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BEIS MOSHIACH

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THEN YOU WILL DELIGHT IN G-D - IN THIS WORLD

LIKKUTEI SICHOS, VOL. 30, PG. 125-133
TRANSLATED BY BORUCH MERKUR



[Continued from last week.]

3. We may propose the following explanation of the matter:

By selecting these precise words, “his reward is in this world, **in addition to the reward hidden away for [him in] the World to Come,**” the Rambam is suggesting that there is an essential innovation with regard to the reward for [observing] the Mitzvos of Shabbos, an unprecedented reward, unlike the reward for any other Mitzvos of the Torah.

In his discussion of the reward for [the performance of] Mitzvos, the Rambam explains at length (in the Laws of Repentance [Chapter 9]) that there are two categories of reward: a) “**The final** bestowal of reward for the [performance of] Mitzvos” is “the life of the World to Come,” for only that [manner of] life is befitting as the ultimate reward for the fulfillment of the Torah and Mitzvos [Footnote 24: as he elaborates on in Chapter 8 there]. b) The promise of **material** reward, which is not the final bestowing of reward for the [performance of] Mitzvos. Its entire function is, rather, to facilitate the individual’s fulfillment of the Mitzvos properly (without disturbances), “so that one will not have to be involved all his days in matters of corporeal necessity, but he will have free time to study wisdom and to perform the Mitzva in order to merit the life of the World to Come.”

It is in this respect [i.e., the first category of reward] that the Mitzvos of Shabbos differ from all the other Mitzvos [as Rambam writes]: “tradition has...been explicit in mentioning that his **reward** is in this world, **in addition to the reward hidden away for [him in] the World to Come.**” That is, the reward in this world [for observing the Shabbos] is not like the promise of

material reward (which only entails the removal of the obstruction in order to facilitate the fulfillment of the Mitzvos and etc. properly). Rather, the reward in this world is **in the same manner and classification** as the reward hidden away for the World to Come. Thus, we are speaking about actual reward [and not just the removal of obstructions, etc.]. [Footnote 25: It [i.e., the reward granted in this world for the observance of Shabbos] is also not considered to be the consumption of the dividends (as is the case with regard to the Mitzvos that are between an individual and his friend).]

Thus, Rambam writes, “tradition has already been explicit in mentioning that his reward is in this world, in addition to the reward hidden away for [him in] the World to Come, as it is said, ‘Then you will delight in G-d, etc.’” The latter verse [“Then you will delight, etc.”] serves to emphasize that the reward for keeping Shabbos **in this world** (is not a reward that resembles the promise of material compensation, which is found throughout the entire Torah, rather it) is one that is defined as resembling **the World to Come**. Thus, Rambam quotes the verse, “Then **you will delight in G-d,**” which [describes a reward that] exemplifies and is a semblance of the reward of the World to Come, wherein “**they take pleasure in the ray of the Divine Presence**” (as the Rambam writes with regard to “the good that is hidden away for the righteous...is life in the World to Come” [Laws of Repentance, beginning of Chapter 8], which is the fact that “the righteous reside, etc., and **take pleasure** in the ray of the Divine Presence” [Ibid, Law 2], as it is explained there at length).

Also, the continuation of the verse, which reads, “and I will cause you to ride upon the high places of the earth,” clarifies and emphasizes that this does not

refer to the promise of material reward, “that He will remove from us all those things that deter us from doing it (i.e., the Torah) – for example, illness, war, famine, and the like – and He will bestow upon us all the good things that strengthen our capacity to do Torah – such as, satiety, peace, plentiful silver and gold” [Ibid, Chapter 9]. The promise of these things is categorized as “earth,” i.e., matters pertaining to this physical earth, albeit the perfection of the earth and matters of this world. Whereas, the quality of the reward of “**I will cause you to ride upon the high places of the earth**” surpasses the perfection of the earth (“the high places of the earth”); it is [the reward of] delighting “in G-d,” “pleasure in the ray of the Divine Presence,” which is beyond the boundaries of earth and pleasures of this world, as it is elaborated on in the Laws of Repentance there [Chapter 8:6].

4. According to the above, the reason why Rambam explains the verse here according to its literal meaning, without bringing the teaching of our Sages mentioned above, will be clearly elucidated:

In Tractate Shabbos, the saying, “Whoever keeps the Shabbos,” appears in the course of the section dealing with various advantages (not general advantages of the concept of Shabbos observance, but) of specific aspects of Shabbos: “Whoever partakes of three meals on Shabbos is saved, etc.,” “Whoever delights in the Shabbos is granted his heart’s desire,” “Whoever keeps the Shabbos according to its law, even if he worships idols, etc., is pardoned,” and others of the sort. Thus, the teaching we are dealing with is cited there to clarify a certain reward (“a boundless inheritance”) with regard to a specific aspect of Shabbos (“delighting in the Shabbos”).

However, the Rambam brings this verse at the conclusion and sealing of the entirety of the Laws of Shabbos, for he is describing a **general** concept in the Mitzvos of Shabbos. Thus, Rambam selects terms descriptive of the actions of the person (*maaseh ha’gavra*) (on account of which the reward is received) – “Whoever keeps the Shabbos according to its law, and honors it and delights in it, etc.” (and not just, “delights

in the Shabbos”) – for his intent is with regard to the general point of observing the Shabbos, with all of its details. Rambam, therefore, writes concisely, “tradition has...been explicit in mentioning that his reward is in this world, in addition to the reward hidden away for [him in] the World to Come” (without citing the reward, “he is given a boundless inheritance”), for his intent here is (not to specify a reward, but) to describe the **general** innovation in the reward for keeping Shabbos over the reward for all the other Mitzvos. Namely, that the reward a person receives in this world for keeping Shabbos is a semblance of the reward of the World to Come.

The reason why the Mitzvos of Shabbos are unique, singled out from among all the Mitzvos of the Torah with regard to the fact that their (true) reward is (also) in this world, is because the essential quality of Shabbos (and the sanctity of Shabbos) is itself a semblance of the World to Come.

We may, therefore, assert that it is for this reason that the Rambam is specific in mentioning that “Whoever keeps the Shabbos, etc., and honors it and delights in it **according to his capacity**” (for at first glance, where is the allusion to this detail in **this** verse?): The reason why the Mitzvos of Shabbos are unique, singled out from among all the Mitzvos of the Torah with regard to the fact that their (true) reward is (also) in this world, is because the essential quality of Shabbos (and the sanctity of Shabbos) is [itself] a semblance of the World to Come [see Footnote 32 for sources]. That is to say that this reward [for keeping Shabbos] is considered a natural outcome [of the unique quality of Shabbos]. Thus, when a person unites with the Shabbos, he **automatically** merits “a semblance of the World to Come” **in this world**. It is for this reason that Rambam specifies that one’s reward in this world is dependant upon the fact that the person “keeps the Shabbos according to its law, and honors it

and delights in it according to his capacity,” for this emphasizes that the person has [attained] perfection in the sanctity of Shabbos, both with regard to the object (*cheftza*) of Shabbos – for he observes the Mitzvos of Shabbos in all its details, “he keeps the Shabbos according to its law, and honors it and delights in it” – and also with regard to the subject (*gavra*, the individual) – for he imbues it with all his life’s vitality (“according to his capacity”). [When perfection has been attained in both these respects] then the Shabbos and the individual unite in a complete unity.

[To be continued, be”H]



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May G-d grant that you should be a true inspiration to all your friends and admirers both near and far.

With blessing,

M. Schneerson

‘AND SUDDENLY, THERE BEFORE ME STOOD MOSHIACH, BLOWING A SHOFAR’

*What did the mekubal Rabbi Chaim Vital dream about? What was the big secret that the Alter Rebbe blurted out and why didn't anybody hear him or remember what he said? How will we dance when Moshiach comes? What happened when the Baal Shem Tov came face to face with the sitra achra? * A compilation of short stories about emuna and anticipating Moshiach's coming.*

KOL MEVASER – A VOICE HERALDS

Rabbi Chaim Vital related:

That year (5322-1562) I dreamt that I was standing on the high peak to the west of Tzfas, at the beginning of the mountain in the middle of its two large peaks, which are above the village of Miron, and I heard a voice herald, “Behold, Moshiach comes!”

Then suddenly Moshiach was standing before me blowing a shofar, and thousands and tens of thousands

of people gathered from the Jewish nation. Moshiach said to us, “Come with me and see the vengeance for the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash.”

And we went with him and he fought and smote the goyim in Yerushalayim, and he entered the Beis HaMikdash and also killed those who were in there. Then he commanded all the Jews, saying, “My brothers, purify yourselves and the Beis HaMikdash from the impurity of the blood of the corpses of these

uncircumcised men and the impurity of idol worship that is in it.”

We purified and built the Beis HaMikdash and the Kohen Gadol sacrificed the tamid sacrifice. The Kohen Gadol was in the form of Rabbi Yisroel HaLevi, who is my neighbor. I asked Moshiach, how did a Levi become a Kohen? Moshiach said to me, “That is your mistake, for he is not a Levi but a Kohen.” Then he took a Torah from the sanctuary of the Beis HaMikdash and read from it, and then I woke up.

(based on the Seifer Hachizyonos – Shivchei Rabbi Chaim Vital)

HE KEPT IT SECRET

Once, the Alter Rebbe said a maamer Chassidus and he mentioned the inyan of the keitz and the time Moshiach will come, speedily in our days amen. The Rebbe brought many p'sukim and maamarei Chazal based on which he calculated and concluded that the Geula would come in the year 5603 (1843), except instead of saying that year, which according to the calculation was indeed the year, he suddenly blurted out a completely different year.

He was astonished by the Chassidim's conclusion and didn't accept their view. He did not understand how they could all have agreed that the keitz was in 5603 when the Alter Rebbe said a completely different year!

The Chassidim were astonished since the year the Alter Rebbe said was further off than the year 5603 and naturally, the Chassidim did not want to accept this. So the Chassidim sat and concluded that the year that the Rebbe meant was 5603.

Years went by and the story was passed down through the generations and the famous Chassid, R' Gershon Dovber heard it. He was astonished by the Chassidim's conclusion and didn't accept their view. He did not understand how they could all have agreed that the keitz was in 5603 when the Alter Rebbe said a completely different year!

This Chassid was also a shadar, who would travel to various places to fundraise. He decided that on his journeys he would try to do research to see whether any Chassid knew precisely what the Rebbe had said when he delivered that maamer.

One day, R' Gershon Dovber arrived in Yekaterinislav and he met the rav of the city, R' Dov Zev. When they got around to this topic, R' Dov Zev said what he had heard from his grandfather, who had heard from one of the Chassidim who was present at that maamer and had heard all the calculations that the Rebbe had made based on the p'sukim and maamarei Chazal, and all of them added up to 5603. Except in the end, when the Rebbe had to say the year, he said something entirely different and he even remembered the year that the Rebbe had said but did not dare to reveal it.

That Chassid who remembered the year and kept it to himself merited long life, to the extent that even R' Gershon Dovber met him and asked him to tell him, but the Chassid refused to say.

"I merited long life only because I didn't tell anyone." And so the matter remains a secret until Moshiach comes.

TEST OF EMUNA

The great Maggid of Mezritch said:

Before Moshiach comes, the same scene that took place on Mt. Carmel will take place once again, with Eliyahu HaNavi and the Baal priests. Whereas previously, the fire came down on Eliyahu's altar, before Moshiach comes the fire will come down on the altar of the false priests and not on Eliyahu's altar. And whoever is still not fazed by this and continues to believe in Eliyahu HaNavi, will merit to see the coming of Moshiach.

(from the mashpia R' Chaim Shaul Brook a"h)

EREV SHABBOS AFTER MIDDAY

The tzaddik Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Rimanoov was once in the city of Lvov (Lemberg) to spend Shabbos with his numerous Chassidim who lived there. The tzaddik sat in his room and it was midday on Friday. He called for his attendant and sent him to the marketplace to see whether the townspeople had accepted the Shabbos yet or not.

Some time later, the attendant returned and said, "Rebbe, the stores are still open, the merchants are still involved in their businesses and the customers are running here and there among the stalls."

An hour or so later the Rebbe sent his attendant out again. "Shabbos is approaching," said R' Menachem Mendel, "maybe now they are preparing for its coming."

