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THE SILENT PRAYER SAID OUT LOUD

LIKKUTEI SICHOS, VOL. 35, PG. 192-197
TRANSLATED BY BORUCH MERKUR



1. Regarding the law of praying in a whisper, it says in the Zohar [210a] on our Torah portion [i.e., VaYigash]: “A person should not hear his voice in prayer. Rather, he should pray in a whisper, with a voice that is inaudible. This prayer is always accepted. Your sign for this is, ‘The voice (*ha’kol*) was heard.’ That is, ‘*ha’kol*’ – appearing here without the letter Vav – ‘was heard.’ This [word, “*ha’kol*,” appearing without the letter Vav] is [symbolic of] silent prayer, as it is written regarding Chana, ‘but her voice was inaudible.’ That is the [manner of] prayer that the Holy One Blessed Be He accepts, when it is done amidst will (*r’usa*), intent/concentration (*kavana*), and preparedness (*tikuna*), as is proper, and for the sake of affirming the oneness of his Master, as is proper, every day.”

Commentators write that from the words of the Zohar it appears that the law that one may not raise his voice [in the silent prayer] means not only that he should not allow his voice to be heard by others, but that “even he himself should not hear his voice.” This is also inferred from the Zohar [202a] of Parshas VaYakhel: “If this prayer is audible to the ears of man, it is not heard above ... Moreover, a word of prayer is

absorbed in the supernal world, and the word of the supernal world should not be heard.”

However, in the context of Torah law, the Rambam rules [in Laws of Prayer 5:9] (as well as the *Shulchan Aruch* [Orach Chaim 101:2]), “One should pronounce [the words of prayer] in a whisper to his ears, but he should not cause his voice to be heard.” The Tur writes: “There are those who say that the fact that it says that one should not cause his voice to be heard in his prayer, [the intent is] that it needs to be in a whisper, to the extent that it is not audible even to one’s [own] ears. And they bring proof from the Tosefta: ‘You might consider the possibility that it [i.e., prayer] may be audible to one’s [own] ears – it is already explained, however, regarding Chana, “but her voice was inaudible.”’ But our Gemara only negates causing one’s voice to be heard, which implies causing one’s voice to be heard by others, but it may be audible to one’s own ears. And so it is explicitly in the Yerushalmi: ‘You might consider the possibility that one may raise his

voice in his prayer – it is already explained, however, regarding Chana, “but her voice was inaudible.””

[To be continued, be”H]

Commentators write that from the words of the Zohar it appears that the law that one may not raise his voice [in the silent prayer] means not only that he should not allow his voice to be heard by others but that “even he himself should not hear his voice.”

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By the Grace of G-d
Rosh Chodesh Adar II, 5738
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

I am in receipt of your letter of March 3, with enclosure, and was pleased to read about your advancement in Yiddishkeit as an everyday experience, in keeping with the rule that "the essential thing is the deed," namely, the fulfilment of the Mitzvos in actual practice.

I trust you will continue your efforts to go from strength to strength in this direction in the spirit of the saying of our Sages, "One that has 100, desires 200, and having attained 200, desires 400," which is to say that ambition grows with achievement. And if such is human nature in the material aspects of life, how much more should be so in regard to the real and eternal values, namely, in Torah and Mitzvos. All the more so since the Torah and Mitzvos, though a "must" for their own sake, are also the channels to receive G-d's blessings in all needs, including the specific needs you mention in your letter.

I was gratified to note your efforts to involve your community in Yiddishkeit, especially in connection with the forthcoming festival of Purim, and the Zechus of it will certainly stand you and yours in good stead.

If you will let me know the Hebrew names of all your family, together with the mother's Hebrew name in each case, as is customary, I will remember you all in prayer.

Hoping to hear good news from you in all above, and wishing you and all yours a joyous and inspiring Purim,

With blessing, *M. Schneerson*

P. S. Referring to your remark that you "cannot pretend to being orthodox in religious practices," - it has often been pointed out that the classification of Jews into so-called orthodox, reform, and conservative denominations is a purely artificial one, which has no basis in the essence of a Jew which is bound up with his Divine soul. For, all Jewish souls were present at Sinai, including those to be born on this ~~earth~~ earth, and to each and all G-d addressed Himself in the second person singular "I am the L-rd thy G-d," when He gave the Torah and Mitzvos to our people. To be sure, there are fully observant Jews and less observant

Jews, but this has to do only with external manifestations and influences, whereas essentially all Jews are fully committed to Torah and Mitzvos. It is, therefore, necessary only to shed the external "garments" or "layers" to reveal the inner Jewish essence, and this is something which every Jew has the capacity to do, where there is a firm will and determination.

There is surely no need to elaborate to you on the above.

Good News

We are pleased to announce that this year a group is being organized to travel from the US to:

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for the Alter Rebbe's upcoming Yahrtzeit
on the 24th. of Teves.***



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THE LIGHT OF CHANUKA – WITHIN AND WITHOUT

BY RABBI CHAIM ASHKENAZI, MASHPIA, YESHIVAS TOMCHEI T'MIMIM, LOD
TRANSLATED BY MICHOEL LEIB DOBRY

*The whole month of Kislev brings us to have influence upon the outside, and therefore, it seems that its closing days demonstrate a contradiction. The chareidi world customarily kindles its Chanuka lights at the entrance to the house pointing outward, while Lubavitcher Chassidim light them in the house, and not even near a window or the front door, but at a doorway within the house. * Excerpts from a chassidic farbrengen.*

THE “OUTWARD” MONTH

The month of Kislev is filled with Chabad dates – Rosh Chodesh Kislev, Tes Kislev, Yud Kislev, Yud-Daled Kislev, Yud-Tes-Chaf Kislev – and all have one common theme: **the revelation and spreading of the teachings and ways of Chassidus.**

Rosh Chodesh Kislev, the revelation of the Rebbe shlita after the concealment of Shmini Atzeres 5738, and there began from Rosh Chodesh Kislev 5738 a new era in

the spreading of Yiddishkait, shining with the illumination of Torah through the Rebbe shlita’s extensive and growing activities, both in quality and quantity.

Tes Kislev, the birthday and yahrtzait of the Mitteler Rebbe, who represented *S’firas HaBina* of chassidus and expressed himself in broad explanations of chassidus, both in quality and quantity. It is told that the Tzemach Tzedek’s son, HaRav Yehuda Leib, was called

“*shtender*” (lectern), because the Mitteler Rebbe would sometimes say chassidus unexpectedly for long hours, leaning upon him as a lectern. Once, the Mitteler Rebbe said chassidus while leaning on him for eighteen hours!

Yud Kislev, Chag HaGeula, the redemption of the Mitteler Rebbe after the concealment from the imprisonment of *S’firas HaBina* of chassidus, known also as a chassid’s day of birth, i.e., the day of his revelation in this world.

Yud-Daled Kislev, the Rebbe shlita’s wedding anniversary, which the Rebbe shlita said represented the day that connected **him with us, and together with him, we will come to the Redemption.**

Yud-Tes Kislev, the Rosh HaShana of the revelation of chassidus – a new stage **in the revelation and spreading of the wellsprings of the Baal Shem Tov.** As is known, when the Baal Shem Tov and the Mezritcher Maggid visited the Alter Rebbe in prison, they gave him instructions that upon his release, he should spread the teachings of chassidus even more.

The Rebbe shlita explains in *Likkutei Sichos* (Vol. 30) that the innovation in the nullification of the decree against spreading the hidden teachings of Torah came as a result of the accusation of Rabbi Pinchas of Koritz. Rabbi Pinchas once saw a page with chassidic writings rolling in an unclean place, and came out against the open and widespread publication of chassidic teachings. The Alter Rebbe nullified this kitrug by comparing the teachings of chassidus to the precious stone in the king's crown that was ground into powder in order to prepare a medicinal remedy for his ailing son. After the nullification of the kitrug on Yud-Tes Kislev, the spreading of chassidus increased, and it no longer was a medicine that was potentially dangerous if used in large amounts, and thus must be taken only in small dosages. From that moment on, it was comparable to food and drink that could be taken until the person was fully satiated. Chassidus now had the status of a document that had been brought into legal question and then accepted in court, making its future nullification totally impossible.

Thus, all the important chassidic dates of this month revolve around one essential point: **the outward revelation of the teachings of chassidus to the world.**

A MIXTURE OR A COMPOUND?

This month is the third of the winter months and the third of the calendar year, corresponding to the third of the summer months, the month of Sivan. Sivan also had the nullification of a decree (that the upper realms shall not descend below and the lower realms shall not rise above), and through the descent of the Sh'china at Mattan Torah, G-d was revealed **to the world and in the world**, i.e., the revelation was **outward**. This same process occurred

with ever greater fortitude in the month of Kislev with the innovation of an additional stage: the revelation of the connection of the physical and spiritual together, which is comparable to the revelation to be experienced with the coming of Moshiach.

Throughout the generations, the Rebbeim strengthened the approach of reaching out to simple Jews. This has been established as an ironclad rule among Lubavitcher chassidim, and anyone who does not conduct himself in this manner is considered unusual and is not called a true chassid who should go out on shlichus.

The Rebbe shlita explains in one of his letters the advantage of the second revelation over the first: Mattan Torah is similar to the combination of sugar in tea. Even though there appears to be a clear connection, nevertheless, the two can be separated through excessive

boiling of the water. In contrast to this mixture of water and sugar, there is a compound – the connection of two types of material and their transformation into a third material, such as stainless steel comprised of various metallic elements, which after becoming a compound cannot be separated and remains as one entity. This is what happened at the revelation of the teachings of chassidus: We were given the ability to raise the world to the point of transforming it into a new compound, a holy entity bearing no sign of concealment whatsoever.

This form of compound also appears at the conclusion of the month of Kislev, during the holiday of Chanuka, as expressed in the mitzva of lighting the menorah at the doorway to the house **outside** on the **left** side after **dark**, until **d'kalya rigla d'Tarmudai** (when the people of Tarmudai no longer pass). "Tarmudai" possesses the same root letters as "mordim" (rebels), and "d'kalya rigla" refers to *kilayon ha'regel*, i.e., the longing of the lowest body part, the *regel* (leg), of those who rebel against G-d, so that they too will come to a state of longing for G-dliness. Similarly, we find throughout the month of Kislev, from Rosh Chodesh until the very end (and even a little left over for the next month), an expression of elevation after elevation, until the lowest level (Tarmudai) shines with the light of Torah and mitzvos.

THEN WHY DO WE LIGHT INSIDE?

As mentioned above, the whole month of Kislev brings us to have influence upon the outside, and therefore, it seems that its closing days demonstrate a contradiction. The chareidi world customarily kindles its Chanuka lights **at the entrance to the house pointing outward**, while Lubavitcher

Chassidim light them in the house, and not even near a window or the front door, but at a doorway within the house. (The Rebbe shlita brings in *Likkutei Sichos* [Vol. 5, p. 156] that chassidim are so accustomed, based on, “since it came from Rav’s mouth,” in accordance with the more esoteric teachings of *remez* and *drush*.)

To understand this point, we first must bring another more fascinating question in relation to our times that we simply did not find in previous generations: Beginning with the lesson from the final Mishna of Pirkei Avos, where Rabbi Yosi said that even if they would give him thousands upon thousands of gold coins, he would only live in a place of Torah. We see further that the Rambam says according to halacha that a person must live among the wise, and in our times, this refers to those who fear the Word of G-d. As a result of this ruling, Jews for generations kept their distance from anyone considered to be ignorant, and they even mocked them because they were considered similar to animals, as mentioned at length in the Rebbe Rayatz’s Memoirs.

The Baal Shem Tov was the first to bring the innovation of reaching out to simple and ignorant Jews, and throughout the generations, the Rebbeim strengthened this approach until the latter years of the Rebbe Rayatz’s leadership and all the years of the Rebbe’s leadership. This has been established as an ironclad rule among Lubavitcher chassidim, and anyone who does not conduct himself in this manner is considered unusual and is not called a true chassid who should go out on shlichus. To live in a place considered “outside” means to be totally distant from the wellspring of thousands of years of light. However, this is not the same as reaching out to ignorant Jews, each of whom is G-d-fearing on his own level. In our

times, each one of us has his personal shlichus to deal with certain people that appear to be on a far lower level, not a higher one.

WE MUST INHALE THE OXYGEN OURSELVES!

What is different and how is it different? It’s true that this is the Rebbe shlita’s responsibility, but what are our tools? As explained by the Rebbe Rayatz and at greater length in *Likkutei Sichos* (Vol. 20), there are people whose job is to find coal within the thickness of the earth and pearls in the depths of the sea. While they must receive and



follow the instructions from their supervisor, they must breathe oxygen on their own. And from where do we get this oxygen? It is clear that while the Rebbe shlita is the source of this light and strength, Lubavitch has worked throughout its history specifically to place lights within vessels. If so, what are the vessels that we must make to be fitting for this avoda?

From the days of our forefathers, we have conducted ourselves according to this rule: Avrohom Avinu distanced himself from Lot when he earned a bad reputation, and Moshe Rabbeinu said, “Turn

away from the tents of the evil people.” Since being close to non-positive people is considered something negative, the abovementioned rule applies. But how can we take such a heavy responsibility upon our frail shoulders?

The answer lies hidden in the custom to light the Chanuka lights inside the house, despite (or perhaps due to) the fact that we strive to **illuminate the outside**. In essence, the answer is that the Rebbe shlita gives us new strengths that were not given to the previous generations, however, we make the vessels. We don’t sit at home, illuminate it at the door only outside, and wait for someone who wants to come, as in the days of Shlomo HaMelech, when the sparks came to him. This is the custom of those G-d-fearing Jews who light the menorah outside, however, they personally remain inside while the candles are a sign that there is light there. Anyone can come if they so wish, just as anyone who needs a doctor can go to him...

On the other hand, instilled by the need to light and illuminate the **outside** in the **darkness**, on the **left side**, and in the place of **rebels**, we go out with the members of our family. However, in order to have success, we must first illuminate ourselves as a rising flame to instill G-dliness within us. **We** are given **light and vitality** for our souls in a manner of “the living bears himself,” and therefore, we light the candles of mitzvos and the Torah of light **within our home**. Furthermore, we educate ourselves and everything in our domain not to be affected by the darkness, but not because we close ourselves in and pretend that it doesn’t exist, and not because we are ready to come in contact with it out of a sense of acceptance. **Darkness** is **darkness** and has no relevance to us whatsoever; it is beneath us and does not deserve that we should

look upon it, because it is so despised and disgusting.

