangential benefit in Divine service from some scientific advancement does not yet fulfill the ultimate goal of its development. (After all, at that stage the science still remains a part of the material world, a permissible matter from which some specific benefit to Divine service is extended.)

The true purpose of their development is achieved when these advances are themselves utilized for Torah or *mitzvos*. Furthermore, since the *Zohar* relates this process to the time when the inner dimension of Torah is revealed, the ultimate goal must be to use them specifically for the revelation and dissemination of the inner dimension of Torah.

THE SEA OF KNOWLEDGE ~~ IN WAVES

As discussed previously, the novelty of Messianic times is expressed in two aspects: “The world will be filled with

knowledge of G-d, as water covers the sea,” and this itself will be in a manner of “all flesh will see etc.” Accordingly, the accomplishment and purpose of using secular wisdom for the dissemination of *Chassidus* (which is, as mentioned, a “taste” of the Torah of *Moshiach*), is that through these advances the revelation of the inner aspects of Torah as a preparation for *Moshiach*’s Torah is accomplished in (at least a “taste” of) those two manners: “The world is filled etc.” and “all flesh will see etc.”

A practical example: When one uses a radio to disseminate teaching of *Chassidus*, the topic of Torah being studied is heard—physically, and in all corners of the globe.

Furthermore, the Chassidic teachings being taught on the radio permeate the entire world, even where no radio-receivers exist to receive the transmission. (Radio waves spread everywhere, throughout the entire world—and actually, not just potentially. The receiver is only able to pick up the voice and transform it in various ways; it does not create the voice.)

This means that through utilizing secular advances to spread the inner dimension of Torah, there is a taste of: a) “The world will be filled with knowledge of G-d...” without any limitations, in every single place. And b) it is in a manner of “all flesh will see...”—the sound is *physically* heard at that very moment.

UNITY WITHIN NATURE, A SIGN OF DIVINE

Even in this case, secular wisdom is still being utilized for something else—in this case Torah and *mitzvos*. In the technological developments themselves we have not yet discussed any connection to holiness. The true fusion of secular wisdom with Torah is when one can discern aspects of the inner dimension of Torah within the secular wisdom itself.

One of the main areas where we see this clearly: The inner dimension of Torah reveals the ultimate unity of G-d within the world. Despite the myriad different creations that exist, they do not contradict G-d’s essential oneness, since the very existence of the many separate entities is itself derived from the essential oneness of G-d, as is explained in various sources.²⁶

Since the true existence of the world is G-d’s “simple unity,” this oneness is expressed even within the physical nature of the world: the world has the quality of unity. This idea—the oneness of our world (which in its inner essence is really the oneness of G-d)—is becoming ever more apparent with the further development of scientific knowledge.

People used to think that each of the forces of nature is completely *separate*; that the matter of every object is comprised of numerous *distinct* elements. The more science develops, however, the more it reaches a recognition that all the diversity and disparity among the various elements is only an external factor—the way in which the components fuse,

the degree of contraction or expansion, etc. Thus, the scientists are continually decreasing the number of fundamental components, until they recognize that the basic existence of the world is simply the combination and interaction of just two aspects: quantity and quality (matter in which energy is contained, and the energy itself). This, then, is the connection between the development of secular wisdom and the revelation of the inner essence of Torah, both as a preparation for “correcting the world to be elevated in the seventh [millennium].”²⁷

The revelation of the inner dimension of Torah automatically causes the development of secular wisdom, since thereby is achieved a “taste” of *Moshiach’s* Torah (which reveals G-d’s oneness in the world) in a manner which is (at least) a “taste” of “all flesh will see...”—when the world itself becomes a “vessel” for the oneness of G-d, and we see this unity and oneness within the world itself.

When we see this, we truly realize that this unity is not something separate from the simple unity of G-dliness²⁸ (which is revealed in *Chassidus*). Through this, the “world is corrected to be elevated in the seventh [millennium]” very soon.

NOTES:

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2 B'Reishis, 7:11.

3 I, 117a.

4 Ashmoret HaBoker on the Zohar (by Rabbi Moshe ben Avrohom Kashtaro), 9.

5 See Zohar *ibid.* (118a): “As the era of Moshiach approaches, even young children will be able to discover the secrets of wisdom.”

6 Yeshaya, 11:9. Cf. (at length) Rambam, *Melachim*, 12, and T'shuva, 9.

7 The term is from the *Tikkunei Zohar* (end *Tikkun* 6). In the introduction to *Mikdash Melech* (a commentary on the Zohar) he explains: “[As the days of Moshiach approach,] they will be sustained... when it will be clear to them the truth of his teachings. Cf. *Kissei Melech* on *Tikkunei Zohar*, *ad loc.*”

8 Correspondence of the Baal Shem Tov. He relates that his soul ascended to the chamber of Moshiach, and he asked Moshiach when he will finally arrive. Moshiach responded: “When your wellsprings will be disseminated to the outside.” Printed at the end of Ben Porat Yosef, and in many places.

9 In 5494, 1734. See also *Orach Chaim*, beginning of *Tzav*.

10 Midrash ‘Otiot D’Rabbi Akiva,’ 2. Rashi, B'Reishis, 1:1.

11 Avos, 6:11.

12 Chapter 8.

13 Tanya, *ibid.*—Different levels and approaches to secular studies with a holy intent have been explained earlier. See end of Ch. 3.

14 Studying in a university in the Holy Land is extremely

dangerous because of the following factors:

The environment and atmosphere there.

It is co-educational.

It delays marriage for several years.

It creates a great division between those studying there and their parents and leaders of the community, etc.

It implants in the students the idea that true wisdom is to be found among non-Jews, and Jews must try their best to imitate them and stop missing out. The more one acts like a non-Jew, the more they consider him to be intellectual and complete.

The fact that they do not say this openly, but rather only through hints and a roundabout manner through practical example in all of their behavior (which forces the above conclusion—as has been clearly proven by the actual results), only serves to increase the danger manifold.

This is especially so since among those who are—in a roundabout way—making this declaration, are also some who keep Torah and mitzvos in their private lives. Unfortunately, they distort the Torah in wrong and false ways, and bring “proofs” to their statements from Torah...

(From a correspondence regarding absorption of young immigrants [seemingly from Georgia or Bukhara]. From a copy of the Rebbe’s handwritten response printed in *Kfar Chabad*, 13 Cheshvan, 5758, Issue 783, p. 11.)

15 Chullin, 10a.

16 Cf. Rambam, *Avoda Zara*, 2:2—“It is forbidden even in thought.”

17 Liturgy of Morning Blessings. (*Brachos*, 60b.)

18 *Yeshaya*, 40:5.

19 This is discussed and explained at length by the *Mitteler Rebbe*, *Shaar HaEmuna*, chapter 25 ff. Cf. *Tanya*, 36.

20 Liturgy in the *Amida*. Cf. *Yeshaya*, 52:8: “For eye to eye they will see.”

21 *Avos*, 2:1.

22 *T’hillim*, 94:9.

23 *Tanya*, chapter 41. Cf. *Rema*, beginning of *Orach Chaim*. *Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch*, *ibid.* *Moreh Nevuchim*, vol. 3, chapter 52.

24 *ShmoS Rabba*, 35:1. (See there for other examples.)

25 And therefore the entire essence and existence. See at length in *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 19, p. 182 ff.

26 See *Derech Mitzvosecha*, 49a.

27 Note Rambam, *Melachim*, end of chapter 11 (in the paragraph that was deleted by the censors): “All of these things (Christianity and Islam)... are merely to smooth the way for King Moshiach, and to correct the entire world to serve G-d together...” How much more so is this true in our case.

28 Note *Sefer HaMaamarim Kuntreisim* (vol. 1, p. 226b ff.), that through illustrations from physical objects “the G-dly soul refines and purifies its portion in the world, for through using the physical objects to understand G-dliness, he sees within them the Divine concept—for he sees the details of what is illustrated in the illustration itself, and how they are truly one and the same.” See there at length.

LIVING AND LEARNING

TRANSLATED BY MICHOEL LEIB DOBRY

*“Do everything in your ability to bring Moshiach Tzidkeinu in actual deed” – this famous quote from the Rebbe MH”M’s sicha from the 28th of Nissan, 5751 served as the focal point of a recent symposium in Kfar Chabad on the subject of studying “D’var Malchus,” the Rebbe’s sichos from 5751-5752, attended by about one thousand people. The main event of the evening was a panel discussion with mashpiim and shluchim who have dealt with various aspects of the “D’var Malchus” sichos. * Part 1 of 2*

Some people ask why there has been such an emphatic focus in recent years upon the study of “D’var Malchus” and why it seems to have “favored status” over all the other sichos that the Rebbe said over a period of more than four decades?

Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Ginsberg: First of all, in 5710, after the passing of the previous Rebbe, the Rebbe shlita made farbrengens throughout that year, where he emphasized the that the Rebbe (Rayatz) provided us with answers to all our questions during the final year of his life in this world. The Rebbe even stated explicitly that he searches for answers to all the questions that people ask, and he finds them in the sichos of the last year. “If only Anash and T’mimim would be precise in the sichos of 5710 and the preceding year,” the Rebbe says and explains that there simply cannot be a situation where the Rebbe leaves his chassidim without answers.

All this was in 5710, a year when there was a histalkus, a new Rebbe, and a new source for hearing maamarim, sichos, and answers, and nevertheless, the message was: go and look and you’ll find answers. This applies all the more so today, after Gimmel Tammuz 5754, when we are certain that there has been no histalkus and the Rebbe continues to lead us on all fronts.



It is especially for this reason that we want to hear sichos and maamarim today. Every Jew, every chassid, and in essence, anyone who cares about the Rebbe wants to know what the Rebbe wants from us now. If so, the Rebbe says that the answers can be found in the most recent sichos we have been privileged to hear. Regardless of any ideological arguments that may exist within Lubavitch today, this point should be quite clear and understood, as this is what the Rebbe said.

A second point: After the sicha of “Do everything in your ability,” the Rebbe began to explain to us that we need to learn about Moshiach and the Redemption, particularly the teachings of the leader of the generation. Obviously, all the sichos that the Rebbe gave throughout his leadership are extremely vital and important, but not all of them discuss the situation that prevails in our world today.

If we want to know about our current state and the best way to deal with it, it’s discussed specifically in the sichos of 5751-5752. Through these sichos, we can determine what the Rebbe wants from us today.

The central point that we need to bring out is that we must not let a week go by without learning in-depth the “D’var Malchus” from start to finish. We want to hear the Rebbe now, but as long as we have not yet been so privileged, we cannot forego our obligation to learn what the Rebbe wants from us in these times through the weekly “D’var Malchus.”

In relation to what Rabbi Ginsberg has just said regarding the importance of learning the “Dvar Malchus,” what can a chassid expect to find there?

Rabbi Mordechai Gal: First of all, I would like to thank my friend, Rabbi Yitzchok Fine, for his involvement in the printing of the “D’var Malchus.” I am aware of the

fact that numerous miracles have occurred in connection with this lofty project.

To the heart of the matter, the involvement in “D’var Malchus” is much higher than any other Torah subject that we have dealt with in the past. I recall that when I first came to the Rebbe in 5738, I found myself standing at a farbrengen without understanding a single word. I would stand on my tiptoes for long hours,

stood for hours upon hours with a wondrous state of enthusiasm.

This feeling comes back to me every week when I sit together with several friends and learn “D’var Malchus.” Hiskashrus to the Rebbe through studying this weekly sicha arouses a point so essential that it brings us to the most absolute opening of the eyes one can possibly attain. Our involvement in the study of “D’var Malchus,” the number of participants that come each week, and the knowledge that we are doing something extremely lofty that has a strong connection to the Rebbe and is a source of great pleasure – all this has a profound effect upon me, and it gets stronger and more intense with each week.

Anyone who learns chassidus and works on himself knows what the Rebbe wants from him. However, this is really not laid out as clearly and sharply as when we learn “D’var Malchus.” In the “Dvar Malchus,” everything is absolutely clear, simple, and fascinating. It raises all worldly matters to a much higher level, opening our eyes to the most inner and essential point. It is the sharpest and most effective tool for living with Moshiach and the Redemption. The “D’var Malchus” lets us feel as if we are sitting at a farbrengen with the Rebbe right now, and anyone can experience this feeling, even someone who is not a Lubavitcher.

How do we instill the “Dvar Malchus” into Jews who are presently not observant, e.g., young people who have just come back from the Far East and are literally living in another world?