The attendant returned a second time with the same answer: "They say there is still time left and why should they bring the Shabbos in early."

The sun began to set and a siren was heard announcing the imminent arrival of Shabbos. Instantly, stores were closed, stalls were taken down



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and people rushed hither and thither. The tzaddik said to his attendant, "Like this Erev Shabbos in this town, this is how Moshiach will come. People will be involved in business matters and work when suddenly the shofar will be heard, announcing the Geula."

THIS THING LEARNED, THIS THING PRAYED

One of the times that the Chassid Rabbi Isaac of Homil went to Lubavitch for Shavuot to see his Rebbe, the Tzemach Tzedek, the Rebbe called him to his room and asked him to recite Torah that he had heard from the Alter Rebbe in the name of the Baal Shem Tov.

When R' Isaac left the Rebbe's room his amazement was apparent and whoever crossed his path was swept up in a dance with him and was kissed. This was surprising, for one with such a broad intellect as R' Isaac was not wont to express such emotion.

Nevertheless, nobody dared to ask him for an explanation for his great joy, though all realized that something great lay behind it.

The way it used to be was that when the elder Chassidim of the Tzemach Tzedek came to the Rebbe to Lubavitch they would sit and farbreng together. At the farbrengen, R' Isaac said, "When Moshiach comes, they will put Izel (referring to himself) on the palm of a hand as a little creature and they will say: this thing learned, this thing davened."

THIS IS HOW THEY WILL DANCE

On one of the days of Sheva Brachos following the wedding of the Rebbe Rashab, a seudas mitzva was held in the backyard of his father, the Rebbe Maharash.

The crowd was large. The Rebbe was in elevated spirits and his face

radiated joy. It looked as though the Divine Presence rested upon his face.

The elevated spirit of the Chassidim is hard to describe. At the end of the maamer Chassidus on the pasuk, "Ki Al Kol Kavod Chuppa," which the Rebbe delivered, he danced and then went up the steps of the garden to the porch near his room, from where he watched the Chassidim dancing in dozens of circles.

R' Zalman Aharon, the Rebbe's son, and R' Moshe Aryeh Ginsberg, his son-in-law, who were in his

"Like this Erev Shabbos in this town, this is how Moshiach will come. People will be involved in business matters and work when suddenly the shofar will be heard, announcing the Geula."

presence, said that some time later the Rebbe said to them, "Look, my sons, at how the Chassidim are rejoicing with the simcha shel mitzva. This is how the Jews will dance in the streets when Moshiach comes."

OBTAINING THE KEY OF GEULA

The Alter Rebbe related a frightening story that he heard from the Baal Shem Tov himself in one of his visions after the Baal Shem Tov's passing.

The Baal Shem Tov said that until

he was eighteen years old, Achiya HaShiloni would come down from heaven and learn with him. Then he merited to be the student of Moshiach himself.

When he was 13, he was taught by heaven all the holy names and their alternates, except for one name that he was not taught. The Baal Shem Tov asked his teacher why he wasn't taught this holy name, and he was told that he too did not know the secret of that name, since heaven had given it over to the Samech-Mem himself.

Why was this done? Because when Hashem wanted to send the Samech-Mem to destroy the Beis HaMikdash, the Samech-Mem refused to go down until he was given this ineffable name as a pledge, so that no man would be able to rebuild it, being that the Geula depended on this name.

The Baal Shem Tov, however, did not give up, and for many years toiled to extract this name from the Samech-Mem in order to hasten the Geula. However, from heaven he was warned that many g'dolei Yisroel had tried to extract his name but were harmed in the process. The Baal Shem Tov persisted and said he was not afraid of anything but Hashem Himself.

After prodigious effort and lofty kavanos, the Baal Shem Tov succeeded in bringing the Samech-Mem before him. The Samech-Mem was irate and yelled, "You putrid drop! I was not in this world until now except for two times, during the destruction of the first and second Battei Mikdash. How dare you disturb me to come down a third time into this lowly world?"

Said the Baal Shem Tov, "I fear nothing except Hashem Himself," and he succeeded in extracting the information.

(Yagdil Torah)

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DEFINING SHLICHUS: SHIFTING THE FOCUS FROM THE FRAMEWORK TO THE FIELD

Instead of focusing on the framework, we should be focusing on the work and the content that one puts into it. And when the nature of the work is spreading the wellsprings of Chassidus and the content is all the sichos and horaos of the Rebbe, including and especially the final horaos from the Kinus HaShluchim 5752, this is definitely a shlichus.

ARE YOU SHLUCHIM?

At the Chai Elul farbrengen in 5734 (1974), the Rebbe MH”M suddenly announced that dollars would be distributed to be given to tz’daka and they would be given out by the tankistin (bachurim and men who traveled on mitzva tanks during the summer on the streets of New York and enabled Jews to do mitzvos, the Rebbe’s mitvzaim).

When those responsible for organizing the tanks approached the Rebbe and wanted to receive bundles of dollars for distribution, the Rebbe asked them whether they were tankistin. In

other words, did they personally go on the tanks.

I remember that this was regarded as highly surprising at the time, for these men had worked for months to organize the tanks, and it was thanks to them that the tanks went out each day, well supplied. Why shouldn’t they be counted among the tankistin?

With his question, the Rebbe was making his definition of a “tankist” quite clear. A tankist is a Chassid who personally goes on a tank to enable Jews to do mitzvos.

Fourteen years later, during the Kinus HaShluchim of 5748, the Rebbe

said there would be a special distribution of kuntreisim just for the shluchim. During the distribution, there were people who stood in line to get a kuntres whom the Rebbe declined to give. The Rebbe asked, “Are you shluchim?”

Those who were there know that the people who approached the Rebbe weren’t just Chassidim who were businessmen who wanted a kuntres from the Rebbe; these were Chassidim who served as rabbanim of large k’hillos, Chassidim who had been sent by the Rebbe decades prior to a wilderness and established flourishing communities. How surprising it was that the Rebbe did not consider them as shluchim!

Naturally, once the Rebbe refused to give kuntreisim to these Chassidim, the members of Merkos L’Inyanei Chinuch and the Rebbe’s secretaries did not dare to ask for a kuntres. This is despite their devotion to the shluchim, 24 hours a day, including organizing the Kinus HaShluchim!

WHAT IS A SHLIACH?

In the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Shlach 5743 (Hisvaaduyos vol. 3, p. 1649) the Rebbe says that a shliach is

someone who is sent out of his four cubits. This is how the Rebbe puts it:

Obviously, as long as he is in his four cubits, since this is his r'shus (private domain), you cannot call this shlichus and hafatza, etc. Especially, when according to halacha, a person's r'shus is considered like his own hand, and regarding "his hand" you certainly can't say there's any inyan of shlichus or hafatza.

It is also obvious that even after going out of his four cubits and conquering another place so that it becomes part of his r'shus, after this place becomes part of his r'shus, then he is sent away even further, and so on. Because once this place becomes part of his r'shus, then the inyan of hafatza does not apply to this place any longer, and therefore, there must be the inyan of hafatza to a place that is more distant.

In this sicha, the Rebbe clearly defines shlichus and who is a shliach. Real shlichus is when you constantly go from strength to strength and are not satisfied with the existing mosdos and activities, but you go and conquer additional territory. If the shliach succeeded in transforming his neighborhood into a Lubavitcher neighborhood, then he has to begin working on other neighborhoods and spreading the wellsprings of Toras HaChassidus there too.

A shliach who established a Chabad community, and instead of moving on to other neighborhoods decides to concentrate on the Chabad community he founded, to develop it and its mosdos, can be a distinguished rav and leader of a community, but not a shliach.

This is why on that one occasion that the Rebbe distributed kuntreisim only to the shluchim (unlike the years that followed when the Rebbe gave out to one and all, shluchim and Anash), the Rebbe only gave it to those Chassidim who did shlichus in the way

the Rebbe defines it. This meant they didn't rest on their laurels but went out to conquer new territory.

This explains an interesting thing that happened in 5748. That year, the Rebbe gave grants to the shluchim but emphasized that these grants were only for shluchim and not for those who run mosdos. As for the shluchim who received these grants, the Rebbe specified that these grants were for debts for projects done in recent years, not to pay off old debts.

A shliach who established a Chabad community, and instead of moving on to other neighborhoods decides to concentrate on the Chabad community he founded, to develop it and its mosdos, can be a distinguished rav and leader of a community, but not a shliach.

Again, we see that a shliach is someone who goes from strength to strength and adds more activities and additional mosdos. As soon as he decides to focus on the existing mosdos, he becomes a menahel of a mosad and is no longer a shliach.

MECHANECH OR SHLIACH?

If we follow this line of reasoning, then those who go somewhere where there is a Chassidische k'hilla with active mosdos, in order to be a rav or teacher

or mashpia, are not shluchim. Their work can be vital and useful, but what is the difference between them and someone who takes a similar position in Crown Heights or Kfar Chabad? Both have difficult jobs and their z'chus is great, but they are not shluchim.

And it's not the distance from Chabad communities that defines whether you are a shliach but the conditions of the place and the manner of spreading Yiddishkeit and the wellsprings of Chassidus. The fact that a person lives far from his family doesn't automatically endow him with the title of shliach. This is especially so when in recent years many shluchim have established empires and their children can live at home, and sometimes the living conditions in these places are more attractive than in Crown Heights!

All this in no way contradicts the point the Rebbe makes repeatedly in his sichos that every Jew is a shliach wherever he is and he is obligated to spread the Rebbe's horaos in his environment. This is because the title "shliach" is also used as a borrowed term. This is similar to the word "tzaddik," which is used in Chazal and brought in halacha as referring to one whose merits are greater than their sins. Yet we know that the real definition of "tzaddik" is someone who has completely eradicated his yetzer ha'ra.

So using "shliach" as a borrowed term means any Jew who spreads the wellsprings, but in order to be called a shliach in the pure sense of the word, you have to be genuinely involved in shlichus, i.e., 24-hours-a-day in developing and expanding activities to spread the wellsprings, without a moment's rest.

A SHLIACH IS UPDATED BY THE ONE WHO SENT HIM

All the abovementioned definitions regarding the **manner** of shlichus also apply to the **content** of the shlichus. A shliach must be the extension of the meshaleiach, to bring the Rebbe's

message to his city and country. In the first year of his shlichus, the shliach worked according to instructions he heard before he left on shlichus, but in subsequent years he came back to the Rebbe and heard further instructions and updates.

If a shliach wants to maintain his title, he has to keep abreast of the Rebbe's new instructions and act accordingly. For example, a Chassid

who was sent on shlichus in the 50's, who for some reason doesn't work on the ten mitzvaim which the Rebbe announced at the end of the 60's and the beginning of the 70's, loses his title of shliach.

By the same token, if a shliach decides to work on only some of the mitzvaim that he thinks are most suitable for his place, neglecting others, he too loses the title of shliach.

As the Rebbe said in a sicha at the Kinus HaShluchim, on Parshas Toldos 5744 (*Hisvaaduyos* vol. 1, p. 521, edited):

“Care is required so that the shliach does not veer from his shlichus (in accordance with the desires of the one who sent him), for when he veers from his shlichus his existence as a shliach is nullified, and obviously this is true with respect to the nullification of his



metzius to become the metzius of the one who sent him.”

Since the last time we heard the Rebbe speak about the role of shluchim was at the Kinus HaShluchim 5752, all shluchim with no exception must update their shlichus in accordance with this fundamental sicha that was entirely dedicated to defining shlichus today.

In that sicha, the Rebbe established that the main avoda of shlichus is “to prepare oneself and one’s environment to greet Moshiach,” and that all details of shlichus must be permeated with this point. Therefore, it is possible to have a shliach who lives far away, who devotedly spreads the wellsprings, but loses the title of shliach because he doesn’t spread the Besuras HaGeula and doesn’t teach inyanei Moshiach and Geula!

SHLICHUS IN A NON-CHABAD MOSAD

Let us go back to that distribution of kuntreisim in 5748. Although the Rebbe limited the distribution to shluchim, the Rebbe also gave kuntreisim to Chassidim who were not recognized by the Chabad establishment as shluchim. They officially served as rabbanim of shuls in non-Chabad communities but they actually ran everything as a Lubavitcher would.