KODSHEI KODASHIM ARE SACRIFICED AT THE NORTH

The pasuk says, “*Kodshei kodashim* are sacrificed at the north,” and Chassidim explain that since it is *kodshei kodashim*, not only can it make a sh’chita that is an elevation, it can do so at the north, the source of evil, as is written, “The evil will start from the north.” Anyone who is not *kodshei kodashim*, i.e., who has not prepared the necessary tools, he has neither the permission nor the ability to act in that place emphasized as “the **north**.” Instead, he can do sh’chita anywhere in the holy courtyard, any place where there is holiness – B’nei Brak, Yerushalayim, Elad, Beitar, and other chareidi towns such as Monsey, Borough Park, Williamsburg, etc.

Similarly, one of the mashpiim from a previous generation said: If we want it to be warm outside, we must heat the stove in the house to a thousand degrees, and then there will be a normal temperature outside. However, if the house is only room temperature, outside it will be below zero. The point to be emphasized here is the need to **heat** the house, not **burn** it. In other words, we should not pressure someone in a manner that will instill unnecessary fear in his home, for such words will cause a form of destruction as mentioned in Tractate Gittin. Rather, we must make things **warm** and pleasant.

HOME HEATING ACCORDING TO THE LAWS OF CHANUKA

We can learn how to heat the home to such a degree of warmth from the laws of Chanuka:

*The oil used to kindle the Chanuka candles must be pure,

sealed with the signet of the Kohen Gadol. Anything that nourishes the human “candles” must be pure without any shred of defect, fit to receive the signet, the approval, and the blessing of the Kohen Gadol, the Rebbe MH”M.

*The Chanuka lights, if they are torches, are unfit. It is essential that the kindling must be done through a single candle that spreads a tranquil and pleasant light – not something boisterous and stormy that leaps forward like a torch. In addition, we are accustomed to sit near the candles for half an hour, befitting the half an hour that the Rebbe Rashab said that we need to spend thinking about our children’s education every day. In other words, we don’t light the candles and leave, nor do we light and then deal with other matters, even very important ones. Rather we must sit and pay attention to what the candles are telling us, how this light has influence. Now when you are totally devoted and dedicated to this tranquil and pleasant light that is burning in your home, your involvement with your family is not merely for your own personal benefit. It is forbidden to make use of the lights; you must make them illuminate for **their** good and not for yours.

*This concept is expressed further by the number of candles we light – eight, not seven. If you light only seven candles, you are illuminating only yourself! Everything revolves around your *yeshus*... As is known, the number seven signifies nature that conceals G-dliness and gives a place to a feeling of haughtiness. Eight days expresses going out from this world, i.e., going out of the selfish way you look at your family, how you want to see them.

*There’s an additional candle for your self, the *shamash*, which is

made especially for the use of your “me.” In other words, light it on its own, set a separate time for your self – but these candles are for your family!

*Each day, you light an additional candle on the menorah. When it comes to education, it’s not enough to give out orders once, say “Shazam!,” and that’s it – everything’s fine... We must make an investment every day, again and again, more and more. And to make sure that each time it’s more, we must add in both quality and quantity.

*The laws of Chanuka also discuss the miracle of the oil: Was this due to an increase in quality or quantity? If the lighting will be as it was yesterday, it adds nothing. But there is also no need for any particularly new and lofty ascents. One of the mashpiim of the previous generation was confronted once by his students who complained that they’re always hearing the same thing. “You want news?” the mashpia replied. “Go and buy a paper!” Thus, while there is no need for new utterances, nevertheless, it is most important that things be said in an innovative and radiant manner.

*Above all, there is the widespread custom among all Jews that each person kindles his own Chanuka light – not one for the entire family, rather each person should light his own menorah. This is not based upon merely the establishment of rules and regulations in the home, but on a more personal approach. The Rebbe shlita added further that children should light at the entrance to their rooms – again, bringing a personal touch to the ritual. This serves as a proven *s’gula* to prevent *rigla d’Tarmudai*, rebellion among the offspring *ch”v* in matters of holiness. For if they see how important they truly are to their parents and

teachers, there is simply no reason for them to rebel. On the contrary, the power of rebellion that exists at their ages stems from the desire to rebel against accepted conventional beliefs as represented by *kalya*, the destruction and elevation of *rigla d'Tarmudai*.

A SHIELD AGAINST SOCIAL PRESSURES

What is the purpose to strengthening the warmth of the home? Intensifying the feeling towards chassidic warmth and light enables a Jew not to be affected when he goes out into the world. The Rebbe shlita once gave a *sicha* on the Rambam's Hilchos Chanuka, where he discusses that after the Rambam lists all the decrees imposed by the Greeks, he added the words "**and they oppressed them with great pressure.**" How does this compare to the decrees upon their daughters, their property, etc.?

The Rebbe shlita explains that this was the harshest difficulty of all: when a Jew feels under pressure from his surroundings and the world – what will people say? This causes him to give in to the other decrees *r"l*. If he gives them room for consideration or discussion, he may afterwards discover reasons why they are right, and eventually, he finds himself on the other side completely.

Chassidus explains the meaning to what is said regarding the *yetzer ha'ra*: Today, it says, "Do this," tomorrow, it will say, "Do that," until finally it says, "Go and worship idols." How is it possible to come to idol worship just from the *yetzer ha'ra* saying, "Do this and that"? Furthermore, it doesn't say that the Jew actually **does** this or that, only that the *yetzer ha'ra* tells him, "Do this!" Perhaps it would be more easily understood if it was written that today he brings him to **do** this and that until he finally worships

idols?

However, the mere fact that the Jew lets the *yetzer ha'ra* tell him, "Do this," means that he accepts the *yetzer ha'ra's* claim to a certain extent, and therefore, he has to argue with him to prove that he's wrong. By doing so, he has thus given the *yetzer ha'ra* room to take up. Chassidus explains that any time we have to negate something proves that it does have some degree of metzius, for something that really has no metzius in our heart, our mind, our will, or our desire, need

Any time we have to negate something proves that it does have some degree of metzius, for something that really has no metzius in our heart, our mind, our will, or our desire, need not be negated whatsoever.

not be negated whatsoever. Therefore, while the *beinoni* never does any evil, nevertheless, the Alter Rebbe writes that the *beinoni* "is judged by both [inclinations]." How can it be that the *yetzer ha'ra* is the **judge** when it is merely **gives its opinion**, as the Alter Rebbe explains in Chapter 13 of *Tanya*, and then the *yetzer tov* comes to refute him, and G-d comes to the aid of the *yetzer tov*. But it is more than enough that the *yetzer ha'ra* is even given the chance to state its opinion, for this

means that it has already **judged** the Jew. The opinion penetrated him, and while the *yetzer ha'ra* was subsequently refuted and defeated, it is still said: One more victory like that and we're lost!

COMPARED TO THE YOUNG MAN "LIVING IT UP"

I once heard a *farbrengen* with R. Chaim Shaul Brook, where he spoke to one of the students who had begun to imitate the dress and hairstyle of young men his age from the street. The main subject of the *farbrengen*: Beware of the young man in the street.

He told a story about a scholarly *rabbi* who learned the concept of giving notice to someone before he passes away that if *ch"v* he commits heresy a moment before his death, it is thus declared that all the good he fulfilled during his lifetime is null and void. This *rabbi* could not understand the existence of such a thing. How can someone who lived his whole life according to Torah and *mitzvos* suddenly deny everything a moment before the departing of his soul? As he pondered the matter, he dozed off and dreamt that someone came in and asked him if he could leave an amount of money as a deposit for a few days, and the *rabbi* agreed. After a few days, a widow came to the *rabbi* in request of a loan to buy chickens that can lay eggs, etc., so she could make a living for her household and then return the money. The *rabbi* did not have the money, and then he realized that the deposit was still sitting untouched in his house like a rock. What could possibly happen if he lent the money to help the poor widow? Could there be any greater *mitzva* than that? So the *rabbi* gave the widow part of the deposit money, but the woman didn't exactly earn enough from this business venture and she couldn't pay back the loan.

In the meantime, the depositor appeared and asked for his money, which the rabbi naturally didn't have. The man complained to the police and the rabbi was placed under arrest, as he did not deny that he had been given the deposit. When he arrived at the prison, the wardens realized that they had caught a big fish – a Jewish rabbi – and they immediately sent for the priest. The priest came with an offer that if he would convert, he would be released. However, the rabbi yelled at him in rebuke, and the priest left. Meanwhile, the rabbi saw a young Jewish man sitting in the same cell, who told him, "Look, rabbi, even if I was caught doing something, if they'll propose that I change my religion, I'll give my consent and I'll leave. My life is before me, I'll do t'shuva and I'll give tz'daka. What's the point to my rotting in prison?" The rabbi harshly castigated the young man. "G-d forbid to even consider such a thing!" he said. A few hours later, the young man was released.

Shortly afterwards, when the priest came back and made his previous offer, the rabbi waved his hand in rejection, but without yelling and rebuking, since he remembered the recently released young man. That night, the rabbi saw the young man in a dream, once again a true G-d-fearing Jew, saying to him, "Nu, *chacham ainer!* What have you gained by being so stubborn? Look, here I am living it up on all fronts." The priest came to the rabbi a third time, but the rabbi did not respond. The rabbi was presently making a personal cheshbon when he again saw the young man, and he then decided that when the priest would come the next time, he would give his consent... At that moment, the rabbi awoke from his dream...

The rabbi now realized that if we act according to that young man's

approach, it is even possible *ch"v* to come to a change of religion. R. Shaul Brook concluded the story by telling this student: Don't look in the direction of the *yetzer ha'ra*, which looks like a young man "living it up." Don't even give him room to enter a discussion or debate.

OUT OF THE SIEGE AND INTO THE ERA OF MOSHIACH

In Chapter 18 of *Tanya*, the Alter Rebbe says that self-sacrifice must be

"Look, rabbi, even if I was caught doing something, if they'll propose that I change my religion, I'll give my consent and I'll leave. My life is before me, I'll do t'shuva and I'll give tz'daka. What's the point to my rotting in prison?"

without **reason** and without **hesitation**. The Rebbe shlita explains this matter in connection with the fast of the Tenth of Teives, a fast so severe that if it would fall out on Shabbos, it would not be postponed, even though the extremely severe fast of Tisha B'Av is postponed when it comes out on Shabbos. However, the Tenth of Teives is held as a result of the beginning of the siege on **Yerushalayim**, i.e., **yiras Shamayim**. Yerushalayim is a combination of two words – *yira shalem* (complete

fear), and the very fact that there is a siege, and you feel yourself choking and pressured by the world, the result of "Go and serve idols" is simply of matter of time *ch"v*.

For this reason, the Chanuka lights are kindled inside, to illuminate and show the truth, and then it is possible to go out with great momentum to have an effect upon the outside without being pressured. Furthermore, through fulfilling the mitzva of the Chanuka lights within the house in this manner – i.e., kindling "the candle of G-d [which] is the soul of man" of all the members of his family as we kindle the Chanuka lights, in a pleasant manner *al taharas ha'kodesh* for their sake and their good, in the most appropriate fashion for each individual – is a good and most befitting preparation to prevent a

situation of "the king of Bavel counts on Yerushalayim." There should be no situation of an educational destruction *ch"v*, to the point that "foxes walk about in it." On the contrary, in the words of the Rebbe shlita, there will be fulfilled the higher interpretation of "the king of Bavel counts on" – **adding strength** in Yerushalayim.

Then, there will be fulfilled "He redeemed my soul in peace...for the many were with me," referring to the people of Avshalom, Dovid's opponent, who still prayed for Dovid's victory. In other words, the darkness itself will shine with a light far brighter than usual, as has been promised at the coming of the true and complete Redemption, immediately, *mamash*, now, when the source of the darkness will be revealed as much higher than the source of the light itself.

WITH THE TANYA YOU COULD BE A CHASSID LIKE AVROHOM AVINU

*As we begin the cycle of daily Tanya study anew, we present a compilation of aphorisms of our Rebbeim and the G'dolei HaChassidim about the holiness and importance of the Tanya. * From the book HaTanya V'Kocho HaEloki by Rabbi Moshe Niselevitz.*

SPIRITUAL JAR OF OIL

At one of the Mittlerer Rebbe's farbrengens with the g'dolei ha'chassidim on Chanuka, there was a long sicha about the jar of oil that was found in the Beis HaMikdash. The Rebbe said:

The recommended counsel to win the spiritual battle is through avoda of the mind and heart, to understand and comprehend the oneness and unity of Hashem in all of Creation. And this is specifically through the holy *Tanya*, which contains revealed G-dliness and is the actual spiritual jar of oil of the Mikdash, which is sealed with the seal of the Kohen Gadol, and it is with this that one wins the entire war.

With the holy *Tanya* we light the G-dly menorah contained within the Torah and mitzvos, in all Jewish homes. That holy *Tanya* cries out and calls, "Whoever is for Hashem, come to me."

(R' Chaim Avrohom Duchman

as heard from R' Isaac Homiler)

PLEASURE IN G-DLINESS

R' Hillel Paritcher z"l would say: If hedonists would know how great is the pleasure and exquisite taste in matters of G-dliness, which they can attain by learning Chassidus, especially the holy *Tanya*, they would abandon all their passions and only pursue the holy *Tanya*.

(R' Chaim Avrohom Duchman, who heard this from his grandfather, R' Mordechai Yoel)

TO CONVERSE WITH THE ALTER REBBE

Learning the *Tanya* is tantamount to conversing with the [Alter] Rebbe, since he wrote in and placed himself into the *Tanya*.

(Rebbe Rashab, Toras Sholom, p. 56)

BOOK OF YECHIDUS

The Alter Rebbe explains in the introduction to his *Tanya* that this book is a substitute for the guidance

given in private audiences, and contains within it answers to all questions in avodas Hashem. By printing his introduction as part of the *Tanya* and as the introduction to the book, it becomes part of the "eternal Torah," which pertains to every Jew.

Therefore, in addition to the learning of the *Tanya* pertaining to and being vital for every Jew, it is also understood that each and every person can extract from the *Tanya* "all the answers to all the questions," and can mine from it "the proper counsel for every challenge in avodas Hashem."