Rabbi Yosef Ginsburgh: In a sense, all the innovations that the Rebbe told us over the years are found in the sichos of “D’var Malchus.” If we want to understand a particular portion of chassidus, we have to learn “D’var Malchus,” one of the finest resource tools to draw out

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active in my thoughts, but unable to comprehend a thing. It came as a great surprise to me that I remained alert and excited, in spite of my inability to grasp what the Rebbe was saying. Every once in a while, when the Rebbe spoke in *Lashon Kodesh*, I understood a little bit, albeit in a very roundabout way. Even though I didn’t have a clear understanding of the sicha’s content, nevertheless, I



Rabbi Yosef Ginsburgh:
At the conclusion of the sicha, the Rebbe brings us to the bottom line: if such a day is so auspicious, then how should we utilize its unique quality in order to hasten the Redemption in actual deed?

all that can be found in the teachings of chassidus. This even takes expression within someone who is totally unfamiliar with “D’var Malchus” and its special style, as he still can find it very easy to follow and comprehend.

In our yeshiva, we give a strong emphasis to our penetrating in-depth study sessions in “D’var Malchus” as an integral part of the daily class schedule. Even when we learn the same sicha again and again, year after year, it still leaves a powerful effect. Everyone knows that it is possible each year to find totally innovative

interpretations that they had never encountered before.

Another aspect to “D’var Malchus” study: When a Jew studies chassidus, it’s not the same as learning any other subject in Torah, as chassidus alters his entire thought pattern. Similarly, when we study “D’var Malchus,” we learn to look upon the present-day reality in a totally different fashion. Furthermore, even when a Jew learns chassidus, thinks in a chassidishe manner, and looks for G-dliness in everything, nevertheless, he has still not reached the new thought pattern that he attains when he learns “D’var Malchus.”

Here’s another example: One of the unique things underscored in the “D’var Malchus” is the auspiciousness and uniqueness of the specific day when the sicha was spoken. Each sicha usually has about seven sections, and the first five deal with an understanding of the meaning of the auspicious day when the sicha was delivered with respect to the year, the month, the day within the month, the day of the week, the weekly Torah portion, and Erev Shabbos. Looking at the date from a variety of vantage points, the Rebbe connects us to the Redemption.

This mode of Torah study accustoms us in the new thought pattern by which the Rebbe wants us to live. This is the process of Redemption that passes like a scarlet thread through every point of time that a Jew finds himself.

At the conclusion of the sicha, the Rebbe brings us to the bottom line: if such a day is so auspicious, then how should we utilize its unique quality in order to hasten the Redemption in actual deed?

Does all this also apply to Jewish children, who are called “My anointed ones”?

Rabbi Yosef Pizem: Absolutely.



Rabbi Mordechai Gal:
In the “Dvar Malchus,” everything is absolutely clear, simple, and fascinating. It raises all worldly matters to a much higher level, opening our eyes to the most inner and essential point. It is the sharpest and most effective tool for living with Moshiach and the Redemption.

One of the things that characterizes these sichos is the Rebbe’s explanation of a new concept in the subject of Moshiach and the Redemption. We are living now in the era of the days of Moshiach; each sicha brings out a new instruction or even several new instructions, and this *Geula’dike* style of the days of

Moshiach continues throughout our journey towards the Redemption.

All these things can be connected to children, and many interesting initiatives have been created throughout the years. A few years ago, I was privileged to publish a booklet entitled "*HaDerech HaY'shara*," which contains a condensed one-page summary of a concept from the weekly "D'var Malchus" or a select portion from the "D'var Malchus" presented in a style that children can understand. Along side the text material, there are educational exercises for children that arouse their interest and a desire to learn and inquire more.

This edition was recently concluded, and if *ch"v* the Redemption is delayed, we will have to publish it again. However, we will probably republish regardless, since the teachings of the Rebbe MH"M are eternal, and it will always be interesting to look back to these times and recall the days when Moshiach and the Redemption were at the threshold.

We hold a weekly class for children in "D'var Malchus" at my home, according to their level of comprehension, where at least a minyan of children participate. While some of the children are not Lubavitchers, nevertheless, the learning material fascinates them as well. They answer all the questions, test one another, and as we said previously, there is always a new concept or instructions, and the kids accept it.

Another link in the growing chain of children's Moshiach activities: We have recently organized in Tzivos Hashem a 'dial-a-chavrusa' program. The children learn in pairs a page out of the "D'var Malchus," written in an attractive and exciting narrative format. They have reacted to this new program with great interest and enthusiasm.

How is it possible to instill the idea of learning "D'var Malchus" within the chareidi community, and particularly, the subject of Moshiach and the Redemption?

Rabbi Zalman Notik: Working on this subject with ultra-Orthodox Jews represents a slightly more difficult dimension than others, as they tend to feel that they've already heard it all. When a person thinks that he knows everything and there is nothing new that you can teach him, the starting point is much harder.

The simplest method to get into a *sicha* is by raising a number of questions. As a result, the listener quickly realizes that he is rather ignorant on a number of points, particularly on Moshiach and the Redemption, and he is then ready to sit down together with you and study the material. After he starts learning, his interest and excitement continues to grow. After all, he is in a world of Torah, G-dliness, and holiness.

However, if he feels that you don't have much to show him, and he especially feels that Moshiach and the Redemption is a rather unlearned and superficial subject – he acts in the way that he does.

Indeed, it is important to know that one of the fundamental concepts that the Rebbe teaches in connection with the seventh generation is that everything belongs to everyone.

So it was in 5744, when the Rebbe first said that young children must start learning chassidus. The Rebbe also explained if you hang a "*Shir HaMaalos*" over a child's bed, this represents his study of chassidus for that day.

There was a prominent mashpia in Kfar Chabad who once went into the Rebbe for *yechidus*, and the Rebbe told him that he should start going around and teaching chassidus on *kibbutzim*. When the mashpia



Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Ginsberg: *"If only Anash and T'mimim would be precise in the sichos of 5710 and the preceding year," the Rebbe says and explains that there simply cannot be a situation where the Rebbe leaves his chassidim without answers.*

asked what material he should teach, the Rebbe told him that he could even start with the Rebbe Rashab's 5672 *hemshech Ayin-Beis*, well known as a very lengthy and deep chassidic work. The mashpia responded by opening his eyes wide in surprise. The Rebbe noticed his astonishment, and then explained that specifically because it is an "encompassing light," it can blind the external light. For the very reason that a certain Torah subject that you are about to teach



Rabbi Yosef Pizem: We are living now in the era of the days of Moshiach; each sicha brings out a new instruction or even several new instructions, and this Geula'dike style of the days of Moshiach continues throughout our journey towards the Redemption.

always seems to be so deep, lofty, and confusing, that is the very time to sit with another Jew and explain it to him, according to your ability. When you open your mouth, the proper words will flow. The Rebbe is speaking from within you – not because you're a big chassid, but because you're doing what the Rebbe wants.

Therefore, it makes no difference whether we're talking about a chareidi with a family history of ten

generations of Torah scholars or a kibbutznik – you have the ability to influence him because you're not going out with your own strengths, but as a simple but loyal chassid on the Rebbe's shlichus and with the Rebbe's help.

Let me tell a little story that emphasizes this point:

A few months ago, there was a Moshiach and Geula Shabbaton in Kiryat Gat with many Jews attending from all circles. One of the participants was a chassidic young man from the Krayot who told how he came close to Yiddishkai. One day when he was traveling on a bus, he saw a Lubavitcher boy under bar mitzva age passing from seat to seat, from passenger to passenger. He couldn't hear what the boy was offering, but he saw that everyone was telling him "No." He had pity on the boy, and he decided that when he would come up to him, he would tell him "Yes." The boy soon approached him and asked him if he would like to hear something on Moshiach and the Redemption, and the young man agreed. The boy began to tell him that the Rebbe MH" M says that we are in the days of Moshiach, and the Redemption will soon take place. The young man asked him what Moshiach is, and the boy proceeded to explain that there are "ten supernal attributes," etc., etc., revealing his amazing expertise on the subject.

When the young man realized the logic and clarity of what the boy was telling him, he said to himself: I'm twenty-four years old, a university student, and I don't know the first thing about Judaism, and here comes this little kid with such vast knowledge. This was the "finishing blow" that led to his becoming a *baal t'shuva*.

This story demonstrates clearly that the Rebbe wants us to learn "D'var Malchus," and he doesn't even



Rabbi Zalman Notik: The simplest method to get into a sicha is by raising a number of questions. As a result, the listener quickly realizes that he is rather ignorant on a number of points, particularly on Moshiach and the Redemption, and he is then ready to sit down together with you and study the material.

mean just Lubavitcher chassidim with hats and beards, but all Jews. In 5747, the Rebbe established that every Jew is a Lubavitcher and a shliach. If you do the Rebbe's shlichus, the Rebbe will help to make everything turn out exactly as it should.

(To be continued iy"H next week.)

THE MERIT OF CHITAS SAVED THEM

BY H. BEN YISHAI

Then it suddenly hit her. “Chasi! Where is Chasi?” Ilana couldn’t believe it. “Just a minute ago we were sitting in the car and I was holding Chasi and a Chitas. She was in my arms when the accident occurred. Where is she now?” Her heart beat wildly and she shrieked, “My baby! Where is she? Chasi, Chasi!”

When Ilana remembers that fateful day when she and her family received their lives back again in a miraculous fashion, she gets as emotional as though the event took place yesterday, and not over ten years ago.

One summer afternoon in 5754, the family left Beitar for Beit Shemesh in order to join a group going to a family simcha in Netivot. Yoram, the husband, was at the wheel with Ilana, holding 11-month-old Chasi, next to him. Their two sons and four-year-old daughter were behind them.

The Eilah Valley (Emek HaEila) is one of the prettiest and greenest areas in Eretz Yisroel. It is forested land with hills covered with pine and oak trees alongside green valleys. The

car drove on a winding road with a tree-covered hill on their right and a steep descent into a wadi on their left.

On one of the turns, a car coming the other way suddenly veered into their lane. Ilana caught her breath for a collision seemed inevitable, but Yoram managed to turn the wheel sharply to the right at the last minute, towards the mountain. However, the brakes suddenly stopped working and he lost control of the car. The car veered sharply left and plunged downward into the abyss.

“Today there is a guard rail,” says Ilana, “but back then there was nothing there and we somersaulted into the wadi.”

It’s amazing how quickly thoughts can race through a person’s mind when he feels the angel of death breathing down his neck, and how eternal are the memories of those unforgettable moments when danger is palpable. How odd it is that a person feels a clarity at moments like these, which actually pass in the blink of an eye, and how sharp are his senses. The thoughts that passed through Ilana’s mind were like words etched in stone:

No, This is not happening to us!

Yes. It is happening to us and we are going to die.

But no!

Ilana remembered the Chazal, “Even if a sharp sword rests upon a person’s neck, he should not despair of mercy.” She searched her mind for a chapter of T’hilim or even one verse, to extract something from memory. She watched, as though observing a movie of her life, how the car flew off the road, somersaulted through the air a few times and finally landed softly on a treetop in the wadi below, as though a cotton cloud had caught the car and gently cradled it.

When the car finally ended its unusual journey, it was on its side in an olive tree. The passengers were in

shock. The first to recover was little Simcha who happily said, "Hey, we did a somersault in the car!"

Ilana looked behind her in surprise. Simcha was the only child who sat there peacefully, as though nothing had happened. The boys were outside. She and her husband tired to figure out how to get out of the car since the doors did not open. They crawled through the trunk that had burst open by the force of the fall. They exited one at a time and gingerly dropped to the ground.

Ilana looked around and saw everybody. Her husband, pale and shaken, looked in one piece, without a scratch. Simcha was smiling. Her older son stood at a distance with a slight scratch on his forehead and her second son was stretched out on the ground, looking fine.

Then it suddenly hit her. "Chasi! Where is Chasi?"

Ilana couldn't believe it. "Just a minute ago we were sitting in the car and I was holding Chasi and a Chitas. She was in my arms when the accident occurred. Where is she now?" Her heart beat wildly and she shrieked, "My baby! Where is she? Chasi, Chasi!"

"Lady, don't worry. She's with me. She's fine."

The voice came from up above, from the road. Ilana looked up and saw a stranger holding Chasi.

Eliyahu HaNavi. It must be Eliyahu HaNavi, thought Ilana. But

how did Chasi get up there to him? She was with us, in the car! Baruch Hashem, she was saved too but how did she get up there?

These unforgettable moments are engraved in her memory, but the enormity of the shock and even more, the enormity of the miracle, struck them full force.

The children are fine, baruch Hashem. My husband and I and the



baby are fine. The baby is in the hands of Eliyahu HaNavi. It's a miracle, an open miracle. How did she get there?

The sirens heralded the arrival of an ambulance and the police. The men from the ambulance walked down into the wadi and helped the shaken family get up to the road. Ilana grabbed the baby from the anonymous rescuer, Eliyahu HaNavi.

Chasi looked at her calmly with big eyes, as though she wondered what the fuss was all about.

A police officer, who began investigating the accident, was shocked by what he saw. He had never seen anything like this before. A fall from such a distance, with such force, and no injuries?

"It's a miracle, an incredible miracle that you had," he mumbled.