Some people were surprised, as they assumed that shlichus, by definition, means working within Chabad mosdos, and that even if a Chassid spread the wellsprings like any other shliach, if he was not operating within a Lubavitch framework, he was not considered a shliach.

However, those who studied what the Rebbe said about shlichus understood that this was not just an isolated event, but represents a clearly defined approach. When the Rebbe sent shluchim to Eretz Yisroel in 5736-8, he wrote them a “general letter” in 5739 defining what he considered the order

of priorities in the jobs they would fill. This is how the Rebbe put it (*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 24, p. 392):

1. All those suited for this, at least if they put in the requisite effort, certainly already worked on receiving smicha yoreh yoreh yadin yadin, and at least they should work and continue with this until completion with alacrity from today onwards.

2. In continuation from the above, those suited to it and those who want to try, should strive in the field of

Here we see the Rebbe’s approach to shlichus: the Rebbe does not see shlichus as a means to aggrandize the name of the official Chabad movement, but as a means to spread the wellsprings of Chassidus in order to hasten the revelation of Moshiach.

rabbanus and dayanus, etc., for this takes precedence over the items to follow.

3. After this, precedence is given to efforts in existing Chabad mosdos in Eretz Yisroel and in founding new ones in places that are suitable and that need them.

4. Settling into the field of chinuch al taharas ha’kodesh in the appropriate mosdos – any mosdos, even if they are not Chabad.

5. Settling, as mentioned, in mosdos that are not of chinuch, but they should be al taharas ha’kodesh.

In this letter, the Rebbe clearly delineates the order of preference in shlichus: first choice is rabbanus and dayanus. This is despite the fact that in order to be a rav or dayan in Eretz Yisroel you have to be part of the official system there, which has nothing to do with Lubavitch. The Rebbe puts as second, working in Chabad mosdos, but if that is difficult, the Rebbe gives another option, choice number three is work in the field of education, even in non-Chabad mosdos! Level four is working in mosdos kodesh though not in the field of education, and there as well the Rebbe does not limit the work to Chabad mosdos.

Here we see the Rebbe’s approach to shlichus: the Rebbe does not see shlichus as a means to aggrandize the name of the official Chabad movement, but as a means to spread the wellsprings of Chassidus in order to hasten the revelation of Moshiach.

Therefore, on the one hand you could have a Chassid who works in a Chabad organization but since he doesn’t work 24-hours-a-day on spreading the wellsprings, the Rebbe does not consider him a shliach. On the other hand, you can have a Chassid who does not work for a Chabad organization but since he uses every moment to spread the wellsprings, the Rebbe considers him a shliach (and gives him a kuntres that only shluchim get).

THE SOLUTION FOR THOSE LOOKING FOR A SHLICHUS POSITION

This understanding of shlichus, based on what the Rebbe said, can make it far easier on the many young couples who want to go on shlichus. Many people are finding it difficult to get a shlichus in an official Chabad framework. If they learned what the Rebbe says about shlichus and discover

that the title “shliach” is given to whomever devotedly spreads the wellsprings, even not within a Chabad framework, many more opportunities become available to them.

To start with, there are positions of rabbanus and dayanus, especially in Eretz Yisroel, where the rav of a city has great authority and he is able to spread the wellsprings of Chassidus with far greater latitude than if he ran a Chabad house in that same place. (And as mentioned above, being a rav and dayan takes precedence over working in a Chabad mosad!) And then there are all the positions al taharas ha’kodesh that enables a person to spread the wellsprings of Chassidus.

It should be pointed out that with the Rebbe Rayatz, he himself chose the shluchim and told them where to go, and occasionally he told them to move elsewhere. And in the letters he wrote the shluchim he would use the title “shliach.” But with the Rebbe it was different. The Rebbe set it up so that the people made their own shlichus suggestions and looked for a place for themselves. There were very few people whom the Rebbe personally chose as shluchim.

Lately the note from the Kinus HaShluchim 5748 has been publicized in which the Rebbe writes explicitly that he will not say who is a shliach. Even in the wording of the letters the Rebbe wrote to the shluchim, the usual descriptive title is, “osek b’tzarchei

tzibbur,” and not the title of shliach! This Rebbe used this title also for non-Lubavitch askanim.

SHLIACH AT THAT TIME

Understanding this enables every Chassid to fulfill the Rebbe’s horaa that every Jew in our generation must be a shliach to spread the wellsprings of Torah and Chassidus. If he is involved in avodas ha’kodesh, even if it’s in a Chabad mosad, and he uses his position as well as his free time to spread the wellsprings, he is a shliach in the full sense of the word.

And if he is a businessman who uses his lunch break to spread the wellsprings, he is a shliach, at least at that time.

Therefore, instead of focusing on the **framework**, we should be focusing on the **work** and the content that one puts into it. And when the nature of the work is spreading the wellsprings of Chassidus and the content is all the sichos and horaos of the Rebbe, including and especially the final horaos from the Kinus HaShluchim 5752, this is definitely a shlichus.

Perhaps this is the place to say that we never heard the Rebbe write or say “head shliach.” And the Rebbe did not differentiate between the place or framework of the shlichus. The Rebbe did not differentiate between the shluchim except, we find in the Rebbe’s sichos that he singles out those who are

further away and says that the meshaleiach is there in a stronger way.

The Rebbe enumerated five levels in the bittul of the shliach to the one who sent him (sicha Toldos 5751, *Hisvaaduyos* p. 331, edited):

There are various levels in shlichus, and they are, in general, from lower to higher, as follows:

- 1. The action of the shliach is attributed to the meshaleiach but not the shliach’s power of action and his other powers.**
- 2. The shliach’s power of action is battul to the meshaleiach but not his other powers.**
- 3. The shliach’s entire being, all his powers, his longing, desire, intellect, and middos, are completely battul to the meshaleiach to the point that –**
- 4. He is “like the meshaleiach and furthermore –**
- 5. Mamash.”**

This is what establishes the standing of a shliach, and as the Rebbe puts it in that same sicha: the loftiest shluchim and the lowest shluchim.

Our N’siim say that Chassidus is not the inheritance of a few people or a particular party, but belongs to all Jews. For this reason, each of us is obligated to spread the wellsprings of Chassidus, whether within a Chabad framework or other frameworks. Sometimes it’s easier to bring the message when not in a Chabad framework, because it doesn’t scare people off with the preconception that it obligates people to change their lives, etc.

The Rebbe has given us the shlichus of spreading the Besuras HaGeula. This Besura is not just for Lubavitchers, for Moshiach is coming to redeem *all* the Jewish people and the entire world. So no matter what situation we are in, we must spread the Rebbe’s prophecy and the Besuras HaGeula until we merit the hisgalus of the Rebbe MH”M immediately.

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*A new era began in which Mother Russia took complete control of the lives of her citizens. * With greatness of soul combined with cleverness and life experience, R' Chaikel worked to save lives. He took care of the material livelihoods and spiritual sustenance of the Chassidim and saved innocent people from falling into the net of the Yevsektzia's informers.*

PAINFUL CHANGES

As I related before, after the revolution the government nationalized everybody's property. From that point on, all property and manufactured goods belonged exclusively to Mother Russia. The citizens, especially the farmers, ceased toiling and manufacturing since there was no benefit in doing so. Consequently, production dropped and the Russian economy went through a significant downturn. There was no food to be had and people cried out for bread.

Due to the critical economic situation, in 1921 the government adopted the NEP policy, which allowed individual initiative with certain limitations. The Russian

economy recovered somewhat and enterprising individuals even began to grow wealthy. However, this threatened the communist ideal of equality and within the communist leadership there was opposition to this policy.

In 1924 with the death of Lenin, NEP died too and the government declared war against the wealthy. From then on, any independent merchant was a bourgeois and considered an enemy of the people. With this ideology, Stalin murdered eight million of his people.

The communists also wanted to change the order of creation. Rather than declare Saturday or Sunday as days off, as the rest of the world does, they said there would be a day

off after five days of work, no matter what day of the week it was. For religious Jews, this was a nightmare. Many were forced to appear at work on Shabbos in order not to be fired and become parasites who live off others, which would make them candidates for all the punishments in the GPU's books.

In 1924, the Rebbe Rayatz saw that NEP wouldn't last long, and through the Joint he arranged the acquisition of weaving and sewing machines for Anash to enable them to work from their homes for the government. This arrangement solved the problem of Shabbos observance, enabling Chassidim to support themselves in a kosher way.

They received the raw material from the government factories at a certain weight and out of that they were expected to manufacture, to sew or weave a certain amount of a particular product (sacks, socks, sweaters, etc.) and send them back to the factory. After the Rebbe Rayatz left Russia, he managed to send the Lubavitchers in Russia another fifteen machines that he got from the Joint.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTOR, CHASSIDIC ASKAN

In the middle of the NEP years, a bank was founded in Russia in

which you paid ten rubles in order to get the right to buy raw material from the government to manufacture clothes or other products. The finished goods were returned to the government office and you were paid for your work.

My father, who was an energetic and seasoned worker, took advantage of this situation and despite his young age, soon became a successful and prosperous businessman. He was living in Chichatchov at the time, and he supported his widowed mother and younger siblings.

When the government ceased its NEP plan, my father was in danger. He was afraid to walk around and fled to Leningrad. There he changed work and officially became a plain worker and a “kosher” citizen. With Hashem’s help, my father managed to obtain machines and raw material, and it didn’t take long before he became a government contractor.

As soon as he arrived in Leningrad and became aware of the parnasa problems that Anash were experiencing, mostly because of Shabbos observance, he did all he could to help them. He used his developed business sense and the special pleasure he took in helping others. My father prided himself on never having received something for nothing from anyone. He obtained everything thanks to his own labor. He was blessed to be a giver and not a taker, and he provided employment to those who had weaving machines.

More and more Lubavitchers wanted to use this tactic in order to be able to keep Shabbos. However, in order to receive a machine like that in your house and to get goods on contract, you needed special connections. My father had excellent connections with managers of factories and he bribed them with

money and was able to supply many of Anash with work.

The circumstances forced many people to turn to the black market to supplement their income. They made more items than the factory estimated and they illegally sold the surplus. The extra money was desperately needed and the Chassidim were happy, but this sort of business entailed great danger and whoever was caught with these stolen goods was in danger of being shot to death.

My father advised him to take a small suitcase and put in a few clothes, his tallis and t’fillin, and something to learn and to get on the first train out of Leningrad to run for his life.

SURVIVAL FARBRENGEN

Another point to my father’s credit was the Kiddush that he arranged every Shabbos in his mother’s home when he was a bachur and which he continued to do after he married. From 1928, after the Rebbe Rayatz left Russia, the Chassid R’ Folik Gurary (brother of the Rebbe’s brother-in-law Rashag) volunteered his house, which was relatively spacious, to the Chassidim. That is where all the meetings and secret gatherings in connection with the support of Tomchei T’mimim and Beis Chayeinu took place.

Every Shabbos a Kiddush took place in his home that served primarily as an occasion for moral support. The Chassidim talked and counseled one another about both material and spiritual parnasa. They guided one another about how to save their children from the public schools. These farbrengens continued in Folik’s house until the NKVD arrested him and he did not survive the seven levels of hell he underwent.

After R’ Gurary’s arrest, my father who was then a bachur, undertook the arranging of the Kiddushim that took place, from then on, at his mother’s house. A secret minyan was even held there in which they read the Torah every Shabbos.

These Kiddushim that he held served a double function, as he said many times that they “served as a source of both material and spiritual sustenance.” First of all, for many of the Chassidim who came to farbreng, there was simply nothing to eat at home, and the farbrengen was an opportunity for them to break their fast in a dignified manner. Secondly, during the farbrengen, people learned who needed a machine, who lacked merchandise, and who had merchandise and was looking for a place to sell it, and this is how my father could help them.

As far as spiritual parnasa, the great Chassidim came and they continued to demand avoda, hiskashrus, mesirus nefesh, and maamud. These farbrengens strengthened the Chassidim and the connection between them and the Rebbe and amongst themselves.

LIFE UNDERGROUND

Even after he married, my father continued to hold Kiddushim in his mother’s house, because in his own house there was greater fear of being

caught by the authorities. He was a known person and was under the cursed eye of the NKVD, whereas his mother was widowed and older and lived alone and was not involved in anything suspicious, so it was easier to avoid spying eyes.