By the Alter Rebbe writing in the introduction, “I am speaking to those who know and are familiar with me,” and that the study of *Tanya* is instead of yechidus, he was conferring the power and ability, and actually accomplished that each person who learns *Tanya* becomes, “those who know and are familiar” with the Alter Rebbe. For then, even if he is on the level of “walking in darkness” (and therefore, he cannot extract the “light which is good” which is hidden within other books of ethics), the *Tanya* **affects** him in a way of “seeing.” Namely, that the Alter Rebbe shows and illuminates the path of truth for him, which is also a **clear and illuminating** path, of how, “the matter is **very close to you**, in your mouth and in your heart to do it.”

(the Rebbe MH"M, Likkutei Sichos, vol. 26, p. 38)

FROM HEAVEN THEY CONSENTED TO THE TITLE, “TANYA KADISHA”

The Alter Rebbe himself did not call the book *Tanya*, and it was only from heaven that they consented to this title. The rabbanim of Krakow and Zolkova write in their approbations, “the mouth of G-d called it *Tanya Kadisha* and it has become known by the name *Tanya*.” This means that both the heavenly yeshiva and the earthly yeshiva consented to call it by the name *Tanya Kadisha*.

(Likkutei Hagahos L'Seifer HaTanya, Brooklyn, 5734, p. 2)

THE TANYA UNCOVERS EVEN HIDDEN EVIL AND CORRECTS IT

When R' Itche the Masmid a"h once entered shul with his friend, the members of the shul stood up for him and R' Itche motioned that they should sit down.

After the davening, the friend asked R' Itche: My dear friend, why did you think that they stood up for

you? Maybe they stood up for me (and I was the one who should have motioned to them to sit)? And why did you motion that there was no need for them to get up for you? That means that you felt that they rose for you. Yet we know from *Tanya* and Chassidus that our naturally inclined feelings (because of the nature of the body) are from klipas noga and from the secret of the sin of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil!

(The Chabad approach is not to overlook in one's friend matters that need improvement in his avodas Hashem and the correction of middos. Rather, one reproves his friend about

First of all, what is needed is constant self-evaluation to know that you are lost, and when you know you're lost, then and only then, do you search for the right path.

correcting something – even when he is greater in knowledge and level, etc. – speaking with love and great care, not even overlooking (in Chassidic terms) “subtle evil.” And the other person, even if he is greater than the one reproving him, always accepts it with love and affection and gratitude.)

When R' Itche heard this, he thanked his friend from the depths of his heart for opening his eyes, and with genuine seriousness he accepted what the friend had pointed out. R' Itche spent a few moments in thought on the subtleties of the matter and said to his friend:

You are so right! Now I see that I

did not work enough on chapter 30 of *Tanya*, because in every inyan and word of *Tanya* you must devote great thought during davening (as it says in chapter 30, “the avodas ha't'filla with concentration is to pour one's soul out before G-d, literally with all one's might, until the soul is wrung out”). Clearly, I did not fulfill this properly. It says explicitly at the beginning of that chapter precisely where I failed, “this too he should take to heart, to fulfill what our Sages say, and be of humble spirit before every man, really and truly before every person literally.” Therefore, how did I think and feel that they rose for me and not for you?

You are more distinguished than me in many areas, and are a far greater baal middos tovos than me. And so, why wasn't it a given for me, in the depths of my soul and with utter certainty, that all are better than me, and that everybody deserves honor aside from me, especially after the long and detailed explanation like the one in chapter 29 of *Tanya* about lowering oneself to be despicable in one's eyes, etc. This is nothing but what Chassidus calls, “hidden evil,” which is very difficult to recognize and feel, and requires much avoda.

(For there is open evil and hidden evil, and even when a person works on himself so that he feels no evil in his soul at all, it is possible that evil remains hidden within him. This is like what R' Yochanon ben Zakai said (when he cried on his deathbed), “I don't know on which path they will lead me,” and this was despite his not having left out anything [in Torah] big or small, and despite all the good qualities that our Sages say about him. This is because our revealed kochos are no proof to what is really going on deep within the soul.)

Immediately after this, R' Itche farbrenged all night with the Chassidim and all he spoke about was that only with the *Tanya* can we recognize and feel the truth in every



The Rebbe distributing Tanyas with English translation 5735

move and turn, and even hidden evil (the feeling of ego that is hidden within the deep crevices of the animal soul). With the *Tanya* we have the ability to find it and uproot it even from there and from the roots.

There is no other book in the world like the *Tanya*. It enumerates all parts of man's avoda in the greatest detail, whether about the G-dly soul or the animal soul, and their garments of thought, speech, and action, and all parts of the body and matters of the world.

We must be constantly immersed in the *Tanya*, all our lives, and then we can walk securely, with Hashem's help, at all times and in all places, on a healthy and strong bridge.

(R' Dovber Yaffe who participated in this farbrengen of R' Itche the Masmid)

LIKE AVROHOM AVINU

Chassidim approached the Alter Rebbe and wanted to hear from him a new maamer Chassidus. The Alter Rebbe said to them: Newspapers! Newspapers! You want the news? Learn *Tanya*! With *Tanya*, you can be a Chassid like Avrohom Avinu.

(R' Chaim Avrohom Duchman in the name of R' Moshe Vilenker)

A WAY OF LIFE FOR GREAT AND SMALL

The *Tanya* of Rabbeinu, the *Seifer Shel Beinonim* – with its various explanations for the paths of life, how a Jew ought to live, materially and spiritually, and the variety of advice about how to find man's flaws and correct them – opened the eyes of

tens of thousands of Jews in the world at large in every dispersion of the Jewish people in the Diaspora and in Eretz Yisroel. The *Tanya* became the guidebook to the pathway of life for great and small: how the greatest genius **must** be an oved Hashem, and how the simplest Jew **can** be an oved Hashem.

(Rebbe Rayatz, Seifer HaSichos 5702, p. 59)

EXTRICATING MAN FROM HIS ERRORS AND DOUBTS

They sat at a farbrengen and among them were famous Chassidim. During a conversation among them (as is customary among Chassidim, to reprove one another to better oneself and to have proper middos, and this reproof is with great gentleness and

out of love), R' Itche the Masmid said to his friend: My dear friend, do you realize that you are lost?

The friend replied with great friendliness: I agree with you that I am lost, but who is not lost now? Nowadays we are all lost and what can be done about it?

R' Itche said: It is true that we are all lost now, but there are two types of people who are lost and there is a big difference between them, and everything depends on this difference. For example, two people separately entered a fearsome forest with wild animals, and they got lost. However, one knows that he is lost in the forest and he keeps searching for the right path, running a little here and returning, running a little over there and returning, until he finally finds the right path and is saved. But the second one, who does not realize that he is lost, and is calm and confident that he is on the right path, he continues walking in the forest and gets in deeper and deeper. The same is true for those who are spiritually lost.

You asked what to do so as not to be lost. First of all, what is needed is constant self-evaluation to know that you are lost, and when you know you're lost, then and only then, do you search for the right path.

The advice for this is to increase and strengthen your study of holy *Tanya*, for it constantly shows a person to recognize and feel the truth, whether the path he is on is right and true or whether he is lost. When you live with the *Tanya*, you absolutely cannot be a lost soul, but without *Tanya* even a gadol b'Yisroel who is expert in Shas and poskim and the writings of the Arizal, can be lost on the path of avodas Hashem, and all the more so with regard to simple people.

When the study of *Tanya* is self-directed with understanding and a good grasp, the *Tanya* will extricate

him from all doubts and errors and will place him on the right path, which is the path of Hashem, to walk on it securely and constantly, for there is no guidance like the guidance in *Tanya*.

Over the years that Jews davened [for the Geula], they accomplished that we were given, "blow the great shofar," which is the holy *Tanya*, and with the *Tanya* the outcasts of our nation will gather from all four corners of the earth.

(R' Yisroel Noach Blinitzky and R' Nissan Nemenov)

UNTIL ANIPOLI WAS COMPLETELY AFLAME

When the Alter Rebbe's emissaries brought handwritten pamphlets of *Tanya* to Anipoli, to Rabbi Yehuda Leib and Rabbi Zushe, in order to obtain their approbations for the printed *Tanya*, they left the manuscripts with them overnight so the tzaddikim could examine them.

When R' Yehuda Leib read the *Tanya*, he was tremendously amazed and excited. Unable to contain his great emotions, he decided to go to R' Zushe (for both lived in Anipoli) and to share his excitement with him.

The same thing happened with R' Zushe. He too could not contain his great emotions and he decided to go to R' Yehuda Leib. So by walking towards each other, they met on the bridge that connected the two parts of the town of Anipoli, and they began to dance there with great joy until "Anipoli was completely aflame..."

(from Lessons in Tanya by R' Yosef Weinberg and from a number of sources)

IF WE KNEW THE POWER OF TANYA

At one of R' Isaac Homiler's farbrengens with Chassidim, he recounted what he had merited to hear from the Tzemach Tzedek when he had a yechidus:

As is known, it is only the work of the Satan that the world has no grasp

at all of *Tanya*. For with the *Tanya* you can transform the entire world to the side of merit. The holy *Tanya* is the precious stone in the crown of the King of the world, as we know from the analogy of my grandfather (the Alter Rebbe).

The greatness and power of the Baal Shem Tov and the Maggid is revealed primarily in the holy *Tanya*, which includes their teachings and avoda. If the world knew the great privilege and what could be accomplished with the power of the *Tanya* in the world, both in spiritual matters as well as in material matters, they wouldn't budge from the *Tanya* for even a moment.

(R' Chaim Avrohom Duchman as heard from R' Isaac Homiler)

THE ALTER REBBE STOOD THEM ALL ON ONE

At the farbrengen of the Tzemach Tzedek on Yud-Tes Kislev with the Chassidim, including R' Isaac Homiler, R' Hillel Paritcher and other great Chassidim, the Tzemach Tzedek greatly extolled the power of *Tanya*:

In *Tanya*, chapter 33 it says, "Just as a person rejoices over an inheritance worth a fortune that he did not toil for, so too and even more so to an infinite degree, we ought to rejoice over the inheritance bequeathed to us by our fathers, which is the true unity of Hashem. Namely, that even on the earth below, there is none other but Him, and this is His dwelling place.

"And this is what the Sages mean when they said that the 613 mitzvos were given to the Jewish people and then along came Chavakuk the prophet and stood them all on one mitzva, as it says, 'and a tzaddik lives by his faith' – as though there is only one mitzva, that of faith, for through faith alone you come to fulfill all 613 mitzvos of the Torah."

The Tzemach Tzedek continued: In these generations, we ought to

rejoice over the great inheritance, worth a fortune, that we did not toil for, which the Alter Rebbe bequeathed to us by revealing to us the *Tanya*. The *Tanya* that reveals and instills the pure and loyal faith within the innermost hearts and souls of all Israel, with the unity and oneness of Hashem, "that everything is G-dliness." This is especially so in later generations, with its lowly souls in the Ikvisa d'Meshicha, when the overpowering of klipos is to an extreme.

The main thing is to disseminate the *Tanya* in as many ways as possible, even to set up tables for mashpiim outside, on the streets of the city, for shiurim for the passersby. Similar to what they did in the time of Ezra, when they read the Torah in the street, because it was a time when klipos were overpowering, as is known. Therefore, the Torah was read in the street in order to subdue the utter evil of the three impure klipos.

My grandfather came and "stood

them all on one," which is the *Tanya*. And it is through the *Tanya* that all Jews will achieve the perfection of the Yemos HaMoshiach and the Resurrection of the Dead, which is the revelation of G-dliness in this physical world. And Hashem's glory will fill the entire world and Yisroel will see, as they did at Mattan Torah, that "Hashem is Elokim, there is nothing besides Him."

(R' Chaim Avrohom Duchman as heard from R' Isaac Homiler)

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ON THE RUN

BY RABBI SHNEUR ZALMAN CHANIN

*The dark days in Russia soon left R' Chaikel the lone survivor of his father's family. * He himself was forced to flee for his life, though ultimately it proved to be what saved him and his descendants.*

THE PENETRATING LOOK OF THE RAV

In 1931, a new law was enacted which stated that every person, from the age of sixteen and up, had to have a new passport made which would also serve as a residents permit. In order to acquire the new passport you had to provide information: your name, parents' names, birthplace, profession, current place of employment, previous place of employment, etc. These seemingly innocent questions were designed to separate the desirable from the undesirable.

Most of the Chassidim were in trouble, for what should they answer about their profession? Most of them were rabbanim, melamdin, or other klei kodesh, and if they would say the truth, they would not be given a passport. Who needed a rav, a chazan, a melamed, or a sofer? People with professions such as these would be given permission to live in Siberia, but not in cities where people normally lived.

Many of Anash lied in order to survive, but our grandfather, Rabbi Yehoshua, who was a rav his entire life, did not want to lie. When he said the truth, that he was a rav, of course they

did not want to give him a passport. They informed him that he was not wanted in Vitebsk and he had no permission to live there, and that in ten days they would let him know where he could live.

The news that the rav had no permission to live in the city got around and the Chassidim were greatly upset. Nobody could understand how the authorities could expel a Jew who was over eighty years old.

My grandfather found out that the head of the passport committee in the police force was a Jew by the name of

Beilinke, and he wanted to meet with him. With great difficulty, the askanim managed to get an appointment. Since my grandfather did not know how to speak Russian, his daughter, Chana Feige Savashinsky accompanied him.

When the door of the office opened, Beilinke was impressed by my grandfather's appearance. My grandfather was an elderly, distinguished man with a long, white beard. Beilinke stood up for him and invited him to sit down. My grandfather saw how Beilinke was in awe of him and he realized that he could have his way.

When he sat down, he looked directly at Beilinke and said in Yiddish, "Look at my white beard. Where do you want to send me?" And he said nothing further.

Beilinke got up and went out to the other room. When he returned, he said to my grandfather: Rabbi, here is your new passport.



When my father related this story he added that here you see the power of a gaon, Chassid, and rav, who with just one look was able to arrange matters of great importance.

UNDERGROUND YESHIVA

The Dvina River divided Vitebsk into two parts. In the larger part, my grandfather served as rav, and in the smaller part, Rabbi Medelia served as rav. My grandfather, who had managed to obtain a new passport, moved to Leningrad shortly thereafter, but Rabbi Medelia did not get a passport. He was arrested and his whereabouts remained unknown.