The tremendous miracle that happened to Ilana and her family awakened in her spiritual powers she never would have believed herself capable of achieving. Her emuna was strengthened and she committed to doing more to "spread the wellsprings," especially in publicizing the miracle and lessons she learned.

"You are not allowed to despair, no matter what the situation. There is no hopeless case."

She began telling her story at women's gatherings, speaking in front of large audiences, something she was embarrassed to do beforehand.

Ilana believes that it was in the merit of the Chitas that they were protected, as well as the Rebbe's bracha, which she received that year on her first visit to the Rebbe in 770. She continues to publicize the miracle and about the importance of having a Chitas and a pushka in every vehicle for protection on the roads.

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FOR THE SAKE OF A CHASSIDIC BROTHER

BY RABBI SCHNEUR ZALMAN CHANIN

CHAPTER 10

APARTMENT TO RENT

After my father, who was still a bachur and the supporter of his widowed mother and the family, received the Rebbe Rayatz's consent and blessing to move to Leningrad, he had to make all the arrangements. He needed to obtain traveling papers in order to move from city to city, permits to live in Leningrad, work permits and a place to work, but the hardest task of all was finding an apartment.

As I already related, my mother's father, Rabbi Shmuel Nimotin (may Hashem avenge his blood) had a spacious apartment with many rooms. When the Bolsheviks rose to power, they confiscated all the rooms. After much effort, they were miraculously able to keep three rooms. This was very lucky for them since all the other families were only given one room!

After some years, when the N.E.P. policy ended and the Rebbe left Russia, the communists began to consolidate their hold on Leningrad. They did an exceptional job of oppressing people in general and Chassidim in particular. They

noticed that my grandfather had, what they considered, two extra rooms, and they demanded that he vacate the rooms, one of which would be assigned to another family. They thought that even the one remaining room was too spacious and that it should be divided. In addition, it was thought acceptable for ten families to share one kitchen.

These were days of terror. Spies swarmed everywhere and fear of the N.K.V.D. reigned. Neighbors could see everything, hear everything, smell everything, and even touching everything wasn't hard since there were common kitchen and bathroom facilities for ten families.

My grandfather worried. How would he ensure kosher food? What about Shabbos and Yom Tov? Candle lighting? Farbrengens? Having a neighbor present meant having a spy present.

When my father heard that R' Shmuel Nimotin (who would eventually be his father-in-law) had to vacate a room and that he was seeking a Lubavitcher as a tenant, he jumped at the opportunity. He couldn't have dreamed of a better apartment. To be the neighbor of a Jew, a Chassid, a Lubavitcher, as well

as a dear friend! When my grandfather heard about the idea, he also breathed a sigh of relief. Everybody was pleased with the suggestion.

My father got to work, building a wall to separate the apartments as well as another door so they wouldn't have to enter the Nimotin apartment to get to the Chanin apartment. Then he moved the family from Nevel, i.e., his mother and his brothers and sisters. Another wall and door were built for his married sister Esther Rochel Minkowitz a"h.

THE CHAZAN

My father arrived in Leningrad already financially established. Within a short time, he was the manager of a large factory, a good position, and Hashem helped him succeed. As manager of a factory, he was able to help many Lubavitchers. As I related in earlier installments, with the help of the Rebbe Rayatz, the Joint supplied weaving machines to Anash so they could work at home. My father supplied them with thread so they could manufacture the goods and he bought the products from them. This made it

easy for them to keep Shabbos and to earn a few pennies.

Despite my father's young age, his talents and financial position enabled him to be a member of the administration of the large shul of Leningrad, and he was greatly influential in the life of the community.

Just as he did in Tchichitchov, in Leningrad too, as soon as he was settled he got involved in public work. He was involved in every holy endeavor, in supporting Tomchei T'mimim and in helping fundraisers support Beis Chayeinu.

With a smile on his lips, my father recalled an amusing episode that took place when he first started out as an askan and member of the board of the shul in Leningrad.

The large shul of Leningrad serviced the highest aristocracy of the Leningrad community and was run by them too. Many Jews who davened there were minimally observant. They sought a famous chazan and were completely uninterested in his level of yiras Shamayim. My mother remembers that one time a chazan came to shul by car, on Yom Kippur, in order to be the baal t'filla.

The shul swarmed with N.K.V.D. agents who would certainly see that the chazan was a Lubavitcher Chassid. That's all they needed! This fact alone would be enough to have them called down to the N.K.V.D. office for interrogation.

In those days, the famous *baal menagen* (singer/composer of Chassidic tunes) and *shliach tzibbur*, R' Sholom Charitonov, came to Leningrad. He was sick, starving, and extremely poor without any source of livelihood. Everybody knew he was a Chassid, an oved Elokim, and an outstanding baal t'filla, but his outer appearance didn't earn him much respect. He

was a short, thin man who wore torn clothes. R' Sholom did not want to benefit from anything but what he himself earned.

When R' Sholom heard that my father was a member of the board of the shul, he asked him to arrange for him to be the baal t'filla on the Yomim Noraim. If he would be accepted for the position, the community would pay handsomely and he would be able to honorably support his family.

NO VOICE

My father wanted to help R' Sholom but how could he present a Jew with a beard, a Lubavitcher Chassid, sick, wearing shmattes to the shul's board? Yet my father decided to recommend R' Sholom as the baal t'filla for the Yomim Noraim. He sang R' Sholom's praises, saying there was nobody else like him in the country, and that he knew him personally as a baal t'filla par excellence. It was tough because my father didn't want the other members of the board to meet R' Sholom for an audition, which is customary for chazanim.

It was finally decided that they would vote on whether to take the chazan my father recommended sight unseen (and sound unheard) and the recommendation of the bachur, Chaikel Chanin was accepted.

On Rosh HaShana night, R' Sholom came to shul, dressed properly after my father had a tailor sew new clothes for him. However, when the board members saw R' Sholom, they were unhappy for they had had no idea that they had voted for a Chassid with a beard and sirtuk!

To top it all off, when my father walked into shul, R' Sholom went over to him and said he had a high fever and he was very hoarse and couldn't daven. My father told him



in no uncertain terms that he had to daven as the shliach tzibbur.

Meanwhile, some members of the board began to speak negatively about my father who had misled them. After all, look at the chazan he had personally recommended! What would the davening be like?

Not only that, but the shul swarmed with N.K.V.D. agents who would certainly see that the chazan was a Lubavitcher Chassid. That's all they needed! This fact alone would be enough to have them called down to the N.K.V.D. office for interrogation.

The time for Maariv was approaching and my father stood hidden in a corner of the shul and recited T'hillim. When the chazan said the first words of Shir HaMaalos, my father despaired. R' Sholom cleared his throat, coughed loudly, but it was for naught. He was so hoarse that you could barely hear him. My father, who sensed danger, realized he had no choice but to flee for his life. He was afraid that the congregation would attack him for bringing them a mute and making a mockery of them.

He went directly to a doctor, a friend of his, and asked him for

When the chazan said the first words of Shir HaMaalos, my father despaired. R' Sholom cleared his throat, coughed loudly, but it was for naught. He was so hoarse that you could barely hear him...

medication that would enable R' Sholom to daven the next day. In exchange for the promise of a nice fee, he promised to come to my father's apartment in order to treat R' Sholom.

"TIKKUN" LEIL ROSH HASHANA

As soon as he was able to, my father sent someone to tell R' Sholom that he should go directly to my father's house from shul after the davening. He warned him not to remain in shul for even a minute lest

he be attacked. The messenger returned to say he had fulfilled his mission and that everybody in the shul wanted to find my father and take revenge.

R' Sholom showed up at my father's house. He had difficult breathing and was burning up from his fever. The doctor checked him and gave him strong medication and left instructions as to how to care for R' Sholom in the middle of the night. By morning, R' Sholom's condition was incomparably better. His fever had gone down and his voice had returned.

The next day, R' Sholom davened as the shliach tzibbur and by "HaMelech" his sweet voice was apparent. My father went to the big shul for Maariv. R' Sholom felt even better and his davening was amazing. His sweet voice reverberated in the shul, his broken heart penetrated hearts and the congregation, which had been so disappointed previously, highly acclaimed him.

Many people approached my father to thank him for his suggestion of taking this baal t'filla. R' Sholom was paid handsomely and their esteem for my father grew.

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THE ‘BOTTOM LINE’ OF CHABAD CHASSIDUS

INTERVIEW BY AVROHOM RAYNITZ

*The Besuras HaGeula, like all the Rebbe’s teachings, is built on the foundations of Chabad Chassidus. If you study the Rebbe’s latter sichos, you realize that the Besuras HaGeula is an expression and revelation of all the foundations of Chassidus. You can also see how the reality of the world fits the details of the Besuras HaGeula. * Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Meizlich, shliach in Mexico, together with a group of young scholars, published “HaT’kufa V’HaGeula,” a compilation of the details of the Besuras HaGeula as they are built upon the foundations of Chabad Chassidus.*

A new edition of your “HaT’kufa V’HaGeula” has come out. What can you tell us about this book?

Since we merited to hear the Besuras HaGeula from the Rebbe – that “behold, Moshiach is coming,” the Besuras HaGeula has become The Topic among Lubavitchers. Over the years that have passed since we

heard the Rebbe speak on the subject, I observed an interesting phenomenon. Although, as Chabad Chassidim, we were raised on explanations (after all, Chabad stands for Chochma, Bina, and Daas), there is a serious lack of explanatory material on the Besuras HaGeula. Somehow, for some reason, when it

comes to the Besuras HaGeula, we turned into “Polishe Chassidim,” who believe things even without explanations.

There’s no question that emuna is the foundation for the entire Besuras HaGeula, but as Chabad Chassidim we have to take that pure faith and bring it down into intellectual understanding. Yet, for some reason, we haven’t. I’ve spoken about this in various forums, with all sorts of people, and when I’ve tried to urge people to apply their minds to this subject, I’ve seen that they lack the knowledge needed to transform the belief into understanding.

I’ve posed the following to many people: The Rebbe said, “the time for your redemption has arrived,” and more than a decade has gone by and we’re still in Galus, and have gotten these reactions: Some began to talk about the need for emuna that is above seichel. Others said these questions are heretical. And still others said you need to open your eyes.

I tried to open my eyes but all I saw was the same Chassid who had absolutely no idea what the “z’man ha’Geula” is, and how it fits with

reality as we see it. In short, there is a tremendous deficiency when it comes to understanding.

This bothered me. A topic that is so important, which the Rebbe established as the focus of shlichus, just couldn't be so removed from reality. The Rebbe didn't speak about a reality that remains in the spiritual realms, but a palpable reality, Moshiach who is bringing Geula to this physical world. The physical reality must play a significant role in our understanding of this b'sura.

The Besuras HaGeula is not a Heavenly decree but a part of Torah that we must understand with all our soul powers, starting with Chochma, Bina, and Daas. The Rebbe himself said that we need to learn inyanei Moshiach and Geula in a way that each of us can grasp it with our intellect and understanding. This means that it is understandable and each person can grasp it.

The uniqueness of this book is that I did the editing with a group of Chassidim, mashpiim, and roshei yeshivos, who reviewed each chapter and commented on it. We took the sichos from the latter years, learned the topic of Geula and Moshiach in depth in the Rebbe's teachings, including and especially the Rebbe's sichos that relate to the special era we are now in, and discovered an entire structure.

The Rebbe didn't just say, "the time for your redemption has arrived." The Rebbe explains, at incredible length, how each detail of the Besuras HaGeula is reflected in the reality around us. Each one of us can see, with our own eyes, how the Geula process is developing.

We put the sichos on this topic into one book, which explains, stage



after stage, how the Geula is progressing, **as can be seen in the world around us.**

What is the reason for this state of affairs? Why is it that when learning about the world of Atzilus, when a person wants to understand it, we don't tell him, "That's the way it is, you just have to believe it," and we try to explain it, but when it comes to the Besuras HaGeula people are inclined to fall back on emuna?

When you talk about the study of Chassidus, you are talking about spiritual concepts. You don't see them and they have no substance. If you want to talk about them, you have to explain. When you talk about an intellectual reality, you must use your intellect.

The Besuras HaGeula on the other hand, speaks about the physical reality. The Rebbe speaks about it as a fact, the reality. Therefore, you expect to see it with your physical eyes without having to

There is a serious lack of explanatory material on the Besuras HaGeula. Somehow, for some reason, when it comes to the Besuras HaGeula, we turned into "Polishe Chassidim," who believe things even without explanations.

use your brains.

The problem is that since we have gotten used to the Exile reality, we have to work with our intellects in order to begin to see the Geula in the world with our physical eyes. In the meantime, when it looks as though we don't see this as the reality, and we avoid explanations, we end up losing out!

And you found the magic words that bridge the Rebbe's sichos and the reality that we see?

It's not about magic words. It's about properly defining what Geula is according to halacha and Chassidus. When we know what Geula is, we will also know what the Besuras HaGeula is about.