The communists weren't sure of themselves and feared rebellion, therefore, one of their laws stated that gatherings of more than three people in one house were illegal. People feared to congregate and daven but my father faced the danger and started a minyan in his mother's house to read the Torah on Shabbos. Despite the fear that the concierge would tattle, they also managed to daven together.

After the communists nationalized everybody's property and decided on absolute equality, they took houses away from their owners and assigned one room only to every family, no matter the size of the family. The one room was the bedroom, dining room, and hallway. The kitchen, with a kerosene stove that had one flame, was communal for all tenants in the house. Understandably, under such conditions it was difficult to hide what you were doing from the neighbors.

My mother told me that the fear at this time was so great that they put the mezuzos up within the house so they would not be seen on the outside, thus testifying that a religious Jew lived there, and so that anti-Semites and criminals wouldn't steal them. Even within the house, they made a hole in the wall so that the mezuzah didn't stand out and wouldn't give away its owner.

She also said that after their wedding, right after she lit the Shabbos candles, my father and mother would close all the windows and shutters in the house because they were afraid that a neighbor would come in, even innocently, and

would see the lit Shabbos candles. They would leave the house and go to her grandfather Rabbi Yehoshua Nimotin's house and spend a few hours with him.

She spoke yearningly about those hours at her grandfather, describing how they were hours of spiritual pleasure, for they would hear stories from the elder Chassidim and of days gone by.

OY REBBE

One time when my parents went to visit our grandfather, they found him sitting bent over the table wearing an expensive fur coat that he had gotten as a gift when he accepted the rabbanus in Beshenkowitz. (He had another coat made of leather with a lamb's wool lining.) It was freezing in his house and he was sitting near a small lamp wrapped in his fur, holding a postcard (see photo) and crying. He was so absorbed in the postcard that he didn't realize they had entered.

After a while, he noticed my parents. He looked at them with reddened eyes and explained that this postcard had come from the Rebbe in Riga. "I was reminded," he said, "of how the Rebbe was born and how he was pampered in his father's house like a prince. I was there at his bris and I was there at his bar mitzva. I saw him when he was appointed menahel of Tomchei T'mimim and was present when he became Rebbe. And now," and my grandfather began crying again, "he has to be in exile with the Yekkes." (Or the turkeys, as the Rebbe called the modern Jews of Latvia, as they prided themselves on their dress and preened with fancy collars and cuffs as was the custom at that time.)

"He is alone in exile and none of us is with him. Can you imagine what pity I have for him? I know the k'hilla in Riga from when I was

a shadar for the Rebbe Maharash. The Rebbe excels in *breitkheit* and expansiveness while the k'hilla in Riga is known for its *farkvetchkheit*, with its frugalness. The Rebbe is not made for their vessels; he is constrained, limited. What a pity! What sorrow!"

My grandfather also said that they found other writings of the Charson Manuscripts after the Rebbe left Russia. Most of the Chassidim were afraid to keep the letters in their houses because of the Yevsektzia and its lackeys. "But I," said my grandfather, "am not afraid of them. I'm ninety years old and what can they do to me already? I took the letters and over months, I have found various ways of sending them, one by one, to the Rebbe. In this postcard, the Rebbe is acknowledging that he received them."

On that occasion, my grandfather said that most of the postcards from the Rebbe with instructions for the Chassidim came to his address.

ENLISTING INFORMERS

In those days the Angels of Destruction, members of the NKVD and Yevsektzia, tried to enlist informers into their ranks from among the Chassidim themselves. They were sure that this would make it far easier for them to gather information about the Chassidim, to know where they farbrenged, where they learned, who were the askanim, and who had money.

These evil people, may their names be erased, chose simple people for this kind of work, people they could convince to work for them. They sweet-talked them and "only" asked them to tell them who spoke with whom in shul, who participated in farbrengens, and where the next farbrenging would be held. Most of these informers did

what they were asked innocently or under terrible pressure and it was hard for the Chassidim to ferret

them out.

Despite his young age, many of Anash respected my father's opinion.

PRAYER OVER A MACHINE

When my father's future father-in-law had to close his restaurant and remained without a source of a livelihood and his family was starving, my father gave him money to buy a weaving machine, without the family knowing about it. He also made all the arrangements so that he and his children would get work from the government bank. My grandfather together with my uncle Refael, my uncle Yosef and my mother, all worked day and night in order to support themselves.

When they bought the weaving machine, which of course was a hand-operated machine, they had to build a table to put near it, on which they would arrange and place the spools of thread and replace them with new, full ones.

My father related emotionally that my grandfather built a table with tears. With every nail he banged in he prayed, requested and said, with tears coursing down his cheeks, "Nobody should, G-d forbid, use this machine on Shabbos." The winds of heresy that blew and the influence of the Russian street with all the fear, the pressure and terror of the previous years had made my grandfather apprehensive lest one of his children desecrate the Shabbos. Despite their poor financial state, it seemed that Shabbos was his only concern.

One thing I can testify to, said my father, that a Chassidic Jew like this wasn't to be found even in those days. He lived in Leningrad from 5666 (1906) until he was shot by the Yevsektzia. Being in Leningrad, the city of culture, had no influence on him. He acted in Petersburg (which is Leningrad) as he did in Lubavitch. He lived Lubavitch, he breathed Lubavitch, and was sustained by the Rebbe's words.

A Chassidic Jew like this wasn't to be found even in those days. He lived in Leningrad from 5666 until he was shot by the Yevsektzia. Being in Leningrad, the city of culture, had no influence on him. He acted in Petersburg as he did in Lubavitch. He lived Lubavitch, he breathed Lubavitch, and was sustained by the Rebbe's words.

They would consult with him about the numerous problems that plagued them in their endless dealings with the authorities. He was instrumental in saving many Chassidim from the clutches of the NKVD, who tried to catch them in their net.

When I was a talmid in Tomchei T'mimim-770 I felt that one of these Chassidim who had come from Russia was trying to be friendly with me even though there was no family connection between us. I didn't understand why he was going out of his way to befriend me until one time he said that he still owed my father for saving him from the NKVD.

When I asked my father he told me that R' S. was a genuine Chassid and mekushar to the Rebbe, but was quiet and weak and learned and davened on his own, and was not too involved in community activities.

One time, on Erev Yom Kippur, when my father was walking down the street, he met S's wife and he went over to wish her a g'mar chasima tova, as is customary. S's wife was happy to see him because she wanted to tell him something privately. She asked to speak to him on a side street.

She told my father that for weeks someone had been coming to their house, apparently to talk about the manufacture of undershirts and socks they produced. At first, the person came once a month, but gradually his visits became more frequent. The man closed himself off in a room with her husband, and when he left, her husband looked worried. She tried to get her husband to tell her what the stranger wanted and what was bothering him but he didn't say a word. She saw how much he suffered and how his health was being adversely affected and so she asked whether my father could help

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יחי אדונינו מורנו ורבנו מלך המשיח לעולם ועד

GROWING UP AS SHLUCHIM

*Shluchim often tell their story, but for some reason their children are left out of the picture. However, children are not merely “the children of the shluchim,” but shluchim in their own right, who are mashpia, who teach, and who handle various challenges. * Rabbi Shlomo Chaim Lisson, shliach in Chaifa, tells a touching story of the young shluchim he is raising in his home. * The soldiers of the next generation.*

I have the privilege of being the Rebbe's shliach in the Karmel HaMaaravi neighborhood of Chaifa. This is an upscale neighborhood. It has five thousand residents who are primarily professionals. They all make nice livings. During work hours, it's hard to find anybody just walking down the street. You have to make an appointment with those you want to meet.

We rented an apartment in the neighborhood and aside from the usual work a shliach does, I am the rav of a shul. The outreach work is done by me, as well as by my wife and children. Yes, they are shluchim, in the full sense of the word, and I'd like to talk about them, particularly about my oldest son, eight-year-old Shneur, for the others are still little.

Shluchim are raised from a young age. Despite their age they are already enlisted and do the work, whether in shul or in the neighborhood in general. The children's shlichus is to be “candles



that illuminate.” They are candles that illuminate their environment not only with their activities, but just by being there, in their behavior. Not only in what they do, but also in what they don't do. And the kids know this good and well.

Shneur'ke's main domain is the shul. He feels a tremendous responsibility towards his shlichus. He knows that he represents the Rebbe there. He sits and davens from beginning to end, out loud, being a role model to his brothers. When we occasionally go to Kfar Chabad or B'nei Brak for Shabbos, he immediately feels that his special role is missing.

(I remember one time we were in Kfar Chabad on Shabbos and Shneur sat and davened. Suddenly I noticed people watching him curiously. As in every shul, children walked around and played, while he sat and davened from beginning to end, word by word, out loud.)

When a new person comes to shul, he immediately brings them a kippa and shows them where we are up to. Every Shabbos, after the davening, he goes on his own to shake hands with everyone and wish them, “Shabbat shalom.” He gives them a copy of *Sichat HaGeula* and *Sichat HaShavua*.

Every Shabbos at the third meal, I review a sicha of the Rebbe. I often ask Shneur to sing a niggun. He opens his mouth and people melt. “Keili Ata,” “Tzama Lecha Nafshi,” niggunim of tshuva in Elul. People ask Shneur to

sing and then say how their heart goes out with pleasure.

I remember how at first, it bothered people that the children came to shul and walked around there. One person told me, "At our shul there are no children; it's just for adults." If a child cried during davening, as children do, they would shush him. Today, if we aren't there for Shabbos, people ask where the children are.

Shlichus is not just in shul, of course, but daily, on the streets of the neighborhood. We do not allow the children to go to the park or play on the street themselves, without our supervision. We cannot allow them to be friendly with the neighborhood children just like that. When Shneur meets children, even those much older than him, it's amazing to see how quickly he takes the lead. He tells them about the Rebbe, about brachos, about various concepts that fill his world. When children ask, "Do you really live here in this neighborhood?" he proudly responds, "Yes, we are shluchim of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. We are on the job!"

Five-year-old Blumie also makes friends easily and she tells them why we, chareidim, live in this neighborhood.

I teach in the Chabad Talmud Torah in Chaifa, and sometimes, when I hear from parents that they are afraid of sending their children downstairs, I advise them from my experience, "If your child is in the position of mashpia, then you won't have problems." And Shneur really does speak the whole time while the other kids listen to him.

Once a week, we have a program for children in grades one to three at the shul. This class was the idea of one of the mothers from the parents' committee. After preparing for the class, Shneur sits down and tells the children a story and they listen to him avidly.

People sometimes walk into the shul in the middle and are so touched by what they see. Some tell me that it

reminds them of their yeshiva days in Russia or Hungary. "That's just how we sat, the melamed in the center and all the children around him, eagerly listening to what he had to say."

Their inner strength and fortitude is expressed in what they eat too. The fact that Shneur checks out the hechsher of a candy is not surprising. Our young shliach knows that he doesn't enjoy all the things that other children do. He can't eat just any candy, and when guests come with a box of chocolate that isn't kosher, he knows that it's not for him. He knows that we are different

Every week, when we get the Beis Moshiach magazine, we look through it together and I show him the shluchim or the pictures of 770. He looks at the pictures of the bachurim and says, "Look Abba, see how much light they have on their faces."

than everybody. We are the Rebbe's shluchim.

They once gave out bags of candy in shul that had gum that wasn't kosher. One of the children teased Shneur, while chewing the gum, saying, "See what you're missing?" And the little shliach proudly said, "We are Chabadnikim and don't put something into our mouths unless it's Badatz." He has shlichus in his blood and from the outset knows he is different.

Shabbos is a special day. The nature of the day gives it a different

atmosphere. Walking down the street while wearing Shabbos clothes, the children and I, on our way to shul, draw attention. And when Shneur wishes, "Shabbat shalom" to passersby, that alone makes it all worthwhile.

We have many guests each Shabbos, young men from the neighborhood or families. The Shabbos meal takes hours. We teach our guests Chabad niggunim, and the music pours forth, as well as heart-to-heart talks, deep into the night...

Then it's three-year-old Yossi's turn. He also knows what it means to be a shliach and he has a job to do, to give *Tanyas* out to the guests. Between the fish and the soup, we learn the daily *Tanya*. Yossi feels it is his responsibility to distribute the *Tanyas*, and then, when we're done, to collect them.