At this time, Yeshivas Tomchei T'mimim in Vitebsk closed because of the ongoing persecution. Small groups of bachurim began learning in Kremenchug, Charkov, Leningrad, and even Moscow. Each group had a married man or bachur who with complete self-sacrifice was devoted to guiding and teaching them. The group wandered from one hiding place to another, from city to city and from town to town, and nobody knew where the next day's shiurim would take place.

There were also boys and bachurim who had to work to support themselves and their families, and another underground yeshiva was founded for them called Tiferes Bachurim. This was an evening program, in which the bachurim learned after a hard day's work. Rabbi Nachum Trebnik and Rabbi Avrohom Yeshaya Swerdlov (called Avremke Beshenkovitzer) ran this yeshiva. Many bachurim learned in this yeshiva and it was unusually successful. Its influence on the bachurim grew from day to day.

The yeshiva lasted for a while but then a spy put an end to it, someone who had been posing as a talmid who came to learn every day. R' Nachum and R' Avremke were arrested by the N.K.V.D. and sentenced to ten years in Siberia. Rabbi Swerdlov was pardoned after five years and went home. Since

this was during World War II, he was immediately drafted and since then, his whereabouts are unknown.

R' Nachum remained in Siberia for ten years and was thus saved. He ended up in the refugee camp in Poking and then went on to Eretz Yisroel, where he was appointed rosh yeshiva in Tomchei T'mimim Lubavitch in Kfar Chabad. At a later point, he became the mara d'asra in Kfar Chabad.

If they would say the truth, they would not be given a passport. Who needed a rav, a chazan, a melamed, or a sofer? People with professions such as these would be given permission to live in Siberia, but not in cities where people normally lived.

MY FATHER'S BROTHER WAS CAPTURED

In 1938, the situation in Russia was terrible and many Lubavitchers were arrested, including my uncle Shmuel (may Hashem avenge his blood), my father's brother. When my father mentioned his name, he always added that he was a "precious soul." Shmuel learned in Tomchei T'mimim in Nevel as a bachur.

I don't know all the details of the story, so I will write only what I heard

from my father. One of the Jews, who was later discovered to be caught in the net of the Yevsektzia and became an informer, entrapped Shmuel and managed to convince him to do a certain deal with him, so he could set up a frame.

My father did not have tangible proof that something was amiss but he felt, with some sixth sense, that this person was trouble. When my father found out that his brother had met with this man, he warned his brother and asked him to stay away from the man. He even suggested that his brother leave Leningrad for a while.

However, Shmuel's wife (who was the daughter of R' Falik Gurary) did not agree to this suggestion. She was only willing to watch over her husband if he hid in the house and she promised to try to see to it that he would not meet with that man anymore.

A few weeks went by and the man looked for Shmuel but didn't find him in the places where he usually saw him, so he began to carefully ask about him in shul. When he got no response, he frequently went to Shmuel's house and looked for him there.

When he had come to the house a number of times and did not find him, he began to bother Shmuel's wife to tell him where her husband was, but she did not answer him. By this point, my father was already sure that this man was an informer and he was very worried. He begged his brother to flee from Leningrad immediately. He promised to give him money that would last him for a few months but the main thing was he should flee that very day.

Despite the palpable danger, my aunt refused to allow Shmuel to leave the city and he remained hidden at home. The man continued to haunt the house until he found out that "his friend" was in the house. He probably conveyed this information to the N.K.V.D. who came that day "on a

visit.”

When the secret police or the Yevsektzia came to conduct a search or to arrest someone, they did so quietly so that nobody out on the street would know about it. They were afraid of creating disturbances and generally silenced the household. The strangers who sniffed something out were sworn to secrecy.

When Shmuel heard that undesirable guests had arrived, he hid under the bed. The guests spoke politely to the members of the household and asked my aunt about her husband. They looked here and there but since they didn't see Shmuel they quietly left. The danger seemed to have passed and Shmuel came out of his hiding place. Unfortunately, one of the agents, who happened to be a Jew, returned to look for something and of course arrested Shmuel on the spot.

All my father's connections didn't help. Even his good connections with the community leaders didn't help. Although these people were sworn communists, they would do anything for my father. Through them he found out that they had made up a strong case against his brother and that he was in the infamous Spalerka prison. They also said that it didn't look as though they would wait for a court case because a crime like this had a predetermined sentence.

My father did all he could to help his brother and tried to work with famous lawyers who had connections with the heads of the communist party and the N.K.V.D. but was unsuccessful.

BRIBE MONEY

My father heard that someone had asked about him in shul and also among Anash. Those who had been arrested also said they had been asked about him, about his power of influence, about his connection with Tomchei T'mimim, and about his connections with community matters and with the Rebbe who was abroad.

My father did not know the final straw that broke the camel's back, i.e. the final reason that made the secret police look for him, however, he knew there were many possible "crimes" with which they could incriminate him. Namely, the fact that he had money, that he supported Tomchei T'mimim, that he helped friends with money, his participation in farbrengens, his participation in minyanim, and his secret work on behalf of religious matters.

Friends advised him to leave the city immediately since they considered the situation to be dangerous for him. First his father-in-law had been arrested as a criminal, then his wife's family had been told to leave Leningrad, and now his brother was arrested and accused of a serious crime.

My father said that his mother, my grandmother Beila Zelda, heard that they were searching for her son and she was afraid they would enter her house and conduct a search. Then they were likely to arrest her son-in-law, Chaim Minkowitz, and accuse him too. So to prepare for their coming she set aside two sacks of gold, so they would take the money and leave her children alone. However, the N.K.V.D. did not look for my father at his mother's house.

When my father safely arrived in Moscow, she said: I set aside these two bags to save my children. Since Hashem saved them, I will give Him the gold by donating it to Tomchei T'mimim. And so she gave the sacks of gold for the yeshiva. May her memory be for a blessing.

FLEEING ON A FREIGHT TRAIN

This entire story took place during the summer when my mother and the children were in Luga and my father went there in order to be present at the birthday party of my sister Sarah. When he was in Luga they came to look for him at his house, and baruch

Hashem, he was saved.

Some days went by, and Satan's agents came again to his apartment looking for him and once again did not find him. They also went to his place of work and asked where he was. The manager, who was a friend of my father, told them he had gone away for a few days and then he quickly sent off a telegram to warn my father that he was being sought after.

It was clear that he had no choice but to disappear. He thought about how to leave without anybody noticing him. He could not use a regular train because the train station swarmed with spies who would be thrilled to catch him in their net. Cars and buses were non-existent and only the military used planes, so what did that leave him with?

He thought of traveling on a train called Maxim, which was a slow freight train, which occasionally had a passenger car attached to it too. Only a few people, who wanted to travel one or two stations, used it, because a twelve-hour trip could take a month. This seemed to be the safest option for him and he hoped that they wouldn't think of looking for him there.

The trip on this train took a week until he arrived in Moscow. My father asked his brother-in-law, Rabbi Refael Nimotin, to travel with him on the freight train to Moscow, because in case something happened to him he wanted someone to be able to inform the family. Before they boarded the train my uncle told him that members of the N.K.V.D. had come to his house again and when they didn't find him, in their anger they took his sister-in-law Bluma Nimotin (Segal), a fifteen-year-old girl, as a hostage.

My father was faced with a serious dilemma but he figured as follows: He had not been able to help his brother, and his sister-in-law, although in jail, would not be kept there long, because of her age. He did not want to put himself or his family in danger and he

knew that if he fell into their hands he would be shot without question. So he had no choice but to flee and to trust in Hashem.

Just as he thought, after a few days when my father still hadn't appeared, they released my aunt.

SECRET MEETING IN MOSCOW

In those days, communication between cities was primitive and was usually only through the mail, and if the police in Leningrad was looking for someone, the police in another city generally didn't know about it. This fact was certainly to the advantage of my father and other Chassidim like him.

Why did he choose to flee to Moscow? Because his uncle, his father's brother, Binyamin Chanin, lived there as well as his mother's uncle, Yirmiyahu Feitel, with his wife, my grandmother's sister. My father was on good terms with them and was sure that despite the danger of hosting someone without a permit to live in the city, in addition to being a man wanted by the police, that they would agree to have him.

When he finally arrived in Moscow, they graciously agreed to host him and he slept in their house for a number of days. Then he wandered to another house in the suburbs of Moscow, that they owned, which miraculously the communists had not nationalized. From then on, for an entire year, he wandered from town to town, and where he spent the day he did not spend the night.

His connection with my mother was almost nil. My father did not have an address and he was also afraid of the censors and did not write letters. There was no telephone or other means of communication so my mother received regards from my father via trusted friends only very occasionally. It was only a year after he escaped that my mother managed to

get to Moscow for only two days.

My mother's trip entailed danger and great difficulty, but she was supposed to find out whether only the secret police of Leningrad was looking for my father or he was being sought after throughout Russia. If her trip was uneventful and nobody followed her, it was a sign that they were not following after my father and the search was localized in Leningrad. This knowledge would enable him to live without terrible daily fear in his city of refuge.

My mother overcame the obstacles that arose. Her children were supposed



Rabbi Yehoshua Nimotin

to stay with my grandmother, Beila Zelda, but she became sick just at that time. My grandmother, Ita Mera, had been exiled to Yuraslava and was far from the city. In the end, she left the children with my aunt, my father's sister, Esther Rochel.

As my father had asked her, she got off at each station to see whether anybody followed her. When she arrived in Moscow, she had two problems: where would she meet my father and where would she stay, for she had no official permit that allowed her to stay in Moscow.

After my father thought it over, he decided that the safest place to meet with my mother was at his uncle, his father's brother, Binyamin Chanin, who despite the danger was happy to have them. My father was afraid of staying there for more than a few hours because he wasn't sure about his non-observant daughters.

By Divine providence, that same day, the Chassid R' Shmaryahu Sossonkin went away for a few days to his summer home and he gave my father his apartment that was in a suburb of Moscow.

After two days, my mother returned to Leningrad and from then until they fled Leningrad during the siege and they arrived in Tichvin, they did not see each other.

DEATH OF K'DOSHIM

Since my mother's trip was uneventful and nobody seemed to be watching her, my father decided that the time had come to ask for a residency permit for Moscow and to become a legal citizen. Thanks to his talents and experience, after a few months, he was able to open a weaving factory and he received official documents that enabled him to live in Moscow.

When he had businesses in Moscow, he began to help Anash in obtaining merchandise so they were able to make a living more easily and not have to desecrate the Shabbos. Although my father had become a legal citizen, he still continued to be nervous about the police.

In Moscow he heard from a friend in Leningrad that they had made a troika, a court of three unofficial judges who passed sentence according to what they were told by the Yevsektzia, and they decided that it wasn't worth wasting time and energy to put his brother on trial. They sentenced him to immediate death by shooting. May Hashem avenge his blood.

All his life, my father was bothered by the fact that he had fled Leningrad. He wondered whether, if he had remained there, he could have rescued his brother, even though he knew that he could not have done anything since his brother had been killed, apparently, before he had left the city. What is clear now is that my father's leaving Leningrad saved his life.

Shortly after he left, the Russians entered into the war against Germany and within a short time Leningrad was under siege. Many Jews died of starvation, of the cold, and various diseases. Since my father was in Moscow, not only did he survive, he was also able to arrange the rescue of my mother and his sister and the children.

IT WAS A MISTAKE

After some years, when my father arrived in Tashkent, he met his friend Yosef Mochkin, who told him that he could arrange his permit "glatt kosher," officially and legally, because he knew the chief of police. My father, who had continued to live in fear that he was sought by the N.K.V.D. in Leningrad said that he wasn't willing to go to him but if the chief of police wanted, he could come to my father and he would give him a nice gift.

My father said that if the chief of police or anybody else they had to bribe came to him, and he was out for money, there was no reason to fear him.

They met and my father asked him to check out why the government had wanted to arrest him. My father figured that if the man brought him the

I set aside these two bags to save my children. Since Hashem saved them, I will give Him the gold by donating it to Tomchei T'mimim. And so she gave the sacks of gold for the yeshiva. May her memory be for a blessing.

information he would know he could rely on him.

It took the chief of police of Tashkent a few days and then he brought the information. They had stopped looking for my father in Leningrad a few years before because the reason they had been searching for him was actually a mistake. My father had worked at a factory in Leningrad and was listed as Chaikel Zalmanowitz but was nicknamed, in Russian, Yefim Zalmanowitz. In the same factory there was another Jew whose name was Yefim Salmanwitz, who had had an argument with his wife, and left her.

The court said he had to provide for his wife and children but he did not do so. The wife complained to the police and they put out a warrant against him. When they came to the factory and asked for Yefim

Salmanwitz, his friends thought they were searching for my father and they immediately warned him.

The mistake was discovered a short time later when the personal details did not match, for example, my father was born in Beshenkowitz and the other man was born in Ukraine, and when the police realized their mistake they stopped looking for my father and arrested the guilty party.

PURE SOULS

My father had another brother named Menachem Mendel, and two sisters, Malka and Freida, who died in their youth.

Another brother of my father died of starvation in the siege of Leningrad. His name was Yekusiel, and he also learned in Tomchei T'mimim in Nevel. He was survived by a wife and daughter. In the post-war chaos, my father could not locate them. Many years later, when my uncle, R' Refael Nimotin, was released from jail, and we were able to contact him, my father asked him to look for them in Leningrad.

After much effort, R' Refael managed to find their address. He went to their house a number of times but they never answered the door. One time, my aunt opened the door a crack and asked him not to come again because her son-in-law was a famous athlete and they were afraid that R' Refael's visits would hurt their livelihood. She said that if he came again they would complain to the police that he was bothering them.

My father marked his brothers' yahrtzait on 24 Teives.

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TO KEEP YERUSHALAYIM

SHAI GEFEN

THEY'RE PLANNING ON GIVING BACK YERUSHALAYIM

The day Anwar Sadat came to Yerushalayim was Yud Kislev, Chag Ha'Geula, 5738, 28 years ago. This resulted in the Camp David Accords and the return of the Sinai and an agreement about autonomy.