A person who thinks that Moshiach is candy on trees and streets paved of gold, looks at the world and knows for sure that the Geula has not begun. But a person who learns Chassidus and knows that Moshiach is a revelation of G-dliness,

that Geula is the end of the avodas ha'birurim, the victory of the forces of holiness over the forces of impurity and a change in the way the world operates – that person looks at the world and sees how the Geula is unfolding before our very eyes.

The Rebbe's Besuras HaGeula is the bottom line, the summary, of the entire Toras HaChassidus. The Rebbe came and said: You learned the concept of Hashem desiring a place for Himself in the lowly realms; You learned about the avodas ha'birurim in the period of exile at the end of which we have the Geula; you learned about the perfection in Torah and mitzvos when Moshiach comes. Now, open your eyes and see that all this is here, now.

The book leads the person learning it along the paths of Chabad Chassidus and explains what Moshiach and Geula are according to Chassidus, and after the person understands what the role of Moshiach is and what the Geula will bring about, he learns the Rebbe's Besuras HaGeula and sees how it's all one structure that is achieving its completion. The book simply combines the two components of emuna and the reality with logical explanations.

In the Rebbe's talks about the Besuras HaGeula there are many statements that are understood spiritually. For example, the Rebbe said that every Jew ought to open his eyes and see the Shor HaBar and the Livyasan fish. After reading your book, I still don't think we will be able to see the Shor HaBar and the Livyasan. What was your guiding principle? How did you decide when the Rebbe is talking in physical terms and when in spiritual terms?

The basis for understanding the Rebbe can be found in the Rebbe's first maamer. All the Rebbeim alluded, in their first maamer, to their role in leading the generation, but the Rebbe said it quite openly. The Rebbe himself defined this maamer as a declaration of what his role is.

In the Rebbe's first maamer of "Basi L'Gani 5711," the Rebbe explains that all the Rebbeim who preceded him had brought the Sh'china and Elokus down into the world but within this physical world it penetrated only its spiritual dimension. My role, said the Rebbe, is to bring the Sh'china from heaven down to earth, and not more activities to bring the Sh'china down from one level of heaven to a lower

of heaven. The role of the seventh generation is to bring everything down to this physical world. This is a major difference, between heaven and earth.

There's no question that each Rebbe fulfilled his role. Each Rebbe brought the Sh'china down to his heaven. When the Tzemach Tzedek spoke about Geula in the year 5608 (1848), he really brought the Geula on a spiritual plane. These are heavens, which have some connection with the earth. However, after all is said and done, they are still heavens. The Rebbe, by contrast, already announced in his first maamer that his job is to bring the Sh'china down to earth. This means, that everything the Rebbe did and said relates to the palpable reality here in this physical world.

You can compare the difference between the Rebbe and the earlier Rebbeim to the difference between Midrash and halacha. If you take a Midrash and give it a spiritual explanation, no one will blame you. But if you take a halacha and interpret it spiritually and say this is the only explanation, you will be a heretic, because the halacha is about the physical reality.

This is the rule that guided me in editing this book. When the Rebbe speaks about the Besuras HaGeula, you cannot understand it as only applying to spiritual realities. After the Rebbe announced that his job is to bring the Sh'china down to earth, any attempt to understand the Rebbe exclusively on the spiritual plane is like someone understanding halacha spiritually.

Naturally, every rule has its exceptions. You mentioned that the Rebbe said we need to open our eyes to see the Shor HaBar and the Livyasan. Along with establishing that this reality exists in the physical world, the Rebbe says that in order to see this reality you must open



A person who thinks that Moshiach is candy on trees and streets paved of gold, looks at the world and knows for sure that the Geula has not begun. But a person who learns Chassidus and knows that Moshiach is a revelation of G-dliness, that Geula is the end of the avodas ha'birurim, the victory of the forces of holiness over the forces of impurity and a change in the way the world operates – that person looks at the world and sees how the Geula is unfolding before our very eyes.

your eyes. This means that this is not the usual sort of physical reality, which you can see with ordinary eyes. Rather, it is something that requires special action on our part.

By way of contrast, all the times the Rebbe speaks about the situation in the world and doesn't say we need to open our eyes, we must say that the Rebbe is talking about a physical reality that any one of us can see without any special effort. When the Rebbe says that we must publicize and proclaim – this must be talking about earthly matters, not heavenly ones.

After we've come to the conclusion that everything the Rebbe says relates to the palpable reality of the world, we must explain the Besuras HaGeula. When we say, "the time for your redemption has arrived," what arrived? How did it arrive?

Reality is comprised of many dimensions – the visible reality, the halachic reality, and the Chassidic reality. When we say that the time for redemption has arrived, we must see the Geula in all these dimensions. In order to do so we must understand what Moshiach will change in the visible reality of the world, what he will change in the halachic reality, and what he will change in the Chassidic reality. After we understand all this, we must understand how we see all this in the here and now.

This is the goal of the book: to take the Rebbe's Besuras HaGeula and put it into practical terms, not just leaving it as a proclamation. The Rebbe already announced that the time for Geula has arrived. Our job is to understand this and to connect it with the reality and market it further. To publicize it.

Most of the book is comprised of quotes from the Rebbe's sichos according to topics. The Rebbe explained the Besuras HaGeula in

such great detail that there is no need for additions and explanations. It's only when there are concepts that are difficult to understand that I expanded on the subject based on the foundation explained in Chassidus.

You mentioned a number of layers of reality. Let us begin with the most superficial layer. How do you see Geula in the world?

In the summer of 5751 the Rebbe announced, "the time for your redemption has arrived."

With this line, which is the essence of the Besuras HaGeula, the Rebbe establishes that the present situation is the "time of Geula." This is not a promise that the Geula will come soon, but a declaration that we are presently already within the time of Geula.

(It's important to clarify: the emphasis is on the **time** of Geula. This means that despite the fact that the Geula did not actually come, for Geula is defined as the return of the Malchus Beis Dovid with the building of the Beis HaMikdash and the ingathering of the exiles, still, the Rebbe has said that we are already in the "**time** of Geula." This means that we are actually in the "time" of Geula, "the time he must come." Perhaps it is like the Geula from Egypt when Moshe announced to the Jewish people that the time for Geula had come ("*pakod pakadti*") more than a year before they actually left Egypt. This is explained at length in the book.)

In the sichos of the summer of 5750 and the winter of 5752, the Rebbe explains how we can see, within the reality of the world, a palpable expression of the fact that we are in the "time of Geula." The Rebbe emphasizes that this is not merely a spiritual reality but a palpable reality in the world that anybody can observe.



In this era, which began with the Gulf War, the Rebbe pointed at the tremendous upheavals in the world, which, with a bit of discernment, show that the world is beginning to shuck off the clothes of Exile and to prepare for the Yemos HaMoshiach, the time of Geula.

The most superficial dimension of Geula is the liberation from servitude to the nations of the world and the ability to fulfill Torah and mitzvos without impediment. In Chassidus, it is explained at length that the world was created such that it conceals holiness and even opposes it. This was the reality throughout the years of exile since Mattan Torah, when the world made it difficult and opposed the observance of Torah and mitzvos. The nations of the world openly hated the Jews and the observance of Torah and mitzvos.

Even during the brief periods when the nations didn't bother us, such as the first Temple era, it was only because we were strong. But as soon as we were weak, the nations renewed their opposition to us.

And here, before our eyes, we see a fundamental change in the status of Jews, both physically and spiritually. Generally speaking, this change, when the opposition of most nations of the world to Torah and mitzvos has diminished and they even help us maintain yeshivos, began with the Rebbe's taking on the Chabad leadership. In a material sense as well, our situation today is incomparable to our situation a generation ago. The parnasa situation in the previous generation for large numbers of the Jewish people meant difficulties with acquiring bread and milk for children. In contrast, today, there are very few Jews suffering from the lack of essentials.

Above all else – the fall of the Iron Curtain: Until 5750, a third of the Jewish people were persecuted. Then the Rebbe said “the time for your redemption has arrived” and incredibly, without any logical reason, the communist government in Russia tottered and melted away. Thus, the final symbol of opposition to Torah and mitzvos was gone.

Since then, there is hardly any place in the world that prevents Jews from keeping Torah, and all Jews, wherever they live, can lead a completely Jewish life. For the first time, we have a situation in which

the goyim are simply not interested in disturbing us from keeping Torah!

This reality is not a Galus reality; this reality is part of the prophecies of Geula, for Geula is primarily about eliminating our servitude to the nations and enabling us to fulfill Torah and mitzvos in peace.

We see an astonishing change in the thinking of mankind. Up until fifteen years ago, everybody thought about how to aggrandize their military might for the purpose of conquering other nations and wholesale slaughter. But since the Rebbe established that the “time for your redemption has arrived,” we see a new yearning in the world, a yearning for worldwide peace and justice.

As a direct result of this yearning, the leaders of the superpowers resolved to limit the development of nuclear weapons and even destroyed large quantities of them. The enormous budgets devoted to developing weapons were diverted to developing the economy and to helping weaker nations.

When you learn that the Geula is a reality in which the Jewish people can easily fulfill Torah and mitzvos, in freedom, and with physical plenty, we see the time of Geula! It's just not proper for us to derive the benefits that we attained solely by virtue of the fact that we are in the time of Geula, and then turn around and ask: Where is the Geula?

(To be continued in "H" next week.)



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FAITH AND HISKASHRUS BEHIND BARS

BY OFRA TUMARKIN

*Avishag Simon, victim of a well-planned frame, was jailed, due to no fault of her own. Understandably, this proved to be a great test of emuna, which she passed with flying colors. * Her nightmare of an experience strengthened her love for Hashem and her hiskashrus to the Rebbe.*

I know Avishag from Machon Alte. The first time I heard her story was at a farbrengen during the third Shabbos meal at the Machon. Avishag sat at the head of the table and for two hours captivated us with her story. In her charming manner, she captivated us with her thoughts of emuna, the difficulties she underwent, her feelings, her mesirus nefesh, and her love.

It's the kind of story that you hardly hear about these days, the sort of mesirus nefesh that is reminiscent of stories of Chassidim in Russia who had to preserve their Judaism within the depths of depravity. And Avishag, with emuna that radiates from her every word and smile, managed to preserve her inner spark and transform her trial (*nisayon*, from the root *nes*) into a banner (*nes*) of fortitude.

I traveled with Avishag throughout the Galil to farbrengens and each time I heard her story I was moved once again and felt strengthened.

Avishag Simon grew up in Karmiel with her father, Eliad, her mother, Sima, and one brother and two sisters, in a warm and loving home. Some traditions were observed but for the most part, her life was similar to that of most Israeli children who grow up without Yiddishkeit: high school, army service, and a trip abroad to search for oneself.

FINDING CHASSIDUS

Avishag: "After my military service, a good friend and I traveled to the United States. For three months, we toured the country, saw the sights, met people, and had lots of great experiences. We had a wonderful time.

After our tour, I decided to remain in the U.S. I began working as a waitress in a restaurant. Nine months later, I felt that I wanted some more serious work. In Sivan 5761, through an ad in the paper, I landed a job with a moving company owned by Israelis. I worked as a secretary and a few months later was promoted to the sales department. After a year, when I felt I had enough, I quit. I moved to a complex, which was near a Chabad shul. Many Lubavitcher families lived in my neighborhood."

Through these Chabad families, Avishag became exposed to Chassidishkeit – and she liked it. The sight of the men wrapped in talleisim on their way to shul on Shabbos, the fragrance of the challos and the beautiful family life she witnessed, made her yearn for her own home. This, as well as being alone, made her feel a tremendous emptiness. This strong feeling brought her to the Chabad house, where she began to study, and slowly, her study led to action.

She celebrated the Yomim Tovim of Tishrei 5763 with the local Chabad community. The holy atmosphere and warmth of the families helped her decide that this was the path she wanted to pursue in life. In Cheshvan of that year, she flew home for a visit

after an absence of three years.

Her family welcomed her with the changes she had made. This visit made it clear to her that she wanted to live in Eretz Yisroel. She decided to return to the U.S. in order to tie up some loose ends and to establish herself financially. Evidently, Hashem had other plans in mind for Avishag. After going through security at the airport, she met a friend who had some bad news for her...

A SMALL CHANGE IN PLANS

Avishag: “She told me that that morning, the FBI had arrested 73 Israelis on charges of fraud connected with large moving companies. I was one of the people on the wanted list. The news didn’t bother me since I knew it was a mistake. If I was wanted, they would have stopped me at passport control. I went back to my house and continued life as normal.

“Throughout the week, there were articles in the newspapers and on all the networks about the Israelis who were arrested. It wasn’t pleasant to hear but I didn’t think it had anything to do with me. A week later, I was unable to withdraw money from the ATM machine, and when I called the bank, I learned that the District Attorney had given orders that my account be frozen because of my friend.