During the davening, he sits on the stairs that go up to the aron kodesh with a siddur in his hand, and he begins to rock with his eyes closed. This is what he sees his older brother doing.

Downstairs from us lives a district judge. She's an intellectual who is a member of high society in Chaifa. Among her close friends is Amram Mitzna, our former mayor. He often comes to visit the family on Friday night. The judge tells me how they listen to the singing coming from our apartment. "We sit mesmerized and every Friday night we sit and wait to hear you," she once said.

I know that the neighbors look at my children with a judging eye and feel that they get the best of the best. The judge once told my wife, "They dress so nicely, like princes." She always enjoys watching them play with each other, patiently and with such harmony.

We know that the Rebbe making us shluchim is a daily gift despite the great difficulties. And there are difficulties. First of all, we are alone. We live far from religious neighborhoods and far from the children's classmates and they have nowhere to go after school. In general, there are hardly any children

in the neighborhood. They often ask for friends and only occasionally are they allowed to visit friends. That which is taken for granted by other children is considered a special treat.

Since they are mostly at home, we need to occupy them so they aren't bored. They need activities, and we provide them with books, games, and various duties.

It's really difficult to be alone. There isn't another Chabad couple in the neighborhood whom we can meet with on Shabbos, or someone who can provide moral support. The nearest Chabad family is an hour and a half's walk away. Feeling lonely is not only the province of those shluchim who live in far-off countries. Sometimes it can affect you when you live in a large Jewish neighborhood!

People who are mekurav and begin to get involved are always interested in knowing how we can raise children here without friends. "And how are your children happy and singing all the time? How do you do it?" We always answer that we are the Rebbe's shluchim to ignite other Jewish sparks and this gives us the strength. We are

here and have no desire to leave.

Shneur has sometimes asked why he has no friends in the neighborhood. How come there aren't other Lubavitchers? "I wish I could have a Lubavitcher friend to play with!"

The feeling of personal responsibility is truly special and too mature for someone his age, and this is why, whenever we do anything, we do it together. Shneur takes on many things because he feels that he couldn't manage otherwise.

We try to bring a Torah atmosphere into the house. We hold many shiurim at home intentionally, so that the children absorb an atmosphere of Torah. In addition, the children are involved in organizing the shiurim. That day, everything revolves around the shiur. We consult and discuss it with them and the entire family feels like one unit around the activities we do.

There's no question that one who goes on shlichus and raises children there has to know this isn't easy. Shlichus is not only for the outside but **first and foremost in the home**. Parents must be role models, constantly.

As I said, Shneur misses having friends but he consoles himself by saying, "I know it's hard for us, but our job is to prepare the world for Geula. We cannot live in B'nei Brak."

As a real shliach of the Rebbe, the topic of Geula burns in his bones. It's not just the Yechi yarmulke that he wears but everything he does.

Every week, when we get the *Beis Moshiach* magazine, we look through it together and I show him the shluchim or the pictures of 770. He looks at the pictures of the bachurim and says, "Look Abba, see how much light they have on their faces."

Every video he watches, the niggunim he sings, revolve around the Rebbe and around Geula. He wants to see every Rebbe video and he is frustrated over never having been to Beis Chayeinu, even once.

"Abba, I want to go with you to the Rebbe," he asked me recently, a bunch of times, before I left for the Kinus HaShluchim. This is a chinuch to yearn for 770 and everything it represents for the Chassidim in general and for the shluchim in particular.

Ashreinu!



‘MY SOUL SIMPLY CRIED OUT’

BY NOSSON AVROHOM

*He began his life in Chaifa in a traditional family but over the years he went through a lot of hardships that included a series of incredible miracles in Colombia and the U.S. * The turning point came when he stood at the subway station and had to decide whether to go to Crown Heights or not. * The fascinating story of Nissim Ben Chaim.*

The story of Nissim Ben Chaim’s life is long and fascinating. I am sure that for many of the friends and acquaintances of Nissim in the Chabad community of Tzfas this will be the first time they are hearing the story that preceded Nissim’s return to Judaism and his *hiskashrus* to the Rebbe MH”M.

Nissim was born at the end of 5712 (1952), in the Hadar neighborhood in Chaifa to Moroccan parents. It was this neighborhood that spawned the famous riots of the Moroccan immigrants, who felt discriminated against by the iron hand of the government. The political climate at the time definitely affected him.

Nissim’s father a”h was gabbai at the main shul in their neighborhood

and Nissim went to religious schools. Since his parents knew the Rebbe’s shluchim in Morocco, he was sent to the vocational school in Kfar Chabad, but he didn’t last there more than a few months: “In those days, Kfar Chabad was first being built up,” Nissim relates, “and we learned in wooden, ramshackle huts and slept on rusty beds. The smell and the antiquated appearance of the place led my parents, who had come to visit me, to take me out of there and bring me home to Chaifa.”

Nissim’s parents sent him to an agricultural school in Kfar Galim, south of Chaifa. His former friends of his background and outlook were exchanged for boys from kibbutzim and moshavim, whose outlook on Judaism was completely different. As

time went by, Nissim discarded the final signs of Yiddishkeit observance that he still retained.

He lasted a year in this program. A long-term program was just not for him and he switched to the Air Force school, where he studied aircraft technology. When he was of draft age, he was drafted into the armored corps, and defended the country in Israel’s wars.

“When I finished my army service, I felt that the fact that I was a member of the Jewish nation, as opposed to other nations, meant nothing. I took various jobs and then flew to Scotland, where I planned to study acting and film in the University of Glasgow. At that time, this was the cutting-edge university in the field. As it turned out, this dream didn’t materialize, given the language barrier, so I ended up returning home.

“Shortly after I returned from Scotland, I opened a music club with the help of a friend and called it Chaifa Jazz Club. But, like everything else in my life, whether my fault or not, the club didn’t last, despite its growing success. The city council of Chaifa decided to close the club because our music was considered anti-establishment. Another contributing factor to this decision was that we were located near an

auditorium where classical music performances took place. We were a nuisance to them and there were many complaints about the noise.”

Nissim felt that his country was too small for his ambitions.

At this point, Nissim’s only remaining connection with Judaism was his great love for stories of tzaddikim. He could sit for hours and listen to his mother who would tell stories that happened with tzaddikim in Morocco and were passed down

the generations.

One day, Nissim got a plane ticket from his older brother who was in Bogotá, Colombia. His brother wanted Nissim to join him.

“In Bogotá, I discovered a very rich Jewish community. Most of the community was in textiles and did very well. My brother dressed me in a suit and tie and I took an accelerated course in Spanish and went to work. However, not much time elapsed and I felt bored. All the mannerisms and

poses of the businesspeople didn’t sit well me at all.

“I left it all and changed my clothes, and with my guitar in hand I went to a jazz club in the center of town and asked the managers if I could join the musicians there. After some brief entrance exam, I was accepted and I was thrilled.

“After a few weeks, at one of my shows, I met and befriended a local gentile girl. She lived in a town called Honda, near Bogotá, and she



“This was the first time that I had to deal with my Judaism. I was confused. For the first time in my life, I began to feel an inner discomfort as well as deep shame. I deflected her initial questions by saying that I wasn’t a religious Jew, but deep inside I was ashamed.”

convinced me to join her there. This was a fishing town and all the residents were of Indian descent. There were breathtaking tropical vistas. I had never seen such beauty. Under every tree were streams of water. We opened a tourist center and I taught the tourists to play the guitar while she taught various crafts.

“One day, we took a group of tourists down to one of the rivers while I sat on the shore watching the swimmers. I suddenly noticed that one of the tourists had gone into an area where the current was strong and he was about to drown. Without thinking twice, I jumped in to save him, but I also felt myself being swept away. I was terrified. My entire life passed before my eyes and I thought I would die.

“At that very moment, a local resident passed by and when he saw what was happening he jumped in and pulled us both out.

“My gentile girlfriend was a member of a local cult and she constantly sought spirituality. She wasn't satisfied with her belief as all her friends and family were with theirs. She wanted to know how the world was created and liked exploring questions like these. One day she began asking me questions about my Judaism. She said that the Jewish religion is the source for all the religions in the world and as a member of the Chosen People I had to answer all her questions.

“This was the first time that I had to deal with my Judaism. I was confused. For the first time in my life, I began to feel an inner discomfort as well as deep shame. I deflected her initial questions by saying that I wasn't a religious Jew, but deep inside I was ashamed. It was there, in that quiet Indian village in Colombia, that my Jewish spark began to burn. Questions about the real meaning of life began to bother me and gave me no rest.”

Meanwhile, Nissim's tourist center flourished, hosting many tourists. The local Indians, however, weren't exactly thrilled with the success the Israeli was enjoying, and decided to do something about it. One night they broke into the modern building, broke the pipes and destroyed whatever they saw. When Nissim came the next morning with his girlfriend, they saw the disaster. He

“I woke up in the morning to hear cries and screams. I saw the drunken man hitting my friend on the head with his gun until my friend lost consciousness. Then he came to my bed, shook me violently and aimed the revolver at my head as he trembled in anger. I was terrified. I prayed to Hashem that He save me...”

realized that remaining in the area posed a danger to his life and he decided to return to the capitol.

Shortly thereafter, he left Colombia penniless and he flew to New York in the hopes of finding some work. He planned on returning to Colombia when he had made some money.

“I arrived in New York and knew not a soul in the big city. I wandered among the skyscrapers of Manhattan. After a few hours, I met a chareidi Jew with a beard who smiled and asked me how I was doing. His friendly approach, despite the fact that we didn't know each other, greatly impressed me. We got into a conversation and I asked him whether he could help me find a job. He told me, ‘First of all, it's Friday and it will be Shabbos in a few hours. You must come with me to Crown Heights and after Shabbos we will see what we can do.’

“Since I had nothing to do anyway, I went with him to Crown Heights. That Shabbos I realized that the disquieting feeling I had was because I was seeking some meaning in my life. Friday night I sat with Rabbi Manis Friedman, and the Torah thoughts and Chassidic glow, the authentic Judaism, utterly captivated me. The next day, I was hosted by a different family and the lady of the house explained to me about how important it is to say T'hillim. I was impressed by what she said. On Motzaei Shabbos, she gave me a T'hillim, and since then, I always have it with me.

“During that week I found a job, thanks to that Chassid I met on Friday. I worked for a few months and then returned to Colombia. Although my visit to Crown Heights did not change my life, it definitely changed my way of thinking. I began to understand that all the pleasures of the world are only fleeting and temporary. I was already someone with alternative ways of looking at things. If before my visit to Crown Heights questions about my identity didn't disturb me (except for that one time, moments before drowning), now they did, though it was a drawn out process.

“On every trip to Colombia I took the T'hillim and read from it. One day

was 1990. I wanted to leave Colombia but didn't have enough money to do so. I offered one of my electric guitars for sale and to my surprise lots of people wanted to buy it. With the money I earned I headed for Philadelphia to visit a good friend of mine.

"When I got to his place in Philadelphia, I discovered that he had left for Eretz Yisroel a long time before. So there I was, with nothing but the guitar in my hand and wearing South American village clothing. I went to the Jewish center and asked for help. An older woman met with me. When she heard my story, she went out of her way to help me. She said I should stay at a hotel for a week at her expense and she would find me a job. I was taken aback by her generosity and thanked Hashem in my heart for the miracles He did for me.

"All it took was two days and I was bored and lonely. Two days is enough of a vacation for me. With the little bit of money that I had I went to the central train station and bought a ticket to New York. I figured I'd find something to do in the big city.

"During the long ride I had time to think. I sat there with my past and present swirling around in my head. I realized that I was at a crossroads in my life. I asked myself: Is my trip from here to there and back and my momentary enjoyment and adventures, the purpose of creation? Was I created for this?

"I thought of my childhood, of my parents, my friends, and to the amazement of my fellow passengers I burst into tears. After so many years in which I felt a lack of peace, I couldn't restrain myself. My soul cried out that it wanted to return to its roots.

"When I arrived in New York I realized that I had two choices. Either I could take the train that went left

and look for work and continue life as usual or I could take the train that went right, to Crown Heights.