The Rebbe explained that the Israelis acted with submission to the goy and not as they should have behaved, with Jewish pride. In this sicha, which has been discovered to be prophetic in nature, the Rebbe says explicitly that they are planning on giving back the Old City of Yerushalayim. We can well believe this as we hear all about it in the papers and people on the "Right" are talking about "creative solutions for Yerushalayim." Lubavitchers should not be surprised.

As was said a number of times, now is not the "is'chalta d'Geula," which will take place only when Moshiach comes; now we are in the doubled and redoubled darkness of Galus.

This is evident from the very fact that they are scared by "the sound of a blowing leaf," to the extent that there are people who agree, in the privacy of their heart, and even [outwardly] allude to being able to give part or all of the Old City of Yerushalayim, along with the Temple Mt. and the place of the Mikdash, to Arabs.

We need this in our possession even though we are absolutely forbidden, without a doubt, from going to the place of the Mikdash, for this is the place of our Mikdash, and "forever, the Sh'china does not part from the Western wall." Therefore, as long as Hashem wanted it to be in the

possession of the Arabs, we had to act in a way of "They shall not rise up in battle." However, the moment that Hashem gave the entire Yerushalayim into Jewish hands, it is certainly forbidden to give it away because of the prohibition of "lo sichanem" (not to give gentiles land in Eretz Yisroel).

Especially when giving part of the Old City of Yerushalayim, endangers all the Jews there, ch"v, even in the new section of Yerushalayim.

More importantly, if they concede on something that is forbidden to concede on, not only is this not a way to prevent war but on the contrary. As they saw in the previous three wars - and three times is a chazaka - the concession increased their chutzpa to demand more, and this was a preparation for additional conquering on their part.

Furthermore, all speculation that through concessions they will attain peace is doubtful, i.e., perhaps they will attain peace thereby. But when you give land from Yehuda and Shomron, this endangers all the Jews in Eretz Yisroel, and this is a certainty. Indeed, this is what the military experts say, and according to Torah they must be consulted. Since "a doubt does not cancel out a certainty," it is clearly forbidden to give away parts of Eretz Yisroel.

WHY WE WON'T FORGIVE

Unfortunately, the approach of "with love we will be victorious," which served as the theme of the battle for Gush Katif, continues. After the expulsion, there were people who opposed the slogan of "we won't forget and won't forgive." They maintained

that we must look forward and focus on uniting the nation.

My question is; what should we forgive? That politicians are planning to continue destroying all of Eretz Yisroel? Should we forgive the fact that thousands of people are physical, financial, and emotional wrecks? Are those "loving people" aware of how much shalom bayis was wrecked since the expulsion? How many people required emergency treatment for total breakdowns? Should we perhaps forgive and love those who, in the name of law and justice, stole the property and work of decades of work?

The halacha is that when one steals there is no forgiveness and atonement until the stolen item is returned. If someone steals and does violence and announces that he will continue to do so, is he deserving of forgiveness?

The Torah also says that there is no forgiveness for one who goes out in open war against Hashem and His Torah, who desecrates the name of Hashem in public and continues to proclaim that he has no share in the G-d of Israel. (And in the sicha of Yud-Tes Kislev 5738, the Rebbe said that giving away land is like avoda zara!)

Those who know what the expellees are going through cannot sleep at night. We suggest that those forgiving souls who want to forget and forgive be expelled from their homes for a week and visit the abodes of the Gush Katif expellees. The forgivers are sitting in their comfortable living rooms and forgiving and aren't lifting a finger to help those who were expelled.

This is also our obligation: to do what we can for these precious Jews, physically, financially, and spiritually.

SPARKLING LIGHTS ON CHANUKA

Stories about sparkling lights on Chanuka.

BY RIVKY KAMINKER

IT'S NOT MONEY, IT'S CHANUKA GELT

Chanuka: It's pouring outside. The main street looked more pathetic than usual. The usual scene of hordes of passersby was blatantly absent. Some of the businessmen in the local shopping center decided to close their stores, to roll down their gates and go home early. There wasn't much of a chance that anyone would want to go shopping in this weather.

Nu, really. Who would go out in this weather unless it was urgent? Lubavitchers.

The T'mimim and the indefatigable shluchim of the Rebbe are not put off by the rain. They don't close up shop because there are no people around. They stand there even if there's a chance that they will meet one Jew and enable him to do a mitzva.

Amidst the fog and hail, a man and a child approached. They seemed to be a grandfather and grandson. They were well dressed for the elements, in coats and scarves, and they held firmly on to their umbrella so it wouldn't be grabbed away from them by the gusty wind.

The Lubavitchers went over to them and offered a menorah kit, that included a doughnut, a Chanuka brochure, and two coins for Chanuka gelt.

"Skazi spasiba" (say thank you), said the grandfather to his grandson.

The child was busy checking out the contents of the bag he had received.

"Look Grandpa," he said excitedly in Russian, "there's even money in here!"

The grandfather took the bag from his grandson, fingered the candles, and then noticed the picture on the brochure. His eyes began to tear.

He looked at the pair of bachurim

*Nu, really. Who
would go out in this
weather unless it was
urgent? Lubavitchers.*

taking in the scene before them. The grandson was pulling on his grandfather's hand, wanting to leave. The grandfather, as though overcome by a wave of memories from the past, clutched the kit to his heart and said in a choked voice, "This is not money. This is Chanuka gelt!"

GOOD MISTAKE

Chanuka: The sentiment is just like in the well-known children's song, "such a nice holiday." Mivtzaim

in New York are not the same as in Eretz Yisroel. In New York, mivtzaim begin with the question, "Are you Jewish?" First, you need to ascertain whether the person is Jewish or not. Only then can you make your next move.

At the hospital it's simpler because on the wall near each room it lists the occupants of the room. Recognizing Jewish names helps prevent uncomfortable encounters.

On Chanuka 5752, two girls and Mrs. R.S., a familiar face in 770, went to a hospital in Manhattan. They were well equipped with material: menoros, candles, etc. To them it was all new, huge, and strange. They were two girls from Eretz Yisroel, on mivtzaim in New York for the first time, with no knowledge of the English language except for a few simple words.

In most of the rooms they were sure about the occupants' background. With names like Schwartz and Klein, they didn't have to wonder. They went from room to room bringing light and joy to sick Jews. The gentile patients looked jealously at them and the fragrant doughnuts.

What about Green? That was the name on room 29B. It could be a Jewish name but not necessarily. This name is common enough even amongst people of African descent.

What if he was Jewish and they skipped him? They knocked and entered.

There was one person there, Green, who was obviously not Jewish, but next to him, even though there had only been one name on the wall, lay an elderly Jew who looked at them curiously. He emotionally held out his hand for the menora.

It was a good mistake they had made.

CHASSIDISHE CHINUCH ON THE HOLIDAY OF CHINUCH

Following the Yom Kippur war, many widows and orphans were added to the lists of “the Mother of IDF Widows,” Mrs. Shifra Golombowitz (Morosov). Each year, she held a celebration for them on one of the days of Chanuka in Kfar Chabad.

It wasn't easy getting them all together on one day, so she came up with a new plan. Each area would have a separate event and the local branch of N'shei Chabad would be responsible for the material end of

things. Shifra would provide the emcee and the spiritual dimension, as well as her children.

At one of these events, the emcee, R' Tzvi Greenwald, greeted the guests in a fatherly manner. The atmosphere was warm and homey. The children and their mothers sang. Bais Rivka girls had prepared an exciting play and then the highlight of the evening was a magician. He got up to begin his performance and even the adults were mesmerized.

Shifra's children, two girls and a little boy, took an active part. But suddenly, in the middle of the show, Shifra's son went over to the window and looked outside and then went off to a corner, took out a Mincha-Maariv and began to daven. No adult had told him to do this, to ignore the performance for a few minutes in order to daven.

Many widows looked at the unusual sight which made a kiddush Hashem and a kiddush of Chabad chinuch.

WE ALSO HAVE!

Chanuka is so beautiful yet not

everybody is aware of this. What a pity. This was true of Sheldon, a typical American kid.

“I don't want to be Jewish anymore,” announced Sheldon as he angrily entered his house, went up the stairs, and threw himself on to his bed. It took time before his father could figure out what had happened. Sheldon was referring to the gentile holiday.

“They get everything!” said Sheldon and began to cry. “They have a beautiful tree, presents, lights ... I don't want to be Jewish!”

Sheldon's father, who had just become friendly with the shliach in his city in the south of the U.S., realized that verbal explanations wouldn't do any good.

“You know what? Take \$29 and we'll go to the mall and pick out a tree.”

Sheldon couldn't believe his ears. It's not just a tree. We need presents too.

Okay, we'll buy presents.

The child was appeased.

While Sheldon walked quickly in the direction of the big store where you buy those trees, his father said, “Wait, let's buy the presents first.”

They went in and the music playing in the background sounded familiar. It was a Jewish song. There was a huge menora and under it was a sign that said, “Happy Chanuka from Chabad.” Lots of people were gathered round and celebrating Chanuka.

Sheldon couldn't believe his eyes. He was equal with his friends. He also had a holiday, one that was nicer and brighter! Something of our own – doughnuts, dancing, latkes. Sheldon forgot why they had left the house in the first place.

Later on, he would say that this is what led to his living as a proud Jew and marrying a Jewish girl, despite the odds against it.



Lighting a menora in an American mall (for illustration purposes)

EARLY MORNING CHASSIDUS KOLLEL

BY NOSSON AVROHOM
PICTURES BY SHLOMO NAIMARK

*This Yud-Tes Kislev marked two years since the founding of the morning kollel for Chassidus in Kiryat Malachi, directed by Rabbi Mendel Vechter. * Despite the early hour and people's schedules, over 100 baalei battim and avreichim begin their day at this kollel, a taste of L'Asid Lavo!*

Chag HaGeula Yud-Tes Kislev is also Rosh HaShana L'Chassidus. This day is especially auspicious for the study of Chassidus, and by doing so, we hasten the hisgalus of Moshiach, as Moshiach himself said to the Baal Shem Tov, "when your wellsprings spread outward."

It's no secret that married men and baalei battim who work hard for a living, find it difficult to emulate the talmidim of Tomchei T'mimim and to start their day with the study of Chassidus. The morning hours are usually stressful, as a person prepares to leave for work or to drive carpool, and the like. It's not always a time that is conducive for the deep study of Chassidus.

In Nachalas Har Chabad something revolutionary took place

two years ago in connection with learning Chassidus, making a kvius in time and soul. It was Rosh HaShana L'Chassidus, Yud-Tes Kislev, when the morning kollel for Chassidus opened. The goal was clear: a shiur in Chassidus for men

before they went to work.

The idea occurred to two men, residents of Nachalas Har Chabad, Avrohom Kravitzky and Shabsi Weintraub, who decided to make a change in how baalei battim related to the study of Chassidus. It seemed hopeless at first, since baalei battim are very busy in the morning, but the idea eventually took off. Over 100 men come every morning to the kollel Chassidus!

The founders of the kollel remember that when they went to make copies of their flyer to announce the opening of the program, the printer said, "Another project that will fail." Today, that printer is one of the men who learns in the kollel along with



9 Kislev farbrengen, from right to left: Rabbi Izevitz, Chacham Moshe Michaelshvili, Rabbi Shmuel Cohen, Rabbi Estulin, and Mashpia Rabbi Y.Y. Friedman



Rav Vechter giving his daily shiur

dozens of others.

What is the secret of your success?

Avrohom Kravitzky: “We see how the Rebbe helps us every step of the way. There is no other explanation for the incredible success the kollel has had.”

The first day of the kollel was Yud-Tes Kislev and only five men came to the first shiur. “We felt that we had, nevertheless, broken the ice,” says Shabsi Weintraub. At this point, there are four ongoing Chassidus classes attended by over 100 men.

The kollel was started in memory of R’ Naftali Kravitzky a”h, who was one of the pillars of Nachalas Har Chabad and a Chassid who learned Chassidus every day. His friends remember that when he went to work at the university of Beer Sheva, he used the travel time to learn Chassidus. The Rebbe esteemed him and appointed him a member of the hanhala that runs the main gemach fund of Nachalas Har Chabad.

Young and old, all types of people, find a shiur that suits them. The first shiur begins at 6:30

a.m. About fifteen men study Hemshech Ayin-Beis with the maggid shiur, R’ Yehuda Chalili. The main shiur is later and is given by the rosh kollel, Rav Mendel Vechter. Over seventy men attend this shiur, which focuses on fundamental maamarim in Chassidus. Rav Vechter explains them, bringing them down to a

basic level of understanding everyone can appreciate, and people simply love it.

One of the regular participants sums up his personal transformation through the kollel Chassidus in this way, “The Mittlerer Rebbe said that his ambition is that when two Chassidim meet they should speak about yichuda ilaa



Siyum of a tractate after Shacharis - in the center of the picture is Chacham Moshe Michaelshvili, rav of the Georgian immigrants who participates in the shiurim regularly, with Rabbi Shmuel Cohen

NON-STOP CHASSIDUS

There is no break from learning Chassidus. The shiurim go on during the Bein HaZ'manim break, on Chol HaMoed etc. Even on Erev Yom Kippur, the Rosh kollel gave a shiur and dozens of people sat and learned Chassidus.

and yichuda tataa, and this is precisely what the kollel has accomplished.”

In the introduction to this article, it mentions the taste of L'Asid Lavo, and indeed, those who attend the kollel really do feel this. People leave their worries behind and in a half hour of Chassidus ascend to a world of pleasure, to a world where there is no jealousy or competition.

Guest mashpiim and shluchim who come to visit are amazed when they see the kollel. When shliach Rabbi Naftali Estulin of Los Angeles came to visit, he was bowled over by what he saw. He said that this is the best preparation to greet Moshiach and that more kollelim of this kind need to be opened.

Immediately following Rav Vechter's shiur, there is another shiur in which maamarim of the Rebbe MH”M are taught by Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Bakshi, going in. It is an in depth study of the Rebbe's maamarim related to upcoming holidays, etc.

At 8:15 there is a shiur called the Chassidishe Parsha, a shiur started in light of the Rebbe's instruction at the Kinus HaShluchim 5752 – that each week the Chassidishe parsha in *Torah Ohr* and *Likkutei Torah* should be learned in order to hasten the Geula. It's a fascinating shiur given by R' Shmuel Cohen and it's

attended by close to thirty people.