“When I asked which friend, they told me the name of a person I had worked with eight months earlier. Throughout the day, I tried to reach the District Attorney in order to explain to him that this was all a misunderstanding. I am a very organized person and I had all the necessary papers to prove my innocence.

“I finally made an appointment to meet with him the next day. I arrived at his office thinking I was going to straighten things out and continue life as usual. I sat in the reception room and waited.”

A half an hour later, the District

Attorney entered accompanied by two FBI agents with an arrest warrant. It turned out that the moving companies had been laundering money. In order to protect themselves, they listed innocent employees as owners of the company. Avishag tried to explain that this was an error but it didn’t help.

One of the agents took out a document on which Avishag’s name appeared as a vice president of a company worth millions! She tried to show them how it made no sense since she had only \$500 in her bank account and she had nothing among her



belongings that would indicate that she was an owner of a company that size. From their reaction, she quickly realized that they considered her guilty and nothing would change their minds.

Avishag: “At first I was shocked. I innocently thought that justice would triumph. I tried to explain things to them but it was like talking to the walls. I fit the profile and they weren’t interested in what I had to say. They began to interrogate me about other Israelis who worked with me and I

didn’t understand how their sense of justice operated. My testimony about other people was considered reliable but what I said about myself wasn’t believed! I understood from them that my attempts were a waste of time and I would only be able to prove my innocence in court. I was incarcerated for a year and eight months.”

A year and eight months – that’s an eternity!

“You can view it as eternity but also as a finite period of time. One of the things that was foremost on my mind at that time was that this *nisayon* was for a limited duration. If a person, G-d forbid, falls ill, he doesn’t know when he will recover. I knew that my *nisayon* had a beginning and an end. I was healthy and I had a place to sleep and food to eat. In addition, the fact that I was put in jail shortly after I had done *t’shuva* gave me a lot of strength, as it says that Hashem precedes the blow with a cure.”

And food? They gave you kosher food?

“It took some time... When I arrived in jail I had to wait a few hours before I was officially admitted. At a certain point, the feeling of hunger began to bother me. I asked the female warden about kosher food but she didn’t seem to understand what I was talking about and told me supper would be served soon. When the meal arrived, it was a sandwich with sausage and cheese. When I tried to explain to her again, she arrogantly responded, ‘We provide food. If you don’t eat it, that’s your problem.’

“Throughout the booking process I tried to find out how I could obtain kosher food, but in vain. The admissions went on until three in the morning. I went to sleep with an empty stomach. The next day they woke us up at six in order to appear in court and to set bail for me. When I entered the hall, I saw many familiar faces there. News of my arrest had spread among the local Chabad community and they came to support

me.

“After they heard the charges the judges announced bail at a quarter of a million dollars. The members of the community tried, with mesirus nefesh, to raise the money. People I didn’t know offered their homes and another six cars as collateral for me, but apparently the decree that I remain in jail was stronger. The judges did not accept the bond, and this meant I had to remain in jail until the trial.

WHEN YOU BECOME A NUMBER

It was Adar of 5763 when Avishag entered the first jail of the six she stayed in throughout her incarceration. It had one central room with some tables for meals and a counter for the warden. This central room led to three medium sized rooms, each of which had ten beds, toilets, and a shower. There were doors between the rooms but all the walls were glass. This means no privacy, not while you sleep, not while you wash, etc. Avishag continued to inquire about kosher food. They explained to her that since she had arrived late, she would get it the next day.

What was the hardest thing for you in jail?

Avishag: “I think that the most difficult thing was that you instantly turn into an object. I was fortunate in that I was used to rigidity and discipline from my army service, so my acclimatization was relatively easy. It’s hard to understand but in a place like that you turn into a number. Your feelings don’t matter and you are guilty by virtue of the fact that you are there. Throughout this time, I had to overcome these feelings. I knew that they could take my body but not my soul.”

They did not allow Avishag to have any personal belongings. They even took her bobby pins with the excuse that they could be used as weapons. She had no siddur, but at least she knew the morning brachos by heart.

After she davened she stood in line for breakfast.

Once again, she tried to inquire about kosher food, but the warden yelled at her, saying that there was no kosher food in jail and she should eat what they gave her. Avishag gave her meal to one of the prisoners without asking for anything in return and went to her room. She didn’t eat a proper meal for seven days. Later on, they explained to her that the wardens thought she didn’t want to eat because she was spoiled.

“In a place like that you turn into a number. Your feelings don’t matter and you are guilty by virtue of the fact that you are there. Throughout this time, I had to overcome these feelings. I knew that they could take my body but not my soul.”

Avishag: “For the first four days I subsisted on water and fruit that they served with the meals. As the days passed, the wardens saw that I was serious and they tried to understand what this kosher food was that I wanted, but they were tough women and didn’t respect this issue.

“One day, one of the wardens stopped me in the middle of the dining room and loudly asked me, ‘Why aren’t you eating?’ I explained to her that I only eat kosher food. She cynically responded, ‘Your G-d that

you so believe in should have protected you outside the jail, not inside it.’ I didn’t react, but the other prisoners were angry with the warden.

“It’s amazing how they looked out for me. They collected the fruits from their dinners and also collected kosher food for me from their personal food. It was on the seventh day that food arrived from the Aleph Institute, directed by Rabbi Lipskar, shliach in Florida. The Aleph Institute is an organization that takes care of the material and spiritual needs of Jewish prisoners and soldiers. I owe them so much, for they really took care of me.”

A white, religious, female, foreigner was a rarity in jail. At first, Avishag kept her distance. Most of the prisoners and wardens were black and their mentality was completely foreign to her. In addition, she could barely understand them.

Avishag: “It took me at least a month to understand them. Sometimes I was convinced that they were cursing one another when they were actually having a friendly chat. Sometimes, the wardens got angry with me when I didn’t understand them. They thought I was being uppity or a wise-guy.”

Avishag had 45 days to wait before her trial, and this period of time included Shabbasos, of course, and Purim. She felt she had to prepare for it. For three weeks, she begged the wardens to get a siddur for her, but each time, they pushed her off with another excuse.

The Rabbi from the Aleph Institute came to the gates of the jail with a Chumash and a siddur but they didn’t allow him to enter. Mind you, every gentile prisoner received a Christian Bible so she would confess and repent. Thankfully, Avishag eventually received a *T’hillas Hashem Siddur*.

Avishag: “It’s hard to describe the joy I felt when I received the siddur. I never had such a great treasure. My entire existence revolved around the siddur. I realized that the only way to

retain my sanity was to daven and learn in my free time. I waited for the girls to go to sleep so it would be quiet and then I would daven and say T'hillim.

“In a situation like this, in a nisayon, Hashem gives you a lot of strength. They told me that throughout my imprisonment I was extremely close to G-d, but naturally I preferred to be out of jail. Today I realize how right they were. I would give a lot today in order to look at my siddur

with the same reverence that I looked at it then.”

At first, Avishag didn't tell her parents what had happened because she was sure that she would be released within a few days, and she wanted to shield them from the pain. But as the days went by, she began to realize that she wouldn't be getting out so quickly. So she called home and told her parents the news. They wanted to come to the U.S. immediately in order to be near her,

but she insisted that they wait, because it was possible that within a short period of time it would all be behind her.

As Nissan approached, Avishag began inquiring about kosher-for-Pesach food. She was told that she would get matzos from the Aleph Institute and the jail would provide the rest of the food. On the afternoon of Erev Pesach, she received a tray with the holiday food, which consisted of breaded fish! That's when she realized that she would be fasting for the next eight days.

For the first four days of Pesach, a warden would steal fruit for her, but then this supply stopped.

“It was very important to me to feel the holiday spirit and this was no easy project in jail. I sold the chametz in my possession to one of the prisoners. On Erev Pesach I sat on my bed, and read the entire Hagada and sang all the songs. It was interesting to me to see the gentile prisoners feeling that something had changed in the atmosphere. They came to see the big ‘cracker’ I was eating.”

What was it like to celebrate Pesach in jail?

“It wasn't easy. There were times I cried and longed for my family and home, but this crying was healthy too. My mother always said that when I cried she knew everything was all right. It was natural, in the situation I was in, to unleash my emotions. It showed that I was psychologically healthy and wasn't repressing things within me.

“My fast lasted eight days and included the second day of Yom Tov, observed outside of Eretz Yisroel. On the eighth day, the prisoners sat together with me and counted the minutes until the holiday would be over. I had nothing to eat because supper had already been served.

“The prisoners and wardens, who had learned to respect me for my standing up for my principles, looked



throughout the jail for kosher food for me. It was only the next day that a meal arrived. They all sat around me and watched as I ate after such a long fast.”

To feel spiritually elevated on a Yom Tov, Shabbos, or even a weekday, wasn't easy with seventy young women around her, a television, and lots of noise. Through little acts, Avishag continuously separated between the holy and the mundane, and these things strengthened her. She saved the Rebbe's sichos and the sidra of the week with Rashi for Shabbos.

“It was amazing to see how the gentile prisoners became familiar with my Jewish daily routine. They would remind me to pray, and while I did so, they ensured that it was quiet around me. I used a cup that came in a package, for washing my hands. Each time, I wrote different psukim on it so it looked different than the others.

“One day I saw one of the prisoners had washed with my cup and afterwards she took out a paper and said the ‘n'tilas yadayim’ bracha. I asked her why she did that and she said that she liked my blessing and so she said it too. I gently told her that she wasn't Jewish and this wasn't for her and she retorted that I had no monopoly on G-d.

“After I left one of the jails, I heard that a Jewish prisoner was sent there. One Shabbos she lit a cigarette and all the prisoners jumped on her saying, ‘What? You're lighting a fire on the Sabbath? You're not allowed!’”

YOU ONLY HAVE ONE MOTHER

On Avishag's fortieth day in jail, she was told that her trial was postponed for five more months. Her mother, Sima, decided to leave her husband and three children and to go to the U.S. to be a moral support for her oldest daughter.

The one thing that upset Avishag no end was the pain her parents were experiencing. She knew it was a lot

greater than her own. Her father's frustration in his inability to help her, and her mother... That is when she understood what a mother's love truly is.

“When I was allowed to meet with my mother, my hands and feet were in shackles. My mother couldn't take it and she cried the entire time while I smiled and tried to explain that it wasn't as bad as it looked. The worst part was that we weren't allowed to touch one another. I was able to endure a lot as long as they didn't cut me off from my mother. I don't know where she got the strength from, to go through all this with me.”

On the afternoon of Erev Pesach, she received a tray with the holiday food, which consisted of breaded fish! That's when she realized that she would be fasting for the next eight days.

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES – HOLIDAYS IN JAIL

In Tammuz 5763, the jail was closed and Avishag was transferred, along with the rest of the prisoners, to a jail ten minutes away. It was an eight-floor building painted gray both inside and outside. It had barely any natural light.

The only advantage was that she got her own room after months of no privacy. When she heard that the case was postponed again, for another month and a half, she realized that this meant spending Tishrei in jail. Since

the entire jail was electronic, the other prisoners became her “Shabbos goys.” One was in charge of preparing hot drinks and another was in charge of opening the electronic door, etc.

“I think that my tikkun in jail was connected with saying Modeh Ani. Wakeup was at five a.m. The wardens began waking up the prisoners on the first floor and then went up a flight. So I was woken at least three times in the night by the electronic doors opening on other floors. Each time I woke up I said Modeh Ani again until I realized that I didn't have to get up yet.”

THE T'HILLIM IN THE CLOSET

After the Yomim Tovim, Avishag was transferred yet again to a new jail. This move entailed a tremendous improvement in her material and spiritual conditions. There was wall-to-wall carpeting, a microwave, a kosher room, and even a popcorn machine. While arranging her things in her new cell, she opened the closet and found a T'hillim with the letters of the Rebbe Rayatz. Avishag considered this a sign that Hashem was with her and taking care of her. Otherwise, how could you explain the fact that the Rebbe's book was in her closet in this thoroughly gentile environment?

Throughout this period, one of the things Avishag and her mother learned was to accept whatever happened with love. As soon as this awareness became a part of their outlook on life, they were able to see numerous miracles happening to them and to feel that Hashem was carrying them.

“At that time, I had a conversation with an FBI agent who admitted to me that he knew I was innocent and that I was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time – but that's how the system works...”

“The trial was coming up and my mother and I were on the edge of our seats, ready to fly home, but unfortunately, it was election time in the court system. My case turned into

a showcase for the judge to prove himself. He said I had to sit in jail for a year and eight months. Since I had done most of the time already, my release was postponed for half a year. We were brokenhearted over this.

AVISHAG'S FIRST SHLICHUS

In addition to the news of her extended jail time, Avishag was told that she had to move to a different jail, eight hours away. She hated the idea of the move, especially since her mother wouldn't be able to visit her so far away. She tried to use all her connections but nothing helped. She felt it was a decree from above.