"I stood there for fifteen minutes deliberating. My body shook. I knew that Crown Heights meant a change in my life and that going back to work meant to continue to wallow in the mud. Hashem helped and I made the right decision. I decided that

"I stood there for fifteen minutes deliberating. My body shook. I knew that Crown Heights meant a change in my life and that going back to work meant to wallow in the mud. Hashem helped and I made the right decision. I decided that whatever the hardships would be, I would change my life."

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"I boarded the train to Crown Heights and it was only when I got out that I realized I had arrived on Shabbos afternoon. The first bachur I met was Nosson Lirenoboy, whom I learned later had come originally from a kibbutz and is today a shliach in Chaifa.

"He listened to my story and simply took me in to daven Maariv of Motzaei Shabbos in the small zal. 'Come and see the Rebbe,' he said, as though to say I'm going to bring you directly to the top doctor. And I didn't know what he wanted of me, and got schlepped along unwillingly.

"The place was absolutely packed. Any other day I would have simply left but suddenly, the Rebbe entered. He hypnotized me. I watched the Rebbe daven, word by word, with a magical inner tranquility. He looked like an angel. I had never seen anything like this before.

"On Motzaei Shabbos I met Rabbi Elisha Cohen. At that time, he organized lavish Melaveh Malkas in his home. I went to his home and was mostly captivated by the niggunim. As a musician, I appreciated the depth of emotion in the Chabad niggunim. I cried. My soul simply cried out and I decided that the time for games was over and I had to change my life to one of Torah and mitzvos.

"At the end of the farbrengen, I became aware of another miracle that had happened to me. I felt I had to call the woman in Philadelphia who had been so kind to me, to let her know that I had changed my plans and that I was okay. She was extremely distraught. When she finally calmed down she told me that one night, after I had left, a fire had broken out in the hotel and destroyed it.

"Many of the people in the hotel had died and many others were injured. The woman hadn't found me among the dead or the injured and she thought that perhaps I had been close to the inferno and had turned to ashes. She had been crying over my death for two days and didn't know who to tell about what had happened, and here I was, talking to her and telling her I was fine.

"For me this was another miracle

I even composed a song from the pasuk, 'Ana Hashem, Hoshia Na,' and I sang it wherever I performed.

"I also began doing lots of touring in Colombia. The jungles of Colombia are known for their exotic beauty and wildness. The breathtaking scenery enthralled me and I loved traveling there.

"An incredible miracle happened to me there. One night, I heard knocks at the door. When I opened the door a crack to see who was bothering my sleep, I saw a revolver aimed at my head and the strong smell of alcohol wafted from the stranger at my door. He ordered me to open the door. Seeing that he was drunk and armed, I opened the door trembling in fear as to what would happen next.

"Fortunately, he didn't want to do anything more than sit down and snooze. I had another person there with me in the apartment, a gentile friend. Since the two of us were exhausted and since we saw the stranger was doing no harm, we went to our room and slept.

"I woke up in the morning to hear cries and screams. I saw the drunken man hitting my friend on the head with his gun until my friend lost



Today

consciousness. Then he came to my bed, shook me violently and aimed the revolver at my head as he trembled in anger. I was terrified. I prayed to Hashem that He save me. For some reason the drunk suddenly removed his gun and began to scream at me. I realized that he thought we had laid a trap for him and had locked the door in order to call the police on him. It took me a long time to explain that he was mistaken.

"It was first a few hours later that he left the house and I could breathe a sigh of relief. I only realized the



Back then

extent of the miracle a few days later. I was watching local television and to my surprise I saw that drunk presented as a big drug dealer who wouldn't flinch at anything in order to achieve his goals. He had hit upon some bad luck and gotten involved with the local mafia.

"The broadcaster said that the man had disappeared and nobody knew where he was one night. Needless to say, I knew good and well where he had been. I thanked Hashem, for if the mafia had known that this guy was hiding out in my house, the house would have been set on fire."

Nissim, however, was still too immersed in klipa for these open miracles to motivate him to change his life more.

"And then, for some reason, just at the time when my dream was coming true and my friends and I were making good money in the music business and filling halls with thousands of people, civil war broke out in Colombia. The war was between groups of rebels who controlled the forests and the military. People were afraid to go out and have fun and so we were left without a source of income.

"Whoever could leave, left. This



At a farbrengen with Elisha Cohen in Crown Heights

in the chain of miracles I had experienced. My feeling of closeness to Hashem was boundless. During those weeks, I resolved not to play any more non-Jewish music but only to play neshama-music.

“I had arrived in Crown Heights in Tishrei, and each time I was charmed yet again by the Rebbe’s ways until I waited in breathless anticipation for the next time I would be able to gaze upon the Rebbe for a few more minutes. I saw in the Rebbe such depth, p’nimius, and sincerity that despite the commotion around him did not affect him. He conducted himself with wondrous humility and modesty. I passed by the Rebbe a number of times for dollars and asked for a bracha for music and the Rebbe always gave me a dollar and warmly blessed me.

“On his way in to one of the t’fillos, the Rebbe stopped near me and made a motion with his hand with a smile on his face. In those few seconds I felt that the Rebbe could read me like an X-ray.”

After a few spiritually elevating weeks in Crown Heights, Nissim’s new friends suggested that he study in the yeshiva for baalei t’shuva in Morristown, but he decided to return to Eretz Yisroel. He committed to growing a beard and wearing a kippa. At this time of his life, he missed his homeland and his family.

Upon his return to Chaifa, he met some Lubavitcher Chassidim who referred him to the mashpia, Rav Reuven Dunin a”h, and they quickly became very close.

“R’ Dunin gave shiurim every Sunday in the Chabad shul on Frishman Street in Chaifa and I wouldn’t miss a single shiur. His explanations, in his unique manner, were greatly mekarev me. I met other Chassidim who were on the same journey as me, like Doron Shefi, who is an alternative doctor, and others.



Receiving kos shel bracha from the Rebbe in 5750

This made my first steps into the world of Yiddishkait easier for me.

“I didn’t neglect my music. On the contrary, I continued to compose and play, but it was completely different than what I used to play. I composed many songs from the sources and each time a song was ready I would bring it to R’ Dunin at one of the shiurim and play it for him. He would either approve it or reject it. At some shiurim, he even spoke about the pasuk that I had sung for him earlier.

“Three years later, when I had become a real baal t’shuva, my former gentile girlfriend that I had known in Colombia suddenly arrived in Eretz Yisroel. She contacted me but I refused to renew our connection. I knew she was in my past and that was that.

“She told me that after being interested in all sorts of spiritual paths she had begun taking an interest in Judaism which is why she had come to Eretz Yisroel, a land that represented Judaism, for the purpose of getting answers to her questions. She had become friendly with a Lubavitcher woman in Chaifa and through her had met Rabbi Gedalia Akselrod who answered all her questions.

“Since this was the case, she wanted to broaden her knowledge of Judaism. One day she traveled to Tzfas and met with Rabbi Avrohom Levy, who speaks Spanish, and he listened to her questions. Instead of answering her, he read her some lines from *Tanya*. These lines fascinated her and she decided to join the Jewish people with all the difficulties this entails.

“After a long time, she finished the conversion process. Her name was changed to the name of the first female convert in history, Rus, and with the rabbis’ approval we married.”

* * *

In recent years, Nissim Ben Chaim works with Ascent of Tzfas in outreach.

“I went for a trial performance. It was Chamisha-Asar B’Av and a group of tourists had come to a farbrengen that took place on the roof of the building. I was very successful and from that day on I work at this amazing place.”

Nissim uses his musical talent for outreach and together with his wife performs at women’s events too. She tells her story with words and art and he accompanies her with his soul songs.

KIDS & COMPUTERS: GOOD OR BAD?

INTERVIEW BY C. BEN DOVID

*The computer is making greater and greater inroads into our lives. Just about every home has one, and its influence, whether for good or bad, is great. So is a computer good or bad for the Jews? Should we have one (or more) in our homes? What about programs, games, DVD's, and the Internet? * Four mothers discuss this pertinent chinuch topic.*

IN FAVOR OF COMPUTERS

Nechama is a mother of young children who works in the computer field and she views computers positively.

“In our house the computer is rather important since I use it for work, and naturally, the children use it with programs suitable for them. Even my four-year-old knows how to operate the mouse and is proficient with various programs.

“I find that the educational programs and computer games offer a lot to children. My boys learn in a yeshiva without any secular studies and they get information and knowledge via the computer. This is in addition to the enrichment for their limudei kodesh that they gain

experientially.

“The computer provides an opportunity to develop talents and various skills. It enables the children at a young age to put thought and time into producing nice script at an age when we wouldn't expect a child to write nicely, and when we wouldn't even expect him to give it any thought. I find that being able to manipulate the mouse definitely develops fine motor skills, though this is not in place of learning how to write by hand.

“The same is true for drawing. A child can enjoy drawing and mixing colors and then print out his creation and this is without making a mess. I don't negate the importance of drawing in the

traditional way but computer art is definitely an addition that enriches and develops creativity.”

Penina offers additional reasons to own a home computer. “It is very important to me that my children receive chinuch at home in a home atmosphere. This is why I bought a computer long before it became popular, because I prefer that my children be at home more than outside.”

Penina agrees with Nechama that the computer gives children a pleasant experience along with enriched knowledge: “Today there are many programs with an educational and Jewish message, and thanks to these, the children have positive activities they can do at home.

“Naturally, this is all under our supervision and not every new disc or program is allowed into my house.

“I'm not talking about the Internet, being completely off-limits in my house. Despite whatever positive things you might find on the Internet, it does lend itself to constant parental supervision.”

Penina enumerates additional advantages to the computer over other activities. “The computer appeals to children and it enables



mess, it's very important to enable children to create in the traditional way. A friend of mine said that her five-year-old son was having a hard time with fine motor skills and she attributed this to his being used to using the computer, where he can produce beautiful graphics without much effort.

“So it's important to remember that creative computer programs are no substitute for drawing on paper with crayons. In general, a computer is an extra, for enrichment, and not the basis for life.”

Although Penina was in favor of having a home computer, she also points out the downside of owning one. She mentions the familiar scene where a child sits in front of a computer and “gets lost” there. You can really lose yourself while on the computer, becoming completely absorbed in a game or educational program or movie. It is so stimulating and fascinating that you can forget where you are.

“I set clear limits for time spent on the computer, telling them the amount of time before they start so the children know that even if they are preoccupied with the computer they have other responsibilities. Our chart also greatly reduces the number of fights which we used to

each child to work independently with educational programs or games that have varying levels of difficulty.”

OPPOSED TO COMPUTERS

Yael disagrees with the claim that a computer is a great educational tool. “The computer can contribute, develop, and enrich but I don't think it's different than any other activity.

“Two years ago we bought a home computer thinking it would occupy them constructively. At first, the kids were very excited about it but not long afterwards, I saw that

the children do not prefer the computer over other activities. At this point, the computer is hardly used except when guests come and the kids want to show them one of the educational videos we have. The children are usually busy with drawing, crafts, games, plays, etc. It's possible that the fact that I am not particularly interested in the computer is a factor in the children's lack of enthusiasm.”

Gila has this to say: “Although the computer enables drawing, writing, and creating and produces beautiful creations without the need for special talent and without the



“The computer is a vessel and the question is what contents are being placed inside.”



have when we first bought the computer.”

Yael also refers to the addiction problem. “I am happy that my children are mostly occupied with things other than the computer. This is because I know of children who sit for hours in front of a computer until they are literally addicted to it.

“Another problem with the computer is that the children don’t play with friends since the computer is something they can do alone. I think parents have to be alert and set limits.”

COMMUNICATION VIA COMPUTER – PERMISSIBLE OR FORBIDDEN?

One of the problem issues that we have today with the computer is communication. Gila, a computer teacher and mother of a large family, starts by pointing out the positive: “In addition to the useful functions of a computer as something to be creative with, for games and videos, the computer is also a useful means of communication. This is an option that can definitely be used with children and I personally use it as a teacher. But this must be done under our full supervision. Communicating via computer can be dangerous, since children, especially adolescents, often get involved in negative things if not supervised.

“This is why we don’t have the Internet at home. True, it’s a terrific tool that can help and serve many positive functions, but in my opinion the danger is greater than its usefulness. Even if we manage to supervise it and teach our children where and how they can browse the Internet, I think the lures are too dangerous.”