One of the Chassidim who attends this shiur admitted that over the years he had been too intimidated to learn *Torah Ohr* or *Likkutei Torah*, and only thanks to these shiurim were his eyes opened. This is a sentiment shared by other participants. Many participants in the shiur say that it is only after ongoing study of the Chassidishe parsha that they understand the importance of this study as part of our preparations for Geula.

At the end of this shiur they learn the daily *Tanya* with explanations that satisfy them all. In Kislev, the shiur begins with teachings of all the Rebbeim starting with the Baal Shem Tov. This is per the Rebbe's instruction that throughout Kislev we should learn the teachings of our Rebbeim.

It's not surprising that after learning Chassidus in the kollel, the davening that follows is completely different than a davening without Chassidus. Even after the davening, they learn an excerpt in inyanei Moshiach and Geula from the Rebbe's teachings.

The participants are also treated to hot and cold drinks and various refreshments, which help the baalei battim who are on their way to work.

Reactions from the participants of the various shiurim are varied

and interesting. Some discover how enormously lacking they were before the kollel opened.

“I truly feel, every day, that I am recharging my batteries.”

“I don't understand how this idea wasn't thought of long ago.”

“We are enabled to fulfill the Rebbe's instructions to prepare for Moshiach.”

“It changes the entire Chassidishe atmosphere in the house and makes everything shine.”

These are only a sampling of reactions that the directors have heard. If you start the day with Chassidus and k'dusha it's got to have an effect on your whole day.



Rosh kollel Rabbi Menachem Mendel Vechter

LEARNING CHASSIDUS B'RABBIM

The Rebbeim in general, and the Rebbe in particular, spoke about learning Chassidus specifically in public. In the maamer “Asara Yoshevim” of the Rebbe Rayatz it explains how much chesed and rachamim is brought down by learning Chassidus b'rabbim.

If you learn the Rebbe's igros and sichos you see again and again the demand that Chassidus be learned copiously and publicly, which also increases one's understanding of the material.



Rabbi Shmuel Cohen giving his daily shiur in *Torah Ohr*

Many participants in the shiur say that it is only after ongoing study of the Chassidische parsha that they understand the importance of this study as part of our preparations for Geula.



Learning Chassidus on Chol HaMoed too

participate in a kollel Chassidus you see tremendous siyata d'Shmaya.”

It's interesting to observe Jews who used to rush off to work, who after coming to the kollel regularly have become much calmer. Now they feel that time is in their hands and they see how the rest of their daily activities are subservient to the main thing.

The rosh kollel, Rav Mendel Vechter, sees the kollel as an enormous transformation, which is definitely part of the special era the Rebbe spoke about, Yemos HaMoshiach. It is transforming people's ways of thinking because if you learn Chassidus every day you're going to think differently, you will look at the world and its assumptions about life very differently.

Rav Vechter hopes the kollel will grow and many more people will learn Chassidus, especially within the framework of the kollel, because the Rebbe explains that “kollel” means inclusive. In that way, the kollel of Nachalas Har Chabad will serve as an inspiration for other centers of Anash.

The colorful assortment of people who attend the kollel Chassidus proves that Chassidus has something for everyone. The kollel is even attended by those who aren't Lubavitchers. One of the business people who attends the kollel said that he sees how the daily study of Chassidus brings bounty, blessing, and success, as the Rebbe wrote to many who asked him about an ample livelihood that they should study Chassidus every day.

The directors of the kollel note the assistance they have received

from the mara d'asra, Rabbi Yitzchok Yehuda Yaroslavsky, who encourages and personally helps the kollel, and joins the kollel's farbrengens.

One of the regular participants who has supported the kollel almost since its inception is the Chabad member of the city council, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Izevitz. He thinks that all askanim should help establish kollelim for Chassidus: “The kollel is not only for avreichim or baalei battim. Menacholim and askanim also need to learn Chassidus every day. If you

THE TRANSFORMATION OF LA MARSEILLAISE

BY SHAI GEFEN

*Fourteen years ago, on Shabbos Parshas VaYeishev, the Rebbe devoted the entire farbrengen to discussing the birur of France in preparation for the Geula, this being seen particularly in the appropriation of the French anthem. This marvelous farbrengen revealed just a little bit of the heavenly goings-on that began on Simchas Torah 5734 and ended with the surprising announcement by the French president on Yud-Alef Nissan 5764. * In a fascinating discussion with Beis Moshiach, shliach Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Pevsner tells of a series of events at the royal palace that complete a circle that began with Napoleon's battle against the Alter Rebbe and ended just recently with an admission written and signed by the president of France! * Exclusive to Beis Moshiach.*

A SURPRISE FOURTEEN YEARS AGO

Participants described the farbrengen that took place fourteen years ago, on Shabbos Parshas



VaYeishev 5752, as a completely mystical event. This farbrengen was entirely devoted to the French revolution. The explicit and astounding things the Rebbe said at that farbrengen about the French revolution were unprecedented. The Rebbe focused on the French national anthem, “La Marseillaise,” and its transformation to holiness.

At the beginning of the farbrengen the Rebbe said, “A group of guests from France came here and should say l’chaim,” and he added, “Where is their menahel?”

The guests said l’chaim and began singing “HaAderes V’Ha’Emuna” to the famous French tune. They sang with gusto while the Rebbe motioned for them to sing even louder. Suddenly, the Rebbe motioned for whistling (see box).

At the end of the first sicha, the crowd began to sing “Napoleon’s March.” The Rebbe turned around to the bench of rabbanim, among whom sat Rabbi Mordechai Belinov of the Vaad Rabbanei Lubavitch in France, and asked him, “Where is your crowd?” And the Rebbe asked again, “Where is the French crowd?”

Rabbi Belinov motioned to where they were standing but the Rebbe continued to ask and motion with his hands. Then Rabbi Belinov got it and immediately told members of the group from France to say l’chaim to the Rebbe. At this point, the Rebbe told him to say l’chaim over a large cup.

The Rebbe strongly encouraged the singing and then suddenly motioned vigorously with both his holy hands. It’s hard to describe the simcha and excitement that gripped

the Chassidim. The feeling was that something spiritual was going on. The Rebbe looked tremendously pleased. The sichos themselves, about the French niggun “that was taken by the Chassidim” (referring to the Rebbe himself, of course), were no less mystical.

Now, fourteen years later, some new revelations can be shared about the French spark that was elevated and refined. As much as our “daas tachton” can fathom, it seems that the completion of the birur of the French exile took place at that farbrengen.

LA MARSEILLAISE AT SIMCHAS TORAH 5734

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Pevsner, director of the Sinai school system in Paris, related new details about the birur of the French anthem in an



interview with *Beis Moshiach*. He also told us about his special relationship with the French president and some amazing stories that took place.

Let's start at the beginning. What do you remember about 5734 when the Rebbe first sang the French anthem?

It was on Simchas Torah. As I recall, the Rebbe went over to his bima during hakafof and began to sing "HaAderes V'Ha'Emuna." I didn't recognize the tune and didn't know what "La Marseillaise" was, but it sounded familiar to me as something I had once heard in France. I remember that the Rebbe sang the niggun a number of times until the crowd learned it (see box).

I'd like to stop here a moment and give some background to the events of that time. That period was a golden era for the Jews of France as far as Lubavitchers were concerned. Groups of French Jews began visiting 770 and this was a strong impetus for them to get more involved in a life of Yiddishkeit and Chassidus. It actually began in 5732 and reached a peak in 5734. The Rebbe simply invited the French to him. The Rebbe even said to Rabbi Binyamin Gorodetzky a"h, director of the European office (known as the Lishka), that he would pay half the expenses of the trip of every Jew from France who came to see him.

Many non-observant Jews came to the Rebbe and

changed their lives. The one who got this off the ground was Rabbi Mulle Azimov. These trips were the seed and the foundation that created the French revolution in our times.

What was it like to have these French Jews in 770?

Someone complained to Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka a"h that the "Frenchies" were coming in droves, that they didn't understand Yiddish and they pushed a lot during the farbrengens. Indeed, they weren't always welcomed with open arms. People weren't used to their style. The Rebbetzin said, "You have no idea what nachas ruach my husband has from their coming."

Back to the Marseillaise. That year, 5734, the Rebbe sang it for the first time, thus refining and elevating it to k'dusha. This brought about big

changes in France. What can you tell us about this?

This was shortly after the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War. The Rebbe began to sing the niggun and some people identified it as "La Marseillaise," the famous French anthem. At the time, nobody knew what would result from transforming the anthem to k'dusha in both the near and distant future.

That year Simchas Torah was on a Friday. The next day, Shabbos B'Reishis, the Rebbe farbrenged and dedicated an entire sicha to explaining what he had sung on Simchas Torah. The Rebbe mentioned the Alter Rebbe's war against the French klipa, headed by Napoleon. Among other things, the Alter Rebbe fought Napoleon by wanting to transform "Napoleon's



The Rebbe motioning to the Chassidim to whistle during Kos Shel Bracha

March” into a Chassidic niggun. Chassidim have been singing this niggun for generations without even knowing its source.

An anthem expresses pride and the strength of a country, explained the Rebbe, especially those countries that have a representative angel in heaven, and France is one of those countries that has an angel.

The Rebbe explained that not everybody has the power to transform a niggun. There exists up above a Heichal Neginah, and each song has segulos and powers, and only someone who knows the power of song can divert a tune to something else.

Then the Rebbe said: The same thing applies now. There is a French revolution underway, as many are becoming mekurav to Yiddishkeit. In order not to feel like strangers in the country and for the country to recognize and respect them, there is an inyan of singing the “Marseillaise,” which is the French national anthem, so that it will last for eternity.

Everybody felt that the Rebbe was doing something special so that the French government would be kind to the Jews and would support Judaism.

Meaning?

That year, Mr. Georges Pompidou was the president. He had been prime minister when De Gaulle was president. Pompidou was a big anti-Semite who did not hide his views and was known for his wickedness and hatred for Jews. Before being prime minister in De Gaulle’s time, he served as a clerk in Rothschild’s bank, and they say he was a Jew-hater back then and couldn’t stand to see Jews doing business. The Jewish community didn’t try to become friendly with him since they knew he openly hated them. He didn’t hide it and he was a tough personality.

In one of the sichos of that year,

5734, the Rebbe spoke against him. I think it was Purim 5734 (or a farbrengen around that time). The Rebbe spoke about a certain individual who said that the Rebbe lives outside of Eretz Yisroel and he shouldn’t mix in to the affairs of Eretz Yisroel. The Rebbe said that even Haman said, “There is one nation,” when he himself said, “They are scattered and divided among the nations.” Haman knew that the Jewish people constitute one nation. Therefore, no one can claim that a Jew outside Eretz Yisroel has no connection to the Jews in Eretz Yisroel, and the Rebbe added that “this is the argument of Pompidou,” and then the Rebbe said that Pompidou is worse than the wicked Haman!

Only someone who knows the power of song can divert a tune to something else.

When had Pompidou said that?

The Yom Kippur War had started and French Jews had made demonstrations on behalf of Israel. A delegation went to him to ask him to help Israel, but he continued his arms embargo against Israel and made a lot of trouble.

At that time he said to the Jews of France, “If you want me to recognize you as Jews of France, don’t mix in to what is going on in Israel” – and this is what the Rebbe was referring to. Demonstrations were held against Pompidou in France and in other places around the world. The Rebbe also compared him to the klipa of Napoleon.

And then?

Pompidou died shortly after that.

It was on Wednesday, Yud-Alef Nissan 5734, the Rebbe’s birthday. He had been sick for a while but he appeared in public and worked as usual. He didn’t show any signs of imminent death.

I remember that they said that R’ Chaim Tashkenter a”h went to the mikva the day after and said, “Mazal Tov. The Rebbe toppled Pompidou.” He was not a beloved president and not too many shed tears over his death.

The story is actually the story of Haman and Mordechai except that the Purim story extended over many years while here it took a very short time until that anti-Semite died.

What does this have to do with the change in the French anthem that the Rebbe made?

The Rebbe himself explained it eighteen years later, at the farbrengen of Shabbos Parshas VaYeishev 5752. The Rebbe explained that this era is an era of Geula, a foretaste of Olam HaBa. People ask, said the Rebbe, where do we see miracles? As an example of a miracle, the Rebbe said that the tempo of the “Marseillaise” was changed by the president who followed Pompidou, Valéry Giscard d’Estaing.

The Rebbe said this is one of the open miracles – that right after they adopted the tune and Chassidish Jews (who don’t even know the source of the tune) sang it in the davening, the president of France changed the tempo of the tune.

Years later, President Mitterand changed it back to the original tempo, so how does that fit with what the Rebbe said?

(Smiling): Apparently, the klipa of France is a tough klipa and doesn’t allow itself to be elevated to k’dusha so fast...

It’s amazing to see what happened next and how they mesh together. After Pompidou died, the anthem

was changed by a president nicer towards Jews, but he was followed by a new president, Francois Mitterand, who changed the anthem back to the way it was originally.

He was also officially against religious Jews. He even tried to legislate against aid to private schools, which ultimately failed. Mitterand acted as though he loved Jews and supported Israel, but at the end of his life he was seen as the big anti-Semite that he was. He admired the Nazis. Every year, on the anniversary of the death of Marshal Petain (who in 1939, signed in the name of the French government to their capitulation to Hitler and accepted his rule), Mitterand secretly went to his grave and laid a wreath in Petain's honor.

Mitterand never tried to hide his antipathy towards religious Jews and religious schools. Once he even announced that he is opposed to Lubavitch. Whenever they asked him to write a letter in the Rebbe's honor, he would say he had no desire to be associated with "fundamentalists."

So in my opinion, it wasn't for naught that the Rebbe said in the sicha of 5752 that the president (Mitterand) changed the anthem's tempo back to what it was originally. As far as I can tell, that was another stage in the war between the klipa of France against k'dusha, like the battle between the Alter Rebbe and Napoleon!

The only person who dared openly oppose Mitterand was my father, Rabbi Hillel Pevsner. That is why, until this day, President Chirac, the current president, considers him a dear early friend. When Chirac began his public service as mayor of Paris, he provided funding for 80 new classes to religious schools within two years. He changed the attitude towards the Jews of France, especially Lubavitch. And when he began his term as president, nine

years ago in 5755, this became more evident.