The final connection she tried to use was Rabbi Katz of the Aleph Institute, who also was unable to help her. When he told her that he was unsuccessful, he added, "It seems you have a shlichus to do there." At that time, Avishag was receiving copies of *Beis Moshiach*, so the idea of shlichus wasn't foreign to her. The Rebbe had prepared her.

The new jail was pleasant and colorful. Avishag described it in a letter that she wrote her family on 18 Adar 5764:

"You have to see the place here. Aside from the barbed wire fence all

around, you would find it hard to guess that this is a jail ... It looks like a university campus ... There are large expanses of grass with paths and places to sit under the trees with tables and benches. There are many pigeons and other birds ... Every morning, at seven o'clock, when I am outside, I listen to the pigeons cooing and it's just like being at home at holiday time."

Upon entering this jail, Avishag was sent for psychological evaluation. She saw a young man sitting there and immediately knew he was Jewish. After he read her name easily, her assumption was confirmed. He was a Jew by the name of Michael and he was doing his internship in jail. He didn't understand what she was doing there, and asked her how he could be of help to her.

When she asked about kosher food, he suggested that she speak to his rabbi, a Chabad shliach.

"I was so excited that there was a Chabad rabbi in the area. Instead of interviewing me, we spoke about Chabad and about the chesed and aid they provide. The next day, I was called for a meeting by the chaplain whose name was Ted. He was a very colorful figure, an older fellow with a white beard and glasses and he was a good-natured man who wanted to help.

"He was excited by the fact that a religious, Orthodox woman was in jail and he was well informed about everything I needed, candles for Shabbos, wine for Kiddush, and special food for Pesach, which was approaching. He showered me with so much good that I couldn't digest it all.

"In my confusion I asked to speak with the rabbi of the prison and he told me that the prison did not have a Jewish rabbi. He suddenly stopped talking and began flipping through the card catalogue in front of him. He removed a business card, took off his glasses, looked at me, and asked, 'Do you know the Lubavitchers?'



"Before I could answer, he called the local Chabad rabbi and let me speak with him. Michael had already told him about me. The next day, he came to visit me and brought some s'farim that I had asked for. Ted, who met him, suggested on the spot that he become rabbi of the prison. That's when it hit me. This was the reason I was here! This was the shlichus, which was carried out through the Rebbe in a miraculous way, within three days, without my lifting a finger. I just had to be there..."

* * *

The Rebbe was truly with Avishag throughout her prison stay. Her hiskashrus to the Rebbe continuously grew. The more she learned, the more she connected with the kind people who helped her throughout this period. Through the shluchim, she saw the power and influence of the Rebbe's shlichus and how far the Rebbe reached.

In her room she had a picture of the Rebbe, and whoever passed by took an interest in it. The gentiles said he was a holy man.

THE FINAL TESTS ARE THE HARDEST

The week of her release, a hurricane hit the area. Over the course of three weeks, four hurricanes lashed about and nobody could move from there. Avishag had to spend Rosh HaShana in jail. She felt this was the greatest darkness before her release and didn't know where to get the strength any more.

"Since I was an Israeli citizen, they transferred me to a special jail of the Department of Immigration, which is the last place I was sent to. Because of the storms, I was sure that I would have to spend Yom Kippur in jail too, but baruch Hashem, the storm died down. On Friday, they came to take me to the last jail, where I spent a week before my flight.

"From there I went to the airport, accompanied by two huge guys from the Immigration Department. For the

first time in about two years, I was outside the prison walls without handcuffs. I began to smell the air of freedom. My mother was waiting for me at the airport. All the other passengers had already boarded the plane and it looked as though the stewardesses were about to close the gates. My mother burst into tears and said the plane couldn't fly before I boarded. She told them my whole story and the plane waited until I arrived."

Avishag returned home and was enveloped with love. For two entire months, she barely left the house.

While arranging her things in her new cell, she opened the closet and found a T'hillim with the letters of the Rebbe Rayatz. Avishag considered this a sign that Hashem was with her and taking care of her.

Suddenly, any small sound disturbed her. They kept the house perfectly quiet for her. They were afraid that now that she was in her protected surroundings, she would break down.

"I remember Sukkos. We celebrated with a friend of my mother. The two families sat together and my sister told funny stories. I laughed and laughed, and then began to cry. I tried to stop but could not. My mother asked me what happened and I told her that I was just overflowing with happiness."

After two months, Avishag went to Tzfas to learn at Machon Alte. She had heard about the school while she was in jail and she had asked her mother to

look into it. Her mother met a woman who had learned there, who told her about the place. After some more inquiries, Avishag knew that when she returned to Eretz Yisroel, she would register there.

"The Machon is not *like* home, because it really *is* my home and not just in the spiritual sense. I am given the tools with which I will be able to establish my own Jewish home, the Rebbe's home. I owe so much to Rabbi and Mrs. Rosenfeld, to Breiny Popack, Mrs. Rizel, Nurit Abitbul, Rabbi Turkov, and all the teachers who teach us, and to Juliet and Felix for opening their homes and their hearts to us. There is a strong feeling of family here that protects and supports us."

Her adjustment to Machon wasn't easy. Small things like standing in line for meals or just being with many girls was hard for her. In her first months there, she preferred to be alone. She had a lot to think about. Slowly, she became more open. She went through a period of intensive and uncompromising work on her middos; she learned to restrain herself, to give space to others because in jail she had no space of her own.

Can you see yourself without these nisyonos?

"It was a year and a half of internal shaping. I am who I am today because of what I went through. I discovered inner strengths that I had to use in order to make it through this nisayon. There were basic aspects of my personality that were strengthened and things that I developed during my stay in jail. One of them is patience.

"While in jail, you have to internalize the fact that everything will take place in good time. This patience led me to very beautiful points in my life, to real serenity. I learned to be more inward and to be less fazed by what happens outside of me, and I wouldn't forego this for any treasure in the world."

THE DISPERSAL PLAN

BY ALIZA KARP

Like Pharaoh, Sharon had to think of a plan to weaken the settlers. He saw the strength in their communities and decided his tactic would be dispersal, and he would call it Disengagement. Sharon is a man of war. To conquer is second nature to him. In this case he has chosen to divide and conquer. The Disengagement Plan is actually a Dispersal Plan.

On the 8th Tishrei, October 11th, Hillel Fendel reported on Arutz Sheva, “Thirty families from the former Gush Katif community of Gadid who have long demanded to remain together have now been told that they are to be scattered in different directions.”

Sharon and the Knesset called their plan the Disengagement Plan. But with close scrutiny – as brought to public awareness by the determined efforts of David Bedein and his Israel Resource News Agency – the Disengagement Plan reveals that there is in fact no Disengagement. Jews are still supplying Aza with water pipes, electricity, industrial zones, markets, employment and – if I read the news correctly – we are still supplying ammunition!

With all these connections, you can hardly call the plan a disengagement.

So where does the disengagement apply?

The disengagement refers to the breaking of relations between the Jews in Aza and the Northern Shomron from the Jewish state. The Knesset passed the Disengagement Plan and so did the Cabinet. The army implemented the decree. In the aftermath of the destruction of industrious, productive, moral communities, the state hides its face and shirks its responsibility to those who are left stranded. The state has disengaged from loyal citizens. The world knows it. The general media consistently reported the ‘Israeli’ army evacuating ‘Jewish’ settlers.

The politicians who voted for the Disengagement Plan are not so naive as to think the extrication of Jews from

their homes will transform terrorists into peace loving flower children. But they do know it has dispersed the strong, wholesome, religious communities that flourished in Eretz Yisroel.

At the beginning of Shmos, of the second book of the Five Books of Moses, we are told that a new Pharaoh became the ruler of Egypt. Rashi claims that this was not an actual new person, it was the same person with a new and very different policy. It was this Pharaoh who gladly settled Yosef’s family in Goshen. But as the years went by, he saw how strong the Hebrews were becoming. He feared their strength and set out to weaken them physically and psychologically.

I don’t like to say that Sharon is acting like Pharaoh, but the parallel is just too real. Sharon was once the advocate for settling the land. And we did settle the land and the settlers became very strong.

Sharon did not foresee the fruits that would grow from the seedling settlements. He settled handfuls of idealists on rocky hilltops and barren sand dunes, he did not know they would evolve into such strong tribes, so strong they became known for providing the armed forces with the finest, most dedicated, most skilled soldiers, or that they would bring to the country much needed cash from their export industries. The potent Yesha

communities are not what Sharon and the secular Zionists had in mind.

The secular Zionists have their own vision of their state. Traditional Jewish values are to be the side-dish of their state, not the main course.

So, like Pharaoh, Sharon had to think of a plan to weaken the settlers. He saw the strength in their communities and decided his tactic would be dispersal, and he would call it Disengagement. Sharon is a man of war. To conquer is second nature to him. In this case he has chosen to divide and conquer. The Disengagement Plan is actually a Dispersal Plan.

As quoted above, "The former Gush Katif community of Gadid who have long demanded to remain together have now been told that they are to be scattered in different directions." And I will add, the former Gush Katif community of Gadid is not the only former Gush Katif community to be scattered in different directions. And the separation of one community from another is also dispersal. The communities gave moral a physical support to one another.

I once attended a community wide bar mitzva celebration in the park of Netzer Hazani and was told the tables and chairs were supplied by Neve Dekalim for the occasion. This was their participation in the simcha. And when there was tragedy, G-d forbid, the communities would send their produce as gifts to their grieving co-community of Gush Katif. Just separating communities would be a painful enough dispersion, but the

Dispersal Plan goes further and breaks up communities as well.

In a recently publicized letter written to Mrs. Geula Cohen in the year 5741 – 1981, the Lubavitcher Rebbe writes about the Jewish government, "I have seen that it is all in one direction: concessions and withdrawal, etc."

Even with this perspective and his foresight that the settlements would not endure, still the Rebbe did not remain silent. He steadfastly protested and fought to topple any government which even spoke about concessions.

Even with this perspective and his foresight that the settlements would not endure, still the Rebbe did not remain silent. He steadfastly protested and fought to topple any government which even spoke about concessions.

Covering up and rationalizing the evil of the Dispersal Plan will only lead to inaction. Delving into the heart

breaking facts of how Jews are treating Jews is painful, but we have to know the enemy in order to fight him. From the chaos of the Disengagement/Dispersal Plan has come the clarity of what a Jewish government is actually capable of doing.

The modern history of Eretz Yisroel is multifaceted and complex. Hashem has preformed open miracles so that Jews could return to their homeland and live together on the soil promised to their forefathers. And yet we find the evils perpetrated by the secular leaders, their betrayal of Jewish values and actions which are in contradiction even to common morality, reaches levels lower than the average Jew can imagine.

And what did the Rebbe tell us to do? To spread Yiddishkai, to spread goodness, to combat evil with the power of Torah.

Without the work of Chassidim, the situation in Eretz Yisroel would be so much worse. With increased work of Chassidim, the situation in the Eretz Yisroel, and the world, would be so much better.

The more we spread Chassidus in Eretz Yisroel the stronger will be the opposition to the evil doers and their evil decrees. The more we spread Chassidus in Chutz LaAretz, the more closed doors the secular leaders of Eretz Yisroel will find when they come knocking for support. The more we spread the wellsprings of Chassidus, the more likely we will be able to greet Moshiach Now!

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LUBAVITCHERS BREAKING IDOLS IN INDIA

BY BENTZION YECHEZKEL

*The idols we learn about in Chumash haven't disappeared from the world yet. At least not in India, where tens of thousands of Jews visit. But the children of Avrohom Avinu, the first Jew, believers in one G-d, arrived in order to destroy the idols and plant seeds of holiness! * Diary of an exciting shlichus during Sukkos, exclusive to Beis Moshiach.*

The idea of celebrating Sukkos 5765 in far-off India was an idea that Menachem Mendel Crombie came up with after he had been there the previous Pesach and saw the tremendous success the Chabad houses of India enjoy. The plan was to return to India and organize a unique festival, which would incorporate Chassidic messages in an original way along with Jewish music.

If you're going to a spiritually impure place, then the best place to hold a Jewish festival is the city of Rishikash. This city is one of the largest mystical centers of the world and was designated as holy by the

Indians because of the Genga River there. As the Alter Rebbe writes about the forces of impurity that the Egyptians drew from the Nile River, you can see this with the Genga River that divides Rishikash.

You can barely take a step in Rishikash without encountering the accoutrements of idol worship. The city has many schools for the study of these teachings and this is why it attracts tens of thousands of tourists a year, many of them Jews and Israelis. According to unofficial statistics, about 80,000 Israelis visit the city each year!

Preparing a festival is no easy thing, especially when it entails

large expenditures of money, the lack of basic requirements, and the lack of financial support. Under these circumstances it was hard to see how a festival could be organized, and on a holiday no less.

R' Crombie approached the people at Ascent in Tzfas and asked them to take it on as their project. The director of Ascent, Rabbi Shaul Leiter, loved the idea and the festival began to take shape. Before proceeding, R' Crombie received the Rebbe's brachos through the *Igros Kodesh*.