Nechama refers to what it says

in Pirkei Avos, “Everything Hashem created in His world, He created only in His honor”: “There’s no question that the computer, with all its possibilities, was created solely to disseminate Judaism. The Internet too is only for the purpose of spreading G-dliness and Chassidus in the world. Thanks to the Internet, it’s possible to read dozens of the Rebbe’s s’farim and to

“This is why we don’t have the Internet at home. True, it’s a terrific tool that can help and serve many positive functions, but in my opinion the danger is greater than its usefulness. Even if we manage to supervise it and teach our children where and how they can browse the Internet, I think the lures are too dangerous.”

print out what you need from Otzar770 and Sichos in English. You can see 770 in real time and live with Beis Chayeinu, watching the t’fillos and the farbrengens that take place there on yomei d’pagra. Additionally, there are Lubavitch websites with shiurim to listen to and wonderful articles to read. There’s no question that this technological advancement prepares

the world for Moshiach.

“As for myself, after much consideration, I decided to have Internet in my home. I use it for work and it contributes towards a Chassidic atmosphere in the house, as we use the various websites to live with the Rebbe.

“Two days ago we got a call from a boy from a nonobservant family who learns with my husband, saying he was sick and couldn’t come. My five-year-old daughter said, ‘So learn together over the Internet!’ The children know that the Internet can be used for positive activities.

“I still must emphasize that I am by no means suggesting that the Internet is for everybody. We decided, based on our situation **and after receiving the approval of a rav**, since the Internet is also something I must use for work. The fact that I am an expert in the world of computers and know how to set limits is what enables me to allow myself to have the Internet at home.

“Every family has to weigh the pros and cons carefully, and I am not convinced that the Internet is for every home, **especially if you can’t control and supervise it.**”

Gila is not thrilled with the CD’s that are touted as educational and “chareidi.” In her opinion, they are not always suitable for us. The producers are interested in their profits and not necessarily in the educational message they convey. You can’t blindly buy any new CD that is produced ostensibly for the chareidi public. Even innocent games can contain pictures undesirable for our children and you must check each item individually.

“The computer is a vessel and the question is what contents are being placed inside,” concludes



Gila.

Penina states emphatically, “The criterion is clear. The first thing I do is get information on the content from sources that I rely on, such as a close friend or a school that the children attend. Only approved material enters our home, and then I check it out for myself to see what a child gets out of it. Do the contents convey an educational message or is it a waste of time?”

Yael adds, “It’s important to realize that not every disc sold in religious stores, bearing the name of a chareidi company, contains a Jewish educational message. Something seen, by anyone but particularly a child, is absorbed into the subconscious. Sometimes there’s a video whose main message

is positive but there are many things about it that are not for us, like the manner of speaking, way of

“Another problem with the computer is that the children don’t play with friends since the computer is something they can do alone. I think parents have to be alert and set limits.”

dressing, etc.

“If in a video presenting a story from our sources the dominant figure is the goy, and he is the actor that draws one’s attention (the proof being that he is the one that the kids imitate time and again), then I consider this video pasul. We have to do our own filtering and have to take all factors into consideration. We also need to pray that we withstand the tests and enticements.”

May we soon merit to experience the time when there is no more confusion and mingling of good and bad and we will all be able to see how the world is G-dliness, when the prophecy of, “a rock in the wall will cry out and the keyboard of the computer will respond” will be fulfilled.

ELECTION TIME

BY SHAI GEFEN

“MONEY DIPPED IN JEWISH BLOOD”

Elections for the Knesset are imminent and suddenly we see how each party is trying to convince us that it's the most chareidi or how much they've done for the defense of Eretz Yisroel and Toras Yisroel.

We can forgive the religious parties for many things but not the Yahadus HaTorah v'ha'Shabbos party for entering the government, knowing full well that the Disengagement Plan would be implemented with their votes. The Yahadus HaTorah party sat in the opposition when Shinui, Mafdal, and Ichud Leumi were in Sharon's coalition that made decrees against religion and brought the world the Disengagement Plan.

After Sharon ran into difficulties in getting his plan approved, he took the Labor party and Yahadus HaTorah into his government for the purpose of implementing his plan of destroying yeshuvim and shuls, and handing over our land to our murderers. This was in exchange for 290 million shekel that they received for yeshivos.

This week, I found a clipping from the chareidi (Hebrew edition) newspaper *Mishpacha* from two and a half years ago. There, one commentator laid out the script of the chareidi askanim, explaining how they will get into Sharon's government in order to save the Torah world in exchange for destroying the yeshuvim.

“The only chance for the survival of the families of the married kollel men by natural means,” say senior askanim to Mishpacha, “is to have the war in Iraq end quickly. Bush will pressure Sharon to make some significant political moves like return land, Mafdal and Ichud Leumi will be forced to leave Sharon's government, and the religious will make their return to the Coalition depend on the canceling of the order of destruction of the Torah world...”

The party entering the government was a crime committed in the name of Yahadus HaTorah v'ha'Shabbos. This is the only religious party which sat in the government during the destructions. They gave a kashrus certification to those who perpetrated the crime against the Torah.

When election day comes, there will certainly be those who will remind us that the Rebbe said to vote “for the most chareidi party.” However, we will remember which politicians were an inseparable part of the destruction machine, and mainly, which was the party to provide a Torah stamp of approval to the expulsion and is still proud of its accomplishment.

BETWEEN LIGHT AND DARKNESS

In interviews with rabbanim and roshei yeshivos within religious-Zionist circles, we are hearing them calling for the elimination of the “halo of k'dusha” from the secular

State. An interview was recently published in *B'Sheva* with Rabbi Chaim Borgansky, rav yishuv Mitzpeh Hoshaya, who declared the urgent need to stop attributing holiness and redemption concepts to the State. Here are some lines from that interview that show how much the nation yearns to hear the Torah truth:

“This churban puts classic Zionism into question. The concept that the State of Israel is a place where a Jew can be secure and not be thrown out of his home has disintegrated. When the State says that an evacuation is necessary for political and security reasons, this means that it cannot defend Jewish homes, and this is a very serious matter ...

“Something about the trust in the innocence regarding the State has changed. The institutions and government have lost a lot of their former standing, as far as I'm concerned. Things that were considered holy are no longer holy. The army is important and necessary, but not holy; the government and judicial system are certainly not.”

Rabbi Borgansky also seeks to reexamine the concept of “reishis tzmichas Geulaseinu” considering the withdrawals the Israeli government has made starting with the war in Lebanon:

“Since that war we are constantly retreating: Lebanon, Yamit, Gush Katif. And there's always an excuse. The most recent



expulsion was just a preview to what is going to happen. We are also faced with assimilation and civil marriages. The problem is that we don't allow these facts to confuse us. We view all these retreats as a descent for the purpose of a later ascent.

“We need to relate to the State as a tool and not as a goal.”

The Rebbe said the following, with great sadness, twenty years ago on Shabbos Chayei Sarah 5746:

Instead of behaving in a way of “uniform control of the Shomron” – namely that when Jews merit to settle sections of Yehuda and Shomron they should be surrounded by a walled city with many Jewish towns close by, which will lead to blessing –instead, they run after murderers and terrorists in order to find favor with them, so that they agree to take land from Yehuda and Shomron! And they debase themselves by doing this publicly!

This lowliness and capitulating to the goy in such a humiliating way is something that was unheard of even in the Diaspora, the literal place of exile! Even within Eretz Yisroel, there was never such a shameful thing such as this, to run after terrorists and murderers as it

has been happening lately. The most ridiculous thing is that there are still those who maintain that we are in the time of “is'chalta d'Geula” (something that is anyways out of the question, as mentioned many times at length)...

It is worthwhile mentioning a number of facts in connection with the peace treaty with Egypt, so that they open their eyes and see what the consequences of this approach are:

Jews who toiled and sweated to build new settlements in Eretz Yisroel were expelled from their homes and land. This included men, women, and children. Not only that, but they forced soldiers who sacrifice their lives to defend Eretz Yisroel and those who live there, to expel Jews from their land in Eretz Yisroel!

Young soldiers who go, wholeheartedly, to defend the land and those who live there, to the point of mesirus nefesh, were forced to expel Jews from their land in Eretz Yisroel! And for what? To give this land to goyim!

We Lubavitchers need to bring the religious-Zionist crowd the Besuras HaGeula that the Rebbe prophesied to us, about the real Geula!

When election day comes, we will remember which politicians were an inseparable part of the destruction machine, and mainly, which was the party to provide a Torah stamp of approval to the expulsion and is still proud of its accomplishment.



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SUSTENANCE

BY RABBI DOCTOR YOSEF FREEDLAND
SURGEON, PATENT ATTORNEY

*A first-person account of Doctor Yosef Freedland's insightful experiences on his path to t'shuva and with the Rebbe. * Part 1 of 2*

What causes a person, free to go wherever he wants to go, see whatever he wants to see, and eat whatever he wants to eat, limit where he can go and what he can see or eat? Why should a person bind himself with the laws of Torah and Chabad customs and philosophy?

Some relate a single cataclysmic event, for example seeing the Rebbe's picture prior to a pagan rite, or following a vow made during a life-threatening encounter. Others relate occasional Lubavitch encounters leading to commitment, like a bee flying around a garden before settling on a flower.

I would liken my entry into Lubavitch to an insect in a Pitcher Plant. The Pitcher Plant is a carnivorous plant with tubular funnels that attract insects with intoxicating nectar. Once the insect enters a funnel, escape is nearly impossible because of the downward pointing hairs on slippery walls. With each attempt to be free, the insect slides further and further toward the nectar; a powerful brew of enzymes littered with insect armor, "*Klepah*", from prior visitors.

My first attachments to Lubavitch were small: attending Chassidut sessions on the University of Michigan campus when Lubavitch was

alternatively spelled "Libowitz" or "Lubaviz"; learning an English work entitled "*Liquatti Amarim*", (spelled with 2 "q"s) printed separately from the original Hebrew text; and attending a Brooklyn "Encounter with Chabad".

By the summer of 1970, I decided to spend a few weeks learning at Hadar HaTorah, a Brooklyn Lubavitch Yeshiva for "*Baalei T'shuva*", Jewish Returnees. Hadar HaTorah was then housed in a building identified by the word "Lorimar" on its stone entrance arch, the arch probably being one of the few structurally sound parts of the building.

In those days, when teenagers were being drafted to fight a war in a faraway jungle, exemptions from the draft, "clergy" deferments for Yeshiva study, were highly prized. As a result, it was a time probably unrivaled for the numbers of Lorimar students toting Day-Glo festooned backpacks; some of whom slept a night or two – or more – in our apartment on Eastern Parkway.

Some mornings I would find strangers lying on the living room furniture, eating crackers, and leaving crumbs for relentless platoons of NY cockroaches. One stranger, between munches, provided further endearment by proclaiming, "Hey man, like you should thank me for giving you the '*mitzvah*' of '*Hachnosis Orchim*'", taking

in a guest.

There were those in the Lorimar crowd who introduced me to the finer points of important "*Halacha*", religious laws, for example whether impurities, "*tumah*", could be transmitted by the touch of a person who had improperly washed at bedside in the morning – three times over each hand. To demonstrate the severity of such an infraction, one member of the "*pro-tumah*" camp ran to the side of the sink, near where another was ritually washing his hands before a meal, and blasted water over a cooked drumstick that had been infected with the above-noted *tumah*. I was duly impressed with the importance he placed on bedside washing and the amount of water that soaked the face and shirt of the next in line.

Then there was the sweltering Brooklyn summer days – and nights – without air conditioning. Besides learning Talmud and Chassidut, I learned that insects, at least those domiciling in the Lorimar building, enjoy Chassidic Farbrengens. We were having a Farbringen with a Chassidic "lifer", one born into this somewhat strange way of life, when these huge black winged creatures began raining down from the gapping cracks in the ceiling. Chabad Chassidut advocates being joyful and eschewing emphasis on "*gashmiut*", opulence, but you'll never convince me that it teaches one to enjoy flicking insects off clothing and food.