And then on Yud-Alef Nissan of 5764 we had another stage in President Chirac's recognition of the transformation of the French

national anthem into a holy niggun.

Right. Erev Yud-Alef Nissan a most amazing thing happened. 30 years after the Rebbe transformed the anthem into a Chassidishe niggun, even the president of the country

DIARY ENTRIES

A diary that described the events of that Simchas Torah 5734 written by one of the T'mimim:

Simchas Torah night 5734, during the fourth hakafa, the Rebbe went to the edge of the bima and began to sing, "HaAderes V'Ha'Emuna" to an unfamiliar tune, suddenly and to everybody's surprise. Only the guests from France – and there was a large group of them this year – joined the singing.

Afterwards, we learned that this is the tune of "La Marseillaise". When we realized that this is the French national anthem, there was tremendous excitement and everybody danced to this niggun the entire night, in 770, and in the streets. You can't imagine the scene...

At the farbrengen of Shabbos B'Reishis, the Rebbe spoke about this niggun and explicitly said that this niggun is one of victory and just as the Alter Rebbe transformed Napoleon's March to a victory of k'dusha, the Jewish people needed victory and therefore we transformed the Marseillaise into victory of k'dusha.

* * *

The mashpia Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Gurewitz, of Tomchei T'mimim in Migal HaEmek, recalls the tremendous excitement of Simchas Torah 5734:

The atmosphere was electric. We danced all night with this niggun. The French baalei t'shuva taught us the tune since we didn't know it. It was felt that the Rebbe was doing something "heavenly" in the extreme. It should be noted that this was in the midst of the Yom Kippur War, so it was natural to connect this with the war and with the French president, Georges Pompidou, who was a big anti-Semite.

The next day, Shabbos B'Reishis, the Rebbe explained at length the significance of transforming the niggun to k'dusha. The Rebbe explained the nature of French people, who think only of self and do not care about others. The Rebbe then compared this to the Alter Rebbe who elevated Napoleon's March to k'dusha.

By the way, we don't sing the final movement of the Marseillaise but there was one occasion when the Rebbe wanted the Chassidim to sing the last movement too.

* * *

Since Simchas Torah 5734, the French national anthem has become part of the Chassidic niggunim repertoire so much so that the Rebbe said: **To the point that there are some who don't even know that this niggun was taken from "somewhere" and they think it's an original Chassidic niggun.**



Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Pevsner, Rabbi Hillel Pevsner, and President Jacques Chirac in friendly conversation

admitted to the transformation of the anthem into something holy, similar to Eisav's acknowledging Yaakov's right to the brachos.

You're telling us new and fascinating information!

President Chirac called me before Yud-Alef Nissan. He was supposed to participate in a Chabad event but because of his busy schedule he couldn't personally attend. Yud-Alef Nissan came out on a Friday and in the course of our conversation, he told me that on Thursday he had to go to Pompidou's grave as he had died on Yud-Alef Nissan.

I politely told him that he was his successor, and Chirac told me that this wasn't a compliment and that he and Pompidou were two completely opposing worlds. He said that he wouldn't bother going to Pompidou's grave and that he did so only

because it was an official ceremony that he had to attend. He hoped the event wasn't covered by the media.

Chirac suggested, of his own initiative, that I prepare a bio of the Rebbe, including in particular everything that pertained to France, and he promised to send a nice letter in honor of the Rebbe's birthday.

Of course, we prepared a memorandum that covered the Rebbe's rich background with France even before his nesius and the special feelings the Rebbe had for those years he spent in France. Among other things, we wrote that before a crowd of thousands the Rebbe used the tune of the French national anthem, "La Marseillaise," for a holy prayer.

The president's advisers thoroughly checked every detail that we wrote. They didn't want to

include anything about the anthem, because in France, the anthem is holy of holies. If you disparage the anthem, you can be sent to jail. In France it is illegal to use the anthem's tune for anything else and it was regarding this point that a debate ensued among the president's advisers as to whether it should be included in the president's letter or not. They decided to let the president himself make this decision.

And what did he say?

President Chirac said that he had made a promise to Rabbi Pevsner and therefore it was all going into the letter. And so, in a letter signed by the president, that was seen by all the Jews of France, the anthem was mentioned too:

*President of the Republic
Paris, April 2, 2004*

On this day of celebration, which is also a day of memorial for each of you, I would like to express my blessings with feelings of warm friendship to the large Lubavitch family, which unites on this day throughout France and the entire world.

102 years ago, a man was born in imperial Russia who left his stamp on history and on your spirits such as in your outlook on the world and how you operate within it, a man who is called, simply and affectionately, the Rebbe.

The Rebbe's connection with France is unique as we see in the unusual and famous episode in which he sang a well known prayer to the tune of the "Marseillaise," before an utterly astonished audience. This took place in the autumn of 1973 during the Yom Kippur War. This is not merely an anecdote but testimony to the loyalty and the inner connection the Rebbe and his Chassidim have with France.

The Rebbe chose France and Paris when he left Germany in 1933 and he continued his outstanding scholarship at the Sorbonne. Thanks to his charismatic personality and his teachings, his

FOURTEEN YEARS AGO – THE EVENTS OF SHABBOS VA'YEISHEV 5752

As said in the body of the article, there was a large group of French guests in 770 on Shabbos Parshas VaYeishev 5752. With their characteristic liveliness, they set the tone from the beginning of the farbrengen.

During the farbrengen, the Rebbe explained in detail about the French revolution in our times. The Rebbe said that the beginning of the birur of France started with the Rebbe Maharash who made baalei t'shuva in France. Then the Rebbe Rashab wrote Chassidus in France. But the main birur was done by the Rebbe Rayatz who sent shluchim there, the Rebbe, etc., to the point that in France there is a thriving life of Torah and mitzvos and Yeshivos Tomchei T'mimim in a way of "in going to a city, follow its customs."

In general, it was apparent throughout the time the Rebbe spoke about the birur of France that his head was turned towards the French contingent. In these sichos the Rebbe revealed shocking heavenly doings, and connected them with the French niggun "being taken by the Chassidim" (referring to the Rebbe himself) back in 5734.

The Rebbe explained at length and in great detail how it is specifically in the last generation before the Geula that the birur of France is completed. In the time of the Alter Rebbe it was not possible to be mevarer France. The Rebbe connects the birur of the French anthem and the birur of France in general, to the completion of the birur before the Geula:

The completion of the birur of the entire world with the Geula – "and saviors will go up to Mt. Seir to judge the mountain of Eisav and the kingdom will be Hashem's" – depends upon and comes about through the birur, in a way of investiture of the galus of "France." And in these two matters, as mentioned before: 1) since it is the lowest place (and the strength of klipa in the world) it is through France that the completion of the birurim of the entire world takes place, as is alluded to in the name "Tzorfas" (France) from the root meaning tziruf and birur (refinement). 2) In the birur of Tzorfas (gematria 770) is also alluded the revelation of the essence, which gives the ability to completely refine everything, to the point that the revelation of the essence can be drawn down everywhere.

Everybody felt that the Rebbe was finishing the birur of France at that farbrengen, a birur that started with the Rebbe himself back before his nesius began, when he lived in France for eight years, from 1933 until 1941, and continued with the shluchim sent to France and the appropriation of the French national anthem.

The Rebbe explained the whistling during the singing of the niggun in an edited sicha:

There is a connection between whistling and the inyan of Geula and the ingathering of exiles, as it says, "I will whistle to them and I will gather them."

The immediate horaa of the entire sicha was that, being that there was a miracle – namely, that France changed their national anthem – we ought to publicize the miracles taking place daily, as part of the hastening of the revelation of Moshiach:

It is a very proper thing to be involved in "pirsumei nisa," to oneself and to others and in every location, the miracles that Hashem does with us, with the knowledge that this is connected with the true and complete Redemption!

At the end of the sicha, the Rebbe mentioned the names of all the Nesiim, from the Baal Shem Tov to Nasi Doreinu, which was something normally done only at special farbrengens on special days of the year!

As a spontaneous continuation of the sicha, the niggun "HaAderes V'Ha'Emuna" was sung again, this time with greater zest. The Rebbe strongly encouraged the singing this time too, and in the middle of the niggun motioned to the guests to say l'chaim, as he continued to encourage the singing with quick movements of one hand and then with both hands, with faster and faster movements as the singing intensified in simcha.

The truth is that the talk about the birur of France began on the previous Shabbos, Parshas VaYishlach, when the Rebbe devoted the end of the farbrengen to the topic of France. The Rebbe connected it to the Haftora of Parshas VaYishlach, which refers to the exile in France.

For the first time, the Rebbe announced that "Tzorfas" is numerically equivalent to 770, which indicates that the birur of France is carried out by "Beis Yosef" 770, from which light goes out to the entire world. In that sicha the Rebbe added a handwritten note that there are yeshivos in France, "like in Lubavitch," "this shows that the time has come for, 'and they will inherit the cities of the Negev and saviors will go up to Mt. Tziyon to judge the mountain of Eisav.'"

Shabbos Parshas VaYeishev was Erev Chanuka. On the first day of Chanuka, there was a "Chanuka Live" worldwide satellite, and the menorah lighting in Paris was particularly joyous. After the chief rabbi, Rabbi Sitrok, lit the menorah, they began to sing the "Marseillaise" with the words of "HaAderes V'Ha'Emuna" and the people were exuberantly happy. The Rebbe, who was watching all this on the screen, raised his hand in a strong motion, to inspire the singing.

reputation spread among a broad array of friends and acquaintances during his stay in France.

During the dark days (of World War II), he was possessed of unusual courage, based on strong faith. He came to the aid of the persecuted, helped refugees and saved a number of lives.

After he settled in New York, he returned to Paris in 1947 to meet his (widowed) mother after she managed to flee from the Soviet Union. At the time of that visit, he established a strong, large-scale foundation in France at that time, and paved the way for the wide-ranging activities of Chabad Chassidim (in France) in the future, including social programs and primarily in the field of education. He established a mission and a message in support of life based on values of spirituality and patience, a message to the French nation and all of France, a country that stands for human rights and liberty, and which welcomes and respects everybody as they are, and lastly – a country that loves.

The great Rabbi Pevsner has dedicated his life to this lofty pursuit for

many years now, and through him I convey, on this great day, to all of you – Happy Birthday.

Jacques Chirac

I also see the signature as part of the amazing Divine providence and the closing of a circle. President Chirac was going to sign the letter two days before Yud-Alef Nissan so that the letter could be read at the Yud-Alef Nissan farbrengens throughout France. However, by Divine providence, he did not sign the letter earlier and signed it on Friday, which was actually Yud-Alef Nissan. Shortly before Shabbos, I personally received the letter from the president's aides who said that the president wanted me to have the letter that very day.

It was only afterwards that I put it all together – how President Chirac had attacked his predecessor Pompidou, who had died on that date, Yud-Alef Nissan, after the Rebbe spoke against him and elevated the anthem to k'dusha. Chirac was the one who agreed to include the transformation of the

anthem to k'dusha in his letter even though this went against French custom.

In other words, the “angel of France” agreed, on Yud-Alef Nissan 5764, that indeed their anthem, symbol of the country, had been taken, and had been transformed to k'dusha.

According to what the Rebbe said in the sicha of 5752 – that the inyan of France is the final birur before the Geula – this birur was absolutely completed.

“THERE WILL BE FURTHER NEWS”

Rabbi Pevsner's story is a miracle story but presumably the French national anthem has to be officially changed back to the Chassidic version, and this hasn't happened yet. This part of the story is completed by Rabbi Simon Jacobson, author of *Toward A Meaningful Life*, who was one of the people who wrote up the Rebbe's sichos:

“Since, in the sicha, the Rebbe spoke about a change in the French anthem, we put a footnote on the bottom of the page that explained the chain of events. In the footnote, we wrote: A number of months after they began to sing “HaAderes V’Ha’Emuna” in 5734, the tempo was changed and softened (out of respect), as per the suggestion of the leadership of France at that time. In 5741, the new (and present) leadership changed it back to the previous tempo.

“This footnote was necessary to understand the sicha, and the Rebbe's comment on it was: **Put all this in a footnote at the beginning of the sicha when the change is mentioned for the first time.** On the bottom of the page the Rebbe wrote: **Urgent.** Afterwards, when the Rebbe was told that the footnote about the change in the anthem's tempo with the details had been inserted the



The Rebbe's notes on the sicha of VaYeishev 5752 in connection with the French anthem

Rebbe wrote: *t"ch* (thank you)."

As mentioned earlier, President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing presided over the change in the "Marseillaise." He spoke about the need to change the words of the anthem, which aroused the ire of the French public. The official reason for his suggestion was that the words are violent. After vigorous discussion, it was decided that only the tempo of the anthem would be changed. Afterwards, the tempo was changed yet again, back to the way it was originally, by President Mitterrand.

In 5752, just at the time that the sicha was said, there were discussions yet again about changing the anthem. This was in the French newspapers. Those who wrote up the sichos asked the Rebbe whether to add these flip-flops regarding the anthem in that footnote, and the Rebbe said: **There will be further news regarding this, in the natural way of things, and you don't need to chase after the news** (see box). In other words, the Rebbe was saying that the story wasn't over yet and there would still be news about the French national anthem!

Obviously, this is all connected to Geula, because Geula is connected with the final birur of France. Rabbi Jacobson has this to add:

"At the end of the farbrengen on Shabbos VaYeishev 5752, in the presence of the group from France, the Rebbe indicated that they should whistle. *This was the first and only time the Rebbe indicated that they should whistle on Shabbos.* In the sicha we submitted afterwards for the Rebbe's editing, we wrote that the Rebbe indicated that they should whistle and we included a reference to Hemshech Ayin-beis, where it says in a maamer of Shabbos VaYeishev 5675 (1915) (precisely 77 years previously), the connection between whistling and Geula.

SING FASTER, MOSHIACH IS ALREADY PREPARED TO COME AND THERE'S NO TIME!

Rabbi Pinchas Gedalia Pashtar, principal of Machon Hadar Torah in Paris, said that whenever he came with a group of talmidim and mekuravim, the Rebbe would indicate that they should sing "HaAderes V'Ha'Emuna" to the tune of the French anthem:

"In those years, 5734-5740, the Rebbe would look for me between sichos so that I could say l'chaim with the talmidim, as the Rebbe said: 'HaKohen (R' Pashtar is a Kohen) HaGadol mei'echav.' A number of times the Rebbe even indicated that we should begin to sing "HaAderes V'Ha'Emuna" to the tune of the French anthem.