There wasn't much time to prepare. Two top Chabad lecturers joined the team: Rabbi Amram Muell, who has lots of experience speaking in Eretz Yisroel and abroad, and Rabbi Ayal Reiss, who is a member of the Ascent staff. The HaSulamot band of Tzfas was selected. Two members of the band, Shavit Ravitzky and Shani Ben-Keinar, are professional musicians with a special flair in the area of Jewish music.

The festival was scheduled for Chol HaMoed Sukkos so that the music and the special crafts would fulfill the Rebbe's instruction to celebrate the Simchas Beis

HaShoeiva each night of Sukkos.

THE JEWISH SPARK

The festival was advertised starting in Elul, through the Chabad houses of India and the Far East, as well as various Internet sites and flyers. When R' Crombie arrived to begin arranging the technical end of things, he promoted the festival even more.

Rabbi Zohar Dovid, shliach in Rishikash, got involved in the festival despite the work he had to do in organizing the t'fillos for the Yomim Noraim.

On the morning of the second day of Chol HaMoed, Rabbis Muell and Reiss arrived in Rishikash with the band and a journalist from Channel 10. After a brief rest, Rabbi Muell and Reiss went out to the city with a set of four minim to enable Israelis to do the mitzva and to invite them to the festival.

Rabbi Muell:

"Hundreds of Israelis were thrilled to see us and the Dalet minim. We stood on the street for a few hours and helped the Jewish passersby do the mitzva.

"Not everyone was excited though. There were some Israelis who, to put it mildly, were unhappy to see us there. They had gone to India to run away from their Judaism and there we were, reminding them of it once again.

"When we told the tourists about the festival, they liked the idea, including those who refused to bless the Dalet minim. One of them, a doctor of mathematics, refused each time we suggested he take the lulav, but he was overjoyed about the festival and he did an interesting dance. So we were able to pull in virtually everyone, each according to where he was at.

"The following is one story out

of many that illustrate this point. As we stood there on the street with the four minim, I noticed an Israeli girl who looked Indian in every respect. She wore the special clothes of the idol worshipers and there was a large dot on her forehead that identified her as belonging to a particular idol-worshipping group.

"When she saw us she changed direction in the attempt to circumvent us. I looked directly at her and said loudly in Ivrit: 'The *nekuda* [lit. dot or point, an allusion to the eternal Jewish spark], you can't hide the *nekuda*.' When she heard this, she came over to us and said a bracha on the Dalet minim.

"One of the nicest things that made an impression on us was the SheHechyanu bracha that was recited with great fervor by the young folk. For many of them, this was the first time in their lives they were reciting this bracha."

FIRE OF SIMCHA

Towards the beginning of the

festival, it looked like some technical matters were not arranged and that they would have few participants. R' Crombie wrote to the Rebbe and asked for a bracha. The answer in the *Igros Kodesh* was addressed to a Chassid who wanted to organize a summer camp but his friends cooled him off to the idea. The Rebbe wrote about the tremendous importance in influencing the youth and the great merit in organizing activities for them.

Naturally, this answer from the Rebbe gave the festival organizers renewed confidence.

A large area near the Chabad house had been rented. They set up a huge tent there, which could contain hundreds of people. At the end of the tent, they built a sukka to provide the participants with easy access to say l'chaim and have a bite to eat. The tent was adorned with lights and a powerful sound system.

Close to five o'clock, nearly a



Rabbi Amram Muell (right) and Rabbi Ayal Reiss (left) at the farbrengen in the Chabad house of Delhi



Rabbi Ayal Reiss (right) and Rabbi Amram Muell (left) with the Dalet minim in Rishikesh

hundred people arrived to participate in the festival's first program. Rabbi Reiss talked about Kabbala and Chassidus.

Then Rabbi Muell spoke about negina. For two hours the people sat riveted by his explanations about negina in Chassidic thought and the special connection between the musical notes and their spiritual origins. He described the broad array of soul-songs which Chassidim sing in a state of

d'veikus, while davening or reciting Shma.

During Rabbi Muell's presentation he played a selection of niggunim on his portable computer, from the eastern liturgical prayers of the Yomim Noraim to the niggunim of the *hishtapchus ha'nefesh* (outpouring of the soul) of Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev.

He played familiar Israeli songs with explanations about the

inclinations of the soul that are expressed in each niggun. Rabbi Muell also taught niggunim of the Rebbe.

Following this, the musicians Shavit and Shani performed. About another 150 people showed up and the tent was full. The people were excited and they began to dance. Within a short time, the crowd entered a state of d'veikus and tremendous simcha, a simcha that broke forth and rose up from the

exile darkness of Rishikash. In that unholy city, the forces of k'dusha overcame the tuma, and hundreds of Jewish youth rejoiced in Chassidic joy.

This opening to the festival made a great impression on whoever was there. With the conclusion of the official part of the festival for that day, a few dozen people gathered around a bonfire for a spontaneous farbrengen that lasted until dawn. They heard about the Nasi HaDor and about Geula. They asked questions, expression

mitzva of the Dalet minim.

The program of the second day, which began at twelve noon, started with a lecture given by Rabbi Zohar Dovid, a shliach in Rishikash, on the topic, "Seven Aspects of Simcha." He explained a number of basic concepts in Chassidus, making it understandable to even the uninitiated. Then Rabbi Muell gave a lecture on the wonders of nature as seen through Chassidus.

After a brief break, Rabbi Reiss gave a lecture about the "Supernal

different perspective.

The following lecture was about what Chassidus has to say about relationships. Rabbi Muell quoted numerous statements of Chazal and Midrashim. The uniqueness of this shiur over the others was in emphasizing how the Torah relates to every single subject in a person's life. This topic is one that is universally addressed by every belief system and the participants were amazed by the Chassidic perspective.

Once the lectures were over, music took over and once again the crowd was swept up in song and dance. Despite the late hour, hundreds of people remained to take an active part in the event and the dancing.

It was Hoshana Rabba night and the atmosphere was incredible. Hearts were opened and hundreds of people felt at home. It was beautiful to see hundreds of kids who seek the truth provided with an answer to what their souls thirsted for, and then joining in the dancing as though it was something they always did.

People clustered around the lecturers. Some of them wanted to ask questions while others came to thank them for their wonderful talks. Time flew by and the official program was over.

As with the night before, dozens of people sat down around a bonfire, which allowed the participants to ignite the fire inside their hearts and form warm connections with people they would normally feel distant towards.

HOSHANA RABBA IN THE BOSOM OF NATURE

The third day, Erev Shmini Atzeres, was devoted to hiking while learning about the greatness

REACHING OUT TO GENTILES

Rabbi Ayal Reiss relates:

In one of his maamarim, the Rebbe explains that the completion of the birur of the nations of the world happens on Sukkos. In connection with this, it was interesting to see the response of gentiles to the Seven Noachide Laws and the belief in one G-d.

When we were in the airport, we began giving out Sheva Mitzvos brochures to employees and we saw how receptive they were. But the high point was when we returned to Eretz Yisroel. The day after we returned to Tzfas, a group of ten Indian professors came to Ascent in order to hear a lecture on this topic.

Since this was the week of Parshas Noach, I gave a lecture that gave the full historical background of these mitzvos. When I told them that I had just returned from India, the professors were quite surprised.

I saw the fulfillment of the birur as it's explained on the verse, "praise Hashem all the goyim," that the ultimate is when the nations of the world themselves submit to the Jewish people.

opinions and received answers.

Exhausted but satisfied with what they had accomplished, Rabbis Muell and Reiss went off to rest.

On the morning of the second day, the rabbis went out to the city again for a few hours before the festival program began. Their work that day was a continuation of their work of the day before. They met dozens of Israelis who had attended the program the night before and who were more open to doing the

S'firos and A Higher Consciousness." As with the previous lectures, the young people were astonished by what Chassidus has to say. The structure of the soul and the s'firos, as explained by Rabbi Reiss, enabled the participants to understand the tremendous G-dly energy that lies within Chassidus, whose explanations enliven the soul. One of them said later on that he had been convinced that Judaism was only dry and technical, but the festival gave him a completely



Mivtza Sheva Mitzvos B'nei Noach (right) and Mivtza T'fillin (left)

of the Creator and the special nature of the soul.

Since the program of the day before ended so late, the organizers didn't expect too many people for the hike. They decided that as soon as ten people showed up, they would leave. To their surprise, dozens of men and women arrived at the appointed time.

The hike was led by R' Mendy Crombie. While hiking by streams they stopped a few times and Rabbi Reiss spoke about the connection nature has with avodas Hashem. He told stories of disciples of the Baal Shem Tov, who were known to seclude themselves in nature in order to connect with Hashem.

In the second half of their hike,

they stopped near a waterfall, where R' Zohar Dovid burst into song accompanied by his guitar. There were a few songs to warm people up and then Rabbi Reiss launched into an explanation about the element of water based on what it says in *Tanya*. At the end of the hike, each participant was given a special gift, a *Tanya* printed in Rishikash.

They did the custom of banging the aravos on Hoshana Rabba with explanations that put together what Rabbi Reiss had said about the element of water. And thus ended the festival, but the strong impression it formed, along with the incredible atmosphere, made parting difficult. Most of the participants stayed to celebrate a very joyous Simchas Torah.

The hundreds of tourists who visited the Chabad house during Yom Tov were a living testament to the inyan of Sukkos, as the Sages say that it is a sign that after the judgment of the High Holidays, "we are victorious," the victory the Jewish people enjoy over the nations of the world.

There, where the forces of impurity reign and where idol worship draws thousands of Jews a year to search for their souls and their yearnings for G-dliness in foreign fields, stood hundreds of Jews who proclaimed, "You have been shown to know that Hashem, He is Elokim, there is naught but Him."

Who could measure or assess the effects of such a mighty spiritual endeavor, but the true simcha that burst forth during the hakafos gave every person the feeling of belonging to the Chosen People.

The high point was the hakafos on the night of Simchas Torah. The participants decided that since



An evening of song and soul outside the Chabad house

there were hundreds more Jews in the city whose Jewish spark had yet to be ignited, people who still did not free to come and celebrate the holiday properly at the Chabad house, they would do hakafos in the city center.

They took a seifer Torah and hundreds of them marched and danced towards the center of town. Whoever observed them was stunned. With the Torah in the center, the parade marched on the streets of Rishikash “and the nations of the land will see that the name of Hashem is called upon you and they will fear you.”

The hakafos were done joyously, as you would expect on Simchas Torah. For a moment, one may have forgotten where they were since they did as they would at home, without fear or shame. This display of Jewish pride imprinted Jewish pride on each of the participants and strengthened their awareness of belonging to a holy people, children of Hashem.

Afterwards, many of them returned to a farbrengen at the Chabad house in honor of Simchas Torah and preparations for Shabbos B'Reishis. Simchas Torah and Shabbos B'Reishis were a direct continuation to the festival.

If previously, the staff was nervous about how many would show up, this time they had the opposite problem. How could they leave as hundreds of people continued to gather around them, demanding understanding of the meaning of life and the path of Judaism.

The night before Rabbis Muell and Reiss were to return to Eretz

Yisroel, Rabbi Muell asked the crowd who wanted to talk to him to allow him a few hours rest before his trip. Dozens of kids begged him not to leave them but to stay and answer their questions.

One of the girls dared to say to Rabbi Muell: You came here on the Rebbe's shlichus to help us! Rabbi Muell had to give in and stay with them until it was time for him to leave the city. The girl, who had searched in the Far East for years, was taken by a story she heard



The Chabad house staff at the entrance to the area where the festival was held

about the Rebbe and has made some progress towards Torah and mitzvos.

After a week packed with experiences, the rabbis and musicians returned home but not before they stopped at the Chabad house in Delhi to farbreng on their way to the airport. Rabbi Reiss tells us about that special farbrengen:

“In the few hours before our flight, we farbrenged at the Chabad house in Delhi. The musicians were

with us too and we were all in a special state of spiritual arousal. We gave out hundreds of cards, which invited Israelis to two free nights at Ascent. These cards had been given out in Elul and Tishrei in the hundreds, throughout India. People were happy to receive them.

“During the farbrengen many Israelis came in to say l'chaim. Every few minutes, new faces appeared around the table and the place was packed. We met dozens of young people who had participated in the festival.

“When we asked them what they were doing in Delhi, which is a port city, most of them said that after leaving Rishikash they didn't see a point in staying in India and had decided to return to Eretz Yisroel.”

STORIES

Dozens of stories could be told about the people who came from near and far. One of them was a girl named Neta who had been wandering around India for seven years. After studying Eastern religions, she decided to join a sect which cuts itself off from the world and is far from Rishikash.

When she came to the city for a brief visit to do some errands, she met R' Crombie, who invited her to the festival. Of course, at first, she wasn't interested, but then she began to think about how she knew dozens of philosophies aside from her own. She decided to join the seminar and that encounter opened her heart to Judaism and Torah.