Disappointed with the environment more than learning Talmud and

Chassidut, I headed for my hometown, Detroit. In those years, there were perhaps a handful of Lubavitcher sleep-away summer camps and one just happened to be located in the rolling hills of Fenton Michigan; Camp Gan Israel of Detroit under Rabbi Shimon Lazaroff, later a Sheliah in Texas. The camp happened to need a stand-in for the soon-to-arrive life guard and “just to help out” I decided to spend a few days in camp. After finishing my lifeguard stint, I decided to stay a bit longer as my job duties shifted into being a fun activities director.

Camp provided a distinct contrast to my Brooklyn experience. For example, sometime after 9:30 am, I was requested to wake the official, and only, office staff, Shlomie. I presented Shlomie with the standard two containers for bedside washing and waited for him to pour the contents of the smaller container into the empty larger container – three times over each hand. To my amazement, Shlomie poured the water only twice on each hand, took a towel and stated, “I guess I don’t feel so religious today”. Seeing my astonishment, he said, “So I’m a shagits” and we both laughed. In one fell swoop, *tumah*, a seemingly contagious contact disease endemic to the Lorimar building, lost its potency as

I was definitely in a third world; located somewhere between the secular world I hadn’t fully left and the Torah world I hadn’t fully entered.

a deterrent to Yiddishkeit.

That year was probably the first year that Color War in Lubavitch camp was peppered with “Motown” soul cheers. “Motown” is short for the “Motor City”, a title for Detroit, then the car manufacturing capital of the world as well as a recording studio that produced albums featuring the “Motown Soul Beat”. The cheers included “Uhn, Ungowa! Our team got the Powah, hey! Uhn, Ungowa! ...” By the end of the four week camp season, I had made friends with many bochurim who learned in the Montreal Lubavitch Yeshiva. It seemed logical to forgo a semester or two of college and, with the Rebbe’s approval, I went to learn in Montreal.

In the yeshiva, my friends from the summer, primarily led by Yehoshua (Josh) Gordin, now the Sheliah of California Valley, organized my daily learning schedule. The names of my partners, each providing a daily hour of their time, included many that went on to join the now burgeoning network of Shluchim: I learned the Chassidic dissertation “*Kuntres Umayon*” with Mendle Lipskar, now the head Sheliah of South Africa.

Code of Jewish Law, *Shulchan Aruch*, I learned with Levy Bistrisky, A.H, former chief rabbi of Tzefat, Israel. Talmud, using the *Soncino* translated edition of Tractate “Pesachim” as a reference, was supervised by Zalman Grossbaum, now of Toronto and Shneur Goodman, now a Sheliah in Israel. Tanya was split between Josh Gordon and Yossi Goldman, now of South Africa. And there were many others, BH.

Over dinners in the dormitory basement, perhaps in return for their help, I would regale my friends with stories about college life. My renditions included how “rebels” at the University of Michigan took over a campus building until row after row of troopers stormed the building. Though the occupation began over a University bookstore price hike, the protest leaders claimed that the bookstore symbolized US “imperialism” against denizens of the third world, and all protestors qualified as “freedom fighters”.

Other monologues were inspired by scenes from MoTown in which members of a motorcycle group would start their Harley Davison motorcycles, “choppers”, and head toward a critical destination like the parking lot of a drive-through hamburger outlet.

The Yeshiva staff, though weary of having such “foreign influences” in the Yeshiva, was tolerant, or seemed to be tolerant, of my intrusion, and helped me in my studies. Rabbi Velvel Greenglass, for example, would pleasantly explain deeper Chassidic



concepts. Chassidut was also supplemented by guidance and ad-hoc question and answer sessions with Rabbi I.M. Gourary, a Yeshiva “*mashpiyah*”, counselor. Rabbi Isaac Shwei, A.H provided supplemental background for my Talmud studies.

There were also mentors from the Montreal community, for example Rabbi Zalman Morozoff AH. In addition to his friendship, Zalman left his home open early Shabbos morning so that Josh Gordon, Moshe Kotlarsky and I could sample his wife’s “blender cake” and coffee prior to Mikveh and prayers.

In addition to learning, my friends and mentors provided general advice about Chassidut, including pointers on how to relate to the central figure of the Lubavitch movement, the Rebbe, MH”M. For example, they encouraged me to write the Rebbe on my progress in the Yeshiva. I enjoyed writing and wrote at least one letter each month. As instructed, in the upper right corner I wrote the letters “BSD”, signifying “with the help of Heaven”. Below that, in the center of the page, I added an abbreviation, part of which dedicated the letter to “His Honor, the Honorable Holiness, our Leader and Teacher”.

The balance of each correspondence, in handwritten block letters, was usually dedicated to a sort of Hunter Thompson Gonzo Journalism rather than a true “*Din V’Cheshbon*”, personal accounting. Besides writing about my learning, I made observations about the food, what I did in my spare time and offered opinions about almost everything. For example, after reading the Rebbe’s response to the heresy of evolution theory, my next letter observed: “I read the Rebbe’s epistle on evolution and agree with some points, but...”

I enjoyed learning with “*tamim*”, students who served the Almighty with an innocent outlook on the world. The Yeshiva took care of everything else: food, cleaning the dormitory, laundry. Montreal Yeshiva, though, couldn’t

qualify as *Gan Eden* because of one huge defect. My parents actively opposed my temporary abandonment of college and my association with Lubavitch. Not necessarily in that order. To them, Lubavitch, like the university bookstore, represented a sinister symbol; an Imperialist organization enslaving denizens of the third world. I didn’t consider myself enslaved, but I was definitely in a third world; located somewhere between the secular world I hadn’t fully left and the Torah world I hadn’t fully entered.

Strong parental objection to my choice of study was voiced in bi-weekly, emotionally charged, telephone conversations. They claimed to have nothing against *me* but against the organization that was destroying their “American dream”. The dream included college, wealth, marginal attachment to Yiddishkeit, marrying into the faith, and producing children that would provide opportunities for “traditional mitzvah festivities”; like a backyard Polynesian tent erected for 250 guests, complete with a Mexican mariachi band playing Israeli music and professional dancers leading men and women in Israeli folk dances.

My parents cut off access to the bank account where I had placed my earnings from summer and winter vacation jobs. They recruited several parents in similar situations to join a “Beth Din”, with the goal being to procure my release. When the Beth Din route didn’t pan out, they attempted to file suit in US court using the same disgruntled group.

Faced with failure of the US court attempt, they took a more direct approach; blackmail. My uncles were successful businessmen who belonged to a country club frequented by a Lubavitch benefactor named Irwin. A short time before my 18th birthday, my parents announced that my uncles would tirelessly work to convince Irwin to withhold donations to Lubavitch, at least until their son was free.

A birthday was an occasion for a

private audience with the Rebbe. The yeshiva staff, aware of my difficulties at home and its negative influence on my studies, suggested that my “*k’vital*”, letter to the Rebbe, include a proposal to mitigate parental anger. The proposal was to limit my Yeshiva studies to part of the day while attending a Montreal-based University. During the Yeshiva’s next visit to Brooklyn, I presented Rabbi Label Groner, a member of the 770 secretariat, with a note from the Yeshiva staff granting me permission to an audience with the Rebbe, “*Yehidut*”. After I promised not to bring up any issues besides those on my *k’vital*, Label Groner added my name to a list of out-of-town visitors scheduled for *Yehidut* that night.

Rabbi Yankel Kranz, A.H., a sheliach in Detroit at the time, also had a personal audience that night. Around 1:00 am I found myself just behind Yankel, waiting for my meeting with the Rebbe in an antechamber often referred to as “the Lower Gan Eden”. My mind was engrossed in what might take place after entering the Rebbe’s office, particularly what I would answer when the Rebbe asked which college and curriculum I had in mind.

The clock neared 1:30 am and suddenly there was no one in line in front of me. Label Groner opened the door to the Rebbe’s study, motioned for me to enter quickly and I found myself facing the Rebbe.

I put my *k’vital* on the desk and the Rebbe pointed to one of two chairs and said, “Sit, sit”, to which I shook my head no, as instructed. Then the Rebbe took my *k’vital*, and, instead of holding the *k’vital* with two hands resting on the desk, looped the pages over his extended right and left index fingers and raised his arms so that the *k’vital* was almost even with his eyes, toward his right side.

The Rebbe’s holy eyes moved across the page, seemingly line by line, and then the Rebbe pivoted my *k’vital* over his index fingers to the next section. At two points during the reading, the

Rebbe placed the *k'vital* on the desk, underlined words and returned the *k'vital* to its prior position, reading as before.

Taken as a whole, these actions gave me the impression that the Rebbe was showing my *k'vital* to someone, unseen, behind and to his right; possibly the spiritual presence of his father-in-law, the “*Friedlickeh*” Rebbe.

At one point, I sensed the study door open and close; perhaps accompanied by a signal from Label that my allotted time had expired; but I was too transfixed by the scene in front of me to take a glance.

The Rebbe placed my *k'vital* on the desk before him, took off his glasses and looked directly at me for the first time. I use the term “looked”, but it was anything but a look. It was a deep, piercing gaze. The Rebbe’s blue eyes, framed by his white beard from below and the brim of his black fedora from above, were mesmerizing.

Then the Rebbe addressed me in English:

“This that you write about Yeshiva not being applicable, does not affect you until September?”

My mind snapped to attention. What was the question? The applicability of Yeshiva? What did this have to do with my question about attending college part time?

“September?” Had I written something about September in one of my many letters to the Rebbe? I drew a blank. Nothing came to mind. Sweat gathered on my forehead. I stood there, motionless.

Then the Rebbe began speaking to me again. “Didn’t you write this past November that you wanted to stay in Yeshiva for a year?”

I focused on November’s letters; my accounting of my studies and learning partners ... suddenly I recalled writing about postponing my return to college for a year. The Rebbe’s inquiry, though, didn’t mention college, only the time I had designated for Yeshiva, by default.

I tilted my head slightly forward then backward, signaling my agreement.

The Rebbe apparently wanted a stronger confirmation and asked me, “You do not need to make a decision concerning college, until September?”

“No”, I answered out loud.

Later I realized that September was past the beginning of the upcoming college year, but calculations had been beyond me and I had agreed to the Rebbe’s time frame – twice.

The Rebbe smiled, and said, “Well, you have seven more months of learning ahead of you.”

***The Rebbe placed my
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before him, took off
his glasses and looked
directly at me for the
first time. I use the
term “looked”, but it
was anything but a
look. It was a deep,
piercing gaze...***

After a brief pause, the Rebbe continued.

“These are seven months with which you can learn and understand our background and heritage; yours and mine and the people around you. And then the decision will not be difficult.

“After this period of seven months, you may take the suggestion of Rabbi Shwei and Rabbi Gourary and attend Yeshiva and college.

“This that you state that Yiddishkeit is too much of a burden implies that it is something foreign to you, not a part

of your body.

“Every Yid has a *Neshama* which is a part of him, just like his blood and bones and flesh. Just as you keep your body healthy, so too is it your duty to provide sustenance, Yiddishkeit, for your *Neshama*. Therefore it is important for you to continue without question, without these conflicts, and not stop your learning.

“You have until September to proceed and then you will decide that the proper course is to continue in Yeshiva. Or, Chas Veshalom, should you not realize this, you will follow the suggestion of Rabbi Shwei and Rabbi Gourary and learn in Yeshiva during the day and attend college only at night.”

The Rebbe broke his gaze with me, bowed his head slightly, and continued speaking in the third person as though addressing someone else:

“May he have all the ‘hatzlacha’, success, he needs in Yiddishkeit and learning..”

Suddenly, I felt a huge smile break out across my face. Imagine this: the Rebbe had ignored the potential financial jeopardy to Lubavitch. The Rebbe cared only about my welfare, or more specifically, the sustenance of my *Neshama*. I was amazed that the Rebbe had actually read at least one of my letters and remembered a sentence I had forgotten. My inner voice began shouting. “I have a Rebbe who wants the best for me and doesn’t give a hang about the funding boycott. The Rebbe Shlita wants me to continue learning in Yeshiva.”

I felt my *Neshama* dancing even as the Rebbe gave more blessings, including that I be granted all the yearnings of my heart. I couldn’t stop smiling.

I was still smiling much later, after recording each word and my impressions of Yechidut, and calculating how I would live up to the Rebbe’s expectations, learning beyond September.

(To be continued be”H.)

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