"At the end of the farbrengen of 12 Sivan 5740, the Rebbe said that since there was a large contingent of guests from France, they should sing their niggun and the Rebbe called for me by name, 'Pashtar! Where is he?'

"I was in the building next to 770, translating what the Rebbe said from Yiddish into French, so that the members of the group as well as other people would be able to hear a simultaneous translation through a tiny transistor and earplugs.

"So I was sitting and participating in the farbrengen by watching it on a television screen and listening on special headphones and the Rebbe was looking for me! I quickly removed the headphones but they got tangled up in my beard and I was stuck there, trying to extricate myself while I could still hear and see the Rebbe asking where I was.

"The Rebbe asked the group, in French, where I was, and added with a smile, 'You don't say the Birkas Kohanim at night!' The talmidim told the Rebbe that I was translating and the Rebbe smilingly asked, 'Here, or in Paris?' In short, an entire dialogue took place in French that included expressions like, 'Sing faster. Moshiach is ready to come and there's no time.'

"I finally managed to free myself and leaped down the spiral, dark staircase and entered the illuminated shul and somehow (it's a story in itself) managed to reach the Rebbe's bima, where the Rebbe was still waiting. A full cup of mashke was waiting for me and the singing burst forth..."

"When we received the Rebbe's corrections, we noticed an interesting thing. At first, the Rebbe made a line with his pencil to show that this paragraph should be deleted, but then the Rebbe erased this line, thus allowing us to print the paragraph about whistling."

* * *

A series of events that began 192 years ago, in the Alter Rebbe's fierce battle against Napoleon, was concluded by the seventh generation

led by the Rebbe MH"M, with the acknowledgment by the "angel of France," the President of France, that the French national anthem had been transformed to k'dusha, this taking place on Yud-Alef Nissan.

This is not merely the individual Geula of a niggun, but the final birur of the klipa of France that was completed as a final step before the collective Geula, may it be immediately now.

RABBI LEVI YITZCHOK SHAPIRO A”H

Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Shapiro, chazan, baal t’filla in the Rebbe’s minyanim, an askan in Crown Heights and secretary of the Beis Din, passed away on Monday, 11 Kislev. Rabbi Levi Yitzchok, or as he was known, R Levi Itche, was born in Karalevitch on Shmini Atzeres 5676 (1915). His father was Rabbi Nachum Shapiro and his mother was Raizel, a baalas middos, who was admired by the townsfolk who went to her for advice.

When R’ Levi Itche was nine years old he was sent to an underground yeshiva in Rammen, under the supervision of mashpia, Rabbi Yaakov Gurary. When his parents deliberated over whether he should eat his meals with families, each day with a different Lubavitch family, or in one set place for a fee, his father said, “If he eats in different households, he will be more Chassidish.”

In 5693 (1933), when he was 17, his mother passed away. Due to the exigencies of the times, he had to leave his learning and help support the family. The family moved to Leningrad and R’ Levi Itche worked in a factory that manufactured fabric.

With unusual charm, he managed to develop connections with local senior police officials and with the local draft office. He used his connections to get exemptions for his fellow Chassidim who feared being drafted into the Russian army. Every so often, he would even have to bribe officials with his own money, and this also entailed great personal danger and mesirus nefesh.

In 1941 R’ Levi Itche married the daughter of the famous Chassid, R’ Peretz Mochkin. During World War II, he fled with dozens of other people, including many Chassidim, to Tashkent, where he spent the remainder of the war. Then he left Russia with the famous *eshelons*. He fled with his family to Poland and from there to Peking and Paris until in 1953 he emigrated to the United States, where

he lived for the rest of his life.

In 1986, he was appointed secretary of the Beis Din of Crown Heights and in this position helped many residents of Crown Heights. Among his many positions, he also served as gabbai of the Chevra Kadisha and gabbai tz’daka on behalf of the Beis Din. Before every Yom Tov, he distributed money to needy families in Crown Heights and this was done happily and graciously.

He was the chazan and baal t’filla in the Rebbe’s beis midrash. For many years, he led the recitation of T’hillim on Shabbos Mevarchim with a Chassidishe sweetness.

“All his life he lived with an amazing combination of simcha and kabbalas ol. It seems that the hashpaos that were drawn down on his birthday on Shmini Atzeres, were what gave him his perpetual simcha,” say family members.

R’ Levi Itche’s devotion to the Rebbe and his dedication to the Rebbe’s mitzvaim were boundless. Until the last two years of his life he would walk on every Tahalucha to Boro Park, an hour and a half walk each way.

This past Shmini Atzeres R’ Levi Itche celebrated his 90th birthday with his extended family. This was the last family gathering that he attended.

Two months ago, he did not feel well and he was taken to the hospital. His grandson was going to have his bris mila that Shabbos and he whispered in his daughter’s ear in a weak voice that she should see to it that they returned home before Shabbos because he wanted to be at the bris.

* * *

R’ Levi Yitzchok Shapiro merited much nachas from his descendents, many of whom are rabbanim, shluchim, mashpiim, and mechanchim.



WAKING UP IN THE WILDERNESS

BY CHANA KATZ

In the double, redoubled darkness, a story of light is doubly, doubly beautiful. Perhaps that is why the Rebbe MH”M told Ruth Ben Haim that she should write her story – not only with precise details, but to make it into a book.

Although this project is still taking shape, we feel it is a z’chus to share some excerpts of her story with our readers now. It began in the South American country Colombia with the day she was born: Yud-Aleph Nissan...

* * *

The circumstances surrounding her arrival into this world were most incredible and miraculous. Following the birth of two brothers, Ruth’s mother underwent surgery of the womb, after which doctors told her not to expect to have any other children. Yet years later, her mother had been able to conceive and give birth to a beautiful, healthy baby girl, Olga (Ruth).

That her date-of-birth was Yud-Aleph Nissan, had no meaning at the time. In the thick of their goyishe world, the family knew nothing about Jewish life or Judaism, even though her mother would sift her flour and her father would delight whenever he heard a Jewish story.

Despite this remarkable entry into the world, Ruth’s childhood and later years were burdened by a grief which lingered and grew. She couldn’t connect to the meaningless world

around her. She didn’t know why and thus dwelled in a disturbing darkness of angst without the faintest hint of light.

“What I felt, and believed and thought, had no connection with what I saw in the world around me!” Ruth said.

* * *

Despite this darkness there was warmth that permeated her home, “a very special house, a house full of chesed.” Her father was a very

It felt like a “mikveh rishon ge’oret,” she recalled. The darkness which had enveloped her most of her life, began to peel away.

brilliant doctor/professor, and at that time, whoever had money could try to get cured, while whoever didn’t, just suffered. Her father cured both the elite and those who couldn’t pay, treating the latter free of charge.

One day, a very poor woman came to the house. “I don’t have any money to pay you,” she said. “I want to thank you for taking care of me.” With those words, she handed him a Tanach...

* * *

As the years progressed, a life crisis was brewing to a boil. By the time she was in university, a deep depression took hold. Things felt beyond her grasp.

Looking heavenward, she pleaded to HaKodesh Baruch Hu: “Where are You? I want to connect to You!” She felt a lifting of her spirit, and she abruptly left the world she knew, her university, friends and family. She went to the countryside and lived by herself.

At home, her parents began to worry that she was disconnecting from society. Her father, knowing she was in mental distress, and touched deeply, went to visit his daughter. He brought her the Tanach which he had received many years earlier from the poor old lady. She felt as though, in a natural way, Hashem had prepared her to reach this point – to receive the Torah!

* * *

She could hardly put her new Tanach down. She pored through it day and night. “The Torah is like water,” she explained, “and I was thirsting for the truth. I found myself inside the Torah. All the thoughts and feelings I had that never seemed to fit with what I saw in the world suddenly began to fit with what I read in the Torah. All the sadness that was inside me, went away, and until today, was replaced with simcha.”

From that point, Ruth began to intensify her relation with HaKodesh

Baruch Hu. If she ate something, she said a blessing first. She also blessed G-d when something made her joyful – all without knowing that it was written in a Siddur.

* * *

One day, while joining a group on a hike through the mountains, she reached a canyon, steep and deep, at the bottom of which ran a beautiful river. She asked her friends to accompany her down to the river. They started to go, but something held Ruth back. With a broken heart, she cried to Hashem, “I left my friends, my family, my home, the university – (her whole life) – for You! I want to do Your will, but I feel alone. I want to get married and have a family and educate them with a love of Your Torah. But here it is impossible to find this.”

Her dream was to go to Eretz Yisroel.

“It’s not easy to explain what happened then because it was a powerful feeling. I felt Hashem asking me if I was ready to receive the entire Torah, and I felt Hashem understood that I was ready. I felt as though I had received a new neshama. Suddenly, I wasn’t scared to go down to the river. In fact, I had an overwhelming desire to go into the water.”

It felt like a “mikveh rishon ge’oret,” she recalled. The darkness which had enveloped her most of her life, began to peel away. For the first time, she felt a joy and hope. Finally, a light! So much light that she felt it was the end of the world.

Ruth emerged with a feeling of “Or b’derech,” a bitachon in Hashem and the ability to see the difference between darkness and light in the world. No longer was she imprisoned in an “olam ha’sheker.”

After this experience, she wanted

to rush to her parents and tell them that she had reached the ends of the world. But she felt Hashem explaining to her that this was just a taste. For more, she would have to work for it. And when the time came to reveal her story she would know it.

The experience was so above nature that she asked Hashem for a sign that the whole experience wasn’t just her imagination. She requested to have a dream which confirmed the entire experience. And that is what she had.

* * *

In the years that followed, Ruth began to study the Torah with her brother, yet managed to keep these



One of Ruth’s murals

learning sessions undetected by family and friends. When she was 29, she met an Israeli who came to vacation in Colombia. They decided to get married, but because she hadn’t yet undergone an official conversion, they got married with a civil service.

She constantly asked her husband questions about Torah but he told her he didn’t know the answers. “You’re Jewish,” she insisted. “Why don’t you know? You have to know!!”

The day came when her dream was realized. She and her husband were going to live in Eretz Yisroel. On their way, they stopped at New York and decided to ask the Lubavitcher Rebbe for a blessing. Her husband

immediately began the slow process of return...

* * *

In Eretz Yisroel, Ruth began to undergo the formal conversion process. At one point during her learning she traveled to the city of Tzfas to study with Rav Avraham Levy, who had come from Argentina and spoke in her native tongue. Levy presented Ruth with her first *Sefer HaTanya*. To her great shock, the page she had opened to her very first time, gave the answers to the questions that had eluded Ruth her entire life – that darchei Chassidut is hidden within a person’s neshama and one’s avoda is to reveal it. All her life everything had been hidden and she struggled to reveal the truth!

* * *

Ruth completed her conversion and became mekushar to the Rebbe. For awhile now, she had already accustomed herself to writing the Rebbe through *Igros Kodesh*. ...

Now it happened that one day, five years ago, Ruth finally decided it was time to write down her story. She only wrote two sentences, but it was a start. She put it away.

That night, she wrote to the Rebbe about something unrelated to her day’s activity and was very surprised to see that the answer later turned out to be an introduction to the book she had just started to write. The Rebbe wrote of a Jewish family who had gone into the galut and made the “heart impure amongst the goyim.”

In subsequent letters the Rebbe told her: “It’s time to tell your story. Not only that...You should write a book and be very specific about all the details that happened to you.”

At one point she wrote to the Rebbe and pleaded, “Rebbe, it’s hard for me to write my story. Maybe this

is not for me..." The Rebbe answered: "This is not your story! It is the story of Am Yisroel!"

* * *

Ruth immediately traveled to a special institute in the center of the country where she could trace her family roots. She started finding out many interesting things, the least of which was that she had a great-grandmother named Esther Navarro. Esther had a daughter named Chava Angelina and Chava had Ruth's mother. Her father's family also was Jewish on the maternal side. She also found the names of her grandmothers in the sefer of Marranos from Spain.

* * *

The Rebbe had provided Ruth with clear direction and information. But something, however, remained extremely puzzling...

The Rebbe kept talking about the need to mekarev her parents, even though she knew that her father had passed away many years earlier and that her mother was very old and still

living in Colombia. Even more perplexing was that Ruth received many letters from the Rebbe which talked about the walls of a grave falling down. She had no idea why the Rebbe kept repeating this "again and again and again."

* * *

Then one day, Ruth opened *Igros Kodesh* ad the Rebbe said, "I'm sending you money to go there and find out!" Not too long after that, Ruth received a phone call from Colombia. Her brother had called to say that a bank account had been discovered in her name...

With this money, she was able to travel to Colombia. There, she had also learned that her mother passed away on Yom Kippur. She also found out something else...

There was a certain goyishe minhag in her city that wherever they buried the dead, every five years they would take out the bones and whatever remained, collect consolidate and store it away in

another place, meanwhile using that same grave for another burial. Her mother started to come to her in a dream and, appearing very upset, asked her, "How long does it take you to come here?" Ruth learned that as they had done to her father's

remains, so had they done to her mother.

Now she understood why the Rebbe kept talking about "L'Karev L'Am Yisroel" her parents: If you switch around the letters of L'Karev (to bring closer) you have the word "kever" grave. The city workers had unearthed her father's bones (and those of her mother, too) and moved them to another place.

Ruth took the money that was in her "newfound" bank account and used it to buy a space in the ground. She then reburied her parents for a second time, this time giving them a proper Jewish burial on land which she owed and would not be disturbed by the local government. This took place on Chai Mar Cheshvan. And every year since then, Ruth remembered her parents on this date. This year, she sponsored a Kiddush in the shul and spoke about this for the first time – in order to thank the Rebbe – Hashem's shliach who looks after all neshamos!

(Ruth, an architect and artist, teaches art classes to young Anash in Tsfat. In addition to working on her story in book form, Ruth also has created a multimedia presentation in which she speaks to gatherings of Anash and those becoming mekarev to Chassidut. Called "Music and Graphics" her presentation is enhanced by her husband and sons, who sing, play guitar and drums. Then she delights her audience by setting up a spontaneous art studio and begins a painting right on the spot that illustrates her story. She is also available to do private wall paintings. Ruth can be reached at: 0507198754).

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