Another story is about a young man who just two weeks previously had been a talmid in a yeshiva in Eretz Yisroel. Questions that



A hike in nature with Rabbi Ayal Reiss



Rabbi Ayal Reiss with an Israeli tourist

perturbed him led him to leave yeshiva and flee as far as he could go. He spent hours with Rabbi Muell discussing emuna and the Jewish people. The bachur, who was amazed to discover how deep Judaism is and how ignorant he was, decided to return to Eretz Yisroel.

In another story, Rabbi Muell told about a young man named Omri who spent a few years traveling around India. When the festival staff met him, he looked like one of the many unfortunates of India, as he walked barefoot. During the festival, Omri didn't leave the tent except to sleep and eat and after the festival he committed to learn Chitas every day.

Yet another story, which showed the staff the power of the Rebbe, had to do with the weather. In the days preceding the festival, as in the days that followed it, it poured. But during the three days of the festival, the skies were clear and the weather was perfect!

A girl by the name of Dorin, who had spent years with a Japanese boyfriend and planned to marry him, met the staff in Delhi on their way home. She said that after the festival she had decided to leave her gentile boyfriend and return to Eretz Yisroel!

The response of the hundreds of participants, as well as the openness of the staff to answer all questions, produced real results: hundreds of personal conversations, the registration of dozens of people to shiurim and courses at Ascent, and even some baalei t'shuva!

Rabbi Reiss told *Beis Moshiach* that two of the girls who participated in the festival already arrived back in Eretz Yisroel and planned to study at Machon Alte in Tzfas.

The staff plans on organizing other festivals and reproducing this highly effective format in other places but first they ask the Rebbe to come immediately at which time we will merit the fulfillment of the promise, "and the children will return to their borders."

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‘A CHASSID SHOULD ASK FOR LIFE’

BY URI LICHTMAN

*When the Chassid R' Menachem Mendel Kaplan was on his way to Rostov to the gravesite of the Rebbe Rashab, Cossacks threw him off the moving train. From the hospital, he wrote to the Rebbe Rayatz, asking that at least he merit to be buried as a Jew. * Profile of a Chassid who passed away 85 years ago, on 6 Cheshvan 5681.*

R' Menachem Mendel Kaplan who was known as "Mendel der Chassid," was born in Bobruisk in Byelorussia around the year 5629. When he came of age, he married Gittel Margolin and ran a large store. The store took a lot of time and effort but he continued to devote many hours of his day to davening at length and to numerous Torah shiurim.

He gave much tz'daka, as can be seen in the ledgers of Kollel Chabad in Yerushalayim and in the ledger of the fundraiser for Hachnasas Orchim in Yerushalayim.

R' Mendel and his wife hosted numerous guests. Friends of the family relate that the family never ate without a guest at their table.

A ZEALOUS CHASSID

R' Mendel's Chassidic zeal was legendary in Bobruisk. In this city

lived the Admur Rabbi Shmarya Noach of Bobruisk (grandson of the Tzemach Tzedek), who had a large following. The Lubavitcher Chassidim, who were mekusharim of the Rebbe Rashab, were the minority. R' Mendel was completely devoted to the Rebbe Rashab and he spoke about the holy obligation to connect with the Rebbe Rashab.

He received his chinuch for hiskashrus from his father, R' Yaakov, who was the Chassid of three Rebbeim: the Tzemach Tzedek, the Rebbe Maharash, and the Rebbe Rashab. Although R' Yaakov was a Lubavitcher Chassid, he was appointed maggid shiur in Rabbi Shmarya Noach's yeshiva. Over the years, R' Yaakov was a liaison between the Rebbe Rashab and the Admur of Bobruisk.

As a loyal Chassid, R' Yaakov would travel to Lubavitch for Yom Tov and when he returned to Bobruisk, the Admur of Bobruisk would ask him for a report. R' Yaakov would review the maamarim that the Rebbe Rashab had said during Tishrei. R' Yaakov would also convey mutual regards between the two Admurim.

R' Mendel, after davening for many years in the beis midrash of the Admur of Bobruisk, decided one day that he couldn't take it anymore. He switched to the shul named after the Chassid R' Hillel of Paritch, where the Lubavitchers davened.

Every Rosh HaShana many Chassidim came to Bobruisk (most of them former Kopust Chassidim, who accepted the younger brother, the Admur of Bobruisk, as their Rebbe after the passing of their Rebbe, the Admur Shlomo Zalman of Kopust). R' Mendel though, would take his tallis and t'fillin and make a point of announcing that he was going to Lubavitch, where the real Chabad Chassidus could be found.

R' Mendel's wife Gittel was from an ardent misnagdic family. When they asked him how a fiery Chassid did a shidduch with a Misnagdic family, he would say: There's no greater mitzva than taking a Misnagdic girl and bringing her into a Chassidic family!

THROWN FROM A MOVING TRAIN

R' Mendel was heartbroken over the passing of the Rebbe Rashab on 2 Nissan 1920. He just couldn't accept the terrible news and he fell ill. After some time, when he had recovered somewhat, he told his family that he needed to go to a spa to recover from his great weakness. He said that he was going to distant Kislovotzk but his family knew him well and they knew that a Chassid like R' Mendel was not leaving in order to recuperate but was actually heading for the gravesite of the Rebbe Rashab in Rostov.

They were right, and R' Mendel headed for Rostov after which he planned on accepting the nesius of the Rebbe Rayatz.

During the Simchas Torah farbrengen, the Rebbe Rayatz spoke passionately and said, "How is it that a Jew writes pidyonos and asks for mercy that he merit Jewish burial? A Jew ought to ask for life and not burial!"



R' Mendel suffered greatly on his trip from Bobruisk to Rostov. In those days, the Bolshevik Revolution was in full force and in various cities there were battles between the Reds (the communists) and the Whites (the anti-Revolutionaries), the Cossacks among the latter. The common denominator between them was that they both persecuted the Jews. The convenient excuse was that the Jews were helping the other side.

This went on for years, as a result of which the normal routine of life was disrupted. Public transportation was affected and R' Mendel faced danger every step of the way. When he arrived in Zhlobin, he was arrested by the authorities for no reason. They thoroughly searched him and his belongings and then left him in jail with no explanation as to why and for how long.

Somehow, his incarceration became known and notables of Zhlobin led by Rabbi Moshe Akselrod, the rav of the city, prevailed upon the authorities to release R' Mendel.

R' Mendel remained undeterred and continued his trip to Rostov but as the train approached Rostov he was attacked by hoodlums. It was when the train was about 200 kilometers from Rostov, near a small train station in Milrubo, in the heart of the district where the Cossacks reigned.

A band of Cossacks took control of the train and abused the Jewish passengers, robbing them of their possessions and then murdering some of them. Others were thrown from the moving train. (R' Mendel's son Eliyahu said that in a postcard his father sent from the hospital his father wrote that it was a group of students and not Cossacks that attacked the Jews, claiming that all Jews were communists and if they weren't, then their children were.)

The thugs took R' Mendel and threw him off the moving train. He hit the ground and broke two ribs. In

tremendous pain, he lay near the train tracks, unable to move. When railroad workers came in the morning they found him there and took him to the nearest hospital.

In a letter that R' Mendel wrote his family he told them that he had broken two ribs but the treatment he had received consisted merely of smearing iodine on the area where he had been injured.

Because of the chaos of the times, the authorities said there was no need to put stamps on letters and you could write on any sort of paper and mark the address on the other side. R' Mendel wrote a number of these letters to his family but they arrived after his death.

R' Mendel was transferred to a larger hospital and he wrote a number of letters to the Rebbe Rayatz in Rostov. He described his medical situation and ended his letters with a heartfelt plea, "Please arouse great mercy on me so that I merit Jewish burial."

THE FIRST TO CALL THE REBBE RAYATZ "REBBE"

R' Mendel was partially recovered after a few weeks and he decided to continue his trip to Rostov. He arrived before Sukkos 5681.

During the Simchas Torah farbrengen, the Rebbe Rayatz spoke passionately and said, "How is it that a Jew writes pidyonos and asks for mercy that he merit Jewish burial? A Jew ought to ask for life and not burial!" The Rebbe repeated this a number of times with great emotion, probably referring to the pidyonos that R' Mendel had written to him from his sickbed.

This was a transition time in Lubavitch for although the Rebbe Rashab had written in his will that his only son, the Rayatz, continue to run Tomchei T'mimim and that he had to establish chadarim and shiurim for the study of Chassidus throughout Russia,

as well as say maamarim in public, the Rebbe Rayatz refused to accept the nesius. Throughout the year of mourning, he closed himself up in his room and did not conduct himself as a Rebbe. On the contrary, he did various things so that people would consider him as one of the Chassidim. Yet the Chassidim treated him like their Rebbe although they were afraid to say this to his face.

R' Mendel couldn't bear the situation in which they did not openly have a Rebbe and at that Simchas Torah farbrengen he called the Rebbe Rayatz – Rebbe a number of times, thus crowning the Rebbe in public. The Rebbe Rayatz responded, "Why are you shedding my blood?" but R' Mendel persisted.

After Simchas Torah, R' Mendel became even more ill and on the sixth of Cheshvan 5681 he returned his soul to his Maker. He was only in his early fifties. All he asked for was a Jewish burial and he merited to be buried

near the gravesite of his Rebbe, the Rebbe Rashab.

About twenty years later, when the Rebbe Rashab's grave had to be moved, R' Mendel Kaplan's grave was also moved and once again he was buried near the Rebbe Rashab.

THE COMMISSAR'S SECRET

A few months after his passing, the family heard an amazing story about how R' Mendel had saved a Jewish communist. R' Mendel's son R' Eliyahu relates:

In 1921, a few months after my father's passing, a Jewish commissar (a high communist official) came to our house and warned my mother of a search that would take place in our house. We managed to hide all our valuables before the authorities came and thoroughly searched our house. They found a few items that weren't worth much and they took them.

I knew this commissar as a sworn communist who fought those who

THE REBBE'S BRACHA FOR A SHIDDUCH

Before Rosh HaShana 5679, the Chassid R' Yankel Zuravitzer (Moskolik) suggested a shidduch to his friend and Chassid, R' Chaim Bentzion Raskin, when the latter was on his way to Lubavitch. R' Yankel told him that for Rosh HaShana a "distinguished Chassid from Bobruisk" by the name of Mendel Kaplan had come to Lubavitch and he had an eligible daughter. R' Yankel suggested that R' Chaim Bentzion do a shidduch with his son, R' Yaakov Yosef with R' Mendel's daughter.

R' Chaim Bentzion decided to ask the Rebbe Rashab. When he had a yechidus, he wrote the details of the suggestion and asked for the Rebbe's opinion. The Rebbe agreed to the suggestion and even gave his bracha for the success of the shidduch. When R' Mendel heard that the Rebbe had given his blessings to the shidduch, he immediately agreed to it.

For some reason, R' Chaim Bentzion kept this information from his son, the chassan, and together they went to the home of his son, Yitzchok (may Hashem avenge his blood), who lived in Nowy Bichov.

It was only on Rosh Chodesh Adar II, on a Monday, that the father first revealed to his son that he was a chassan and that the mechutanim were waiting for them in Bobruisk. They left on Wednesday and on Thursday, the chassan and kalla met for the first time. On Friday, they made the tenaim. The wedding took place in Bobruisk three months later and the mesader kiddushin was the Admur of Bobruisk.

opposed the communist Revolution and I was surprised by his warning. I was very curious, and after much effort I managed to meet with him and I pressed him to explain himself.

He said that in 1919, during the Polish rule of the city, he was active in the underground communist movement. When they were discovered and many people were arrested, including himself, he knew that the only way he could remain alive would be if he denied that he had anything to do with the communists. When they asked him who could speak up on his behalf, he gave my father's name.

They called my father and questioned him in the presence of the accused. When my father was asked whether he knew the prisoner, he said that he did. When he was asked whether he could confirm the man's claim that he was not a communist, my father said that he

At that Simchas Torah farbrengen he called the Rebbe Rayatz – Rebbe a number of times, thus crowning the Rebbe in public. The Rebbe Rayatz responded, "Why are you shedding my blood?" but R' Mendel persisted.

could.

My father was asked to swear but he explained that religious Jews

don't swear. The interrogator agreed that my father's signature was sufficient but he warned him that if he was discovered to be lying then both he and the accused would be hung. My father signed.

After the Soviet conquest, that Jew came to my father in the uniform of a commissar and he said, "R' Mendel, I will never forget what you did for me."

My father answered, "I ask one thing of you, that you do not abandon your Judaism."

In gratitude to my father, he endangered himself to tell us that a search would be made of our house.

How did my father have the guts to sign and endanger his life? He explained afterwards as follows, "A person who truly believes cannot say of himself that he does not believe. If that Jew could deny his belief, i.e. communism, then he wasn't really a communist."

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